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.

**Burn X (Long/Short)** – This maneuver or ability can be used X times before either a long or short rest is needed. Long rests count as both Long and Short for this purpose.

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

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

**Disorientated** – A condition on a player that causes all rolls that player makes to have disadvantage.

**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. If the player must make a roll from a maneuver, they played that roll is at disadvantage while prone.  
  
Characters can also have this state forcible change by an 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 2 or more sizes larger than it, and is at disadvantage if it is 1 size larger. 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.

**Stealthed** – A status that you have towards an enemy. While **Stealthed** your attacks have advantage towards an enemy, and if you are at least level 3 you also gain 1d4 **Crit Points** (this is in addition of any other **Crit Points** you may gain from the roll). Each turn you begin **Stealthed** from enemies or when you attempt to gain **Stealthed** from enemies, roll Dexterity against your opponents’ perception if any enemy can see you in their **peripheral** while being preoccupied with something (like combat for example), or can hear you within 30 feet of the enemy, or make excessive noise. You automatically fail if you move into view of an enemy that is not preoccupied. All characters can stealth. But only the Rogue class can attempt to stealth in combat.

**Stress Counters** – Counters that a character can be given, A character can have 3 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. All melee attacks have advantage on a stunned target.

**Throw** – Allows you to throw your weapon dealing if it hits. This uses the Range Attack Rules. See How to Play  Maneuvers  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 a creature or when those players are being attack by another creature. It ends when there are no nearby hostile characters. Generally, the GM will determine announce 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:

*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.*

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 3 **stress counters** without negative effects, but if they start in this phase with more than **3 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).

*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.

*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. 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.

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**. When it is their turn, a character can elect to move after another character as long as their **initiative** is higher than 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. A player can be force past their movement limit.

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 they are, the player 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 (General Actions)

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 may also allow for special effects and may even ask for a roll (like pushing a loose pillar down).  
  If the item is in an easy to reach place (at your feet, on your belt, etc...) or the task is quick and very easy to do this maneuver is not interruptible. (GM can determine this)
* Prone – get up from or go down to **Prone**

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

Normally the General Maneuver is **Interruptible** regardless of what is chosen (meaning the ability is canceled if a successful attack was made against you). Some abilities have an exception to this rule. Like the interact ability.

### 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 Defense.

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. To aim you need to see the target when the effect is resolving, same with any attack.

**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**.

When making a range attack you will roll 1d20 + Dexterity + Focus for each time you Aim - **Falloff** for every 10ft from the target. Also, if the target moved more than 5ft (1 space) last turn then subtract 3. The goal of the roll is to meet the targets Defense.

We will see how the numbers work out for this later. My biggest concern is actually that there is too much math just to calculate a range attack. Maybe to close to Thac0

The goal of range attacks is that they are pretty hard to hit until you Aim, but they also hit pretty hard. I suspect that an archer’s normal bow damage would be similar to a hand axe heavy.

### Critical Hits

Critical hits don’t work the same as most RPGs. In this game there are no Critical Failures (although the GM is welcomed and recommended to narrate a critical failure on a 1).

For non-combat there still is a critical success on a natural 20 roll, to allow for some extra info or unlikely success to occur.

This unlock exists so that players can learn the game at an appropriate pace without giving them too much to manage earlier. The critical system in this game is more complicated than most.

But, in combat things are a bit different. First you do not gain Critical Hits until you unlock it through the Class Talent Tree. Then, there are two types of critical successes: Critical Success and Overwhelming Success.

**Critical Success** occurs when you make an attack and roll a natural 20 (a 20 on the 1d20 die roll regardless of modifiers). This will make your attack automatically succeed. And you can roll 1d8 and gain that many **Crit Points**. More on these later.

**Overwhelming Success** occurs when you make an attack and roll a natural 19 or 18. If after modifiers this roll is successful, then you can roll 1d6 if you had a 19 or 1d4 if you had an 18 and add that roll to your **Crit Points**.

