

# THE FOURTH GATE

A HOMESTUCK ROLEPLAYING GAME

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# Chapter 0 - The game

## Legal note

*The Fourth Gate and its rules are not supported by Andrew Hussie. It is a nonprofit fan-system intended to function as a ruleset for providing gameplay in the spirit of early Homestuck and Problem Sleuth. All rights are reserved by Andrew Hussie.*

*Additionally, the game draws some inspiration from John Harper's Blades in the Dark, a fantastic game that keeps on teaching and inspiring me to this day. Please support all of these.*

## Lines, veils and respect

Playing a role playing game is a social event, in which different people get together to have a common experience. Everyone has different things they're comfortable with. To make sure that everyone is having fun when playing, it is important that everyone is comfortable. Before anything else is done, you should establish the **Lines and Veils**.

Lines are subjects that the game will never, ever touch. There doesn't need to be a reason beyond the fact that someone at the table isn't comfortable with it.

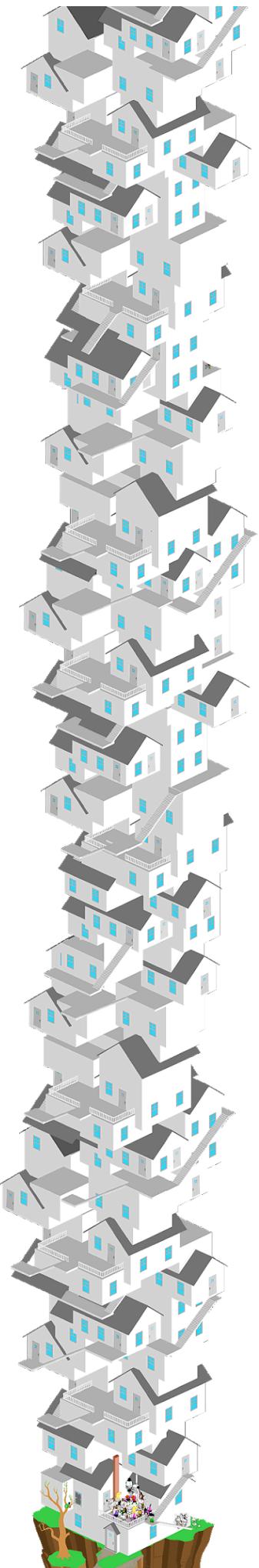
Veils are translucent. While they can happen in the game, they are never depicted.

While changing the game to fit your playstyle is encouraged, *you should never cross a line or depict a veil. Ever.* It is for the fun of everyone involved.

## Introduction

*The Fourth Gate* is very specifically about the stories told in Andrew Hussie's webcomics *Homestuck* (Act 1-4 in particular) and *Problem Sleuth*. The characters go on silly escapades, and rarely manage to do something without losing something else. Twists in logic are the norm - just expect that once a new set of logic has been established, you should stick to it. Get weird, get crazy, and have fun.

Keep your friends close, and your Snoop Dogg busts closer.



## Using this book

This book should provide everything you need to play the game, both as a player and as a Game Master.

Chapter 1 only contains character creation.

Chapter 2 features all of the base rules, as well as some tips for being a good player.

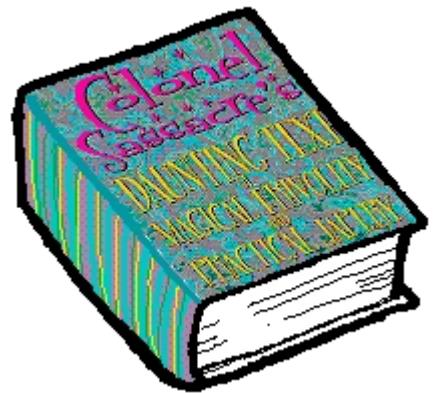
Chapter 3 is meant to help you as a GM. It dives deeper into the rules from chapter 2, and contains some new rules.

Chapter 4 contains tips, memos and rules for running specifically a game of SBURB.

Chapter 5 has variant rules that you can use as you wish in your game. It details each rule, how it changes the game, and how to use it to the most effect. Many of them empower characters.

Chapter 6 details examples of play.

Chapter 7 covers the changelog.



# Chapter 1 - Starting the game

## Character creation

### Basic character sheet

On a purely mechanical level, character creation is a **four step** process.

1. Decide on a **basic concept**. This is a short sentence that describes your character. It doesn't have a mechanical impact, but it'll significantly help you with the following steps. *A blind teal-blood with a taste for justice. A prospitan soldier who was left by their lover.*
2. Set your **actions**. The actions are labeled 1-6, and you need one for each number. Set the top one to *Succeed*, and the rest as you please with verbs that describe what your character would do. Remember that your actions define you - this is the big mechanical choice you make at character creation. The GM has the final say in actions. *Aggrieve, Deceive, Realize, Illustrate, and Abscond are all examples of actions, but don't let that limit you. Almost any verb can work.*
3. Decide on a **name** and a **look**. The easiest way to describe your character is to pile adjectives and substantives. *Cowlicked black hair, square glasses, buck teeth, thin.*
4. Go from level 0 to level 1. Begin play.

By default, this is all there is to character creation. However, this does not mean that you'll be done with your character sheet.

*For more details on levels and questions, check Advanced character creation in chapter 3.*

First, there is the subject of **Leveling up**. You'll need four different Level up scenarios - moments of great importance when you gain a level. This is very important from both a narrative and a mechanical point of view. The GM sets the level up scenarios, but you can always leave suggestions!

Second, you have to consider the **Questions**. They fill no mechanical purpose, but are important for establishing your character's personality and ideology. They can also be used to establish things about the world - in that case you are given a lot of control within the area the question touches. Use it well.

If you feel lost, use actions that describe your character's heritage, background, abilities, physiology, interests, or skills.

>AGGRIEVE	>ABUSE
>AGGRESS	>ACCUSE
>ABJURE	>ASSAIL
>ABSTAIN	>ASSAULT
>ACCEDE	>ABSCOND
>ARRAIGN	>ARSENALIZE
>AR	>ARTILLERATE
>ARF	>ARMAMENTIFY

# Chapter 2 - Playing the game

## Conflict resolution

*When the outcome is uncertain, the dice make the final call.*

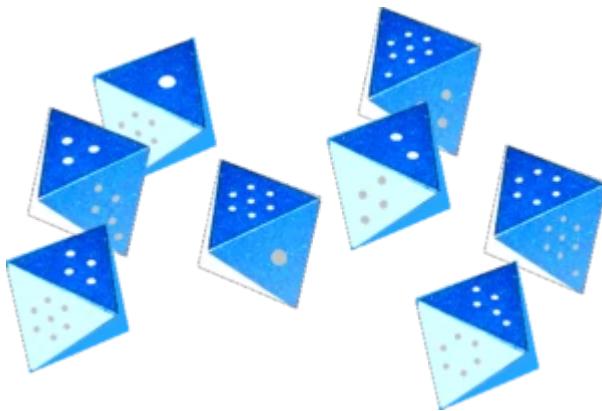
But when is the outcome uncertain? In this question the GM has the final say. They decide if the dice are needed.

When they are, start by considering the intent. What do you want to accomplish here? Keep it simple.

Then, examine your actions and determine which ones would qualify as a success in this case. *Succeed* is always a success, meaning you always have a chance. However, having more actions apply will greatly improve the odds of things going your way. With your intent and actions established, grab the dice and roll one six-sided die (1d6) per character level.

See what actions the dice you rolled landed on. If any of them correspond to any of the actions that equaled a success, you do it. If not, you fail. There is usually some sort of *complication* following failure.

Even if you fail, the GM may still offer *success at a price*.



Help from allies, advantageous positions, special items, and other circumstances may grant you +1 die or more on your check, but you can't benefit from more than +2 dice on a check.

In the same vein, things that affect your position poorly can give you -1 die. However, it is often better to use a clock than to use a penalty to dice.

If you're rolling zero dice, roll two dice and use the worse one.

