Playing Fate Core online

Fate Core is easy to play online – you don't need to rely on a Virtual TableTop (VTT) application at all. You could do it over voice chat, add in any type of online collaboration / whiteboard app you like and you are set. You can use an online dice roller app to share rolls, or have each player roll their physical dice and tell you the results. Randy Dean Oest has outlined how he runs his Fate game at:

http://randyoest.com/2018/managing-long-term-fate-rpg-campaign-online/.

Check it out for some solid advice.

Since the question comes up on a regular basis, I decided to answer a few questions:

- How do you play Fate using Discord?
- How do you play Fate using Roll20?
- How do you find a group to play Fate online?

What you will find below is based on my experience and how I like to run a Fate session online. It is by no means the only way, nor is it the best way. This is what I have come up with through trial and error.

I assume no prior knowledge of Discord and Roll20. As such, I tried to explain all key steps, or provide link to the relevant Discord or Roll20 help page.

I hope this guide is useful in creating your own unique setup for online play. Have fun! You can find me on Twitter **@PG_YYZ**. -- Pascal

Playing Fate using Discord

To play Fate using Discord, you will need a free Discord account (https://discordapp.com/). Once your account is created, you will then need to create a server to host your sessions.

Click on the [+] button to **Add a Server**

You may want to set up your server as private. Discord Help will walk you through server setup and how to set permissions.

To manage permissions in bulk, you can assign roles. I assigned the following roles:

- GM
- FoC_Players (Fate of Cthulhu)
- Fate_Steampunk_Players

And no manage access to session channels:

- Fate_Cthulhu _01… etc.

Next step: create text and voice channels for your server. Click the + account above **Text Channels** or **Voice Channels** to create new ones.

Since I have multiple groups for various scenarios, I make session channels private for that group, as I'm not interested in watch parties.
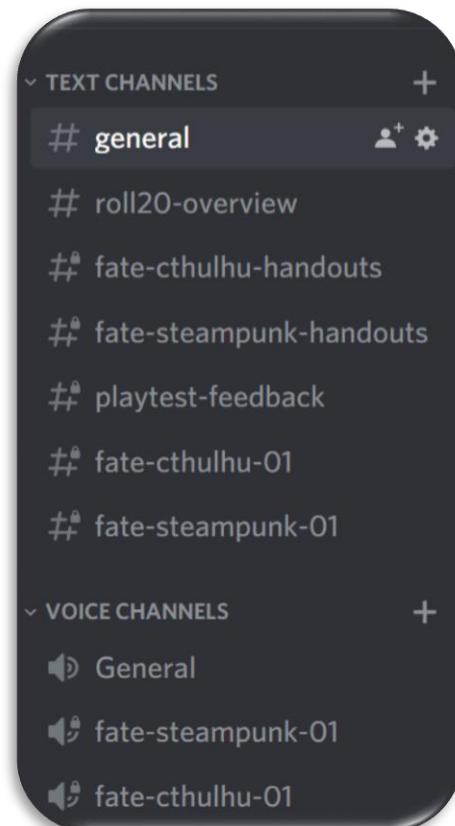
This is the setup I use:

Text Channels:

#general – Accessible to @everyone I invite to the server. I use this channel for general conversations.

#*roll20-overview* – series of GM posts and screenshot to introduce people to my roll20 interface. Read-only for players.

#Fate-cthulhu-handouts – Accessible to all players for that campaign (read only). Series of GM posts only with useful handouts for the game / session.

#Fate-cthulhu-01 – Restricted to players for that specific session.

Voice Channels:

◂ **general** – Accessible to @everyone I invite to the server. I use this channel for general conversations and sound checks.

◂ **fate-cthulhu-01** - Restricted to players for that specific session.

Etc.

Some players may prefer a text-only game due to a hearing impairment or social shyness. Ensure everyone is on the same page regarding whether a voice channel will be used, and if so, ensuring everyone has a decent headset and quiet environment to connect.

Note: I strongly recommend to set time aside (to do a sound check before the session. Otherwise, you might find the first 30 minutes are spent tweaking setup.

Dice Rolls within Discord

To handle rolls, I simply authorized the SideKick bot to my server:

https://github.com/ArtemGr/Sidekick

Just follow the instructions on the site to install.

