Sour Grapes

Rule Book

About this Book

This book is a Rule Book. It is designed to be compact, easy to browse and act as a resource during gameplay. This is not a tutorial on how to play the game. In order to fully understand the rules we highly recommend the following companion books:

Sour Grapes: Why?
A brief introduction on why this role-playing game exists.

Sour Grapes: By Example
Taking stories found in many role-playing games and breaking them down step-by-step as to how they would be done "The Sour Grapes Way"

Sour Grapes: Firefoot's Tavern
A 45 minute mini-adventure designed to learn the Sour Grapes system that culminates in a tavern brawl!

Sour Grapes: Print this!
A PDF ready to take down to your local print-shop. It will have enough duplicates to support up to 5 players for a single campaign and include some basic actions.

In addition this book assumes that you have played a role-playing game before. This game system is designed to be accessible, free and easy to pick-up. However, it does not include a primer on role-playing games in general.

https://www.sourgrapesrpg.com/

The following items are required to play Sour Grapes

A lot of six-sided-dice. To make life easier have a pile of 50 dice available.

Tokens. Pennies or anything around the size of a coin will be fine. You'll want at least 50 per player. They should be easy to stack.

Each player should have a twenty-sided-dice. These will make an occasional use if the game calls for it. Most of the time you can get by without it if you do not have one.

Pen and Paper

A printer. There are character sheets, enemy sheets and other items all designed to fit an 8.5x11 sheet of paper. For a quick reference look at the companion book: Sour Grapes: Print this!

Overview

This section will cover the basic mechanics of creating a character and selecting their stats and skills.

Most campaigns are designed to last between 4-8 sessions. While leveling progression has been given some thought it is not a primary driver of this game. You will notice that most of the recommendations for creating a character will start them out fairly proficient. If you wish to create gameplay that is more progression-based you will want to adjust some of the starting points accordingly.

Who is your character?

Sour Grapes does not come with any sort of roles or types of characters for you to select. There are companion books that might dive deep into character selection or they may leave it open to the table to decide what makes sense in the current world. It is up to you to decide what kind of character you want to play, their backstory and what makes them special in this universe.

After deciding on the type of character you wish to play it is time to select stats. Stats are heavily used in this game and will make up the brunt of your gameplay.

There are 9 Stats in the game: Agility, Might, Knowledge, Perception, Prestige, Resolve, Spirit, Stamina and Vitality. Each stat can have a value from 1 to 10 and the "Random Adult Human Average" value of a Stat is 3.

Let's look at an example on the next page. Here the player has filled out their stat sheet by writing the stat value in pen and then coloring in the dice in pencil.
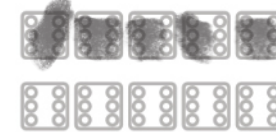
The character's true stat value will rarely change, but the dice value will be frequently erased or filled in as your stats are modified due to effects and actions.

Agility (AGI)
Physical

Athletic ability

5

Crippled
Physical stats do not recover
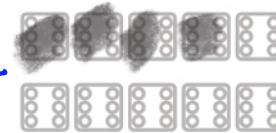
Might (MIG)
Physical

Raw power

3

Frail
Damage to physical stats are doubled

Knowledge (KNO)
Mental

Intelligence and experience

4

Feeble
Mental stats do not recover

Perception (PER)
Physical and Mental

Awareness and focus

6

Dazed
All actions are +2 difficulty to perform

Prestige (PRE)
Mental

Clout, fame, trustworthiness

2

Despised
Damage to mental stats are doubled

Resolve (RES)
Mental

Fearlessness, mental state of the character

4

Panicked
Mental actions cannot be played or reacted against.

Spirit (SPI)
Mental

Spiritual connection

2

Lost
Damage from Spirit attacks is doubled regardless of target stat

Stamina (STA)
Physical

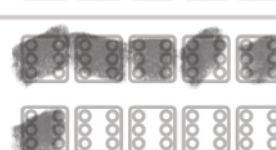Ability to continue physical activities

4

Incapacitated
Physical actions cannot be played or reacted against

Vitality (VIT)
Physical

Physical state of the character

6

Dying
Actions cannot be played, stats do not recover

Note: When a stat is depleted you cannot use any action, item or ability that lists that stat as part of the Success or Result.