## Progress Clocks

Progress Clocks are a circle divided into segments. They also have a label, which detail what happens when all segments are filled. They can be used for many things, but their main use is to track ongoing efforts against an obstacle or the approach of impending trouble. When you roll to overcome an obstacle, you fill 1 tick if you succeed. However, negative clocks can fill up either as a consequence of failure. All clocks should fill up as the fiction demands it.

It is important to note that progress clocks say nothing about *how* they are filled, just *what* happens when they are full. You can take any approach to filling it (or emptying it, if it is a negative clock). You can overcome the ogre's defense both by sneaking around and launching a surprise attack or by brute forcing it. This does not mean those two are the only ways of filling the clock, *nor should every ogre have a 2-step clock for defense*. Do what feels right for the context.

If you don't have an easy way of keeping track of clocks, you can just write it down.  
*Jailbreak out of Derse's prison - 0/4*

## Harm

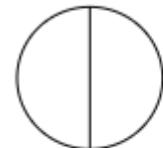
When you fail, you might take harm. On the character sheet, the slots for Harm are labeled 1-6, just like the actions. When you take Harm, it covers up that action (making it unusable) until the harm is cured. If you would succeed on something but don't because of harm, describe how the harm causes you to fail.



Harm is not just taking damage from attacks, but can be so much more. Let it be indicative of the character's emotional state. Let it be social issues they might face. *Hunger, stress, doubt, daydream, wound, embarrassment, lost, amnesia, missing arm and many more are all harm you could take.*

When you cure harm, it is above all else important to consider what type of harm you've taken. *While medical attention is probably the best way to cure a wound, it*

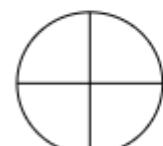
### Sample clocks



Overcome the ogre's defense



The Horrorterrors' siren song



Jailbreak out of Derse's prison



Locate your missing guardian

*doesn't help with embarrassment at all. Coffee can help when you're daydreaming, and to cure amnesia you might need a reminder of what you've forgotten. How does your character distress? Who can help them overcome their doubt? Who do you call to get a robotic arm?*

Some harm might be so grave that it takes up multiple slots. If so, you might be able to cure all of it at once, if it makes sense. *With your new robotic arm, all three "Missing arm" harm is no more. One by one, you manage to clear out all four "wound" harm. Reuniting with your lost lover causes memories to flow back, curing all 6 of your "amnesia" harm.*

Do you die at 6 harm? There's no right answer for every situation. You *can* definitely die at 6 harm - but that doesn't mean you have to. Talk with the GM. *Are you okay with the character dying here? Is it a satisfying end? Is it important for the narrative? Is it actually the end? Is it maybe for the best?* What it does mean is that it is *impossible* for you to succeed at anything that requires a check. It might mean that it is time to hit the metaphorical hay and lay low for a bit.

Yet, even with 6 harm to your name, you can still come out ahead in conflicts. At a price. Sometimes, that price might be your life.

## Items

Inevitably, your character is going to pick up junk that they carry with them. Plot-critical relics, strange jujus, weapons of very poor quality, 2 dozen left shoes, gushers, or small replicas of busts of famous rappers. However, this system does not contain long lists of every possible item that you'll ever find. Instead, this system will try to provide guidelines for what items can do. Work things out with the GM.

**Allowing you to take action.** The item enables you to do what you were previously completely unable to. However, things are still uncertain enough for the GM to call for conflict. *A rope that lets you climb high up. A melee weapon to let you go toe to toe with your foes at close range. A ranged weapon to take enemies out from afar. Medical supplies with simple instructions.*

**Negating having to take action.** An item like this turns an uncertain situation certain. *A key. A map of the labyrinth. The poisonous air of the Land of Tombs and Krypton chokes the life out of you, but you pull out a gasmask, negating the need for conflict.*

**Be sacrificed for a success at a price.** The GM offers a success at a price, where the price is item. When you can do this is the GM's decision. It works great with a

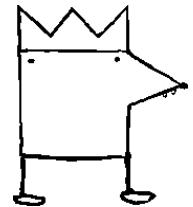
weaponized sylladex. *The Snoop Dogg bust is drifting far out of reach. I'm sorry. You have to know when to say goodbye.*

**Give +1 die in a certain situation.** This item is a relic of great power. Keep these effects rare and niche. Or don't. Ultimately the GM's decision. Just keep in mind that you can't benefit from more than 2 bonus dice.

You should be able to carry somewhere between 4-6 items at any point, depending on their size. You usually start with nothing, but basic equipment should be nearby when you begin play. Picking these things up gives both you and the GM an opportunity to establish them in the fiction.

### Player's best practices

**Don't be a weasel.** As tempting as it can be, don't say that all of your actions count as successes. Be honest, otherwise you're just ruining the game for everyone involved.



**Take responsibility.** You are a co-author of the game. Every participant is responsible for tone, style, and themes - not just the GM. As a player, your expressive role is just as important (if not more) as your tactical role. Tell what your character thinks and feels.

**Ask questions.** Show the GM what you want to know. Ask for opportunities to do cool things. Be inquisitive. Ask how the NPCs reveal their thoughts. Sometimes, the GM might call for conflict when you're trying to find out, but don't let that dissuade you.

**Build your character through play.** During character creation, the actions you choose define you. Let this continue through play! However, the actions that define you are no longer just the ones written on your character sheet, but the ones you take in the fiction. Portray your character honestly, but don't be afraid to change what you don't like. "It's what my character would do" is not an excuse when *you* control every aspect of your character.



# Chapter 3 - Running the game

## Game Master's best practices

**Play to find out what happens.** While it may be fun to plan out a sprawling plot ahead of time, it might not be the best way to do things. It just means that players have no agency in how things end. If you plan, do it to set the stage or plan contingencies. If you tell a player that they can't do something, make sure it is because of a good reason. *It is okay to say that they can't jump to the moon or break down a tower with their bare hands. It is not okay to say that they can't sweet-talk their way to victory because you didn't anticipate it.*



**Be a fan of the PCs.** They are the protagonists of the story, after all. The world might be a strange and hostile place (or it might not), but above all else you should be interested in the characters and excited about their victories. In the same vein, don't make them look incompetent just because the dice didn't fall in their favor.

**Convey the fictional world honestly.** What would really happen in the world you're conveying? What forces are at play? Let everyone act upon their own agendas and ideals. Follow the physics of the world.

**Provide opportunities, follow their lead.** Give the players plot hooks and opportunity to follow that are suited to their character. Additionally, when they have something they want to do, make sure to provide for it.

**Telegraph trouble before it strikes. Then, follow through on it.** When the action is underway, show them a threat that's about to hit, then ask them what they do. This makes it easy to determine the consequences. Once you have established the consequences, hit them hard if the dice fall that way.

**Hold on lightly.** Always be prepared to rewind, revise, and reconsider events as needed. No one wins when you play the no-backsies game. Nothing is sacred and you can always change as you like.

## Asking questions

Asking questions lies at the heart of GMing. You can get along very well as a GM by simply asking questions, building on the answers, asking more questions, answering them with dice rolls, and so on. Here are some types of questions:



**Establishing questions** set the stage for the action. Use them when you want to check up on what a character is up to. *We've established the scene, but where are you in it? Where do you meet up with Jack Noir? Do you want to focus on their leader and win him over, or are you addressing the room at a large to make your point?*

**Provocative questions** make the players think and express their characters. They tie in well with success at a price. *Do you really mean what you're saying? Can you bring yourself to seriously hurt him? How far are you willing to go?*

**Trivial questions** are great for establishing minor traits that make characters feel alive. Ask them when the mood strikes you and you're curious. *What posters do you have on your room? What's your favorite type of food? What's your opinion on the matter?*

Finally, **ask the players for help** when you're uncertain or stuck. Everyone is roleplaying together. *I'm really not sure where to go from here, any ideas? Do you have a good idea for success at a price? Should this be 1 or 2 harm? What do you think?*

## Calling for conflict

As a GM, one of your primary tasks is deciding when conflict is needed. It may seem easy at first, but there are few things to consider. Is there an interesting consequence to failure? Who doesn't want the character to succeed? Can they put up a fight? Is the player character very skilled at this in the fiction? Sometimes, the answer is to whether it is time for conflict is not as obvious as one might think.

