

FANTASTIC WORLDS

**AN ANTHOLOGY OF RESOURCES
FOR FANTASY PbtA GAMES**

EDITED BY J. ALAN HENNING

Fantastic Worlds: An Anthology of Resources for Fantasy PbtA Games

Featuring the work of Tam H, Jeremy Strandberg, Jason Lutes, Yochai Gal,
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Credits

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- [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#) (contributed about 18,000 words at one point, the exception to keeping contributions below 20%!)
- [The Perilous Wilds](#) (contributed wording for many moves, especially follower moves and travel moves, as well as the Scout compendium class)
- [Freebooters on the Frontier](#) (first edition; Luck and Dynamic Spells)
- [Funnel World](#) (funnel session, villager character creation, more on Luck)
- [20 Dungeon Starters](#) (starters)
- [Mounted Combat](#) (Mounts & Vehicles)
- [Planarch Codex: Dark Heart of the Dreamer](#) (Heritage system)
- [Blades in the Dark](#) (referenced sections on Clocks and Factions).

The following works weren't used but are the flagship products of their creators, whose other work we did use. So we encourage you to support them as well:

- [Stonetop](#) - Not published yet at the time of this writing (March 2021), so it seemed unfair to incorporate parts of it before Kickstarter backers have received their books. I highly recommend this game for its GM advice, which is invaluable and will change how you GM, no matter what system you GM.
- [Freebooters on the Frontier 2](#) - The battle-tested second edition of this game. Kickstarter coming soon.

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- [Dungeon World Codex](#) - by Sage Kobold, including contributions from A Person With No Name, Addramyr Palinor, Alex Davis, ArachCobra, Ben Shares, Eon Fontes-May, Esoteric, Eric Nieudan, First Son of Light, Gaptooth, Gilladian, Iggi_De, Infinite Oregano, Juan Manuel Avila, Krynol Pentegarn, Lucid Dion, Oase Menta, Oney Clavijo, Owen Kerr, Skalchemist, the Viper, The Watcher, and Tyler H.
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- ["The Adventuring Archaeologist: A compendium class for Dungeon World"](#) - by Jeremy Strandberg
- [Freebooters on the Frontier](#) - by Jason Lutes. Included moves: Call for Assistance, Do Their Thing, End of Session snippet ("alignment goal"), Order Follower, PayUp, Supply, and Spout Lore.
- [Mounted Combat](#) - by Andri Erlingsson
- [The Perilous Wilds](#) - by Jason Lutes and Jeremy Strandberg. Included moves: Forage, Forge Ahead, Hunker Down, Journey,

Recruit, Make Camp, Manage Provisions, Navigate, Scout Ahead, Take Watch, and Undertake a Perilous Journey.

- [“Stealth in Dungeon World”](#) - by Kasper Brohus Allersle

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- [A Book of Beasts](#) - by Jason Lutes.
- [Homebrew World](#) - by Jeremy Strandberg. In addition to selected drives, the following moves were included: Aid, Deal Damage, Defy Danger, Discern Realities, Encumbrance, Give Chase, Interfere, I Know a Guy, Last Breath, Parley, and Struggle as One.
- [Revised Debilities, Make Camp, Recover](#) - by Jeremy Strandberg

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- [“Alternate Location Rules For Dungeon World”](#) - by Yochai Gal
- [“Keys for Dungeon World”](#) - by Yochai Gal
- [Script Change](#) - by Beau Jágr Sheldon (no endorsement by Sheldon of this game is implied)
- [“Threads in Dungeon World”](#) - by Cameron Burns (@Muggins)
- [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#) - by Tam H

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- [Drives for TTRPG Characters](#) - Flagellation and Truth drives - by Justin Hellings
- [The Inexhaustive List of Dungeon World Questions](#) - by Brennan O'Brien (“Veilheim”)

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- [Absurd World](#) - by Jarrod Ingram (see Attributes, Light, Stress, Wounds, Vices & Virtues)
- [Class Warfare](#) - by Johnstone Metzger
- [“Drowning and Falling: A collection of custom moves for Dungeon World”](#) - by Jeremy Strandberg
- [Fourth World](#) - by Lester Ward

- [“Noble Compendium Class”](#) and [“Oathkeeper Compendium Class”](#) - by Chris Sakkas
- [Worlds of Adventure](#) - by Cameron Burns. In addition to selected drives, the Recover move was included.
- [Unlimited Dungeons](#) - by Timekeeper. In addition to selected drives, the following moves were included: Carouse, Defend (itself adapted from *Homebrew World*), Hack & Slash, and Volley.
- [YAFPH \(Yet Another Fantasy PbtA Hack\)](#) - by J. Alan Henning. In addition to selected drives, the following moves were included: Flashback, Level Up, and Outstanding Warrants.

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- [Chasing Adventure](#) is © 2021 by Spencer Moore. Used by permission. Included moves: End of Session, Push Yourself, and Steeped in Lore.

Many fantasy PbtA systems have different names for moves; the name of the DW move it is compatible with, if any, is used above; further, the wording of moves has been edited for consistency and compatibility with one another.

Note that these are the direct sources. Many of these sources in turn adapt other Creative Commons materials. Please bring to my attention any inadvertent omissions that should be listed.

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Introduction and FAQ

The goal of this book is to provide an anthology of tips, techniques, and resources for running a wide variety of fantasy PbtA (“Powered by the Apocalypse”) games, drawn from the writings of many authors. Ever since [Tony Dowler hacked “Apocalypse D&D”](#) out of *Apocalypse World* in March of 2010 and Vincent Baker gave his blessing for adaptations, the community has been characterized by tinkering and collaboration. Open any fantasy PbtA work and you’ll see a long list of acknowledgements and sources. This was turbo-charged when Sage LaTorra insisted that *Dungeon World* (the non-trademark-infringing successor to *Apocalypse D&D*) be licensed under the Creative Commons, a copyleft arrangement that allowed others to incorporate and build upon the works of one another.

I’m new to this, is this type of game right for me?

Yes! If you can have a conversation with others (and some people to play with) you can run this game. Fantasy PbtA games are easy to pick up and play and don’t require any RPG experience.

What are the biggest differences between 5e and fantasy PbtA games?

The family of role-playing games that emerged in the 1970s grew out of wargames and focused on the mechanics of combat and exploration. Fantasy PbtA games put the fiction first, the mechanics second. As a result, players have much less work to do - their primary job is to envision the situation their character is in and decide how they would react. Rather than a character sheet that lists stats common to every player, PbtA games have playbooks, which offer unique information depending on the type of character (wizard, fighter, cleric, etc.). Where combat in 5e and its predecessors is divided into 6-second segments and takes place in a particular player order decided for each fight, combat in fantasy PbtA games is much more cinematic, focusing on the highlights of each battle rather than every blow. Where players are expected to read a player handbook in 5e, for fantasy PbtA games their playbook and a list of moves common to all players are all they will need.

Who wrote this?

My co-authors didn't elect to be my co-authors - they licensed their works so that they could be integrated and re-used, which is what I've done here. At the end of the day, any errors are my own.

Which specific fantasy PbtA game should I play?

★ Do you want to play the game with the most third-party material?

- *Dungeon World* has the biggest community and the most materials that are directly compatible with it. Most other fantasy PbtA systems may require some level of edits to make this third-party material compatible.
- Systems that will require less customization of third-party material are probably *Unlimited Dungeons*, *Uncommon World*, and *Fourth World*, as they use the same names of moves as *Dungeon World*. *Freebooters on the Frontier* will require somewhat more customization, *Homebrew World* even more, then *Chasing Adventure*. Completely different PbtA engines will require much more customization: *Monster of the Week*, *Fellowship*, *Ironsworn*, *Fantasy World*, *Apocalypse World: Fallen Empires*. Of these, *Monster of the Week* may have the most third-party material, though far behind *Dungeon World* in quantity.

★ Do you want to make the accumulation of wealth the forefront of play or a minor part of play?

- The focus of *Freebooters on the Frontier* is the accumulation of 10,000 silver pieces, at which point your character can retire.
- *Chasing Adventure*, *Homebrew World*, and *Unlimited Dungeons* all use abstract wealth systems, with tags representing a few tiers of value, rather than requiring detailed accounting.

★ Where do you want to set the dial between Dungeons & Dragons and Powered by the Apocalypse?

- *Freebooters on the Frontier* provides an OSR (Old School Renaissance) experience, fusing 1970s role-playing with PbtA rules: four basic character types, a high rate of PC fatalities, and even funnel sessions (adapted from *Dungeon Crawl Classics*, itself an OSR system).
- If *Freebooters on the Frontier* is more like Original Dungeons & Dragons, *Dungeon World* is more like AD&D or D&D 3.5 or so. If you want *Dungeon World* without any

D&D influences, try *Chasing Adventure*. If you want a more Powered by the Apocalypse influenced design, try *Fantasy World*. If you'd like to actually play *Apocalypse World* using fantasy playbooks, try [Apocalypse World: Fallen Empires](#).

★ **On the continuum from streamlined to comprehensive, what do you want from a ruleset?**

- If you are looking for just a few pages of rules, check out *World of Dungeons* or *Defying Danger*.
- For a middle ground, check out the *Remix* expansion of *World of Dungeons* or look at *Homebrew World*.
- For a more comprehensive system, check out *Dungeon World* and *Unlimited Dungeons*. For an even more comprehensive system, customize *Dungeon World* with a wide range of third-party supplements and playbooks. For a richer selection of moves for common situations that occur in play, check out *Uncommon World*.

★ **What type of setting do you want?**

- While most systems are geared towards homebrew fantasy settings, *Homebrew World* puts homebrew in its name. But *Freebooters on the Frontier* backs it up with random tables galore to generate the setting. *Dungeon World*, *Unlimited Dungeons*, etc. are more about GM improv.
- *Urban/Modern/Fantasy* is specifically adapted for play in today's times but with characters touched by the supernatural. *Chasing Adventure* can be easily adapted to such play. For instance, both include rules for firearms.
- *Fourth World* is an independent third-party fan work set in Earthdawn.
- *Stonetop* features an integrated setting meant as a jumping off point for player improvisation, with players the expert on the region they hail from or the deity they worship.
- If you'd like to play a grimdark fantasy, try the *Dungeon World* supplement [Grim World](#).
- If you'd like to play "Dungeon World ... IN SPACE," try [Adventures on Dungeon Planet](#).

★ **Are your players more interested in staying at home or traveling?**

- Stay-at-homes? If you'd like to play power politics a la *Game of Thrones*, try [The Sword, The Crown, and The Unspeakable Power](#). If you'd like to improve the lot of a small community, try *Stonetop*. If you'd like to protect your communities from the supernatural, try *Monster of the Week*.

- Why are the adventurers traveling? If looking for lucre, try *Freebooters on the Frontier*. If undertaking a long journey to overthrow an evil overlord, try *Fellowship*.
- ★ **Do you want a one- or two-shot, a short campaign, or a long campaign?**
 - If you'd like to play one or two sessions, check out [One Shot World](#).
 - If you're interested in 10 or fewer sessions, try *Homebrew World* or [Hard-Knock World](#).
 - Most other systems are geared for longer campaigns of 10 or more sessions.
- ★ **Do you want to play with kids?**
 - For young children, try [Dungeons RPG](#). For tweens, try *World of Dungeons* or *Hard-Knock World*. *Freebooters on the Frontier* includes a "kid friendly" edition.
- ★ **Do you want to roll your own system, drawing from many of the other hacks?**
 - *Uncommon World* includes a configuration tool where you can compare and contrast moves from different fantasy PbtA systems and select the wording that's right for you and your players. with [its configuration tool](#).
- ★ **Help, I can't make up my mind!**
 - Just as people still play Original Dungeons & Dragons from the 1970s, so you can certainly still play *Dungeon World*, which was published in 2013. It's still a good place to start! While some of the systems have been widely replaced (3-18 stat scores, bonds, alignment), you can tweak the game as you go, changing whatever gets in the way of your player's enjoyment once you've stumbled over it.

A bit more on the pros and cons of some of these systems:

- ★ *Dungeon World*
 - The game is very much a "1.0" version, with a host of minor issues that are fixed in subsequent hacks. Despite this, it remains very playable and can easily be tweaked to better reflect your table's preferences.
 - Of the fantasy PbtA systems, it has the largest active community on Reddit. In fact, the [DW subreddit](#) is often where other games are discussed as well.
 - Some avoid the game due to the co-author Adam Koebel's [violation of player consent](#).

- ★ *Fantasy World*
 - Verbose moves are a pro and con, providing a better framework for a first-time GM but possibly becoming tiresome in regular play. Not yet published.
- ★ *Freebooters on the Frontier*
 - This is the most polished of the hacks, with a 2.0 edition having been in beta-testing for a number of years now.
 - Very American: It centers the pursuit of capital and the exploitation of the frontier, a particularly American framing of the othering of those native to the edge of imperial expansion.
- ★ *Hard-Knock World*
 - This game has had little playtesting but is designed for short campaigns with a rules-light framework.
- ★ *Homebrew World*
 - Currently oriented towards short campaigns, requiring minor modification to fit longer campaigns.
- ★ *Stonetop*
 - Adventuring for the sake of a village provides a different feel from most other fantasy games. The primary downsides are that the game hasn't been finalized and the community supporting it is small, with just a handful of third-party playbooks, for example.
- ★ *Uncommon World*
 - As a custom framework to use with all the playbooks and third-party material for *Dungeon World*, reflecting the most popular hacks and house rules while still hewing close to the original, it can be more a meta-hack than a coherent system (see below).
- ★ [Unlimited Dungeons](#)
 - Redesigns all the core playbooks and adds some new ones, while embodying many of the most popular changes to *Dungeon World*. Some dislike how streamlined the new playbooks are (only 7 advanced moves each) and push back on the abstract wealth system and standardization on using only six-sided dice.
- ★ *Urban/Modern/Fantasy*
 - A supplement to *Dungeon World* rather than a standalone system, though it comes close to standing alone.

Table Comparing Dungeon World Hacks

	Dungeon World	Chasing Adventure	Freebooters on the Frontier	Homebrew World	Uncommon World	Unlimited Dungeons
Pitch	PbtA + D&D	DW – D&D	PbtA + OD&D	Stonetop – Stonetop	DW 1.5 + 3rd-party	DW 2.0
Requires DW	–	No	No	No	No	Yes
# stats	6	5 (no CON)	7 (adds Luck)	6	6	6
3-18 scores	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Typical bonuses	+1/-1	Advantage/ disadvant.	+1/-1	Advantage/ disadvant.	+1/-1	Advantage/ disadvant.
Harm system	HP	Conditions	HP & ability damage	HP	HP	HP
Debilities	6	5 conditions	Condition tags	3	6	6 (renamed)
Dice	d4-d12	d6	d4-d20	d4-d12	d4-d12	d6
Money system	Coins	Abstract	Coins	Abstract	Coins	Abstract
Supplies	Some quantum items	Many quantum items	Primarily concrete items	Many quantum items	Some quantum items	Many quantum items
Encumbrance	Load	None	Load (called Weight)	Load	Load	Load
Base classes	10	10	4	10	0	10
Background	Race	Backgrounds	Heritage	Backgrounds	Backgrounds	Heritage
Alignment	Alignm.	Backgrounds	Alignment	Drives	Drives	Drives
Bonds	Yes	Favor system	No	No	No	Yes

Uncommon World

Uncommon World [\[PDF\]](#) is a fantasy roleplaying game designed to be compatible with [nearly 400 third-party Dungeon World playbooks](#), [165 compendium classes](#), [8,000 monsters](#), [600 supplements](#), and [100 adventure starters](#), while updating the system's core moves with what has been learned over the past decade.

Highlights:

- ★ Based on a survey of over 250 players
- ★ Leverages refined core moves from seven fantasy PbtA hacks
- ★ Adds drives, uses Follower moves, and eliminates stat scores

Overview

The DW community has produced a phenomenal amount of material, and I wanted a core system that worked with that material. The key insight was that all that was needed to maintain compatibility was to keep the names of the moves the same! The text of the basic and special moves, however, have all been revised based on a survey of over 250 players, who selected their preferred moves drawn from more than a dozen supplements and hacks.

The PDF contains a Consensus Edition of the rules, using the most popular alternative to DW's wording for each move, but you can customize all the wording to your own preferences using the [online configuration tool](#). (Warning: this takes a median of 22 minutes, but some people take up to an hour to do it; there's a lot to read and choose between!)

The moves are organized thematically: Basic Moves, Combat Moves, Downtime Moves, Settlement Moves, Follower Moves, and Travel Moves. (This structure is inspired by [Freebooters on the Frontier](#).)

While many of the hacks have their own names for moves, the name of the DW move that each is compatible with, if any, is used here. For instance, the most popular alternative wording for Spout Lore is from Jason Lutes' move Establish in Freebooters on the Frontier.

The wording of each move has been edited for consistency and compatibility with one another. Only a few moves, like Discern Realities, needed to keep the exact same structure as in DW; in such cases it is because many playbooks

may add a specific capability, like a question, to a core move. ([Class Warfare](#), from Johnstone Metzger, proved invaluable to me to do that analysis.)

Three Major Changes

Because of the need to keep compatibility with existing DW supplements, Uncommon World is more conservative in its changes than most other hacks. Think of it as more a “Dungeon World 1.5” than a “Dungeon World 2.0” (for which you probably want to look at the other hacks). The major changes in Uncommon World are adding drives, using Follower moves, and eliminating stat scores.

1. The big change was supplementing alignment with [drives](#). In analyzing the popularity of different End of Session moves, I saw that the majority of respondents chose a move that included drives. Accordingly, I’ve provided a list of drives that can be used with any playbook; these were selected for conciseness, primarily from [Homebrew World](#) by Jeremy Strandberg, [Worlds of Adventure](#) by Cameron Burns, and [Unlimited Dungeons](#).
2. Another change was replacing Hireling moves with a streamlined version of Jeremy Strandberg’s Follower moves from [The Perilous Wilds](#), with an expanded Recruit move that explained truncated versions of Quality, Loyalty, Instinct, and Cost.
3. The final change was replacing stat scores (e.g., 8-16 for starting characters) in favor of only modifiers (-1 to +2 during character creation), which required updating the Character Creation rules and the Level Up move (inspired by a hack by [Yochai Gal](#)).

Uncommon World exists because of the great fantasy-PbtA community and its commitment to releasing work under the Creative Commons. See the PDF for a full list of credits. Thanks to everyone who used the configuration tool to select moves. Thanks also to [Kevin Scarlet](#) for designing the logo. Finally, I want to single out Tam H of [Hedonic Ink](#), who did the excellent layout of the rules. She also compiled the [Big List of Playbooks](#) and moderates the [Dungeon World+ server on Discord](#). Thanks, Tam!

You can discuss [Uncommon World on its subreddit](#) or on the Dungeon World Discord on its other-published-games channel.

Player Guide

How to Play

by Tam H, Yochai Gal, and J. Alan Henning

Fantasy PbtA games are a conversation, a back and forth between the players at the table, who are divided into two roles. Players explore the world using their characters, while the Game Master, or GM, serves as their lens, describing the world as the characters would see and experience it, and also controls the other pieces in play. Choose one person to be the Game Master; everyone else will take the role of the characters in the game (player characters, or PCs).

Like other *Apocalypse World* derived games (known as "Powered by the Apocalypse" or "PbtA" games), fantasy PbtA games expects the GM to ask a lot of questions of the players, and to use their creative input to help define the world, explore their premises, and to develop the narrative that you all build together. Ultimately, however, the GM makes the final call of what is true in the game's fiction.

Like many role-playing games, your character has numeric abilities, in this case STrength, DEXterity, CONstitution, INTelligence, WISdom, and CHARisma, each of which typically have a value of -1 to +3. These scores can be lowered temporarily by corresponding "debilities," to reflect the consequences of struggles: Weak, -1 STR; Shaky, -1 DEX; Sick, -1 CON; Stunned, -1 INT; Confused, -1 WIS; and Scarred, -1 CHA.

You'll find more details shortly, but for now it's enough to know that when you are a player and it's your turn, you narrate what your character feels and does, and if a move triggers, dice are rolled, and the move's rules are followed.

Hack & Slash

When you **fight in melee or close quarters**, roll+STR.

On a 10+, Deal Damage and choose 1:

- You evade, prevent, or counter the enemy's attack;
- You strike hard and fast; deal 1d6 extra damage, but suffer the enemy's attack.

On a 7-9, Deal Damage, but also suffer the enemy's attack.

Most moves have three parts: a trigger, beginning with "when", which says what must happen fictionally to make the rest of the move happen, instructions on what to add to your 2d6 roll or what to do when the trigger happens, and clauses that tell you what happens next depending on your roll result. Moves are always, and only, triggered by things that happen in the game's fiction: i.e., that you or the GM narrate.

Most moves include the phrase "roll+x" where "x" is one of your character's ability score modifiers (CON for example). Unless the move tells you otherwise, that "roll" always means that you roll two six-sided dice and add their results to the value of the modifier, usually between -1 and +3. The modifier is typically the ability scores of the rolling player's character, but a few moves will have you add some other value to your roll instead of an ability modifier.

The results of a move's dice roll always fall into three basic categories. A total of 10 or higher (written 10+) is the best outcome. You get what you want, and often an additional benefit. A total of 7-9 is still a success but it comes with compromises or cost: it's qualified, partial, or comes with some drawback. A 6 or lower (written 6-) is trouble or a failure, but you also get to mark XP. While each move will tell you what happens on a 10+ and a 7-9, most moves won't say what happens on a 6-, in which case the GM will make a move from their list of GM Moves.

Moves can reference other moves, as in the example above, which references the move Deal Damage.

Some moves...

- ★ Say "take +1 forward." That means to take +1 to your next move roll (not your next damage roll). The bonus can be greater than +1, or even a penalty, like -1.
- ★ Say "take +1 ongoing." That means to take +1 to all move rolls (not damage). The bonus can be larger than +1, or it can be a penalty, like -1.
- ★ Give you "hold." See below!

Advantage/Disadvantage

Sometimes you'll roll an extra die and keep the best two (*advantage*), or keep the worst two (*disadvantage*). Sometimes you'll add *+1 forward*, meaning a one time +1 bonus to either the next roll or to the next roll of a specific type, or *+1 ongoing*, meaning you keep adding that +1 to any appropriate rolls until the GM tells you the fiction has changed significantly enough that it no longer applies.

Rolling

Everyone at the table will need something to write with and some six-sided dice (two minimum). You may also need at least one four-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided die, and twelve-sided die, but if you don't have these specialty dice you can use the table in [D6 Only](#) with a six-sided die instead.

In fantasy PbtA games, the players handle almost all rolls. The GM rarely rolls dice, except perhaps on random tables, but even those can be rolled by a player at the GM's direction. NPCs and monsters also don't roll for anything: the players roll any relevant dice for the monsters, typically for the damage they cause (squeamish players can ask the GM to roll these).

While moves typically specify a roll of 2d6 (two 6-sided dice), they don't have to. For instance, Deal Damage often requires a die specific to a playbook (e.g., d4 for a Wizard), while the Encumbrance rule is activated by carrying too much and doesn't use a roll. Some moves from playbooks don't require rolls, either.

Hold

You might also earn *hold* from a move, which is typically a point value from 1 to 3. Hold points can be spent to achieve effects. Hold is tracked and spent according to the move you earned it from, and lasts until the fiction changes enough that it is no longer relevant. The most common move with hold is Defend:

Defend

When you **take up a defensive stance or jump in to protect someone or something else**, roll+CON. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7–9, hold 1. Spend your hold to:

- Suffer an attack's damage/effects instead of your ward
- Halve an attack's damage/effects
- Draw all attention from your ward to yourself
- Strike back at an attacker; deal your damage with disadvantage.

When you go on the offense, cease to focus on defense, or the threat passes, lose any hold left on this move.

