

# minim

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Minim is a simple and easy-to-learn role-playing game system. RPGs are a lot of fun and you should give them a try – it’s a hobby that promotes problem-solving, creativity, teamwork and story-telling, is free to enjoy and can be played by people of all ages<sup>1</sup>! From Wikipedia:

*Table-top role-playing games are a form of role-playing game (RPG) in which each person playing the game will make-believe that he or she is a character in the game. A person playing the game will tell the action of his character and a system of rules will tell whether the action can be done or not.*

*The game will happen in a made-up world that is controlled by another person playing the game, called a game-master (GM). The game-master tells the game's story to the players, tells them where they are in the game world and plays the part of all the non-player characters (NPCs) and foes that the players meet.*

You can find a lot more information and ready-to-play adventures and other products and manuals in many book-stores, libraries, [online](#)...

The traditional quantity of players for a gaming session is from 3 to 5 plus a game-master. A gaming session may last anywhere from a couple of hours to a whole day. Campaigns are series of interconnected sessions featuring the same setting and recurring players characters and can last for months or even years!

## Why rules?

You may be wondering: *this game sounds more like group storytelling, why should I bother with rules at all?* The rules come in to prevent the sort of thing that happens when children play robber-and-cop: *I shoot you! No, you miss! No, I got you, you're dead! No, you didn't!*

The Minim rules described in this book also help the game-master prepare fair and interesting situations for the player characters (PCs).

The game-master has the last word on any decision about rules and everyone should remember that the game is meant to be fun for everyone involved (or else why even play)? The GM needs to try his best to provide challenges that are neither too easy nor too hard for a given player character group.

## About foot-notes

You will find many foot-notes in these pages. Some of them discuss edge-cases or optional rules to provide a certain tone, such as adding a more realistic and serious flavor to *Minim* games. Brand-new players are invited to read this short booklet twice, ignoring these notes the first time around and returning once they have a better feel for how the system works as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> Although certain products are targeted at either younger or more mature groups of players.

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## Philosophy

“*Minim*” is short-hand for *minimalistic*. This rules system tries to be a very simple game that can be played using only common six-sided dice – ideally 2 per player<sup>2</sup>. Miniatures, extra dice and drawing paper (or even a white-board) can be used to represent in-game situations but they are entirely optional!

This means that the rules are easy to learn as you read this bookleat and that new rules are intuitive to make on-the-spot for cases that are not covered here.

Being so simply-structured it also becomes quite easy to convert existing characters, adventures and concepts to *Minim* and also to create news ones. One of the core ideas behind this design is for it to be almost as simple to create NPCs during a game session as out of it, unlike most other systems which require a varied amount of preparation in advance.

To keep the rules this simple and short. unfortunately some realism has to be discarded. I did my best to keep it as realistic as possible in the sense that dangerous actions (like combat) can quickly become fatal if not handled with some caution.

It is also a generic system, which means that you can play anything from swash-buckling pirate adventures to medieval fantasy to science-fiction settings using the same rules (and even mix them a bit if you feel like it)!

The focus of this game is to keep the narrative flowing fast and bother the players as little with rules as possible while maintaining some semblance of fairness and realism.

## Rules

### Skill values

There are 3 primary skills (*physical*, *social* and *mental*) and each of them has 5 secondary skills. Primary and secondary skills are measured on this scale:

Value	Primary skill	Secondary skill
1	Terrible	Inept
2	Weak	Practiced
3	Mediocre	Professional
4	Strong	Specialist
5	Amazing	Master

(The full list of secondary skills is detailed in another section).

<sup>2</sup> Having dice of two different colors (one for primary and one for secondary skills) can be pretty convenient!

## Tests for actions

To determine if an action is successful, choose the most relevant primary and secondary skills and for each of them roll 1 die. For each roll, the *partial result* is determined through a simple comparison:

- If the roll is lower than the skill's value then you have a success (+1)
- If the dice roll is the same as the target value, you have a neutral result (0)
- Otherwise, a higher roll than the target value is a failure (-1)

When a roll lands on a 1, the partial result is always a success (+1) and always a failure (-1) on a 6.

Add up the primary and secondary *partial results* to get the attempted action's *final result*:

Sum	Result
+2	Critical success! The outcome was achieved in great manner. Benefits will be enhanced; or the result will last longer; be attained more quickly...
+1	Success. The intended outcome of the action is achieved.
0	Neutral. A slightly positive or slightly negative unintended outcome happens; or the outcome is partially achieved, allowing for a more favorable second try (if possible)...
-1	Failure. Nothing happens but retrying is usually possible (if the situation allows it).
-2	Critical failure. The outcome of the action was not achieved and disaster ensues: the exact opposite of what was tried is achieved; or someone is hurt or put in danger in the process...