*John is facing off against a large amount of imps. Previously, there has been 1 conflict roll to determine the result against a single imp, but John has progressed since. He alchemized some equipment has attained personal growth. The GM makes the call that he can wipe out all of the imps with a single action, and then they'll decide what to do with the ogres when he reaches the top. John then fails his roll,*

*but the GM offers him victory at a price: give up an item. John accepts it, and then begins an awesome fighting montage (during which he will lose an item).*

## Success at a price

Players will inevitably fail. When they do, things go poorly, escalate, and slip out of their control. The players are eager to make sure this doesn't happen, which is when you can offer them *success at a price*. Let them have their victory, but don't give it for free. The most reliable price is having them take 1 harm "stress," but there's nothing preventing you from being more or less lenient. Let your deals flow from the fiction. You never have to offer success at a price, but it is a good way for the player to express how much they care about their goals.

*Other costs can be loss of an item, putting someone you care about in harm's way, giving away an advantageous position, offending someone important, or ticking a troublesome clock...*

## Advanced character creation

What makes for good actions? How do I create good level up conditions for my players? What kind of questions should I ask about their characters? This section will dive deeper into the thought process behind character creation.

**Actions** define a character. This is worth repeating. As a GM, you make the final judgement on the player's actions. Read each of the actions the player has written down, and think about them.

- *Show concern* if you feel like an action does too much or too little.
- *Consider* if there are other verbs that better convey what the player is trying to create.
- *Inquire* on the actions, and ask the players to specify what they do. Using actions rewards linguistic mastery, but there's no shame in using a dictionary or thesaurus.com.

Additionally, let players replace actions as they progress. *Suggest* actions that suit the character more as they grow.

**Level ups** set the big milestones. There should be four of them, and each of them should indicate some sort of great progression of character. However, The Fourth Gate is built for shorter games, and this is reflected in the smaller amount of levels. Do keep in mind that you can take the levels in any order. Generally, the four levels go as follows:



1. An initial establishing event that gets the game started. When play begins, this level up is either about to happen or has just happened. *Enter SBURB. Decide that you can idle no longer. Flee from your home. Arrive at an alien planet.*
2. The first goal for the player, an initial victory. Might set up the rest of the game. *Reach the first gate. Enter SBURB. Find out where your guardian was taken. Make an alien friend.*
3. Should be uncertain by design, since you ultimately can't predict in what direction the story will go. *Experience great character growth. Die on your Quest Bed. Deal with massive loss. Face the Choice.*
4. Has a certain sense of finality to it. When you reach this point, there isn't much left of the game. The player has either overcome the final obstacle or is just about to face it. However, it might be good to keep a certain sense of ambiguity about the ending, or presenting two different endings. *Release the Billious Slick, or send him into hibernation. Ascend to the God Tiers. Reunite with your lover, or ultimately decide not to. Face the Choice.*

You may notice that some suggestions appear multiple times. This is by design, as you decide where to put the level ups.

*This is difficult. Do I have to put down all of the level ups at character creation?* No, of course not. If you want, you can simply let the player level up when they hit some sort of milestone, but this method does not give them the same concrete goals to work towards. You can also simply let the player level up when they complete some major goal - just keep in mind that a level 4 character is very good at not failing.

**Personal Questions** are your way to finding out more about the character at character creation. They can also be used to establish connections between characters. *Why did you leave your home? Who hurt you in the past? Have you forgiven them? Who do you harbor secret flushed feelings for?*

**Worldly Questions** let the players shape either the world they face, or the one they are about to. Don't be afraid of this. Let them into the narrative. *What is a feature in your land and how does it challenge you? What ally are you going to make? What are you going to prototype? Going only by the rumors that reach Prospit, which land is your favorite?*

## Monsters

RPGStuck Custom - The Fourth Gate does not feature a monster manual. The exact statistics of a “monster” are not particularly important, as they would do the narrative nature of the system a disservice. Instead, consider the various tools you have for making a monster more or less difficult. When you decide what tools to use, you need to think about how powerful the opponent is compared to the player. It is not always obvious, and it plays into the “Calling for Conflict” section.

**Defensive clocks** must be overcome before a monster is defeated. Think of it like a bar of Hit Points, but (like any clock) there’s no right or wrong way to overcome it. Let the players hit, talk, trick, ambush, trap, or tech their way past their opponent’s defense. Just make sure that it is justified in the fiction. *What happens when they overcome the defense?*



**Amount of Harm** an enemy deals on a failure also establishes their threat. 2 harm per failure is a very tough enemy. 3 harm per failure means that the character is horrifically outmatched. *Tying in to the best practices, make sure to always telegraph a hard-hitting enemy. Establish their skill or strength.*

**Terror dice** can be used to make monsters tougher. When the players goes into conflict against them, they also roll an amount of additional d6s (usually one to three). If that die comes up as a 1, the monster does one of two things: cancel out an abilitech or cancel out a success. If the monster is in a disadvantageous position, they cannot benefit from Terror dice.

**Masters** have a very specific area of expertise, in which they are vastly superior to the characters. Before the players act, the master has already done something related to their area of expertise, and the players must scramble to react to the master. Be very careful with who you decide to make a master. Make sure that the players know what they’re getting themselves into. The master can’t do as they please from a disadvantageous position, and if you fear the master will absolutely steamroll the players, you could only use its mastery once to give it an extra edge at the beginning. *You grab your warhammer firmly in your hands, and get ready for an epic showdo- you look down, and your adversary’s sword is already in pierced through your chest. How did this happen?*

Finally, consider the character's progress. Just because an enemy deals 2 harm while also being a master doesn't mean that it'll always be that way. If the players are now fictionally on even ground with an enemy that used to outmatch them, let the mechanics show it.

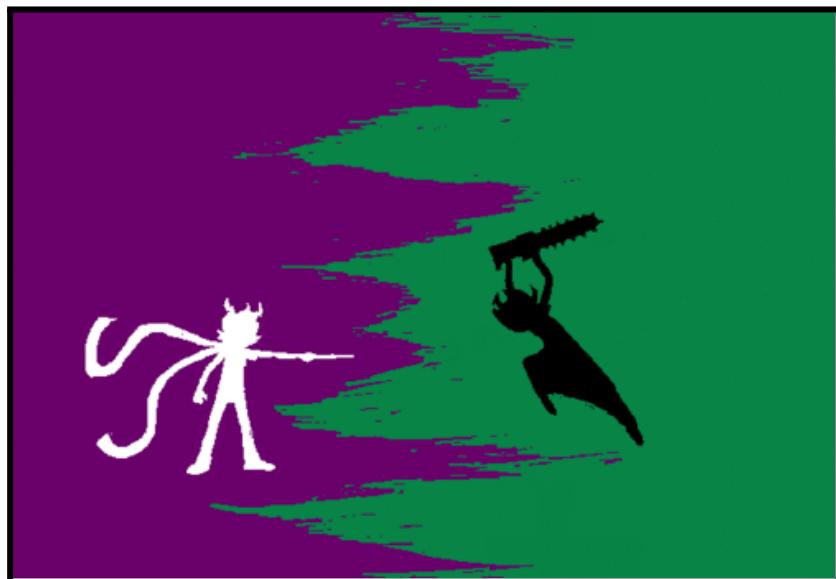
## Player versus player

Situations may arise in play in which two or more players come into conflict. How do you deal with this? In general, the rules for player versus player are the same as normal. Conflict calls, success at a price, and so on. However, it is always good to have a few guidelines to follow as well.

- 1. Pause the game.** Take time-out from the fiction and make sure to talk things through. "Who talks first" or "who talks the loudest" should not be what resolves this situation.
- 2. Agree to the resolution methods.** Talk it through, figure out the actions, and discuss the consequences at stake. Do not move on until everyone involved is happy with the method. Speak up! If everyone is not in on it, this conflict isn't happening. The characters might be having an intense staredown, only for them to decide to back off at the same time. It is okay if that happens.
- 3. Abide by the results.** The dice will fall as they do. Stick to it. Even if things don't turn out the way you wanted to, you might be able to salvage some things with success at a price.

