Code Name: Melee

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# Introduction

# How to Play

## Key Terms

1. These are some terms to understand while reading. You should skip this section and just refer back as needed. All key terms are bolded throughout the document. References to other sections in this document are underlined.

**Character** – Any character in the game, NPC or player character.

**Counter** – Forces another maneuver unsuccessful. Typically, specific maneuvers can make other maneuvers unsuccessful.

**Exhaustion** – A state that forces the players maneuvers to all act like they are slow maneuvers for a turn. For more on Exhaustion see How to Play 🡪 Turn Order 🡪 Start Phase.

**Fast** – An Maneuver that takes effect in the Fast Phase. See the fast phase at How to Play 🡪 Turn Order 🡪 Fast Phase.

**GM** – A Game master. Or the person who handles the NPCs and the story of the game. They are the person who run the game and any rule questions or uncertainties are resolved by them.

**Initiative** – The order in which players can move and resolve ties. See How to play 🡪 Combat Start 🡪 Determining Initiative and How to play 🡪 The Stats 🡪 Other Stats for more information.

**Maneuver** – The action you are doing this turn. Normally dictated by the card you play.

**Move/Movement** – The total amount a character can move per turn. By default, all characters can move 5ft (1 space) per turn. Other effects may change the amount. See How to play 🡪 Movement for more.

**NPC** – A non-player character, typically controlled by the GM. It can be friend or foe.

**Perform** – To perform the maneuver. This can be successful or unsuccessful depend on the maneuver, how you roll and the other maneuvers played this turn.

**Phase** – The different parts of a turn where specific actions happen.

**Player –** a non-GM player of the game and their associated character.

**Prone** – This is another condition. Being prone causes a character to movement is capped at 5ft (1 space) and cannot be forced to move by another character. In addition, all attacks at or within 15ft (3 spaces) have advantage while attacks farther from 15ft (3 spaces) have disadvantage. In addition, any roll the prone character needs to make is at disadvantage. To change the state of being in and out of prone, a character must use 5ft of movement to stand or go prone. Characters can also have this state forcible change by any ability. When this occurs their movement for the rest of the turn is set to 0ft. Lastly a character’s prone state cannot be change more than once in a turn.   
  
A creature cannot force a character larger then it prone. If two are more creatures attempt to force a character prone, then those characters can force a character one size larger than the largest character prone. No combination of characters can make a character two sizes larger than the largest character prone. For a character size list use the sizes in DnD 5E.

**Slow** – An Maneuver that takes effect in the Slow Phase. See the slow phase at How to Play 🡪 Turn Order 🡪 Slow Phase.

**Stress Counters** – Counters that a character can be given, A character can have 2 before they start suffering for the effects of exhaustion. For more on Stress Counters see How to Play 🡪 Turn Order 🡪 Start Phase.

**Stunned** – A condition on the player that forces them to become inactive for a turn. This stun takes effect the next phase and lasts until 1 entire turn is complete. For example, if you are stunned in the fast phase of one turn. You are not able to do any actions (Maneuvers/Movement) for the next slow phase, in addition to the entirety of then next turn. Its only the turn after that where the stun effect ends.

**Throw** – Allows you to throw your weapon dealing 2x **light** weapon damage if it hits. This uses the Range Attack Rules. See How to Play 🡪 Manuvers 🡪 Range Attacks.

**Turn** – A turn in combat. Everyone completes the turn at the same time. In game time passage should be about 2-3 seconds

## Combat Start

Combat begins when one or more players start to attack something or when they are being attack by something. It ends when no nearby characters are no longer hostile to each other. Generally, the GM will determine when combat will start and end.

When combat starts there are two things that must be done before we can start with the general turn order: determining initiative and determining the surprise round.

### Determining Initiative

Your **initiative skill** is equal to your dexterity plus your cunning bonuses. When determining Initiative at the beginning of combat roll a d20 and add your **initiative skill**. Ties broken by the highest Cunning attribute. If there is still a tie, each character rolls a d20 and the highest breaks the tie.

Initiative will determine the movement order and other tie breakers. Unlike in most RPGs initiative is not quite as important in Melee as most actions happen at the same time. But more on that later.