Sometimes it will be hard to decide which secondary skill to use for a certain action. In these cases you can instead use the relevant primary skill for both rolls.

## Test bonuses and penalties

Often you will find that in-game circumstances will make certain actions easier or harder than they normally are. For example: trying to run with your legs tied up would be much harder than normal! Bonuses can be:

- +1 to skill values for small advantages
- +2 to skill values for big advantages

Similarly, penalties can be:

- -1 to skill values for small disadvantages
- -2 to skill values for big disadvantages

Multiple bonuses or penalties can apply to a single action. For example: a hero could be trying to strike a monster while he has the upper ground (small advantage) but his sword's blade is broken (small disadvantage) and the monster is completely unaware to their presence (big advantage). Sum all applicable bonuses and penalties together to get a final modifier then apply it to the skills being tested.

Regardless of bonuses and penalties, skill values can only go as low as 1 or as high as 5.

A character can gain a +1 bonus by taking twice as long performing an action than it would usually require (unless circumstances make it impossible to properly concentrate on the task).

# Characters

Each player character starts with one primary skill at value 4, another at 3 and a last one at 2. They can then distribute 6 points on the secondary skills of the highest attribute, 4 on skills of the middle one and 2 on the skills of the lowest<sup>3</sup>. They also distribute 4 points into one or more *powers* of their choosing.

These are normal starting characters which are medium-to-strong inhabitants of the game world. Stronger or weaker starting characters can be made if the game-master approves of (or requires) it. Traditionally, recurring characters slowly grow in power as the game progresses<sup>4</sup> - and more often by acquiring progressively better equipment and riches that help them tackle challenges.

Non-player characters can be made with as many points as the game-master desires. Ideally he should not be spending points at all but using the “skill values” table to determine accurate values that properly represent the in-game character’s abilities<sup>5</sup>. Naturally, a powerful villain will have more points than the average person and animals like dogs and cats will have very low values for most skills.

## Secondary physical skills

The physical skill governs everything that a character tries to do using his body.

**Brawl:** fighting at close quarters with a weapon, improvised weapon or bare-handed; martial arts; grappling...

**Coordination:** manipulating objects with your hands; driving...

**Fire:** using missile attacks at range. like a firearm or bow-and-arrow to hit a target.

**Sports:** athletics, acrobatics; balance; running, jumping, reaching; attacking by throwing an object...

**Stealth:** moving and acting undetected.

## Secondary social skills

The social skill is the realm of interaction with other humans or sentient beings. It also encompasses perception of the external world, self-esteem and presence in social situations.

**Coercion:** intimidation, bribery; street-smarts...

**Communication:** manipulating, barter, banter, socializing, discovering rumors; detecting lies...

**Languages:** each character starts with 1 language and learns a new one with each point spent in this skill. It can also be used as a normal skill to try to understand an unfamiliar language.

**Perception:** awareness, readiness. sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch.

**Survival:** interaction with beasts and critters; riding; farming; outdoorsmanship...

- 3 A more realistic approach to character creation is having them start with 16, 10 and 5 secondary skill and 6 power points then buy each skill level independently. For example: to get to level 3 you need 5 points (2 for the second point plus 3 for the third). For powers you need to also buy the first point. This encourages players to buy a larger set of skills, rather than specializing heavily on just a few.
- 4 A way to achieve this is to hold two votes at the end of a gaming session: best acting and best action. The best actor gets a free willpower point while best action has a chance to improve the given character’s relevant secondary skill by rolling a die and, if higher than its current value, permanently increase it by 1. More rarely, a primary skill point can also be given to each player at the end of a major story arc, which can be used to improve any primary skill of their choosing.
- 5 The same method can be applied to PCs too but these rules are a base-line to keep the game fair and fun for all players.

## Secondary mental skills<sup>6</sup>

The mental skill represents the intellectual prowess of the character.

**Art:** creating anything; painting, drawing, stonework, jewelry; repairs, manufacturing, building, assembling; forgery...

**Cure:** medicine, healing. First aid<sup>7</sup>.

**Security:** lock-picking, burglary; arming and disarming traps; security systems, alarms...

**Technology:** what is considered technology proper depends on the game in question. A medieval fantasy setting could present magic scrolls and artifacts as “technology”. Futuristic or contemporary scenarios could have computers, machines and robots... This only covers the operation of technology. Constructing, building or assembling technical devices in every setting is usually done with *art* instead.