**Crit Points** are a special pool of points you can gain and spend during combat to give you additional abilities when you attack. The maximum amount of **Crit Points** someone can hold is 10. **Crit Points** can be spent right after you make a successful attack and can even be spent on the same attack you gained them from. Only one Critical Ability can be used per attack. All **Crit Points** are lost when combat ends.

Future class abilities may increase this cap.

Listed below are the current list of abilities you can spend your **Crit Points** on. All classes have access to the General Crits Table, once you unlock **Critical Strikes** from a **Class Talent Tree**. Then all other tables can only be used if you have unlocked them, again from the **Class Talent Trees**.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| General Crits | | |
| Cost | Name | Description |
| X | Sunder | Deal X Sunder Damage (Attack must be a Heavy to use this). |
| 2 | Shove | Move Target 5ft |
| 3 | Shock | Target gains +1 Stress Counter |
| 4 | Disorientate | Target is **Disorientated** for the next turn. |
| 5 | Cleave 2 | This attack can hit an additional target. It uses the same roll as the original attack to determine if it hits and uses the same damage rolls if it does hit. The targets must be next to each other and in melee range. |
| 6 | Pierce Armor | Ignore Armor when dealing damage on this roll. |
| 8 | Weak Spot | Double the damage you deal with this attack. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Rogue Crits | | |
| Cost | Name | Description |
| 3 | Advantage | Advantage on this Roll (this can and must be used before the attack roll). |
| 5 | Disarm | Disarm the opponent’s weapon. It falls 5ft in any direction of your choice away from your target. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bezerker Crits | | |
| Cost | Name | Description |
| 2X | Mighty Hit | You may reroll X number of damage dice. Each die can only be rerolled once. This ability can be used after you have already rolled for damage on the attack. |
| 8 | Cleave 3 | This attack can hit up to an additional two targets. It uses the same roll as the original attack to determine if it hits and uses the same damage rolls if it does hit.  The targets must be in melee range but do not need to be next to each other. |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Champion Crits | | | |
| Cost | Name | Description | |
| 6 | Double Strike | Play an extra attack maneuver that resolves during the slow phase of this turn. This can continue a fighting combo. | |
| 10 | Inevitable | This strike cannot not be dodged or countered. | |
| Weapon Crits (Additional Talent for Champion)  (These conditions cannot be stacked multiple times) | | | |
| Cost | Weapon | Name | Description |
| 4 | Polearms | Pin | The targets movement is fixed to 0, Your weapon is also stuck with the target, At the beginning of each turn they can roll STR vs your FORT to break free or you may just pull your weapon out. |
| 5 | Swords or  Daggers | Bleed | Target bleeds your weapons Light Attack Damage Dice each turn until the wound is bandaged or magically healed. |
| 5 | Shields | Laid Out | You knock the target prone. |
| 6 | Hammers or Staffs | Break Bone | Each future successful Melee Attack on the target deals additional damage equal to your weapons Light Attack Damage Dice until the wound is bandaged or magically healed. |
| 7 | Axes | Maim | Choose one to be applied to the target:   * Movement caped at 5ft (1 space) * All attacks have Disadvantage * All Maneuvers are slow,   The target can choose ignore this each turn, if they do they take damage equal to 2x your weapons Light Attack Damage Dice. This effect ends when the wound is bandaged or magically healed. |

# 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 too much about it.

There are levels in Melee. Currently the point of all levels is to help the player learn the game and introduce mechanics at an easy to digest pace. In the future the plan is to have levels 1-3 or maybe even 1-5 as tutorial levels, then levels after that don’t really introduce new mechanics but add to the existing ones or change them to the players advantage.

Next let’s go over the stats.

## The Stats

### Attributes

There 8 stats called attributes which symbolizes your general skill in an area. For almost every 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**. The starting values for these attributes are explained in The Player Character  Creating a Character. If few cases there may be additional modifiers to add to this roll.  
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.