### Determining Surprise Turn

After initiative is sorted out a surprise turn can take place if some characters are aware of the presence of others. So, if the party snuck up against a group of bandits the entire party will participate in this turn while the bandits will not and vise versa.

This is not restricted to the only party or only NPCs. A player and NPC could participate in the surprise round. The only restriction is any character that is not aware that enemies are around.

This surprise round follows the normal turn order. After this the turn order follows the pattern listed below and everyone can participate.

## Turn Order

In Melee, the turn order is not done like most games where one character takes a turn, goes through each phase, and then moves on the next character. In this game the turn happens for every player at once and everyone moves through the sequences together.

So, for most phases everyone does things at the same time and all effects are simultaneous. This is the phase order and how each turn works:

Start phase  
This phase is a lot like the upkeep phase in MTG. At this phase you handle any counters or remove any spell effects that end at the beginning of your turn.

The main thing that most characters will be doing this phase is handling stress and exhaustion. Characters can handle up to 2 **stress counters** without negative effects, but if they start in this phase with more than **2 stress**, they remove 1 and then they are **exhausted** for the rest of the turn, meaning that all Maneuvers are automatically downgraded to a slow, and your initiative is move to the bottom for the turn (If multiple characters are exhausted, then they maintain their initiative among each other).

*I should mention here that it might be good for a GM to allow player to discuss strategy here, especially for inexperience players.*

*In game the whole turn is about 2 seconds of action so for more experienced players it may be good to only allow a quick sentence or two of discussion. This is defiantly up to the discretion of the GM.*

*In the future this number can change and might even scale with level or with different classes, but for now everyone gets 2 before the effects of exhaustion come into play.*

Selection phase  
During this phase players pick which card they play and place it face down. Once all players have placed a card faced down, the GM will announce what the NPCs will do. When this is done all players reveal and then next phase starts.

Fast Maneuver phase  
Any card with a fast icon (Red mana) effects go off at this phase.

Once that is done the all cards that are set to be resolved in the phase are resolved. Players can choose any valid target for their maneuvers. All card effects resolve simultaneously, which generally means all effects happen with a few exceptions bellow.

*This may seem cumbersome and I believe at first it will be, but it allows for some interesting choices being made at the card selection phase. Also, I think it will actually speed the rounds up as people get a hang of it. For this way all rolls that need to happen for an entire round happen at the same time. Then the GM just needs to make the outcomes of those rolls happen. Once people get the hang of it then it should actually be rather quick.*

Now there are some exceptions to the everything resolving at the same time:

* If one maneuver states it counters another and it is **performed** successfully, then that other maneuver is unsuccessful.
* Any Maneuver with the **Interruptible** tag will automatically fail if the character has had a successful attack made against them in this **phase** or any previous **phases** this turn.

Then in order of initiative any player who wishes to move now can **move** as they wish or they choose to wait until a certain trigger. Remember that any maneuver effects that force **movement** like knockback will use that character’s movement.

Once all effects are resolved this phase is complete and the round moves to the slow phase.

Slow Maneuver phase  
This phase is the same as the Fast Maneuver Phase with a few key differences. In this phase only the slow actions (Blue mana) happen on this phase. Remember that many effects that happen in the fast phase still effect people in the slow phase. Also if an event in the fast phase made one of your slow maneuvers invalid like a knockback effect making it so your attack has no valid targets, then that maneuver also fails. Lastly maneuvers that have effects resolving in the fast phase can have those effects continue in the slow phase. For example, if someone **performs** the counter maneuver that maneuver still affects attacks that resolve in the slow phase.

The last important difference to this phase is if a successful attack was made against a character in the fast phase, any roll the character must make for the slow phase has disadvantage.

*I have some mix feelings about this, but part of the reason for this is it seems like acting in the slow phase from effects like exhaustion might not be as punishing as it should for characters that can keep doing non-interruptible actions like heavy attacks in this phase. Part of me feels like another good solution to this problem is to only allow characters that are exhausted or played a slow maneuver (not just downgraded), to move that the end of this slow phase and not in the end of the fast phase, so fast characters can better create situations that make slow maneuvers invalid.*

After that is another movement phase. It does not refresh the movement for the turn so if a character’s movement is already completely used up then they cannot move during this phase.

