

## Proofreader Notes

Hi, you are amazing for taking time to read!

This is Draft 1 of Talebones, which means we are in the very first cycle of proofreading.

When reading focus on:

- Organisation of information
  - o Should Chapters be moved around? Should Boxes be moved to a different section?
- Completeness of information
  - o If anywhere is a Header that is does not have text below it, or any bullet point that visibly is supposed to be only a placeholder

You may already look at:

- Ramblings
  - o Did I write too many words for simple ideas?
- Prose
  - o How nice is it to read?
- Spellchecking
  - o I have word, but maybe I missed something

**\*\*DO NOT\*\*** correct:

- Formatting
  - o Word is bad and evil, and I will use a separate tool to properly format. The current format is purely as a box for the text.

You may write your feedback on discord, in a file, or in comments to any of the documents that support those.

Thank you so much for helping <3

~ Nicky

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# [CONTENTS]

- Table of Contents

## [PREFACE]

## [INTRODUCTION]

Talebones is a roleplaying game about stories. For one it is about the stories you and your friends will embark on, the twisting and winding paths your characters will take, and the many folktales, legends and horror stories you are going to encounter, act out and subvert. On the other hand, Talebones is about stories more generally. How they inspire people (mostly humans in the real world), how they shape perception and how they compel us to dream. But really Talebones is about nightmares. The nightmares that start when you are incapable of waking the next morning, forced to tread deeper and deeper on a path to assured madness.

Adventures played in Talebones can reach in tone from delightfully whimsical to deep existential horror, with all facets in between. Generally, it is by its nature fantastic and narrative focused, but there is a large focus on making combat more narratively satisfying and scenic as well.

Talebones intends to put the dynamic conversation between game master (GM) and the players front and centre and acknowledge its central role in telling the story at the table.

## THE WORLD AND YOU

Talebones is played in a mystical world after the end of the world. Centuries ago, almighty old gods ravaged and destroyed everything, leaving in their wake a deeply broken land with drastic changes done to how things worked.

The good news is that these old gods are gone now. Leaving their broken plaything behind, to torture a different kind of people. The bad news is that the changes seem very much irreversible.

Stories are essential in this new order. They shape everything that happens, give everything the correct appearance of a dramatic tale, even against the wishes of the freshly chosen protagonists. Some of the stories are remnants of the world before, some are new tales. Told by the elderly at fireplaces, over and over, to a point where a story gets its whole own way of being alive. And alive things need nourishment. This way stories leach of the people in the world, somehow making them follow their every whim.

These people in the world. They are not quite what you might know from your world. Maybe you are familiar with humans, maybe even with different races like elves, gnomes and orcs. Maybe this world was the same once, but since the apocalypse everyone is just Folk. Every folk is completely unique in their appearance, form and abilities. Free from limits in size, skin tone, or even the old laws of nature, Folk can take any shape, completely independent of their parents or farther ancestors. A Folk with green skin and tusks may have a child that is a sentient and telepathic, wooden barstool, who someday will marry a little guy with a big red pointy hat.



To spite this new way of creation, folk still manage to think in boxes though. Anything that is significantly larger than average they call Treefolk. Anything significantly smaller, Grassfolk. They huddle up in small communities, cut off from others like theirs by the untamed wilderness that sprung up in the wake of grand civilisation. Every other village or commune is just that. “The others”. And the things that don’t live in groups, not scared of everything outside their palisades? Those are “the rest”. Folk are used to living in abstract fear of everyone and everything they cannot categorize. And the world does not tend to freely explain itself.

You step into this splintered world as an outsider. Because everyone is somewhere an outsider. But you might just be strong, smart or charming enough to wrangle the last figments of free choice you get from the stories. And everyone knows. Subverting a worn-out trope, is sometimes the best way to breathe life into a tale.

## THIS BOOK

In this first chapter you may gain an overview of what Talebones has to offer. After a quick introduction, you get a first look at what is left of the world you are playing in. At the end of the chapter, there is a basic overview of the Challenge mechanic and dice rolling system of Talebones.

The next chapter leads you through the character creation process, which are the means to bring your very own Folk to life. Talebones does not have any classes, specific races or similar, so you are nearly completely free in following your imagination.

In chapter 3, There is a list of reactive actions. These are combat specific ways to interact with things happening around you, outside of your turn. This is the core mechanic of Talebones’ combat and allows it to be very fast and fluid.

Afterwards there will be an overview of Abilities, which are powerful traits your character may acquire on their adventure, to bolster their actions.

In chapter 5\*? the magic of Talebones will be explained. To cast spells, or rather so-called Incantations, a Folk needs to break their own bones to released stored energy, shaping reality around them.

Chapter 6 goes in depth on the topic of combat, including initiative, special weapon mechanics and of course taking damage and dying.

Chapter 7 gives a more detailed insight into the world of Talebones, including several locations the game master may use in their adventure and additional tables to generate random places for the players to visit. Chapter 8, chapter 9 and chapter 10 are primarily the domain of the game master, chapter 8 going into detail on enemy and non-player character mechanics and chapter 9 helping the game master with tips and advice for running an adventure in Talebones. Reading this as a non-game master should be cleared with your game master first, to avoid avoidable spoilers.

Wrapping up the book is a short adventure, the game master can use to introduce the players (and possibly themselves) to Talebones and how it is played.

## WHAT ARE ROLEPLAYING GAMES?

All roleplaying games are a form of structured cooperative storytelling. At heart it is very similar to children playing games of make belief. A group of people come together and agree that a shared set of beliefs is true for the duration of play.

While playing each player gains control over one character of their own making, while the game master controls any other non-player characters that might come up during the story as well as being the final arbiter of rules. Additionally, the game master has prepared the basic story framework the group is going to play through. This framework is not fleshed out and clearly defined at the start, as that is the task of the group to explore cooperatively.

Any scene, both planned or completely improvised ones, usually starts with the game master giving a quick overview of the surroundings and current goals of the characters. From this point onwards the game master steps back, and it is the challenge of the players to talk between each other or interact with characters in the scene or the scene surroundings. At any point the game master may ask a player, or a player may request from the game master, to make a dice roll for the current action they are doing. This may occur because the outcome of the action is indeterminate, or a failure could affect the story meaningfully. Generally, a dice roll should not occur for actions that are sure to work out to the players expectations, or do not have interesting consequences. This is dependent on the opinions of everyone though, so if someone feels as if something should not require a dice roll, or oppositely should require one, they may attempt to argue for it. On topics of dice rolls the game master has the last word, to allow for a regulated flow of the game.

<h3>Example of Play</h3>
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Consequences for bad dice rolls or other situations, should be a product of cooperative storytelling. Every player should take pride in being able to narrate their character tripping in a dramatic moment or having to put a relative to rest. The game master should relinquish control of as many moments as possible, to allow for players to have the impression that they are not powerless in the face of consequences, but rather accomplices in putting their characters through bad times.

Note that the game master has surprisingly few required duties to attend to during play. Largely they play the role of an instigator and enabler for the players and their characters, allowing them to shine with what their characters are good at. You do not need to be the plotting mastermind behind all machinations to be a good game master. And while a firm grasp on the rules helps your role, it is by no means essential. Players usually have a good idea of the rules as well and will help, if you reach out. All other parts come through experience. Just remember to communicate your style of game

mastering with your players as early as possible, so they are prepared for the type of game you are going to run. And do not be afraid to make in the moment rule decisions or to make up whole new rules! Just review the decision after the session of play and communicate with your players, if you are sticking with that in the moment call or reverting it. Noone asks you to never go back on your word. Homebrewing, as it is called, was the origin of the development for Talebones, so feel free to perpetuate that practice.

The social contract is a mindset that every player at the table wishes to enjoy their time and enable the enjoyment of other players. The game master is a player in this as well, so even they are here to enjoy their time and make the experience memorable for all other players. This contradicts directly a competitive reading of role-playing games, so there should not be winners or losers, and the goal should be for everyone to feel included and valued as a person.

Conflict between player characters, or conflict between player character and non-player characters will occur, and Talebones even encourages these kinds of interactions in game. During all of this, the actual players should stay in constant contact and communication, working together to tell the best story. That may include one player having to decide that their character suffers a defeat, embarrassment or loss, but that should never occur in direct opposition of that player. This requires self-reflection and control of everyone involved, especially if the conflict deals with sensitive topics like relationships, death or trauma. To facilitate a healthy and welcoming gaming group, this book presents the safety tool of the “X card” as well as “Lines and Veils”. Whilst these are the safety tools we present here, there are other options. If you would like to find out about alternatives, there are many more that can be found online.

## X Card

The X-Card is an optional tool (created by John Stavropoulos) that allows anyone in your game (including you) to edit out any content anyone is uncomfortable with as you play. Since most RPGs are improvisational and we won't know what will happen till it happens, it's possible the game will go in a direction people don't want. An X-Card is a simple tool to fix problems as they arise.

The X-Card is any piece of paper or chat message marked by a visible "X". If anyone wants to skip the current scene or content, they just need to tap, lift, or send the X-Card and the content is skipped without any further questions.

On how to introduce the X-Card, do read the original document for the "X-Card by John Stavropoulos" (<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>).

## Lines & Veils

Lines and veils are established boundaries for the story and are defined by each player individually. Generally, they are shared with the GM, either as a group or in private, before the start of a game or campaign. Lines are hard boundaries that exclude specified content from the game, no questions asked. This could include anything, but common lines are children being harmed, rape or sexual violence, or racial discrimination. Veils are softer limits where the player is ok with it being included in the game, but it isn't explicitly described. Things that are specified as veils will be hand-waved without going into detail or happen off-screen, like the fade-to-black sex scenes in a PG movie. (Source: *Golden Lasso Games*)

## A SESSION OF TALEBONES

A game of Talebones is usually played by a group of three to six players over the course of at least one session. Each session of Talebones is around three to six hours but do listen to everyone's gut feeling which duration is best for your group.

An adventure that only takes a single session is called a Oneshot and a good way for new players or game masters to get a feel for the game. These stories usually focus on a slice of an implied greater story, with already established characters that tend to not have a notable arc over the course of that one session.

Longer form adventures take course over more than one session, shorter ones around five to fifteen, longer ones without any upper limit. In these kinds of stories, the players and game master are able to dive into detailed character and story arcs with multiple stages and twists and turns. Usually this takes the form of an overarching campaign story arc, interspersed with more personal character focused arcs. In these character focused narratives, the players take turns highlighting the story, development or relationships of one player character at a time, enabling each other to get a moment in the spotlight.

## Executing themes

During a session of Talebones you might encounter themes of horror, whimsy, gore, and wonder. While Talebones wants to illustrate the inherent connection between these apparent opposites, the final content of your game is completely up to you and your group.

To highlight the horror side of your adventures, put the players into situation without apparent escape, focus on the characters being alone and describe their surroundings in terms of their senses. Strange scents, screams and flashing lights set a certain vibe for the adventure. Do refrain from “showing your monster” early, let the enemies of the player characters affect their surrounding by warping or killing everything they touch for example. Do pay some mind for your play environment. Make use of mood lighting or appropriate ambient music.

If your group prefers the lighter tones of storytelling, cater to them with quirky, light-hearted non-player characters that have a positive outlook on life. Include themes of hope and encourage players to try stupid plans even if opposed to sound reasoning. You should remember that whimsy does not necessarily mean low stakes or lack of conflict though. It just guides the tone of those parts of the game.

For a gorier experience, you should necessarily check in with everyone on their Lines and Veils regarding body horror and similar. Do take the safety tool serious and keep in close contact with everyone throughout the game. It is possible that someone discovers their discomfort only during play. If this communication is given, describe every grotesque body part of a creature in abject detail. If anything transforms, do introduce steps to it, describing every step. Your facial expressions and body movements are a great way to enhance the effect of this form of narration.

A sense of wonder generally comes from the prospect of bountiful secrets with chances of discovering them. Anytime the characters enter a new setting their wonder will correlate with the questions being unveiled and their ability to interact with those secrets. If you want to create a wondrous place, create many small parts that by themselves are hard to explain or grasp, but together paint a larger story (e.g. a lair of a dragon might have constant falling cinders, ground warm to the touch, and fluctuating winds). A wondrous character usually does things without having an obvious reason to. Either courageous and heroic things to surprise their audience or mysterious and cunning things to catch them off guard.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play a session of Talebones you need the following:

- **This Rulebook.** In an accessible format to look up rules if necessary.
- **Five to eight 20-sided dice or any digital dice rolling app or website.** Talebones requires only 20-sided dice. How many depends on your character, but dice may be shared between players or be rerolled if necessary.
- **Character Sheet.** To bookkeep all rule information about your character.
- **Notepaper and Pencil.** To bookkeep all other information.
- **A Game Master.** To game master the game.
- **Some Players.** To play the game.

- **Tokens to represent Characters.** Talebones' combat requires at times a representation of the current battlefield.

Additionally, you may decide to use:

- **Square or Hex Grid Paper.** May be introduced to simplify discussions about distances during combat.
- **Game Master Screen.** Any visual barrier to prevent players looking at the game master's notes. Can be used for additional space to display rules lookups for the game master.

## CHALLENGES

Talebones uses exclusively 20-sided dice. You are able to buy these in your local game store or online. But any app or website that offers digital dice rolls works, as long as you check in with your game master. In this book sometimes when a dice is referenced, it is abbreviated to "d", followed by the number of sides (i.e. d20). A number before the "d", may represent the number of dice of that kind to be rolled (e.g. 3d20).

Challenges are the system to resolve character actions. Whenever your character does something, the game master may decide to ask for a challenge of any type. This usually occurs if the outcome of the action is undetermined or significant to the story.

Any challenge determines a number of successes, which define how well your character performed during the action. The more successes achieved in a challenge, the better the result. A task of average difficulty performed by a character with average skill can be achieved without major consequences with three successes.

As the game master calls for a challenge they (or the rules) define which base attribute the challenge is using. You, the player performing the challenge, then collect a number of d20 equal to the points your character has in that base attribute.

For example, if your character has three points in Feel, a Feel challenge starts out with a dice pool of 3d20.

## Base Attributes

Any folk and many inanimate objects have the following eight base attributes, although some might have no points in some. Player characters always have at least one point in each base attribute.

Three points is an average amount of points in any base attribute.

- **Force.** Exerting kinetic energy, either by strength or speed.
- **Body.** The limits of the physical form before breaking.
- **Speed.** Movement speed and dexterity to dodge and evade.
- **Intelligence.** Logical reasoning and planning.
- **Feel.** Intuitive understanding of own skills and the surrounding.
- **Experience.** Knowledge gained by repeated lessons, study or training.
- **Impression.** Effect on other folk by being around them.
- **Luck.** Chances of advantageous events occurring without intent.

From this point on you have to argue why any of your character's talents have prepared them for the task at hand. This is intended to spark a conversation with your game master about how your character plans to approach the challenge, for example by coming across scholarly to people preventing them from entering a library. This could be a useful application of the talent "Knowledge" (for more details on all talents, see chapter 2).