To calculate ones Defiances add two attributes together and add that value to 10. So for example if you have a **Strength** of 5 and a **Constitution** of 3 then your **Fortitude** is 18. They work like Difficulty Class in other games. When you are asked to beat someone’s defiance, make a roll with 1d20, add the appropriate stats, and you must have your final number higher than or equal to the defiance to beat it.

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 subconsciously. 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 and Cunning.

**Defense**

This is how hard it is for an attack to hit you. It is normally 10 but can change with armor and **Maneuvers** like the Guard Stance. This works like defiances where someone needs to roll at or greater than your defense for that roll to succeed. Think of it as Armor Class from other games

**Health**

This is how alive your character is. Characters have a Maximum Health and a Current Health. Damage can reduce your current health to 0 or a negative value. Reaching 0 will make you **unconscious**. Reaching a negative value will cause you to go unconscious and cause you to go in the **Dying** state. If you ever the negative value equal to your maximum health you die.

A player can heal 1 + Constitution (Minimum 1) health points per 1 hour of rest. During this rest they cannot perform stressful activities.

When ending a turn at a negative health and are considered to be in the **Dying** state. At the end of each next turn you must make a **Stability Check**. This check has no modifiers and require the player to roll a d20. If the roll is 10 or higher, it is a success and nothing happens. If it is less then 10 then it is a failure and the player must lose additional health equal to their current negative health. Once they make 3 successes, they because stable (no longer in the **Dying** state) and no longer lose any health. They are still unconscious. After 2 minutes of being unconscious they will wake up with 1 health.

As an example: if a player has 8 health currently. They are hit with a heavy attack that deals 20 damage. They are now at -12 and when this turn ends, they are **Dying**. The next turn goes by and they roll a **Stability Check** they roll a 10 and pass. That is 1 success. They next turn they roll a 9, that’s a failure so they lose another 12 health and are now at -24. Their max health is 50 so if they reach -50, they will be dead. Next turn they roll a 3. Another failure means they take 24 more damage and are now at -48. They are very close to dead but not dead yet. Next turn they roll a 17. Another success so that’s 2 now. Next turn she rolls a 11. That’s another success, they have 3 successes and are now stable. In 2 minutes, they will heal to 1 health and wake up again.

**Damage Bonus**

This is a bonus that is added to your damage roll. Your weapon specifies how this gets added on to the damage roll. This stat is normally just equal to your strength, but some abilities may change this in the future.

## Creating a Starting Character

This character creation will strictly focus on the mechanics of how to create a character. See the Character Sheet in the next section to write down these stats.

### Generating Attributes

*(8 Pointed Stars on the Character Sheet)*

To generate your attributes you will use the common roll 4d6 drop 1 method. So roll 4d6. Then remove the lowest value and add the rest together. Then subtract that value by 10 and divide that number by two. Lastly, round down that final value. This number can be negative.

As a formula this is what this process looks like:

Do this 8 times and write the numbers on the side. Then assign each of these numbers to the 8 attributes in any way you would like. Remember in the current implementation of the game only **Constitution**, **Strength**, **Dexterity**, **Focus**, and **Cunning** really have any mechanical purpose. This will obviously change as the game develops further.

### Calculating Defiances

*(Shields connected by lines to Attributes on the Character Sheet)*

To calculate you Defiances simply add the 2 connecting attributes together and then add 10. For example, a Strength of 3 and a Constitution of 2 will get added with 10 to make a Fortitude of 15. Do this for all Defiances.

### Calculating Health

*(Rounded rectangle named Heath on the Character Sheet)*

Health is something that I am sure will change with testing. I also am not sure how I want to deal with health as you progress as it can really push a high level character in a ridiculous realm with their health.

To start your health is equal to your Constitution multiplied by 5 (this can be a negative value), plus 50. So as a formula it looks like this:

Each level you gain 1d10 (or 6) + Constitution. This can has a minimum of +1. You cannot lose health gaining levels.