**Wisdom:** knowledge; learning; researching; remembering facts.

## Powers<sup>8</sup>

Powers are actions that do not have normal tests. Instead, a player rolls a single die and, if the result is equal or lower than the power’s value the action is successful. In case of success, 1 point is lost for the power - which means continuous use becomes increasingly difficult. The lost points are completely recovered when the character has a chance to have a long period of uninterrupted rest (often at the end of the day).

Like skills, the values for powers range from 1 to 5 points.

Unlike skills there is no set list of abilities. Each character is expected to be unique and feature his own. There is no problem, of course, in using famous abilities (like Hadouken, Force powers, Fireball, Ultima or the Round-House Kick) or reusing existing ones and adapting them. Powers can be mundane and trivial (but still useful) too: things like detecting lies, fast reactions and leadership are also powers!

6 *Sanity tests* are an optional type of mental test that can be used to simulate fear and panic for games that are more serious or realistic (or special occasions for any game). A sanity test is made when something disturbing happens like the sight of something very weird, gory, horrifying... It is a mental primary skill test and, before rolling the player has to predetermine a reaction in case he fails. Example reactions are fleeing, attacking and being stunned. If he fails the test, he performs that action. If there is a critical failure he will panic and do a much more exaggerated and harmful version of what he decided for or the very opposite at the GM’s discretion. A success means the player can act normally.

7 *Cure* can be used shortly after a wound has been received to recover 1 health point. A character can only do this on a single wounded character, once per scene. A patient can only have one first-aid test done. Any wounds that are not treated in the scene they were caused on need to be healed naturally as explained in the section about recovery.

8 As a guideline for power effects: a power that targets a single character should cause 2 points of damage and abilities that affect an area (multiple targets) cause 1 point of damage. Instead of doing damage, powers can also heal, grant bonuses and penalties or apply one or more *fumble* effects as described in the combat section. Players should decide what their own abilities can do based on this and as always the game-master has the final word on what is allowed.

## Wealth<sup>9</sup>

A very unique power that represents the wealth of a character and is recommended to all characters (because having no points in it means the character has literally no possessions of value except for a few items he carries around in his person). Values are exponential, with 1 being poor and 5 filthy rich.

Buying items much cheaper than a character's total wealth value is free, while buying items of slightly lesser value to one's total wealth requires a dice roll and a point is permanently lost on a roll of 1. Obviously, buying an item worth close to a character's total wealth value brings his value to zero.

## Willpower

Each player character starts with 3 willpower points and can have 5 at most. A willpower point can be spent at any time to provide a +1 bonus to an action. It can only be used once per action and represents inner strength reserves the character could muster.

1 willpower point is recovered at rest and whenever a character acts in accord with their *virtue* or *vice* if the GM finds it appropriate. Both of these traits are determined when the character is created and one represents a good, productive trait while the other is a negative, twisted personality flaw.

## Health

Each character starts at full health, with 5 health points. Each time a point is lost the character is said to have *received 1 point of damage* but both manners of addressing it are equivalent. If for any reason a character is brought down to only 2 health points he will suffer a -1 penalty to all his actions. If he reaches 1 health point the penalty grows to -2. If a character has no health at all, he is permanently dead or at least unconscious for a good while<sup>10</sup>.

## Recovery

At each uninterrupted, long rest period (usually once a day) the player can roll a die. If the result is equal or less than the number of health points his character currently has he gains an additional point. This means that it is much harder for a badly wounded character to recover but also that a character in the brink of death can recover to full health at an average of 14 rest periods (2 weeks if resting every night), so the GM will need to impose penalties if a more realistic approach is desired<sup>11</sup>.

A medic can spend a day taking care of a group of patients and if successful in a *cure* test each will receive a +1 bonus to their current health level for the purposes of the recovery test for this rest period.

An entire day resting will also grant a +1 bonus to a recovery test made on the end of that day. The same applies if the character has a very luxurious, comfortable place to rest.

9 Other cultural *powers* like reputation, patronage and alliances can also be handled in a similar fashion.

10 Characters in a cartoon-themed game world need not die! They can just be removed from the game for a number of scenes rolled on a die and then come back as if nothing ever happened! On fantasy games featuring magic, resurrection is a widely available (but very costly) practice.

11 For example: needing to roll two dice equal-or-less instead of only one in order to recover one point of health.

## Combat<sup>12</sup>

Fights against monsters or any sort of foe can be a lot of fun and some groups play combat-oriented games with little to no narrative story-line while others rarely, if ever, fight. Combat can be a fun way to intercede (or advance) the story as well! The best combat experiences focus on tactical movement, planning, strategy and having the freedom to try multiple things - each with different outcomes!