Your talents or profession grant you either to be considered skilled or pool points. For each pool point applicable due to your talent, you may add another d20.

Afterwards you roll all gathered d20s and tally up your successes. If you are not considered skilled in the challenge, any dice that rolled higher or equal to thirteen are considered successes. If you are considered skilled, the number to beat is an eight. A twenty on a die always counts as two successes.

Achieving three or even more successes, can be quite difficult for a character, if they are not specialized on the current task. This is by design, as any challenge can be helped or assisted by all other players. Another player must describe how they help you being successful in the task and roll their own challenge. The final successes are being added together. This does not have to be the same challenge; it just has to be helpful to the process.

## [CHARACTER CREATION ART PAGE]



## [CHARACTER CREATION]

Your character in Talebones is a Folk at the whims of narrative storytelling. Either they have been enveloped by a Tale since their birth, they have been found by their story before the start of the adventure, or they start out the adventure as an unremarkable everyday Folk, at least for now. Over the course of your play you will build on the foundation you put down in the character creation process and will use the tools given to you by the rules and game master.

But you are a part of other stories as well. The story of the game master which will guide you through play and the stories of your fellow players that will enrich each game session with interactions and life. Be active in your communication with everyone throughout the process, to allow for even greater, communal, storytelling.

If everyone tries their best to be the best, most enabling supporting role for every other character and story, every story has a rich cast to play off.

Character creation has been itemized into five steps. The first step defines your character in the broadest strokes, by giving them a Name, a Species and a Profession. Step 2 to 4 define the general and more specific rule-based abilities your character can utilize and call upon. Step 5 closes with thoughts on building on a, possibly shared, backstory for your character.

### Character Concepts

Anyone may have a different process to create their character. Some may know directly what character they want to play in which way, while others only discover these things during play. Beyond the very rules-oriented steps in this chapter, you should roughly know the appearance of your character, as well as any, otherwise supernatural, abilities they possess. Beyond that you are free to find out more about your character at your own pace.

Every character in Talebones is unique. Any character could look, interact and live differently than their parents, their community or their stereotype. This puts a lot of power in the hands of players, but also brings some responsibility with it.

No character should be naturally gifted in everything, so do pay some mind to the other players when choosing special abilities for yourself.

Here is a list of examples of how to find a character to play:

- **From 0.** You already have a concept in mind and create a character based on that concept.
- **Be inspired.** You do not need to be the sole source for your character. If you like a character from any media or story you know, just try to create them in Talebones.

Maybe even introduce them as their own Tale. You are of course free to adapt them in any way you like and change things about them to your liking.

- **Feature focused.** You pick an ability, reactive action or incantation you want to use and go from there. Imagine a cool, fun or absurd character that uses this feature and figure out their stats.
- **Weapon focused.** You pick a weapon you want to use and go from there. Imagine a cool, fun or absurd character that uses this weapon and figure out their stats.

### Quick Create

To quickly create a character, follow these steps:

1. Choose a Name, Specie and Profession.
2. Start every Base Attribute at 1 Point.
3. Distribute 10 Base Attribute Points.
4. Choose 2 Talents to be skilled at.
5. Distribute 3 Pool Points on Talents.
6. Calculate Hit Points and Poise. Fill in Action Points and Luck.
7. Choose 2 Weapon Talents to be skilled at.
8. You know the Reactions: Dodge, Riposte, Help and Panic.
9. Choose 1 Reaction or Incantation to learn.
10. Prepare around 3 Talebound Epithets from your backstory.

## Step 1: Name, Species, Profession

At first define your character in the broadest strokes. Those being how your character looks and what they do, while not on an adventure.

### Name

Your Name is what others use to call upon you. The world of Talebones is culturally fractured, so you can use any naming pattern you can come up with. Not all villages use First and Last name, some might use descriptive names like “No-ear”, or use special types of communication for names, like whistling. All characters should have a pronounceable transcription of their name though, to be used by other players and the game master.

### Specie

Everything is **Folk**. But there are two ways how to further specify the general group belonging of your character. They may either be Grassfolk or Treefolk, which describes only their general size.

**Grassfolk** are any Folk smaller than the average Folk. Usually everything below 4 feet or 1.50 meters is seen as Grassfolk.

**Treefolk** are everyone larger than the average Folk. Treefolk children are usually at least 6 feet or 1.80 meters. With adults being larger of course.

Grassfolk and Treefolk do not have a finite bound for their size. So microbic Grassfolk and mountainous Treefolk are possible, but it is highly advised to stick to manageable sizes, except explicitly allows by the game master. This is so other character can interact with you.

Villages usually stick to one Specie as its population, for the infrastructure to not have to facilitate a wide range of sizes. Special circumstances of the community may change that of course. Achieving homogeneity is never an easy process, as any child born may grow up to be a different specie than their parents. Due to that most villages have a handful of mostly younger people of different Folk groups among them.

## Profession

Your Profession is what you have done before starting the adventure. That can be a job description (e.g. baker, fletcher, hunter, criminal) or a life experience (e.g. street urchin, noble, elder). The choices for your profession start and end with your imagination.

### [Actual Play Example]

## Step 2: Base Attributes

Your Base Attributes describe what your character can do. There are seven Base Attributes that you can affect, and there is Luck. Luck is not quite within the power of your control but defines the general relationship of your character with fate.

Each base attribute starts with **1** point, so there is no way you can't roll a challenge due to not having any dice.

During character creation you distribute **10** points beyond across the Base Attributes. You may not have more than **5** points in any single base attribute.

You are not able to increase your Luck Base Attribute during this step. It always starts with a maximum value of 3 points.

### [Actual Play Example]

## What do the Base Attributes Mean?

Here are some examples, how different values in Base Attributes may express themselves. Your character may express their lack or excess in any attribute differently.

### Force

**0 (Points):** Unable to physically interact.

**1:** Barely able to throw a punch.

**2:** Can hold themselves in a fight and defend themselves in bad situations.

**3:** Can actively participate in fights and is able to do some damage to objects. (Average)

**4:** Trained individual, wins most contests of force.

**5:** Peak of strength or speed.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of strength and speed, little can stand in your way.

### Body

**0 (Points):** Unable to be destroyed or damaged.

**1:** Fragile, the slightest damage is too much.

**2:** Sickly and fatigued.

**3:** Healthy and well sustained. (Average)

**4:** Resilient against many sicknesses and damages.

**5:** Peak of constitution and resilience.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of constitution and resilience, little can harm you.

### Speed

**0 (Points):** Unable to move without assistance.

**1:** Sluggish movements and low reflexes.

**2:** Barely can keep up with fast movement or react to sudden events.

**3:** Can keep up with most regular Folk. (Average)

**4:** Trained individual, few things are a challenge.

**5:** Peak of speed and agility.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of speed and agility, little can keep up with you.

### Intelligence

**0 (Points):** No thought.

**1:** Barely can conclude anything, doesn't plan.

**2:** Forms simple plans, can put ideas into correlation.

**3:** Can conclude reliably based on evidence, knows how to plan properly. (Average)

**4:** Intelligent individual, most plans succeed.

**5:** Peak of logic and planning.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of logic and planning, little can keep up with you.

### Feel

**0 (Points):** No way to empathize or perceive.

**1:** Ignorant to the world around.

**2:** Struggles to connect with others or the world.

**3:** Can empathize with and is perceptive to most events around them. (Average)

**4:** Highly sensitive individual to the feelings and world around them.

**5:** Peak of empathy and intuition.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of empathy and intuition, little can keep up with you.

### Experience

**0 (Points):** No knowledge or training.

**1:** Barely interacted with the world or education.

**2:** Little knowledge of the world or skill.

**3:** Average level of training, education and travel experience. (Average)

**4:** Learned and experienced individual.

**5:** Peak of knowledge and skill.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of knowledge and skill, you always know how to react.

### Impression

**0 (Points):** Unable to invoke desired reactions.

**1:** Incapable of sustaining any desired effect beyond first contact.

**2:** Unequipped to stay calm in conversation.

**3 Points:** Manages to convey desired emotion in most interactions. (Average)

**4:** In control of most conversations.

**5:** Peak of social graces and control.

**5+:** Supernatural levels of social graces and control, little can keep up with you

## Step 3: Talents

There are eight Talents which broadly categorize the trained skills your character has, all of them described in Chapter 3. Each talent can be skilled and have up to two Pool Points.

Being skilled in a Talent describes your training and study of this skill set. How that skill is expressed, is up to you.

Pool Points in a Talent describe an innate talent for these kinds of tasks, for example by natural abilities or cultural framing.

You may choose two Talents to be skilled in.

Breach and Knowledge are Cumulative Talents. Cumulative Talents can be skilled more than once. Each time you skill these talents you can define another way you may apply that talent (see the Cumulative Talent Table for details). You can only be considered skilled in a Challenge that concerns one of your specified options.

Talent	Name of List	Meaning of Entry	Pool Points in this Talent...
Breach	Ways of Entry	Complete training and experience in the task.	... describe your general ability to avoid and overcome obstacles.
Knowledge	Fields of Academic Study	Complete academic knowledge of the topic.	... describe your general ability to learn and work things out.

Furthermore, you may distribute 3 Pool Points on any Talents. This does not depend on which Talents you are skilled in.

You may apply Pool Points from a Cumulative Talent to a challenge, even if you are skilled but are not currently using one of your specified options.

## Weapon Talents

A Weapon Talent groups all similar Weapons into one general way of how to use them. Skill with a Weapon Talent describes your ability to use any Weapons for which that Weapon Talent applies in all situations reliably.

You may choose two Weapon Talents to be skilled in.

## [Actual Play Example]

## Step 4: Calculate and fill in Values

Fill in the following values according to your Base Attributes and Talents.

<b>Hit Point Maximum</b>	Points in Body * 20
<b>Poise Maximum</b>	Points in Body + Points in Speed + Pool Points in the Talent Tactics
<b>AP Maximum</b>	10
<b>Luck Point Maximum</b>	3

## Step 5: Reactions & Marrowing Incantations

Reactions are your ability to react to events around you and use them to your advantage. They are largely used in the context of initiative and combat, but some do help in generally stressful situations as well. Especially if speed is of concern.

Marrowing Incantations are patterns of magic, that you practised enough to perform them in any situation and headspace. See Chapter 7 for more details on Marrowing, Incantations and alternate options of using Marrowing.

You always know the Reactions:

- Dodge
- Panic
- Riposte
- Help

Beyond that you may choose **1** additional Reaction **or** **1** Marrowing Incantation during Character Creation. You receive access to more over the course of your adventure.

### [Actual Play Example]

## Step 6: Talebound Epithets

When you fracture a Talebone during play, you avoid death but are burdened with a Talebound Epithet. That Talebound Epithet relates either to the circumstances of your near death, or to a part of your backstory, most likely a part that you do not want people to freely know. See Chapter 6 for more details on Talebones and Talebound Epithets.

During Character Creation, try to think of around three Epithets, that relate to your backstory and note them down. This way you have some at the ready when you come around to fracturing a Talebone.

### [Actual Play Example]

## Conversation Topics

After having decided on most of what your character is or is not able to do, a conversation with your Game Master should start. This conversation should not end with

the start of the adventure and actual play, but rather be an ongoing process of developing and evolving your character.

## Goals

You should communicate clearly, if you have certain goals for your character. Either as a want that the character feels, or a meta-goal that you the player have, for where you want your character to end up. The Game Master cannot give you everything you want of course, but it is useful to talk about these things, and worst case maybe discuss alternatives, if some goals are completely unachievable, according to your Game Master.

## Body

Due to the wildcard nature of Talebone's Character Creation, a character does not need to be of the standard "humanoid" mold. Communicate clearly what your character can do with their body and discuss setting limits for otherwise supernatural capabilities that can be achieved by different body structures and different limb arrangements.

## Senses

Your character may have different senses than the standard Folk. Do let your Game Master know, so they can include that in their planning and are able to describe scenes to you according to your senses.

## Movement

There is not any limit set to what types of movement your character can perform. As these options change adventure design drastically, always let your game master know before the adventure starts, which abilities your character has. Do not change these abilities without having another conversation with your Game Master. The Game Master may always disallow any certain way of movement but should work with you to figure out alternatives.

## Character Advancements

As you play you progress in the overarching story, the story of other characters and your own character's story. Generally, that correlates with an increase in capability and experience, so you can gain new skills and abilities as you go on.

### Plot Points

At the end of each play session, the game master asks you character specific questions (see "Questions for Plot Points"). For each question you can answer with "yes" for your character, you gain one Plot Point.

#### *Questions for Plot Points (PP)*

1. Did you participate in the session? (You always gain 1 PP per session)
2. Did you fracture a Talebone?
3. Did you discover new information?
4. Did you have a meaningful conversation with another character?
5. Were you able to help another character have a standout moment?
6. Did you face and overcome a Legend?
7. Were you affected by one of your Talebound Epithets?

As soon as you gathered 5 Plot Points, you may increase your Level and gain the benefits from it. After Character Creation your character starts at level 1.

### Levels

While levelling up, every character follows the same process from level 1 to 6. At level 7 every character may pick to either follow the Tragic Tale levelling path or the Heroic Tale levelling path.

This changes the process for these two paths, until level 10 is shared among everyone once more.

**R+I:** The sum of Reactions of any type and any Incantations you know.

**Signature Move:** see Chapter 5 p.124.

**Weapon Mastery:** see Chapter 5 p.124.

**Ability:** see Chapter 3 p.123.

### Embodiments

If you are an Embodiment of a certain story, you gain special advantages, reserved for your type of story.

#### Tragic Tale Embodiment

You can contribute two Actions or Reactions to any Reaction Chain.

#### Heroic Tale Embodiment

You can spend your own Action Points on Actions of other characters.

#### Folktale Embodiment

You can always use any Reactions or Incantations you have access to.



Story Arc						
Level	Title		Upgrade			R+I
1	Talebound					5
2	Talebound		Choose 1 additional Action Add two Base Attribute Points Choose a Signature Move			6
3	Talebound		+1 Action Choose an Ability			7
4	Folkhero		+1 Action Choose Weapon Mastery Choose one additional Skilled Talent			8
5	Folkhero		+1 Action Add three Base Attribute Points			9
6	Folkhero		+1 Action Choose an Ability			10
Branching Paths						
Level	Title	Upgrade	Level	Title	Upgrade	R+I
7	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Choose Weapon Mastery	7	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Add three Base Attribute Points	11
8	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Tragic Tale Embodiment	8	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Heroic Tale Embodiment	12
9	Tragic Tale	+1 Action Choose an Ability	9	Heroic Tale	+1 Action Choose an Ability	13
Finale						
Level	Title		Upgrade			R+I
10	Folktale		+1 Action Folktale Embodiment			14

### Option 1: Beyond Folktales

If your players have reached level 10 of the normal progression, you can just continue levelling. Either start back at the start of the Upgrade List and just count up, or transition to Option 2.

