

GENERIKUS

A *Risus: the Anything RPG* Variant

WELCOME!

What you now possess is a modification of the **Risus: the Anything RPG** created by S. John Ross. **Risus** does what it was intended to do swimmingly; however, I have found myself wanting something that allows for a little more generic-ness to the rules that comprise **Risus**.

I enjoy the freeform mayhem of character creation and combat that **Risus** brings to the table, but wanted to add my own contribution. I wanted something that could be used to provide the oomph to power fantasy super heroes but at the same time have the capability to be scaled back to run a gritty horror campaign. Thus, **GENERIKUS** was born.

Consider this my attempt to grab **Risus** by the collars, slap it around a bit, get it to stop slouching and stand up straight.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

First off, the vast majority of what I will be presenting will make about zero sense without first having a copy of **Risus** in your hot little hands. It's free, it's six pages, and you can find it [here](#).

Seriously – I'll wait.

Okay, once we've gotten that out of the way, you'll also want to have some dice handy. You'll need d6's, d8's, d10's and d12's. Others may be helpful or handy, but those are the only ones that this will actually make use of.

While not required, you may also want to get the 64-page [Risus Companion](#), which I will be stealing bits of... Rather, making reference to. In any event, it's very handy for doing these sorts of modifications.

It also helps to have a vivid imagination and a willingness to ditch many of your preconceptions to role-playing games in general, but whatever.

THE MORE THINGS STAY THE SAME...

Alright, so you have read and absorbed the rules of **Risus**. Now it's time to shake it up and...keep things the same. Sort of.

First off, the concept of the Cliché is still integral to how **GENERIKUS** works.

There is still the 6-die cap on any Cliché. Combat is largely run the same, with "damage" to a Cliché being expressed as a loss of die for that Cliché.

GENERIKUS also *can* make use of any of the first three "Advanced Options," but it doesn't *assume* that you are using any of these. However, it **does** make extensive use of the "Funky Dice Option," and that is where the path begins to differ.

...THE MORE THEY CHANGE

Okay, now we're getting to the nuts-and-bolts of how **GENERIKUS** works.

DIE TYPES CHANGES

GENERIKUS makes use of the following "die types:"

- d6
- d8
- d10
- d12
- d16
- d20

"Hold the phone – you said that we'd only be using up to the d12!!!"
And I stand by that statement.

The d16 and d20 "die" I speak of are really just a simplified way of saying, "two d8's" and "two d10's," respectively.

Yes, yes, I know. The probabilities for rolling a true d16 and two d8's are different, as well as the fact that when rolling two d8's you aren't going to have a possibility of a "1" being rolled.

Which is just the way I intended it.

The d16 and d20 types are intended for those creatures and beings whose abilities far outstrip those of mortals, and thus it only makes sense that they are more likely to succeed at any given task – even ones that would otherwise be near impossible if not for their godlike powers.

So my intended breakdown of the various die types with regard to power scaling looks like this:

- d6 – normal mortals
- d8 – upper end of “normal” mortal power
- d10 – low powered superbeings
- d12 – high powered superbeings
- d16 – dragons
- d20 – demigods/gods

Obviously these are just basic benchmarks and can be changed to fit your specific needs; scaling the die types per these sorts of “powers” enables both players and GM at a glance to figure out what sorts of things that their character(s) should be capable of per any given game world.

Purchasing dice should be scaled based on the intended level of power for the campaign. Die types have a number of points associated with them equivalent to their number of sides, i.e. d6 is 6 points, d12 is 12 points, d20 is 20 points, and so forth.

A good rule of thumb in terms of determining points to spend vs. campaign power is to multiply the maximum intended starting die type number by 10; thus, a campaign of gritty horror where the starting characters are limited to d8's would have 80 points to spend on clichés that could use either d6's or d8's.

As usual, double pumps would cost double (thus making larger die types more costly to double pump comparatively).