You can roll Fudge dice with the command:

> /r 4dF

Which gives the screen output:

> @GM (Pascal): 4dF = (bb-b) = -1

Feeling fancy? Typing this command in the chat:

> /r 4dF+2 #Athletics (Hard Parkour stunt)

would give you the following screen output:

> @GM (Pascal): 4dF+2 Athletics (Hard Parkour stunt) = (-+++)+2 = 4

(explaining the skill the player is rolling, adding the bonus, and specifying the stunt used for the +2 bonus)

Playing Fate using Roll20 Basic

Fantasy Grounds and Roll20 are two major players in the Virtual Table Top (VTT) arena. I prefer playing face-to-face, so I haven't invested much time learning advanced functions in either system. There are several other options out there – try them out, and pick one you like. Check out the Roll20 Crash Course to quickly learn your way around that VTT.

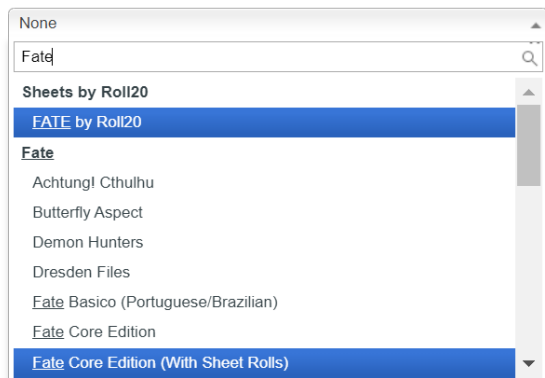I opted to use **Roll20 Basic** (the free version), and tend to run mostly one-shots online.

Basic Setup

You can quickly get started on Roll20 by creating a free account, and then creating a game.

There are two decent Fate character sheets you can use. Type in "Fate", and the options will pop up.


I like the **FATE by Roll20** sheet slightly better for the way it enables me to customize stress tracks clearly, but I enjoy the visuals of the **Fate Core Edition (with Sheet Rolls)**. Try both, and pick which one you prefer.

You can use the text and voice chat built in with Roll20, and have a collaboration area to use with your players – you can sketch a map, have tokens representing characters, etc. Roll20 relies on WebRTC, requiring more bandwidth. If you have players with low bandwidth, turn off Roll20 voice chat and use Discord, which is not as bandwidth intensive.

- It's free for me and the players
- Easy to setup
- Fate character sheet support
- Fate dice roll support
- Common table mat
- Ability to display character sheet summaries
- Ability to display maps and handouts
- Ability to implement interactive features such as
- Fate point tokens, stress tracks, etc.
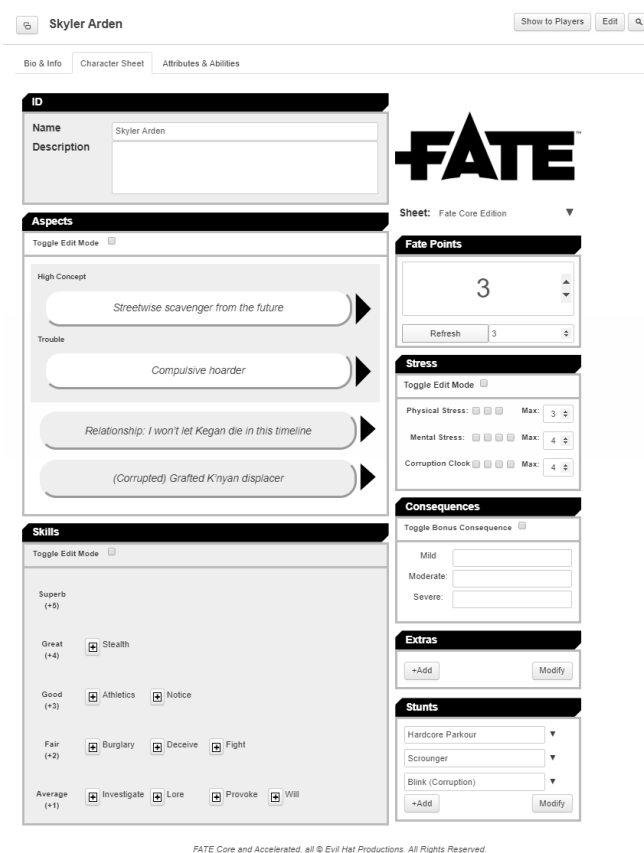
Clicking on the [+] besides a skill (**Stealth** @ (Great / +4 in this case) produces the following chat entry:

