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 can rely on any video or voice chat software and augment your online experience with any type of online collaboration app you like and you are set. Each player can roll their own dice and relate the results.

Randy Dean Oest is compiling a list of advice on how to run Fate games online. Check it out for some solid advice: https://fate-srd.com/playing-fate-online

Well-established VTT include Roll20 and Fantasy Grounds which also offer forum boards to look for GMs and players. Other contenders include Tabletop Simulator, Foundry, Role, and Astral. Finally, some gamers have decided to tackle developing Fate-specific tools to game online. I encourage you to check out Fari, which has been steadily evolving. Ultimately, which tool(s) work for you will depend on what you seek in your digital experience, and what your players are comfortable with.

In March 2020, more and more Fate players asked others how they played Fate online as social distancing became the norm. I decided to put this guide together to share how I play Fate. As physical conventions got cancelled and the frequency of my online games increased, I made gradual changes to my setup and released a version 2.0 of this guide. Following more tweaks, game sessions and the feedback of other folks in the gaming community, including Sophie Lagacé and Randy Oest, I have now updated this guide to version 3.0.

I currently play Fate using Discord and Roll20. The setup described below can all be done using basic level accounts (free) for both platforms. There are many other ways to play – I encourage you to read about various GMs experience, and choose what works best for you and your players!

I have included below information regarding:

- Playing Fate using Discord
- Playing Fate using Roll20
- Finding a group to play Fate online

My examples below are based on my Fate of Cthulhu setup, using the latest version of the Roll20 Fate character sheet by Evil Hat. They are easily adapted to any flavour of Fate.

I assume no prior knowledge of Discord and Roll20. As such, I provide link to the relevant Discord or Roll20 help page with a few highlights specific to Fate.

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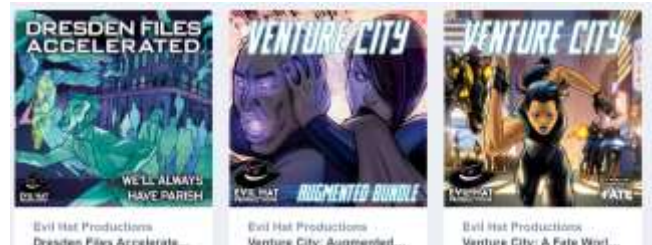
You can find me on Twitter **@PG_YYZ**.   -- Pascal

If you wish to support and help grow the Fate community, I encourage you to:

- Support Evil Hat Productions through purchases at your FLGS and directly from their website:

- Purchase Evil Hat Fate products on Roll20 marketplace.

- Consider supporting the growth of the Fate SRD by supporting the site on Patreon!

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 wish 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 to players. I create a role for each of my gaming groups on the server:

- GM
- FoC_Players (Fate of Cthulhu)
- Fate_Steampunk_Players
- GenCon_2020
- Etc.

Since I have multiple groups for various scenarios, I make roles for each session / group. This enables me to keep channels private for that specific group, as I'm not interested in watch parties. It also avoids spoilers if I run the same scenario for multiple groups.

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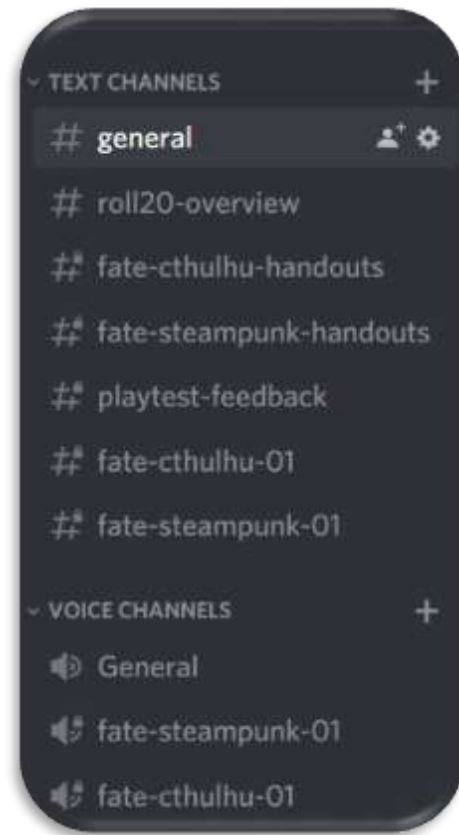
This is the setup I use:

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. I prefer to avoid video chat as it introduces distractions and divides players attention between the mat and the video chat.