### Option 2: Free levelling

If you plan to run a longer form adventure, the standard progression might be not extensive enough. You may want to opt for a free levelling approach in that case. Generally, each level should give players at least one additional Reaction or Incantation. Beyond that you should regularly allow players to pick additional character choices like abilities, base attribute increases or skilled talents.

[MARROWING ART PAGE]

# [MARROWING]

## Marrow

The reign of the Old Gods has changed the world in many ways. Stories are acting as if alive, society is splintered, and monsters rule the space between enclaves of safety. But one of the largest changes came slowly. It started with the children. A young Folk falling off a tree and suddenly having a burst of eery energy that lasts days, if not weeks. When they finally calm down, usually it is discovered that they have a broken leg, rendering them bedridden immediately. Something changed within them, within their bones. Over time the old generation died, and left were only Folk with this newfound energy, trapped within their own bodies. Ready at any point to jump out and rec havoc. The magic, innate to everything mortal, soon was named Marrow, for it was the marrow of bones that seemed to trap it best.

Since these early times Marrow has been fully embraced as the only chip mortals have to offer in this cruel game of survival. It has defined cultural development of many villages and has spurred new stories and tales. And even these stories propagate through the world and confirm themselves, by spurring on ever new discoveries in the field of Marrow.

## Marrow Witches

Marrow Witches are those proficient and trained in breaking their own bones to achieve anything their mind can think off. Obviously, anyone else is absolutely scared of these Folk shrouded in folklore, magic and gory practises. Due to that, Marrow Witches are one more hated, but very much required bad the world has to offer. They protect the village they are a part of, but anyone in the village tends to stay on arm's length with them. Most settled Marrow Witches have accepted this fate, but it is understandable that some decide to hide their talents and practises, to have a relatively normal life in return. Same with many travelling Marrow Witches. It is far too much of a gamble to expect villagers to be welcoming to a possibly antagonistic Marrow Witch.

To be a Marrow Witch you just need practise. Even though some talent does aid, as does in all other professions. It is also generally accepted that Marrow Witch is a non-gendered profession, so men, women and non-binary Folk carry the same label, even if some prefer to name themselves otherwise, just to define their own perception.

The training of becoming a Marrow Witch usually starts small. The smallest bones most Folk possess and heal comparably fast are fingerbones. Due to this, a fully trained Marrow Witch tends to have crooked or weak fingers from many early training sessions. These many fractures usually strain in the presence of other sources of Marrowing, straining to rebreak and add onto the environmental magic. This way Marrow Witches are usually more talented in finding sources of Marrowing than other Folk.

Of course, Marrow Witches are as much Folk as anyone else. So, they usually have other interests or professions than just Marrowing and use Marrowing in application of that other profession. Only the most dedicated take the immense bodily strain and social recluse onto them to follow the practise as their only life content.

## Marrowing

Marrowing is the name of the magic surrounding bone marrow. Every Folk can utilize Marrowing, but some are trained in doing it while suffering the minimum amount of harm. This is described by being skilled in the Talent Marrow. Generally, these Folk are referred to as Marrow Witches by most societies.

## Marrowing Challenge

During gameplay any use of Marrowing brings with it a Marrowing Challenge. A Marrowing Challenge has a Base Attribute set by the game master or the rules, just as any other Challenge, but the only Talent that may be applied is Marrow. Additionally, whenever you roll a Marrowing Challenge, you may reduce the Challenge Dice Pool as much as you prefer. Technically you can roll any Marrowing Challenge with no dice in your Challenge Dice Pool due to that.

Any successes gathered with your challenge are used to determine and scale the effect of your incantation or other use of Marrowing.

Any failures of your challenge are treated differently to other challenges. Each failure deals Hit Point Damage (see Chapter 5?) to you equal to the displayed number on the d20.

## Incantations

Incantations are trained and memorized patterns of Marrowing, that users can reproduce at will and in any situation even under pressure. An Incantation is always defined by the following aspects:

<b>Name</b>	Name of the Incantation.
<b>AP</b>	AP cost to cast the Incantation.
<b>Type</b>	If the Incantation is a Reaction, and which type.
<b>(Base) Attribute</b>	Which Base Attribute is used for the Marrowing Challenge.
<b>Effect</b>	The effects of the Incantation, usually scaling with Successes of the Marrowing Challenge.

Incantations are a Character Option that are interchangeable with Reactions (i.e. you may only have four Incantations or Reactions active at a time. See Chapter 7?).

## Option: Free Marrowing

As an alternative to defaulting to Incantation you may try to freely apply Marrowing to whatever you need at the moment. To perform free Marrowing you also need to roll a Marrowing Challenge, but the successes are not used to scale an Incantation but to judge the success of the challenge like in a normal Base Attribute Challenge.

Marrowing is generally a soft magic system, so you can be as creative in its applications, if you have a good in character explanation why it should work. There are limits to each Base Attribute used during Marrowing though, so you should keep those in mind when thinking of arguments. Your goal is to connect what you are doing to bones, even if they are metaphorical bones.

Base Attribute	General Area of Application	Example of a metaphor
Intelligence	Any changes within objects or Folk	A tree's bark is like its bones, so you can change it into gold or repair it.
Feel	Any forces on objects or Folk from the outside	Torrents of winds work together like joints of bones, so you can move them to topple that tree.
Experience	Knowledge gained and Information discovered	The rings of a tree are like the Marrow of its bones, so you can read from it by who it was planted.
Impression	Anything affecting the mind of Folk	The minds of folk can be trained by muscles, so there must be bones being moved by those muscles. I can affect these bones to make the Folk think the tree attacks them.

# [COMBAT]

## Initiative

Initiative can be called by the game master as soon as a group initiates physical conflict, or a tense scene takes place with a lot of actions happening at the same time.

If only a single character attacks something or someone, without danger of a reaction or time pressure, the game master should opt to resolve the action as a simple challenge.

At the start of initiative every player character rolls for their placement in their round and all non-player characters are sorted in either allies of the player characters or other alignments or factions.

## Initiative Roll

To determine the placement of your character within their round, roll a d20 and add the number of points you have in the Speed Base Attribute.

## Action Points

Most actions during initiative cost Action Points (AP) to perform. All character options like Reactions or Incantations have an associated AP-cost, as specified in the rules. Any actions you improvise have to be described in detail and receive an AP-cost by the game master.

The game master may increase any rules-specified AP-costs, if the environment does not facilitate fast actions, for example under water or during covert operations.

Action Points are a representation of how quickly or slowly an action is to take. As rounds are a pure gameplay system, single AP-Values do not have an explicit duration associated with them. They each rather accommodate a type of action (see AP Time List).

### AP Time List

1-2 AP	Split second decisions. Quick, imprecise movements of muscle memory.
3 AP	Quick trained movements. Actions barely taking thoughts to execute.
4 AP	Trained movements of average speed. Preplanned actions that require little additional thought.
5 AP	Trained movements of slower than average speed. Improvised actions with a base need of coordination.
6 AP	Trained movements of slow speed. Unplanned actions, not possible without active consideration.
6+ AP	Movement and actions that require immense concentration and effort.

## Round

Initiative is resolved in rounds. At the start of each round the opposing forces get their turns and may perform their actions, followed by the allied characters to take turns.

Action Points and Status effects are always constricted to within one round.

At the start of your round, you regain all your Action Points, so you can react to the opponents' actions as soon as they happen.

At the end of your turn, you lose all unspent Action Points, so do remember to leave as few remaining as possible at the end of your turn.

At the end your round, you get rid of any Status effects gained during the preceding round.

Additionally the last player character in initiative is put at the top of the initiative order. This is equivalent of adding 20 to the last player character's initiative.

## Encounter

Each initiative is set up out of two parts. The group around the player characters, including their allies, and the Encounter. The encounter are any non-player characters or environmental processes that act against the wishes of the player characters. The encounter does not need to be allied within itself.

Each encounter shares a single Action Point total, to streamline combat and describe the effects of group coordination amongst the participants of the encounter. Any action taken by any participant of the encounter removes AP from that shared total.

An encounter has their own round, that is structured the same as the round of the player characters. The initiative is counted with perspective towards the players' rounds, so when initiative starts, the round of the encounter "starts" in its middle (see Round Checklist for clarification).

### Round Checklist

Each round of the player characters resolves as follows:

1.	(Player) Round Start	Player Regain AP.
2.	Encounter Turns	Encounter Turns Resolve.
3.	Encounter Round End	Encounter loses Status Effects.
4.	Encounter Round Start	Encounter Regains AP.
5.	Player Turns	Players' Turns Resolve according to initiative order.
6.	(Player) Round End	Players lose Status Effects. Last Player Character adds 20 to initiative order.

## Turn

Your turn occurs when the round resolves the turns of your group in the initiative, and it is your turn. Within your turn you can do anything, if it is less than 10 AP, according to the game master. Every character can perform four types of core actions that happen most often during initiative. See the box Action Overview, for more information on those.

Outside of your turn you may only ever use Reactions or Incantations that are of a Reaction Type. You may not use these within your turn.

At the end of your turn, you lose all unspent AP.

## Distances and Reach

1 Step := 1 m := 5 ft.

Talebones works in its own measurement system called Steps.

Usually, one Step is either defined as one meter or five feet in real units. But in the end Talebones does not stop working, if you play small characters and one Step equals 1 inch, or huge characters with one Step equal to one hundred kilometres.

Within one adventure and group of characters one Step should equal one Step though, so you should agree on one definition before play.

Within the rules Reach is mentioned at times. Usually within the context of arm's reach, but ranged weaponry for example uses the same Reach rules. Reach is at any point dependant on the character wanting to reach something. Any Ranged properties of weapons or extensions, only add to that. Due to this a character may push themselves to reach further than their regular reach, be it by leaning over to reach further with their arms or making a wild shot with a crossbow. This should lead to a raised difficulty at the hand of the game master or player.

### Action Overview

Movement Action	Dash	2 AP	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed.
	Move	6 AP	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times two.
	Sprint	5 AP	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times three. You may only move in a straight line.
Attack Action		AP of Weapon	Attack with a Weapon.
Help Action		4 AP	Help a character after you in initiative.
Draw Action		1 AP	Draw or stow an object on your person.



## Movement Action

During initiative your character moves by making use of one of the Movement Actions. Dash is the quickest and shortest burst of movement your character is capable of, allowing them to move Steps equal to your points in your Speed Base Attribute. This is the most efficient way to traverse any space, costing only 2 AP. It gives opponents ample opportunity to call Reactions to each Dash you do though. The Action Move does not allow this, as it is a single Action that moves you double the distance of Dash, while having a higher AP-cost of 6. Due to that, opponents can not stop you in the middle of your move. Dash is the fastest way to move, allowing you to move Steps equal to triple your Speed points for only 5 AP. This comes at the cost of only being able to move in a straight line.

You are always able to not take all steps of a Movement Action. If you interrupt your Movement with any other Action, you may not move the remaining Steps though.

The way your character is able to move naturally is defined during Character Creation and should always be cleared with your game master in cases of special movement options.

## Jumping

When you take a Movement Action you can always Jump a distance of 1 Step as part of that movement, as many times as you wish.

If you have taken any Movement Action before during your current round, you may instead Jump any fraction of your current Movement Action. Jumps always have to be in a straight line.

Jumps are only measured horizontally; the possible height of the Jump is up to the game master, but usually will only allow you to jump a number of Steps equal to your Speed points high.

## Movement through Characters

You may move through characters, except the character is double your size or larger. If you move through a character, that character may roll a Body Challenge, dealing damage to you equal to the successes.

## Attack Action

To perform an attack, you need to define the Weapon you are using, which Weapon Talent applies, and which target you are attacking. Then the game master is going to modify the attack's difficulty if necessary (see Examples of Advantage/Disadvantage). An Attack Action's AP-cost is determined based on the Weapon Talent used. The damage of an Attack Action is determined by rolling an Attack Challenge.

## Unarmed Attack

If you decide to attack unarmed, you are considered using the following Weapon Talent.

AP	Pool	Base Attribute	Properties
3	0	Force	-

## Desperate Attack

If you do not have enough AP left for a proper attack, the game master may allow you to still attack, using your remaining AP. Possible consequences could be Disadvantage on the attack challenge, a reduction of the success pool, or heightened consequences should the attack not achieve its goal.

## Help Action

During your turn you may set up a Supporting Reaction to someone acting after you. To do that, take the Help Action for 4 AP, and describe what you do to assist. The game master will ask you to roll a Base Attribute Challenge, based on your description. At any point after that Help Action, but within the same round of yours, you may decide to use the Help Reaction without spending AP, using the success pool of your Help Action.

## Draw Action

If you want to draw or stow a Weapon or another object during your turn, you must spend 1 AP. This only applies, if the Weapon or object stays on your person. You cannot hand it off to another character, drop it, or pick it up. For any of these cases, the game master must determine a situational AP-cost.

## Reactions

During initiative you are not restricted to your own turn in terms of doing things. Any action outside your own turn is called a Reaction. You can generally react to any Action and Reaction performed by another character, or event occurring around you. Whenever you want to react to something you announce your intended Reaction you want to use, and the game master will set up and resolve a Reaction Chain of all queued Reactions.

Any character is capable to announce four types of Reaction, and most characters have additional Reactions they may use as well. A Reaction is a Character Option you can pick from a list in chapter 8?. Additionally, some Marrowing Incantations are Reactions as well.

### Examples of Advantage/Disadvantage

Target (of the attack) is below you	Advantage
Target is distracted	Advantage
Target is afraid	Advantage
You attack in a unique/surprising way	Advantage
Target is above you	Disadvantage
Target is beyond your normal reach	Disadvantage
You have difficult footing	Disadvantage
Target is extremely fast	Disadvantage

To be able to announce a Reaction to any other event or Action, the event or Action must match the Trigger condition of the Reaction, and you must be able to perceive it.

### Trigger Condition Rules

Any Reaction is valid to trigger “Any Action”

A Dash, Move or Sprint Action is valid to trigger “Any Movement Action”

Any Action involving an Attack Challenge is valid to trigger “Any Attack Action” or “... attacks/attacked ...”

### Reaction Chain

As soon as you announce a Reaction, the game master asks everyone else if they wish to announce a Reaction as well. Afterwards, all Reactions are sorted in three categories, and each category is resolved in order of initiative.

The three categories are Preventive, Supportive, and Reactive Reactions. First all Preventive Reactions are resolved, then all supportive Reactions followed by the original triggering Action or Reaction, and lastly all Reactive Reactions take place.

You may only perform one Action or Reaction within the same Reaction Chain.

If you react to a Reaction, that is already announced and part of its own Reaction Chain, a nested Reaction Chain is resolved as soon as the triggering Reaction is resolved within its Chain.

### Telegraphed Action

Telegraphed Actions are usually performed by Legends or other powerful characters. A Telegraphed Action describes the winding or powering up of a much stronger attack but does not involve any activity of its own. Nevertheless, you can react to a Telegraphed Action as if it were any Movement, Draw or Help Action. This way you can perform Reactive Reactions before the powerful Action takes place.