Hold can be thought of as a currency that is earned by moves and can be spent later without the need for a roll. To emphasize this, some games, such as *Homebrew World* and *Stonetop*, give each move's hold a unique name: e.g., *Readiness* for the Defend-style move, *Preparation* for the Bolster-style move.

Typically when hold can be spent on a list of choices, you can't select the same choice repeatedly. For instance, on a 10+ for Defend, you can't "Halve an attack's damage/effects" three times.

Many playbooks have one or two moves that have hold unique to that type of character.

You might want to use gaming stones to track hold or just keep a tally with pencil and paper.

Health

Speaking of damage, adventures don't just dish it out—they also receive it. Cuts, bruises, and mortal wounds are common dangers for adventurers. In the course of play, characters will take damage, heal, and maybe even die. A character's health is measured by their Hit Points, or HP. Each playbook lists the maximum HP that a player starts with; with most playbooks this is a

formula (see Character Creation) but with some playbooks it is a static number. For instance, a Wizard in Unlimited Dungeons starts with 12 HP and a Barbarian with 24.

Hit Points are also a measure of a character's stamina, endurance, and health. More HP means they can fight longer and endure more trauma before dying.

Damage reduces HP. Likewise, if a character has armor they subtract its listed value from the damage dealt; for instance, a leather cuirass might have 1 armor while a breastplate might have 2 armor.

In the right conditions, or with medical or magical help, damage is healed and HP is restored. See the Recover move, for instance.

Debilities—listed above—are a different form of damage, which don't affect HP but affect rolls based on modifiers (e.g., *weak*, -1 STR).

Death stalks the edges of every battle. A character who is reduced to 0 HP immediately triggers the move Last Breath, to see if they live or die.

Play Example

Riley's got the satchel and, in the back seat of the cart, Audrey is out cold and still bleeding from the vampire's bite. Riley's player: "I goad the horses to go fast, but careful not to attract notice, straight to Ella's. It's late but she might still be up."

GM: "Going for a healer, that sounds like you're looking for someone who can help you, right?" That triggers the I Know a Guy move. The roll is a 2 and a 3, plus Riley's CHA of 2 makes it 7, a partial success. So Ella's home, but - as specified by the move - needs help herself, is going to ask a lot, isn't quite cut out for this, or can't exactly be trusted.

"Okay, you get there, the lights are on. As you duck in, you see her talking with Elliot. He's a vampire, he's definitely going to notice the blood, and you'll recall he has a thing for Audrey. What do you do?"

A few things to keep in mind:

Specific always wins over general. Use the most specific move available for a given situation.

Be a fan! If two moves conflict, try to use the best interpretation for the player. And always round up, if it's in the player's favor, or round down, if it isn't.

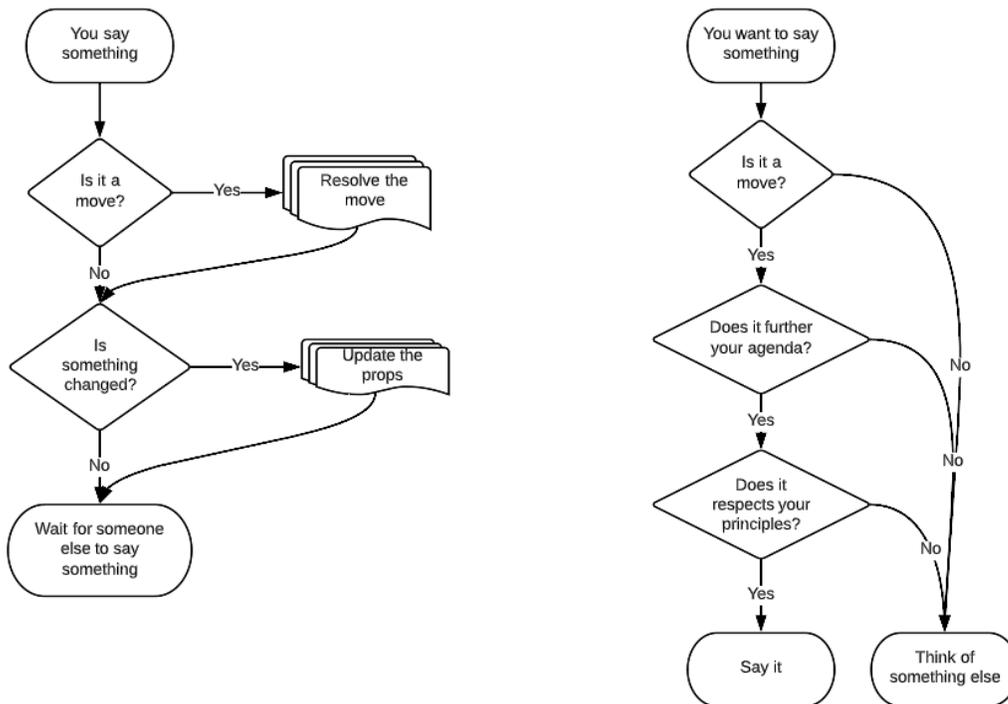
Turn Structure

by Kasper Brohus Allersle

While PbtA games don't have a strict turn structure, it is important realize that there is an assumption on how the conversation is supposed to be structured:

1. The GM makes a move and asks "What do you do?"
2. The players respond.
3. If the players triggered a move, resolve it immediately.
4. Go back to 1.

More formally, a guy named Matteo Suppo formulated it as a flowchart for Apocalypse World, but it should apply equally to fantasy PbtA games:



Player Agenda

by Keith Tompos and Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

- ★ Portray a Compelling Character
- ★ Challenge Your Character with Adventure
- ★ Play to Find Out What Happens
- ★ Be a Fan of the Game

Like the GM, players too have their own agenda and principles to help keep their attention focused on the conversation. Your agenda makes up the things you aim to do at all times while playing a fantasy PbtA game. Everything you say and do at the table that pertains to the game (and away from the table too) exists to accomplish these goals and no others. Things that aren't on this list aren't your goals. You're not trying to beat the GM or other players, or "win" in some mechanical sense by grinding your way to the biggest numbers. You're not here to play out a pre-ordained character path or story, no matter how cool you think that plan may be. Perhaps most importantly, you're not here to simply watch stuff happen or be entertained by a one-sided story. You take a powerful role in the unfolding narrative. While these should be considered part of the rules of play like the GM's Agenda and Principles, they do not carry mechanical weight to affect the dice or any moves or abilities.

Portray a compelling character is the first item on your agenda. While the story may often seem to be about all the stuff happening around your character, it's the characters themselves that are the stars. The stuff that happens around them and to them is there to highlight these characters, and push them into greater depths. So begin with and continue to bring forth a character that's up to that role. This doesn't mean you have to make a character that everyone else is overwhelmingly fascinated with, but you better find it interesting! And if you are drawn to the character, usually they'll find themselves being drawn in as well. It's your job to make a character who is interesting not only for what they can accomplish, but also for who they are. Play a character who can grow, who is intriguing and worth following through the game—a character whose death will be lamented as well as meaningful.

Challenging your character with adventure means working with your GM to live out a story that is both engaging and dynamic, and that means they need a reason to adventure. Just having an interesting character is worthless if there's never struggle or adversity for that character to engage in. Pursue things that are meaningful and challenging, looking for opportunities to accomplish significant feats both in areas of strength and weakness. Your adventures will be dangerous. Your character will get hurt. This should not stop you from pursuing your goals or your Drive; these things should be worth risking life and limb for. Push your character out of their comfort zone, and roll with the GM when they bring those opportunities. Embrace the journey, and make it a colorful one.

Play to find out what happens. You're sharing in the fun of finding out how this story will play out and what that will mean for your character as well. You can have goals and objectives, in fact it's necessary to play a compelling character, but realize that part of the adventure is built upon the reality that you aren't always in control, so hold those plans loosely as a player. Not only will the GM be bringing in twists and turns, but so will the other players. It's fun to see how things will play out for you all, rather than forcing a prescribed result.

Be a fan of the game. Finally, the experience is best if you invest in it by being a fan... a fan not only of your character but a fan of the world, the story, and the other players (including the GM). It sounds circular to encourage one to enjoy something in order to get the best out of the experience, but the ridiculousness doesn't diminish its significance. Suspend your disbelief and get into a mindset that embraces the setting. Let the game do what it does best instead of trying to force it into something else. Invest yourself in pursuing what the game offers and what the GM is trying to present, while doing your part in adding richness to everyone else's experience as well.

Player Principles

by Keith Tompos and Timekeeper, [*Unlimited Dungeons*](#)

- ★ Play Your Character With Honesty
- ★ Do It By Doing It
- ★ Be Awesome and Flawed
- ★ Engage With the World
- ★ Cast Hooks, Fill as You Play
- ★ Build Your Part of the World
- ★ Embrace the Contradictions
- ★ Share the Spotlight

These principles are guides to help you fulfill your agenda. When you have the spotlight and your character acts in the world, consider your choices in light of these principles.

Play Your Character With Honesty

This comes out of a recognition that you (the player) and your character are not the same. By playing this character you are taking on a persona not your own with its own motivations, philosophies, and vices. There is a large degree

of intentionality required in portraying this persona with integrity, and becomes more so the further these motivators are from your own. So be deliberate in pursuing them.

Separate player knowledge and discussion from character knowledge and discussion. There will be things that you (as the player) know and think that the character you play wouldn't know or think of, and must guide the character according to only the information they have available. This also means that the character's motivations and philosophies should be the guide for future actions, rather than your own. Consider the character's personality, stats, history, and perspective to inspire you, and follow those cues with integrity. However, this should not be interpreted as an invitation to disrupt the game because "that's what my character would do." If you're using this shield for your actions, maybe your character needs a second look.

Do It By Doing It

Remember that even when you're using specific moves, you're telling a story and describing actions. To roll for a move, your character has to actually do something which triggers that move. The moves themselves are only meant to give mechanics to something happening in the fiction, so tell us all what you're actually doing. Fiction is the oil that makes the engine keep turning.

The best advice for fulfilling this is to always be asking yourself: "How?" Remembering that will actively push you from naming a mechanic to describing specific actions. Your actions should always begin and end with the fiction. To do it, do it. Example:

"I attack the owlbear (How?) ...by charging it and swinging my axe (How?) ...chopping low at his legs to stay clear of the claws and beak."

"I parley with the guard (How?) ...by bribing him (How?) ...approaching him casually and sliding a gold coin into his palm, whispering 'You didn't see a thing.'"

The corollary is that if your character does something in the fiction that would trigger a move, you have to make that move, even if it's risky. Your character wants to do the thing in the fiction, so you need to make the move in the rules.

Be Awesome and Flawed

You should always be doing stuff, acting, rolling dice and throwing yourself into what's happening in the game. Whether you're being awesome or being flawed, you should be something. To be inactive is to effectively cease existing in the story. Every major character in a good story should have a goal, something that matters to them so much that they're willing to leave home and take up a life of adventure to achieve. Your character should be no different. The most interesting characters are those who are specific about what they want, but also have a few quirks or foibles.

When you get the chance to do something awesome, don't hold back. Be brave. Make it big, and take the risks necessary to create those moments. But get equally excited about opportunities to be imperfect, and jump into them with the same participation. Don't shy away from difficulty, setbacks, or even failure. (After all, failure often leads to XP.) What makes your character compelling is the balance of both of these. So let both sides of your character shine in the spotlight!

Win or lose, make your actions stylish. The only way your character's unique identity is displayed is when you push it to the front. Moods, passions, fears and personality have to be shown in the story, otherwise they don't exist in it. So don't just do something, do it with style—your style. Whatever it is you want to embody with your character, whatever makes them unique and interesting, should be apparent in everything you do or noteworthy when absent. You will take some of the same actions as everyone else, but no one does them quite like you do.

Engage With the World

The scope of fantasy PbtA games goes far beyond just combat and becomes stale if reduced to such. Even if your character is singularly focused, there's still lots of ways for them to interact with the wider world through that one facet. Think of how your character reacts to every different NPC. Explore and pursue the things that interest your character, and consider the greater scope of what it means to be driven by that. Intentionally spend time connecting your character to the other PCs and exploring how you interact with them. Don't be afraid to step outside the box either. You might discover something new about your character, or even yourself.

Example: Suppose your character is all about fighting, plain and simple. You could still—

- ★ Seek out masters of your style
- ★ Describe the extent that you go through to care for your weapons and body
- ★ Do fun things like sign up for underground sparring tournaments
- ★ Treat NPCs according to your assessment of their martial prowess or physical threat level
- ★ Treat certain monstrous opponents with honor because of shared ideals
- ★ React adversely to the other PCs whenever they back down or don't take care of their equipment
- ★ Buy one of the PCs a drink when you get back to town because they did something impressive during the last battle.

Cast Hooks, Fill as You Play

Hooks are details you add that draw people's attention and evoke further questions. They can be things for you to latch onto later, or things for any of the other PCs or even the GM to take hold of and run with. These are often in the extra descriptions like: a quirky thing your character does, an odd embellishment to something your character possesses, or a name you throw around. These are interesting because they point to something bigger—a history, a lesson learned, a prejudice, etc. They are things that break from the ordinary. In this way, you not only build your character, but you help build relationships between characters that can be a lot of fun.

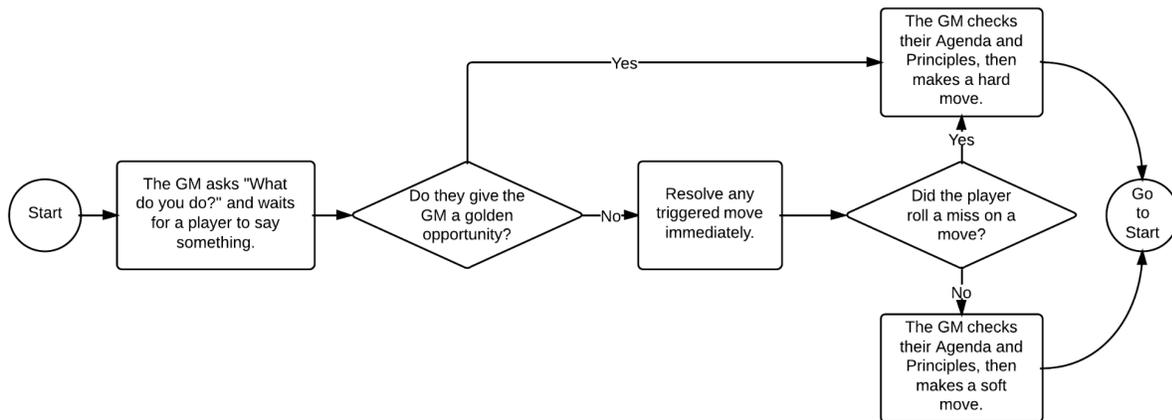
It's fine if you throw out these hooks without knowing what's behind them yourself. That way it's able to adapt to whatever may come up and others can also build on it before it is fully fleshed out. These can even be intentional blanks left in your background to leverage or define later when it's needed. When you need a contact in a new town, this might be a good time to define that brother you keep talking about, or how that insignia on your cloak matches the banners flying from the keep. Maybe there's a skill relative to the current situation that could have been part of your upbringing, if you've left room to fill that in. Claim it now!

Build Your Part of the World

Fantasy PbtA games are designed to be collaborative, so take hold of your little section of the world and help define it into something that really interests you. Whenever the GM asks you questions about the setting or past, these are huge opportunities to bring the things that interest you to life in the fiction! Take advantage of them by taking the reins at that moment. You not only have permission to do so, but are expected to.

Likewise, you can be intentional in creating these opportunities yourself, without waiting for specific questions to come from the GM. Think of the things that define your character and make them stand out from the other PCs, and consider yourself the resident expert on them. Speak up about your race and culture, your geographical roots, your areas of expertise and hobbies, etc.

Use the opportunities when those topics come up in play to help carve out parts of the world that really intrigue you. As other people make their contributions, build on what they say. Perhaps you'll have to roll to Spout Lore, but often GMs relish this creative fodder and inspiration. Don't worry, the GM still runs the world and you still run your character, but that character knows stuff. So speak up and take charge of some of that!



Some of the best things you can build are details you add that draw people's attention and evoke further questions. They can be things for you to latch onto later, or things for the other PCs or even the GM to take hold of and run with.

Examples—

- ★ If you're a Dwarf, speak up often about Dwarves and contribute to building that part of the world through your character's experience. You are one, so you would know!
- ★ If you're the Wizard, take charge in explaining how the winds of magic work in this setting, or explaining the nuances of the ritual that trapped the sprite in your new wand.
- ★ If you come from a noble family, throw out tidbits about etiquette and latest fashions whenever you step into dignified society or regal events.

Coming up with details on the spot can be daunting for players who are shy or unused to improvisation. That's fine! If you're stumped for ideas at the moment, go with what seems like would be obvious in this situation, the thing you think everyone expects to happen. Paradoxically, that obvious thing may, to everyone else, seem original and brilliant. At the very least, you'll carry the story forward.

Embrace the Contradictions

Because this is a collaborative story, there will be directions it takes that don't perfectly mesh with the niche or direction you've carved out for your character. Don't be disruptive because "that's what your character would do." Grab hold of these seeming contradictions and work them into the richness of your character. Maybe you'll have to do something that seems out-of-character for your PC, but do it anyway; and along the way you can work a reason into your character. This will add new dimensions to your character. There are no universals.

Look for ways to add your own contradictions as well, unforced. You will have a more rich and compelling character for it. Examples:

- ★ Your paladin wouldn't usually go on a mission to break into the church. Why is she doing it anyway?
- ★ Your Elf despises Dwarves. So why have you decided to travel with three of them?
- ★ You're prideful and never accept help even when necessary. But why do you let Elondria tend to your wounds after battles?

Share the Spotlight

You're one of the main characters, but not the only one. So when the focus of the conversation is naturally shining on someone else, let them be the focus and push your own character in a way that further highlights the current "star". If they don't know what to do, you can give them some suggestions, but your hero shouldn't jump in and take their moment from them. It's their turn to shine, not yours. The intention is that they'll do the same when you get the spotlight back.

This also should lead you to focus on ways that you can be deliberately passing the spotlight, or supporting the other players in the way they play their characters. If there are things that really define one of the other PCs, give that character lots of opportunities to do that. Be impressed by their prowess and turn to them when that's needed. Even if the characters don't get along, the players need to; and even as an adversary you can be highlighting the other characters while being true to the conflict between your PCs.

Throwing a spotlight like this should also be done with the world the GM is creating with you. The stuff they bring into the world are there for you to utilize, to bring out their full potential. Light up that world and the fantastic places or characters in it, especially the parts that interest you. The more you highlight something, the more significant it will naturally become. Note that just because the spotlight is off you doesn't mean you can tune out. You can still contribute to the conversation by paying attention, asking questions, and offering suggestions. In this way, you can build further on the actions of the other characters. Even just the act of listening attentively to other people can have a profound impact. When you make other players look good, they'll return the favor. When everyone in the group trusts one another, you'll have a much better game.

Attributes and Angles

by Jarrod Ingram, edited by Mitchell Parry,
adapted from [Absurd World](#)

Attributes are scores from 3-18 (as in *Dungeons & Dragons*) and modifiers (+3, +2, +1, 0, -1). Most other fantasy PbtA games just use modifiers instead of both scores and modifiers. The reasoning behind removing scores is to remove common misinterpretations for new players of *Dungeon World*, that is whether to roll with your score or modifier, or whether to add your constitution score or modifier to your HP. This is a relatively minor change that makes character creation more meaningful and avoids power creep in campaigns that go past level 10.

To assign your attributes at character creation simply assign the scores +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1 to whatever the player deems are their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to combat and social situations. Have the player's take note of the angles they're interested in when assigning these modifiers.

Conversation angles relate to a character's attributes like Strength and Dexterity. They let a character sway a conversation in more ways than one. In the case of Strength a character would be Aggressive in getting their own way with another PC or NPC and use their Strength modifier instead of Charisma when rolling to check if they get what they want. This leads to characters not being hampered in conversation because they have low charisma but a conversation angle won't work all the time at the GM's discretion. For example, the character might act aggressive but instead of getting their own way the character has actually instigated avoidable conflict. It's best to judge the "mood" when gauging what conversation angle would be most appropriate.

Below you'll find the attributes that detail potential combat and social consequences of a given attribute. The word in parentheses next to an attribute is how the attribute can be used in a social situation, while the attribute itself governs how it's typically used in combat. Typically a character will emphasize one attribute to compliment their chosen form of combat, with the rest of their attribute spread governing how they perform with certain conversation angles. Attributes are allocated at character creation with the following scores: +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1. The modifiers are added to any dice roll that follows from an action that tests the corresponding attribute be that in a combat or social sense. Therefore a character with +2

strength would roll 2d6+2 if they were going to attack someone with a melee weapon. A character with +0 (average) dexterity on the other hand would just roll 2d6 if they were trying to act graceful in a conversation.

Strength (Aggressive)

A strong character is good with melee weapons and in conversations is particularly apt at getting their way if they're aggressive or through blackmail. This doesn't always lead to a pleasant result though and some of the time this will lead to avoidable confrontations. An aggressive character would typically tell a mentally ill person to "Harden up" or something to that extent with mixed results.

Dexterity (Graceful)

A dextrous character is good with ranged weapons like a bow or sling or, if your setting features it, a firearm. They typically approach conversation by trying to smooth it over by being polite and respecting the other party or outright lying and putting on a facade. However, this doesn't always go as planned and the other party could be offended by the character trying to "butter them up." A graceful character would typically tip-toe around the major issues of presented symptoms, trying to distract a character from their debilitation; again to mixed results.

Constitution (Enduring)

A character with a high constitution is good at taking blows in battle and in the field of discourse. Not particularly apt at leading a conversation, they're good at deflecting arguments in a direction that would benefit them. When it comes to mental stress, they would say something along the lines of "It just takes time," letting the person in question know that it's okay they're not feeling the best now, that in time they'll come better.

Intelligence (Witty)

Intelligent characters typically use arcane knowledge to get their way in battle. Casting all manner of spells to turn the tides not just in battle but in the field of discourse as well. When not casting spells intelligent characters are witty, either trying to get their way using logic or crafting a joke to smooth things over. Logic and jokes don't work in every situation though and like any other conversation angle they could backfire. A witty character might try to

cheer a person up with a joke or two to lighten the mood, or try to be rational about the entire ordeal.

Wisdom (Empathetic)

Wise characters typically have a god or cause that they fight for, drawing on the power of something greater than them to turn the tide of battle. They're also particularly empathetic, having a keen understanding of the human condition; they know the right thing to say given the situation. Perhaps they're consoling someone on the death of a loved one or trying to appeal to someone's emotion in some way to get what they want. Wisdom is not just the understanding of others though, it's also an understanding of oneself. A wise character would typically cater to one's emotions when mental health is concerned, perhaps something along the lines of "Emotions are fleeting" would be a good opener.

Charisma (Glamorous)

A charismatic character uses their charm, be that through playing instruments or enacting justice for example, to do battle. In terms of conversation they don't need many words but simply their looks get them by; seduction is always an option. For mental health purposes, charismatic characters "brighten someone's day" with, for example's sake, a smile nice enough to pierce through symptoms.

Character Creation

Follow these 10 steps to create a character.