Finally, this system does not do player versus player particularly well. When it happens, you must cooperate and come up with a solution together. RPGStuck Custom - the Fourth Gate cannot solve conflicts between players. You will have to sort that out yourselves, and return to the game when it is done.

Don't use the game to resolve person-to-person conflict.

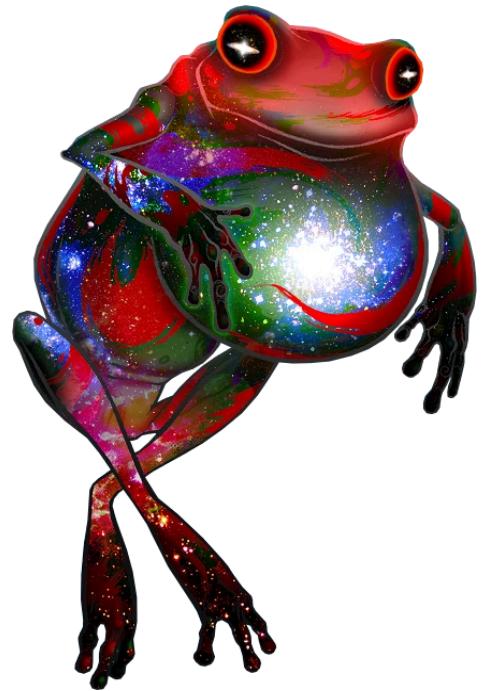


# Chapter 4 - The game world

## SBURB itself

SBURB is about creating a new universe. The Ultimate Alchemy, as it is called, is what the game is all about. Here's a vague checklist of everything the players need to do before they can claim The Ultimate Reward.

- Build all of their houses all the way up and place a grist rig at the top.
- Deal with their Denizens, either by defeating them or facing the Choice.
- Complete time loops by creating themselves with ectobiology.
- Breed the Genesis Frog.
- Defeat the Black King and the Black Queen.



For more information on this entire chapter, read the comic or the MS Paint wiki. This chapter is meant to be a handy reference (not a complete guide), and also intends to offer some advice on how to actually think about the many moving parts from a GM's perspective.

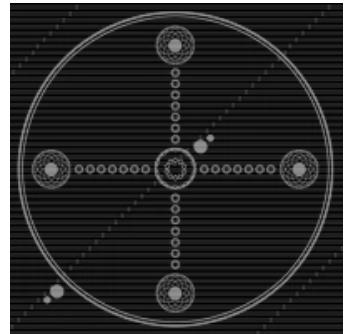
## The IncispHERE

The IncispHERE is the dimension where the entire session takes place. It is divided into three main sections - Skaia, the Medium, and the Veil.

Skaia lies in the middle. It is “a dormant crucible of unlimited creative potential.” It is also the home of the Battlefield and the Prophetic clouds.

The Medium lies in the middle, and is simply a collective term for all the lands of the session.

Finally, the Veil lies at the edge of the IncispHERE. A large belt of asteroids rest here. When the Reckoning starts, the asteroids will launch towards Skaia and assault the Battlefield. Some of them will be sent back in time. Most of them won't. Notably, some asteroids contain strange cloning labs, either for creating carapacians or doing ectobiology.



## Kingdoms of Light and Darkness

The kingdom of light, Prospit, is home to the white carapacians and rests close to Skaia. They revere the Genesis Frog, and are destined to lose in the Battlefield. In

towers on the moon, the players' Dreamselfes sleep. During the Zenith (when Prospit's moon is closest to Skaia), one can gaze into the prophetic clouds to receive visions of the past, present, and future. Visions of the past and present are easy to describe. Visions of the future are not.

One way of dealing with them can simply let the player write down some amount of future vision tokens on their character sheet. These can be spent at any time for either unique knowledge on a subject determined by the player or for +1 die. Another way of handling it can be to show doomed timelines. Dark paths that must be prevented. Use either, both, or neither as it suits you.

The kingdom of darkness, Derse, houses the black carapacians outside of the Veil. Derse's moon also has towers, in which Dreamselfes sleep. When the moon is pointed towards the furthest ring, the noble Horrorterrors whisper to them and offer guidance.

## Alchemy and Grist

A signature part of SBURB, continuously creating new items by combining different items is a fun and interesting part of any good session. However, doing this requires a lot of grist. Continuously grinding monsters just to keep up with the grist costs of alchemy is... not as fun. The Fourth Gate makes grist mostly abstract by measuring grist in

Windfalls. It isn't exactly defined how much grist or what types of grist is contained in a single windfall - but it is a lot. The amount of grist in a windfall also changes as the character progresses (but a grist windfall will never cease to exist just because the player reached a higher level in the fiction).

Whenever a character is challenged by a group of underlings and defeats them, they earn 1 grist windfall. If it wasn't very challenging (try to avoid this), start a 3-step clock "1 grist windfall" and fill 1 tick on it.

When you alchemize something important, pay 1 grist windfall. Otherwise, pay nothing. It still costs grist - just not enough to be measured. Sometimes, a long alchemy chain can cost 1 windfall, but in that case the end result should be good. This allows for characters to mess around and have fun without feeling like they're wasting resources.

As a rule of thumb, alchemy comes in four "tiers". The different tiers fill no major mechanical function, but should be important in the fiction. The difference between the lowest and the highest tier should be *felt*.



**Tier 1 - Mundane items.** Everything (barring shenanigans) you find in your house is Mundane. It is the base level items with potential for greatness. *John's normal hammer, any starting clothes, a wizard statue.*

**Tier 2 - Alchemized items.** The very first items you create are simply Alchemized. They have some degree of unique functions, and in the fiction they are more powerful than Mundane items. *John's Pogo hammer, portable computers, unique adventuring gear, Rose's majyk wands.*

**Tier 3 - Advanced items.** As you venture deeper into alchemy, you get to the Advanced items. They are clear improvements of simply Alchemized items, but still have potential. *Wrinklefucker, jetpacks, heads-up computers, time turntables.*



**Tier 4 - Penultimate items.** These artefacts are Alchemy squared. Made out of Alchemized items and Advanced items, Penultimate items should be worthy of the final battle. *Fear no anvil, Crimson Ribitar.*

**Tier 5 - Legendary items.** The origin of Legendary items are veiled in mystery - they cannot be alchemized under normal circumstances. They are powerful beyond recognition, probably. In some cases they can also be a cheap piece of crap.  
*Warhammer of Zillyhoo, Octite Flouette, Ahab's Crosshairs, Unbreakable Katana.*

When you create a new weapon, you can also create one or more outfits, free of charge. *What does it look like? What did you use to make it? Why do you think it's cool?*

For some tips on exactly what kind of effects alchemy might add, use the following abilities for inspiration.

**Permission to do something normal people can't do.** *Alchemized binoculars allow the user to gaze far beyond what is normally possible.*

**+1 die to a roll in a specific circumstance.** *Your collection of smuppets, amber smuppets, smuppets in amber, and so on gives +1 die when leveraging fear or the uncanny valley.*

**+1 clock tick in a specific circumstance.** Meant only for items that are incredibly powerful - +1 tick is effectively a free success. *The warhammer of Zillyhoo*

*does +1 clock tick with violence. The Fratwurst Fantastical offers +1 clock tick when offered in friendship.*

**Add a very potent action.** All bets are off. Allow what you didn't allow at character creation. *A jetpack might allow the user to pick up the action Fly. A wand enables the action Cast.*

## Houses to towers

A central mechanic in SBURB is building your house up. This is for reaching the seven gates, each one leading elsewhere\*. The seventh gate leads to the Denizen's lair. Beyond that lies Skaia and the Battlefield.

The houses must be built. Spending precious grist windfalls on just getting a taller house isn't particularly fun, so building your house does not cost grist windfalls. Instead, *build your house up when it makes sense in the fiction.*

Generally, can building up can be done when you return to your house, or when you feel like you don't know what to do. Fresh adventure awaits beyond every\* gate!

**As a rule of thumb**, you can't really begin building your up until you get your first Grist Windfall.

\*Not actually 100% clear where they lead. Neither the comic nor the wiki is consistent, and the gates are named in a misleading fashion (the big issue being that the "second" gate isn't *above* John's house).