CLICHÉ CHANGES

If you are anything like me, you may want to make use of a Cliché to support other Clichés to keep with a given genre. Thus, an alternative way of “working the Cliché” needs to be used. The following is adapted from J. Scott Pittman's “Son of Risus,” which is available from the [RisusTalk Yahoo Group](#).

BURNABLE CLICHÉS

A Burnable Cliché is one that can be lowered (a.k.a. “burned”), usually to provide bonuses to

the character or as “fuel” for powers. Burnable Clichés are defined when the Cliché is chosen. For example, a vampire could have a *Blood Pool* Cliché that could be used to power his vampiric powers or to raise his physical attacks/defenses for a single turn.

A Burnable Cliché is one that decreases automatically every time it is used. For example, a *Minor Gadgets* Cliché loses one die each time it is used. Once the Cliché is used up, the character is “out” until it is refueled in some fashion (in this case, the character has to “load up” again at his laboratory or whatever).

SPECIALTY CLICHÉS

Players can gain a Specialty to a Cliché if they like. This represents some sort of “signature maneuver” that the character possesses with regard to one of his Clichés.

This requires the equivalent of a 1 die purchase at character creation (without actually purchasing a die), but can also be purchased later with Experience Points (which are discussed in just a bit).

A Specialty allows a player to re-roll any “1” when performing a very specialized action with a Cliché. If the player is not using that Cliché, he cannot use the Specialty.

Specialties should be described in at least two ways; for example, a character might have the *White-Hatted Cowboy* Cliché with a Specialty of *Throwing Hot Lead from His Silver Six-Shooters*. In this case, the *Cowboy* must be firing his pistols – not just any, mind you; his *silver* pistols – for the Specialty to apply to a given situation.

Thus, character is more capable of performing specific actions that they are familiar with at the cost of limiting that familiarity to a specific task.

RULE CHANGES

Well, this first one is not so much of a *change* so much as an *exclusion*. For many campaigns, the comedy aspect is more a byproduct, and not necessarily something that you want to have reflected in the rules. Thus, the whole **Inappropriate Cliché** section will probably not apply for a more serious – or rather, less silly – campaign.

To compensate for that, I have come up with something similar but different to give **GENERIKUS** a slightly more familiar feel.

DOUBLED-DOWN VARIANT

If the difference between the high and low rolls for a given attack is equal or greater than twice the low roll, then the low roller loses twice the Cliché dice for this attack.

Or – the easier-math-way of saying it – if the higher roll is greater than three times the lower, then the lower roller loses two die from the particular Cliché.
However, if I had originally thought of it this way, I wouldn't have come up with the cool "Doubled-Down" name.

So, as an example, I will give the following character:

Arthur "Ace" Cleveland
Hardboiled Private Investigator (5d6)
Gifted Telekinetic [4d6]

"Ace" has come across a Gremlin (2d8) and decides that he will handle the beastie with a non-pumped telekinetic attack - the Gremlin just isn't worth more to him.

"Ace" rolls very poorly for a total of 5; the Gremlin rolls very well - both 8's for a total of 16. Thus, because the difference between the high and low roll is greater than twice the low roll (high roll, 16 – low roll, 5 = 11 > 2 X low roll, 5), "Ace" loses 2 Cliché die in his *Telekinetic* Cliché as opposed to the one he would normally lose.

GM: "Well, 'Ace,' it appears that the Gremlin's natural ability to wreak havoc with things electrical is severely interfering with your psychic powers."

Player: "Grrrr... I reach for my hand cannon - this thing is toast..."

This also takes into consideration the much higher differences that can be generated with "higher" dice in play – which I believe makes a bit more sense, inasmuch that one who is significantly more powerful than another should be able to deal more capably with lesser foes.

GOLIATH RULE VARIANT

The following is adapted from the **Risus Companion**, and should be used as a staple of **GENERIKUS**.