Hovering over the result gives you the details:
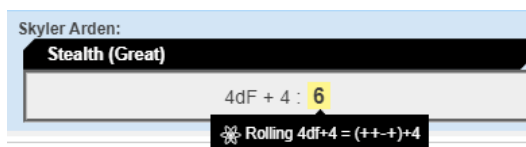
My Roll 20 Setup

When I play with Roll20, I setup my games with the following:

- FATE by Roll20 character sheet (See above)
- Template Character Sheet
- Roll20 "Decks" to hand out tokens:
    - Fate Points Deck
    - Physical Stress Deck
    - Mental Stress Deck
    - Corruption Deck (Fate of Cthulhu only)
    - X-Card Deck (safety tool)
- Macros to automate skill rolls
- A single page to serve as a table mat with the following areas on the table:
    - Interactive PC Summary Cards
    - A Map / Main Handout area
    - Fate Ladder (uploaded image)
    - Situation aspects in play

Each element on the table mat is designed separately so I can manipulate them in play. I have seen other GM design the entire table mat as a background image with cool graphics, and limit the number of interactive elements. Choose what works for you.

If I run a long-term campaign (face to face or online), I maintain a website containing player handouts, character sheets, maps, and adventure logs.

For one-shot adventures, I don't need something so robust. In that case, I find that using Discord as a companion app works just as well, with a text channel dedicated to handouts.

Roll20 does have a handouts feature, but it is limited to images. The app will let you convert PDFs to images – a single page at a time

On the following pages, I will explain how I set up each component of the table map using the free Roll20 Basic features

My Roll20 Tablemat for my current Fate of Cthulhu adventure

Creating Roll20 Decks

You can create tokens using **Rollable Tables** or **Decks**. I prefer Decks for my setup. This enables me to deal tokens to players (such as Fate points) and to flip tokens during play.

To create a Fate point deck:

- On the **Collection** tab of the Roll20 sidebar, click on Decks **+Add**

  Decks   **+ Add**

- Select the options shown on the right. I use a 30 px by 30 px image size – adjust to your own liking.
- Upload an image to represent your fate points (preferably a PNG image with transparency enabled) for the card backing
- Create a single card with the same image.

I show the Fate point deck during play to easily deal points to players. If you hover on a deck, you can deal tokens to one or all players. You can also drag a token out and place in on the table.

To create a Stress track deck:

- Follow the same steps as above.
- You can either:
  - o Use a blank box and a filled box images for each side of the "card":
  - o Or you can use more evocative images. I used Hearts for physical stress, Brains for mental stress, and the Fate of Cthulhu corruption symbol for corrupted Aspects.

I show the stress slots and corruption clock decks at the start of the session to set up character cards, then I hide them until they are needed again.

Alternatively, you can also use **Token Bars** on character tokens to track fate points and/or stress tracks.

See the **PC Summary Cards** section below to see how the deck is being used.

Finally, I also create an X-Card deck (single card, same facing on each side) that I keep on the playmat. Any player can draw an X Card and place it on the table if they want the current discussion to stop, or can simply type X in the chat.

The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a resource created by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a compilation of safety tools that have been designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by players and GMs at the table. You can find it at https://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit.

Creating a Template Character Sheet

Before creating all the Player Characters using the Fate Core sheet, I recommend creating a PC Template. Unfortunately, I haven't seen a Fate Condensed character sheet on Roll20 yet – but the current versions are flexible enough to make it work.

To create a default character, go to the **Journal** tab on the sidebar where characters and handouts are created and stored.

If you plan on creating NPCs, you can create a folder for PCs, and a folder for NPCs, to keep things tidy.

To create a character, click + **Add.** The character sheet has three tabs. Go on the **Character Sheet** tab.

Give your template Player Character a clear name (I use **PC Template**) with a few defaults and information typed in based on the Fate setting you are playing. For example, for **Fate of Cthulhu**, I put the following default values to avoid retyping again and again:

- I type in **Relationship** for the third aspect to remind players to pick a relationship.
- I set default Refresh to 3
- I set default Physical and Mental stress tracks to 3.
- I create a custom stress track for the corruption clock, with 4 slots.

Note: This sheet is set up to generate up to 4 boxes for each track. If a specific PC has more than 4 stress slots, I create a second stress track for them (named Physical Stress – 2nd row for example) with the additional slots.

If you have a Roll20 Pro account and some coding experience, you can create custom sheets.

On the **Attributes and Abilities** tab, I type in every skill in use for the setting, with a default value of zero. I use those values to develop macros that appear on the tablemat. ***This is optional*** – players could also roll from their character sheet by clicking on the + besides their skills. But I like staying focused on the tablemat. Do not touch any other ability on the sheet – these are used to automate other sheet functions.