### Damage

You can take damage for many reasons on your adventures. Damage affects your current Poise and Hit Point totals, reducing either until they reach 0. If anything deals damage to you, and your current Poise total is not zero, it counts first as Poise Damage. If you take more Poise Damage than you have Poise left, the remaining Poise Damage gets converted into Hit Point Damage. If you take more Hit Point Damage than your remaining Hit Point total, you die.

If Poise Damage or Hit Point Damage is dealt explicitly, it cannot be transformed into the other and any excess Damage of either kind is lost.

## Poise and Poise Damage

Poise expresses your ability to avoid permanent damage or to be hit entirely. You regain all your Poise at the start of every Initiative or new Scene (see Chapter 8?). Loss of Poise should be narrated as a success by the character, as they manage to avoid being hit or damaged enough to slow them down.

Poise cannot be reduced further than 0 but can be temporarily increased further than its maximum. If you have more Poise than your maximum at the start of an Initiative or Scene, you lose any excess Poise.

Poise damage is usually determined by a Challenge and is equal to the success pool of that challenge.

Finally, if your Poise gets reduced to 0, you get Staggered (see Chapter 0?).

## Hit Points and Hit Point Damage

Hit Points describe your current capacity to endure damage by attacks or hazards. The most common way to regain Hit Points is during a Rest (see Chapter 8?). Loss of Hit Points is an urgent matter, as you are not able to easily regain it. It should generally be described as a dire heightening of stakes during a Scene.

When your Hit Points reach zero, you die or fracture a Talebone. You cannot have more Hit Points, than your Hit Point Maximum.

Hit Point Damage is either dealt directly or gets converted from Poise Damage. If you are dealt Poise Damage, but have no Poise left, for any Poise Damage left, roll 1d20 per Poise Damage and add all numbers up. The sum is the Hit Point Damage dealt, and your Hit Point Total is reduced by as much.

Sources of direct Hit Point Damage without a need to convert from Poise Damage, can be Marrowing Challenges (see Chapter 4?), a Weapon with the Wounding Property (see Chapter 5?), or a rare source of damage that cannot be avoided or reduced.

Additionally, each time you take Hit Point Damage you are Staggered (see Chapter 0?).

## Death

If you are reduced to 0 Hit Points, you die. Resurrection and healing are not possible at that point, except in unique narrative moments governed by roleplay.

## Talebones

Some Characters, including all player characters, may have any number of Talebones within them. If these characters would die, instead they fracture one of their Talebones and return to life, but at a cost. From now on they have to carry a Talebound Epithet and deal with the social repercussions of their past actions.

Talebones are a cultural myth and not physical parts of your body, but rather a description of a common behaviour.

To allow for rules to refer to this behaviour, the rules assume the myth to be true

Non-player characters do have a predetermined, finite number of Talebones. Player characters do not. Each time a player character is about to die due to loosing all Hit Points, the player may decide, if their character has another Talebone to fracture. This does not need to be cleared with anyone else and is in the responsibility of the player to handle tactfully.

## Fracturing a Talebone

If you fracture a Talebone time and initiative stops. In the same moment you regain 1 Hit Point and all Poise up to your maximum. Additionally, you gain one Charged Level towards your Signature Move.

Still within the same moment you may spent AP equal to the Damage that reduced you to zero Hit Points, to spend on Movement and Object Interactions as you like. You may not interact with other characters or their objects that are on them directly or deal Damage in any way. Narratively this describes a sudden last-ditch surge of energy that your character can use to get out of trouble and set up for the coming Actions.

## Signature Moves

In moments of heightened danger and tension, some characters grow beyond their station and perform greatness. These moments are encapsulated by Signature Moves. Powerful single actions that can define a whole scene or combat. When you have accumulated charged levels, you can spend three to perform your selected Signature Move, also consuming the AP-cost of it. You gain your Signature Move as your Character develops across an adventure and most reference your Level to scale effects.

## Gaining Charged Levels

You can gather up to four Charged Levels at a time, spending three to use your Signature Move.

You gain one Charged Level every time you take Hit Point Damage.

You gain one Charged Level, if you fracture a Talebone.

You lose all Charged Levels upon Resting.

## Surprise

If you are surprised by the start of initiative, for example because you did not notice an opponent sneak up or expected a peaceful confrontation with them, you are surprised.

Surprise halves your Action Points you gain at the start of the first round of initiative (e.g. if you normally have 10 AP, if you are surprised you start initiative with 5 AP). Additionally, you are not able to communicate any warnings or messages with anyone while surprised. Otherwise, you can act as you normally would.

## Elevation

Having the high ground is generally advantageous during conflicts, be it to better survey the situation or have a better angle to defend yourself.

If you attack a target that is **below** you, you have advantage on that attack equal to the Step-difference in height.

If you attack a target that is **above** you, you have disadvantage on that attack equal to the Step-difference in height.

A target that is Prone is one Step below you, if you stand next to it.

Step-difference is measured at the start of your Action. Due to that, even if you drop on top of an opponent or fly up to their level as part of the same Action, you are affected by the elevation.

## Falling

If you end your turn without being able to support yourself, you instantly fall. This is an event others may react to.

As you impact the ground, the game master may call for a Body or Speed Challenge, contesting a Success Pool equal to the Step-distance fallen. Any non-contested successes are dealt in Damage to you.

## Suffocation

If you have to breath but is not able to or have to stay conscious in spite of whirling colours around you, or any other overstimulation of senses or deprivation of important bodily functions, you are able to stay conscious a number of Rounds equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute.

If you can prepare yourself for the stress, by holding your breath or similar, you are able to compose yourself for minutes equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute before starting to suffocate.

## Status Effects

You might be afflicted with a condition that is common enough to be described by a short keyword or phrase. Any of these Status Effects get removed at the end of your round in initiative.

### Tripped

Something stops you from moving for a moment, takes you by surprise, or occupies your attention. While having this Status Effect, you are unable to take any Movement Actions.

### Downed

While you lay on the ground defenceless, you are also Tripped.

Attacks against downed targets usually are rolled at advantage (+1), due to the difference in elevation.

### Staggered

While staggered, any of your Movement Action costs double the AP it would usually cost. This is usually the consequence of being hurt.

### Weirded

Affected by natural impulses and marrow, you are unable to announce any Reactions.

### Off Balance

If anything impedes your ability to defend yourself or hinders your sense of balance, you are Off Balance. For each Status Effect instance of Off Balance, you lose one Poise.

When removing the Status Effect, you regain Poise lost this way.

## [CHARACTER OPTIONS]

- Reactions
  - Description
  - Preventive
  - Supportive
  - Reactive
- Abilities
- Signature Moves
- Weapon Talents
- Weapon Masteries



# [CHALLENGES]

Whenever your character performs an action or activity that has an indeterminate outcome or has an outcome that is central to the plot, the game master may request you to roll a Challenge. At any point you may ask for a Challenge yourself too, but the game master has the final say if and which Challenge is rolled.

## Challenge Dice Pool

Every Challenge has a Challenge Dice Pool. This describes how many dice you roll during it.

## Pool Dice

Pool dice are additional dice you may add to your Challenge Dice Pool.

## Success Pool

The result of a Challenge is a Success Pool, which is used to determine the outcome of your actions. In an unskilled Challenge any die that rolls a thirteen or higher is counted towards the Success Pool.

A twenty on a die always counts as two successes towards the Success Pool.

[Table]

## Base Attribute

Any Challenge has to be based in a Base Attribute. This is within the decision of the game master or the rules. The game master should try to enable players to use their best Base Attributes, but they should decide based on the actions described. If the player wishes to use a specific Base Attribute, they may be asked to describe what they do to tackle the problem with that Base Attribute in mind (see chapter 1? For descriptions of Base Attributes).

Your Challenge Dice Pool has as many dice as you have Points in the Base Attribute the Challenge is based in.

## Talents

After having determined the Base Attribute of the Challenge either by the game master or the rules, you may go through your Talents and see if any apply to the situation you are currently experiencing. If any do, you may ask the game master to apply that Talent and either be considered Skilled in the Challenge or gain Pool Dice, or both. The game master may ask you to elaborate on your plan and why you think your experience or intuition in the Talent will help you achieving your goal.

[Talents]

## Skilled

A Talent may be Skilled either during Character Creation or Levelling Up. Being Skilled in something implies extensive training or studies of the Talent and the capacity to call back to that training in most situations.

If you are Skilled in a Challenge, you only have to roll an eight or higher with each die for the die to count as a success in the Success Pool.

If you are Skilled in the Talent Breach, you may only be considered Skilled in the Challenge if you make use of a Way of Entry you defined. The same rule applies to the Talent Knowledge with Fields of Academic Study. These two Talents are called Cumulative Talents.

## Pool Points

For each Pool Point you have in a Talent you may add one Pool Die. Pools Points describe a natural inclination or talent towards a Talent.

Pool Points in Cumulative Talent may be applied even if you do not use a specified way.

## Profession

If you do not have any befitting Talent to apply, you may call back to your Profession. If the game master agrees that your experiences in your Profession help you in your current situation, you are considered Skilled in the Challenge.

Your Profession does not grant you additional Pool Dice.

## Base Attribute Challenge

A Base Attribute describes the most common improvised activities you can attempt. You can apply any Talents or your Profession.

## Attack Challenge

Attack Challenges always are connected to the use of a Weapon. The Base Attribute of the Challenge is determined by the used Weapon Talent. You are considered Skilled in the Challenge, if you are Skilled in a matching Weapon Talent. You may add Pool Dice equal to the Weapon Dice Pool. You cannot apply any Talents or Profession, other than your skill in a Weapon Talent.

## Marowing Challenge

Marowing Challenges are used if you tap into the magic stored in your bones. If you perform an Incantation, it determines the Base Attribute. You may only apply the Marrow Talent.

## Compound Challenge

If the activity you perform takes course over a long duration, the game master may request a Compound Challenge. A Compound Challenge is based in more than one Base Attribute, representing different aspects of the action you need to watch out for.

Your Challenge Dice Pool has as many dice as you have Points in all Base Attribute the Challenge is based in.

You can apply only one Talent or Profession to the Challenge.

As an example, you want to smith a powerful sword. The game master determines you need to roll a Compound Challenge based in Force, Feel and Experience. Force to swing the hammer, Feel to describe the intuitive handling of the hot metal, and your Experience in smiting. The success of the Challenge should be determined by the same table as Base Attribute Challenges, as any additional difficulty should be balanced out by having more time to fix mistakes. If the Challenge attempts something unreasonable, the game master may still decide to ask for above average Successes.

## Help

Whenever you roll a Challenge, any other Character may decide to Help. To Help, the Character describes what they do to facilitate a better Success of the Challenge. This is rarely achieved by doing the exact same as what you are already doing, so the game master will ask them to roll their own Challenge. The Success Pool of the Help Challenge gets added to the Success Pool of your own Challenge.

It is possible for multiple Characters to Help the same Challenge.

During Initiative, helping is done by using the Help Action or Reaction.

## Contested Challenge

Any Challenge can be contested by you, if you are able to perceive it occurring. You perform your own Challenge, and your Success Pool is subtracted from the Contested Challenge's Success Pool. Only the remainder is used to determine the Success of the Contested Challenge.

It is possible for multiple Characters to Contest the same Challenge. Note that out of Initiative, Non-player Characters rolling Challenges is rare.

During Initiative, contesting is done by using certain Reactions.

## Difficulty

The base Difficulty of an unskilled Challenge is thirteen. If you are considered Skilled in the Challenge, it is eight. Difficulty is the number any die of the Challenge Dice Pool must roll equal or higher to be considered a Success.

If the Challenge you are attempting is harder or easier than the average task, the game master or rules may give you Advantage or Disadvantage. This modifies the Difficulty of the Challenge. Usually this stays within a change of plus or minus five but may be more in unique situations.

### Advantage/Disadvantage

Advantage or Disadvantage are always related to a number. For example, Advantage (-2) decreases the Difficulty by two, and Disadvantage (+5) increases it by five.

Advantage can be achieved by creating a calmer environment to perform the Challenge, being overqualified for the Challenge, or being explicitly prepared for it.

Disadvantage is usually the result of stress, failing plans, overconfidence or a negative work environment.

### Luck

You cannot be considered Skilled in a Luck Challenge of any kind, except stated otherwise.

If you roll any Challenge based in another Base Attribute than Luck, you may spend Luck Points, adding one Success to the Success Pool per Luck Point spent.

You regain one Luck Point per Rest you take, up to your maximum Luck.

# [RULES]

## Resting

Adventuring is exhausting and most certainly dangerous. To catch a breath in between days of being on edge and running from danger, you need to properly sit down and have a calm evening with friends and family, with food, stories and a lot of rest.

To Rest you need to spend the duration of a night (usually 8 hours) in the safety of a reinforced resting site. Sleeping in the forest on the ground in a bedroll is enough to not topple over from being tired, but not to heal wounds or broken bones.

Anyone who wants to partake in the rest has to have enough food or similar materials to sustain themselves. The meal has to be proper and fresh, so the Rest usually involves some form of cooking.

If the Rest is interrupted by a perceived threat, it fails to grant its benefits to the Character perceiving the threat or knowing about the threat.

At the end of a Rest, it is apparent to everyone, if the Rest succeeded for anyone else.

If your rest succeeds, you regain your Hit Points, up to a maximum of half your usual maximum and gain one Luck, up to your maximum.

You may choose up to 4 of your Reactions or Incantations to actively use too.

If you have a Legend Vessel on you, you may start actively using it (see Chapter 10?).

## Talebound Rest

There come times when the situation is dire and the nights are especially dark. In these times, you might not have enough food, not have a house to rest or are under constant danger.

Then you can utilise the power of a good story. If you spend the Rest telling a tale from your past, its magic will protect you and your allies. The story has to be of a significant event, a significant person, or a significant place of your past. If any of your allies listening did not know that part of your backstory yet, the rest site is protected for the next eight hours. No threat will attack, and no harm will come to you.

The game master may inquire, what the significance of the story to your character is. This should encourage you to flesh out the role of the character, place or event, to make it more significant and defining for your backstory.

Additionally, anyone who did not know that story yet, regains all Hit Points during the Rest, as the story does its magic and repairs broken bones and bodies.

## Resting over multiple days

If you want to recover properly, you may decide to rest more than one night. For every full day without an Initiative or other exhausting activities, you regain 1d20 Hit Points.

- Perception
- Scene
- Resting

To take a Rest you need to meet the following requirements:

- You need sufficient food for one proper meal for anyone attempting a Rest (the definition of a proper meal depends on the character).
- You need to rest in a secure and reinforced resting site.
- The resting site may not be under threat for eight hours.

If any of these requirements gets interrupted during the eight hours, the rest fails.

If the rest succeeds, everyone participating regains up to half their hit points and one Luck Point.

(see Chapter 8? for further options for Rests)

## [ARTIFACTS]

You are a traveller and adventurer. It is assumed that you have the basic tools for your craft always on you. Except stated otherwise, you can use any object that you have reasonable access to in simple villages or from your backstory, for example rope, bedroll, your weapons, simple tools, a backpack and more. The game master may allow you to have access to non-trivial objects, based on your Profession and backstory, like specialized tools, non-magical artifacts from the old world, or items of higher value like jewellery, a mount, or a cart.