Stats can go up or down depending on situations during the game. If a stat reaches zero something significant will happen (as explained on the stat sheet).

There are two terms to remember with stats:

Actual Stat Value is the value that the stat is regardless of effects. This is the value written in pen on the stat sheet.

Current Stat Value is the value of the state with all modifiers applied to it.

Unless otherwise expressed in this game every single stat role should be based off the Current Stat Value. If your character has a strength of 10 but the Current Stat Value is 1 then for all rolls that character is treated as if they have a Strength of 1.

When a Stat goes down it is called "Exhausting" the stat. Stat points can recover after a short rest away from the activity. Exhausting a Stat is a common part of this game. How long it takes to recover an exhausted stat depends entirely on the situation, but it is usually within a couple of hours.

If a stat is Injured then the stat will not recover until the injury is removed. If a stat is injured just mark it once on the paper until that injury has been healed. There can only be one injury marker on a stat at a given time. It is up to the story teller to determine what needs to happen to remove an injury. If a stat ever reaches zero it is automatically injured.

In this example the players Actual Stat Value is 4, the Current Stat Value 2 and the stat is Injured

There are no default skills in the game. Instead players are encouraged to come up with their own skills. As you progress through a story it will be common to make a case for a skill being a comparable for another. For example a player may say they wish to use their "Dancing" skill during an event that requires "Some athletic ability". This is going to happen frequently, therefore it's going to be up to the table to decide if this makes sense or not.

There are no set number of skills but players should rarely have more than one page. All common skills that would be part of a normal individual of that character's era are assumed to be part of this character as well. For example, if the character is a from 4000bc they are assumed to know how to hunt, forage, make a fire, camp in safety and listen for predators.

Skills are in values from 1 (trained) to 5 (masterclass). Having a masterclass in a skill means the character is truly "world-renown" in that ability. This is significant as skills are used as "free tokens" for actions (more on this later).

The next page has an example character skill sheet.

Name: fencing — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: acrobatics — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: handguns — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: Stunt driving — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: boxing — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: persuasion — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: luxury — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: electronics — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Name: — Trained · Expert · Masterclass · Notes:

Skills represent "Free Tokens" that can be used as an automatic success. If a Skill is defined as being part of the roll you may add that many tokens to your die rolls.

Skills cannot be injured, negated or modified. Similar to exhausting a Stat, it takes time to get Tokens back for a Skill. That time is depending on the story and events at hand.

Single Check Roll - Skill is recovered immediately

Situation Roll - Skill is not recovered until end of Situation. Check rolls inside the Situation may or may not recover until the Situation is complete (storyteller discretion).

Event - Player gets one point at the beginning of their turn to put back into an exhausted uninjured Stat or Skill.

Here the player is using tokens to remember that they used up their Acrobatics Skill

There are 9 stats

Stats are values from 1 to 10

The "Average Adult Human" Stat value is 3

Stats are frequently modified but will always revert back to their original value over time

It's important to know what the original stat value is as well as the current stat value

There are no set Skills

Skills are values from 1 to 5

A character should only have one page of Skills

There are no other backgrounds or traits as part of the default game

Players are encouraged to come up with their own skills

There are moments that will happen during a game that will involve rolling dice or updating the character sheet. These are just examples, there is no set rule as to when to use which type of moment. It will depend greatly on the type of game you are playing.

Spend - the act of spending a stat point to perform an action without rolling.

Carrying a heavy object

Searching for something

Studying

Check - rolling dice against a threshold to determine if an action was successful or not.

Picking a lock

Hot wiring a car

Stealing an object

Situation - a scenario that could lead to multiple outcomes.

