Core Rules

Things Needed for Gameplay

- Pencil and character sheet.
- (Optional) map/grid and character tokens (graph paper, mat, VTT).
- Dice: `d4`, `d6`, `d8`, `d12`, `d20`.
  - In practice, one of each is sufficient (you roll one die at a time).
  - (Optional) **d100** for random tables or generators.

- If you only have `d6`, use the **2d6** variant (at the end).

Glossary of Terms

These words appear in the rules — here they are explained "in plain language":

- **GM (Game Master)**: leads the world, describes situations, controls opponents, sets Difficulty and consequences.
- **Player**: describes the actions of their character and makes rolls.
- **Test**: a dice roll that resolves an uncertain outcome.
- **Attributes**: **Strength (S)**, **Dexterity (D)**, **Might (M)**. They indicate *what die you roll*.
- **Attribute Die**: the size of the die assigned to an attribute (e.g., D = `d12`).
- **Difficulty (D)**: the number that must be met or exceeded for the action to succeed.
- **Success**: result ≥ Difficulty.
- **Exceptional Success**: **maximum result** on the die (e.g., 12 on `d12`, 20 on `d20`) — success + additional benefit.
- **Complication**: an additional problem after failure (noise, loss of time, worse position, loss of resource).
- **Success at a Cost**: the action succeeds, but you pay a price (compromise, loss of resource, exposure, risk).
- `Luck` **Point (LP)**: a limited resource that allows you to salvage scenes (reroll / boost die / turn failure into success at a cost).
- **Hearts**: the "life" of a character (stamina, wounds, condition — depending on the world).
- `Power` **Points (PP)**: a resource for powers and "above standard" plays (magic, psionics, gadgets, "cinematic" actions).
- **Defense**: the threshold for hitting an opponent in combat (instead of multiplying rules about armor, armor class, etc.).
- **Cover**: an obstacle between you and the target. Usually hinders ranged attacks or observational actions.

1. Character

Creating a character is quick. A character is: **concept + role + traits + resources + equipment**.

1.1 Concept

One sentence: who you are and what genre you are playing.

> *Example: "A former corporate agent, now a bounty hunter who operates in the shadows and trusts no one."*

1.2 Role (choose one)

Roles are deliberately "world-neutral". In fantasy, you might call them something else, in cyberpunk something different, but they function the same way.

- **Assault** — pressure, combat, overcoming obstacles, breaking through the front.
- **Specialist** — stealth, precision, technique, observation, planning.
- **Adept** — powers, influence, knowledge, improvisation (magic/psionics/technology depending on the world).

1.3 Attributes and Dice

You have three attributes:

- **Strength (`S`)** — physical `power`, endurance, melee combat, forcing.
- **Dexterity (D)** — reflexes, precision, sneaking, shooting, driving.
- **Might (`M`)** — "the special stuff": magic, psionics, advanced technology, social bluffing, intuition — depending on the convention.

At the start, distribute the dice as follows:

- one attribute has `d12`,
- one has `d8`,
- one has `d6`.

Suggested distribution by role (the simplest):

- **Assault:** `S` `d12`, D `d8`, `M` `d6`
- **Specialist:** D `d12`, `M` `d8`, `S` `d6`
- **Adept:** `M` `d12`, D `d8`, `S` `d6`

> *Example: if you have D = `d12`, then when shooting, sneaking, and dodging, you usually roll `d12`.*

1.4 Resources

- **Hearts:** 5.
- `Power` **Points (PP):** 3.
- `Luck` **Point (LP):** at the beginning of each session, you have **2 LP**.

`Luck` **Point (how it works):** spend **1 LP** to choose one:

- **Reroll** your test (keep the better result), or
- **Increase the die by 1 step** for that one roll (`d6` → `d8` → `d12` → `d20`), or
- **Turn a failure into a 'success at a cost'** — the action succeeds, but the GM immediately adds a price (e.g., noise, loss of time, loss of resource, worse position, attracting attention, damage to equipment).

Recovering LP: at the beginning of the next session, you return to the limit. The GM may grant **+1 LP** for bold risks, great narrative decisions, or playing consequences.

1.5 Talents (optional, but recommended)

Talents are **2 short phrases** that describe what your character is good at (no lists, no tables).

- Examples: "Mechanic", "Scout", "Negotiator", "Medic", "Hacker", "Veteran", "Explorer".

How Talents work: if a Talent genuinely helps in a test, the GM may **increase the die by 1 step** (or neutralize a penalty).