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 he/him): 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 he/him): 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

As mentioned in the intro, there are many VTTs out there to try. I opted for Roll20 because:

- It is relatively easy to setup
- The basic version is free for me and my players
- It has a strong player base and community forums
- It supports Fate dice rolls
- It has a great Fate character sheet by Evil Hat
- I can use a common table mat as a visual aid
- 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.

Roll20 also has drawbacks. Text boxes are not easily manipulated, and GM-created text objects can't be edited by players.

Check out the Roll20 Crash Course to quickly learn your way around that VTT.

Basic Setup

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

Fred Hicks from Evil Hat has designed a fantastic (and visually pleasing) Fate character sheet you can use. Type in "Evil", and the options for Evil Hat character sheets will pop up. The sheet is designed so that you can apply a template for whatever flavour of Fate you wish to play.

Optional: Choose a Character Sheet

A character sheet template provides the characters in your game with a pre-made set of fields, just like a paper character sheet in a face-to-face game. You can use any template you want, even if it doesn't exactly match your game. Or, choose "None" and you can manually add your own Attributes and Abilities to each Character.
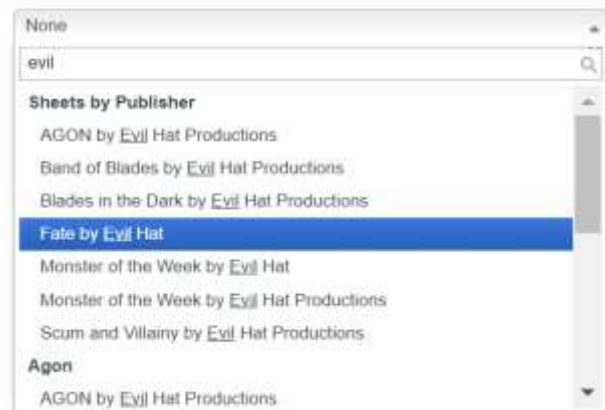
The Evil Hat Fate Character Sheet

I like the Evil Hat Fate sheet as it is highly customizable. Attributes can be linked to tokens, and skills can be referred to in macros using the syntax *Skill-[Name]* as explained on github.com, enabling you to do a lot of cool things if you wish to tack on some more advanced features.

Selecting a pre-set option provides you a character sheet for one of the most popular versions of Fate ready to use.
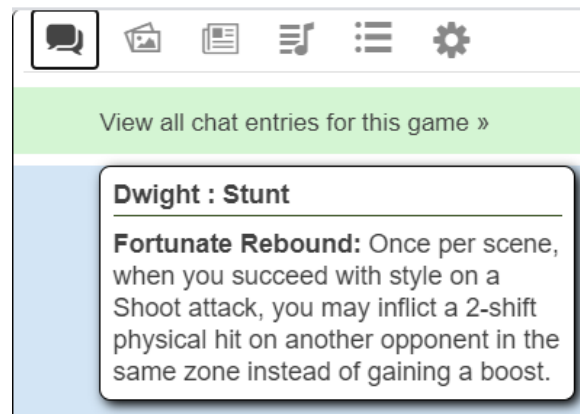
The skill list can be easily edited. Each skill can be clicked upon to do a skill roll.

Stunts can also be designed to be rollable by linking them to a skill and specifying any stunt bonus.