- 1) **Choose a Playbook** - From the list at <https://bit.ly/playbooklist>, download a free playbook or buy a commercial playbook for your character.
- 2) **Choose a Race or Background** - Just because a playbook doesn't show options for a specific race or background doesn't mean that you can't create a character like that. Check out the *Heritage and Backgrounds* chapter for ideas or write in your own background for now then discuss with the GM creating a custom move to build on this background.
- 3) **Choose a Name and Look** - Make up a name for your character, or choose one from any lists provided by the playbook. Choose aspects of your character's appearance from those given, or write in your own.
- 4) **Choose Modifiers** - Assign each key attribute of your character a modifier. The attributes: STrength, INTelligence, DEXterity, WISdom, CONstitution, and CHARisma. Look at the moves on your playbook; for the one you want to excel at, assign the attribute it needs a +2. Then assign the following values to the remaining attributes: +1, +1, +0, +0, and -1.
- 5) **Determine Max HP** - Each playbook has a different maximum HP (hit points), signifying the amount of damage you can take before being in danger of dying. Where the playbook lists an HP formula (Base + Constitution score), instead calculate your max HP as follows: $2 \times \text{CON} + 10 + \text{old base}$. For instance, if the playbook says "4+ Constitution" then double CON, add 10 and add 4.
- 6) **Choose Starting Moves** - The front side or first page of each playbook typically lists the moves your character can begin the game with. Some are selected for you; some playbooks give you options to choose from.
- 7) **Choose Alignment or Drives** - Some playbooks list alignment goals, and others list drives. Choose as appropriate. If your playbook lists alignment but you'd rather use drives, consult the list on the next page and either roll for two drives or pick two.

- 8) **Choose Gear** - Each playbook offers different choices of what armor, weapons, and equipment you can start with. If you have armor, record your total armor value on your sheet, as indicated (for instance, a shield increases your armor value by 1).
- 9) **Introduce Your Character** - Wait until everyone else has reached this step, then go around the table taking turns describing your character, your appearance, and anything else you consider important or public.
- 10) **Choose Bonds** - Bonds are an optional way to connect your characters to one another at the start of your adventures together. Choose another player's character and write in their name for one of your bonds; you can repeat this with other characters, if you wish. Let the other players know what bonds you picked. (Unlike bonds in *Dungeon World* and *Unlimited Dungeons*, bonds in *Uncommon World* don't provide any mechanical benefit to Aid, Interfere, or End of the Session moves; they're just a roleplaying aid.)

Drives

d100	Name of the Drive	Goal for Each Session	Hack
1-2	Accord	<i>Find virtue in others not of your own kind</i>	UD
3-4	Antiquity	<i>Acquire something old, lost, or magical</i>	WoA
5-6	Artistry	<i>Experience something of beauty or grace</i>	UD
7-8	Champion	<i>Choose honor over personal gain</i>	UD
9-10	Conquest	<i>Prove yourself superior to someone in power</i>	UD
11-12	Contempt	<i>Offend an NPC with your brutish ways</i>	HBW
13-14	Courage	<i>Lead another to act despite fear or doubt</i>	HBW
15-16	Crusade	<i>Lead others in righteous battle</i>	UD
17-18	Cultivation	<i>Help someone grow, learn, or improve</i>	HBW
19-20	Cunning	<i>Set up a ploy and then take advantage of it</i>	HBW
21-22	Daredevil	<i>Leap into danger without a plan</i>	UD
23-24	Defiance	<i>Stand up to a bully or tyrant</i>	HBW
25-26	Discovery	<i>Uncover something about a mystery</i>	WoA
27-28	Dominance	<i>Coerce someone through threats or violence</i>	HBW
29-30	Doubt	<i>Question your faith, your oaths, or your order</i>	HBW
31-32	Drama	<i>Provoke conflict between others</i>	HBW
33-34	Fame	<i>Ensure that others will spread your name</i>	HBW
35-36	Fellowship	<i>Use your art to help those in need</i>	UD
37-38	Firebrand	<i>Spread a dangerous new idea</i>	UD
39-40	Flagellation	<i>Confess to an inadequacy</i>	JH
41-42	Freedom	<i>Free someone from literal or figurative bonds</i>	WoA
43-44	Gigantic Mirth	<i>Cause trouble by over-indulging</i>	HBW
45-46	Heritage	<i>Upset another with your strange ways/rites</i>	HBW
47-48	Honor	<i>Keep a promise made to an NPC</i>	HBW
49-50	Hope	<i>Give hope or cheer to someone who needs it</i>	UD

d100	Name of the Drive	Goal for Each Session	Hack
51-52	Inquisition	<i>Reveal the failings or falsehoods of another</i>	HBW
53-54	Judgment	<i>Deny mercy to a criminal or unbeliever</i>	UD
55-56	Mercy	<i>End someone or something's suffering</i>	HBW
57-58	Mystery	<i>Deflect or evade an inquiry into your doings</i>	HBW
59-60	Mythos	<i>Discover a piece of lost knowledge</i>	UD
61-62	Naturalist	<i>Help an animal or spirit of the wild</i>	WoA
63-64	Nature Claims All	<i>Destroy a symbol of civilisation</i>	WoA
65-66	No Quarter	<i>Kill a defenseless or surrendered enemy</i>	WoA
67-68	Peace	<i>Settle a conflict or dispute without bloodshed</i>	HBW
69-70	Pride	<i>Refuse a request or order that's beneath you</i>	HBW
71-72	Primal	<i>Eschew a convention of the civilized world</i>	WoA
73-74	Renewal	<i>Reclaim something for the natural world</i>	UD
75-76	Romance	<i>Share a passionate moment with another</i>	HBW
77-78	Ruthless	<i>Deny mercy to an enemy</i>	YAFPH
79-80	Sacrifice	<i>Endanger yourself to heal another</i>	WoA
81-82	Sagely	<i>Teach someone else the ways of your people</i>	WoA
83-84	Science!	<i>Discover how something new works</i>	UD
85-86	Shepherd	<i>Endanger yourself to help another</i>	UD
87-88	Slayer of the Weird	<i>Eliminate an unnatural menace</i>	WoA
89-90	Tenacity	<i>Refuse to give up despite objection or disaster</i>	HBW
91-92	Trickery	<i>Get someone to act on false information</i>	HBW
93-94	Triumph	<i>Defeat a mighty foe to prove your worth</i>	WoA
95-96	Truth	<i>Find and reveal a lie</i>	JH
97-98	Victory	<i>Defeat a worthy foe in single combat</i>	HBW
99-100	Wonder	<i>Show someone a place/thing of great beauty</i>	HBW

Playbooks

Hundreds of free and for-purchase playbooks are available for fantasy PbtA games and can work with your game with little to no adjustment. For free sets of playbooks, check out these in particular:

- ★ [Dungeon World Play Kit PDF](#)
- ★ [Playbook Hacks by Anthony Giovannetti](#)
- ★ [Unlimited Dungeons](#) (recommended)
- ★ [Homebrew World](#) (recommended)

For a Pay-What-You-Want set of playbooks, check out [Incomplete Adventurers](#).

If you are looking for a specific character class, check out [The Big List of Dungeon World Playbooks](#), collected by Tam H.

If you or one of your players want to convert a 5e character to fantasy PbtA, see [Iggy's Compendium Classes](#) by Iggy Dee. (A compendium class is a set of moves that can be added to a playbook. See that chapter for more.)

If you want to create your own playbook, you can pick and choose from prewritten moves and follow the recommendations of [Class Warfare](#), written and compiled by Johnstone Metzger from a wide range of Creative Commons playbooks. Or peruse Tam H's other collection, [Compendium Classes](#), for over 165 compendium classes that you could use to assemble a playbook.

See also:

- ★ [Primer on Class Creation](#) by Alex Norris
- ★ [When You Want to Write a Class](#) by David Guyll
- ★ [Minimalist Playbook Template](#) by Yochai Gal.

Overview

by Johnstone Metzger, [Class Warfare](#)

Most of the original Dungeon World classes are built on a similar framework: each has roughly three powers, one racial move, and some additional details to flesh them out. Base damage, load, and maximum HP are set based on what the class is good at and expected to be doing: the Fighter and the Paladin are, by default, close combat experts, so they have high hit points and high damage.

Notice how the Ranger gets a damage bonus from his animal companion and is also good at ranged combat? In order to keep him from outshining the Fighter and the Paladin, his damage and hit points are not as high.

The Wizard is supposed to hang back and cast spells instead of fighting with weapons, so she gets the fewest hit points and the smallest damage die. The Thief isn't supposed to be fragile, exactly, but she should be better at dishing out the pain than taking it, while the Cleric is the opposite—tough and stalwart but a better healer than a head-smasher. Their respective damage dice and maximum HP scores reflect that.

In terms of starting moves, the Fighter and the Ranger are the clearest examples of classes with three, distinct special abilities. The Fighter is able to wear heavy armor and break things, plus she has a signature weapon—three abilities, easy to see. The Ranger has four moves, but only because having an animal companion requires two. That trope is joined by the archer and the woodsman to make a complete, three-power Ranger.

The Thief may seem like she has a lot of moves, but look again: she can backstab, find traps, and brew poisons. Being able to hide her alignment is a bit of color to make the class more roguish—it's nowhere near as useful as any of the Fighter's or Ranger's moves—and the ability to pick locks and steal items is there to remind you that you can just defy danger with DEX to see if sneaky behaviors go as planned or not.

Spellcasting ability gets spread across several moves, for both the Cleric and the Wizard, but again, they each have three special abilities. In addition to spells, the Cleric has a deity and can repel the undead, while the Wizard can defend with her spells and perform rituals.

The Bard is a little bit lopsided—arcane art is her chief move, with charming and open and port in a storm playing support roles. Bardic lore may seem like

an additional power, on par with the other two support moves—especially when compared to port in a storm—but it really just functions to make the Bard an expert at something, even if her player decides Intelligence will be her dump stat, and has no interest in using the Spout Lore move.

The Paladin could easily be accused of being overpowered, especially when directly compared to the Fighter. He appears to have four special abilities, and indeed he does, although undertaking a quest also puts more restrictions on the Paladin than other characters have to deal with, so in this case, four powers are balanced out by a weakness. Not exactly three, but close enough.

Not every class is built around three distinct powers, however. The Druid, for instance, is almost completely devoted to shapechanging, with her other moves backing up that concept, but not adding much in the way of dynamic special abilities.

The rest of this section won't list all the moves from selected playbooks, but instead will focus on those moves from *Dungeon World* playbooks that are often misconstrued.

Barbarian

Herculean Appetites

Others may content themselves with just a taste of wine, or dominion over a servant or two, but you want more. Choose two appetites:

- ★ Pure destruction
- ★ Power over others
- ★ Mortal pleasures
- ★ Conquest
- ★ Riches and property
- ★ Fame and glory

While **pursuing one of your appetites if you would roll for a move**, instead of rolling 2d6 you roll 1d6+1d8. If the d6 is the higher die of the pair, the GM will also introduce a complication or danger that comes about due to your heedless pursuits.

Commentary

While battling a tribe of goblins, Nanok the Barbarian pursues her appetite for conquest by avoiding the goblin king's bodyguard to attack the king

directly. She rolls a 4 on her d8 and a 5 on her d6, triggering the complication. While she is able to do damage to the king, and he back to her, his bodyguard attacks him from the rear, doing additional damage.

A common question is whether the pursuit of appetites can be indirect. While this may vary from table to table, typically the GM is looking for a direct connection between the move taken and the appetites pursued.

Bard

Arcane Art

When you **weave a performance into a basic spell**, choose an ally and an effect:

- Heal 1d8 damage
- +1d4 forward to damage
- Their mind is shaken clear of one enchantment
- The next time someone successfully assists the target with aid, they get +2 instead of +1.

Then roll +CHA.

On a 10+, the ally gets the selected effect.

On a 7-9, your spell still works, but you draw unwanted attention or your magic reverberates to other targets affecting them as well, GM's choice.

Commentary

The phrase “basic spell” here often sends players off to look at spell lists in the Cleric and Wizard playbooks. That’s not what is intended. Think of it instead as “weave magic into a performance, choose an ally and an effect of that magic”, since the magical effects are limited to the four listed. For more, see this [Reddit discussion of the Arcane Art move](#).

Don’t let the PC shortchange “performance” - typically more than a single note is required to engage with this move.

Cleric

Divine Guidance

When you **petition your deity according to the precept of your religion**, you are granted some useful knowledge or boon related to your deity's domain. The GM will tell you what.

Commentary

For more, see this [Reddit discussion](#).

Druid

Shapeshifter

When you **call upon the spirits to change your shape**, roll+WIS. On a 10+ hold 3. On a 7–9 hold 2. On a miss hold 1 in addition to whatever the GM says.

You may take on the physical form of any species whose essence you have studied or who lives in your land: you and your possessions meld into a perfect copy of the species' form. You have any innate abilities and weaknesses of the form: claws, wings, gills, breathing water instead of air. You still use your normal stats but some moves may be harder to trigger—a housecat will find it hard to do battle with an ogre. The GM will also tell you one or more moves associated with your new form. Spend 1 hold to make that move. Once you're out of hold, you return to your natural form. At any time, you may spend all your hold and revert to your natural form.

Commentary

See:

 [The Druid Shapeshifter FAQ.pdf](#) (by Joel Bethell)

 [Shapeshifted Moves Druid](#) (by Jeremiah Gentry)

Ranger

Animal Companion

You have a supernatural connection with a loyal animal. You can't talk to it per se but it always acts as you wish it to. Name your animal companion and

choose a species: Wolf, cougar, bear, eagle, dog, hawk, cat, owl, pigeon, rat, mule.

Choose a base:

- Ferocity +2, Cunning +1, 1 Armor, Instinct +1
- Ferocity +2, Cunning +2, 0 Armor, Instinct +1
- Ferocity +1, Cunning +2, 1 Armor, Instinct +1
- Ferocity +3, Cunning +1, 1 Armor, Instinct +2

Choose as many strengths as its ferocity: Fast, burly, huge, calm, adaptable, quick reflexes, tireless, camouflage, ferocious, intimidating, keen senses, stealthy.

Your animal companion is trained to fight humanoids. Choose as many additional trainings as its cunning: Hunt, search, scout, guard, fight monsters, perform, labor, travel.

Choose as many weaknesses as its instinct: Flighty, savage, slow, broken, frightening, forgetful, stubborn, lame.

Commentary

See [☰ Animal Companion FAQ](#) by Tim Franzke.

Heritage and Backgrounds

Role-playing games and fantasy works have often transplanted racism into their imagined worlds, from Tolkien’s “Mongol-type” orcs to Rowling’s stereotypically Jewish goblins to D&D’s genetic determinism. Nor are many early fantasy PbtA games any better. How to proceed then, to produce characters that play against stereotypes, to have fewer elves like Legolas and more like Hermey the Elf, D.D.S, while recognizing that some players really just want to play a prototypical character?

Most of the fantasy PbtA games so far just lean into the classic tropes. Many playbooks offer a choice of moves reflecting a character’s background or heritage. Here’s the Freebooters on the Frontier (first edition) system, by Jason Lutes, designed to emulate 1970s RPGs, with heritage determined randomly and affecting principle stats. Halflings are lucky, dwarves are strong, elves are wise, dextrous, or charismatic; humans are generalists.

Heritage (Streamlined)

by Jason Lutes, *Freebooters on the Frontier*

1-7	<input type="checkbox"/> Human: +1 to 2 different ability scores of your choice, excluding Luck. When you succumb to a Vice [a drive or negative trait], take +1 forward.
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Halfling: +2 Luck. When you eat 1 more ration than necessary , take +1 forward.
9-11	<input type="checkbox"/> Dwarf: +2 Strength or +2 Constitution. When you sniff the air , the GM will tell you if there is gold nearby.
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Elf: +2 Dexterity or +2 Wisdom or +2 Charisma. When you move , you have perfect balance and a feather-light step.

If you are looking to add a single move for a selected race,

 Races of the Farthest Reaches offers a wide selection. If you’d like to add moves for other backgrounds (e.g., gladiator, traveler, see Background Moves).

Heritage (Unlimited)

by Johnathan Walton, [Planarch Codex](#),
as adapted by Timekeeper for [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

Heritage is an optional mechanic designed to reflect a character's background and history, offering many more choices for greater customization to each game. Please note that while Heritage is a part of each character's background, it is a separate and distinct mechanic from each playbook's Background move.

Your choice of race or heritage should ideally bring some creative influence into the conversation. An elven ranger isn't the same as a human ranger with pointy ears. When you create a new character, decide on your species, ethnicity, and cultural heritage, choosing anything or any combination of things that sounds interesting to you and the other players. Then choose two Heritage moves to start with, based upon your background.

Heritage moves are simple phrases or actions your character can do that reflect your character's heritage: their ancestry, homeland, culture, or youth. You also get two Heritage boxes.

If you are using the Heritage system, print up one of the half sheets on the following page and add it to your playbook. Simply fold your playbook in half and insert the Heritage half sheet inside like a booklet.

At the start of each session (including the first one), mark a Heritage box. When you draw upon your heritage to perform a task, erase a mark from one of your Heritage boxes and make one of your Heritage moves. No roll is necessary; you just make that move.

When you Spout Lore about your heritage, you may erase a mark from one of your Heritage boxes to automatically succeed, as if you had rolled a 10+.

When you reveal a downside to your Heritage that creates some meaningful tension or disadvantage for you, mark a Heritage box. The GM may ask you to Defy Danger or give disadvantage to a move you make that follows when this downside impacts you.

When you Level Up, if you are level 6 or higher, instead of choosing a new move or increasing a stat, you may gain a third Heritage box and write a third Heritage move. If you choose this option, you also immediately mark all of your Heritages boxes for free. You may only choose this option once.

Using a Heritage move may allow you to obviate or overcome a Danger that would otherwise need to be Defied, or grant Lore without having to Spout it first. However, they should not be allowed to deal damage without having to roll for it. Using a Heritage move to set up or augment another move may give advantage on that move. Exactly what happens is left to the GM's discretion.

We have presented a few common racial and cultural choices here as examples, but players are encouraged to think of their own heritages and accompanying moves.

Dwarves of the Iron Mountains

- Analyze stonework
- Resist poison
- See through the darkness
- Sniff out gold and silver

Elves of the Borderlands

- See clearly in faint light
- Balance with uncanny grace
- Blend into the forest
- Listen to the whispers of the trees

Clans of the Northern Wastes

- Endure hardship to keep a sworn vow
- Find shelter in harsh places
- See the honor in others
- Ignore pain and cold

Citizens of the Great Empire

- Read and write a foreign language (choose the language when you first use this move)
- Hold fast to what you love
- Rationalize in the face of madness
- Blend in with a crowd

Vagrants of Highcastle

- Find a place to hide
- Survive on an empty stomach
- Deflect aggression or suspicion by acting meek
- Size up a mark

Military Caste of the Federation

- Remain focused or marching despite fatigue
- Evaluate a military situation
- Hold the line
- Make hasty repairs to your gear

Nomads of the Golden Plains

- Scavenge for food or shelter in the plains
- Watch a threat from afar
- Read the weather
- Coordinate an assault on a bigger target

Heritage Insert

Heritage box:

Heritage moves:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

When you **create a new character**, decide on your species, ethnicity, and cultural heritage, choosing anything or any combination of things that sounds interesting to you and the other players. Then choose two Heritage moves to start with, based upon your background. Heritage moves are simple phrases or actions your character can do that reflect your character's heritage: their ancestry, homeland, culture, or youth. You also start with two Heritage boxes, with the potential to later unlock a third Heritage box.

At the **start of each session** (including the first one), mark a Heritage box.

When you **draw upon your heritage to perform a task**, erase a mark from one of your Heritage boxes and make one of your Heritage moves. No roll is necessary; you just make that move.

When you **Spout Lore about your heritage**, you may erase a mark from one of your Heritage boxes to automatically succeed, as if you had rolled a 10+.

When you **reveal a downside to your Heritage that creates some meaningful tension or disadvantage for you**, mark a Heritage box. The GM may ask you to Defy Danger or give disadvantage to a move you make that follows when this downside impacts you.

When you **Level Up**, if you are level 6 or higher, instead of choosing a new move or increasing a stat, you may gain a third Heritage box and write a third Heritage move. If you choose this option, you also immediately mark all of your Heritages boxes for free. You may only choose this option once.

Background Moves

by Jeremy Strandberg, [Homebrew World](#),
and Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

Accursed

When you **unsheathe Your Weapon**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, name an NPC who will die; on a 7-9, name two NPCs—one will die and one will live but it's unclear which is which; on a 6-, someone will surely die, but who?

Regardless, the GM will ensure that your vision comes true.

When you **Make Camp and reminisce about someone you regret killing with Your Weapon**, mark XP.

When you introduce yourself to the other PCs, ask one or more of the following:

- Which of you once stayed my hand?
- Which of you has failed to stay my hand?
- Which of you knows how to lift the curse?
- Which of you has stuck with me despite it all?

Brute

When you **make threats of violence while you Parley**, you roll with STR instead of CHA.

Courtesan

When the **GM first establishes a noble, famous, or influential NPC**, you can ask the GM one of the following and get an honest answer:

- What is their most notable virtue or vice?
- What great deed are they known for?
- What great shame do they try to live down?

When you **first meet a noble, famous, or influential NPC in play**, you can expend Supplies to present them with a fitting gift (describe it); if you do, gain advantage on your next move against them.

When you introduce yourself to the other PCs, ask one or more of the following:

- Which of you also serves my liege or house?
- Which of you is pledged to a rival house?
- With which of you do I share a torrid past?
- Which of you is owed a debt by my liege?

Courtier

When you **Parley**, on a 10+, you may also ask them one question, which they must answer truthfully. This information comes from slip of the tongue or their body language giving it away; they won't notice that they gave up their information.

Far Traveler

When you **lead the way while you Undertake a Perilous Journey or Defy a Danger caused by the natural environment**, you may describe how you have dealt with a similar trouble in your journeys before; if you do, gain advantage to your roll.

When you **Spout Lore about your homeland or its traditions**, you cannot get a 6-: treat any such result as a 7-9 instead.

Forester

When you **hide in natural surroundings**, enemies never spot you until you do something to reveal your position (like attack or move quickly).

When you **forage while the party Makes Camp**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, both; on a 7-9, pick 1:

- The party doesn't need to expend Provisions
- One member of the party can fully heal after getting a few hours sleep.

When you introduce yourself to the other PCs, ask one or more of the following:

- Which of you hired me as a guide?
- Which of you makes the most noise?
- Which of you has no business being out here?
- Which of you needed me to put something out of its misery for you?

Gladiator

When you **dispatch a foe in a flashy or brutal way**, pick 1:

- Name a foe; you've got their attention
- Name an ally; you've given them an opening (they gain advantage if they act on it)
- Name a witness; they will spread tales of you

When you **take damage**, you can expend 1 use of Supplies to halve the damage and the effects of the blow; tell us how your gear takes the brunt of it.

When you introduce yourself to the other PCs, ask one or more of the following:

- Which of you has faced me in battle?
- Which of you is the most fun?
- Which of you is scared of me?
- Which of you do I trust the most?

Hero Reborn

When you **Spout Lore by consulting the memories of your past life or lives**, you have Advantage.

When you **Make Camp and dream your prophetic dreams**, ask the GM a question about the perils that you face. They'll give you an honest answer in your dreams, though it may be clouded or cryptic.

When you introduce yourself to the other PCs, ask one or more of the following:

- Which of you knew me in a previous life?
- Which of you is my kin in this life?
- Which of you doubts I am who I claim to be?
- Which of you has pledged to follow me?

Militant Order

You ignore the *clumsy* tag on armor you wear, and any armor you wear, not including shields, has -2 weight, to a minimum of zero.

Street Rat

When you **blend into a crowd or the shadows**, enemies never spot you until you draw attention to yourself or leave your cover.

Vandal

Your people know only war and violence. When you **Discern Realities**, on a hit you may also ask "What here is weak or vulnerable?" for free.

Additionally, when you prove yourself superior to someone in power, gain advantage on your next move made against their followers, underlings, and hangers-on.

Veteran

When you **Spout Lore about a military unit or combat situation**, you may describe a similar situation you have faced before; if you do, you roll with STR instead of INT. The first person acting on your information gains advantage on their next move that follows.

Additionally, when **an enemy is watching you and there's a difficult choice to make**, the GM will tell you what the enemy expects you to do.