Combat in *Minin* is designed to be fast and short. Characters with high physical abilities and skills can be very deadly and even the weakest foes in groups can suddenly become effective if they start to stack up small advantages<sup>13</sup>!

Using [miniatures](#), extra dice or drawing to create a map and represent characters as they act in such situations can be very helpful but is not mandatory.

## Initiative

Especially when a battle starts (but also sometimes outside of combat) it becomes easier to determine exactly in what order each character in a scene gets to act. This is done by a roll of the *physical* and *social* primary skills. Characters who score higher results act first. Tied rolls are resolved by who has the higher *social* value first, then *physical* next, then *mental* last.

As soon as the acting order is defined, each character takes his *turn*: a period of time at which he can act, doing a single action such as attacking, moving, wielding something, shouting an order...

## Surprise

Some combat encounters start with one side unaware of being attacked. It could happen in an ambush or if that group is distracted... In such cases a surprised character cannot act on the first round of battle unless it passes a *perception* test. Neutral rolls mean the character cannot act and failures mean it will also be unable to defend themselves at all on the first turn (which gives a +1 bonus to attackers).

## Weapons and armor<sup>14</sup>

Any weapon or armor has a -2 to +2 quality value associated with it. A typical *leather armor* is a 0 item while a mighty magical *sword of flames* is +2.

<b>Wealth cost</b>	\$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5
<b>Gear quality</b>	-2	-1	0	+1	+2

12 Combat scenes do not need to be necessarily gory. Super-hero combats are often clean - with *whams*, *smashes* and *pows*!

13 A typical player group against a very large number of creatures can become very dangerous! Having a total of less than 2 enemies per player-character at most is a good base-line.

14 Optional encumbrance rule: you can carry at most 5 items. If you have 4 you suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls or -2 if you are carrying 5 items. A character in fantasy settings can buy a *happy adventurer's kit* for 1 Wealth, which is a backpack containing 1 use of each common item such as ropes, torches, food, ammo... The character freely and automatically replenishes these items at every possible opportunity (when spending a day resting in a town or city, for example).



## Attacks

The *brawl* skill can be used to fight in close-range; *fire* to shoot missiles and *sports* to throw objects at a distance. The attacker makes a physical test plus the appropriate skill to try to hit his target. In case of success add 1 point of damage to attacker's weapon quality minus the target's armor to determine the total number of damage points dealt<sup>15</sup>. Any successful attack always deals at least 1 point of damage<sup>16</sup>.

Scoring a critical hit on an attack roll grants you another attack (even if it happens many times in row)!

A character that spends his turn defending has a -1 penalty to any attack against him until his next turn.

Attackers (in particular those with lower combat skill values) can gain an extra edge by taking a turn aiming, receiving a +1 bonus for an attack they make next turn (if none is made, disregard the bonus).

## Fumbles

If an attack has a neutral result, apply one of these effects to the target, without causing damage. In case of a critical failure during an attack. apply one of these to the attacker instead. Sum two dice and look-up on this table:

Result	Effect
12	Stunned: cannot act next turn.
11	Falls: -1 penalty to all actions until taking a turn to get up.
10	Disarmed: drops a held (or carried) item.
9	Shaken: makes a mental test before next action to not panic or flee (has bonus if winning combat, penalty if losing).
8	Interacts with nearby ally.
7	Interacts with environment.
6	Interacts with nearby enemy.
5	Grapples: attacker and target grab a hold of each other.
4	Disabled: can act but cannot attack next turn.
3	Pinned: can act but cannot move next turn.
2	Dodge: target moves away from attack.

Of course it is always nicer when someone can think of or create an effect that is relevant to the situation at hand and action being performed instead of checking a table every time this happens. It can be hard to be creative all of the time though. so this table can help a lot!

<sup>15</sup> For example: if an attacker with a +2 weapon hits a target wearing +1 armor. they will deal 2 damage (1+2-1=2).

<sup>16</sup> Optionally, for a more realistic combat feel, allow defenders the chance to dodge (*sports* test) or parry (*brawl* test) to negate a successful attack roll. This will slow down combat a lot but can be offset by increasing weapon and lowering armor values. Called shots can also be used (for example: -2 to attack the enemy's head for +2 damage if successful).

## Challenge

One of the hardest parts of being a game-master is trying to create (in advance or during a session) a fun adventure for the PCs to experience. Combat encounters are especially tricky to get right because if a combat is too hard it's possible to outright kill one or more player characters - and if it is too easy it can be fun but it will not necessarily challenge the group. So here is a guideline system that can be used to plan combat situations around<sup>17</sup>.