Ending phase  
This phase has the players picking back up their cards and any effects that end at the end of the turn end here. Some other effects may occur in this phase but generally it just signifies the end of the turn. After this phase, a new turn is started back at the Start phase.

This cycle will continue until the end of combat is reached.

*That’s basically the turn order. Its fairly simple and the main mechanic is not knowing what exactly what the opponent is trying to do. You both sort of operate from this wait state and act at the same time. I have given thought to other forms of combat that develop on top of this. One thought was to add it so a player plays 2 cards that allowed them to make to maneuvers at once (one for slow phase, one for fast phase), or that you would need to perform wings of glory style maneuvers where your maneuver you plan on for this turn doesn’t happen until the next turn. Those were all really interesting, but I ultimately decided against it as I don’t want to “overgameify” the role playing game and I’m trying to keep this relatively easy for the novice roleplayer and gamer. So, I think one action per turn while trying to predict what your opponent is actively going to do is both mechanically interesting enough and does not detract from a narrative experience, at least in my current estimation. I think some of these ideas would `be best saved for a sort of class choice or feature later down the line, like say a rogue might be able to generate combo points and could use those points to play two maneuvers in one turn. This way you slowly progress the number of options you have.*

*I also want to elaborate on a comment I mentioned earlier, and as you read some of the abilities and understand their design I would assume you may notice this pattern. In the previous paragraph. I specified what someone actively does. When I say this I really mean directly active, for example when you review basic maneuvers you may notice that there is no block maneuver. The closest on to this is dodge which is purposely different than a simple side step would be. In the design I do not want to bog down the combat with many passive defensive rolls. So blocking a strike is directly related to your defense stat verses there attack roll. This is way there are 6 defense stats that are the difficulty numbers for opponents to reach instead of having both characters roll, potentially slowing the game down, even if its just a little bit. On the other hand dodge is a very active action which you need to be swifter then your opponent’s reflexes so you need to actively roll higher then there reflex defense allows them to adjust to your movement mid action.*

*Also you will see later that Guard Stance is this sort of active blocking that you make looking for. The idea being that you are no more focused on blocking and can only perform a few things while you are doing this, like basic fast attacks, but more on this one later.*

## Movement

Movement is fairly simple and universal for most players. All players as 5ft (1 square) of movement for free per turn that they can move at the end of the fast or slow phase (You maneuver speed does not affect when you can move). Also, once per **turn** this movement can be diagonal.

### Movement Order

Movement happens in the order of **initiative**. Any character can choose to move later then another character as long as their **initiative** is higher then that character’s. If two characters are waiting on each other to move the one with lower **initiative** must move first.

### Increasing and Decreasing movement.

Certain effects can increase and decrease the total amount of movement a player can move a turn. For example, the General maneuver will allow most players to move an extra 10ft (2 spaces) a turn. In this example since the General **maneuver** is a **slow** **maneuver** so this extra movement can’t be used until the end of the **Slow** **phase**. Also, some abilities can restrict movement.

### Force Movement and Knock back.

Certain abilities can force a character’s movement. Maneuvers that say Force Movement or Knock Back are some examples of this. When a Character’s movement is forced, that movement uses up their movement allowance. If a forced movement would put them bellow there limit they would move 5ft (1 space) after hitting that limit and knocked **prone**.

A creature cannot forceable move a character larger then it. If two are more creatures attempt to force move a character, and both agree to move the character in the same motion, then those characters can forcible move a character one size larger then the largest character. No combination of characters can move a character two sizes larger then the largest character. For a character size list use the sizes in DnD 5E.

### Force Movement into Walls and Objects

When at characters movement is being forced, that movement can be forced into a wall or hard to break object like a horse carriage. If it is the player does not take up the same space as the wall but instead is left in their current position and is **stunned** for 1 turn. This stun starts in the next phase and must last 1 complete turn.

If a character is forced into an easy to break object like a chair or table, then the object breaks and the character is knocked **prone**.

So, movement took me a bit to figure out. Mostly because I was caught up in the idea that everything including movement should happen at the same time. That wasn’t working out so I just decided that movement should happen in the traditionally manner at least until I come up with a better system that’s interesting and doesn’t have as many problems as my previous attempts. Movement happens at the end of each phase so that it shouldn’t affect people decision in the Selection Phase.