- A Talent does not grant automatic successes.
- Usually, **a maximum of 1 Talent** affects a single test.

1.6 Equipment

List:

- 1 "key" tool (weapon / kit / gear without which you cannot do your job),
- 1 protection (armor, shield, camouflage — depending on the world),
- 3 trinkets useful in the adventure.

Equipment in the core rules is mainly **permission** (enables actions), not a numerical bonus.

1.7 Example of a Complete Character

- Concept: "Information thief who steals data from systems, not from pockets."
- Role: Specialist
- Attributes: **S** `d6` , **Z** `d12` , **M** `d8`
- Resources: 5 Hearts, 3 MP, 2 AP
- Talents: "Hacker", "Shadow"
- Equipment: pistol, light armor, lockpicking kit, rope, flashlight

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2. Core Rules: Tests

This part is the most important — if you understand it, you understand the system.

2.1 When You Make a Test

You make a test when both conditions are met:

1. the outcome is uncertain (it may succeed or fail), and
2. the stakes are real (failure will change something / cost something).

If the action is trivial and without pressure — the GM may say "it succeeded" without a roll.

2.2 How to perform a test (step by step)

1. The player states **what they do** and **why**.
2. The GM chooses an attribute: **S** or **Z** or **M**.
3. The GM sets the **Difficulty (D)** and explains what failure means (the stakes).
4. The player rolls the **attribute die**.
5. Compare the result with D and determine the consequences.

2.3 Difficulties (T)

We use simple thresholds. If in doubt, choose the lower threshold, and let the "difficulty" show through the consequences.

- **T 3** – easy (almost certain, but sometimes worth checking under pressure)
- **T 4** – standard (typical challenge)
- **T 5** – hard (requires competence or an advantage)
- **T 6** – very hard (risky without an advantage)
- **T 8** – heroic (for the best or with good preparation)
- **T 12** – legendary (rarely "clean"; usually as a campaign goal, plan, ritual, or under great conditions)

2.4 Test Results

- **Result ≥ T → Success.** You achieve the intended effect.
- **Result < T → Failure.** You do not achieve the effect, and the situation changes (complication or cost).
- **Rolled 1 → Failure + complication.** A complication definitely occurs.
- **Maximum result on the die → Exceptional success.**

- In addition to success, you gain an **additional benefit** (faster, quieter, stronger, safer, additional effect).

> *Example of success with a cost: "You manage to force the door, but you make noise and someone comes to check."*

2.5 Advantages and Disadvantages (without counting)

Instead of adding +1/−1 to rolls, we change the **size of the dice**.

- **Better situation → upgrade the die by 1 step**
  `k6` → `k8` → `k12` → `k20`
- **Worse situation → downgrade the die by 1 step**
  `k20` → `k12` → `k8` → `k6` → `k4`

Examples of advantages: preparation, good tools, positional advantage, surprise, support.

Examples of disadvantages: darkness, slippery surfaces, time pressure, noise, distraction, cover.

Order of rules: for speed, assume that for one test you usually apply **a maximum of 1 advantage and 1 disadvantage** (they can cancel each other out).

2.6 Ally Assistance

An ally can sacrifice their action (or time in a scene outside of combat) to assist.

Effect: for this one test, **increase the die by 1 step**.

Assistance must be described sensibly (providing cover, handing over tools, distracting, stabilizing, giving hints).

2.7 Repeating Tests

If the test fails, do not repeat it "ad infinitum" without changing the situation.

- Either you do something differently (different attribute / different tools / different approach),
- or you accept the cost (time, alarm, resource),
- or you withdraw.

2.8 Examples of Tests (Outside of Combat)

Example A — Stealthy Passage

- Player: "I will cross the yard before the spotlight returns."
- GM: Dexterity (D). It's under time pressure → Difficulty **T 5**.
- The character has the Talent "Shadow" → advantage, die increased by 1 step.
- Roll: D `d12` = 4 → failure. GM: "They don't notice you right away, but someone hears a rustle and starts checking the area (complication: pressure increases)."

Example B — Forceful Breach

- Player: "I will kick down the metal door before the guards reach the corner."
- GM: Strength (`S`), Difficulty **T 6** (very hard without tools).
- Someone helps by holding the lock and wedging the door → die increased by 1 step.
- Roll: `S` `d12` = 12 → exceptional success: the door gives way immediately and you do it quieter than expected.