We will use the concepts of *power level* (not to be confused with character *powers*) and *challenge value* here. *Power levels* indicates the value of the average character skills relevant in combat. A hypothetical character with every skill exactly at value 3 is considered to be *power level* 3. Each *power level* translates to a challenge value:

Power level	Challenge value
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	8
5	16

A typical player character starting between *power level* 3 to 4 will have roughly a *challenge value* of 6 (generally speaking, as some characters will focus more or less on combat skills).

You use the *power level* to find the *challenge value* for each character and then add up all the *challenge values* together to find out the total *challenge value* of the group as a whole. So:

- A group of 2 foes at *power level* 3 has a total *challenge value* of 8 (2X4).
- A group of 5 characters at *power level* 4 has a *challenge value* of 40 (5X8).

This way you can compare the player group with an enemy group to determine what are their odds of winning. A hostile group that has a fifth of the *challenge value* of the PC group will be a moderate challenge, while one with half the *challenge value* could likely see the death of a player character! So take it easy until you and everyone else is familiar with the game and its combat rules. While many games benefit from a dangerous feel to combat, trivial deaths can be very disappointing to a player!

Too many moderate combat encounters in a row without rest can also be deadlier than a single hard battle!

PCs also have the advantage of possessing *willpower* and *powers* to help gain an extra edge during combat but remember that since the game is based on random odds with the dice, it is always possible for bad luck to turn a would-be easy combat into an unintended challenge!

<sup>17</sup> This is a very simplified approach for similar numbers of units on both sides of a combat scenario. For a robust analysis backed by extensive automated simulation, check [the interactive challenge spreadsheet](#), which also contains additional resources on how to balance sets of encounters.

## Environmental challenge modifiers

Some combat scenarios have special mechanics that affect the battle arena. For example: fighting on a crumbling cave might cause ceiling rocks to fall upon the characters' head! This would be a neutral environmental condition since rocks could fall on anyone in the battlefield and needs not be taken into consideration when estimating challenge.

Conditions that affect allies or enemies more than the other side though do need to be taken into consideration when calculating challenges. For example: a group that could prepare the room with traps and advantages before a fight begins surely will be much harder to deal with than the same group caught in the middle of their sleep in a comfortable hotel room! Each such advantage will modify the group benefiting from it up to twice their *challenge value*.

## Dungeons

The most traditional RPG adventure is the dungeon. An interesting place that a group of player characters explore and conquer during one or more game sessions! Although the term “dungeon” implies dank, dark underground complexes it could just as well be a forest or skyscraper, as long as there can be loosely connected “rooms” in which players can find combat, rewards, traps and interesting features to explore, experience and interact with.

In *Minim.* a guideline to constructing dungeons is to take the PC group's *challenge value* and offer the same amount of challenge divided throughout the rooms of a dungeon floor. This way it becomes an increasingly difficult task to clear all of it but the group can explore at their own pace and go rest when their resources are exhausted<sup>18</sup>. Many dungeons feature multiple (sometimes increasingly dangerous) “floors”.

Don't forget to place treasure throughout the dungeon so that it becomes a rewarding activity while giving incentive for the group to push onward to the next challenge! One such reward is the *magic item*, which works almost exactly like the *powers* described in this booklet. Having one such item (with a *power* value equal to the player party's *power level*) per dungeon floor is a good base-line.

## Creating a dungeon floor

A typical floor has 2 to 12 rooms, 1 to 6 combat encounters and 1 to 3 features. Roll to select a feature:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Mechanical or magical trap:                            | 4. A combat can be resolved with clever role-play, negotiation or otherwise peacefully |
| 1. Guarding a reward                                      | 5. A combat has environmental modifiers  |
| 2. Hidden with reward                                     | 6. One of the rooms holds a key that unlocks:  |
| 3. On a combat room                                       | 1. Hard combat and great rewards   |
| 4. One of the combats is an ambush                        | 2. Hard combat and good rewards  |
| 5. In an empty room                                       | 3. All of the dungeon's rewards  |
| 6. Hidden in an empty room                                | 4. Mediocre rewards  |
| 2. Hidden reward  | 5. Poor rewards  |
| 3. <i>Physical</i> or <i>mental</i> test to access a room | 6. A whole new set of rooms  |

<sup>18</sup> Resting inside the dungeon is extremely dangerous, usually requiring adventurers to fall-back to safety. Even lingering around too long can cause a random combat encounter to occur on a roll of 1 on a die. Upon returning to a dungeon, cleared rooms are often “restocked” with new traps or foes on a roll of 1 on a die (roll once for each empty room).