Force movement is something I’ve wanted in an RPG for a while now. It’s something I feel big strong characters should be really good at doing to others. The Fighter currently has the best move for this with there forced kick move. Plus, additions like wall stuns and knocking creatures prone should be a fun interaction with the environment.

## Maneuvers

I have considered capping the maneuver count like a maximum hand size based on a stat but at the moment it feels like an unnecessary restriction.

My concern is overwhelming players with too many cards to start, but I think I would rather mitigate this by limiting the options a player has per level. At least for now.

As describe in the combat sequence the abilities a player can perform in combat are their maneuvers. Based on their level, weapons, and class, players will have a set of maneuver cards that they can play in the selection phase.

All Players have the Free Maneuver set.

Each weapon in each hand provides additional Maneuvers, and if at least one had is free hand a player can also use the Brawl Maneuvers.

These maneuvers can be further divided into sub-types. Currently there are only two: Attacks and Actions. The main purpose for this is that certain maneuvers interact with other maneuvers of these specific types and not others, like the Counter maneuver.

### Free Maneuvers

All players have with what are called Free Maneuvers.   
These **maneuvers** are as follows:

* General Maneuver
* Guard Stance
* Dodge
* Flourish.

See more on these in Card Lists 🡪 Free Maneuvers.

### The General Maneuver List

This list is for those general abilities where the player is generally not making a roll. It also helps keeps the number of cards in hand low.

The General Maneuver has several options that a player can choose from as the ability resolves.   
The list is as follows:

* Move – Increase your movement for the rest of this turn by +10ft (2 spaces)
* Rest – Remove a Stress Counter.
* Interact – Interact with the environment, your equipment, switch weapons, etc…   
  (The GM can extend what can be done with this ability).
* Prone – get up from or go down to **Prone**

Other abilities a player can get while leveling may add, change, and remove this list.

### Actions

Actions are a set of maneuvers that are not attacks. They differ from attacks in that they don’t always cause a roll and effects like counter can’t interact with them. These maneuvers state on the card how they resolve. Beyond this there is nothing special about these maneuvers.

### Attacks

Attacks are a special **maneuver** that have special rolls associated with them. When an attack **maneuver** is revealed the character declares who they are attacking and then they make an attack roll (the specifics are specified in the Maneuver Card and can differ with the weapon used, but generally its: 1d20+Dexterity+weapon bonus vs target defense). Then if it is successful, that Maneuver Card will also specify an effect (usually just damage).

What makes attacks special maneuvers is that can be affected by other abilities like counter, and that they always require the player to make a specific roll against a player’s DEF.

Also, attacks can have the **Heavy** or **Light** property which effects their damage and can interact with other abilities based on these properties.

### Range Attacks

Eventually bows, crossbows, and magic attacks will be added to the game, but for now only melee weapons exist. So, the only range attacks are weapons with the **Throw** ability.

Range combat works a little differently. You do not normally get any weapon bonuses for a range attack. In addition, all range attacks made at Point Blank (1 space) have disadvantage. All range weapons have 2 additional stats: Steady and Falloff.

**Steady** – The number of times one can use the Aim maneuver. This Aim maneuver will add a player’s Focus to their next attack to same target they were aiming at. This bonus is lost if the next maneuvers is not Aim or Attack, and it is lost if they change targets with those next maneuvers. All weapons with **throw** have a **Steady 1**. So, Aim can only be used once.

**Falloff** – This is how fast the weapon accuracy falls off every 10ft (2 spaces). This is measured from the center of squares. It is basically a negative modifier to lower your accuracy with distance. All weapons with **throw** have **falloff 5**.

# The Player Character

In the currently implementation, player characters are can be any humanoid fantasy race they can think of and are all treated to be the same size, have no mechanical differences from one another. This will be changed later but for now, don’t really bother thinking to much about it.

There are levels in Melee. Currently the point of all levels is to help the player learn the game and introduce more

## The Stats

### Attributes

There 8 stats called attributes which symbolizes your general skill in an area. For almost everything you roll to do something you will roll a d20 and add the relevant attribute to your roll and that determines how well you do in that action. The 8 attributes are **Constitution**, **Strength**, **Dexterity**, **Focus**, **Wisdom**, **Charisma**, **Cunning**, and **Intelligence**. Here are short descriptions of each attribute.