Diffusing a bomb

Haggling

Interrogating

Event - an extended scenario involving battle cards

Combat

Anything that constitutes the "core" of the game. This could be "Lawyering" or "Taxi Driving".

The spend action is simply exhausting a point of a stat in order to achieve a goal. This could be exhausting one point of knowledge to study up on a mythical creature or exhausting one point of stamina to run to the nearest police station.

Spend actions can be dictated towards the players "You've been hunting for so long why don't all of you spend a Perception." or they can be at the request of a player "Can I just spend some Strength and kick this door down."

This is a good way to indicate how something is going. If the party is supposed to sneak into a high-class dinner party and they show up wearing their battle armor and weapons that might cost them some Prestige. On the flip side, if they make a good argument for a situation or come up with something creative it might earn them some of their exhausted stats back.

Typically Skill tokens do not apply to Spend rolls. If they did they would just be a "Success" without needing to perform any action.

A check action represents the first and most basic role of the game. In order to perform a check roll you must first identify the type of moment being described, how difficult it is, and what are the outcomes for success and failure.

Requirements for a Check Roll

Stat (required)

Skill (not required)

Difficulty threshold

Success outcome

Fail outcome

The player gathers six-side-dice equivalent to the Current Stat Value of the Stat identified. Then the player gathers tokens equivalent to the Skill. The player can choose to add any combination of dice and tokens. If this is a single check roll not tied to an event or situation the tokens are replenished immediately afterwards.

The tokens automatically count as a success. The dice are a success as long as they do not land on a "1". If any die lands on a "1" it is not counted AND the Stat is exhausted by one point per die.

The player must produce a value larger than the Difficulty. If the player does not produce a value larger than the Difficulty the roll has failed, otherwise it was successful.

The player may choose to use less dice in a roll to prevent additional ones that may exhaust a stat farther than necessary to achieve the success.

Example:
The player wishes to pick a lock, they have a lock-pick skill of 2 and a perception of 7. The difficulty is 5. They use the two tokens from their lock-pick skill and decide to only roll five dice for their perception. The result is Token, Token, Six, Two, One, One, Five. The final score is 5 therefore they failed. They also exhausted two points of perception and will need to rest to try again.

A situation roll is a buildup roll that produces a final Check Roll. The character works into the story events that will either raise or lower the difficulty.

First the Storyteller announces that a particular task will come at a very high difficulty. Then it is up to the players to work into the situation ideas that will lower the overall difficulty.

During this time there could be spending and check rolls. Skill Token and Stat Point recovery are up to the story teller. It's entirely acceptable to have no Skill or Stat recovery until the entire Situation is over.

Example:
The player wants to break into the back room of a casino. The difficulty to simply walk there using only Prestige (Stat) and Fast Talking (Skill) is 20. This creates a Situation.

First the player decides to get an application for a job and apply in person for the position. This reduces the difficulty down to 18.

Then the player decides to strike up a conversation with one of the bartenders trying to convince him that he'd be perfect for the job. This is a Check Roll. The player passes the check roll and it reduces the overall Situation difficulty down to 11.

Then the player decides to follow the bartender out for a cigarette and knocks him unconscious when no cameras are looking. Now the player has a uniform, a backstory and a badge. The difficulty of the Situation is no 5.

The player decides to chance it and walks up to the door. The player uses Fast Talking and Prestige to convince the security guards he's new on his first day and successfully gets entrance into the back of the casino.

Events are the longest and most time consuming part of the game. They represent performing a series of Actions using card mechanics. Ultimately Events are just a very scripted series of Check Rolls.

Initiative

An Event is declared with a roll for Initiative. Each participant chooses a Stat and makes a check roll. The participant must make a case for the Stat being selected, any Stat can be picked if it makes sense for the event. Players can choose the amount of dice up to the Stat to roll however this check roll does not exhaust the Stat.

There's a high percentage of ties so a simple fix is to have the participants add the results of their check roll to a D20 roll.

Rounds

A round is every participant ranked for initiative. When the next Round begins announce a "New Round" as some Actions, Effects and Cards take effect in the beginning of a Round.