Stunts and aspects can be displayed in the chat window by clicking on the icon ⤴ .

Roll20 Voice and Video Chat

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.

Note that Roll20 relies on WebRTC, requiring more bandwidth. If you have players with low bandwidth, use the voice chat only, or turn off both Roll20 voice and video entirely and use Discord, which is not as bandwidth intensive.

Doing Skill Rolls using The Roll20 Dice Roller

As the GM, you might not wish to create character sheets for every NPC. To keep things simple for GM rolls, you can simply use the Roll20 dice roller and add any skill bonus and stunts afterwards as you speak to the players.

To use the Roll20 Dice Roller, click on the dice on the left pane, and select **FUDGE-4**. (If you are not familiar, Fate Dice and FUDGE Dice are the same thing).

Which will give you this Chat output:
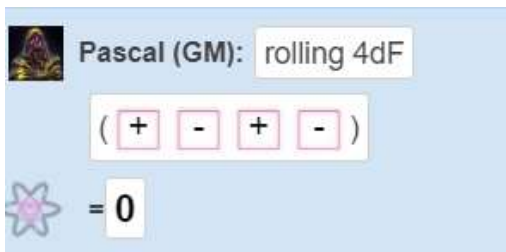
See the **Macros** section below on how to setup a GM skill roll with a drop down skill list.

Doing Skill Rolls from the Character Sheet

Players (or the GM) can open a Roll20 Character sheet and roll skills from the character sheet as well.

Clicking on a skill (**Investigate** (Great / +4 in this case)

will produce the following chat entry:

Hovering over the result gives you the details:
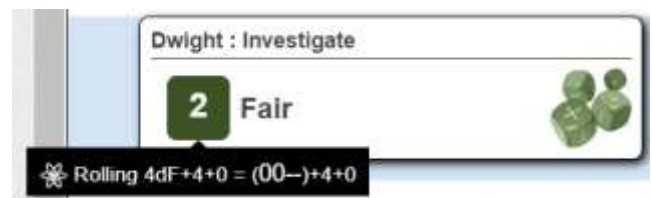
Mapping Tokens to Character Sheets

Within the first tab of the Fate Character Sheet, click on **Edit**. You can set a portrait for each character.

The **Avatar** is for the character sheet representation. The default **Token** is about what is used on the mat.

If you double click on the associated token on the game mat, you can select which character it represents. This is important if a Player will use macros linked to a specific character sheet, or if you want to track Fate points and stress on the token itself.

Managing Stress Tracks and Fate Points

Players can simply manage their Fate points and stress tracks directly on their Roll20 character sheet.

If you want to use something on the game mat that everyone can see at all times, you can use the Token Bars.

With tokens mapped to characters, you can associate one bar to each stress track.

Stress track attributes are automatically created by the sheet based on the name of each stress track using this structure: Stress-*<stress track name>*. For example:

- Stress-**Mental**-Remaining
- Stress-**Physical**-Remaining

These attributes can be mapped using a dropdown list when you edit a token.

You can also map to a bar any custom stress track you create using the same syntax.

My Current Roll 20 Setup

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

- Evil Hat FATE character sheet (See above)
- Template Player Character Sheet (with any changes to the skill list)
- Roll20 "Decks" to hand out tokens:
    - o Fate Points Deck
    - o Fate Dice Rollable table
    - o Corruption Rollable table
    - o 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:
    - o Interactive PC Summary Cards
    - o A Map / Main Handout area
    - o Fate Ladder (uploaded image)
    - o Situation aspects in play
    - o Timeline sheet (for Fate of Cthulhu)

With the new Fate character sheet, I no longer use icons to show physical stress and mental stress, as I now use stress bars on tokens linked to the character sheet.

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 separate 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 post PDF handouts.

Roll20 does have a handouts feature that I use, where you can include images and text. The app will also 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 and Rollable Table

You can create tokens using **Rollable Tables** or **Decks**. 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**

- 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.