### Calculating Damage Bonus

*(Trapezoid shape near Strength)*  
This one is really simple for most characters. By default, it is just equal to your strength and is typically just added to your damage rolls. Future abilities can change how this is calculated.

### Calculating Initiative

*(House shape object on the Character Sheet)*

Initiative is just simple you Dexterity and Cunning added together. It is rolled at the beginning of combat with a D20.

### Calculating Natural Defense

*(Circle on the Character Sheet)*

Natural Defense is the Defense you have normally when not guarding. It is normally equal to 10 plus any bonus provided by the armor you are wearing. For more information on armor see the armor section: Equipment  Armor.

### Calculating Guard Defense

*(Rounded Shield near Natural Defense on the Character Sheet)*

Guard Defense is the defense you have while in guard stance. It is normally equal to your **Reflex** defiance plus the defensive bonus of your weapons and armor. For more information on armor see the armor section: Equipment  Armor and for more information on weapon defensive bonus see Equipment  Weapons.

### Starting Equipment

Starting out for weapons you may pick one of the following options:

* Large size weapon or smaller and a shield or dagger
* Two medium weapons or smaller
* One huge weapon.

For a list of weapons see Equipment  Weapons. For armor, simply choose one of the 3 types of armor available. In the future there will be more diverse sets of armor. See armor in Equipment  Armor.

### Starting (Level 1) Abilities

For starting abilities, the all players start with the same list of abilities:

* Free maneuvers – which include: Move, Dodge, Flourish, and General. See free maneuvers: Card Lists  Free Maneuvers.
* The following General Actions (for the General Maneuver): Move, Rest, Interact, and Prone. See more How to Play  Maneuvers  The General Maneuver List.
* A set of maneuvers given by the weapons you choose when starting. See Equipment  Weapons.

This game is designed to teach the player the mechanics in a digestible way. So, you will not have access to very many abilities at the first level. As you level, which should be very quick at early levels, you will gain more abilities that show the core mechanics as you level.

And that is it for a starting character for now. Future releases may add some other items, especial when related to more narrative options and character background.

## The Character Sheet

**Health**

**Guard**

**Defense**

**Character  
 Name**

**Player  
 Name**

**Natural**

**Defense**



**Name**

**Light**

**Equipment**

**Heavy**

**Weapons**

**Light**

**Light**

**Light**

**Heavy**

**Heavy**

**Heavy**

**To Hit**

**Sunder**

**Damage**

**Max Stress**

**Current Stress**

**Focus**

**Wisdom**

**Charisma**

**Cunning**

**Intelligence**

**Fortitude**

**Reflex**

**Willpower**

**Reason**

**Perception**

**Composure**

**Constitution**

**Current**

**Max**

**Damage  
Bonus**

**Initiative**

**Level**

**Class**

**Strength**

**Dexterity**

**Race**

**Skills**

**Abilities**

**Name**

**Bonus**

## Leveling

Leveling at this stage of the game is a more flexible item. Later iterations of the game detail this out more in the future. Expect this when more class features get added to the game.

### When You Level

So, determining when a player levels for now is really based on the GM’s decision. The recommendation is that you level after some kind of narrative accomplishment that is set out by the GM. Level 2 should probably be after the first session or perhaps even half way through it if the players are picking up the mechanics of the game quickly. Level 3 should be the next session after that and have level 4 (Max level at the moment) to be 1 or 2 sessions later. At the moment each level ads a new mechanic to the game. Future levels will focus more on enhancing mechanics as opposed to simply adding new ones.

### Level 2

At level two the player may now choose a class. This class introduces two abilities, one maneuver and one special ability. The classes available to choose are listed below.

**The Fighter**

**Kick Back Maneuver** – As a fighter you have trained in the ability to use your whole body in a fight so you gain the Kick Back maneuver. This maneuver can only be performed after flourishing and has you roll Strength against an opponent’s Fortitude (your choice). This interrupts the opponent (like normal attacks), breaks stances, force moves them 5 ft (1 space) away from you. This Kick Back can be Dodged by an opponent. It also does not cause you stress from the flourish effect.