**Constitution**

Constitution is your physical ability to resist pain, physical sicknesses, or impairments. It also increases your general health.

**Strength**

Strength is how physical strong your muscles are. Together with Dexterity this represents your general athletics. You will use this this in combat to increase the damage to do with each attack and to increase you chance to hit someone when using heavy weapons.

**Dexterity**

Dexterity is how accurate and precise you are in your movement and balance. Together with Strength this represents your general athletics. You will use this in combat to increase you chance to hit with general weapons as well.

**Focus**

Focus is your ability to pay attention and be aware off what is happening in this moment. With Higher focus you won’t be as distracted by things outside of your current action. In combat will increase your chance to hit with throwing weapons when aiming.

**Wisdom**

Wisdom is your knowledge of experiences specifically when dealing with people. Wisdom is the attribute that will allow you to read what other living things want and the knowledge of how to communicate with them. **Currently this does not have any mechanical effect in combat.** It may be used when a magic system is added.

**Charisma**

Charisma is a character’s ability to communicate with others as well as their ability to influence others. The Difference between charisma and Wisdom is that Wisdom is the know how to manipulate someone while charisma is the actually talent of doing so. **Currently this does not have any mechanical effect in combat.** This will rarely be used outside of social interactions.

**Cunning**

Cunning is your street smarts, your ability to outthink, and ability to think quickly. It differs from Intelligence as it focuses on cleverness and the ability to think outside the box. **Currently this does not have any mechanical effect in combat.**

**Intelligence**

Intelligence is your book smarts, your ability to recall information, and your ability to solve logical puzzles. It differs from Cunning as it focusses on knowledge and the ability to think inside the box. **Currently this does not have any mechanical effect in combat.**

### Defiances

Outside of those there are your defiances. Defiances are your more passive defenses against a negative action. They directly correlate with your attributes as each defiance is calculated based one exactly 2 attribute bonuses. There are 6 of them: **Fortitude** based on Constitution and Strength, **Reflex** based on Dexterity and Focus, **Willpower** based on Wisdom and Charisma, **Reason** based on Cunning and Intelligence, **Perception** based on Focus and Wisdom, and **Composure** based on Charisma and Cunning. Here are descriptions of each defiance:

**Fortitude**   
Fortitude is one’s ability to resist pain or physical force. A common usage for this defiance is when an enemy has you grappled and is ready to through you to the ground, that foe must roll their strength against your fortitude to force you to the ground.

**Reflex**  
Reflex is one’s ability to react mid action to a change in the situation instinctively. A good example of this is when an opponent dodges you when attacking; they roll dexterity and need to beat your reflex so that there dodge is too swift for you to adjust your attack to still hit them mid dodge.

**Willpower**   
Willpower is one’s ability to control there our desires and temptations. The more willpower you have the hard it is for one to tempt you. This is not strictly related to physical desire, it could also be the temptation to give up, or give in to something like torture. Effectively you can consider it a more mental version of fortitude.

**Reason**  
Reason is one’s ability not to be fooled. The hire this sick is the hard it is for others to directly fool you especially when you are directly questioning the information. Or your ability to tell what is real or fake. For example, any Illusion spell trying to fool someone will need to make a roll that is greater than one’s reason defiance to fool that character.

**Perception**   
Perception as a defiance is very much more like passive perception in most other games, while the search skill is more like your active perception. This defiance one’s natural ability to notice the things they’re not looking for.

**Composure**  
Composure is how well you can hide your emotions and intentions. It is somewhat different from lying in that lying is active and deliberate. This is used when someone is not sure if you’re holding some information or if you look nervous or not. Lying directly requires an active deception role that is typically made against someone’s reason or perception when it relates to something that could otherwise see/hear/smell/taste/feel or reason out.

### Skills

You have no skills… yet…

### Other Stats

Here are some other stats a character may have. This list is not yet exhaustive.

**Initiative**

This determines your ability to act quickly in combat and described more in the How to Play 🡪 Key Terms. This is calculated from adding your Dexterity modifier with your Cunning Modifier.

# Classes

# Cards