Turn

A turn is one Participants chance to perform an action, this could be movement, trading objects, taking items, or playing a Stunt card. This participant is referred to as the Controller. Once the turn is done the next participant in line becomes the Controller.

There are 5 Action Cards (Stunt, Interrupt, Compliment, Divert, React)

Stunt cards: The action being performed by the player

Interrupt cards: A card designed to halt the stunt card

Compliment cards: Used to modify the Stunt in a positive or negative way

Divert cards: Used to redirect the stunt towards another target

React cards: Used to react to a stunt being played against the target

A 1	ATTACK *You swing your weapon at the target*	E
B *Success* **Agility**	Skill: Swords F	
C *Result* **Strength**	Notes: Deal Vitality Damage equal to the Result to one Target	
D *Target* **Vitality**		

A The value that is necessary to pass in order for the Action to be successful. If this is a number treat it like a Check Roll difficulty, otherwise read the notes to see how to determine the number.

B The Stat that can be used to pass the Action

C The Stat that can be used to apply the Result. This is usually the amount of damage applied to the Target but not always.

D The Target of the result.

E The type of Action (Stunt, Interrupt, Compliment, Divert, Reaction)

F The Skill that can be used as free tokens for any roll in the card

Prep
1: At the beginning of a turn the Controller gains a free point that can be used to replenish a spent Skill Token or uninjured Stat Point.

Next they will go through their applied Effects. Some they can choose to discard, others they must roll to keep in play and some they cannot discard until a specifc action has occurred.

Stunt
2: Now the controller may lay down a Stunt card. This card will kick off the turn. No other player may lay down a card until a Stunt card has been placed. Only the controller may lay down a Stunt card.

Interrupt
3: After the Stunt card is placed any other player may lay down an Interrupt card. The player who placed the Interrupt card must roll for success or failure immediately. **If the Interrupt card is successful it is applied and the turn is over.**

Targeting & Betting
4: The Controller now must declare the Target(s) and how many points they intend to place into the Success and Result rolls. They place dice and tokens there to represent their future rolls but they **do not roll at this time.**

Compliments & Diversions
5: Any players may now lay down either Compliments or Diversion cards. Only one card of each may be laid down.

6: Success rolls are made for the Diversion and Compliment cards on the table. This will determine who the receiver of the action ultimately is and if there are any other modifications to the action.

Reaction
7: That receiver (or multiple) must now choose to play Reaction cards.

Final Rolls
8: Controller rolls for Stunt and this is compared against the Reaction(s). If the Reaction card is successful it will apply. If it fails then the Stunt card moves to Damage. Unless otherwise stated the Damage is rolled once and applied to all failed Reactions.

After that the turn is over.

Notes:

- Reaction cards can only be played by a character who is the target of a stunt. Only one Reaction card may be played per player.

- You can only have one Interrupt, one Compliment, one Divert and one Stunt on the table.

- If at any time there is a conflict, meaning multiple players wish to lay down an interrupt, diversion or compliment card the player willing to put the most points into their card wins. In the event of a tie the players decide on a tie-breaker. However if this happens the loosing player must still make a check roll to see if they exhaust their skills even though they don't get to apply their card!

- Even if a card is guaranteed to lose they still must roll to determine if they exhausted any Stat points.

The Stunt card is the first card to place on the table during a turn. Only the Controller can play a Stunt Card.

This card is a generic Attack card.

It requires AT LEAST one success

You can use Agility (Stat) or Swords (Skill) to reach that Success

It will deal damage to the target's Vitality

The damage is based off of Strength (Stat) and Swords (Skill)

Dealing damage is another Check Roll just with no minimum difficulty

Stats can be exhausted as part of the Success (Attack) and Result (Damage) portion of this card.