### Heavy Objects

If an object is especially heavy or large, it is considered Heavy. You can only carry one Heavy object at a time. If you carry two or more Heavy objects, you are considered Prone.

### Ideas

Money is difficult to use in the world of Talebones. Due to the fractured society, a centralized system of coins is hard to enforce or track, so at most local currencies manage to get a foothold. Trading is happening though, so deals with foreigners or other villages is usually concluded by a system of utilitarian trading.

One Idea is an object with one use. Generally coins of any kind are considered to have the single use to trade and thus are worth one Idea.

Any other object may have more than one use and be worth more than one Idea. These objects can be traded for an object of the same value in Ideas.

### Bartering

Most transactions transition usually into a game of bartering. Both parties try to think of ways to use their object to increase their Ideas and try to convince their opposite that these Ideas are reasonable.

For example, you want to buy a bread. The merchant argues that the bread is worth three Ideas: You can eat it yourself, you can feed it to something, and you can gift or trade it. You offer a dagger in return, being able to be traded, attack something and defend others. The baker responds by pointing out that both attacking and defending includes fighting, so he thinks your dagger is worth two Ideas. You come to an agreement, as you explain that you want to eat the bread yourself, so feeding it to something is on the one side too close to eating it yourself, and is not that important to you, resulting in an equal exchange of two Ideas.

Bartering Ideas can involve a Challenge as well, but is supposed to be a roleplay centred activity, with the option for inventive players to gain an advantage.

This leads to weapon being very low in value, as most farmers don't really have a need for more than one weapon if at all, and you usually don't use weapons for anything but fighting.

## Artifacts

Artifacts are special objects that carry innate powers or abilities. It is possible for these objects to even display simple forms of sentience, but that is rare. Artifacts usually are not tradable, due to their mystical nature and it being unclear how many Ideas they actually serve. Additionally, most common Folk are mildly to intensely afraid and cautious with any Artifact.

## Marowing Artifacts

Any form of magical item based in Marrow, has to have some component of dead bone. Due to that they all have the Weapon Property Marrow (see chapter 7?). Most Folk do not dare to touch these for it, running danger of breaking it.

It has been said that there exists a secret metal alloy that is infused with ground down bone dust. This metal is used to create Marrowing Artifacts with apparently no bone inclusions, but the process of creating these artifacts is bound to significantly upset Marrow Wraiths and similar forces.

Marrowing Artifacts have a name and appearance. Some have defined effects, but most can be used by characters in Challenges or during other activities to argue what it is able to do, based on its name and appearance. The game master may request a higher Difficulty or more Successes for a use of a Marrowing Artifact.

## Old-World Artifacts

Before the Old Gods, there was a world of old. This world was highly developed in science and magic, leading to countless lost artifacts strewn across the world. These items usually have lost any non-marrow magic, but the technology usually keeps working. Knowledge about these artifacts is largely lost, so many of them just seem to perform magic after all.

Any modern or science fiction machines, objects, or creatures may be used as Old-World Artifacts.

## Legend Vessels

When defeating the centrepiece of a story, bringing down the evil king of a tale, or burn the wicked witch of a poem, powerful magic happens. Part of the tale concluded is trapped in an object nearby and the spirit of the story is kept alive.

These Legend Vessels are powerful magical objects, able to grant characters immense power. You may actively use only one Legend Vessel at a time. On the end of a Rest, you may change the actively used Legend Vessel to another one on your person.



Legend Vessels usually have sentience and the personality of the Legend. Mostly this sentience is revealed in a telepathic connection with the active user.

### Catch Legend

On defeating and either killing or destroying a Boss, also referred to as Legends, your group may pick any object or body part of the Legend, or any object involved in its defeat to become its Legend Vessel. Any object may ever only be the Vessel for one Legend.

### Commune with Legend

While actively using a Legend Vessel you may try to commune with the Legend trapped inside. To commune you need to perform an act that is reminiscent of the Legend itself or the tale the Legend was a part of. The act must be actually performed and may not be acted or substituted, while all participants may be willing, even if the tale implies otherwise.

When communing with the Legend, the Legend has to answer truthfully to one question the active user has. The Legend may only answer to its knowledge within its lifetime.

### Example Ideas List

#### Artifact List

#### Legend Vessel List

[SETTING ART PAGE]

# [SETTING]

## - Setting Description

- Lore

- Factions

- Old Spirits/ Old Lands (Gods)

- Magic of the Story

- o Legends

- o Folktales

- o Superstition

- Magic of the Gods

- o Apocalypse

- o The Old World

- Magic of the Land

- o Folk

- o Culture

- o The rest

- o Factions

- Place 1: Hill (Village)

- o General Description

- o Places

- o NPCs

- o Plot Hooks/Quests

- o Statblocks

- o Boss

- Place 2: The falling Waters (Open Area)

- Place 3: The old World Cube (Dungeon)

- Place 4: Tree (Large Village)

- Place 5: Dirk (Custom)

## [BEASTIARY]

- Statblocks
  - General Statblocks For Folk
- General Statblocks for Stronger Folks
  - Marrow Wraiths
  - Talebound Adversaries/Legends

## [GM SECTION]

You as the game master carry the role of judge and coordinator. You have the final say in most things, but coming up with the options to decide over, does not need to be only in your hands. Ask your players to help you, come up with ideas and pitch in consequences to their own actions. Plot twists and mystery are a central part of Talebones, but that should not deter you from trying to game master. Starting together with your players is more worth than feeling anxious alone over the scale of decision and responsibility.

### Run the game

What follows is a collection of topics around the mentality of running an adventure of Talebones and useful tips on how to interact with different player behaviours.

### Social Contract

The main goal of everyone participating in play is to have fun. That is always true and should be kept in mind. That does not conclude that your players should just get everything for their characters though. The actual characters are not real and have no feelings. If a player needs their character to succeed at everything to be happy, that will lead to imbalance in attention between them and the other players. Anything like that should be addressed outside of play and cleared with everyone involved, while enabling people to actively reject the idea.

The social contract is only applicable to the players themselves. If a character fails, the fewest players will have an issue, but if they seem to only fail or be overshadowed, this can harbour unhappiness. Due to that you and the group should try to balance times of failure and success, darker and lighter themes and stress and calm periods of play. Where that balance lays, depends on your group and is easily reached by communicating openly throughout.

### Different Types of Players

Your players are naturally going to be interested in different parts of the play experience. To know the most common types of players, can allow you to identify them and include parts into the adventure that speak to them. Any player can of course play the part of multiple types, most do.

#### *The New Player*

Everyone has been a new player to tabletop and pen and paper roleplaying games at some point. These players are not necessarily firm with the rules or comfortable with acting out interactions, but that is usually not due to their type of play, but rather due to inexperience.

To involve new players in your adventure, do...

- establish an open communication, especially about rules and levels of comfort.
- guide them through new experiences and lead by example.

### *Acting*

Players who like to act, love impersonating their character in social and roleplaying scenarios. They like to flesh out their character, their personality, and their flaws.

To involve players who like to act, do...

- include colourful and interesting non-player characters for them to interact with.
- enable them to develop and explore their characters flaws and strengths.
- highlight chances for roleplaying in any situations (e.g. combat: “How do you kill...?”)

### *Explore*

Most worlds and adventures are wide and mysterious. Explorers like to delve into the many facets, mysteries and secrets of your world, lore and story.

To involve players who like to explore, do...

- include mysteries and aspects of your story or world that are unexplained at first.
- give opportunities to discover answers, either by talking to non-player characters or other options.

### *Instigator*

Some players like to cause events, even if at risk of their characters or against caution. They like moving the story forward, rather than spend a long-time planning.

To involve players who like to instigate, do...

- include opportunities to tempt them.
- acknowledge their actions in interactions with non-player characters.

### *Narrating*

Even if you have the role of the overarching narrator, players may be interested in the same craft. They like to recognize good stories and tell them themselves.

To involve players who like to narrate, do...

- include multilayered characters, plot and themes into your adventure.
- open opportunities for them to help you narrate either their own character’s story or the greater story of the adventure.

### *Observer*

Not every player is as adept at handling social situations or wants to take the spotlight, but they still are here to have fun.

To involve players who like to observe, do...

- keep them in the back of your mind and refer to them regularly about what their character does or thinks about the current situation.
- include opportunities for explicitly their character to shine and have significant moments.

### *Optimizing*

Optimizing their character, creating stories of power fantasies and showing these feats off can be a driving force behind the motivation of a player too. So long as this is clearly communicated with the group, everyone has no issue and is not pushed into the background due to it, this is a valid and exciting way to play roleplaying games.

To involve players who like to optimize, do...

- include narrative or mechanical options to become more powerful, perhaps at an interesting cost.
- allow the player to define ways in which their character is unusually exceptional (e.g. by having a special way to move or perceive).

### *Planning*

Having the tactical advantage and control over a situation is a fantasy for some players, which they can live in roleplaying games. If that control does not silence other players, this is a very useful player to have.

To involve players who likes to plan, do...

- include problems that are possible to be solved by proper planning and preparation.
- allow plans to work out from time to time.

### *Purposeful Actions*

Your players will surprise you and will not follow what you prepared from time to time. To know when to allow this and when to reign them back in, is one of the hardest skills a game master can acquire over time. As a rule of thumb, you can assume that if players are willing to spend resources like equipment, hit points, or Signature Move Charges, it should be possible for them to receive something for it. Generally, the consequence will be that the players have a greater feeling of being able to control the plot and be the master of their own fate.

If a player has sacrificed part of their arm to pull out a glowing hot piece of metal from a forge, they should be able to use it in some way or gain an advantage or knowledge through it.

## Purpose of Rules

Each rule defined is just to be understood as a guideline. Your group may not decide to not use any specific set of rules or add some homebrew rules (see chapter 9?). The chain of command goes like this:

Rules suggest a way how to resolve any situation. Players will interpret these rules and try to understand, execute or even bend or break them. The game master is the judge over these attempts and either allows or corrects them.

Due to that, if both players and game master agree, the rules can be completely overruled. Additionally, even if rules and players agree on something, the game master may decide that it does not serve the narrative or session to resolve it like that and may offer an alternative. If this happens the game master should explain themselves though and be open about their reasoning with the players.

## Talebound Epithets

Each time a character avoids death by fracturing a Talebone, a conversation between yourself and that player starts. During writing the characters backstory the player has noted down some ideas for Talebound Epithets. But usually, the near-death experience is connected to an action by the character that can be seen or at least twisted to be seen as morally grey or even plain bad. These are more obvious to you as the game master.

So, with a collection of ideas which part of the character the Epithet should reference, you and the player decide on a specific narrative that should become part of the public consciousness. That narrative should reference the character directly, or at least describe people like them to a degree that they can't really avoid the connection. Additionally, the narrative should be twisted far enough from the truth to portray the character in a questionable light at the least, or even plainly as a villain. Receiving a mostly positive Epithet should be only in the power of the Old Gods and their most powerful allies, so basically not for player characters.

Based on this narrative you both can think off a well sounding Epithet.

### Ideas for Epithets

- **Name of Origin:** „... of Rome”, “... of the earth”, “... from the depths”
- **Name of Actions:** “The Butcher”, “Bringer of Bad News”, “Thief of names”
- **Name of Essence:** “Seventh Son”, “Lost Child”, “King of Nothing”
- **Name of Appearance:** “The Tall”, “Stubby ...”, “The Bald”

The roles during this discussion should be for the player to have most control over the choice, and the game master sticking to advising and suggesting. Additionally, the game



master should of course communicate if any specific Epithet or narrative has little opportunity to be significant in the adventure or portrays the character too positively.

The final choice over the Talebound Epithet is only in the hand of the player. The game master may veto certain choices but should never restrict the choice to only their own suggestions.

From this point on, every Folk the character meets may have heard that narrative, in forms of tale, poem or song. The Folk does not need to reasonably have access to this information. Having fit onto a single Talebound Epithet can be explained by bad luck, if you are otherwise non-suspicious, but the more Epithets apply, the more the characters interacting with the talebound character are gripped by superstition.

### *Using Talebound Epithets to balance the adventure*

In the worst-case situation of the players finding a way to significantly disrupt the balance of your adventure, for example by discovering a powerful combination of Incantations or by discovering an unintended weak spot in your creatures, you should immediately step into an open conversation with them.

Possibly this kind of issue can be resolved by simply addressing it and the players stopping to do it. In this conversation you may also offer to alleviate any in character fears by putting restraints on the character by the means of Talebound Epithets. The character at their next death could receive a Talebound Epithet, referencing their methods and connotating it badly. Due to that any further use of the ability can be connected to heavy social repercussions, beyond the mechanical effects.

The rule, of a player always having to agree to any specific Epithet still applies and should not be circumvented, even if you are of the opinion that this is necessary.

## **On determining Difficulty and required Successes**

You as the game master have the difficult task of determining numbers for each Challenge a player rolls. Determining the “correct” number is a skill that comes with experience, but there are several short hands for either determining Difficulty or required Successes for any one Challenge.

### *Difficulty or Advantage/Disadvantage*

Mechanically changing Difficulty or granting Advantage or Disadvantage is the same. In the rules Difficulty is generally used to describe an action on the side of the game master, and Advantage/Disadvantage an action on the side of the players, who gain Advantage/Disadvantage from any of their abilities. In communication you may use either, whichever works best for you.

Changing the Difficulty of a Challenge is the easiest way to make a Challenge harder or easier to succeed in. A single change of Difficulty should only exceed plus or minus five, if the circumstances are extraordinary. Added up with all other changes and

Advantages/Disadvantages, the final change in Difficulty may be larger than five of course.

If there is a single circumstance of the challenge that changes its Difficulty, it is usually possible to quantify it in terms of a number between one and five. For example, if a character tries to unlock a lock while at a high place, they may have to deal with an increase in Difficulty equal to their Steps above the ground. Alternatively, a band performance with some non-player characters may lead to a decrease in Difficulty equal to the band members beyond the rolling character.

### Poise is just a number

When determining required successes to overcome a specific person, for example in a conversation or social Challenge, you can simply treat the Success Pool as Poise Damage, with the person caving in when they are defeated.

In combat, whenever a player character sacrifices AP to gather information, convince or intimidate, consider applying equal Poise Damage to relevant targets on top of the results of the Challenge.

This approach leads to Difficulty being more comprehensible by players. They know that if they move the lock picking closer to the ground or if they add more band members their Challenge will be easier, and you don't have to explain bad circumstances in detail.

Generally, just try to feel it out. A more tense scene will warrant more harsh metrics to judge a Challenge (e.g. "Increase in Difficulty equal to lost Poise this scene among all characters"), but do not hesitate to not change the Difficulty if there is no reason for it too (e.g. the characters try to remember something in a non-tense scene).

### Required Successes

The required Successes to overcome a Challenge without consequences is another tool of yours but should be wielded with more care. Most challenges should stay within three to five required Successes.