## Mythological Roles

*For more information on each individual mythological role, read the comic, the MS Paint wiki, the Extended Zodiac, and numerous fan interpretations on the internet.*

One of the most tantalizing parts of SBURB is the Mythological Role, or *classpect*. The Mythological Role is made up of two parts: a class and an aspect. There is twelve of each, and many of them are misleading. Each mythological role gives different powers (although there is definitely overlap) and it is not clearly defined exactly what those powers are. This segment will not try to do that. Instead, it aims to provide a general framework in which *classpect* can exist.

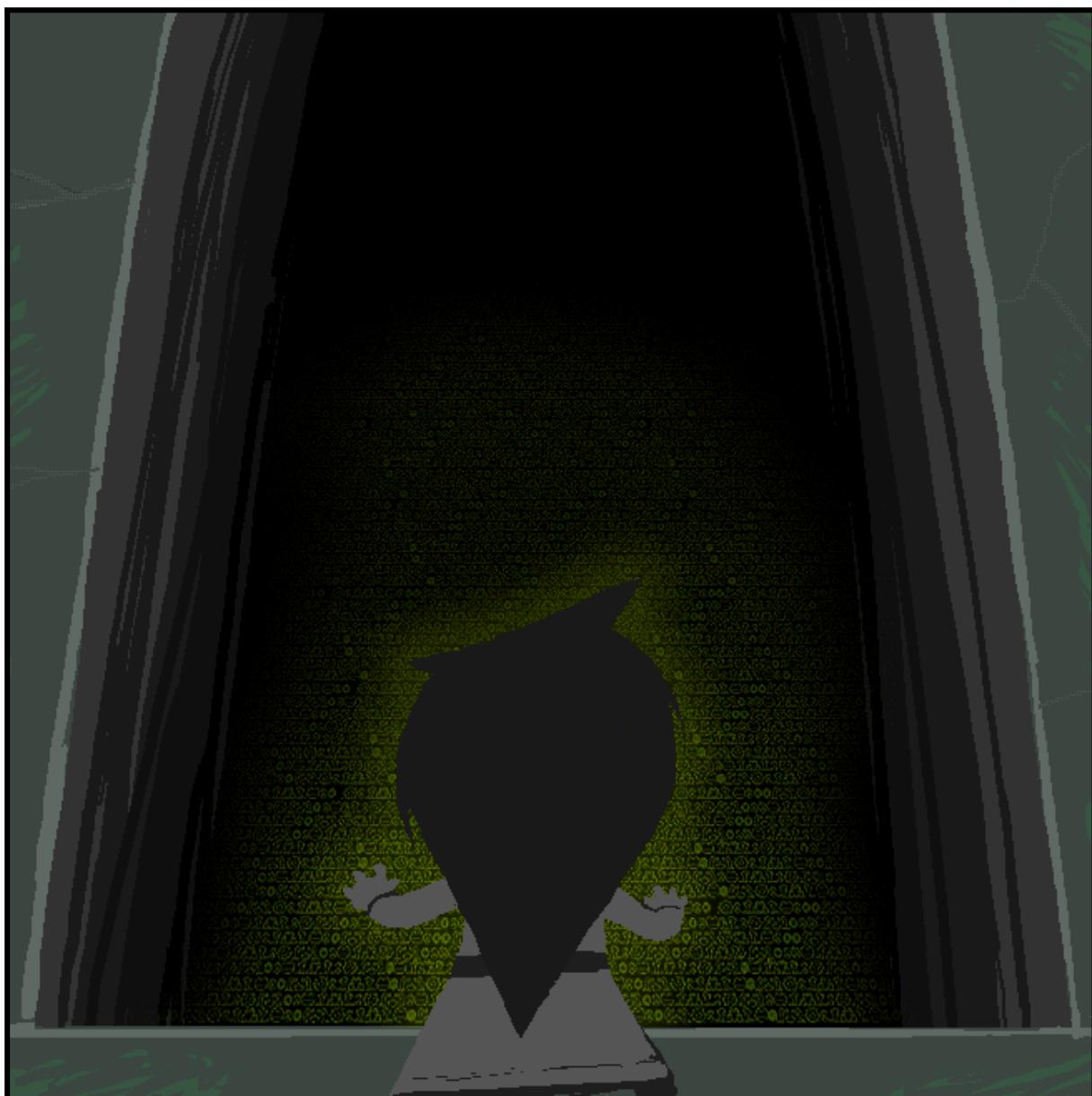
6	Heir of Breath
5	Become wind
4	Tornado
3	Wind Drill
2	Not yet known
1	Not yet known

A suggestion for how to do it is to simply use the same resolution method as the default game - write up actions on a d6, but keep your Mythic actions separate. If you roll the correct mythic action, you succeed. However, you should do a few things

different. Where you would normally write “Succeed”, write your Mythological role instead, indicating a success at anything related to your mythological role. If you don’t know it yet, simply write “Mythological role”. As you play, the GM and the player should work together to fill out the rest of the mythic actions. Don’t limit yourselves to just one-word verbs, create mythic actions such as *Array of Selves*, *Path to Victory*, or *Rip Soul*.

When rolling for Mythic abilities, roll your current level - 2 dice. This means that in most circumstances you can’t use Mythic powers before level 2 (and even then, you roll with 0 dice - roll twice take worst result).

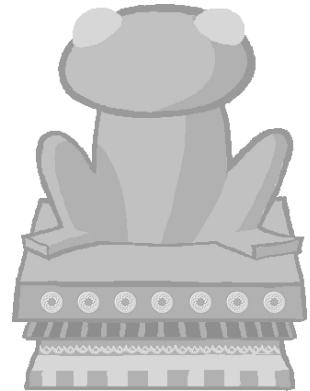
If a character dies on their Quest Bed or in their Quest Crypt, they ascend to the God Tiers. They gain the ability to fly, conditional immortality, snazzy god tier pyjamas, and they roll their level on Mythic actions.



## Prototypes

Before players enter a session, they must prototype something. While, in theory, anything can be prototyped, this is not recommended. The prototypes affect the session deeply, and should not be done for laughs (unless that's the kind of session you're running). Sprites are generally attracted to the dead or doomed, but any sort of animal or humanoid can be a good prototype.

Prototypes affect three things in the game: Sprites, underlings, and kingdom culture.



**Sprites** are the player's mystical guide on the magical journey that is SBURB. They are a direct manifestation of the prototypes, and get impractical if it, say, doesn't have a mouth. Otherwise, they often carry the abilities and mannerisms of whatever they're prototyped with (in addition to emergency healing and ghostly attacks).

**Underlings** are the enemies. They drop grist, and carry the general abilities of whatever they're prototyped with. However, they often have their own personalities that mostly overwrite the prototype - imps are mischievous and ogres are brutish. They are fairly generic on their own, but the prototypes give them spice.

**Kingdom Culture** refers to the kingdoms of light and darkness, and how they are shaped by the prototypes. Only the royals are directly affected (due to their rings and scepters), but all of the other carapacians are indirectly affected. Their clothes, laws and ideals change to reflect the whims and appearances of their beloved king and queen, often shaping their society from the bottom and up. Prototypes determine almost every part of Prospit and Derse.

## Session clocks

There are many things to keep track of in a session. To help with that, this section contains many different evocative clocks that will hopefully aid you in some capacity. Every clock will name what happens when it is fulfilled, how many ticks it might have, and what triggers the clock progressing. Most of these relate to the game elements of a normal session - don't let them limit you.



### **Jack Noir rebels.**

2 ticks.

Each “humiliating” prototype advances this clock 1 step. Attempts at diplomacy can also further it. Jack Noir’s rebellion gives access to the Regicide plan, unless he somehow gains the ability to murder all of creation. If that happens, he’ll do that instead.

If you have more players in your session, increase the length of this clock. 1 tick per two players might be appropriate, but it is your call.

### **Build a house to Skaia.**

8 ticks.

When you build your house up, tick it. When the clock is filled, the GRIST RIG is placed at the top. As you tick it, you gain access to the gates. Meeting the Denizen should happen somewhere between 6 and 7 ticks.

### **The Black King wins.**

6 ticks.

