

JOURNEY

by Vorpal Dice Press

THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT REPRESENT A FINAL PRODUCT

Introduction

Journey is a game of character stories. In it, players take the role of a character and shape their path in the world. Journey is designed to be genre agnostic, fitting sword and sorcery as it does science fiction, noir intrigue, or any other genre equally well.

One player takes the role of the Guide, weaving the narrative; and guiding the other players through a story that gives their characters every opportunity to express themselves, grow through their experiences, and to interact with others and the world around them. The Guide's role is not to thwart the players, but to enable them while providing meaningful stakes.

When interacting with the world, players have a suite of skills and exploits that represent the unique abilities their characters possess. In many cases, an action can resolve without the need for rolling dice. However, when a task is sufficiently challenging or the player wishes to flourish on their action, a die roll will determine whether such an action succeeds or fails. Every action taken by a player, pass or fail, should drive the story forward.

Using This Book

The Journey Game Manual contains all the content required to run Journey as both a player and as the Guide. It is divided into three parts:

Part 1 is about how to play Journey, and will introduce you to the basics of building your first character. The Ancestries, Classes, Skills, and Exploits systems are explained in this section, and by reading it, you should have everything you need to create a character and play as a player in Journey.

Part 2 is all about your role as a Guide, introducing you to the concepts of creating your own adventures, challenges, and building a story that integrates gameplay elements in a meaningful way. It also contains a short sample adventure as a model. A Guide benefits from having read both Part 1 and 2 of this book. Knowing the characters that your players are using will help you engage them in the world and craft an immersive narrative for them.

Part 3 is an appendix containing equipment, creature stats and descriptions, and other supplementary material. This section is important for both players and Guides as both Parts 1 and 2 reference it.

References

While reading this book, if you read colored text in **bold** (referencing a section or chapter) or *italic* (referencing a specific piece of content, such as an exploit, creature, or piece of equipment), it is directing you to another section of this book, often the appendices. You can use the index at the back of the book to find the specific page number, or, if you are reading a digital copy of this text, it will be hyperlinked for your convenience.

Playing the Game

Journey plays like most other tabletop roleplaying games. The Guide provides a scenario for the players to interact with—either a published adventure or one of their own creation—and the players describe the actions of their characters, adding in conversation and dialog to build the scene.

Generally, this follows the pattern of the Guide describing the scene, providing the players with the Where, What, and Who. This gives the players the information they need to decide on their character's actions: the How and When.

For example, the player's enter the market for the purpose of acquiring a key item to accomplish their goal. The Guide might describe the layout of the area, where stalls are located, what kinds of goods are for sale, and who the vendors are. While the players are not limited in what actions they might pursue, this gives them prompts and clues as to how they

might proceed. They could choose the closest stall, or one selling the wares most alike to what they are looking for, or they might recognize one of the vendors and choose to talk to them first.

Once the players have decided on a course of action (or multiple), it is up to the Guide to resolve them. In many cases an action is trivial and the Guide simply narrates the outcome of the scene. In other scenarios, success in accomplishing the task is contingent on the skill of the character performing it. In these cases, the Guide chooses an appropriate skill and difficulty. Unless a character's skill is insufficient for the difficulty, they succeed and the game continues. Otherwise, they must roll a die to determine if they succeed or fail.

Failing Forward

Journey is designed assuming story will fail forward, a paradigm that tells that even a failed action progresses the story or can be treated as a success with a cost tied to it. For example, if a character is attempting to pick a lock and fails their check, the Guide might choose to have the check succeed but the lock picking tools become irreparably broken. Alternatively, that failed check might have produced enough noise to attract the attention of a guard: the very guard who is holding the key you need to open the door.

Dice in Journey

While a goal for Journey is for players to engage in a story-first experience, dice are still used when necessary to resolve conflicts or attempt great feats. The game primarily uses 4-, 6-, 8-, 10-, and 12-sided dice. A game of Journey only requires one of each of these dice to play the game. Whenever the Guide calls for a die roll, they also provide a target number to either meet—or beat—for the roll to be a success.