**Second Wind** -- You have the ability to quickly recover from the strain of battle. At the beginning of the turn after already handling exhaustion state you can activate your Second Wind. When you do you are unable to be affected by exhaustion this turn and you remove 1 stress. This ability can only be used once per long rest.

**The Berserker**

**Rage Stance** – As a berserker you are fueled by the anger within you and gain the Rage Stance. While in rage stance you gain the following:

It seems slightly bloated, but I like the high-risk high-reward style. I also expect when we add magical healing to the game this can be very powerful. Expect future levels to add more effects to the rage.

* +1 stress as you enter it.
* +2 damage bonus.
* Reaching 0 or less health no longer causes you to go unconscious or start Dying.
* While at less than 1 heal hit points equal to your Constitution at the end of your turn until you reach 1 hit point.

This stance is unbreakable, and will only end if you decide to end it at the beginning of the turn. Alternatively, it will also end if you have not been dealt damage to or attempt an attack maneuver (must have a valid target when selecting it) for two turns in a row. If you are at 0 or less hit points when the stance ends, normal unconscious and dying rules start to apply.

**Natural Armor** – Your body is hard and has learned to naturally absorb the weaker blows from an opponent’s weapons. While you are not wearing armor, your defense is equal to your fortitude. Also, when in Guard Stance you may substitute your Reflex for your Fortitude.

**The Rogue**

**Sneak Stance** – You are an expert in the art of moving subtly. Everyone can attempt to sneak past their foes but only you are bold enough to do it in the middle of combat. You have the Sneak Stance maneuver. When you enter this stance and each turn you start in it, Dexterity against any enemy’s perception. If you succeed you gain the **Stealthed** status. Flourishes and General maneuvers do not break this stance. Also, during combat your footsteps are too quiet for normal enemies to hear you mov. If Lastly your Move Bonus (not the base) is at -5 ft (1 space). Please see **Stealthed** status to read more on the stealth rules

I like the idea of turning the rogue into more of a mid-fight assassin but currently am not happy with how complicated stealth rules seem to be. I would like to simplify this in the future.

Remember that some creatures are indeed smart enough to understand object permanence. The GM can decide which creatures are smart enough to know that a rogue that just hit them a turn or two ago is still behind them.

**Stealthed** – A status that you have towards an enemy. While **Stealthed** your attacks have advantage towards an enemy, and if you are at least level 3 you also gain 1d4 **Crit Points** (this is in addition of any other **Crit Points** you may gain from the roll). Each turn you begin **Stealthed** from enemies or when you attempt to gain **Stealthed** from enemies, roll Dexterity against your opponents’ perception if any enemy can see you in their **peripheral** while being preoccupied with something (like combat or a conversation with someone for example), or can hear you move (30ft radius for most creatures). You automatically fail if you move into view of an enemy that is not preoccupied. All characters can stealth. But only the Rogue class can attempt to stealth in combat.

**Facing** is be changed during any movement phase and can be done multiple times a turn (as long as you are not prone). It costs no movement. **Peripheral** is considered as a 90 degrees cone from the character’s front face. (Assumes square grid)

**Exploit Weakness** – You are master in the art of hitting enemies where it hurts. Whenever you gain advantage on an attack you can choose to forgo the advantage, and gain bonus damage if the attack hits. For light attacks 1d4 damage bonus, and for heavies gain a d4 for each point in dexterity you have (Min: 2) damage bonus. The damage dice get larger at higher levels.

### Level 3

At level 3 you know how to combo moves with your more outstanding hits. You unlock the critical hit system and can acquire Crit points. For more information on critical, see How to Play --> Maneuvers --> Critical Hits.

These are the 3 classes I have now. I’m fairly happy with the way they work although I am sure the balance between them is off. I do want some classes to just be blatantly better at completion specific things in the game. Like the rogue being very powerful when not being focused on and the Berserker (barbarian) being able to trade blows with their opponent.