If you wish to create a Stress track deck:

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

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

My preference now is to use **Token Bars** on character tokens for the stress tracks.

I still use fate points as cards dealt to each player. I like the ability to discard fate points on the table mat, and deal them as required.
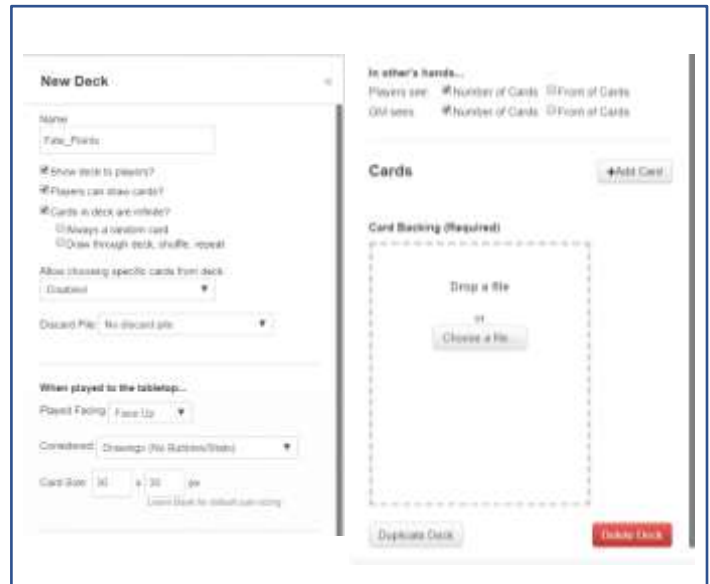
For the Fate of Cthulhu corruption clock, I created a **Rollable table** (based on the Evil Hat Roll20 setup):

Simply create five images depicting the clock gradually filling up and insert each image as a Rollable item.

Once inserted as a token on the table mat, players can right-click on the token, and select the appropriate image:
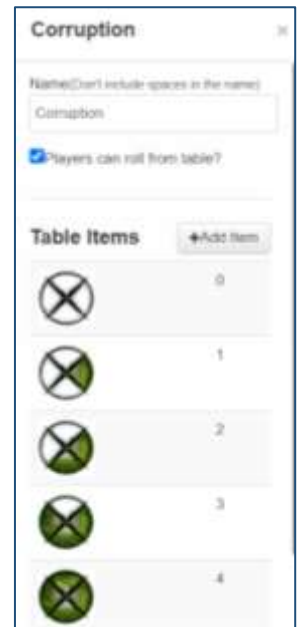
I follow the same process to create a multi-sided Fate Dice, which I use on the timeline sheet to indicate progress.

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 an award-winning online resource assembled 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 PC Sheet

If your skill list differs from the available templates, I recommend creating a PC Template within your Roll20 session so you only have to type the skill list once.

You can then create duplicate copies of that character template as needed.