Wildling

When you **mark an animal (with mud, dirt, or blood)**, you can see through that animal's eyes as if they were your own, no matter what distance separates you. Only one animal at a time may be marked in this way. This doesn't give you control over the animal, but they could be convinced to do as you say when you Parley with them.

Background Compendium Classes

A compendium class is an insert that can be added to a character's playbook. While most compendium classes are made available when an adventurer accomplishes something (for instance, see Oathkeeper, which can be taken when a solemn oath is sworn), a few - like the ones above - reflect the background of a character.

Compendium classes typically have a starting move and a few additional advanced moves. The first move in each compendium class must be taken

first; after that, any additional moves in that compendium class can be gained in any order, using a Level Up move.

Below you will find compendium classes for an archaeologist, berserker, centaur, and noble. To find other compendium classes that might make suitable backgrounds, see [The Big List of Dungeon World Compendium Classes](#), curated by Tam H.

The Adventuring Archaeologist

by Jeremy Strandberg

When you spend months or years in study of an ancient civilization, complete all your required coursework, and submit your thesis to the University, you get Rights and Responsibilities (right away, no need to wait until you level up or spend a move on it).

Rights and Responsibilities

When you **petition the University to back an expedition** (either one you intend to take, or one that you've dropped into, in media res), roll+CHA. On a 10+, you have their full backing, and they've provided 3 of the following (your choice):

- A handful (2-4) of eager undergraduates to assist you (+1 Quality, +1 Loyalty, +3 tags each, cost: experience, instinct: to cause drama)
- A crew of 6-12 drovers, diggers, and porters (+0 Quality, +1 Loyalty, *excavation-wise, group, hardy*, cost: lucre, instinct: to avoid danger)
- A knowledgeable guide (+2 Quality, -1 Loyalty, *locale-wise, cunning*, +2 more tags; cost: lucre, instinct: to save their own skin)
- A detailed map of the area or site, from a previous expedition
- A relic or artifact that will be useful on the expedition (tell us how or why)

On a 7-9, the University provides 2 from the list above (your choice) but there's a rival scholar or collector who's also exploring this area, with similar funding or resources. Answer the GM's questions about them.

On a miss, the University refuses to fund or approve your expedition, and suggests that you focus your research elsewhere. If you press on with your expedition anyway, you're on your own and you're risking your reputation and standing with the university; take -1 forward to use Rights and Responsibilities.

When you successfully complete an expedition and formally present your discoveries to the University, take +I forward to use Rights and Responsibilities.

When you have Rights and Responsibilities and you level up, you can pick one of the following moves instead of one from your playbook.

Done the Reading

When you **Spout Lore about the subject of your expedition or something you discover on it**, you can ask the GM a follow-up question and get an honest, useful answer (even on a miss).

Field Work

When you **carefully analyze a place or object *in situ***, you can Discern Realities with INT instead of WIS and you always get to ask an extra question (even on a miss, ask one question).

Safety First

When you **Defy Danger to avoid the effects of a trap or environmental hazard**, treat a 7-9 as a 10+.

Be Prepared

When you **Bolster in preparation for an expedition**, gain 1 extra Preparation. While on the expedition, you can spend 1 Preparation to:

- Add +1 to a roll where you preparation paid off
- Produce an item of particular and specific use for the expedition
- Describe a helpful contact that you've established in the area
- Reveal some plan or ploy that you arranged in advance

I Know This Work

Requires: level 6+

When you **first examine an ancient artifice**, you can ask the GM 2 of the following and get an honest answer:

- Who made this, and roughly when?
- What is for/what does it do?
- What is unusual or out of place about it?
- How can I activate it?
- How can I deactivate or disable it?

Or At Least a Close Second

Requires: level 6+, Safety First

When you **take damage from a trap or an environmental hazard**, roll damage twice and take lower roll. Anyone who follows your lead also gains this benefit.

Expert in Your Field

Requires: level 6+

When you **declare some fact or truth about the subject of your expedition**, tell the table what you believe to be true. If you are incorrect, the GM will correct you and reveal the truth of the matter—mark XP and you cannot use this move again this session.

Berserker

by Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

When you **willingly give yourself fully to battle-lust, blacking out and coming to later surrounded by carnage**, you may take the following move:

Berserker Rage

When you **work yourself into a violent, howling frenzy**, roll+CON. On a 10+, choose three. On a 7-9, choose two. On a 6-, choose one anyway, but expect to leave some serious collateral damage in your wake, which you won't notice until it's too late.

- Your melee attacks are messy and forceful
- You are immune to fear and any other effects that would control or manipulate your mind
- You have 3 armor in place of any other armor you are wearing
- You ignore the effects of all of your debilities
- You're not exhausted after your frenzy ends (otherwise, you are)

Your chosen effects last until you take an action requiring subtlety, finesse, higher thinking, discussion or otherwise come down from your rage.

If you have the move Berserker Rage, you may take one of the following moves as well when you Level Up.

Savage Cunning

When you **Discern Realities while under the effects of Berserker Rage**, you may roll with CON instead of WIS, and this action does not end your rage.

Terrifying Reputation

When you **enter a steading**, rumors about your fury may precede you (your call). If so, tell the GM what the people have heard. They'll act accordingly, maybe by barring their doors, asking for your help, or testing your strength.

Wrecking Ball

When you **Hack and Slash while raging**, on a hit, also choose one:

- You deal 1d6 damage to another creature within your reach, even if the only other creature nearby is an ally
- You lash out at something breakable in the environment, either breaking or damaging it as the GM describes.

Note that you must choose one, even when you'd rather not.

Noble

by Chris Sakkas

If you are born into the nobility or after you marry into the aristocracy or are knighted by the monarch, you may take this move when you level up:

Pulling Rank

When you **pull rank**, roll+CHA. On a hit, you get what you want. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- You don't attract the notice of the local lord.
- You don't leave bitterness and resentment behind.
- You are given a gift of goods or information.

Once you've taken pulling rank, the following moves count as class moves for you. In addition to your normal list of moves, you may choose from this list when you level up.

Taunt

When you **Defend**, you may use CHA instead of CON.

Gossip

When you **Carouse**, you can hold instead of choosing straight away.

Etiquette

When **your Recruit is a miss**, you are approached by someone close to your requirements as well as an influential and ill-suited candidate.

Ally

When you **Carouse**, you may also choose 'You are introduced to one of the influential' and 'You are invited to a social function'.

Family Ties

When you **Recruit**, take +1 forward if you open applications to members of your family.

Refuge

You have a safe place. Describe it. When you **travel to your safe place**, you do not need to Undertake a Perilous Journey.

Smear

When you **spread malicious rumors about someone**, roll+CHA. On a hit, they stick. On a 7-9, choose 1.

- They don't suspect it was you.
- They don't have an alibi or evidence to disprove it.
- The relevant authorities are investigating.

Do You Know Who I Am?

When you **Defend**, you may also choose:

- They think better of attacking you.

Titled

When you **Aid or Interfere with someone by giving them a command**, roll CHA if it is higher than your bond. In addition, instead of taking -1 or +2, you can instead allow them to use the stat of your choice for the move.

Wealth

When you **pay for supply with your family's wealth**, choose one:

- Your family cuts off your account.
- Your flagrancy attracts attention.
- You are cornered by muggers.

Supernatural Paths

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Supernatural paths are similar to compendium classes and can be appended to any playbook, reflecting a character's supernatural background (angel, demon, fae, galatea, ghost, or shapeshifter). The Supernatural paths open up new avenues for PCs to impact the game world, sometimes in surprising ways.

Talk to the GM before taking any moves from a supernatural path, and discuss your vision, the thing about this path, about being a werewolf or an elf or a psychic, that you want to explore in play, of your character and how they fit into the world with your table.

Discuss what complications inherent in your premise interest you, and how you see the fiction of it unfolding, and if any of the aspects of your moves don't quite gel with your vision.

The GM should defer to your vision of your character, by asking questions and using the answers, whenever possible. Be flexible about your premise, and open to expanding it as events unfold.

Supernatural moves, like all moves, are both prescriptive and descriptive. The GM will grant moves as they become fictionally appropriate, and you might lose moves under the same circumstances.

Note that the Supernatural paths are more like suggested packages than traditional classes, and more flexible. Be sure to read the instructions for each path carefully as some grant extra moves or open up additional options.

And if a move makes sense with your character's fiction, even if it's not from a path you have access to, talk to the GM about taking it, or ask them to create a custom version based on it for your character!

Manifest Power

When you use **this move for the first time**, choose a modifier. You will use this stat to manifest unless the GM tells you to use a different one for a specific roll.

When you **use extraordinary powers to do something consistent with your premise or established abilities**, roll+STAT. On a 12+, as 10+, and the power is part of your repertoire now; the GM will create a niche move to reflect it. On a 10+, you do it; choose one. On a 7-9, the GM will choose one as well:

- You attract unwanted notice
- You cause collateral damage or an unintended injury
- You get hurt
- You lose a resource
- You owe someone a debt
- The outcome is worse than you hoped.

Commentary

This is the move that triggers when you have supernatural abilities and you're trying to do something you should be able to do, given what you are, but that isn't explicitly spelled out in the rules. It allows you to represent your premise, even if you don't yet have advanced moves from your paths.

"Bad news, those two werewolves have followed you outside the town's walls, and they're joking about staking you out for the sun," the GM says.

"I've been a vampire for like two nights," Charlie complains. "I'm going to go crazy on them, just vamp out."

"You don't have that move yet, but that's how you described Elliot when he lost control feeding earlier, right? So that's part of your premise," the GM says. "Sounds like Manifest Power."

A 10, and Charlie picks "lose a resource". The GM nods. "As you teeter on the edge of control, you can feel you're running through Blood way faster than you should be. What do you do?"

Manifest Power is a default move, but remember to always use the most specific move you've got!

Niche Moves

FOR THE GM: When you create a niche move on a 12+, keep the fiction (what happened) and the intent (what the character wanted out of the situation) in mind.

Niche moves should be a better deal than just rolling Manifest Power in some way, either because they're slightly easier, have a better success condition, or grant explicit narrative control to the player.

Use the advice in the *Dungeon World* core book about making new moves. Consider passives, or adding to one of the PC's existing moves. As a rule of thumb, choose a stat, then use one of these two patterns:

Pattern A

On a 10+, the ability works as it did the first time, fictionally, with the same costs. On a 7-9, there will be a drawback like:

- It's weaker than expected, or of shorter duration
- There's a cost, or a higher cost than expected
- There'll be an unexpected side effect or ramification
- You'll have to choose one from Manifest Power.

Pattern B

On a 7-9, the ability works as it did the first time, fictionally, with the same costs. On a 10+, there will be an advantage, like:

- The costs are lessened or waived
- It will last longer than expected or
- Some drawback to it is reduced or negated.

Before you begin play, be sure to discuss with your table who will pick the consequences on a Manifest Power; it's okay for a table to defer those choices in part or in whole to the GM if all players prefer.

The Angelic

The Angelic is a divine entity trapped in a fragile mortal shell, with great powers but only one way to fuel them: burning through that mortal shell.

Choose this path if you want to achieve great things at great personal cost (or with a lot of collateral damage).

When you take one of these two moves, you get the other free.

Nomen

You shine with a divine light, even through your mortal shell. Maybe you fell from heaven, or maybe it was your parents' sin, but either way, you're bearing the consequences now. You have a special ability you can spend 2 HP to use.

Choose one:

- You know where and how far the thing you need is
- You can speak the person you're talking to's language
- You're lucky but that luck comes from somewhere.

You can use any spell from the cleric spell list except those that animate the dead. Clerical rites count as 0-level spells.

Channel Divinity

When you **channel divinity through your mortal shell**, lose as many hp as the level of the spell, tripled, then roll+WIS. On a 10+, it works as expected.

On a 7-9, also choose one:

- A supernatural entity notices and comes to investigate
- Your shell is marked with a debility of the GM's choice
- You lose an additional number of HP equal to the spell's level
- You can't channel divinity again until you get at least a few hours of rest.

If a spell is ongoing, you take the standard penalty of -1 to this roll.

When you can choose a new move and are angelic, you can choose from these.

To My Hand

Choose a specific weapon or other item of similar size. When you **summon that item to your hand or return it to whence it came**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, it appears or moves as you expected. On a 7-9, the effort costs you. Choose one: you take 1d4 damage, mark a debility, or someone takes advantage of your moment of inattention.

The Gates are Barred

When you or someone you **want to live would die or has just died**, tell the GM and they will offer you two costs, like a memory of a lover or a singing voice, to choose between. If you choose, the subject is completely healed.

When you gain a level from 6 to 10 and are divine, add the Shapeshifter's Regeneration and this to your options:

Burning Bright

When you **do something by being particularly angelic or in keeping with the light**, roll the appropriate move with advantage. If you are within your mortal shell, you lose as many HP as the lowest of the three dice you rolled, in addition to facing any other consequences. On a miss, the GM asks, "how does the burning up of your mortal shell start to manifest?"

The Demonic

The Demonic is a bargainer, a tempter, who can rewrite reality if the deal's good enough – but they always teeter on the edge of pushing it just a little too far – and Hell itself has their number.

If you start as a demon, when you take one of these two moves, you get the other free. If you become a demon or sign away your humanity, take these moves immediately and forgo your next level move.

Demon Tainted

Maybe you're an unfortunate offspring, maybe a former Power trapped in a mortal shell, maybe just cursed, but the powers of Hell are under your command to a limited extent. Describe at least one physical mark you carry that betrays your infernal heritage, and name a powerful supernatural creature you owe a debt to, if it's a bargain or not, and why.

When you **use demon magic to adjust reality in a small, subtle, and temporary way to facilitate the fulfillment of a binding bargain**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, it does what you intended and you don't mark a debility. On a 7-9, pick one: it works but goes awry, or it does what you intended but you mark a debility. On a 12+, choose if it'll be big, flashy, or long-lasting instead, but if you do, someone will definitely notice.

Binding Bargain

When you **make a nominally even bargain with someone and declare it binding**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, neither of you can break it until the GM declares that the terms are met or both parties mutually declare that it's over.

On a 7-9, also choose one:

- You can't bind any new bargains until this one is settled
- The binding will break if you utter a lie before it's settled
- The target has a prior binding that conflicts; you'll need to defy danger to make yours take priority, and the previous claimant will notice.

When you're demon-tainted and can take a move, you may also choose from these and the Shapeshifter's Hybrid Form (as a demon form).

Forked Tongue

You're skilled at saying one thing and meaning another. When you **use words deceptively**, gain +1 to be believed, escape punishment, or influence others.

When you spend time sizing up someone's desires, hold 1 Temptation. Spend this hold to tempt them to act to some degree in a way they normally wouldn't. An NPC usually will; if a PC does, they mark XP. If someone does act, you clear a debility or regain 1d6 HP.

Entwined Fates

When you **adjust reality using demonic magic and would take a debility**, you can opt to instead inflict it as a spiritual taint on the person you're working on behalf of. If they demand your presence, you hear it, and you may go to them instantly if you want to. Finally, you are always considered to have 1 Temptation you can spend as if for Forked Tongue with anyone you have a bargain with, even if you don't have that move.

When you gain a level from 6 to 10 and are demon-tainted, add Ascendancy to your options.

Ascendancy

When you **use demon magic**, you get the benefit of a 12+ on a 10+ and the effects of a 10+ on a 7-9.

The Fae

The Fae is three intertwined paths: the Light Court, who are unpleasantly manipulative, arrogant, and never what they seem; the Dark Court, who are literal monsters, the stuff of nightmares; and the poor stolen mortals known as Changelings.

Choose one Court Move and a Seeming for the cost of one move. If you are a fae by blood, you have Cold Iron Allergy for free.

Cold Iron Allergy

When you're surrounded by large quantities of iron, mark a debility that lasts until you aren't. When you take max damage from an iron weapon, mark a debility; the wound is painful and slow to heal.

Light Court

You were born into a Seelie Court; cruelty, manipulation, and wild magic are a matter of course to you. Choose one of these that is second nature to you and take +1 when your familiarity with it is useful.

When you **spend at least a half hour communing with nature**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, hold 3 Elan. On a 7-9, the GM will hold 1 as well; they may spend this hold to declare how your alien nature causes you problems.

Dark Court

You were born into an UnSeelie Court; cruelty, pain, and scheming are a matter of course to you. Choose one of these that is second nature to you and take +1 when your familiarity with it is useful. Choose a monster or two that best represents your UnSeelie parentage; you gain two of their moves and a concealable physical mark that betrays your heritage, like tentacles, scaly patches, or extra eyes in off-putting places.

When you **use one of your monstrous moves**, Defy Danger; the danger is that someone you didn't intend to will get hurt.

Courted

You spent time in Faerie. Hours, years, centuries—time flows differently there. You're as familiar with Faerie as anyone who wasn't actually born there, but someone or something of Faerie wants you back. Take +1 when enduring injustice, feigning obedience, or escaping from anything.

Seeming

You have a Seeming, a normalized facade, that hides your true nature, like peasant boy, matron, or blacksmith. When mortals (and supernaturals who aren't paying close attention) look at you, that's what they see, unless given serious cause to doubt.

When you **pass your Seeming off as truth against someone who might see through it**, roll+WIS or +CHA. On a 10+, they don't notice what you wish them not to or believe what you wish them to about you, your choice. On a 7-9, the GM will tell you what confirmation they require.

Broken Seeming

You have faerie magic clinging to you, and you can't get out from under it. Choose a Seeming, like an old curmudgeon, demure wallflower, or adorable child; this is who most mortals (and supernaturals who aren't paying close attention) will think you are.

Even if shown evidence to the contrary, they'll rationalize it away, though they won't forget things they already knew or let you stab them twice. You're stuck with it. If you're ever stripped of it in play permanently, replace this move immediately with a new one.

When you are Fae and can choose a move, you can choose from these.

Faerie Magic

Choose any two cantrips or rites; you may spend one Elan to use either.

When **faerie magic is used near you**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you learn that faerie enchantment. On a 7-9, your understanding is flawed; you take -1 to weave that enchantment.

Weave Enchantment

When you **weave a faerie enchantment you've learned**, spend 1 Elan and roll+CHA. On a 10+, it works. On a 7-9, also choose one:

- You put yourself in a spot
- Your Seeming falters or you attract unwanted notice
- You take -1 to weave enchantment until you regain Elan.

On a 12+, in addition to any other effects, you no longer have a flawed understanding of it.

Psychic Vampire

You feed on an emotion, like ecstasy, pain, or fear; name it.

When you **should mark off a Ration**, as long as you've fed on that emotion within the past 24 hours, you don't. Otherwise, tell the GM; they will offer you an opportunity to feed soon. If you take it, mark XP. If you don't, take a -1 ongoing until you do.

When you **feed psychically on someone who is cooperating or unable to resist**, roll+CHA. On 10+, you only take what you need or you take everything they've got, your choice. On a 7-9, the GM will offer you a hard bargain, ugly choice, or worse outcome.

Mania

When you **focus your Seeming on inducing a specific emotion**, roll+CHA. On a 10+, anyone looking at you feels that emotion strongly; they will act as you would expect them to act, given who they are. On a 7-9, the GM will offer you a hard bargain, ugly choice, or worse outcome. On a 12+, say how they are overwhelmed; if the GM disagrees, mark XP.

When you gain a level from 6 to 10 and are Fae or Fae-touched, choose from these too.

Through The Hedge

When you **slip into the ancient hedge maze that separates Faerie from the Real** (through any opening that separates two distinct places), roll+WIS. On a 10+, you step back out where you wish to be, you are not in a bad spot or late, and nothing followed you. On a 7-9, choose two.

Trickster

You are no longer limited to a normalized facade with your Seeming; from a burning coal to a ragged beggar, your Seeming is under your command and you may opt to change it when you wish with a moment's thought. However, it will be much less effective against anyone who sees you change, and you always retain a specific mark of your true self.

Monstrous Control

Choose two more moves from your monster parentage. You may choose "the move will not work at all" as the danger when using Dark Court.

The Galatea

The Galatea, or Made, are fashioned from inanimate materials and given life through sorcery or sacrifice or accident. They hunger for mortality, and feed on its ephemera. In return, they are constantly reinventing themselves.

When you take Made, you get Essence Siphon (below) for free.

Made

You weren't born; you were built. You have two states; that of a soft, fleshy mortal and your true form, an animated human-shaped substance. You may switch between them at will.

Name the substance, like snow, corpses, clay, or stone, and describe it. Choose one of the following benefits for your mortal state and two for your true state.

- You have one spell of your level or lower you can cast by spending Essence.
- You take +1 when doing a specific activity, like fist-fighting, persuading, or spouting lore about a topic.
- You have +1 Armor or take -1 damage; name something that bypasses this.

And one drawback that applies in both states:

- You require a specific substance in addition to Essence to heal damage.
- People find you off-putting; take -1 when this matters.
- You require a specific substance in addition to essence to switch from your true form to your mortal one.

Essence Siphon

As an animated construct, you don't age, change, or heal naturally; you simply are. You rely on essence, an ephemeral substance that can be gained from a specific strong emotion. Choose one, like love, hate, rage, sorrow, or fear.

When you **siphon essence from a source within reach**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, hold 3 Essence. On a 7-9, hold 1. When you have no Essence left, you revert to your true state and may not return to your mortal one until you have at least one Essence. You can hold Essence equal to your level+WIS.

Choose a specific time of day; if that time occurs and you have no Essence, you de-animate for good. When you switch states, you can spend one Essence to return your HP to full, to repair an injury, or to remove a debility.

When you can choose a move, choose from these too.

Basic Self-Improvement

Take another benefit or the same benefit but a different application from Made.

Improved Self-Improvement

Take another benefit or the same benefit but a different application from Made.

Share Essence

You can spend one Essence to grant the benefit of your Made abilities to someone else for one move, to heal them as you would heal yourself, or to use any other ability you can spend Essence on in a similar fashion. If the granted benefit requires you to have a specific substance on hand, you must.

The Ghost

The Ghost is just that, a disembodied spirit, a very stubborn dead mortal, with nothing left but emotion: those they still possess and those of the people who care about them.

When you take Ghost, you get Emotional Anchor free (see below). You have no gear except the spiritual versions of whatever you died with.

Ghost

You're a ghost, with all that entails. You're not corporeal, and can't be seen, heard, or touched except by sensitives. Choose a tic or invent one:

- Each day, at the same time as when you died, you act out your death as if it were happening again
- You confuse people with those you knew when alive
- When materialized, sunlight reveals your true nature.

When you **materialize physically**, roll+CON. On a 10+, pick up to three: you can be heard, seen, or interact with the world as if you were mortal. On a 7-9, pick up to two. While you're materialized, you can be hurt or damaged just as a living person is. However, you never draw a Last Breath; instead, you reform where the GM says, when they say.

Emotional Anchor

When someone feels a strong emotion, like love, fear, or regret, involving you, you know and may name them an anchor until that emotion is resolved or changes. You know when an anchor is in trouble or in turmoil, and can materialize for one without a roll; if you do, only they can see, hear, and touch you.

When you **cross the distance between you and an anchor in an instant**, roll+CON. On a 10+, you're there; choose if you're fully or exclusively materialized, and how much. On a 7-9, the GM chooses if you're materialized, and how much, and for how long.

When you can choose a move and are a ghost, choose from these as well:

All My Friends Are Dead

When you **go looking for a ghost who can help you**, tell the GM who it is and roll+CHA. On a 10+, you're there and they can help. On a 7-9, you're there, but either they've got other problems or they can't help as much as you'd like, GM's call.

Poltergeist

You can move small objects, singly or in groups, with your mind. When you **take a moment to focus your mind on manipulating the physical world**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, just 1. Spend hold to:

- Move a single object up to the size of a chair, slowly
- Move a group of objects as if with your hands, slowly
- If you're moving an object or group of objects, do it fast enough to trigger Volley.