Three Successes in a Challenge is achievable by most characters by themselves and should describe most easier tasks without much multitasking. Any less than three Successes are the absolute majority of any Challenge's Success Pool, so is not very representative of any real Challenge. If you are considering less Successes than three, you should consider just allowing the player to describe how they succeed without requiring a roll.

Five Successes are not achievable by a single character except they are extremely skilled in the given task. Five successes describe a Challenge of medium difficulty, if the rolling character gets help from other characters. Coordination between players can be difficult in within itself, and the more dice are rolled, the higher is the variance of the Success Pool. Due to that five successes should be the ceiling of most Challenges the characters meet in their adventure.

More than five Successes describe a task of unusual difficulty or scope. Either the characters attempt something in a fraction of the time a task like that usually takes, attempt a cooperative task while not being able to communicate and coordinate as a group, set their eyes on a task of unbelievable complexity, or any combination of these circumstances. A Challenge with more than five required Successes should always go along an increase in tension and drama and the players should be able to describe their actions in detail in case of success.

### *Excessive Success*

If a Success Pool exceeds ten Successes, you should consider the Challenge succeeded with supernatural results. Ten Successes represents the story, world, and fate smiling at the characters. They should be able to describe what they do, without any consequences, no matter how unbelievable the success is.

If the Challenge attempted is only achievable by an act of fate, you are free to require ten or even more successes, but if that is the case, you should inform your players that the Challenge is this difficult and that serious consequences will occur if they fail. Ten or more required Successes should only ever be used in the climax of the story or equivalent dramatic moments.

### *Running Initiative*

Running an Initiative can be very complex on you as a single person. Due to that this section gives you tools to handle most parts of the process. Do feel free to ignore certain advice or add some of your own, this section is purely optional.

#### *Note Taking*

As game master, you have the responsibility to track a few core metrics of Initiative.

You should track the Initiative order of the player characters and allied non-player characters each round and coordinate the resolving of Initiative (see Chapter 6?).

Additionally, it is your responsibility to track Action Points of the Encounter, and the Poise, Status Effects and possibly Hit Points of each opponent.

It is not your responsibility to track AP, Poise and Hit Points of the player characters. If the players do not do it well, you should work out a system for them to keep better notes, but you already have a lot to keep in mind, so the solution should not be for you to do everything.

#### *Tracking Initiative Order*

To track initiative order you should keep in mind that the order changes each round. So if you do not want to write down the new order each time, you should invest in something you can rearrange, like cards with the player characters names on it, small trinkets or figurines each representing a character, or small pop-up name cards.

### *Tracking Numbers*

When taking notes on paper, you should separate them between rounds. Action Points reset every round and due to that do not need to be tracked over multiple rounds.

If you have any additional dice on hand, you can track numbers like AP and Poise with them, by counting down their displayed number (there are specifically Counter Dice too, which are easier to use for this purpose).

### *Tracking Status Effects*

Status effects can be tracked easier with physical markers on the figurines of the characters. Either have coloured snippets of paper on hand you can place the figurines on or have bottle cap rings in different colours for different Status Effects. You do not even need to cover all Status Effects, just the ones possible to be applied in an Initiative.

The most common Status Effects are Tripped and Staggered, so you should think about a solution for these at least.

### *Tracking Positions*

Talebones can be played completely without a grid and actual figurines. Each character should have a unique token of some kind though, and due to the vague definition of Steps as a distance measurement, you can literal “step” the token forward, by replacing it one length further down a path.

This can be supported by a square or hexagonal grid, to judge distances more easily or customizable figurines. Either way, you should consider investing in some form of furniture or object markers to create a better picture of obstacles and covers for your players. These can be made easily by cutting down pieces of paper without additional costs.

### *Tracking Reactions*

If tracking Reactions and their announcement becomes an issue you may resort to handing each player a unique physical marker like a playing card or coin. Whenever they want to announce a Reaction, they may tap the marker with their finger or throw the marker on the table. The thrown markers can then be used to arrange the Reaction Chain like the solutions for Initiative order.

## **Combat between player characters**

Combat between player characters should never be due to personal disagreements between players. Due to that it is advised to resolve combat of this kind in a roleplay interaction, with both players working to resolve the conflict appropriately and in a way that everyone is comfortable with. This includes both players agreeing which character wins or loses the conflict, or if and what both win and lose at the same time. The game master should take up the role of mediator in these situations.

If there is still reason to go into Initiative after the out of character conversation, or the conflict happens within an already resolving Initiative, the rules differ slightly from the usual resolution.

In an Initiative with an Encounter of either the environment or non-allied characters, the Initiative Order remains the same, but the conflicting characters have to agree to any Supportive Actions announced to their Actions.

If the Encounter contains a group one of the conflicting characters sees themselves allied to due to the conflict, or if both sides of the conflict have more than one character, the Initiative treats one group of the characters as part of the encounter. In this case the previous Encounter members need to roll an Initiative order too and the newly joined characters keep their old order.

In these Initiatives you should take extra care of keeping in communication with the players and remind them of the safety tools in place in case someone feels uncomfortable.

## Tell the Story

Here you can read about how to plan out and write an adventure, a story, or a One-shot for your group of players.

Stories are as varied as people are, so to find alternative story structures, expose yourself to more stories by reading books, watching movies or listening to other people tell stories about their lives.

## Inspiration

By the nature of Talebones' world, you may be inclined to be inspired by an already existing story, motif, character, or location, fictional or real. Any story that is told in the real world, be it by text, song, act or even dance can be used as inspiration.

You should analyse which parts of the story you like and which parts can be either subverted or left open for players to explore or ignore as they wish. Generally, you should try to keep the inspiration to the Establishing Shot of the adventure and set up details like location and cast of characters. The actual actions of the players should not be required to match the story you are inspired by. Some players might recognize the story and choose to adhere to it by themselves, but the players should be free to approach the issue at hand any way they can think off and not fail due to not doing exactly as you think they should act.

## Establishing Shot

Each story needs a start, and one of the most common beginnings is that that is normal. A description of the environment before the adventure picks up and changes the status quo to create the conflict necessary for the story to occur (technically not every story needs a conflict, but as a start it is good to assume so).

In an actual play scenario, you should include a scene or even whole session for the characters to interact and just live in the moment. If this is the first time the players get to meet their characters they can introduce them in a calm context.

In Talebones this usually occurs on a journey from one village to another. The wilderness is dangerous, but only in between long durations of boring peacefulness. Alternatively the Establishing Shot can take place as the characters arrive in a new village or location.

During the Establishing Shot you should include most of the necessary set up for the adventure to make sense. This possibly includes introducing veiled hints at the larger plot, establishing important non-player characters or even smaller conflicts, that show that not everything is as peaceful as it seems.

At some point during the Establishing Shot an inciting incident should occur. This is either a sudden burst of conflict, a sudden shift in perspective on a location or a character, or a revelation. After the incident the player character are supposed to have a hard time continuing their mundane activities and the Establishing Shot should end soon after.

Popular Establishing Shots are Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes talking before someone with a case comes to them, Bilbo Baggins sitting in front of his home before Gandalf comes to bother him, or Luke Skywalker buying two droids to help on his uncle's farm before they are revealed to carry a message.

## Heightened Tension

After the Establishing Shot the rest of the story takes place. This can be of any narrative structure you can imagine and does not necessarily be a constant increase of tension. Murder mysteries usually increase the tension fast at the very start along with the inciting incident of the murder and keep the tension relatively stable after. Only increasing it further if another victim is discovered. Other narrative structures increase tension more regularly, as for example the three-act structure common in many fictional stories. The three-act structure shows clearly that the tension does not need to be only rising too. Within the main body of the story, there can be phases of calm, moments to recoup composure and to check in with the other characters.

## Resolution

At the end of the story there is usually some kind of resolution. That can be another heightening of tension in form of a climactic fight or tense reveal. The resolution is one of the more common points in the story of character death, or in case of the player characters, of Fracturing a Talebone. Any consequences of significance to the player characters should have been predictable. Plot twists and revealing of secrets are popular but need to be treated with great care, as players can feel a lot more strongly about experiencing it than hearing about it happening to someone else.

## Outlook

The story returns to a place of calm or normalcy at the end. Maybe nothing seems to have changed beyond the characters themselves, maybe the result of the events is drastic, and they are confronted with a completely new outlook on life. Plan in time for player characters to have a couple of scenes to debrief and settle down after a tense Resolution.

The same applies to the players themselves. After the adventure has closed be open to answer questions they may have, reveal clues, parts of the story, or characters they have missed.

### *After every Session*

Do use roleplaying safety tools like Stars & Wishes after each session (see Chapter 2?). Additionally, if the adventure continues after this session, ask the players the questions determining the Plot Points they gain for this session (see Chapter 2?).

## Example: 5 Room Dungeon

The 5-room dungeon is a common stylistic device in adventure writing. Generally, it is structured as follows:

1. Entrance and Guardian  
*An obstacle that prevents the characters from entering the actual area of their adventure.*
2. Puzzle or Roleplaying Challenge  
*A trial that cannot be solved by brute force and offers a break in the adventure.*
3. Trick or Setback  
*Building of tension and an opportunity to include players not yet catered to.*
4. Climax, Big Battle or Conflict  
*The central Encounter or Obstacle blocking the characters from reaching their goal.  
Should be as cinematic as possible.*
5. Reward, Revelation, Plot Twist  
*Reveal of future things to come or recontextualization of the victory in Room 4.*

A 5-room dungeon does not have to be exactly 5-rooms, nor does it have to be an actual dungeon. The structure can be applied to anything that should be relatively short, but nonetheless should have a narrative arc.

In terms of sub-chapters mentioned, the Entrance and Guardian take the role of the Establishing Shot, introducing the setting and inciting incident. As soon as the characters are past the Entrance there is no return, the only way is forward.

Room 2 and 3 describe the Heightening Tension, introducing the theme of the dungeon in two different ways and iterating on it.

The Climax and Reward rooms supply the Resolution, both in confrontation and information or wealth. The fifth room is partially responsible for serving as the Outlook too, so here you see that parts of the adventure can serve multiple purposes.



## Talecards

Writing your own adventure and story can be daunting. Other tasks like roleplaying characters can be made easier by focusing on the interaction with the player characters, but writing the story usually happens while you are alone. If new story needs to be written in the moment, it is hard to take your time and quickly come up with something too.

To help you in all these situations, Talebones offers the concept of Talecards. Talecards are a deck of 50 playing cards, each with a common trope appearing in fiction and other art. Each of these tropes or story subjects are briefly named, described, and explained what they can be used to evoke in your players. Additionally, each card gives examples of how to subvert the trope.

### *Using Talecards*

Whenever you need a prompt or idea to come up with a story you can make use of the Talecards.

You may just draw a card at random and let your imagination take it from there, but you may use a more structured approach too, combining multiple cards too.

### Taledice

The special Talecard deck (sold separately) has a custom artwork for each trope on each card. If you do not have access to it, you can use a d100, divide it by two, and reference the table below, whenever you otherwise would draw a Talecard.

Before drawing any cards, you should make up your mind about what you want. Most likely you already have a player or non-player character, place or inciting incident that you want to include in your narrative. This may be something you are inspired by from outside Talebones or something wholly original to your story. Note down these fixed aspects or at the very least voice them out loud.

### Three-card Pull

Talecards are best used like tarot cards. The interpretation is best slightly adapted, but the most basic spread of multiple cards is the three-card pull. For this purpose, draw three cards and arrange them in a row from left to right. The centre card (1) describes the current situation of the story. The left card (2) explains what happened in the past to set up the story and cause the current situation and any future events. The past is the part the player characters have the least control and knowledge over. They can find out more about it over the course of the adventure. The right card (3) can be interpreted multiple ways. Either way it is only concerned with events happening throughout play. Due to that the predictive power is greatly lessened. But the easiest readings are either as the inciting incident of the adventure in relation to the player characters or as the best way for the player characters to resolve the conflict. Keep in mind that the fun of the players is first, so the third card is merely a suggestion until the players come up with something better or more fun.



[Example]

### Celtic Cross

A more complex way to lay cards is called the Celtic-Cross in tarot. In this spread you put down 10 cards, with each cards meaning listed below.

Cards (1), (3), and (4) are the present, past and future cards, same as with the three-card pull.

The second card (2) describes the main challenge or struggle that defines the story. This can be a struggle the player characters are facing themselves or specific non-player characters are facing.

The card above (5) and below (6) expand on the motivations and driving forces behind the plot. (5) is the explicit goal of the story, the plot point characters in the narrative strive for. (6) in comparison is the subconscious driving force behind the actions. Maybe a reason why the current situation shouldn't be the way it is.

(7) illustrates a helpful ally or advantageous strategy that can help resolve the story in a desired way, some advice to keep in mind.

(8) describes an external influence on the plot. That can be positive or negative, but the external influence does not necessarily have stakes in the resolution but changes the context of the characters' actions.

(9) is a hope or a fear, some uncertain aspect of the narrative, which, if it is true, can change the outcome drastically, either for the better or worse.

Finally, the last card (10) gives a hint on the outcome of the adventure. Similarly to the card describing the future of the plot, this is highly malleable due to the player characters having free choice about their actions. You may let yourself be inspired to a plot twist or revelation by this last card, too.

[Example]

### Inverted cards

As an alternative addition you may interpret if a card has been placed down the wrong way around. You can subvert tropes on inverted cards and take the trope at face value if the card is not inverted. This reading gives you even more starting points for your inspiration, but might start to restrict you, especially with more cards, as in the Celtic cross.

	<b>Talecard</b>		<b>Talecard</b>
1	3	26	Journey
2	4	27	Lie to spouse
3	7	28	Magical sleep
4	12	29	McGuffin
5	13	30	Mentor

6	Amnesia	31	Monkey's Paw
7	Beauty beyond compare	32	Power corrupts
8	Birthright	33	Power of Names
9	Birth Sign/Defect	34	Refusal of the call
10	Call to adventure	35	Secret helper
11	Chosen one	36	Shapechanger
12	Cunning solution	37	Sleeping guardian
13	Consuming Folk	38	Spirits
14	Curse	39	Surrogate Parents
15	Damsel in distress	40	Switched children
16	Enthralling Music/Song	41	Test of virtue
17	Evil Witch	42	The just monarchy
18	Fate	43	Timeless Fey
19	Fate worse than death	44	Treasure Island
20	Foundling	45	Uncontrollable/Wild Magic
21	Greed	46	Undeath
22	Hidden (true) Beauty	47	Unexpected Guest/Contender
23	Hubris	48	Uninvited Guest/Contender
24	Immortality/Undying	49	Unknown identity
25	Invention	50	Weapon of the lake

3

4

7

12

13

Amnesia

Beauty beyond compare

Birthright

Birth Sign/Defect

Call to adventure

Chosen one

Cunning solution

Consuming Folk

Curse

Damsel in distress

Enthralling Music/Song

Evil Witch

Fate

Fate worse than death

Foundling

Greed

Hidden (true) Beauty

Hubris

Immortality/Undying

Invention

Journey

Lie to spouse

Magical sleep

McGuffin

Mentor

Monkey's Paw

Power corrupts

Power of Names

Refusal of the call

Secret helper  
Shapechanger  
Sleeping guardian  
Spirits  
Surrogate Parents  
Switched children  
Test of virtue  
The just monarchy  
Timeless Fey  
Treasure Island  
Uncontrollable/Wild Magic  
Undeath  
Unexpected Guest/Contender  
Uninvited Guest/Contender  
Unknown identity  
Weapon of the lake

## Build the World

Writing and building the world your adventure and story take place in is a difficult task, but it does not need to be that way. There are many different ways how to write a fictional world, but to start it is completely fine for you to just write the places important to your narrative and leave the rest blank. Maybe your players can help you with filling these blanks or you will come around to it later, but the only necessary part to prepare are the actual locations your players are going to explore or witness. Each of those locations can fulfil one or more purposes and is defined by many different perspectives. Not all perspectives have to be completely explored for a location to fulfil any purpose, but you should at least consider exploring them.