1	ATTACK	
	You swing your weapon at the target	
Success **Agility**	Skill: Swords	
Result **Strength**	Notes:	
Target **Vitality**		

This card requires a success of 7 to pass

The card allows Perception (Stat) and Ninjitsu (Skill) to be used

If this card is successful it deals 1 damage to the target's Perception

Not all interrupts make sense in a given situation - what if the target is wearing a motorcycle helmet? What if the target is a 30ft tall robot? If the player places an invalid interrupt it can be rejected by the table.

6	Sand Strike	
	You disrupt the action with a cloud of sand	
Success **Perception**	Skill: Ninjitsu	
Result **N/A**	Notes: If successful deals 1 point of damage to the target's Perception	
Target **N/A**		

This card works like a Stunt card, it will deal additional damage to the player.

Not all Compliments will work. What if the person is attacking with their fists?

4	**Flame Weapon** *The weapon glows with magical fire*	
Success **Knowledge** *Result* **Spirit** *Target* **Vitality**	Skill: Fire Magic Notes: Treat this as additional damage dealt.	

Divert cards are interesting because they change the target.

In this example it is important for the player and storyteller to agree on a new target. What happens if you are shoving a person away who is firing a crossbow? What if it is a longsword? Your valid targets may change.

*	**Shove** *You shove the attacker mid-strike*	
Success **Agility** *Result* **N/A** *Target* **N/A**	Skill: Judo Notes: * Success score is based off Attacker's Agility. If successful you and storyteller agree on new target.	

Reaction cards can only be played by the targets of a Stunt. This is how they get out of the way.

Again, not all reaction cards can be played. You may be able to dodge a bullet but can you really dodge the impending sense of doom that follows a lifetime of failed choices?

*	**DODGE** *You jump out of the way*	
Success **Agility** *Result* **N/A** *Target* **N/A**	Skill: Athletics Notes: * Score must beat Success score targeting you	

Effects are cards that are continously in play and change some of the rules of the cards being used.

Effects can be positive and negative.

Most positive effects can simply be stopped and removed from play at the start of the controllers turn.

2	**Trained Breathing** *You are pacing your attacks and focused on prolonging the fight.*	
Success **Agility** *Result* N/A *Target* N/A	Skill: Boxing Notes: Play this card first as a Stunt. At the start of your turn Roll for this effect or discard the effect Each time you roll a "1" on an Agility roll you may choose to exhaust Stamina instead.	

Negative effects will have some criteria before they are finished:

*	**Intoxicated** *You are drunk sir!*	
Success N/A *Result* N/A *Target* N/A	Notes: Place 4 tokens on this card. Remove a token at the start of your turn. When there are no Tokens on this card discard it. You cannot use Skill Tokens and Agility Points at the same time as part of the same Roll.	

Whenever a Stat reaches zero it is automatically marked as injured.

If the player exhausts 3 or more points in a single roll that Stat becomes injured.

If the player is hit for 2 or more points of damage in a single turn that Stat becomes injured. This includes damages from multiple sources.

Even though you should only mark the injury once on a card feel free to indicate if it is a minor or serious injury. If the player was hit by a car going 70mph that should take longer to heal than if the player winds up injuring themselves by exhausting a stat near the end of battle.

Injuries can self-heal if they are minor or enough time has passed. These are decisions best taken out of the game mechanics and left for the table to decide. It should add a challenge but not an annoyance.

This is primarily designed to be "Single Session" games or at the most a game with under a dozen sessions. This is not a game built around hundreds of sessions.

That's not to say you couldn't have that! While there's no experience in this game you can create table rules around experience.

Every "Level" could be a point to modify a stat or skill of their choice.

Smaller bonuses could be modifying the requirements of an action card to cost lest or deal more damage

At the end of Chapter moments hand out enough of these points to allow the characters to prepare for the next chapter.

Well, that's all the rules that make up the game! There are plenty of areas to explore further but now's a good time to reflect.

Is this the kind of game you want to try out? Go back and check out some of the recommended follow-up materials as well as some of the Field Guides.

If it's feeling like it's not for you? That's Okay! You could try some of the other books but there isn't going to be anything new to uncover.