Possession

When you **attempt to take over someone's physical body**, roll+CON. On a 10+, you do it; their body is yours, choose one. On a 7-9, choose two:

- They remember this as a dream or nightmare; otherwise it's blank
- Take a 1d4 damage to yourself to act with coordination
- You control only the hands, legs, or mouth, your choice
- You have time for one move before being forced out.

The Shapeshifter

The Shapeshifter is two related paths. The lycanthrope is your classic werewolf, with regeneration, allergies, and a tendency to lose control and eat their friends, while the protean is the trickster shapeshifter, hard to catch and harder to pin down, but regeneration doesn't come as easily.

When you take Shapeshift, choose between these moves from those below: In the Blood or Blocked, and between Protean or Minor Regeneration.

Shapeshift

Choose an animal form that is unique and specific (the one you would have if you had been born that creature), roughly your size or smaller, and that shares a distinguishing feature (like eye or hair color or a scar or tattoo) with your default form. You can shift into this form at will.

While in another form, you have the abilities, moves, and instincts of that creature. You retain your human mind and use your own stats. Your natural weapons have the tag *hand*; choose one of *precise*, *messy*, *forceful*, *reach*. (See Tags.)

Choose the stat you will use to shift when you take this move. When you **shift back into human form**, roll+SHIFT. On a 10+, you accomplish it, no problem. On a 7-9, also choose one.

- You can't change form again right now
- You retain a mark like oddly colored eyes, pointed ears, or sharp claws
- You forget a nuance of civilization, like forks or personal space, or retain the creature's instinct.

Any artifacts of a change last until you next take a long rest.

In The Blood

You have heightened senses, but you also have a wild side, barely kept leashed. You have a bane, like silver, fire, or obsidian, and a trigger, like the full moon rising, the touch of moonlight, a dunk in salt water, or extreme fear. Exposure to your trigger causes an involuntary transformation into another form.

When **the condition for involuntary transformation is true**, roll+SHIFT. On a 10+, you transform but retain control, though you can't shift back as long as the condition persists. On a 7-9, the GM will offer you a hard bargain, ugly choice, or worse outcome. On a 6-, you lose control; the GM will tell when you regain it.

Blocked

Choose two banes or triggers from In the Blood; when you're exposed to either, you cannot Shapeshift and you remain in whatever form you were in when the condition became true. Mark a debility that lasts as long as the condition persists.

Protean

For each level you possess or gain after taking this move, choose a new alternate form. This form works exactly as the one granted by Shapeshift; choose a suitable weapon tag for the form when you first use it.

Your flesh is highly malleable, but also resists permanent change. When you are targeted by effects that change you physically, treat the result of any roll to avert or subvert the physical change as if it were one step worse.

If you become trapped in any shape, including your default, except by a bane, the GM will offer you an opportunity to escape soon.

When you are a Shapeshifter and can choose a move, you can choose from these.

Healing Shift

When you **shift into an alternate form and are injured**, roll+SHIFT. On a hit, heal all injuries and regain all HP; take a cumulative -1 to all Shapeshifter moves. On a 10+, the penalty is just to this move. Clear any penalties after a long rest.

Packmate

You may designate up to four people as your packmates; as long as you treat them as such, the designation remains. All of you gain Telepathy, limited to each other but at any range (not just voice) you can detect each other, and may use Exploit Weakness when acting in concert.

Spontaneous Form

You may swap any alternate form you've used only a handful of times out for a new one with a few moments of concentration.

When you gain a level from 6 to 10 and are a shapeshifter, choose from these too.

Regenerate

You have regeneration points equal to half your max HP. When you take damage, subtract half from the regeneration pool and half from HP; damage caused by a bane goes entirely to HP. When you take a moment to regroup while injured, you may move points to your HP from your regeneration pool. Regeneration points refill after you take a few minutes to rest.

If you already have Minor Regeneration, you may opt to replace it with Regenerate now. If so, choose another move.

Hybrid Form

You can shift into a hybrid form, with the benefits of one of your animal forms and the advantages of opposable thumbs. Choose two:

- It's terrifying; take +1 when this matters
- It's well-suited to combat; add a new weapon tag
- It's obscenely strong; add +1 when strength matters.

Scent Of Fear

When you hack and slash an enemy, your next attack against that foe deals +2d4 damage. Add a third option (or new tag) to your Hybrid Form.

Bigger And Weirder

You may choose monster or inhuman forms as one of your alternate forms, as long as they are a living creature and you've seen one, and you can now shift into forms as large as a dragon. When you choose a monstrous form, instead of choosing weapon tags, choose two of the monster's tags.

Full Protean

You may select a human form as an alternate form. When you roll to Shapeshift, choose one fewer consequence on a partial. You may also change the specific details of one of your forms on the fly (though a distinguishing mark remains) by choosing a consequence from Manifest Power.

Others

Buy [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#) for moves for these other supernatural creatures and mortals: The Dragon, The Elemental, The Empath, The Haunted, The Hunter, The Lucky, The Oracle, The Psychic, The Scarred, and The Vampire,

In addition, a provided list of Meta moves can be used by any supernatural beings, with the GM's discretion.

GM Advice

Check out "Running the Supernaturals" in the *Running the Game* chapter for GM advice on each character type.

Safety Tools

adapted from [Script Change](#), by Beau Jágr Sheldon

To get started, choose a “rating” for your game content. You can refer to standard film ratings for these, or create your own! Generally, you should know what audience you’re playing for – is it going to be G-rated good fun for all ages, or is this more of an adults-only show?...

When you’re in a game, sometimes elements change. Script Change helps address when troublesome elements come up in game, or when issues no one expected arise...

At any point during the game, if a player or game master (GM) finds that they are uncomfortable with the subject matter or actions happening in the game, they can call for a Script Change....

Just say “rewind,” “fast forward,” “pause,” “frame-by-frame”... It’s often best to integrate these phrases into a sentence, like “Could we rewind that statement? My character probably wouldn’t actually say that!” or “I have to pause, this is a little intense” or even “It feels like the right place for the scene to end, could we fast forward?”

After calling any tool for use, once things are resolved, just say “resume.”

For more, see the [Script Change RPG Toolbox](#).

Also see:

- [The Same Page Tool](#) - “a system-neutral tool to make sure everyone's playing the same game”, by Christopher Chinn
- [X-Card](#) - a system-neutral tool for safe gameplay by John Stavropoulos (Creative Commons)

First Session

The Pitch

adapted from [One Shot World](#), by Yochai Gal

Because most fantasy PbtA games are hacks of *Dungeon World*, they come with many of that game's perks: ease-of-play, simple but flexible rules that always support the narrative, and simple, fast-paced combat. Put simply, fantasy PbtA games are what you thought fantasy RPGs were supposed to be like when you first heard of them: grand heroics, adventure, and fantastic storytelling!

As such, they don't bog the players down with rules, especially when it doesn't support the narrative. You shouldn't need to worry about exactly how many feet you are from an enemy, or if your class explicitly states that you can or cannot do something. If it makes sense in the fiction, then you should be able to do it! This makes things very simple: state what you're trying to do, pick a move, and roll the dice!

Also, it's important that you pitch the game you're planning to run. First, start with the tone: will it be fun & light, where the Good Guys vanquish the Big Bad? Or will it be dark and gritty, with danger at every turn? Try to relate it to a TV show, novel, or video game you like.

Remember that the rules are there to both support a fun game experience as well as an interesting story. If they get in the way, don't be afraid to adjust them to your liking. Finally, you don't need to do any prepwork; the story should flow from the conversation between the GM and the players.

Remember, you play to find out what happens!

Getting Started

adapted from [Homebrew World](#), by Jeremy Strandberg

Come to the session with something prepared, such as:

- ★ One or more dungeon starters (be familiar with their contents)
- ★ One or more blank dungeon maps with evocative names (Dyson Logos maps are my go-to) and questions to establish premise
- ★ A procedure for generating place & situation, like [John Lewis's Adventure Builder](#).

If you're bringing a specific location and you have time & foreknowledge, also prepare:

- ★ Hook questions (see below)
- ★ 7 possible encounters: monsters (and stats), NPCs, discoveries, hazards, locations, etc.
- ★ 3 sensory details for each key location and each encounter you prep
- ★ 1 distinctive trait (voice, posture, vocab, etc.) to use when portraying each NPC you prep (this is based on [Jason Cordova's 7-3-1 style of prep](#)).

Establish Premise

Before character creation, work with the players to establish two things:

- ★ Where they are (and it should be someplace interesting and fantastic)
- ★ What they are doing there, in broad strokes (exploring, rescuing, searching, hunting, fleeing; something exciting, adventurous, desperate).

Here's a good level of detail: "you're on the run from something scary, and it's chased you into the dreaded Obsidian Forests of Yend."

Establish the premise before character creation so that the players can make informed choices.

If we're playing in a city besieged by undead, I probably won't play a Ranger with the Forester background, y'know?

Character Creation

Have everyone pick a class and work through their choices. Answer questions as they have them. The playbooks are optimized to make this speedy, so it should take no more than 15 minutes.

Commentary

adapted from [One Shot World](#), by Yochai Gal

The GM's role during character creation is to help the players with their playbooks, ask questions, and record their answers. Throughout the game (but especially during character creation) you should pepper the players with questions about their character and the world you're building together. When a player chooses a particular background or answers a question aloud, ask them about it!

Collaborate with your players. If they ask a question, it's because it interests them; so try to make the answers interesting as well. Or better yet, ask them! Work together to find a fantastic and interesting answer. Equally, when a player says, "What kinds of people live in this village?" say, "I don't know. What do you think? What makes the most sense?"

Ask each player to write a character goal; something they'd like to see their character accomplish this session. Examples include:

- ★ Discovering the truth behind a local corruption.
- ★ Overcoming a major character flaw.
- ★ Developing a new character trait, flaw, or character bond.

Hook Questions

adapted from [Homebrew World](#), by Jeremy Strandberg

While they make characters, formulate some hook questions. These should both assert something and prompt the players to make up details.

E.g. “What are you fleeing, that you were desperate enough to enter the Obsidian Forests of Yend?”

Your hook questions should establish all of these:

- ★ Motive: why are they here, doing this?
- ★ Stakes: what’s on the line, why is it important?
- ★ Dangers: what dangers do they expect to face? What do they know about them?
- ★ Urgency: why shouldn’t they dawdle?
- ★ Detail: what specifically are they hunting/seeking/fleeing/fighting/etc.?
- ★ Complications: what’s getting in their way, making this harder, constraining them?

A good Dungeon Starter will have questions like these baked in. If you use a blank dungeon or if you generated a place and situation on the fly, you’ll need to make these up.

Introductions

When everyone is ready, have them go around and introduce themselves by name, look, and background. (Do NOT have them ask each other questions from their backgrounds yet.) Ask questions that occur to you about who these characters are and how they fit in the world.

Next, ask some (but not all) of your hook questions. Ask just enough to flesh out the premise and establish a grabby situation.

Go around again, having each player ask one of the 4 questions from their background. See who answers “me” and ask follow-up questions as you see fit. Work together to weave the answers into the starting premise and situation.

After everyone’s asked one question, go around again. They can ask another question or pass. If everyone passes, you’re done with introductions.

Ask your remaining hook questions, plus any additional questions that occur to you.

Start Play

Frame the initial scene: who, where, what, when.

Give three sensory details to describe it.

Make a GM move. Ask: “what do you do?”

Play!

Questions for Players

by Josh Ervin, adapted from

[“Kickstart Questions For Dungeon World \(And Other Fantasy RPGs\)”](#)

Ask your players some of these questions about their characters in their first session, to get to know them. If they’re not playing one of these classes, pick the closest class to theirs and ask questions from that instead: Barbarian, Bard, Cleric, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Thief, Wizard.

When wrapping up subsequent sessions, ask some of these questions to give yourself ideas for the next session. Check off each question as you ask it.

Barbarian

- What is it about the rites and rituals of your homeland’s gods that makes their practice illegal here?
- What great curse troubles your people, and what in this land did the Elders say might be the only way of ending it?
- When you underwent the initiation rites of adulthood, the psychotropic brew you drank gave you a vision of a person, a place, and a thing. What were they?
- What great beast from your land are you the only one ever to slay, and who believes that the strange pattern its claws gashed in your flesh makes you the Chosen One?
- Which one of your fellow PCs exhibits a power that your people consider anathema, and when the time is right, how do you plan to make sure they never use that power again?
- They came and they slew your tribe. They killed your family. They carried away the only one you ever loved. Who are they, and how did you track them here?

- When you first met one of your companions, they saved you from an angry mob. Who do you now owe a life debt, and what made the mob so angry at you?
- On the next full moon it will happen. What is it, and what dangerous quest must you undertake to avoid it?
- Your eldest sibling traveled to this land when you were but a babe. Where do the rumors say they met their gruesome end, and what vile murderer now wields your clan's ancestral weapon?
- What is your clan's totem spirit? What promise did your Elders make to it that has now come due, and why are you the only one who can make sure it's paid?

Bard

- It was love at first sight. Who is your one true love, and what is the seemingly insurmountable obstacle that is keeping you apart?
- One of your performances has made you a powerful enemy. Who are they, and why are they so enraged?
- *From what place have you been banished on pain of death, and why is it so vital that you soon return?
- Who is the legendary hero that you're searching for so that you may sing them the ballad you've written about them? What part of the ballad will make them incredibly angry?
- One of your companions finds your joie de vivre incredibly annoying. Who are they, and what are you going to do to change their negative attitude?
- They say you have the voice of an angel. They're close. How do you plan on avoiding the wrath of the creature whose voice you stole?
- You have eschewed the traditional occupation of your family in order to wander the world. Why would it be so incredibly inconvenient if people were to find out who your family is and what they do?
- One of your recent performances has captured someone's heart. What makes your newest fan so dangerous now that you've rebuffed their advances?
- An older, wiser troubadour taught you everything you know. Who were they, and what will they believe you owe them when you meet again?
- There's an old, faded inscription on your instrument that you just discovered. What does it say, and why does that fill you with dread?

Cleric

- From what deity, pantheon, or impersonal anthropomorphization of a philosophical concept do you draw your power, what aspect of the universe do they control, and what is the most important tenet of your faith by which you must always abide?
- What force or organization is the greatest threat to your sect, and what is the reason behind this conflict?
- What sacrifices and offerings does your faith demand, and how do they put you at risk?
- What major holiday of your faith is soon approaching, what does it commemorate, and what threatens to mar this year's celebration?
- You've shared a shameful secret with one of your companions that could ruin you were it to get out. Why do you fear that trust might be soon broken?
- One of your companions' very soul is at risk! What do you plan to do in order to convert them?
- What vice (drinking, gambling, philandering, crime) did you engage in before you found your calling, and what is tempting you to begin again?
- What sign of the prophesied apocalypse have you just witnessed, and what grim portent of armageddon must you now work to prevent?
- What corruption have you discovered that threatens your religion's very foundations, and why won't anyone in charge believe you or address the problem?
- What hypocrisy or inconsistency in your faith's teachings or practices has always bothered you, and what now forces you to confront these doubts?
- Druid
- What blight on the natural world has long been kept at bay by your fellow Druids, and what makes you believe that it will soon return?
- In what unusual way does one of your companions keep dying in your dreams, and what makes you believe the dream will soon come true?
- Your shadow is gone. What does that mean, and what terrible fate will befall you if you don't get it back before the next new moon?
- What enemy or villain must you convince to willingly give you their blood, lest a great calamity occur?
- What is the cause of this extreme, out-of-season weather, and why do you think it might be your fault?

- What kind of horrid creature has been stalking the group, and who were they before they were transmogrified?
- Why must this entire village be evacuated immediately, and why won't anyone believe you?
- How do you know that you've just crossed into a different world?
- What promise did you make to the Queen of the Fae, and why won't one of your companions like it?
- Why are all the trees so angry?

Fighter

- Who did you leave behind when you went off to fight the war? Why do you need to find them now?
- Why were the recent wars fought? What now might allow the losing side to begin the conflict anew?
- What promise did you make to your closest friend while they lay dying on the field of battle, and what will make it so dangerous to keep?
- What wartime atrocity do you feel responsible for, and what might allow you to redeem yourself?
- What enemy did you make during a past battle, and why might they now be able to enact their revenge?
- Which of your companions must you keep safe, and what do you fear will happen if they fall?
- What is the name of the noble to whom you still owe an oath of loyalty, and what are you afraid they'll ask you to do?
- Who did you once fail to save, and what does their ghost now seem to want from you?
- What legendary lost weapon do you seek to possess, and who else believes that it should belong to them?
- How did you get that terrible scar, and what does it mean now that it's begun to burn and tingle?

Paladin

- Who is your family, and what terrible past actions have dogged them for generations?
- What three vows did you make when you joined your knightly order, and what terrible punishment would you endure were they to find out about the one you just broke?
- What great destiny does that birthmark portend? Why might you want to avoid it?
- Who slew the knight you were squired to, and what is stopping you from seeking revenge?
- Which member of your family has it in for you, and what gives them the power to cause you so much trouble?
- What quest were you given by your order or family, and what makes you doubt its wisdom or morality?
- Which of your companions has shown disrespect for your station, and how do you plan on teaching them their place?
- What lawbreaker did you once show mercy, and why do you now regret it?
- What temptation threatens to corrupt you, and which of your companions do you fear might lead you further down the path?
- What was the first thing the voice coming from your ancestral sword whispered to you, and why are you relieved that nobody else can hear it?

Ranger

- What terrible tragedy drove you to abandon civilization all together, and what threat has emerged that is forcing you to return?
- This isn't your first animal companion. What makes you sure these tracks you just found belong to your first animal companion, even though you were sure they were dead?
- There's an old hermit in these parts who has shown you kindness in the past. What makes their disappearance so worrying?
- Which of your companions reminds you of someone important that you once lost, and why do you fear the same fate might befall them?
- The bodies show signs of being attacked by a supernatural creature that has never been seen in these parts before. Tell the DM what it is, and they'll tell you what is the only thing that can kill it.

- Long ago on your travels many leagues away, you once found a standing stone in a forest glade. Something terrible happened there. Now that you've found an identical monolith here, why are you filled with dread?
- Why do you think you've received this invitation to the incredibly formal party at a noble's manor, what's forcing you to go, and which of your companions is the only one who can teach you all the etiquette you'll need to know in time?
- Unbeknownst to them, when you first met one of your companions, you were stalking them like prey. Why were you doing that, and what do you fear they'll do if they find out?
- The creatures of the forest are disappearing. Especially the dangerous ones. What do you think is taking them, and why does your answer portend even more danger?
- What is that thing that just reared up behind one of your companions, and what makes you think reflexively shooting it with an arrow might turn out to have been a really bad idea?

Thief

- Why is there a price on your head, and what made you fall in love with the person who put it there?
- You lost your family when you were only a child. Why is it so important that you find their final resting place before anyone else?
- What is the greatest treasure in the entire Realm, and why is it imperative that you steal it?
- You really do look exactly like the local lord's child who hasn't been seen in years. Is that a coincidence?
- Which one of your companions has something that you need, and how do you plan on stealing it without anyone finding out?
- Who is currently sitting in a cell, awaiting execution, and why are you planning on breaking them out?
- What has only recently been declared illegal, and how are you planning to take advantage of this fact?
- Someone in a position of power is a despot who needs to be brought down. Why are you the only one who can do that?

- It looked valuable when you stole it, but it's only brought you misfortune. What is it and why can't you get rid of it?
- You slit their throat years ago. Who are they, why do they seem so happy to see you?

Wizard

- What was the first time you cast a spell, and why do the repercussions still haunt you?
- You have trafficked with dark forces in order to attain some of your knowledge and power - what were these forces, and why must you never let your companions find out what price you paid?
- What kinds of magic are punishable by death, and which ones have you performed?
- In order to progress further in your studies, you'll need something almost impossible to obtain. What is it, and which one of your companions is the only one who can get it for you?
- None of the others can read the ancient script in which the words are written. What do they actually say, and what did you tell the others when you lied to them about it?
- It drove your former mentor mad when he dared try to control its power, and you assumed that it killed him. What is it, and what will you do now that your old master has returned, and is completely under its influence?
- The stars are right. This only happens once in an eon. What will occur, and what are the dangers of trying to capitalize on it?
- What's the matter with all the children, and why are you the only one that notices?
- There are multitudinous theories about the makeup of the various planes, and you've studied most of them. Based on your readings, where do you think this glowing portal leads, and what do these strange creatures who just emerged from it want?
- Why don't you want to cast the spell this person is asking you to, and why will it be so dangerous if you refuse?

Opening Scene Prompts

by Yochai Gal, [*One Shot World*](#)

- ★ The battle has just ended; the bodies of a hunting party are dead at your feet. Why did it come to this? Who struck the first blow? Who will be looking for them?
- ★ You wake up in the lair of a _____. You've heard awful rumors about this place. What are they?
- ★ You are in a _____ long after closing. You have tripped an alarm, somewhere, and the sounds of guards can be heard coming down the hall.
- ★ You left something very important back in town. Where is it? And what is it?
- ★ You're looking through a keyhole and see the _____ you came to kill on the other side. Who is it, and why must they die?
- ★ You're on a road in the midst of a terrible storm. There is a man kneeling before you in the mud and you have your weapons drawn. Why?
- ★ You wake up in a prison cell without your equipment, except for one hidden item. What crime do your captors think you committed? Are they right?
- ★ You're asleep on a riverboat, headed to an important place. Why are you going?
- ★ What has just woken you?
- ★ As you rush away from a burning field, and into the relative safety of the forest, a group of _____ cuts you off. The leader angrily accuses you of destroying the harvest his people rely on. Are you at fault?
- ★ A member of your party is being forced to fight in the secret pits beneath a local tavern. You stand in the audience above the pit; you can hear the shouts of the crowd chanting the name of the local champion: a _____.
- ★ A young woman lies in the middle of the ceremonial circle, a green-gemmed dagger in her heart. You are relieved to finally see her go. The earth begins to shake, and pillars start to collapse. You can see the exit, but the ground is cracking open!
- ★ You stand outside the cave entrance. What are you searching for, and what happens at dawn?
- ★ Careful searching has revealed the location of the bandit fort. At just the perfect moment, you launch your attack! Alas, it was a trap, and now you're cornered!

- ★ Bowmen are taking shots at you from the rooftops. You've taken shelter behind an overturned carriage, but it's on fire! Someone nearby is bleeding to death: who are they?
- ★ On a jagged mountain pass, a group of armed cultists wearing lavender-colored robes rush toward you. One of them is holding a weapon high above her head, her face filled with rage. Why is this pass so vital?
- ★ Why are you breaking into the home of a mighty _____? What are you planning to steal? And what were you warned about?

Draw Maps

adapted from [Freebooters on the Frontier](#), by Jeremy Lutes

This section covers setting creation, based on some of the ideas set down in *The Perilous Wilds*. At some point during the first session, you may wish to work together to create a map. [See Collaborative Map Creation below for another approach.]

After the players have created their characters, follow these steps to create the geographical framework for the adventures to come.

1) **Start with a blank map.**

Ask everyone to imagine a civilized kingdom or empire that is mostly off the map, and ask someone to draw an outline of the small part of this realm that reaches onto the map.

This line is the border between civilized lands and the unexplored wilderness.

2) **Add their home steading.**

Ask someone to draw a steading just inside the civilized border, and decide whether it's a village, town, keep, or city. Perched on the frontier, this steading will act as the party's home base between expeditions. Draw a dotted or dashed line from the steading to the nearest map edge: this is the road back to the capital city, some days or weeks away.

3) **Define the steading.**

Refer to the Steading Generator below. Read the first list of options, and ask a player to choose one that applies. Then, ask a different player to do the same for the list of problems. In both cases, let the players know they can roll instead of choose if they would prefer to leave those details to chance.

Discuss the implications of the results, asking questions and taking notes as necessary (for instance, if the steading is built around a church, what is the higher power to which it is devoted?). If the results indicate new things that would logically be added to the map, ask players to draw those things in.