## Tenants of Talebones' World

Talebone as a roleplaying game, assumes some basic rules about any setting, world or place. These rules should be followed, so the rules do not detract from your writing.

- Stories and superstition are widespread and magical in of themselves.
- All Characters may use magic by severely hurting themselves.
- Being fast is more significant than being sturdy.
- Being experienced is more significant than being physically capable.
- Most things are achievable with a good plan.
- Antagonistic forces make frequent use of mental attacks on characters (e.g. fear, panic, mystery)

## Isolated Places (Context)

Each place exists in context to all other places. Most are far enough away from each other to not meaningfully impact their appearance or feel, but even far away kingdoms can define the worries, wealth or fates of a small village the player characters visit.

When writing a place do at least go through all plot-relevant places of your adventure and consider how these could affect the current location. A giant volcano will impact the climate and culture for communities for miles and a village of goblinoid Folk will litter the forest around them with traps to catch careless travellers.

Isolated places technically do not have other places affecting them physically, but the context of the surrounding or similar places is still important. Describe to your players what they notice is different. What is a sign of the isolated lifestyle of these people? Is the culture significantly different and how do they spend their days?

## Wonderful Places (Appearance)

The first impression on your players of most places is by your description of it. Appearance is more than visuals here, the smells, sounds and feel of a place are as important to describe as those visuals. Try to always include at least one more sense than sight for any description of a new place, especially if you have characters that perceive differently.

The description of a place usually sets the tone for any scenes taking place there. A tense village will most likely have a tense and dreary atmosphere in any interactions with villagers, a bustling marketplace is a more inviting place for exciting hijinks, and a graveyard by night is naturally spooky and scary. Whenever you create a place for a story or a story for a place, keep in mind how the tones of each interact. It is not impossible to subvert a dark place with a hopeful scene, interaction or plot beat, but it should be a conscious decision.

## Narrative Places (Purpose)

Not every location you describe has to be necessitated by the narrative of the adventure. Nonetheless locations without any reason to be included can feel unnecessary to the players, if they don't have another aspect to divert their attention. Due to that it is always beneficial to include some piece of evidence or plot beat, the players may discover if they look for it. Do consider what role the location takes in your narrative and pacing of the adventure and include it into your writing.

## Homely Places (Characters)

The fewest places are completely abandoned by life. Most villages have denizens, most ruins harbour monster, and empty roads may have travellers wandering. By the rules everything is Folk, but you can consider who these Folk are in particular.

Any character has an appearance, wants and needs. Some have wondrous behaviours and some even supernatural abilities.

## Dark Places (Secrets and Drama)

Finally, there are aspects to a place that are not readily apparent to anyone newly arriving. There are secrets, mysteries and dark undercurrents permeating each small village, ruin and campsite. Characters have feuds, other villages send undercover spies, and dark alley deals relevant to the story are happening all over.

While writing a place, do not stop at the obvious, the first thing you describe to your players. Locations are as layered as characters, and one has to interact with them over a longer time to uncover all secrets, conflict and drama hidden just beneath the surface.

## Side Quests

Your narrative is front and centre to the adventure, but especially during a longer story, players need distractions and break ups of tension. Any of the aforementioned aspects of a location can serve as the basis of a small task or quest, the players may decide to tackle while actually having other things to do.

Be it a Folk asking the characters for help, redecorating the market square, a child having run away from home or a small bounty on a creature outside the ruins of an old house inhabited by mites. Any of these tasks can be usually ignored by the players, if they are deemed uninteresting or unimportant, but if attempted, can offer a wide array of approaches and resolutions.

Side Quests are great tools to introduce a different tone to the rest of the adventure and hint or reveal secrets of the location you are currently in.

## Locationcards

Same as Talecards, Locationcards are useful to inspire you or quickly fill a set piece with alluring locations. Locationcards is a deck of 50 cards, each with a unique location and a short description. Each location comes with examples for small side quests and non-player characters.

Whenever you need to fill a village with some notable locations for your players to explore and get to know the place, you can just draw that many cards and introduce these locations to the narrative.

## Build the Game

### Crafting Artifacts

Players tend to like gathering as much stuff as possible. The logical follow up is for players to ask to create their own artifacts, inventions or signature weapons. There are generally two ways to approach such a request, both are based in the fact that crafting any artifact will take significant time and resource investments.

### *Crafting during Downtime*

The least involved process is to craft an artifact in between adventures. The player character must have a prolonged time of rest, at least a month, in a secure location with sufficient tools and skill to be able to craft anything. This process lends itself best to Artifacts emulating Old World magic (see Chapter 5). Marrowing Artifacts created like this should only have very minor effects or the process should only produce the blank that can be further enchanted during the story.

### *Crafting during Adventure*

Otherwise, any crafting ventures are great material for side quests or secondary plot lines during any story. If the desired Artifact is of exceptional value, it might even be possible to have a full storyline about hunting down a specific ingredient or Legend for either its Legend Vessel or possession.

Artifacts gained during a story can be whatever you allow the players to possess. If they turn out too powerful you may always communicate that with the players and change the rules of the item, break it or let it be stolen. The process of retrieving the Artifact can be in itself another narrative, that rewards the players with a reworked Artifact in the end.

## **New Reactions**

When creating new Reactions, you should follow these general rules.

If a Reaction includes multiple different normal Actions (e.g. Movement and Attack Action) the AP-cost should reflect that. It should be roughly the same AP-cost as all included Actions' AP-costs combined.

Do try to be specific with the trigger of the Reaction. General Reactions that can react to more than one Action type or event are immensely useful and will otherwise become the default choice of your players over any other more niche options. This reduces gameplay breadth and character customization options.

Whenever a Reaction makes use of either a Weapon or moves the character voluntarily, do consider making the AP-cost dependant on which Weapon Talent or which Movement Action is used. You may add a flat cost to the variable value, but these types of calculations should be kept to a minimum.

## **New Weapon Talents**

If you or a player miss a certain type of weapon to meet a certain character concept, you might resort to write a new Weapon Talent. This section leads you through the creation process and explains the general steps necessary to make it unique.

### *Identity*

Any Weapon Talent should be notably different than all other Weapon Talents. Due to that the first step is to consider what you want from it that is currently not covered. Do you want to have a specific ability while using these types of weapons or do you have a

specific reference in mind that you want to emulate. This identity of the Weapon Talent should be clear before you start putting rules to it, so you can make decisions that are contributing to that identity.

### *Positives*

Each Weapon Talent has positives and drawbacks. Positives are things that make the use of these weapons more powerful, more versatile, or more attractive to players.

The **shortsword** Weapon Talent is considered the average base, for a weapon without specific positives and drawbacks (see chapter 3?).

A faster weapon might want to use a Weapon Talent with a low AP-cost for each attack. A more dangerous weapon might favour a larger Weapon Dice Pool. In Talebones a Weapon Talent usually has to decide for one of these two aspects to focus on. If both the AP-cost is small and Weapon Dice Pool is large, the Properties of the Weapon Talent should be debilitating to the point of not being able to use these weapons most of the time.

A Weapon Talent should not cost less than 3 AP to use. The Weapon Dice Pool should not exceed 4 with weapons that can be readily used.

Additionally, you may decide to give a Weapon Talent specific Properties to improve the fighting using them. The advantageous Properties already present are generally sorted in two sections: Utility and Identity. Utility Properties allow weapons to be used differently in different situations. For example, by allowing players to choose the distance at which they attack from within a range or choose if they would like to do more damage or more consistent damage. Identity properties are conceits to bend the hard rules to allow for a certain fantasy to be played out. For example, by reducing AP-cost below 3 AP with Momentum.

### *Drawbacks*

Generally, each positive should get paired with an equivalent drawback. If the AP-cost gets reduced, you should decrease the Weapon Dice Pool as well and the other way around.

Properties that act as drawbacks are either Restrictions or Risks. Restrictions force the player character to only use the weapon a certain way, like using both hands, so not using a side weapon, or only having one weapon of the Weapon Talent on them at a time. Risks of a weapon can be risks of using the weapon or most commonly, of the weapon breaking during use. This applies especially to any magic weapons, made from bone.

## Create a Legend

The most difficult task you have is designing and running Legend encounters. These climactic battles are often the highlight of an adventure and might seem daunting to plan out and design. With these advice it is achievable to write a compelling experience for your players though.



## Adapt an existing Legend Encounter

The easiest way to run a Legend Encounter is for you to take an already Legend Encounter from Chapter 7? and only change superficial or single aspects of the Encounter according to the following steps.

### Identity

First define central personality and roleplaying aspects of the Legend. Who are they? What is their name? Are they naturally hostile or agitated by something? What is their favourite thing in the world? Consider how they look, what their emotional effect on other characters is and how they fight.

### Purpose and Structure

The purpose of a Legend encounter is not always and solely to be a large action set piece for your players to enjoy. Do consider which optional endings exist to the fight, beyond murdering the Legend, and what the overarching narrative is and how the encounter contributes to it. The Legend may have motives themselves, that can be exploited or pandered to by the players. As an example, the Legend might want to activate an Old-World Artifact to do something, and will surrender if the Artifact is destroyed, deactivated or threatened.

A sign of powerful Legend encounters are mechanics that disable large parts of the player characters Initiative tools, for example by having far superior movement, resistances to damage or similar abilities. Beyond handing these out, do consider what you can incorporate into the environment of the encounter to allow players to disable or prevent these abilities, for example destroying a power source or making the terrain difficult to move across.

### Talebones

A Legend commonly has at least one Talebone, if not several. These act as the phases of combat. After the Legend gets reduced to 0 HP, it fractures a Talebone, except it regains all HP as well. Do try to think of daunting Epithets the player characters become aware as the encounter progresses.

Each Phase should bring a change in Movement and Attack pattern of the Legend, usually by unlocking new Actions and Reactions.

### Statistics

A Legend should have a maximum of **22** converted Poise per character fighting it (converted Poise is the sum of all Poise plus one converted Poise per 11 HP). The maximum damage a character can deal does rarely increase significantly, character progression is rather defined by approaching a more consistent damage output.

If you want a sturdy combatant, you should lean towards giving the Legend more Poise than more HP, as more HP leads to more adding up of Hit Point Damage during combat.

Action Points should be at least 10 + the number of characters fighting the Legend. If you wish to have a faster and more dangerous Initiative give them more.

## Base Attributes

Pick one or two Base Attributes that define the Legend and give them points ranging from 5 to 10. A value more than 10 is godlike abilities in the Base Attribute and rarely achieved, even by Legends.

The other Base Attributes range somewhere between 2 and 5, although Legends rarely have Base Attributes with 1 point, except it is a specific weakness of theirs. You may pick Body and Speed, so the previously established Poise and HP make sense, but do not feel constricted to it.

## Attacks

Is the Legend a melee brawler, a long distant tactician or maybe even a designated Marrow-Witch? Most Legends use at least one Weapon Talent to bridge pauses in their fighting or excel at using the weapon beyond mortal means.

## Reactions and Incantations

The Legend should have at least one Reaction for each type of Action. This way they may punish any unnecessary Actions by the player characters and their allies. A gap in that coverage, for example by not having a Reaction to Movement Actions, is a fatal flaw of a Legend, and usually a trait of early Encounters, when the characters are weaker.

## Combos

Combos are a chain of Actions and Reactions the Legend may perform as a singular Reactive Action to any or a specific trigger. The Combo may only be reacted to as one Action, character may not interrupt it. Combos are usually tied to the current phase of the encounter.

## Telegraphed Actions

Right before powerful Reactions or Combos, characters may have to perform a Telegraphed Action. A Telegraphed Action does not do anything by itself but may be reacted to as if it was any type of Action. The last part of the Reaction Chain is the actual dangerous Action or sequence of Actions (i.e. you cannot react both to the Telegraphed Action and the actual Action).

## Abilities

There are many Abilities that can aid and hinder Legends achieving victory. Following is a list with exclusive Abilities for Legends.

Armor	Once during combat, if the Legend starts its turn with no Poise, refill all Poise.	
Cleanse (X)	As a Reactive Action to any trigger, the Legend spends X AP and removes 1 Status Effect from itself.	
Marrow Oath (X)	If the Legend rolls a Marrowing Challenge with a Challenge Dice Pool of X or less, it does not take any Hit Point damage.	
Resistance (X)	Any damage the Legend takes is reduced by X before conversion to Hit Point damage.	

## Minions

If the Legend is a character that does not like to do the dangerous work themselves, they may have Minions as part of the encounter. Minions should not have more than 3 Poise and not have Hit Points. Each Minion contributes AP equal to one attack with their Weapon Talent to the Encounter AP-pool.

## Moving Parts

Do not feel afraid to change any aspect of the Legend during the Encounter. Your players do not know what you have written down, so you may adapt the rules in a way to make the Encounter more, or less, tense.

## Legend Vessel Ability

After the Encounter is resolved, the players may decide which part of the Legends or item involved in their defeat becomes the Legend Vessel.

Do try to distil the power fantasy of being that Legend into one of their Actions, Reactions or Abilities for the players to use and enjoy.

[SHORT ADVENTURE]

## [APPENDIX]

- Appendix

- Character Sheet

# [Rules Glossary]

## Glossary Conventions

The glossary uses the following conventions:

**Abbreviation.** The abbreviations below are commonly used in the glossary and elsewhere.

AP	Action Points
HP	Hit Points
NPC	Nonplayer character
PC	Player character

## Rules Definitions

### Ability

An ability is a passive ability that your character may have or gain to support or enhance your actions.

### Action

An action in the context of initiative is a discrete activity that costs AP to perform. Any action can be the trigger for a reaction, unless stated otherwise.

Actions defined in the glossary are:

Attack Action

Help Action

Movement Action

Draw Action

### Advantage

If you have advantage on a challenge, you subtract a specified number from the difficulty of the challenge. Advantage is specified as for example “advantage (-3)”.