Once the basics of the game become more finalize, I will actually introduce the real planned class system. I understand that some my not like class systems and I can understand why, it can be very restrictive, but on the other hand the thematic of a class system is nice and can really give a great role-playing direction so currently the plan is to create a system that somewhat addresses both viewpoints. The plan is having a class system that is really more like several different talent trees. Each level will allow you to get a new ability from any tree (starting from the root skill at the bottom). In additions some selections should be able to lead to some of the branches in other trees to allow some more hybrid class abilities without starting from the very bottom. Think of the cleric having a mid-level skill choice that leads to a mid-level fighter skill choice, thus making a paladin like path. This way players have a lot of choices for skills if they would like it or can simply stick with a tree that they like.

But these will defiantly need to come at a later time when the base mechanics have been tested and proven to work well.

### Level 4

At level 4 you now know how to combo maneuvers in a way that allows you to set up special maneuvers. You know learn a fighting Combo. See the list of combos below and choose one that you can perform.

The first maneuver in the combo is always the maneuver you need to perform to start the combo. Then play the next maneuver listed to continue the chain on your next turn and keep going until the combo ends. In order to continue the combo, the previous maneuver must have been considered successful, otherwise the combo ends. The last move of a combo is generally a finisher, meaning that it cannot be the start of another combo. The if the finisher maneuver has a chain icon in it, then it can be used as to begin another combo (it does not have to be the same one if you happen to have more).

You do not need to continue the combo on your next turn. It is just there as an option. If you have multiple chains that a maneuver can start then you choose which chain you are starting when you perform the first maneuver in that combo.

**Fighting Combos**

Listed are the currently available combos in a card format. The combos require a specific weapon combination as listed. Bellow is a diagram explaining each component of these combo cards.

**Heavy Attack**

**Light Attack**

**Heavy Attack**

**Sweeping Strikes**

Polearms (Two Handed)

Cleaves 3

Knocks Targets Prone on Success

-



1111

*Combo Name*

*Maneuver played to start the Combo Chain.   
This maneuver must be successful to go the go to the next move in the combo*

*Next maneuver to play to continue the chain.*

*Bonuses you get for performing this maneuver in the combo.*

*This symbol shows that you can use this previous maneuver as the starting maneuver to another chain.  
  
Without this you cannot us any part of only Combo to started another comber.*

*The weapons required to perform the combo.*

The following is the current list of Combos

Dual Weapons (No Shields)

1111

**Heavy Attack**

**Heavy Attack**

Dual Weapons (No Shields)

**Twin Strike**

Uses both weapons.

Make a heavy attack rollfor each weapon.

+2 to each roll

1111



**Light or Heavy Attack**

**Heavy Attack**

Dual Weapons (No Shields)

**Berserker Strikes**

Using Opposite hand from the last attack.

1111

Two Handed (No Polearms)

**Light Attack**

**Light Attack**

**Heavy Attack**

**Unstoppable Momentum**

Two-Handed (No Polearms)

**Uninterruptable**

*Counters Light Attacks:* If this attack is successful, perform the Counter maneuver, it automatically succeeds.

**Uncounterable**

1111

**Counter**

**Heavy Attack**

Two-Handed (No Polearms)

**Superior Counter Strike**

-

One Hand (Off Hand Empty)

1111

**Light or Heavy Attack**

**Light Attack**

One Hand (Off Hand Empty)

**Slash and Grab**

If attack is successful, the target is **Grappled** by you.

Must be on non-**grappled** target

1111

**Dodge**

**Heavy Attack**

One Hand (Off Hand Empty)

**Dancing Strike**

-



1111

Weapon and Shield

1111

**Flourish**

**Shield Bash**

Sword and Shield

**Spinning Shield Bash**

No **Stress** penalty from previous flourish

+5 additional knockback on a successful pushback ablity.