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 select the **Fate of Cthulhu** gameset
- I set the skills display to **Group by Rating**:
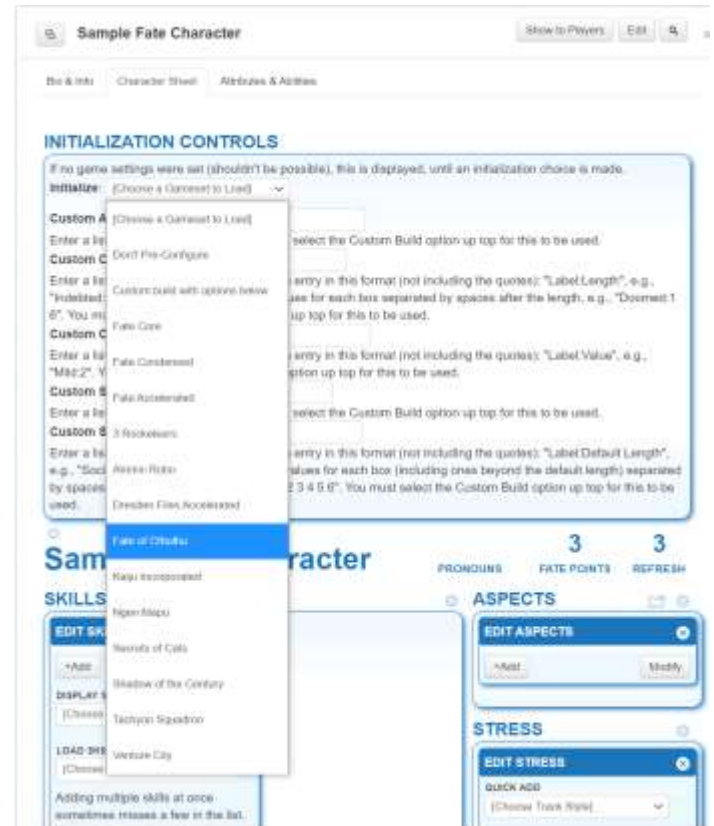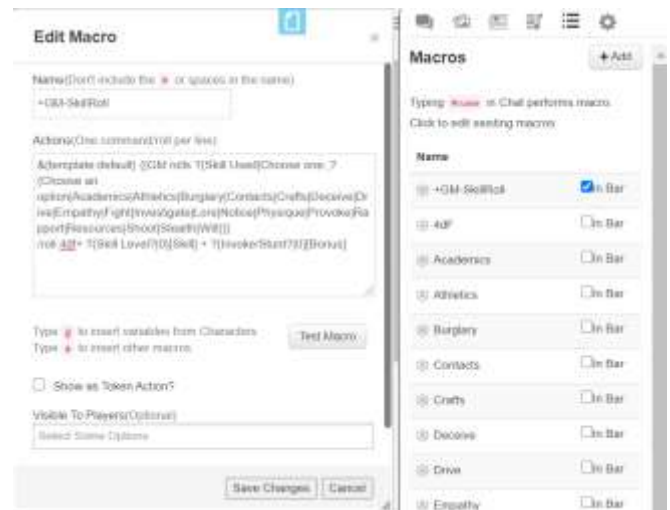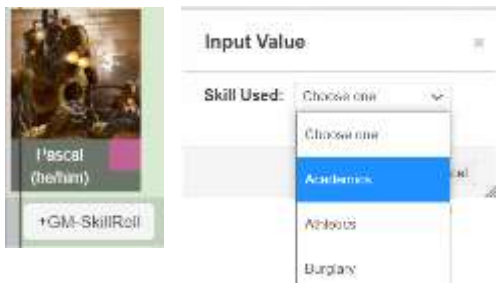
Macros

Roll20 Basic allows you to create macros.

GM Rolls

For nameless PCs, I set up a macro named "GM-Roll" that appears on the macro bar at the bottom of the Roll20 screen.

> *&{template:default} {{GM rolls ?{Skill Used|Choose one:,?{Choose an option|Academics|Athletics|Burglary|Contacts|Crafts|Deceive|Drive|Empathy|Fight|Investigate|Lore|Notice|Physique|Provoke|Rapport|Resources|Shoot|Stealth|Will}}}*
>
> */roll 4df+ ?{Skill Level?|0}[Skill] + ?{Invoke/Stunt?|0}[Bonus]*

This provides me an easy to click macro with a drop-down menu of the skills used in my game. I then enter the skill level, and any relevant modifier.