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3. Movement and Distances (Grid is an Option)

By default, NDE operates without a map: you describe the scene and the positions of the characters.

3.1 By Default: Descriptive Distances

Use four zones:

- **Close** — within arm's reach, melee combat.
- **Nearby** — a few steps away, easy to close in.
- **Far** — the other side of the scene, requires clear movement.
- **Very Far** — sniper/vehicle range/"at the edge of the scene".

In a turn, you can usually change the distance by **one zone** (e.g., Far → Nearby).

3.2 Option: Grid Play (for Tactics)

If you prefer specifics:

- 1 square = 1–2 m.
- Movement per turn: **up to 5 squares**.
- Diagonals are allowed (count as a regular square).

3.3 Cover and Line of Effect

- **Full cover:** it is impossible to interact "in line" (shot, observation, many powers).
- **Partial cover:** makes it difficult — usually **lowers the die by 1 step** for the attacker/watcher.

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4. Combat

Combat is a standard scene with tests, only organized in turns.

4.1 When Combat Begins

Combat begins when:

- at least one side wants to harm the other, and
- it matters who acts and when.

If the situation is brief and obvious, the GM may resolve it with a single roll.

4.2 Turn Order (Simple Version)

Simply put:

- First, all players act (in any order),
- then the opponents act,
- and so on in a loop.

4.3 What Do You Do on Your Turn

In your turn, you have:

- **Movement** (changing zones / up to 5 squares in grid variant),
- **1 Action** (attack, test, assist, use `power`, equipment, interact with the scene).

4.4 Attack: How It Works

1. Choose a target and describe the attack.
2. Choose an attribute:
   - **melee** → roll **Strength (S)**,
   - **ranged** → roll **Dexterity (D)**,
   - **powers** → usually roll **Might (M)** (see Chapter 5).

3. Determine the target's **Defense**.
4. Roll the dice and compare it to the Defense.

4.6 Damage and 'How Much They Can Endure'

- A hit deals **1 Heart**.
- A **Critical Success** deals **2 Hearts** *or* provides a strong effect (disarm, knockdown, push out of cover) — choose one.

Simplest enemy archetypes:

- **Minion:** goes down after 1 hit.
- **Elite:** has **2 Hearts**.
- **Boss:** has **3 Hearts** (or 5 in final scenes).

> *Note: 'goes down' does not necessarily mean death. They may be unconscious, fled, surrendered, or taken out of action.*

4.5 Opponent Defense (Guideline)

- **Weak:** Defense **4**
- **Typical:** Defense **5**
- **Elite:** Defense **6**
- **Boss:** Defense **8** (legendary boss: **12**)

Cover and conditions usually change the size of the attacking dice (easing/difficulty), not the Defense.

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 <span class="rpg-token token-`tn`">`TN` +1 step.

5.8 Multiple foes in close

If many minions are adjacent to one hero, either:

- raise <span class="rpg-token token-`tn`">`TN` by 1 step (pressure), or
- have failure include an extra complication (lose position).

Keep it fast: one resolution → one outcome.

4.7 Examples of Combat

Example A — melee combat with a lackey

- The Storm (`S` `d12`) attacks the lackey (Defense 5).
- Conditions are favorable (surprise) → die increases by 1 step, but it is already `d12`, so the increase gives `d20`.
- Roll `d20` = 7 → hit, the lackey is down.

Example B — shot at the elite from cover

- The Specialist (`Z` `d12`) shoots at the elite (Defense 6).
- The target is in partial cover → difficulty, die drops to `d8`.
- Roll `d8` = 6 → hit, the elite loses 1 Heart (leaving them with 1).

Example C — boss and Stroke of `Luck`

- The Adept (`M` `d12`) tries to incapacitate the boss (Defense 8) with `power`.
- Roll `d12` = 4 → failure. The player spends 1 LS for a reroll.

- Reroll = 10 → success. The boss loses 1 Heart, but the GM adds a cost: "the effect is loud, an alarm goes off."

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5. Powers (P) and Power Points (PP)

In NDE, " Power " is a category of special effects. Depending on the world, it may mean:

- magic, psionics, rituals,
- advanced technology, drones, live hacking,
- cinematic hero moves (e.g., "masterful concentration"),
- social influence in games where conversation is a " power ."

5.1 When You Spend PM

You spend PM when you try to achieve an effect **above standard**.