1111

**Shield Bash**

**Light Attack**

**Shield Bash**

**Unrelenting Assault**

Two-Handed (No Polearms)

**Uninterruptable**

Knock Prone on Success

Polearms (Two Handed)

1111

**Move**

**Heavy Attack**

Polearms (Two Handed)

**Shish-Kabob Skewer**

5 ft range

On Success, move with target up to your maximum movement. Target cannot be knocked prone from this ability.

At least 10ft of movement must be towards the next target.

**Heavy Attack**

**Light Attack**

**Heavy Attack**

**Sweeping Strikes**

Polearms (Two Handed)

Cleaves 3

Knocks Targets Prone on Success

-



1111

### Level 5+

This is where the levels end for now. Expect a very different system in the future still keeping the concept of slowly learning the game as you level. For now, if you would like more levels, keep learning a new combo at each level. This will be filed out much better in the future.

Future plane for leveling involve spending points in a sort of skill tree. The goal is to make a game that really expands its options as you progress but limits them greatly when starting out.

I think it is generally better to have lower levels tailored to brand new players and higher ones to more experienced players. If a game consists of only experienced players my recommendation is to start at a higher level.

## Equipment

### Armor

Armor is currently sorted out between three types: Light, Medium, and Heavy. Armor in Melee generally has two important bonuses to it:

* **Defense Bonus** – Some armor gives you a bonus to your defense (both natural and guard). This is to represent the blows that deflect off of the armor.
* **Damage is halved** – While your armor is still intact all physical damage done towards the wearer is halved. This is to represent the blows that are softened by they arm but still do some damage.

Since the point of armor is to absorb blows, there is another stat for armor to be aware of:

* **Durability** – This is effectively the health of your armor. This can be reduced by successful attacks that have a **Sunder** value. For example, when a Heavy Longsword attack hits someonce with armor, they take half of the damage of that hit, and then after their armor’s total durability is reduced by 3. Armor breaks when their structure is reduced to 0 or less, at which point it no longer provides any of the positive benefits. (Note that the negative effects of wearing armor that is broken are still in effect until the armor is removed.

Now because of the different levels of armor there are some disadvantages to wearing one set from another. Some of these disadvantages are listed below:

* **Reflex Cap** – Medium and Heavy armor both have maximum reflex allowed while wearing the armor. If your reflex would normally be higher then this max, when wearing this armor it is reduced to the max value allow.
* **Stress Reduction** – Heavy Armor will reduce your maximum allowed stress before fatigue sets in by 1.
* **Stealth Disadvantage** – Some armor is noisier then others, thus giving disadvantaged on stealth rolls.

Next are the list of Armor in the game at the moment. Note that the **Starting Item** column shows which armor players can select when starting a character.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Durability** | **Def Bonus** | **Reflex Cap** | **Armor Type** | **Max Stress Reduction** | **Stealth** | **Starting Item** |
| Light Padding | 10 | +0 | - | Light | - | - | yes |
| Leather | 7 | +1 | - | Light | - | - | yes |
| Studded Leather | 12 | +1 | - | Light | - | - | no |
| Hide | 15 | +0 | - | Light | - | Disadvantage | no |
| Gambeson | 20 | +1 | 14 | Medium | - |  | no |
| Chain Shirt | 12 | +1 | 14 | Medium | - |  | yes |
| Scale Mail | 18 | +2 | 14 | Medium | - | Disadvantage | yes |
| Breast Plate | 15 | +3 | 14 | Medium | - | - | no |
| Ring Mail | 15 | +4 | 12 | Heavy | 1 | Disadvantage | yes |
| Chain Mail | 25 | +4 | 12 | Heavy | 1 | Disadvantage | no |
| Splint Mail | 25 | +5 | 12 | Heavy | 1 | Disadvantage | no |
| Full Plate | 35 | +6 | 12 | Heavy | 1 | Disadvantage | no |

### Weapons

The Weapons you choose in melee can have a significant impact to your fighting style. In addition to the damage a weapon can do, a weapon also has stats for how likely you are to hit, damage to armor you do (Sunder), and Different Counter Strike effects that Weapon have.

# Cards Lists