### Action Points

Any participant of initiative has an amount of AP at their disposal. Most actions during initiative cost AP to perform. You regain all AP at the start of your round. You lose all unspent AP at the end of your turn.

### Attack Action

An attack action is any action that involves an attack challenge of any kind. It costs AP dependant on the Weapon used.

## Attack Challenge

An Attack Challenge always uses a Weapon (see Unarmed Attack for exception). You can be skilled in the challenge, if you are using a Weapon of your Weapon Talent. The challenge dice pool is determined by your base attribute and the weapon dice pool.

## Base Attribute

Anything can have eight Base Attributes – Force, Body, Speed, Intelligence, Feel, Experience, Feel and Luck - each has points attributed. If the Base Attribute has no points, you are unable to make challenges based in it.

## Base Attribute Challenge

A challenge based just based in a Base Attribute is specified like for example: “roll a Speed Challenge”. The Challenge Dice Pool is equal to your points in the Base Attribute.

## Body Attacks

If you walk into the space of someone, they may roll a Body Challenge, dealing damage to you equal to the successes. This Action does not cost AP.

## Challenge

A challenge is a roll of d20s equal to the [Challenge Dice Pool] of the challenge, representing an action a character performs. The game master has the final word, if a challenge is required for any action.

## Challenge Dice Pool

The Challenge Dice Pool defines the number of d20 you roll for a given challenge.

## Compound Challenge

A Compound Challenge is composed of multiple Base Attributes. For the Challenge Dice Pool, add up all points in the corresponding Base Attributes.

## Cumulative Talent

## Contest

If one Challenge contests another one, successes cancel out one to one. Only the remaining successes count towards the Challenges Success Pool.

## Critical Failure

If a challenge has no successes one of the following events takes place:

**Challenge Dice Pool equal to one:** The action fails completely and cannot be reattempted.

**Challenge Dice Pool greater than one:** The action fails spectacularly, and serious consequences transpire.

**Challenge was an Attack Challenge:** Target gains the opportunity to react with a Riposte.

## Damage

If you take damage, you first take Poise Damage until your Poise is expended and afterwards take Hit Point Damage. If you take more Poise damage than you have Poise left, the leftover damage gets turned into Hit Point damage. If a rule states Poise or Hit Point Damage explicitly it cannot be converted by any means. Exceeding damage vanishes.

## Death

If you drop to zero hit points and do not fracture a Talebone, you die. Confer with the game master about how you wish your player character's story is to be recalled by NPCs.

## Difficulty

The Difficulty of a challenge is a number between one and twenty. Any dice of the Challenge Dice Pool must roll equal or greater to the difficulty to be counted towards the Success Pool.

The base Difficulty for an unskilled Challenge is **13**.

The game master can adjust the Difficulty by any amount, usually by up to five in either direction.

## Disadvantage

If you have disadvantage on a challenge, you add a specified number to the difficulty of the challenge. Disadvantage is specified as for example "disadvantage (+3)".

## Downed

While you lay on the ground defenceless, you are also Tripped.

Attacks against downed targets usually are rolled at advantage (+1), due to the difference in elevation.

## Draw Action

During a Draw Action you either Draw or Stow any object on your person you are able to hold in your hands.

## Elevation

If you are above your target, you gain advantage (- height difference in Steps) on any challenges interacting with the target. If you are below your target, you gain disadvantage (+ height difference in Steps). Height difference is measured at the start of your action and ignores changes during the action.



## Encounter

An encounter is a group of NPCs that work against the PCs and their allies during initiative. All members of an encounter share a single pool of AP.

## Excessive Success

If the size of the Success Pool of any Challenge is equal to or greater than ten, the game master may declare an Excessive Success. The character achieves the given task to a degree that rivals supernatural results.

## Heavy Object

Some weapons and other objects can be Heavy. At all times you are only able to carry one heavy object or gain the Status Effect Prone.

## Help

If you Help an ongoing Challenge, you explain how you intend to help the successful outcome of it. The GM then asks you to roll your own Challenge. All successes get added to the original Challenge.

## Help Action

During your turn you can take the Help Action once, to use the Reaction Help once without paying AP until the end of your round.

## Hit Points

Hit points (HP) are a representation of how healthy or intact your character or an object is. Hit Point Damage reduces HP and healing restores them. You can never have more HP than your Body Points \* 20 and less HP than zero.

## Hit Point Damage

Hit Point Damage reduces HP by a given amount. It is possible to reduce Hit Point Damage to nothing.

If you receive Hit Point Damage, you gain the Status Effect Staggered.

## Ideas

Trading goods are traded based on how many uses, or ideas, the trading partners can agree on the item has.

## Incantation

An incantation is a trained pattern Marrow Witches are capable of reproducing in any situation. An Incantation always involves a Marrowing Challenge. Furthermore, a Marrowing Challenge is defined by the following:

**AP**                      AP cost to cast the Incantation.

<b>Type</b>	If the Incantation is a Reaction, and which type.
<b>Base Attribute</b>	Which Base Attribute is used for the Marrowing Challenge.
<b>Effect</b>	The effects of the Incantation, usually scaling with Successes of the Marrowing Challenge.

## Initiative

Initiative determines the order of turns during combat or tense scenes (see Chapter 5).

## Jumping

When you Move you can always Jump 1 Step as part of that movement, as many times as you wish.

If you have taken any Movement Action before during your current round, you may instead Jump any fraction of your current Movement Action. Jumps always have to be in a straight line.

Jumps are only measured horizontally; the possible height of the Jump is up to the GM but may be oriented on the rule of: Maximum Height of Jump in Steps equals Points in Speed.

## Legend

Powerful NPCs are called Legends. They are usually the core part of a story and usually the antagonist.

## Luck

Luck is a Base Attribute, that can be used in Challenges normally but cannot apply Talents or Profession.

Whenever you roll a challenge that is not based in Luck, you may spend any number of Points of Luck to add one Success to the Success Pool of the Challenge.

You regain one Luck Point every Rest, up to your maximum Luck Points.

## Marrowing Challenge

A Marrowing Challenge has a maximum Challenge Dice Pool equal to the Points in the Base Attribute of the Incantation cast and added any Pool Points in the Talent Marrow.

A Marrowing Challenge is only considered skilled, if the Talent Marrow is skilled.

Any success of the Challenge gets counted towards the Incantations effect as specified in its description.

Any failure of the Challenge deals Hit Point Damage to you equal to the displayed number.

## Movement

You can move in any way your character is able to. That includes flying, swimming, climbing and walking. If your character has a natural ability to do something else than walk, do check in with your GM on it.

Movement can be hindered by difficult terrain or wounds. The GM may increase the AP costs of Movement Actions in these cases.

It is possible to play a character with disabilities affecting any of their Movement. This should be given opportunities to exist without making the character not playable.

## Movement Action

A Movement Action is any of the following Actions, that can be used interchangeably whenever a Movement Action is mentioned.

<b>Dash</b>	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed.	Costs 2 AP
<b>Move</b>	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times two.	Costs 6 AP
<b>Sprint</b>	Move Steps equal to your points in Speed times three. You may only move in a straight line.	Costs 5 AP

## Nonplayer character

A Nonplayer characters (NPC) is any character not played by a player. All Nonplayer characters are usually controlled by the GM.

During Initiative a Nonplayer Character can either be part of the Encounter, or part of the players.

## Off Balance

For each Status Effect instance of Off Balance, you lose one Poise. When removing the Status Effect, you regain Poise lost this way.

## Perception

You can perceive everything you have senses for, and your environment allows for. If you have senses beyond regular seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, do check in with your GM on it.

It is possible to play a character with disabilities affecting any of their senses. This should be given opportunities to exist without making the character not playable.

## Player Character

A Player characters (PC) is any character played by a player.

## Poise

Poise is a representation of the ability of your character or an object to avoid suffering wounds or damage. This can be achieved by being resilient or quick.

You regain all Poise at the start of each scene or initiative.

Poise is reduced by Poise Damage.

## Poise Damage

Poise Damage reduces Poise by a given amount. It is possible to reduce Poise Damage to nothing. Poise can never be less than zero.

If Poise Damage reduces your Poise to 0, you gain the Status Effect Staggered.

## Pool Point

A talent can have up to two Pool Points. If you may apply that talent, you may add dice equal to your pool points to the Challenge Dice Pool.

## Preventive Action

A Preventive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved before the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Profession

Your Profession describes what you have experienced and learned in your life before the actual adventure you play through. This may be an actual education or occupation like “Chef” or “Bounty hunter” but may as well be a general description of class or life experience (e.g. “Urchin”, “Elder”).

## Property

A Property is a keyword rule for a Weapon talent. (see Chapter 6? for a list of them)

## Reach

The most common form of Reach is “Arm’s Reach”. This describes anything you can reach with a limb of yours without moving your whole body. As different characters have different sizes and amounts of limbs, it is up to you and the GM to define this on a character-to-character basis. An average arm’s reach is one Step.

Other types of Reach usually refer to an action that needs to be taken to reach a target.

## Reaction

A Reaction is a type of Action of a character or environment that reacts to a triggering Action or Event of another character. At any point you may intercept the current flow of events and announce a Reaction to the current events. As soon as this happens a

Reaction Chain gets created and anyone else may react too. After the Reaction Chain is resolved the events proceed.

## Reaction Chain

A Reaction Chain is a collection of Reactions that have a determined order of being resolved. If a Reaction of the chain triggers another Reaction Chain, that Reaction Chain gets resolved first before the next Reaction in the Chain gets resolved.

Any character can only contribute one Reaction or Action to any Reaction Chain, except stated otherwise.

## Reactive Action

A Reactive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved after the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Resting

To take a Rest you need to meet the following requirements:

- You need sufficient food for one proper meal for anyone attempting a Rest (the definition of a proper meal depends on the character).
- You need to rest in a secure and reinforced resting site.
- The resting site may not be under threat for eight hours.

If any of these requirements gets interrupted during the eight hours, the rest fails. If the rest failed due to a threat, the rest only fails for the Character perceiving or knowing about the threat.

At the end of a Rest, it is apparent to everyone, if the Rest succeeded for anyone else.

If the rest succeeds, everyone participating regains up to half their hit points and one Luck Point.

(see Chapter 8? for further options for Rests)

## Round

In any initiative there are two rounds, one for each party of the initiative. A round always starts with the turns of the opposing party and afterwards resolves the turns of your own party.

The party of the PCs resolves their turns in descending initiative count. When the PCs end their round, the character with the lowest initiative count adds 20 to their initiative count.

At the end of your (own parties) round you lose all Status Effects.

At the start of your round, you regain all AP you spent last round.

## Scene

Any distinct time duration defined by a simple goal or location (e.g. the investigation of a cellblock, an encounter with a trap, an initiative, a chase).

## Skilled

If you are Skilled in a Talent, any Challenges using that Talent are considered skilled.

The base Difficulty for a skilled Challenge is **8**.

## Success

Any dice rolled of the challenge Dice Pool that is shows an equal or higher number than the Difficulty of the Challenge is considered a success and adds one to the Success Pool.

A twenty on a die always counts as two successes.

## Success Pool

The Success Pool of a Challenge determines the success of the Challenge. A Success Pool of three results in a successful task of low to average difficulty.

## Suffocation

If suffocating, you stay conscious a number of rounds equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute.

You can hold your breath a number of minutes equal to your points in your Body Base Attribute.

## Supportive Action

A Supportive Action is a type of Reaction that gets resolved at the same time as the triggering Action gets resolved.

## Staggered

While staggered, any of your Movement Action costs double the AP it would usually cost.

## Status Effects

A status effect is a temporary state of a character. Any condition ends at the end of the characters round. The glossary defines these conditions:

Tripped  
Downed  
Off Balance

Staggered  
Weirded

## Steps

A Step is a relative unit of distance. It can be anything your group agrees on, but is usually either equal to one meter or five feet.

## Talebone

Any character may have Talebones. If you are about to die and have an unfractured Talebone left, you instead fracture that Talebone, drop to one HP, regain all Poise and gain a Talebound Epithet.

Immediately you may take Actions with a combined AP-cost equal to the damage that would have killed you. It is not possible to announce Reactions to these Actions, but you are also not able to interact with any other Character during those Actions.

An NPC has a predetermined amount of Talebones.

If a PC is about to die, the player may decide in that moment, if they have another unfractured Talebone or if they die.

## Talebound Epithet

A Talebound Epithet is a byname that you can have, that any other character has heard folktales about. The character knowing the tale, does not have to have a reasonable explanation about how they know the Epithet. Interacting with you, these characters may have preconceived ideas about what you are or what you do.

Talebound Epithets may be introduced at a later point in time. If they are, the world itself gets rewritten, so that the stories about the Epithet always have existed.

## Talent

A Talent is a general area of skill that a Character may have trained or have a natural predisposition for. (see Chapter 3?)

## Target

A target for any Action or Reaction involving a physical aspect must be within Reach.

A target for any Incantation must be perceivable by the character.

## Telegraphed Action

Telegraphed Actions are Actions that do not do anything by themselves but count as if they were any Movement, Draw or Help Action, concerning Trigger Conditions of Reactions.

As soon as the Reaction Chain of a Telegraphed Action is resolved a second Action follows. Usually, these Actions are very powerful.

## Trigger

The Trigger for a Reaction can be anything happening around the character. The character has to be able to perceive the Trigger and have a Reaction that matches that Trigger to use that Reaction.

## Tripped

While tripped you are unable to take Movement Actions.

## Unarmed Attack

If you do not use a weapon for an attack challenge, generally the attack challenge treats it like a normal attack based on Force and with a weapon dice pool of 0 and an AP-cost of 3.

## Weapon Dice Pool

During an Attack Challenge, the Challenge Dice Pool is partially determined by the Weapon Dice Pool.

Each Weapon Talent has their own Weapon Dice Pool.

## Weapon Talent

Your Character usually is skilled in two Weapon Talents. If using a Weapon that counts towards one of these Weapon Talents, you use its statistics.

A Weapon Talent is defined by the following:

<b>Name</b>	A general name to describe the Weapon Talent.
<b>AP</b>	The AP-cost of using this Weapon Talent.
<b>(Weapon Dice) Pool</b>	The Weapon Dice Pool added to the Challenge Dice Pool of Attack Challenges.
<b>Base (Attribute)</b>	The Base Attribute the Weapon is based on.
<b>Properties</b>	A collection of keyword rules specific to each Weapon Talent.

## Weapon Mastery

Each Weapon Talent has two Weapon Mastery associated. If you have access to the Weapon Masteries of a Weapon Talent, you may change which Weapon Mastery you are currently using for that Weapon Talent, each time you finish Resting.

## Weapon

A weapon can be anything. To be used as a Weapon, it must be associated with a Weapon Talent of your choice. The form of the Weapon supersedes any intuitive rules of the Weapon Talent (e.g. you use a breadstick as nun chucks, so you can eat them, and can feed ducks with them).



In conversation with your GM your Weapon may have differing Properties to the ones suggested in the Weapon Talent.

### Weirded

While Weirded you cannot announce Reactions.

## [INDEX]

- Index