4) **Name the steading.**

Ask them the name of the steading, and write it on the map. If they're stumped for a name, suggest something simple that reflects a concrete aspect of the steading's position, surroundings, or the details determined in the previous step (examples: "Clearwater," "Farport", "Irontown").

5) **Define their home base.**

Ask them the name of the inn, tavern, or other place they call home when they're in town. This is where they'll regroup, recover, and recount their exploits and losses after returning from the wilderness.

Ask more questions about their home base as you see fit, especially if you're curious about particular details.

6) **Share knowledge of the wilds.**

Get them to define the wilderness by going through each of the steps below, switching from player to player with each step. Repeat steps (b) through (e) as many times as you like, soliciting information from a different player each time.

Take notes as they say things, and make sure they add things to the map.

- a) What is the predominant terrain of the wild frontier, stretching away from civilized lands as far as the eye can see? Dark forest? Misty wetlands? A crystalline waste? Something else?
 - b) Name one ancient civilization that is said to have once flourished in the wilderness.
 - i) How is that civilization said to have met its end?
 - ii) What remnants of that civilization may still be found scattered throughout the wilderness?
 - c) Name one region within the wilderness that borders civilized lands, and draw its outline on the map. If you need ideas, roll up a name using the “Random Region” table on page 16 of *The Perilous Wilds*.
 - i) What is the defining terrain of that region?
 - ii) What is a striking rumor about that region?
 - d) Name one landmark in the area, and mark its location on the map. If you draw a blank, just roll one up using the “Random Place” table on page 17 of *The Perilous Wilds*.
 - i) What’s notable about it?
 - ii) How long does it take to get there on foot?
 - e) Name one creature, among the countless known or rumored to inhabit the wild, that the locals speak of fearfully. Mark its alleged habitat on the map.
 - f) What is the nearest known ruin? Draw it on the map.
 - i) Who or what is thought to have built it?
 - ii) What is said to have been its original function?
 - iii) What thing of great value did an expedition recently find there?
 - iv) What terrible danger is said to reside within?
- 7) Make a plan and sally forth!**

Set the stage: they’re at their home base, gathered around a map of the known frontier laid out on a table, or carved into the table itself. Ask them about their plans for their first expedition. Some shopping might be in order.

Steading Generator

by Jason Lutes, [The Perilous Wilds](#)

Roll 2d6 to determine the type of steading, then roll 2d6 to determine attributes of the steading and another 2d6 to determine a key problem faced by the steading.

1-5 Village

Poor, Steady, Militia, Resource (GM choice) and has an *Oath* (steading of GM's choice).

If the village is part of a kingdom or empire, choose 1 or roll 1d12:

- 1-3 Natural defenses: *Safe, -Defenses*
- 4-6 Abundant resources: *+Prosperity, Resource* (GM choice), *Enmity* (GM choice)
- 7-8 Protected by another steading: *Oath* (that steading), *+Defenses*
- 9-10 On a major road: *Trade* (GM choice), *+Prosperity*
- 11 Built around a wizard's tower: *Personage* (the wizard), *Blight* (arcane creatures)
- 12 Built on a site of religious significance: *Divine, History* (GM choice)

Then, choose 1 problem or roll 1d12:

- 1-2 Surrounded by arid or uncultivable land: *Need* (food)
- 3-4 Dedicated to a deity: *Religious* (that deity), *Enmity* (steading of opposing deity)
- 5-6 Recently at war: *-Population, -Prosperity* if they fought to the end, *-Defenses* if they lost
- 7-8 Monster problem: *Blight* (that monster), *Need* (adventurers)
- 9-10 Absorbed another village: *+Population, Lawless*
- 11-12 Remote or unwelcoming: *-Prosperity, Dwarven* or *Elven* or other non-human

6-8 Town

Moderate, Steady, Watch, and Trade (with 2 places of GM's choice).

If the town is listed as *Trade* by another steading, choose 1 or roll 1d12:

- 1 Booming: *Booming, Lawless*
- 2-3 At a crossroads: *Market, +Prosperity*
- 4-5 Defended by another steading: *Oath* (that steading), *+Defenses*
- 6-7 Built around a church: *Power* (divine)
- 8-10 Built around a craft: *Craft* (your choice), *Resource* (something required for that craft)
- 11-12 Built around a military post: *+Defenses*

Then, choose 1 problem or roll 1d12:

- 1-2 Outgrowing a vital resource: *Need* (that resource), *Trade* (a steading with that resource)
- 3-4 Offers defense to others: *Oath* (GM choice), *-Defenses*
- 5-6 Outlaw rumored to live there: *Personage* (the outlaw), *Enmity* (steading preyed upon)
- 7-8 Controls a good/service: *Exotic* (that good/service), *Enmity* (steading with ambition)
- 9-10 Suffers from disease: *-Population*
- 11-12 Popular meeting place: *+Population, Lawless*

9-11 Keep

Poor, Shrinking, Guard, Need (supplies), *Trade* (someplace with supplies), *Oath* (GM's choice).

If the keep is owed fealty by at least one other steading, choose 1 or roll 1d12:

- 1-2 Belongs to a noble family: +*Prosperity, Power* (political)
- 3-4 Run by a skilled commander: *Personage* (the commander), +*Defenses*
- 5-6 Stands watch over a trade road: +*Prosperity, Guild* (trade)
- 7-8 Used to train special troops: *Arcane, -Population*
- 9-10 Surrounded by fertile land: remove *Need* (Supplies)
- 11-12 Stands on a border: +*Defenses, Enmity* (steading on the other side of the border)

Then, choose 1 problem or roll 1d12:

- 1-3 Built on a naturally defensible position: *Safe, -Population*
- 4 Formerly occupied by another power: *Enmity* (steadings of that power)
- 5 Safe haven for brigands: *Lawless*
- 6 Built to defend from a specific threat: *Blight* (that threat)
- 7 Has seen horrible bloody war: *History* (battle), *Blight* (restless spirits)
- 8 Is given the worst of the worst: *Need* (skilled recruits)
- 9-10 Suffers from disease: *-Population*
- 11-12 Popular meeting place: +*Population, -Law*

12 City

Moderate, Steady, Guard, Market, Guild (GM's choice), 2+ *Oaths* (steadings of GM's choice)

If the city has trade with and fealty from at least 1 steading, choose 1 or roll 1d12:

- 1-3 Permanent defenses, such as walls: +*Defenses, Oath* (GM's choice)
- 4-6 Ruled by a single individual: *Personage* (the ruler), *Power* (political)
- 7 Diverse: *Dwarven* or *Elven* or both
- 8-10 Trade hub: *Trade* (every nearby steading), +*Prosperity*
- 11 Ancient, built on top of its own ruins: *History* (your choice), *Divine*
- 12 Center of learning: *Arcane, Craft* (your choice), *Power* (arcane)

Then, choose 1 problem or roll 1d12:

- 1-3 Outgrown its resources: +*Population, Need* (food)
- 4-6 Designs on nearby territory: *Enmity* (nearby steadings), +*Defenses*
- 7-8 Ruled by a theocracy: *-Defenses, Power* (divine)
- 9-10 Ruled by the people: *-Defenses, +Population*
- 11 Supernatural defenses: +*Defenses, Blight* (related supernatural creatures)
- 12 Occupies a place of power: *Arcane, Personage* (whoever watches the place of power), *Blight* (arcane creatures)

Advice from One Shot World

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

Collaborative Map Creation Rules

First, prepare a stack of index cards and permanent markers. Hand 1 or 2 to each player, then ask each to draw an image. It could be something fantastical (a floating city, a dragon's den), mundane (gorges, mountain peaks, lakes) or simply represent a feature you might see on a fantasy map (ancient ruins, temples, a city on a hill). These are meant to inspire you and the players as you build your world map.

Next, choose two or three of the index cards and lay them down in the middle of the table. They shouldn't be touching; leave a little bit of space between. Pick one that you feel is appropriate (an image of a dark forest, the city docks, a mountain cave) and mentally designate it as the starting point of the adventure. Use it to help set the scene!

As each player adds their details to the map, ask them what they know about them! Work with your players to figure out what these cards represent. They could be the player character's hometown, an overlord's fortress, or an artifact of the landscape. You can also ask the appropriate character (for instance, a Thief might know the name of the capital city's slums), the history behind a ruin, who rules the Emerald Forest, etc. As you talk, you should jot this information down for later use. Always remember to leave blanks!

Work with the players to build a unique world; think about the answers they've already given you, and what kind of story you can build with them. But go even further by asking more questions, especially leading ones. Something that hints at a larger truth, something hidden, or a secret agenda. If you've already established that the characters will start out in the ruins of an abandoned temple, ask them what happened. Why was it abandoned? Perhaps the Cleric would know based on their religious past? Or maybe the Bard has heard of it in legend? Ideally, you want questions that snowball into more questions, filling out the world as you go. The one thing you absolutely can't bring to the table is a planned storyline or plot.

When you've finished the session, keep the index cards. You can use them in future sessions, however you like!

The image's view angle can be top-down, from the side, super zoomed in, or even way zoomed out!

You can then begin the adventure, building out the map as the players move through the world. If they need to cross a treacherous territory on the way to defeat a great evil, place an index card image that best illustrates the danger! It could be a rickety bridge between two mountain peaks, or a dark forest, brimming with creatures of dark intent. Use what the players give you!

Additionally, don't feel limited by what you've got: you can always move the existing index cards apart and insert a brand new one between them! You or the players can also draw new locations as the story progresses!

Some players may not feel comfortable drawing. That's OK! After a few sessions, you'll develop a nice pile to draw from!

See also:

- ★ [Examples](#) of player-created index card maps (from Yochai Gal).
- ★ "[Things to Do in the First Session](#): A Guide To Making Player Choices Matter" by Tim Franzke.

Adventure Builder Tables

by Yochai Gal, adapted from
John Lewis

We are exploring:

1. a remote ruin
2. an overgrown necropolis
3. the ruins of an ancient city
4. a flooded settlement
5. an abandoned village
6. a twisting canyon
7. a lost valley
8. a long-forgotten road
9. a legendary battle site
10. a mysterious cavern

That lies:

1. on an uncharted island
2. along the edge of a great swamp
3. high in the mountains
4. in a desolate wasteland
5. in the freezing tundra
6. deep in an ancient forest
7. in the windswept badlands
8. among the rolling dunes
9. in a tropical jungle
10. in the middle of hostile territory

Seeking the:

1. temple of a dead deity.
2. crypt of a forgotten hero.
3. vault of the last dwarven king.
4. prison of a bound demon.
5. lair of a legendary beast.

6. hideout of a notorious thief.
7. cathedral of a fallen god.
8. monastery of a mystic order.
9. fortress of a tyrannical warlord.
10. tower of a mad wizard.

We are here to:

1. find an ancient artifact
2. search for a cure
3. rescue someone in distress
4. use a sacred site
5. bring a villain to justice
6. find the chosen one
7. recover our souls
8. stop the release of an ancient evil
9. seek forbidden knowledge
10. close an unholy portal

And:

1. an un-living lord
2. an alien horror
3. a fallen angel
4. an ancient dragon
5. a powerful sorcerer
6. a despotic warrior
7. a zealous priest
8. an infernal fiend
9. a criminal mastermind
10. the one that betrayed us

Guarded by:

1. undead horrors
2. crazed cultists
3. twisted abominations
4. ruthless assassins
5. monstrous hordes
6. foul demons
7. deadly traps
8. powerful constructs
9. wild beasts
10. skilled warriors.

Dungeon Starter Table

To get started, roll 8d6 and take turns assigning them below. You'll have two dice left at the end: total them. On 10+, open your first scene in the heat of battle. On 7-9, you're hot on the heels of something you're hunting. On 6 or less, you're pinned down, imprisoned or on the run.

Who's really in control here?

1. A cabal of powerful wizards
2. A rogue spirit infecting human minds
3. Warring gods, using people as pawns
4. A populace bent on rebellion
5. A maniacal genius, bent on dominion
6. Something from beyond or truly monstrous

What is about to happen?

1. A treasonous plot nears fruition
2. A radical sect threatens the status quo
3. A despised or beloved leader lies on their deathbed
4. An otherworldly monster comes to take what's theirs
5. An invading army camps at the border
6. The forces of nature threaten annihilation

What happened here recently?

1. A great and bloody war
2. A devastating plague
3. Famine brought by drought, flood or blight
4. Visitors from another plane
5. A prophecy of doom or redemption
6. The discovery of powerful new magic or technology

What here is useful or valuable to me?

1. A holy relic in a faraway tomb
2. An abandoned hideout, waiting to be seized
3. A famous sage, offering blessings for service
4. A tournament with a grand prize
5. A fugitive with a huge price on their head
6. A disorganized mob, desperate for leadership

What should I be on the lookout for?

1. Roving bands of scavengers
2. Soldiers enforcing martial law
3. Spies everywhere
4. A landscape littered with arcane traps
5. Carriers of a nasty disease
6. Tainted food and water supplies

What here is not what it appears to be?

1. A monster in human skin
2. A patrician in disguise
3. A monster with a kind heart
4. A sham religion
5. The return of someone presumed dead
6. A curse disguised as a blessing.

See [Dungeon Starters](#) for three example starters that you can use instead.

Funnel Session

by Jason Lutes, abridged from [Funnel World](#)

What is a Funnel?

A Funnel is an adventure in which the player-characters start as a motley crew of ordinary villagers who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances; common folk thrown into a crucible of death and terror, who struggle merely to come out the other end in one piece.

Many, and sometimes all, of these poor souls die horrible deaths over the course of a Funnel adventure, but those lucky enough to survive are transformed by the extremity of their experience.

While most fantasy RPGs start the PCs off as heroes, a Funnel adventure concretely demonstrates how common folk become heroes.

It is their origin story.

Although the idea of playing multiple o-level characters goes back to the original roleplaying game, the Funnel as a mode of play was resurrected, given a name, and imbued with unspeakable eldritch power by Joseph Goodman for the Dungeon Crawl Classics Roleplaying Game (DCC RPG). Hence, many of the published adventures best suited to Funnel play are [published by Goodman Games](#).

All characters in a Funnel session start as “o-level” Villager characters, but each will likely “graduate” to a full-fledged class at the end of the Funnel. Unlike characters in the core rules, each Villager—from name and appearance to ability scores and gear—is generated entirely at random.

Instead of a class, each Villager has an occupation. From crofters to swineherds to watchmen, Villagers come from all walks of life. A Villager’s occupation is rolled up during character generation, and the result indicates the Villager’s starting gear.

Along with occupation, each Villager has the following Starting Move:

Know Your Stuff

When you **Spout Lore or Discern Realities about something related to your occupation**, tell the GM why you deserve it and take +1 to that roll if the GM agrees.

In addition, when you **have the resources (time, materials, etc.) to do something you know how to do**, you do it.

Villagers start with no declared Alignment or Drive, because with the forging of a hero (or villain) comes the forging of moral character. At the end of the Funnel, the GM and players will discuss which Villagers have behaved in ways that may indicate an Alignment, and each player must choose an Alignment or Drive for their Villager based on this discussion. See the modified “Level Up” move for a full explanation.

The following basic moves have been modified for use by Villagers. After a Villager graduates to a full-fledged class, these moves work as normal.

Last Breath

When you **are a Villager and dying**, you catch a glimpse of what lies beyond the Black Gates of Death’s Kingdom. Then, you die.

Villager Character Creation

1. **Determine ability modifiers and hit points** - Roll 3d6 for each ability, in order: Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Record the results of these rolls in the appropriate spaces on the Villager playbook. Check each ability score against the table below, and write the corresponding modifier in the STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIS, and CHA spaces provided on the playbook, so, for instance, a Constitution roll of 13 would have a modifier of +1.

3d6 roll	3	4-5	6-8	9-12	13-15	16-17	18
Modifier	-3	-2	-1	+0	+1	+2	+3

Each Villager starts with Hit Points based on her Constitution roll.

Constitution roll	3-5	6-9	10-13	14-17	18
Hit points	1	2	3	4	5

2. **Determine Load** - Each Villager's Load is equal to her STR+4; for instance, a Villager with a STR of +1 would have 5 Load.
3. **Determine occupation and gear** - Roll d20 dice and compare the result to the table to determine the Villager's occupation and starting gear. A Villager is human. Write the Villager's occupation, race, and starting gear in the appropriate areas of the playbook.
4. **Determine gender** - Choose your Villager's gender, or roll 1d20: 1-9 = male, 10-18 = female; 19-20 = non-binary.
5. **Determine name** - Using whichever table is appropriate to the Villager's gender, roll to determine that Villager's name.
6. **Determine traits** - Roll 1 physical and 1 personality trait on the specified table, recording these traits in the "Traits" area of the playbook.
7. **Introduce characters** - Introduce your Villagers to the other players at the table with a brief description, using all of the information generated in the previous steps to help you paint the picture. Then play!

Village Occupation & Starting Gear

d10	Occupation	Starting Gear
1	Carpenter	Handaxe (<i>close</i> , 1 wt), hand saw (1 wt)
2	Crofter	Pitchfork (<i>close, reach</i> , 1 wt), bushel of crops (4 rations, 2 wt, roll 1D4: 1=turnips; 2=potatoes; 3=onions; 4=oats)
3	Fisherperson	Knife (<i>hand</i> , 0 wt), fishing net (<i>reach, thrown</i>)
4	Goatherd	Crook (<i>reach, awkward</i> , 1 wt), 1d4 goats
5	Hunter	Shortbow (<i>near, far</i> , 1 wt), arrows (1d4 ammo, 1 wt)
6	Shepherd	Crook (<i>reach, awkward</i> , 1 wt), 1d4 sheep
7	Swineherd	Crook (<i>reach, awkward</i> , 1 wt), 1d4 swine
8	Trapper	Knife (<i>hand</i> , 0 wt), traps [roll 1D4: 1 = 2d4 rat traps (0 wt); 2 = 1d4 rabbit traps (2 wt); 3 = 1 snare trap (1 wt); 4 = 1 bear trap (2 wt)]
9	Watchmen	Spear (<i>reach, thrown, near</i> , 1 wt), helmet (0 wt), lantern (0 wt), flask of oil (0 wt), flint & steel w/ tinderbox (0 wt), horn (0 wt)
10	Woodsman	Handaxe (<i>close</i> , 1 wt), 2d4 sticks of firewood (1 wt ea.)

See [Funnel World](#) for a d100 table with about 70 occupations and d100 tables for names and traits, as well as more options, involving bonds and other races.

Village Names and Traits

	Female Name	Male Name	Physical Trait	Personality Trait
1	Ar	Ace	Big hands	Arrogant
2	Bisgu	Bana	Braided hair	Cheerful
3	Cwen	Bar	Buck teeth	Conscientious
4	Don	Cynn	Dark eyes	Crazy
5	Eda	Deogol	Fat	Deceitful
6	Freya	Eamon	Gnarled fingers	Earnest
7	Hamia	Eorl	Hirsute	Fatalistic
8	Ifield	Farmon	Large ears	Friendly
9	Juliana	Gimm	Limp	Gracious
10	Kendra	Ham	Long mustache	Humble
11	Lyn	Lar	Wild hair	Lazy
12	Mae	Lin	Nearsighted	Modest
13	Nelda	Manton	Pale skin	Neat
14	Ora	Odi	Plump	Optimistic
15	Rheda	Peada	Rotten teeth	Plodding
16	Sulis	Ramm	Sharp fingernails	Realistic
17	Tate	Ro	Small eyes	Sarcastic
18	Udele	Swift	Spade-like hands	Solitary
19	Viradecthis	Tamar	Tall	Superstitious
20	Wilda	Winter	Weathered	Trusting

Villager Playbooks

Name:		Occupation:			
Gender:		Physical:		Personality:	
STR=	DEX=	INT=	WIS=	CON=	CHA=
Load=STR+4=	Gear: Armor=				
Max HP:	Current HP:				

Name:		Occupation:			
Gender:		Physical:		Personality:	
STR=	DEX=	INT=	WIS=	CON=	CHA=
Load=STR+4=	Gear: Armor=				
Max HP:	Current HP:				

Name:		Occupation:			
Gender:		Physical:		Personality:	
STR=	DEX=	INT=	WIS=	CON=	CHA=
Load=STR+4=	Gear: Armor=				
Max HP:	Current HP:				

Funnel Starter: Escape from the Plague Pits

Read the following to players:

The last thing you recall, you had fallen asleep on the village green after the harvest festival. Now your head is pounding, but you don't remember drinking that much. What is this place—some sort of pit? Friends and family crowded together in the stench-filled dark. Some unmoving, some awake and frightened. Faint torchlight flickers through the grate covering mouth of the pit, far above. Why are you here?

Questions

- Who here is kin to you?
- Just how bad is that rash?

Stakes

- Who among the Villagers will end their days serving the Nosomancer?
- Will the Hundred Plagues of Natofax be unleashed upon the world?

Adventure Moves

When you **make it out of the pit**, you find yourself in a torchlit place, filled with many such pits. 2d4 doorways lead away into the pitch-dark Maze.

When you **dare the Maze**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, you find a unique area (GM choice). On a 7-9, you find a common area (roll for it).

When you **suffer a Plague**, roll+CON: on a 10+, you feel queasy, but shake it off. On a 7-9, you show a symptom (ask the GM).

The Maze - Unique Areas	The Maze - Common Areas
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Oubliette2. Den of the Blighted3. The Midden4. Lair of the Blight Beast5. Laboratory of Natofax6. A twisting stair to the surface.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A collapsed dead-end2. A door of black wood (locked?)3. A straight or turning passage4. A 3- or 4-way intersection5. A room containing something useful6. Stairs going up or down.

The Blighted

Horde

Damage: Tooth and nail (1d4, *close*)

HP 2 Armor 0

Experimental subjects of Natofax.

Instinct: To blight them

- Drag them to the ground
- Inflict a Plague upon them
- Welcome them as kin.

Natofax the Nosomancer

Solitary, Organized, Intelligent, Devious

Damage: Plague dagger (1d6+1, *close*)

HP 8 Armor 0

Special Quality: Sorcerer-chemist.

Father of the Hundred Plagues.

Instinct: To unleash the Plagues

- Summon the Blighted
- Conjure a cloud of Plague
- Shriveled them.

End of Funnel Session

When you **are a Villager and reach the end of a session**, answer these four questions as a group:

- ★ Did we learn something new and important about the world?
- ★ Did we overcome a notable monster or enemy?
- ★ Did we loot a memorable treasure?
- ★ Did we witness the horrible death of a comrade?

For each "yes," everyone marks XP.

Additionally, mark 1 XP if you role-played a physical or personality trait of your Villager.

Level Up Villager

When you **are a Villager and survive an adventure**, if you have at least 4 XP and a few hours or days of downtime, you can reflect on how your experience has irrevocably altered the way you see the world, and leave your old life behind.

Perform the following steps:

1. Subtract 4 from your XP.
2. Choose a new class playbook that makes sense, given your experience (see below).
3. Transfer the information from your Villager playbook to your new class playbook. Do not choose ability scores or gear as indicated by your new playbook; carry that stuff over from your Villager playbook.
4. Write in your Villager move (Know Your Stuff).
5. Recalculate Hit Points and Load as indicated by your new class playbook.
6. Choose an alignment from those options on your new playbook, based on your experience.
7. Increase one of your ability scores by 1, adjusting that ability's modifier if necessary.

When choosing a new class, consider everything you've been through and whether or not the class makes sense. Be aware that, in a campaign that starts with a Funnel, it may be rare for Villagers to graduate to more exotic classes like Ranger, Druid, or Wizard.

Keep in mind that there are many more playbooks available than those in the core rules. You may want to investigate what's out there before settling on a new class. You may also want to work with the GM to write your own. It can be lots of fun to build a custom playbook off of a Villager's occupation, elevating the likes of a Swineherd or Halfling Brewer to heroic status!