The screen output for the GM skill roll looks like this:
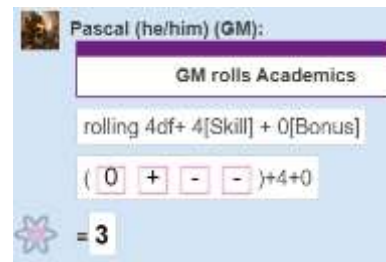
PC Rolls / Named NPC Rolls

For my Roll20 campaigns, I create a macro for each skill to automate skill rolls. This enables players to click on their character token on the playmat, select a skill from the list appearing at the top of the playmat,

enter any modifier (stunt bonus) and make the roll. The exact macro text is:

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

(replace the skill name as required for each macro)

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.
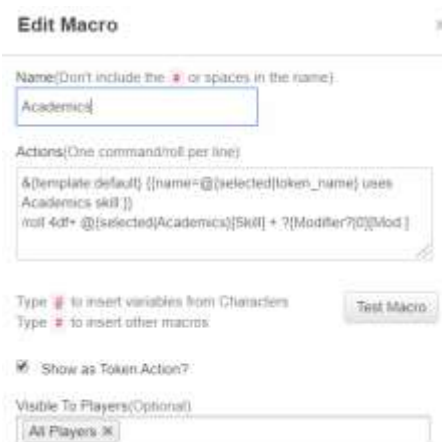
The screen output for the PC Skills is as follows:
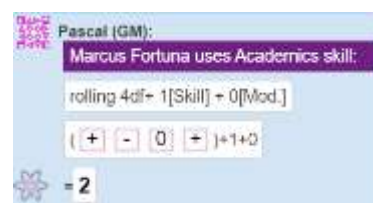
Roll20 Page Layers

Roll20 pages have three layers:

- **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.

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. (Note that if the GM creates a text box, players cannot edit it. The GM can edit text boxes created by players.)

Generate a corruption clock token from the rollable table for each character and line them up.

If you choose to use tokens for the stress tracks, make the stress track decks visible, and generate the required number of tokens. Right click on the token, you will see the option to **Flip Card**. Test it out a few times to ensure it works.

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.

As mentioned under Managing Stress Tracks and Fate Points, you can link three bars for each token to a value on the character sheet (such as **stress tracks**)..

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 Rollable Table feature with a three-sided Fate dice)

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 appropriate.

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.

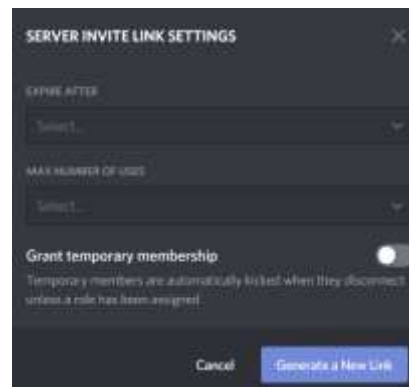# Inviting People to Join Your Game

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.
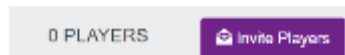
If you want to avoid links being shared, set an expiration time, or limit the number of use.
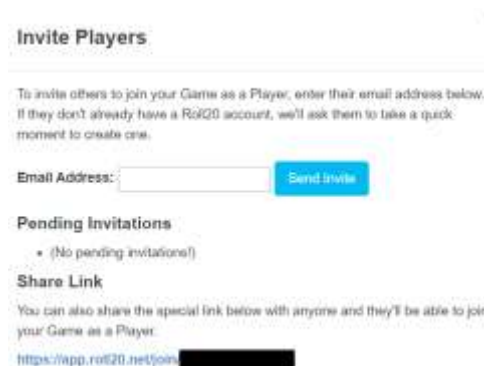
Inviting People on Roll20

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.
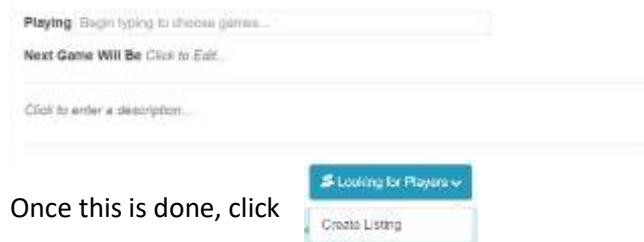
Finding a Group to Play Fate Online

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: FLAIR

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