If the combatants score the same total for a given combat roll, the combatant who rolled the *fewest dice* is the winner. Only if they rolled the *same* number of dice is a tie really a tie.

This depends on the number of die actually rolled – not the size of each respective Cliché when healthy.

TEAMING UP VARIANT

It makes sense – to me, anyway, and I'm the one doing the writing – that more powerful allies would be able to provide more powerful support.

Thus, add the highest roll of the die for the given support Cliché to be added to the Team Leader's total.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT CHANGES

This is one of the biggest changes I have made, mostly for two reasons. One, I wanted to have characters be able to feel like their previous exploits give them a greater insight into being more capable of dealing with future confrontations – much like a more traditional experience point system.

Two, I wanted to keep – to some extent – the capriciousness that was the **Risus** die-rolling advancement system. There's nothing like trying and failing.

Thus, **GENERIKUS** characters earn experience points (henceforth referred to as "XP" because I'm a lazy typist) based on the adventures that they undertake. The amount of experience is going to greatly depend on the difficulty of what they have accomplished vs. what level of relative power the characters are at.

For example, some normal mortals through luck and ingenuity foiling a vastly powerful dragon should earn more than a group of super-powered beings beating up random street toughs.

CLICHÉ ADVANCEMENT

When a player wants one of his character's Clichés to advance, he looks at the total amount of XP that said character has accrued. Then, he makes a single roll of the Cliché in question, trying to roll **under** the number that is his XP.

Should he succeed, he subtracts the result of his roll from his previous XP total – which represents the amount of effort that it took to get better at a given Cliché. He also adds a die (of the same die type) to the Cliché in question – thus making him a better "whatever" through practice, training, etc.

Should he fail, the player subtracts the difference of the previous XP total and the roll total from his XP – which represents the amount of effort that was expended in trying, but not

quite succeeding. No die advancement occurs in this case.

A player can attempt to try to better a Cliché again as many times as he wants (and as the GM thinks makes sense for the given genre of campaign), however the erosion of XP after multiple failures will likely cause the player to want to wait until he has a better chance of success – meaning he has accrued more XP through adventuring.

Once the limit of six die has been reached for a given die type, a player can then try to advance the die **type** of a Cliché. The GM has final say for the die type cap on the campaign, so try not to bicker too much about it. We're supposed to be having fun, remember.

For die type advancement, a player rolls similarly to the previously described method, with the following addition – the roll total of the particular Cliché receives a positive modifier that is equal to the die type that is next on the progression. Thus, a Cliché using a d10 die would receive a +12 (since the d12 is the next in the progression) to the roll – making it more difficult to get under the XP total (and representing the difficulty of getting “better” once you're already “pretty darn good”). If successful, the Cliché advances to the next die type, with one less total die in the Cliché – if you had a 5d6 and advanced die type, you would then have 4d8.

As this will lead to progressively more powerful characters rather quickly, the GM may want to limit die type advancement to Clichés that have five or six die in them to start with.

I'll give some examples of what I'm talking about so that this makes a little more sense.

We'll take **Batty**, a *Dark Costumed Vigilante with Serious Parental Issues* (5d8). He has 24 XP available for use advancing.

Batty's player decides that he wants to be just that much better at vigilante-ing and informs the GM that Batty has been training – and it is thus time for an advancement roll.

Example #1: Batty's player rolls his *Dark Costumed etc. etc.* Cliché and lucks out – a 17. The XP total is now adjusted to 7 (XP total, 24 – Cliché roll, 17 = 7), and the *Dark etc. etc.* Cliché is now (6d8).

Example #2: Batty's player rolls and rolls high – a 34 (which, coincidentally, is what his player

wished he rolled against the Jolly Jester in the previous session). As the roll is obviously higher than the current XP total, the difference (10) is subtracted and the XP total is now 14 – also, Batty must have pulled a muscle on the parallel bars because he just couldn't nail the dismount (or something – players, come up with something genre appropriate to describe either success or failure).