Macros

Roll20 Basic allows you to create macros. For my Roll20 campaigns, I create a macro for each skill to automate skill rolls. This enables players:

- click on their character token on the playmat
- Select the relevant skill from the list appearing at the top of the playmat
- Enter any modifier (stunt bonus) and make the roll

This way, players do not have to keep their Roll20 character sheet open, and can focus on the playmat.

To create a macro, go to the **Collection** tab of the side bar and click **+Add** besides the macro area. Ensure the macro is visible to all players.

Edit Macro   ✕

Name(Don't include the # or spaces in the name)

Academics

Actions(One command/roll per line)

&{template:default} {{name=@{selected|token_name} uses
Academics skill:}}
/roll 4df+ @{selected|Academics}[Skill] + ?{Modifier?|0}[Mod.]

Type @ to insert variables from Characters   Test Macro
Type # to insert other macros

☑ Show as Token Action?

Visible To Players(Optional)

All Players ✕

The exact macro text is:

**&{template:default} {{name=@{selected|token_name}
uses Academics skill:}}
/roll 4df+ @{selected| Academics }[Skill] +
?{Modifier?|0}[Mod.]**

Replacing the skill name as required for each macro.

And provides this output showing their roll, the skill modifier, and any additional modifier entered:

Pascal (GM):
Marcus Fortuna uses Academics skill:

rolling 4df+ 1[Skill] + 0[Mod.]

(+ - 0 +)+1+0

= 2
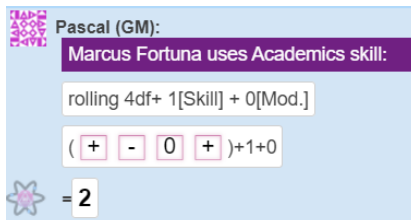
Macros   + Add

Typing #name in Chat performs macro.
Click to edit existing macros

Name

Academics	☐ In Bar
Athletics	☐ In Bar
Burglary	☐ In Bar
Contacts	☐ In Bar
Crafts	☐ In Bar
Deceive	☐ In Bar
Drive	☐ In Bar
Empathy	☐ In Bar
Fight	☐ In Bar
Investigate	☐ In Bar
Lore	☐ In Bar
Notice	☐ In Bar
Physique	☐ In Bar
Provoke	☐ In Bar
Rapport	☐ In Bar
Resources	☐ In Bar
Shoot	☐ In Bar
Stealth	☐ In Bar
Will	☐ In Bar

☑ Show macro quick bar?

Roll20 Page Layers

Roll20 pages have three layers:

Interactive Player Character (PC) Cards

On the left side of the playmat, I put all the PC summary cards containing key info the players & I need during play. The character portrait is linked to the PC character sheet (for skill rolls purposes).

The frame, headers and boxes are set on the **Map & Background** layer.

All text fields are in the **Objects & Token** layer so that the players or I can edit them during play.

Make the stress decks and corruption clock deck visible. Pull the relevant number of tokens for each track and line them up.

If you right click on the token, you will see the option to **Flip Card**. Test it out a few times to ensure it works.

- **Map and Background**. I use this layer to place graphic elements on the table mat that will not change during play and that I do not want to move around regularly.
- **Objects and Tokens**. I use this layer to place text boxes that I want the players and I to edit in play (such as aspects and stunts), stress tracks, etc.
- **GM Info Overlay**. I may place information on this layer that I want readily accessible, but not revealed to the players at this time.

You can right click on any element and change their layer while playing.

Insert a portrait for each character. Double-click on the image token to bring up the menu. Select the **represented character** for this icon. This will enable you to click on macros on the tablemat linked to the character's skill levels on their PC sheet. I make a second copy of the portrait to place on the right side of the tablemat. For that token, I select **Show Nameplate** to display the name under the token.

You can also link three bars for each token to a value on the character sheet (such as **fate_points**). I do not use the bars and prefer to use tokens for my games.
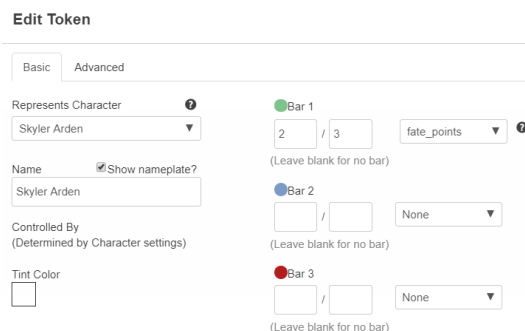
Map / Handout Area

On the top right of the playmat, I place maps or important handouts. For Fate, this can be a white rectangle (on the map layer) on which you can then type or draw zones for a scene if required.