5.2 How to Use Power (Step by Step)

1. Describe the effect you want to achieve.
2. The GM determines the Difficulty and the cost in PM .
3. Spend PM .
4. Roll M and compare it to the Difficulty.

Failure: the effect does not work; PM is lost; a complication arises (overload, trace, revelation, side effect).

5.3 Levels of Effects (Difficulty / Cost)

- **Trick** (short trick): **T 4 / 0–1 MP**
  light, sound, minor illusion, momentary distraction.
- **Standard**: **T 5 / 1 MP**
  projectile, shield, impulse, jump, enhancement.
- **Strong**: **T 6 / 2 MP**
  area, control, healing, paralysis, "hack during combat."
- **Great**: **T 8–12 / 3 MP**
  an effect that changes the scene or has campaign consequences.

5.4 Exceptional Success in Power

If you roll a maximum on the M dice:

- increase the scale (larger area / longer / stronger), or
- add an additional benefit (quieter, more precisely, safer), or
- the GM may grant **1 MP** (if it fits the fiction).

5.5 Recovering MP

- After a conflict scene, you recover **1 MP**.
- After a safe rest, you return to full.

5.6 Examples of Powers

Example A — Shield for a Dash

- Player: "I set up a short cover to dash to a better position."
- GM: Standard **T 5**, cost 1 PM .

- Roll `M` `d12` = 9 → success: you dash safely.

Example B — Failure with Consequence

- Player: "I stop the elite in their tracks."
- GM: Strong **T 6**, cost 2 `PM`.
- Roll = 1 → failure + complication: you lose 2 `PM`, and the effect rebounds, revealing your position.

6.1 0 Hearts

If you drop to 0 Hearts:

- you are **out of action** (wounded, stunned, in shock — depending on the convention),
- an ally can sacrifice an action to get you back on your feet with **1 Heart**.

6.2 Rest

- After a scene of conflict, if you have a moment to catch your breath and the basic conditions, you may return to full Hearts.
- In harsher campaigns, the GM may require a safe resting place to return to full strength.

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.

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7. Character Development

When you grow: after an adventure, mission, or important chapter of the story (usually every 1–3 sessions).

Choose **one**:

- **Increase** one attribute by 1 die step (max. up to `d20`), or
- **+1 Heart** (max. 7), or
- **+1 MP** (max. 5), or
- **New Trait** (a one-sentence, specific ability agreed upon with the GM).

> *Example: The Specialist increases Strength from `d12` to `d20`, as the campaign has entered a phase of chases and shootouts.*

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8. Variant Only `d6` : 2d6

If you do not want to use different dice, play with **2d6**.

8.1 Attributes as Modifiers

Instead of die sizes, distribute the modifiers:

- one attribute has **+2**
- one has **+1**
- one has **+0**

8.2 Test

Roll **2d6 + ability modifier**.

Result:

- **6 or less** – failure with consequence
- **7–9** – success at a cost
- **10+** – full success
- **12** – exceptional success (additional benefit)

8.3 Difficulty of the Situation

Instead of changing the thresholds, give:

- **+1** for advantage, preparation, a good plan,
- **−1** for hindrances, pressure, cover, chaos.

8.4 `Luck` Roll in 2d6

Spend 1 `Luck` Point to:

- reroll 2d6, or
- add **+1** to the test result, or
- turn a failure into a success at a cost.

8.5 Quick Mapping (Optional)

If you ever want to "convert" a character between variants:

- `d6` ≈ +0
- `d8` ≈ +1
- `d12` ≈ +2
- `d20` ≈ +3 (for very experienced)

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1. What exactly is the player trying to achieve?
2. Which attribute applies: `S`/D/`M`?
3. What's the <span class="rpg-token token- `tn` "> `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?

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1. Introduction

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

9.1 Protection (armor) as a simple resource

If you want "protection" to have a clear effect:

- a character with protection has **1 Armor token per scene**,
- when they would lose 1 Heart, they can instead expend an Armor token.

9.2 Time Pressure as a Timer

If the scene has a time limit, the GM sets a "counter" (e.g., 3 steps). Each failure moves the counter by 1. When it reaches the end — a consequence occurs (alarm, target fleeing, passage collapsing).

9.3 Retaliation (Risky Combat Variant)

If you want the fight to be more "intense" and fast-paced:

- when you **attack in melee** and **miss**, you lose **1 Heart**, provided the opponent could realistically reach you. This is a variant — in the core of NDE, the consequences of failures in combat mainly arise from fiction and the GM's decisions.