The army of darkness is destined to win in the Battlefield. When that happens, the Black King uses the White King’s sceptre to initiate the Reckoning.

### **The Reckoning destroys the Battlefield.**

4 ticks.

Time is running out! When the Reckoning begins, it is only a matter of time before the meteors ruin the Battlefield. The Genesis Frog cannot grow without the Battlefield. If this clock is completed, the session is lost.

### **Jack Noir rebels. Violently.**

4 ticks.

Each “humiliating” prototype also advances *this* clock 1 step. Jack has had enough, and rebels against the queen without a plan. Will in most circumstances result in his death.

### **Strange Happenings in the Veil.**

4 ticks.

The Veil is easy to forget, but many important things happen here. Most of it related to either ectobiology or carapacian cloning.



### **The lure of the Furthest Ring.**

4 ticks.

This isn't directly related to the session at large, but rather a single player. The Horrorterrors whisper and offer great power and knowledge - this clock represents a player walking the thin line of corruption. Grimdarkness (and Actions Grim and Dark) awaits at the end of the clock.

### **Dead kids pile up.**

4 ticks.

Time travel brings many benefits and some side effects. The main one being dead kids. Doomed timelines are difficult to prevent. Make sure to remind the players of them (and even maybe send them down one or two).

## Land design

Lands are planets, specifically designed for each and every player. They all follow a similar naming theme - Land of X and Y - and they all have certain similarities. Here is a checklist with advice for creating them. For more advice, the comic and the MS Paint wiki offers great advice, as always.

**Lands should evoke a sense of wonder.** They are fantastical places that tickle the imagination. Just hearing the name of a land should make you want to see more of it and learn its history.

*What happened in your land? Why is it the way it is? What lies beyond the horizon?*

**Lands should allow for varied environments.** If it doesn't, it will get old. If the majority of the session is going to be spent exploring lands, make sure that they have the capability to offer different environments, obstacles, and stories. The canon lands are not particularly good at this, due to them mostly being a backdrop for the story.

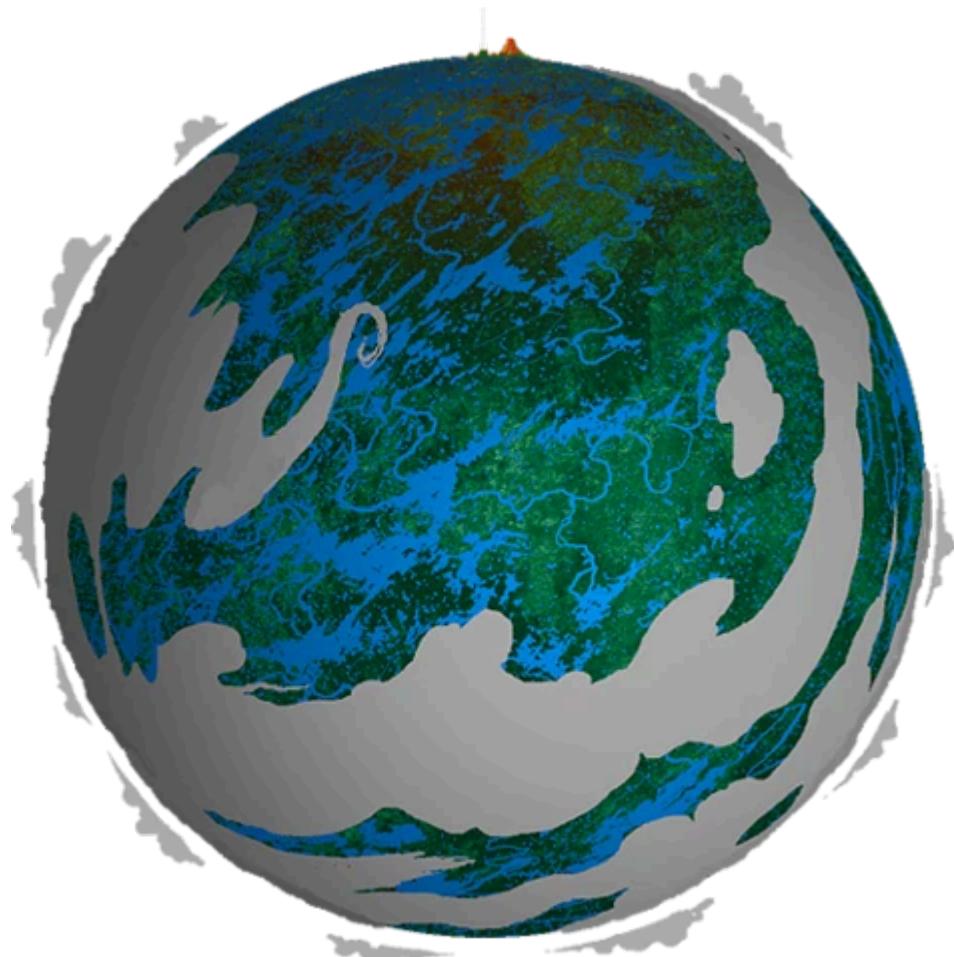
*How many different biomes can you think of for the land? What sort of landmarks would one find?*

**Lands should relate to the player's Mythological Role.** Don't be too obvious about it (or be obvious about it), but use the land to hint at it. You can also draw upon their interests for land ideas. Let the player shine when the moment comes. *The Land of Wind and Shade empowers your aspect, the constant gale being a source of power. The Land of Snow and Frogs reflects the Ultimate Alchemy and the monstrous (but fun and cute) task ahead of you - creating Bilious Slick.*

**Lands should challenge the player.** It can be physically, psychologically, or logically. Put them in situations they are ill prepared for. Remove the comfortable parts of society. Drive home that this is the apocalypse (but also the beginning of a new world).

*The constant whirring of steel in the Land of Heat and Clockwork evokes memories of clashing swords and a childhood lost in combat training. The pastel colors of the Land of Light and Rain refuses to let you into adulthood, insisting that you are still the little girl that you've left far behind you.*

**Lands are often inhabited by consorts and the Denizen.** The consorts inhabit villages that are in constant danger from the underlings. The Denizens brood in their lairs. The kingdoms of light and darkness are involved in some capacity. Make the lands feel as if someone lives there.

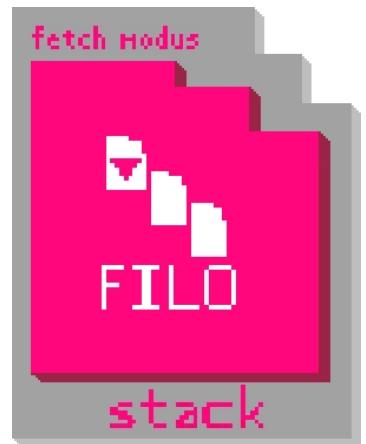


## Chapter 5 - Changing the game

This chapter contains many different variant rules that you may or may not consider to be an important part of the Homestuck experience. Each rule is divided in two parts. The first one describes the rule. What it is, how it works in the fiction and how it interacts with the main rules. The second part in cursive is a personal comment on the rule. It gives advice on when you should use a rule. Ultimately, what variant rules (if any) you decide to bring to the table should be a discussion between everyone.

### Sylladexes

A mainstay of early homestuck. They become less and less important as the story continues because the joke has eventually played its part. If you want to have an unwieldy way of inventory management (it is usually a great way to find conflict early on and establish character), you do so. Fade it out of importance as your progress through the game. If you want to weaponize your sylladex, you can do so either by sacrificing items or by having an action that relates specifically to your sylladex (or both). For more information on sylladexes, read the comic or the MS Paint wiki.