Ultimately, the players (including the Guide) know what is best for their characters and the story unfolding. Even if a game effect would normally require a die roll, it is perfectly acceptable for the Guide to have the effect succeed without one. Conversely, in highly tense or difficult situations, the Guide might call for a die roll that would normally not have been required.

Skills

Part of creating a character in Journey is to gain Skills based on your class. Skills are the basis for the gameplay in Journey, and are an objective measure of how well you can perform actions such as swinging a sword, persuading a captor to release you, or calming a riotous crowd. Classes provide you proficiency in Skills, which increase naturally as you gain levels. You can also improve skills through training in the game world.

SKILLS

Skills

Skills are the most basic engine that drives your character in Journey. These are broad categorizations of the various types of actions you can take while playing. They range from combat actions, such as making a melee attack, to social and exploration features such as jumping across a gap or negotiating the release of a prisoner.

There are two ways to improve your skills: proficiency, which you gain from your choice of class, and training, which you can gain as you accomplish tasks through the story.

Proficiency Scaling & Success

Your character's proficiency is determined by their level, starting at 2, as shown in the Prof. column of the Skill Difficulty table. Your proficiency determines your potential for success at a given skill such as attacking a creature or bribing a guard. Your proficiency is added to any training bonus for the relevant skill, which determines your Potency for that skill (marked on your Character Sheet for reference). This is then compared against the Difficulty of the task you are attempting to determine your chance at success.

Potency = Proficiency + Training bonus in that skill

If your Potency is equal to or greater than the Difficulty of the task, you can succeed without the need to roll any dice—and have the option to use Exploits, explained in the next section.

If your Potency is less than the Difficulty of the task, you must make an attempt at success by rolling a Chance die based on your level, and adding the result to your Potency. If the total meets or exceeds the Difficulty, and the result of the die is not a 1, you succeed.

The Difficulty of a task is in some cases a fixed number, such as an enemy’s defense, or it is determined by the Guide based on how difficult they feel the task should be to complete¹. The Difficulty by Level section of the Skill Difficulty table is provided as a guide for the Guide to set difficulties for tasks based on the level of the party.

Proficiency Scaling			Difficulty by Level			
Level	Prof.	Chance	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Severe
1st–2nd	2	d4	2	4	6	8
3rd–4th	4	d6	3	6	9	12
5th–6th	6	d8	4	8	12	16
7th–8th	8	d10	5	10	15	20
9th–10th	10	d12	6	12	18	24

Not every task will be possible with your current level and bonuses, and that’s okay. The Guide should communicate an impossible task to the players and—more importantly—they should not be the only path forward for the story.

¹ The decision as to how difficult a skill check is in a published adventure will be determined by the adventure itself and may conflict with these guidelines. This table here is for Guides running a homebrew adventure or generating a skill check on the fly.

Advantage and Exploits

When you take an action that requires a skill check, and your Potency exceeds the Difficulty of the check, you have Advantage and automatically succeed. With Advantage, you also have the option to use an Exploit.

Exploits are abilities that increase the Difficulty of a skill check for the chance of an additional effect. The most basic example of an Exploit is a combat maneuver: **Called Shot**. When you are making a ranged attack against a creature and have Advantage, you can use **Called Shot** to deal additional damage. Each Exploit tells you how much more difficult the skill check becomes: +4 in the case of **Called Shot**. You add this number to the Difficulty, and then roll your Chance die and add its result to your Potency. If the total exceeds the new Difficulty, and the result of the Chance die was not a 1, you succeed and gain the benefits of the Exploit.

Not all Exploits are combat related. An example of this is the social Exploit **Barter**. Even though the trader is more than happy to sell you their wares, a particularly suave player might want to use **Barter** to attempt to lower the cost.