Now, if Batty had been trying to advance the die type because he had just created a super-y serum with his *Master of All Things Science* Cliché (also 5d8), it would look similar but different: in the first example, he would have failed because the modified total Cliché roll would have been a 27 (roll, 17 + next die type, 10). Such is the price of bettering yourself.

Based on how advancement works, the GM now has an idea of how to assign XP for the intended genre and style of campaign (more for more intended powerful characters, less for less).

OTHER ADVANCEMENT

XP can also be spent obtaining a Specialty for a given Cliché. To do this, simply subtract the value of the Cliché's current die type directly from the XP total and name away.

You'd think with the big header for this last section that I might have had more in mind, but I didn't.

MORE BETTER EQUIPMENT

What I've written so far has been largely for both player *and* GM. Here I'd like to drift from that for just a spell and cater to just the GM.

Well, the GM and maybe players (like myself) who like to say, “Hey, it would be really cool if my character could get X...”

Players like to have “stuff” that is above and beyond the normal ken of your everyday Joe. Why just have a sword when you could have a *Blade of Vicious Disemboweling*?

Obviously, the power level of the campaign is going to have a large impact as to what sorts of mechanical bonuses whatever gear will provide.

For lower powered campaigns, it might make sense to just provide gear that gives a flat bonus, denoted as (+X), to whatever Cliché might make the most sense.

For example, a grim-n-gritty fantasy campaign might produce a *Finely Wrought Dagger* (+1), which could then add “1” to the *Sneaky*

Backstabber Cliché of the party sneak. A *SWAT Sniper* might get a *Laser Sight* (+2), and so on.

For campaigns that are looking for a more powerful feel it might make sense to stat out weapons or equipment as if they were Clichés in their own right.

For example, a campaign that was more steeped in magic might could see a *Scepter of Draconic Control* (2d10). In this case, it is likely that the bit of equipment could very well function as a Burnable Cliché (which the more astute of you will remember as being previously discussed).

In either case, make sure that you give the item a fancy name – the players will treasure it all the more.

There is also the very likely possibility that enterprising players might want to create their own equipment – and, hey, that's less work for you.

Unless they are having it made for them by a particularly helpful NPC, the character should have some Cliché relating to the creation of the item in question.

For example, it is unlikely that the *Furious Barbarian of the Eastern Swamps* is going to be putting together a Dellway 9600 Laptop.

Assuming that it makes sense for the character to make the item, figure that each (+X) is the one-to-one equivalent of XP to expend, to a maximum of (+4). For items that are in their own right Clichés, use the Specialty Cliché rules for determining cost per die type.

THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT

Thus brings to a close about all I can think of in terms of making **Risus** just a *shade* more “crunchy” while at the same time capable of running any number of different games.

One note: I haven't actually play-tested any of this yet, so be sure to check the release version that you may get – I'll update this as I find issues with what I've come up with (hopefully with the appropriate fixes).

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About the “author,” as if such a title could be applied to someone who did so little work...

Steve lives in the Capital-region of NY with his wife and two daughters. And a cat, whose gender matters little since the surgery.

After serving for some time in the US Navy – which really screwed up his gaming capability, by the way – he finally found his calling as a NY State employee at the [College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering](#), where he works as Senior Laboratory Technician. He currently plays with the [Iron Gamers Guild](#) and likes writing about himself in the third person, thank-you-very-much.

Thanks to all the guys I've played with: Bob, Chris, Dale, Ray, San and Tim; as well as all the guys I currently play with: Andrew, Bryan, Mike and Sean. Thanks also to [RPG.net](#) for showing me things like **Risus** actually existed.

Special thanks to my wife, Amiee, and my daughters, Belle and Shannon, for not bothering me too much whilst I was writing this.

A note on the title: I Googled a bunch of different variants before I settled on **GENERIKUS** (mostly to keep myself out of legal trouble); the word **GENERIKUS** is actually Hungarian for “generic.” Go figure.