*This isn't a part of the core rules because everyone might not be interested in them. It doesn't really affect the player's power level in either direction, and can be pretty funny when it isn't overdone. Just make sure it doesn't overstay its welcome.*

### Strife Decks

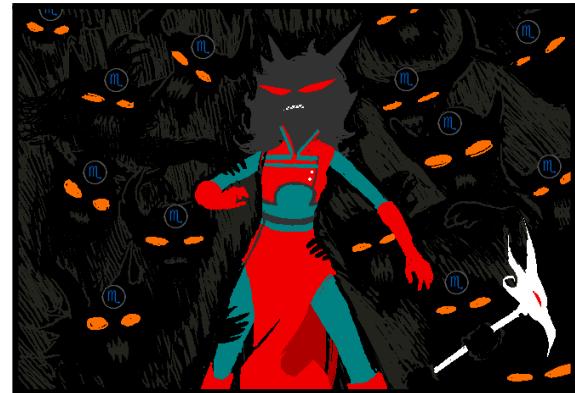
In the homestuck universe, weapons can be allocated to Strife Decks, which allow them to be wielded. Each Strife Deck has a Kind Abstratus, which determines what kind of weapons that can be allocated to it. You can have multiple Strife Decks (and start with either 1 or 2), and you can store any amount of weapons in each Strife Deck. Other than that, weapons are not considered separate from items, and their effect is usually enabling conflict. For more information, read the comic or the MS Paint wiki.



*This isn't a part of the core rules because it goes hand in hand with Sylladexes. It doesn't affect the character's power level either, and allows everyone to have their signature weapon which is cool.*

## Psionics

In canon, psionics is usually associated with lowblood trolls, but don't let that limit you. If you're playing with this variant rule, you can be psionic. This manifests itself in the actions that you choose. There are no exact rules for psionics, much like there are no exact rules for actions. They operate within the same rules. However, if you feel like having psionics is too much of an advantage, you can make them take the harm "Psionic Brain," which can be moved around if you have a couple of minutes to think but is *permanent* (until the GM deems that it isn't needed anymore). For more information on what types of psionics are available, read the comic and the MS paint wiki.



*Changing Psionic Brain to something else can be a great tool of characterization. Some examples of Permanent Psionic Harm be "Paralyzed Legs" or "Is a ghost."*

*Psionics can drastically alter how a character is played, it could not. It does have some pretty nasty implications with powers like Mind Control (see the Chapter 3 for more info on how to deal with that), but overall it can contribute to character variety and open up new possibilities. Unlike previous editions, there's no resource associated with psionics. Instead, there's just one factor to consider when using psionics. Should you as the GM call for conflict?*

## Vriska-style

Named after the only character in Homestuck, Vriska-style offers a style of play that is different in . Instead of using a d6, Vriska-style uses a **d8**. Characters have room for 8 actions (one of which is always succeed) and can take 8 harm before being unable to succeed at a conflict. 82THE8TH.



*How does the math check out? Vriska-style allows character to have more different actions, but actually reduces their overall chance at success. Vriska-style creates characters that are jacks of all trades, but masters of none.*

*Can you use other dice than d8s? Of course, but it will only highlight Vriska-style's extremities even further, while also requiring players to write down more actions. For maximum old-school insanity and next to immortal characters, use a d20 and sip the wicked elixir.*

## Struggle

*Struggle* is a unique action, much like *Succeed*. If you use this variant rule, put Struggle on the second to highest numbered action. When you roll Struggle, you succeed, but you struggle when you do it. Some sort of *complication* occurs. Something goes wrong. Your enemies achieve their goals as well. It is kind of like “you succeed, but success has a price.” For more information on how to do Struggle well, check systems designed around it, such as *Blades in the Dark* and games that are *Powered by the Apocalypse*.

*This increases how often players succeed at their task, but it also makes things more gritty and hard on the characters. It works very well with Vriska-style and offsets some of its issues.*

## Pushing on

Sometimes, you really don’t like where the dice fall, and the GM has no success at a price to offer. In such occasions, you might consider Pushing on. When you do, you ignore whatever went wrong, charge in headlong, and scream obscenities in the face of the universe. Roll the dice again, and use the new result. However, if things *still* don’t go your way, the original consequences for failure will be greatly magnified.

You get to redefine what actions count as a success when you push on. If all those actions are defensive in nature, you get +1 die.

*Pushing on is a gambling move. You’re betting everything on a single dice roll, and you’re willing to take the hit if that fails. Pushing on greatly improves a character’s chance of success in their undertakings, so perhaps it shouldn’t always be available. Perhaps you can offer Pushing on as a success at a price?*

## Teamwork

### The great game of chess

The rules support playing as a carapacian (and started as a system for just carapacians), so almost no major mechanical changes need to be done, although the stories told should be quite different. Just keep in mind that carapacians are a lot less heroic than normal characters, and have no



mythological roles to manifest. Instead, they have something different.

All carapacians have, in addition to their name, a pair of *initials*. Every time they level up, their name changes, but the initials remain the same. They also have the special ability of *Invoking* their name. If their name is relevant to a conflict they're in, they get +1 die.

Carapacians can use rings of orbs and royal scepters to become prototyped.

*Carapacians play into the war between light and darkness. They aren't prototyped by default, but they are still affected by them. Give your players the option to take new actions that reflect the different prototypes.*

## Experience

*What have you learned? What has happened? How are you growing?*

To gain experience is to reflect upon what you have done and what you are. When you finish a pesterlog with another player, take a moment to think. A number of questions will be asked to both the player and the GM. For every question where the answer is yes, the player gains 1 experience.

For the player:

- Was the conversation important to you?
- Has the GM challenged you?
- Have you learned something?
- Do you feel like you've grown since the last time you reflected?

For the GM:

- Have they expressed their thoughts, drives, or personality?
- Have they advanced their house, land quest, or mythological role?
- Have they cooperated with their friends?
- Have you enjoyed yourself?

Leveling up takes either 4, 8, 10, 12, or 16 experience. GMs, make the call. Change the amount required later on if you want to slow things down or speed them up.

However, consider 8 or 12 the default.

*If don't you feel like predicting where the story will go (or just don't like doing it), use the Experience variant rule. It makes it less about the big goals and moments, and more about the person the player portrays.*

## Abilitechs

Abilitechs are cool abilities that let you do something unique. You have 0 Abilitechs when you begin play (or maybe you have 1). There's no default way for learning them, but some methods will be offered. One way could simply be as a result of learning something or something awesome happening. Another way could be starting a clock for it. If you do, set the amount of ticks required to fill it and what you need to do to make it tick. For inspiration, you can refer to "XP triggers" from other games, which function about the same.

Still, you have a great deal of freedom with exactly what an Abilitech does - come up with it yourself. Still, certain guidelines do exist to help you on your path.

**Permission to do something normal people can't do.**

**Take 1 harm to do something extraordinary.**

**+1 die to a roll in a specific circumstance.**

**+1 clock tick in a very specific circumstance.**

**Add a very potent action.**

**Remove permanent harm.**

*There will never be a massive document called something like "Roads and Obelisks", detailing a large amount of Abilitechs, sorted by some vague sense of identity.*

## Action advancement

When an action is leveled up, simply add a +1 to it on your character sheet. When you roll and that action is a success, take +1 die. If you have multiple actions that are considered a success, use the dice of the lowest leveled action (not counting Succeed).

*If you feel like adding +1 die to all rolls when you level up is too much and makes players too powerful, this variant rule might be for you.*

## The Other Cube

The Other Cube is a variant rule that *greatly* increases a character's amount of actions available, without compromising their probabilities. Wielders of The Other Cube gains 5 additional slots for Actions. When the GM calls for conflict, the player chooses which one of the set of actions they would like to use. Then, they decide what actions count as a success and roll.

Harm cancels out *both* of the actions it corresponds to, so be careful!