For Fate of Cthulhu, I like to place an interactive timesheet, where players can see when I check off ripples on the timeline track (each box on the track is an interactive token using the Deck feature)

To keep maps, images or tokens that are not yet in play accessible, you could:

- Create a GM only area on the play mat using the **fog of war** feature to hide the area on the Object layer that you are not ready to bring into play.
- Use the GM layer (and switch the layer of an object when it comes into play); or
- Organize items under the **Journal** tab and show them to players when

Aspects in Play Textbox

Situational aspects come and go during each scene.

Some GMs like to generate tokens using a deck to annotate with a text box for each Aspect. After trial and error, I find it simpler to have one main text box where I add and delete aspects as they come into play.

Again, try a few things and select what works best for you.
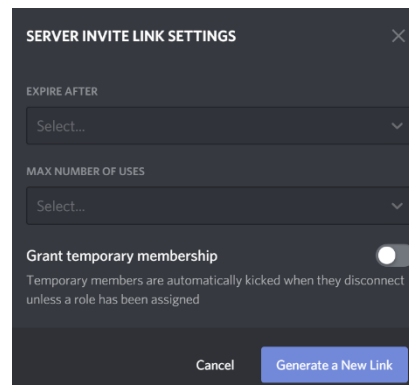
Inviting People to Join Your Game

If you have a group of friends that you want to play with, send them an invite to join your Discord server and your Roll20 game. If you are looking for players, I will cover that a bit further below.

Inviting People on Discord

On Discord, just click **Invite** People to generate a link. You can set Discord server invitation links to expire by a certain time, or to be usable for a maximum number of times.
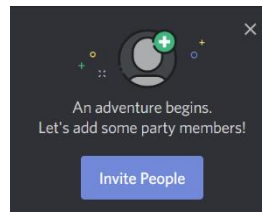
If you want to avoid links being shared, set an expiration time, or limit the number of use.

Inviting People on Roll20

To generate an invite link on Roll20, go on your game info page and click:

You can invite people you know by typing their email, or sending them a link to automatically join as a Player.

Invite Players

To invite others to join your Game as a Player, enter their email address below. If they don't already have a Roll20 account, we'll ask them to take a quick moment to create one.

Email Address: [ ] Send Invite

Pending Invitations
- (No pending invitations!)

Share Link

You can also share the special link below with anyone and they'll be able to join your Game as a Player.

https://app.roll20.net/join

Finding a Group to Play Fate Online

If you are looking for players, you can actively advertise your game. While D&D tends to dominate many of the Looking for Players (LFP) forums, you can still find Fate players relatively quickly.

If I want to play a long-term campaign face-to-face, I usually send out a survey to ensure we are a good match. I would recommend the same online. This is a good place to discuss the type of settings you are interested in running, the tone, etc. I also maintain an interactive website to store campaign notes and handouts.

When I offer to run a one-shot or a few adventures, I skip this step. If I plan to run the game on Roll20, I usually do the following steps:

- Generate a **Looking for Players** post on Roll20
- Cross-post your ad & Roll20 link on Reddit **r/LFG**
- Cross-Post on the Fate LFG Facebook Group - FATE Core|Accelerated RPG [Looking For Players / GMs]

Be specific on what you offer to attract players. An image showing your setup or poster giving a first impression of the adventure helps. Being vague can lead to players registering who won't be interested in your game.

Generating a Roll20 LFP post

On your Roll20 game information page:
- Enter the system you are running (FATE)
- Enter the proposed date for the next session

Once this is done, click

Note that the number of players includes yourself (as a GM). Roll20 will only let as many people enroll as the number of slots you identify.

Do not include external links or personal info in the post, or it will be flagged. You can post Discord server links and other contact info inside your Roll20 game info discussions, or PM it to interested players.

Generating a Reddit LFP post

The r/lfg subreddit comes with a lot of tags to help players find games. If you do not adhere to the formatting rules, your post will not be approved. The title of your post should be:

[Fate][Online][Time Zone] Setting / Adventure title

At the bottom of the post, select:

As a courtesy, remember to go change the FLAIR to **Closed** once your game is full.