For commercial products, see:

- [Funnel World](#) - three additional funnels by Jason Lutes, as well as many detailed random tables
- [3 Fiendish Funnel Starters](#) - by Mark Tygart, illustrated by Jason Lutes
- [Saviors of Hogtown](#) - three-part funnel by [Moth-lands](#).

Basic Moves

These are popular moves drawn from a range of fantasy PbtA games.

Aid

When you **help another character who's about to roll**, they Take Advantage but you are exposed to any risks, costs, or consequences.

Defy Danger

When **danger looms, the stakes are high, and you act anyway**, check if another move applies. If not, roll...

- ... +STR to power through or test your might
- ... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
- ... +CON to endure or hold steady
- ... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
- ... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
- ... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in.

On a 10+, you pull it off as well as one could hope. On a 7–9, you can do it, but the GM will present a lesser success, a cost, or a consequence (and maybe a choice between them, or a chance to back down).

Commentary

by Tam H and J. Alan Henning

Lean hard on Defy Danger; this is the core move of this game. If there's danger inherent in what you narrate your character doing, that triggers Defy Danger when no more specific move triggers. Ask the GM before you roll if you're not sure what's at stake and what's achievable.

If you miss while Defying, the danger comes to bear, and (if you're still in a position to push it) you'll either need to escalate to get what you want (e.g., notch an arrow, threaten a punch or throw one, start making a scene) or try a new approach.

GMs, consider naming a couple of potential dangers when a Defy Danger roll triggers, but before calling for the roll. You'll quickly discover if the player has misunderstood the stakes! In the heat of the moment, never feel ashamed to fall back to suggesting Defy Danger: players will tell you if they have a more

relevant move in mind from their playbook, compendium or magic item, or even from the core moves.

Discern Realities

When you **closely study a situation or person and look to the GM for insight**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, ask the GM 3 questions from the list below. On a 7-9, ask 1; either way, Take Advantage on your next move to act on the answers.

- What happened here recently?
- What is about to happen?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What here is useful or valuable to me?
- Who or what is really in control here?
- What here is not what it appears to be?

Commentary

See “Suddenly Ogres: What to do on Spout Lore and Discern Realities misses” by Vasiliy Shapovalov, in the Essays chapter. Also see “[In Defense of Discern Realities](#)” by Jeremy Strandberg.

Flashback

When you **propose that you took some previously undeclared action in the past that can affect the current situation**, and the GM agrees, roll+INT. On a 10+, it's as you specified. On a 7-9, it's not quite what you specified; the GM can introduce a complication or a cost. On a miss, things have changed that you're only now learning about.

Interfere

When you **try to foil another PC's action and neither of you back down, and that PC's player is willing to let you interfere**, roll...

- ... +STR to power through or test your might
- ... +DEX to employ speed, agility, or finesse
- ... +CON to endure or hold steady
- ... +INT to apply expertise or enact a clever plan
- ... +WIS to exert willpower or rely on your senses
- ... +CHA to charm, bluff, impress, or fit in.

On a 10+, they pick 1 from the list below. On a 7-9, they pick 1 but you are left off balance, exposed, or otherwise vulnerable.

- Do it anyway, but Take Disadvantage on their roll
- Relent, change course, or allow their move to be foiled.

Mark XP

When you **roll a 6-, or are otherwise instructed**, record a gain of one experience point (XP).

Parley

When you **press or entice an NPC**, say what you want them to do (or not do). If they have reason to resist, roll+CHA. On a 10+, they either do as you want or reveal the easiest way to convince them. On a 7-9, they reveal something you can do to convince them, though it'll likely be costly, tricky, or distasteful.

When you **press or entice a PC and they resist, but that PC's player is willing to let you make an attempt**, you can roll+CHA. On a 10+, both. On a 7-9, pick 1:

- They mark XP if they do what you want
- They must do what you want, or reveal how you could convince them to do so.

Commentary

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

For some situations, you may want to use Defy Danger instead of Parley.

Note that just like you can't Hack and Slash a dragon with a toothpick, you can't just ask the vampire king for his diary and expect to get it. It's all in the stakes: the danger of such a request isn't "he won't hand his diary over," it's "he'll be unamused and make an example out of me."

See "[How to ask nicely in Dungeon World](#)".

Push Yourself

When you **put all of your effort into one act**, you may take a debility of your choice to Take Advantage. The debility does not affect this roll.

Spout Lore

When you **recall something you know about the subject at hand**, say how you might have come by such knowledge. If the GM buys it, roll+INT. On a 10+, the GM will tell you a relevant truth, or ask you to establish one. On a 7–9, the GM will say what you recall, but you won't know how true it is until you put it to the test. If the GM doesn't buy how you might have come by such knowledge, it turns out you don't know much about the thing after all.

Commentary

See "Suddenly Ogres: What to do on Spout Lore and Discern Realities misses" by Vasiliy Shapovalov, in the Essays chapter.

Struggle as One

When the GM calls on you to **Defy Danger as a group**, they'll describe the struggle you face. Say how you deal with it and roll+STAT. On a 6-, you find yourself in a spot, the GM will describe it. On a 7+, you pull your weight. On a 10+, you can get someone out of a spot, if you can tell us how. If you roll 6- but someone saves you, don't mark XP.

Design Notes

by Jeremy Strandberg

This is mathematically a lot more forgiving than "everyone rolls Defy Danger."

If someone misses and no one is able to cover for it, you zoom in and put them in a spot, resolving that in detail.

If someone misses but another PC can cover, you get this cool little vignette. Like, maybe the thief gets caught out in the open by a suspicious guard, and while he tries to bluff his way out of it, the cleric slips forward and *bonks* the guard on the head. Then they proceed to their destination.

If everyone nails it, you give some color and proceed to the next point of interest.

Take Advantage/Disadvantage

When **another move gives advantage**, roll 3 six-sided dice and tally the two highest to determine your result.

When **another move gives disadvantage**, roll 3 six-sided dice and tally the two lowest to determine your result.

Commentary

The advantage/disadvantage mechanic is stronger than a +1/-1 modifier. The average result for 2d6 is 7; for advantage, it's 8.5; for disadvantage, it's 5.5. Advantage/disadvantage also changes the results from a standard bell curve to one that is skewed positively or negatively.

Combat Moves

Deal Damage

When you **harm a foe but don't murder them outright**, roll your damage and say the result (plus any tags like *messy*, *forceful*, etc.). The GM will reduce the target's HP by that amount, less armor and any partial (+1 armor) or major cover (+2 armor). The GM will either describe the result of the harm or ask you to do so.

When a **creature is reduced to 0 HP**, they are out of the action: dead, unconscious, cowering, etc.

When you **have advantage or disadvantage to a damage roll**, roll the main damage die twice and take the higher or lower result; then add any bonus dice that apply.

If you **harm multiple foes at once**, roll damage separately for each.

Commentary

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Characters may incur damage from falling rocks, poison, avalanches, and more, as part of the Deal Damage GM move.

When this happens, the GM can ask the player to roll any dice between 1d4 and 1d12, depending on the severity. The GM can even impose a [b]est or [w]orst tag; e.g. b[2d8] would have the player roll 2d8 and choose the higher result.

If multiple monsters attack a character at once, roll the highest damage among them and add +1 damage for each monster beyond the first.

Defend

When you **take up a defensive stance or jump in to protect someone or something else**, roll+CON. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7–9, hold 1. Spend your hold to:

- Suffer an attack's damage/effects instead of your ward
- Halve an attack's damage/effects
- Draw all attention from your ward to yourself
- Strike back at an attacker; deal your damage with disadvantage.

When you **go on the offense, cease to focus on defense, or the threat passes**, lose any hold left on this move.

Give Chase

When you **pursue your quarry**, roll and add...

- ...+DEX to outrun or outmaneuver them
- ...+CON to outlast them
- ...+WIS to track them or seek them out.

On a 10+, you corner your prey or catch them in the open. On a 7–9, your prey picks one:

- You've almost got them, there's just one last obstacle in your way
- They've gone to ground; you know where they are but they're hard to get at
- They wheel unexpectedly and attack.

Hack & Slash

When you **fight in melee or close quarters**, roll+STR. On a 10+, Deal Damage and choose 1:

- You evade, prevent, or counter the enemy's attack;
- You strike hard and fast; deal 1d6 extra damage, but suffer the enemy's attack.

On a 7–9, Deal Damage, but also suffer the enemy's attack.

Commentary

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Note that "makes an attack" means not just a literal attack, but any move the enemy can use, in the context of the fiction, to deal harm, gain an advantage, or otherwise make the players' lives difficult.

Also note that enemies do not stand still waiting to be hit in UMF any more than they do in DW • if you fail to deal with ghouls two through five while stabbing ghoul one, you're going to get swarmed, bitten, and clawed, no matter what you roll on your hack and slash.

Last Breath

When you **are dying**, you catch a glimpse of what lies beyond the Black Gates of Death (describe it) then roll+nothing. On a 10+, you've cheated death—you're no longer dying but you're still in a bad place. On a 7–9, Death will offer you a bargain—take it and stabilize or

refuse and pass beyond the Black Gates into whatever fate awaits you. On a 6-, your fate is sealed: you're marked as Death's own, and you'll cross the threshold soon; the GM will tell you when.

Commentary

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Make that Last Breath personal. A dead relative offering a choice between peace or duty. A heavenly vision tainted by a sense that something's unfinished. Death herself opening welcoming arms, with a skull's grin.

Offer mortal bargains for partials, like a psychological quirk, a lingering physical injury, or a debt. Look to the fiction when crafting supernatural bargains.

Possible mundane bargains: they have a death wish; survivor's guilt; they feel invincible; they're anxious or paranoid; they have a scar or a chronic injury like a limp or double vision or memory loss.

Possible supernatural bargains: lycanthropic infection; new oracular powers; a bargain with a demon; primed for vampirism; existing power amplified to unbearable levels; existing power or method of revival leaves a visible mark.

On a miss, the rules say the PC has to die, but in death—at least the first time—can often be just the beginning. When a PC dies as a result of drawing

their last breath, consider that move complete, even if they come back. And make it hard: the new vampire's in thrall to a master, say, or the ghost is bound to someone they hate.

Volley

When you take aim and attack an enemy at range, roll+DEX. On a 10+, you have a clear shot, deal your damage. On a 7-9, deal your damage but also choose one:

- You have to move or hold steady to get the shot, placing you in danger as described by the GM;
- You have to take what you can get: Deal Damage with disadvantage;
- You have to take several shots, reducing your ammo by one; for a thrown weapon, it's either broken or lost forever (otherwise, you can recover it later).

General Discussions of Combat

For an excellent discussion on how to handle combat, see Jeremy Strandberg's blog post, "[Running Fights in Dungeon World & Stonetop](#)" and [ensuing discussion on the DW subreddit](#). See also "[A Guide to Pacing in Fights](#)" by Tim Franzke.

Downtime Moves

Carouse

When you **return triumphant and throw a big party**, spend 100 coins or a valuable item and roll+1 for every 100 coins or additional valuable item spent. On a 10+, choose three. On a 7–9, choose two. On a 6-, choose one anyway, but things get really out of hand, the GM will say how.

- You befriend a useful NPC.
- You hear rumors of an opportunity.
- You gain useful information.
- You are not entangled, ensorcelled, or tricked.

Commentary

One of the least used moves when playing fantasy PbtA games, Carouse offers a chance for potential assets in exchange for spending cash.

End of Session

When you **reach the end of a session**, as a group answer the following:

- ★ Did we discover something new and important about the world or characters?
- ★ Did we newly visit or significantly alter a memorable location?
- ★ Did we overcome a notable obstacle, enemy, or challenge?

For any “yes” answer, everyone marks 1 XP.

Additionally, mark 1 XP if you accomplished your Alignment Goal or Drive.

Commentary

In your Session 0, ask your players if they want to swap out one of these three questions with a different focus for the campaign.

As GM, when preparing to run a session, keep in mind how experience is gained through the End of Session move. Make sure you’re giving players chances during the session that align with this move!

If you’re finding that you’re regularly not providing experience along one of the dimensions the end-of-session move invokes, talk with your players. In my campaigns, we’ve tweaked the move.

We've added this language from Stonetop: "Describe how your opinion of or relationship with another character (PC or NPC) has changed this session. If no one objects, mark XP."

When I run a session, I too often skimp on providing good loot, so that's something I need to plan for better. As a result, though, we've diversified beyond loot: "Did we gain a significant treasure or boon?"

Finally, we've integrated [Stars & Wishes](#) so that I have regular feedback about the future direction of the campaign:

- ★ "Award a star to someone for a great moment of gameplay."
- ★ "Make a wish for what you'd like to see in a future session."

Most fantasy PbtA sessions seem to be played in two to four hours. If you are running longer sessions, you may want to run the End of Session move twice, asking it half way through in addition to the end. This will advance XP at a faster rate but more similar to the XP per hour of play typical of shorter sessions.

Level Up

When you **have any downtime (hours or days) and XP equal to (or greater than) the sum of your current level plus 7, and aren't level 10**, do the following:

- I. Subtract 7 and then your current level from your XP.
- II. Increase your level by 1.
- III. At every even level (2, 4, 6, 8), increase one of your modifiers by +1, but you can't increase modifiers above +3. At every odd level (3, 5, 7, 9), increase your HP by 2.
- IV. Choose a new advanced move from your class or any compendium classes you've earned and follow any other instructions specific to your playbook.

Level Up: It Doesn't Go to II

When you **would attain level II**, instead:

- Retire to safety. Create a new character to play instead and work with the GM to establish their place in the world.
- Take on an apprentice. Play a new character (the apprentice) alongside your current character, who stops gaining XP.
- Change entirely to a new playbook. Keep your ability scores, background, HP, and whatever moves you and the GM agree are core to who your character is. You lose all other playbook moves, replacing them with the starting moves from your new playbook.

Recover

When you **settle down for the night** (making camp in the wilderness, spending the night at an inn, etc.) and spend several hours resting, eating, drinking, and recuperating, you heal damage equal to half your maximum HP.

When you **spend a few days resting in relative safety and comfort**, tell the GM how you spend your time. You heal all of your HP and clear all your debilities, but the GM moves on without you; the GM will advance one or more of their Fronts in your absence.

Steeped in Lore

When you **spend any downtime (hours or days) sifting through rumors and information** in a library, watering-hole, or other scholarly or social nexus, roll+INT. On a 10+ choose three. On a 7-9 choose two:

- You learn of a valuable treasure.
- You learn of a dangerous enemy or group.
- You learn something useful about an area's history, layout, or politics.
- Your research went unnoticed by your enemies. For each one you choose, the GM might ask you, "How did you learn this?" Tell them the truth.

Settlement Moves

I Know a Guy

When you **know someone who can help**, name them and roll+CHA. On a 10+, yeah, sure, they can help, though you might need to make it worth their while. On a 7–9, pick 1:

- They can help, but they need your help first.
- They're going to ask for a lot.
- They're not quite cut out for this.
- You can't exactly trust them.

On a 6-, the GM picks 1 and then some.

Commentary

Use this move when you need information, help, gear, or similar, either to find someone you already know (whether or not they've made an appearance in the fiction), or someone new.

FOR THE GM: Remember to ask questions and use the answers.

If the field Scientist asks you, "do I know anyone from my college who is an expert in Egyptology?" feel free to ask them in return, "do you? Are you rivals for the same tenure?".

Outstanding Warrants

When you **return to a civilized place in which you've caused trouble before**, the most notorious among you must roll+CHA. On a 7+, word has spread of your group's troublemaking, and everyone recognizes you but no one wants to turn you in. On a 9-, the GM chooses a complication:

- The local constabulary has a warrant out for your arrest.
- Someone has put a price on your head.
- Someone important to you has been put in a bad spot as a result of your actions.

Supply

When you **go to buy something with money on hand**, if it's something readily available in the settlement you're in, you can buy it at market price.

When you go looking for something specific and uncommon, say who you ask about it and roll+CHA. On a 10+, they know where you can find it, and it can be had for a fair trade. On a 7–9, the GM chooses 1 from the list below:

- It'll cost you more than expected.
- You find a poor substitute.
- You can get it, but only if you see a guy who knows a guy.
- It was on hand until just recently, when someone else acquired it.
- It's not here, but there's something else that might do the job.

Follower Moves

by Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

Only the penniless and foolhardy undertake an expedition without proper support in the form of porters, hunters, guides, and guards, not to mention specialists who can bring their skills to bear in several ways. Followers, sometimes known as Hirelings, are NPC (non-player character) companions to the Player Characters. They are those individuals who offer such assistance, accompanying the party on their exploits about the world.

Like monsters, followers have HP, damage, and instincts. They also have moves and tags that indicate what they're good at and how they act. Unlike monsters, they have three additional statistics: Quality, Loyalty, and Cost.

Quality represents how effective the follower is, particularly in the areas defined by their tags and moves. A follower's Quality can range from -1 (rubbish) to +3 (masterful). A follower of average competence has a Quality of 0.

Loyalty tracks how committed the follower is to you and your cause. It usually starts at +1 but changes often, ranging from -1 to +3. Note that Loyalty is a resource to be used up by the GM like any other.

Cost describes what motivates the follower to follow. Although a strong leader or worthy cause can be motivating factors, all but the most selfless followers do the dirty work in exchange for coin or other material reward. A follower's Loyalty is increased when you pay their Cost. Costs aren't always tangible things, they may include revenge against a common enemy, an opportunity to discover something, or the rush of glory in battle.

When you pay a follower's Cost, increase their Loyalty by 1 (to a maximum of +3). In general, the higher the Follower's Quality, the greater amount of their Cost will be required to meet it. When a follower has -1 Loyalty, you cannot choose to decrease their Loyalty any further, and they will leave you at the next opportunity.

Instinct is comparable to a monster's Instinct. Instinct is the trouble that the follower gets into or pursues when idle or stressed. Commanding a follower to act against their Instinct requires making the Order Follower move.

Followers deal and take damage like a monster does. When they would deal damage, roll a d6 and add their damage modifier (usually +0), just like any

other damage roll. When they take damage, they lose HP. When they are reduced to 0 HP, they are out of the action and probably dead or dying—their fate is in the GM's hands.

Followers who are with the party for a long time may evolve and advance, increasing in Quality or gaining tags or moves. This is purely at the GM's discretion and should be rooted in the fiction.

Creating Followers

Like any other important NPC (Non-Player Character), followers should have their own names. By default, followers have 6 HP, a damage modifier of +0, and can carry 2 weight beyond what they come equipped with. The GM will choose their specifics (Quality, Instinct, Cost, tags, etc.) as needed, to be discovered through play.

Quality

Quality represents how effective the follower is, particularly in the areas defined by their tags; a follower's Quality can range from -2 (*rubbish*) to +3 (*masterful*) and starts at d6-3.

As a benchmark for follower aptitude—

- ★ Reasonably competent: Quality +0, 2 tags, 1 move
- ★ Skilled and experienced: Quality +1, 3 tags, 2 moves
- ★ Very talented veteran: Quality +2, 4 tags, 3 moves
- ★ Has lived a life of servitude and oppression: +meek
- ★ Past their prime: -1 to Quality, +1 wise tag
- ★ Has lived a life of danger: +2 tags
- ★ Has lived a life of privilege: +1 tag
- ★ Not their first adventure: +1 tag
- ★ Specialist: +1 to Quality, -2 tags

Follower Tags

The first tag every follower has is a *-wise*, expressed as _____-wise, where the blank is filled by whatever subject or thing the follower knows best: e.g., *streetwise*, *trapwise*, *wildernesswise*. Write down the follower's Wise.

If the follower has more than 1 tag, choose additional tags from this list, either now or as needed.

- ★ _____-wise: They know all about _____ and can roll+Quality to Spout Lore about it on your behalf. Examples: Woods-wise, Sea-wise, Herb-wise.
- ★ *archer*: They use ranged attacks (not necessarily bows) effectively and can roll+Quality to Volley when ordered.
- ★ *athletic*: Good at running, jumping, climbing and the like.
- ★ *beautiful*: They make an impression, drawing admiration and attention.
- ★ *cautious*: They are careful and methodical; they avoid acting rashly.
- ★ *connected* (_____): They have friends or contacts in the indicated steading or group.
- ★ *cunning*: Clever and observant. They can roll+Quality to Discern Realities when ordered.
- ★ *devious*: Deceitful, treacherous, tricky. Just the sort you want working for you.
- ★ *group*: A team, gang, or mob, with all the strengths and disadvantages that come with greater numbers.
- ★ *guide* (_____): Knows a particular steading or region and can roll+Quality to Spout Lore or Undertake a Perilous Journey in the listed area.
- ★ *hardy*: Tough, hard-working, and willing to put up with discomfort. They can carry an additional 2 weight.
- ★ *healer*: They have the knowledge and ability to provide aid to the injured and the sick. They can make the First Aid move, and they add their Quality to the HP recovered.
- ★ *meek*: They accept their lowly lot and will do degrading or unreasonable things without needing to Follow Orders.
- ★ *magical*: They are magical by nature or training, and sensitive to the workings of magic. Use at least one of their moves to elaborate on their powers.
- ★ *mount*: You can ride them like a horse.
- ★ *organized*: They make and follow plans well and work well in a group. Once they agree to a plan, you do not need to Order Followers to keep them on that course of action, unless the plan goes south or the situation drastically changes.
- ★ *stealthy*: They can avoid detection and often get the drop on foes.
- ★ *warrior*: They have 1 armor and get +1 to their damage bonus, and you don't need to Order Followers to get them to fight (as long as the opposition is not terrifying or overwhelming).

Follower Moves

Write 1-3 moves for the follower that further describe their behavior and abilities. These are for you, the GM. Use them like other GM moves, when the players look to you to see what the follower does, or when they give you a golden opportunity.

A player might order or expect a follower to use one of these moves on their behalf; that's fine, but you may require the PC to Order Follower or that the follower Do Their Thing if the situation is stressful or subject to chance.

A follower move reflects a skill, ability, or trait that can't be better summarized by a tag. Examples include:

- Point out a flaw in the plan
- Notice something hidden
- Follow quarry by tracks and spoor
- Tend to the sick and injured
- Divine the future
- Poison someone
- Maintain and operate the ship

Loyalty

Loyalty tracks how committed the follower is to a PC. By default, a new follower starts with Loyalty +1, but the GM may add or subtract 1 Loyalty to reflect their initial disposition and their respect (or lack thereof) for the characters they follow.

Instinct

What does the follower do naturally that might cause trouble?

Choose one, make one up, or roll 1d6:

1. Hold grudges and seek payback
2. Slack off and give into temptation
3. Treat others as beneath them
4. Hew to superstition and tradition
5. Take things too far when given a chance to indulge
6. Bicker and fight amongst themselves.

Cost

What motivates the follower to accompany and assist the characters? Note that their cost does not need to be monetary; for instance, for a Cleric, it might be to evangelize their goddess, while for a Bard it might be to witness events worthy of song. Choose one, make one up, or roll 2d6.

2d6	Cost	Description
2-3	Fellowship	Risks taken, by you, to help them
4	Defense	Threats to their home put down
5	Debauchery	Food, drink, gambling, sex, and mischief
6	Glory	Defeating a worthy foe in battle
7	Wealth	Valuable treasure looted (of which they get their cut)
8	Renown	Public recognition for their deeds and skills
9	Vengeance	Payback against those that have wronged them or their loved ones
10	Knowledge	secrets, mysteries, and wonders only found by exploring the wider world
11-12	Good	suffering alleviated, innocents defended, wrongs righted

Moves

lightly adapted from work by Jeremy Strandberg
as part of [Freebooters on the Frontier](#)

Recruit

When you **go looking to hire help**, tell the GM what you're offering and whom you're looking for, phrased in one of the following ways:

- A group of (porters, guards, minstrels, angry farmers, etc.).
- A skilled (guide, sage, burglar, bodyguard, etc.).