*In this example, we see a character with 10 actions. They also have the harm Blind (which is actually permanent psionic harm, caused by their extraordinary sense of taste and smell). In this case, Blind cancels both Accuse and Spook.*

First Actions		Harm	Other Actions	
Succeed	6		6	Succeed
Skirmish	5		5	Abscond
Accuse	4	Blind	4	Spook
Abstain	3		3	Inquire
Ambush	2		2	Lick
Hunt	1		1	Sniff

## Echeladders

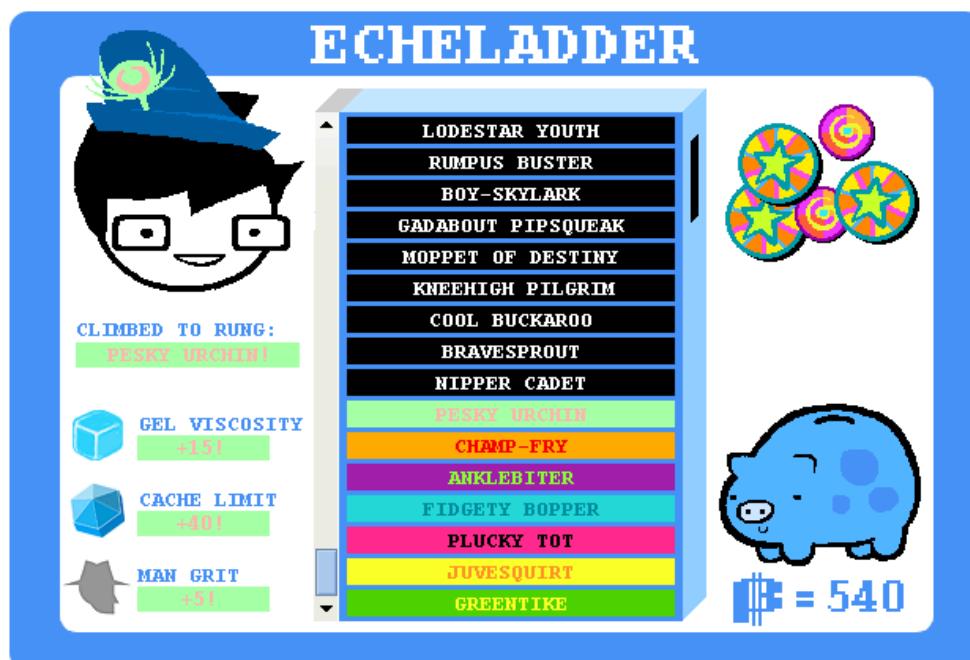
This variant rule works in synergy with several different rules to bring a system similar to previous editions of RPGStuck (mostly 2e and 3e). It combines Experience, Abilitech, Detectives Three and Action Advancement into a single leveling table. You can of course choose to use any amount of these. Still, there will be explanations of each individual level ups.

**Dice increases** are the levels you get in normal play. The number of dice written down is the number of dice you have in conflicts.

**Abilitech** means that you gain 1 Abilitech, as per the variant rule. They are special abilities that makes you more powerful or open up new possibilities.

**Stats** (Imagination, Pulchritude, and Vim) aren't shown in the leveling table, but you have stat points equal to your level. Assign them as you level up. If you're using the Elf Tears variant, you have Elf Tears equal to your level + 2.

Level	Gain	Level	Gain
1	1 die	6	Action Advancement
2	Abilitech	7	3 dice
3	Action Advancement	8	Abilitech
4	2 dice	9	Action Advancement
5	Abilitech	10	4 dice



## Detectives Three

The Detectives Three variant rule is actually a collection of variant rules that have common themes. They are all distinct power ups in various ways. The first section describes how they work and shows how they can be used individually. The last section describes some ways that they can be used together.

### Imagination

*Use Imagination to adapt your strategy on the fly and come out ahead however the dice may land.*

If you use the Imagination variant rule, you have a Max Imagination equal to your level. When you roll and fail, you can then use one Imagination to redefine what actions count as a success. However, you must describe how you use the new actions instead. While in FORT MODE, your Imagination is doubled.

*You fail a roll where AGGRIEVE was a success. Using imagination, you change the success to ABSCOND, allowing you to disengage from your opponent.*



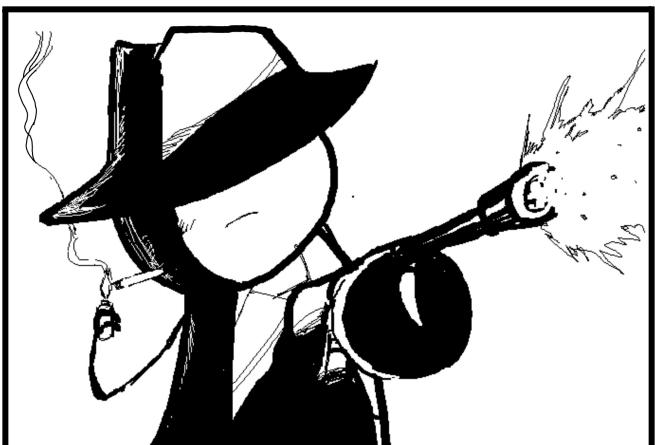
### Pulchritude

*With proper Pulchritude, there's always conflict to be found.*

If you use the Pulchritude variant rule, you have a Max Pulchritude equal to your level. You can then use 1 Pulchritude to enforce a conflict. Note that conflict in this scenario does not always mean combat, but sometimes diplomacy or great physical feats. Pulchritude means that you can always try to succeed (and probably have a pretty decent chance). You can also use 1 Pulchritude to get +1 die in any situation. While in TRICKSTER MODE, your Sepulchritude is doubled.

*The GM may introduce clocks and similar obstacles, but you can always try.*

*Reason with the unreasonable, fight the unwinnable, do the impossible. Pulchritude always means it could happen.*



## Vim

*To wield Vim is to be able to carry an inhuman amount of wounds and woes.*

Like the other two rules, you gain Max Vim equal to your level. When you take harm, you can then use 1 Vim to not take the harm. It makes you a whole lot more durable, absorbing massive blows with Vim alone. While in FIESTA MODE, your Vim is doubled. *You AUTO-PARRY a bullet directly in the gut, saving your dear, sweet, SONHEARST!*



## Recovery

There are no explicit rules for recovering Imagination, Pulchritude, and Vim. Instead, suggestions will be made. First of all, proper rest should always restore your statistics. Second, in *Problem Sleuth*, various beverages are used for restoration: Alcohol for Imagination and Coffee or Hot Sauce for Vim. Consider what restores what for your character.

## Stats three

Using Imagination, Pulchritude, and Vim together creates very flexible characters, but it would not be recommended to simply use three bars where you always resources equal to your level. While you can do that, the recommendation is to use one of these instead:

**Three Bars.** Keep track of three different bars - one for each statistic. At character creation, the bars have the length 2, 1, and 0. When you level up, you can increase 1 bar maximum by 1.

**Elf Tears.** Keep track of one bar - Elf Tears. You have Elf Tears equal to your twice your level + 2. At character creation, you assign all of the statistics the numbers 1, 2, or 3, using each number once. That is how many Elf Tears you must pay to use that statistic.



## Chapter 6 - Game Examples

### Lines and Veils

A group of players, Tim, Ana, and Simon have gathered in /r/RPGStuck. They also have a GM, Alan. This is them establishing Lines and Veils.

Alan: We're operating within RPGStuck, so by default everything related to sex and similar is veiled. I'd also like to line stuff like torture and gore. Doesn't add much, imo. *No one disagrees with this, so Alan writes it down.* Ana?

Ana: Hmmmm. Can we line sexism?

Simon: What do you mean?

Ana: No overt remarks about gender and no one is treated differently because of it. *The gang spends some more time defining exactly what it means, and then Alan writes it down.*

Tim: I don't have anything in mind. Sorry. Actually, wait. Can I line or veil anything?

Alan: Pretty much, yeah.

Tim: I wanna line my character being romantically involved. I don't care if the rest you do it, but I don't want to. Does that sound dumb?

Ana: No, not really.

Alan: If you change your mind later, we can revise it. Simon?

Simon: I don't have an ideological line, but a mechanical one. Can we line things like poisons, slow-acting fire damage, basically anything that'd count as a dot in a video game? They work really poorly in a tabletop environment, and... *Simon continues to rant about his burning hatred against damage over time in tabletops for a while, until Alan stops him and writes it down.*

Alan: ANYWAY, to summarize: Sex is veiled. Torture and gore is lined. Sexism is lined. Hitting on Tim's character is lined. Damage over time is lined. Did I miss anything? No? Good, then let's go to character creation...

## Chapter 7 - Changes to the Game

This is a changelog of all past editions of the Fourth Gate.

- Edition 1
  - Released.
- Edition 1.1
  - Added Chapter 6 - Game Examples
- Edition 1.2
  - Added Chapter 7 - Changes to the Game
- Edition 1.3
  - Minor changes, mostly editing.
  - Thanks to Merc for proofreading.
  - Added a page of contents.