On a 6-, no one shows, but mark XP.

A group is a follower like any other, but with the *group* tag. If the GM says you can't find that kind of help in a place like this, start over or move on.

Otherwise, roll+nothing and take +1 if you have a good reputation in these parts. On a 10+, they're yours for the hiring. On 7-9, the GM chooses 1 from the list below. On a 6-, no one shows, but mark XP.

- They demand greater compensation, in coin or some other form.
- No one here fits the bill, but you hear of someone elsewhere who does.
- They have a need that must be met first (permission from someone else, a favor, etc.).
- You can tell at a glance they are less than ideal (ask the GM how).

The GM will choose or roll the specifics of followers (Quality, Loyalty, Instinct, Cost, tags, etc.) as needed. Quality represents how effective the follower is, particularly in the areas defined by their tags; a follower's Quality can range from -2 (rubbish) to +3 (masterful) and starts at d6-3. Loyalty tracks how committed the follower is to you; it starts at +1 but can range from -2 to +3. Cost describes what motivates them to follow: coin or other reward.

Call for Assistance

When a **follower helps you make a move that calls for a roll**, take +1 to that roll, but that follower is exposed to any risks or consequences of the move. When **that move is a Hack & Slash or Volley**, roll your damage die twice and use the higher die.

Do Their Thing

When you **have a follower do something chancy within the scope of their tags**, roll +Quality. On a 10+, they do it, as well as one could reasonably hope. On a 7–9, they do it, but there's an unforeseen cost, consequence, or limitation (ask the GM what).

Order Follower

When you **order or expect a follower to do something dangerous, degrading, or contrary**, roll +Loyalty. On a 10+, they do it, now. On a 7–9, they do it, but the GM picks one from the list below.

- Decrease the follower's Loyalty by 1. (When a follower has -3 Loyalty, they betray or abandon you at the next opportunity.)
- They complain loudly, now or later, and demand something in return.
- Caution, laziness, or fear makes them take a long time to get it done.

Pay Up

When a **follower is compensated for their efforts by having their Cost met**, increase their Loyalty by 1 (to a maximum of +3). This move cannot be made again until after the follower and their leader both Make Camp.

Travel Moves

by Jason Lutes, [The Perilous Wilds](#)

This section provides guidelines for traversing the world, as well as new moves related to travel and exploration.

Travel Time

The estimation of travel time and distance for purposes of these moves is never based on any codified geographic scale; the GM simply decides how long a journey will take based on her judgment of the terrain and distance to be traveled, or asks the players how long it will take based on their characters' experience in the game world.

Players may wish to keep a written record of travel times from place to place, to use as a reference when discussing travel times with the GM.

Mounts and Other Transport

Horses, mules, boats, and the like can reduce travel times and increase the carrying capacity of the party. Too much logistical detail can bog down play, but some basic assumptions about mounted travel should be taken into account. (See [Mounts & Vehicles](#) for optional added moves.)

Travel time: for the sake of simplicity, a mounted or similarly equipped party can be assumed to travel one and a half times as fast as a party on foot, or twice as fast if pushing it. The specific circumstances should always be open to discussion, and the GM should adjust the rate of travel accordingly. Note that a party can only move as fast as its slowest member, which means wagons and the like will slow everyone down.

Carrying capacity: each animal or other form of transport has its own Load. For a party bent on treasure hunting or long distance travel, this factor can play an important role.

Care and feeding: when mounts play a role in the party, “name every animal” and treat them as members of the team—perhaps turning the most notable into followers. Don't forget that animals need to be fed and watered as well; treat their feed as part of the party's ration supply, but adjust the number of rations needed to feed them according to their size (i.e., a warhorse might eat 2 rations per day). Name your mounts!

Discoveries & Dangers

Central to travel and exploration in a world of fantasy adventure are the things that make that world both fantastical and full of adventure. These encounters are broken into two categories: Discoveries and Dangers, and may come into play as a result of various moves, or when introduced at the GM's discretion.

A Discovery is anything the party finds that is interesting, but not actively dangerous. It might be something beneficial, like a steading or freshwater spring; something that begs investigation, like an overgrown ruin; or an impediment, like a bog or chasm.

A Danger is anything which, if left unchecked, may be harmful. Traps and monsters are two common types of Dangers. A Danger encountered in the course of a journey may be incidental, or it may be a hint of something larger.

Moves

Encumbrance

When you **carry more than your Load**, you're encumbered (*noisy, slow, hot, quick to tire*).

Commentary

by J. Alan Henning

The Load limit of PCs varies by playbook and is typically modified by STR. For instance, a Druid has a Load limit of 6+STR, while a Fighter and Paladin each have a maximum Load of 12+STR.

Accounting for weight is simplified; items typically have a wt (weight) of 0, 1, or 2: for instance a knife (0 wt), a handaxe (1 wt), a shovel (2 wt). Higher weights are rare and typically used for armor: chainmail (3 wt), scale mail (4 wt), and platemail (6 wt), for instance. Treat 100 coins as 1 wt. As a general rule of thumb, if it fits in your pockets, 0 wt; if you can hold it with 1 hand, 1 wt; if you need 2 hands to hold it, 2 wt; if you wear it, 3+ wt. See the equipment list for full examples.

If someone tries to carry 3 or more than their Load limit, you'll probably want them to be immobile.

Forage

When you **spend a day seeking food in the wild, and your surroundings are not barren**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you gain 1d4 rations plus 1d4 rations if you have the knowledge and gear needed to trap or hunt. On a 7–9, as above, but first face a Discovery or Danger of the GM’s choice.

Forge Ahead

When you **push on despite powerful opposition from the elements**, roll+CON. On a 10+, you go as far as you are able before needing to pause for a rest. On a 7–9, choose 1 from the list below.

- You go as far as you are able, but overtax yourself and become weak, shaky, or sick (choose one).
- You go as far as you are able, but the weather takes its deepest toll on your gear (ask the GM how).
- On second thought, maybe you’re better off staying put.

If you make progress, ask the GM where you end up on the map, and if the weather shows any sign of relenting.

Commentary

See “Weather the storm” below for more on using this and Hunker Down.

Hunker Down

When you **take shelter to wait out the elements**, choose 1 party member to roll+nothing. On a 10+, it doesn’t take long for things to clear up. On 7–9, things aren’t going to change any time soon; you can Forge Ahead or Make Camp here for the night and hope things have changed by morning.

Commentary

See “Weather the storm” below for more on using this and Forge Ahead.

Journey

When you **travel by a safe route, through safe or dangerous lands**, indicate your destination on the map. The GM will tell you how long the trip takes, and what—if anything—happens along the way. When you reach your destination, choose someone to Manage Provisions to determine how many rations were consumed over the course of the trip.

Commentary

by J. Alan Henning

Consider this quote from *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*: "He had many hardships and adventures before he got back. The Wild was still the Wild, and there were many other things in it in those days besides goblins; but he was well guided and well guarded—the wizard was with him, and Beorn for much of the way—and he was never in great danger again." Given the title of the book, not much is spent on the "And Back Again" part!

Multiple times we've had a journey to somewhere new require many more moves, and sometimes just take focused play rather than this move out at all, while the journey back was abstracted into this move.

Make Camp

When you **settle in to rest**, choose one member of the party to Manage Provisions. Then, if you eat and drink, and have enough XP, you may Level Up. If you're bedding down in dangerous lands, decide on a watch order. Then, the GM chooses one person on watch during the night to roll+nothing. On a 10+, the night passes without incident. On a 7–9, the GM chooses 1 from the list below.

- The person on watch notices a nearby Discovery.
- One party member of the GM's choice suffers a restless night.
- One or more followers causes trouble.
- A Danger approaches—it's not immediately hostile, but if it approaches Take Watch.

When you wake from at least a few hours of uninterrupted sleep, and you ate and drank the night before, heal damage equal to half of your max HP.

Manage Provisions

When you **prepare and distribute food for the party**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, choose 1 from the list below. On a 7–9, the party consumes the expected amount of rations (1 per person for Make Camp, 1 per person per day for a Journey).

- Careful management reduces the amount of rations consumed (ask the GM by how much).
- The party consumes the expected amount and the food you prepare is excellent—describe it, and everyone who licks their lips takes +1 forward.

Navigate

When you **plot the best course through dangerous or unfamiliar lands**, roll+INT. On a 10+, you avoid dangers and distractions and make good time, reaching a point of the GM's choosing before you need to Make Camp. On a 7–9, GM chooses 1 from the list:

- You happen upon a Discovery missed by the scout.
- The going is slow, or you wander off course. The GM says which, and where you end up on the map.
- You encounter a Danger; whether or not you're surprised depends on whether the scout has the drop on it.

Scout Ahead

When you **take point and look for anything out of the ordinary**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, choose 2 from the list below. On a 7–9, choose 1 from the list below.

- You get the drop on whatever lies ahead.
- You discern a beneficial aspect of the terrain—short-cut, shelter, or tactical advantage (describe it).
- You make a Discovery (ask the GM).
- You notice a sign of a nearby Danger—ask the GM what it is, and what it might signify.

Take Watch

When you are **on watch and something approaches**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you notice in time to alert everyone and prepare a response; all party members take +1 forward. On a 7–9, you manage to sound the alarm, but no one has time to prepare. On a 6-, mark XP, and whatever approaches has the drop on you.

Undertake a Perilous Journey

When you **travel through dangerous lands, and not on a safe route**, indicate the course you want to take on the map and ask the GM how far you should be able to get before needing to Make Camp. If you're exploring with no set destination, indicate which way you go. Then, choose one party member to Scout Ahead, and one to Navigate, resolving those moves in that order.

Travel Commentary

by Jason Lutes, [*Freebooters on the Frontier*](#)

Points of Interest and Color

Overland adventure in a role-playing game runs the risk of feeling tedious, due to the temptation to describe everything that happens to the characters on every step of their travels. You are therefore urged to move the fiction from one “point of interest”—physical or dramatic—to the next with speed and economy. If the party sets up a base camp and spends the day exploring the vicinity, keep your descriptions brief.

If their Scouting Ahead move results in a Discovery or Danger, describe it and follow through, but if they encounter nothing, just tell them that and ask them to Make Camp for the next night.

That being said, the subtle, beautiful, and fearsome aspects of the landscape should not go unmentioned, since they are what makes the world wild and wondrous. Demonstrate these things by adding a bit of “color” each time a narrative leap in time or distance is made, in the form of one or two succinct details about what the party experiences along the way.

For example, after plundering an ancient ruined temple in the wilderness, an adventuring party of four returns to the village of Feket, on the outskirts of

the Kingdom of Otthon. Unable to trade their newfound treasures with the impoverished locals, they decide to travel to the capital, Koronaz, and look for buyers there.

I, the GM, tell them that the trip will take 3 days, so they make the Undertake a Perilous Journey move and will consume the expected number of rations at the end of the trip. Because I see the big city as the next point of interest in the fiction, I want to get them there as quickly as possible without losing touch with their surroundings, so I say: “The journey takes you three days, mostly through cultivated land. It’s harvest season, and from sunup to sundown the fields are teeming with workers. By the time you reach the gates of the shining city, the darkness of the Wildwood seems like a dream. Mark off 12 rations.”

If the party is moving through territory known to one or more of them, you may want to ask them to add color to the proceedings, either by direct invitation or in the form of a leading question:

- ★ “Cleric, on your hike to the shrine, what is it about these hills that reminds you of your deity?”
- ★ “Thief, what is the flower that you remember picking here when you were a child, and why did you pick it?”

But in unknown lands, it’s your job to inject color. When doing so, or inventing any part of the game world, remember the exhortation to *embrace the fantastic*. Perhaps the locals use bipedal lizards to haul their wagons, build their fences out of monster bones, or start their hearth-fires with brands that fall from an ever-burning tree.

But don’t choose all three and make everything crazy-weird, because the fantastic emerges out of contrast with the mundane. Insert unusual details here and there, and, when you have a moment, consider the implications for the local culture and ecosystem.

Recall that truth is stranger than fiction, and that the real world offers wonders to rival anything imagined. Early European explorers of North America recorded flocks of birds so vast that they blotted out the sun and took days to pass overhead. Manta rays can grow to a diameter of 25 feet, and leap up to nine feet into the air. A cave in VietNam is three miles long, and in it stalagmites are up to 200 feet tall.

These examples point to a useful technique for describing your world: think big. Take that mundane detail that pops into your head and dial it up to a larger size, a richer aspect, greater numbers.

- ★ “To the west you can make out the Pillars of the World, a forest of trees so tall their upper branches are lost in the clouds.”
- ★ “The cliff face is blood red in the sunlight, as if some part of the mountain was shorn from it by a terrible blade.”
- ★ “The animals—they’re horned like antelope, but have zebra stripes of black and gray—bound across the savannah on all sides, as far as you can see, like a great flood, leaving you untouched as they flow around and past.”

But think small too, just as often, to ground things in the commonplace: birdsong in the morning, a lone set of tracks in the snow, the smell of the distant sea.

Beasts in the Wild

There is a tendency in fantasy RPGs to make every natural predator a potential threat. We commonly assume that wolves, panthers, and the like prowl the periphery of civilized lands, ready to attack people at the first opportunity. In reality, most such animals avoid contact with humans unless they outnumber them, resorting to violence only when cornered, desperate, or suffering from some behavior-altering affliction.

The GM should consider this fact before throwing lions and tigers and bears at the party, reserving aggressive actions for the worst enemies: intelligent humanoids and bona fide monsters. At the least, the Instinct of an animal should be applied in full consideration of the circumstances. A pack of wolves with the Instinct “hunt, scavenge, defend,” finding itself up against a party of four, might follow them over long distances, looking for an opportunity to prey upon anyone who gets separated, but would not likely attempt direct confrontation.

Food and Water

The need of the party to stay fed and hydrated may be glossed over in settled lands, where monitoring daily consumption might feel more tedious than interesting, but in the wilderness tracking food and water consumption can become vital to the party's survival.

Food supply: each expedition into the wilderness necessitates some degree of planning. When loading up on rations, the players should take into account the number of days they plan to be afield, the number of party members who need to eat (including followers, mounts, and pack animals), and the possibility that some rations may be lost due to unforeseen circumstances. Foraging (page 25) is an option, but it takes time, and should probably not be depended upon.

Water supply: in general, the players do not need to monitor water consumption; streams and other minor watercourses are assumed to be common enough that they are able to drink their fill on a regular basis without difficulty.

However, should they venture into arid lands (desert, wasteland, etc.), or into a dungeon, tracking water supply and consumption can add an interesting resource management element to play. It's easy enough to do: everyone can be assumed to have a waterskin, which starts full whenever the party enters dry territory. Each person in the party consumes 1 waterskin's worth of water per day, just like a ration; the amount consumed by a given mount or pack animals is up to the GM.

Starvation and thirst: the question of what happens when the party runs out of food and/or water is an important one, to be answered according to the fiction. A human being can live up to thirty days without food (the fatter the person, the longer they last), but growing progressively weaker. Without water a person can survive for only a week, with serious consequences manifesting after three days: confusion, followed by coma and death. Dying by dehydration is excruciatingly painful.

But there are more immediate, mechanical consequences: any character who Makes Camp without consuming one ration and one skin's worth of water does not heal HP upon waking.

Getting Lost

Exploring the wilderness would not be as exciting without the threat of getting lost, and you should take this possibility into account when making moves. Getting lost might happen through a failed Scouting Ahead or Navigate move, when the characters charge off into the wild, or even when everyone is disoriented in the wake of a chaotic battle.

Knowing that the sun moves east-to-west is not a recipe for success when trying to find the right path, because the sun only rises due east and sets due west on the equinox; sunrise and sunset may orient the party in the right general direction, but the further the distance traveled, the greater the room for error.

The stars also provide only broad help in terms of orientation, and then only to those versed in their positions throughout the year. But even characters like the Ranger or Druid, who might know the stars by heart, can be thwarted by heavy cloud cover, precipitation, darkness, or a dense forest canopy.

Regardless of how a character or party becomes lost, once the players become aware of their geographic disorientation, there are a few different ways to handle things in play. Use whichever method appeals to you, but in either case you might want to start a new map on a new sheet of paper, in order to keep track of what they encounter while they are lost. When and if they do manage to find their way back to familiar territory, this separate map can be integrated into the main map.

Fiction-first: using this approach, the nitty-gritty details of being lost are hand-waved away in favor of moving the game along to the next interesting point in the story. The GM's job is to describe the situation in general terms, without worrying about exactly where the party is on the map.

An attempt to remedy being lost might trigger Discern Realities (if they look for clues in their surroundings), Defy Danger with INT or WIS (if they try to backtrack to the last known landmark), or Undertake a Perilous Journey (if they just set off into the unknown, hoping for the best). Regardless of the move triggered, a good hard GM move on a 6- is to make them even more lost!

Simulation-first: using this approach, the GM tracks the party's location in secret—mentally, on a piece of scratch paper, or maybe on a copy of the main map—and adjusts their position depending on the results of their actions.

Any of the same moves mentioned above might be triggered, but incremental progress takes precedence over broad fictional strokes. A roll of 6- might cause the party to veer from their intended path, but only you will know by how much. Describe what they see when they reach the next logical decision point, ask them what they do next, and play to find out what happens. This method requires more effort, but can be much more satisfying if exploration is important to your campaign.

Weather the Storm

What time of year is it right now in the game? What's the weather like? These questions are among the many that should be shuffling through your head as you describe the world, to be answered as called for by the fiction.

Seasons will vary depending on the climate, but should always be taken into account when setting the stage, especially in places subject to extreme temperatures. Venturing into the Desert of a Thousand Graves is sure suicide in high summer, and folks at Frostfell Keep in the frozen north hardly set foot outside the walls once winter sets in.

Seasonal effects and weather can be folded into the fiction in a variety of ways, but here are three to consider:

- ★ As color: evoking the season or weather in small ways when adding a bit of color (i.e., “The dry leaves crunch underfoot as you climb the hillside,” or “You glance back at Arne and see that his crystallized breath has turned his beard white.”) helps tie the characters to the world, and reminds them that details like dry leaves and freezing temperatures matter.
- ★ As drama: if you enjoy high drama in your game, bending the weather to the narrative circumstances can be used to great effect, either to underline the action (“He turns to face you just as the storm breaks, and a lightning strike illuminates the scar on his face”) or contrast with the emotional content (“You stagger out of the ruins, your friends lost to the darkness forever, and into the blinding sunlight of a beautiful, cloudless day”).
- ★ As moves: the weather is always there, ready to complicate things. You might make a single soft move to create a sudden downpour, but making a series of soft moves to build atmosphere and tension over time can be used to great effect as well: clear skies turn cloudy; the land grows dark; rain begins to fall.

Following that notion, consider rain as an example of complicating weather. How does it affect the characters' environment? It makes stone slick and soft ground muddy, begging you to make moves in tense situations that compromise their footing, but what about a rainstorm that hangs over an entire journey? Rolling a 6 or less to Scouting Ahead might mean the rain is falling so heavily that the scout is unable to see more than a dozen yards; on Navigate it might bring the party to the banks of an overflowing and impassable river; on Manage Provisions it might mean that 1d6 rations have turned to mush.

Blizzards, sandstorms, sweltering heat—each has a characteristic and potentially dramatic impact on the landscape and those attempting to traverse it. Any of these conditions might trigger the Hunker Down and Forge Ahead moves, but the outcomes should vary to suit the circumstances. Compromised gear in a blizzard might mean a frozen spear haft snaps in two; in tropical humidity, it might mean that fungus starts growing in someone's leather boot. Regardless of how you handle weather, don't think of it as mere backdrop. Tie it physically to the landscape and to the characters, make it affect them even if in superficial ways, and you will bring the world that much more to life.

Drowning & Falling Moves

by Jeremy Strandberg

The name is a self-effacing reference to something Vincent Baker said in an [interview about Apocalypse World](#), about how Ars Magica was bloated with “rules for drowning and falling.” Ars Magica is ostensibly a story game about medieval wizards and their hangers-on, researching spells and politicking with fellow magi and dealing with faeries and demons and angels. And yet there they are, rules for things like drowning and falling.

“You are just lucky that in Apocalypse World, there isn’t a move ‘when you are drowning, roll+HARD...’ or ‘when you are falling, roll+COOL.’”

-Vincent Baker

I always found that funny.

Now most fantasy PbtA games don’t have specific rules for drowning and falling. They don’t *need* them. Just like they don’t *need* moves for being on fire, or starving to death, or chasing someone through a crowded street, or sneaking around. An appropriate combination of GM moves and Defy Danger will suffice.

But...

But those things come up. I’d say your PCs are pretty darn likely to fall, or risk drowning, or find themselves on fire or starving to death or chasing someone or sneaking around. And it’s not always obvious exactly how you should use GM moves and Defy Danger. So maybe a custom move or two would be in order, yes?

What can a (good) custom move give you?

- ★ **Preparedness:** If you have a custom move to fall back on, you don’t have to make it up on the spot, mid-game. Your brain is free to do other stuff.
- ★ **Agreement:** If you share a custom move with your players, and say “this is how we’ll resolve this,” then they know the rules. You don’t have to spend as much game time on stuff like “*Really, I’m running out of breath? I’ve only been down here a couple seconds!*”
- ★ **Surprise:** A good move (not just a custom move) introduces elements that you (or your players) wouldn’t otherwise include. Like, I’m generally pretty averse to maiming my players’ characters with stuff

like lost eyes or broken bones or severed fingers. But put that as a choice in a custom move, and now I've got *permission*. And a reminder.

- ★ **Flavor:** Custom moves can go a long way toward setting tone. A good list of choices tells you and your players what the outcomes *could* be, even if they don't actually occur. That goes a long way toward communicating danger (or advantage, or whatever).
- ★ **Incentive:** Put a cool custom move in front of your players, out where they can see it, and some of them are going to be tempted to trigger it—just to see what happens.
- ★ **Structure:** You can use a custom move to provide a specific structure to a situation that you don't want to handle through detailed play. This is what the Undertake a Perilous Journey move does: it gives you a way to gloss over the details of a long journey and zoom in on one or two key details.

So: what follows is a collection of custom moves for commonish scenarios. Most of these have seen play in my own games. For each one, I've also added some notes on why it's structured how it is, how you could tweak and/or it apply it to other situations, and GM moves that you might make in similar situations.

You don't *need* these moves. But you might find them useful. I hope you do.

Drowning

When you **plunge beneath the waves**, hold Breath equal to CON+1 (minimum 1). If you **take a deep breath first**, hold Breath equal to CON+3 (min 2). Each time you roll 2d6 to make a move, pick 1 (after you roll):

- Spend 1 Breath
- Mark a debility
- Take your Last Breath

Design Notes

I have rarely encountered a topic so contentious in RPGs as “what happens when you fall in the water?” We all know that you’ve got to hold your breath, but how long can you do so?

The main goal of this design is not realism, but rather to:

- 1) Put everyone on the same page
- 2) Create tension
- 3) Keep things moving (i.e. no roll—just use up a resource)

I think this captures the tension of being underwater quite well. You’ve got a sense for what you can accomplish with the Breath you have, but it’s not a sure thing. You get a 7-9 on some roll, and you could end up stuck underwater longer than expected.

Why did I opt for debilities when you run out of Breath?

- ★ I could have just given more Breath, and then when you run out you take your Last Breath. But that’s either too generous (they have so much Breath that they never run out) or too harsh (you fall in the water, you die).
- ★ I suppose I could have used HP instead of debilities, but then you’ve got weird crap like using bandages to restore HP lost from holding your breath too long. Ugh.
- ★ Debilities are a nice sweet spot. They suck, but they don’t suck *too much*. And most characters can soak one or two without *really* feeling them. But those “dump” debilities don’t go away anytime soon. Next time, you’re really going to feel it.

The only thing I *don’t* like about marking debilities is that I have a hard time justifying the “Scarred” debility as a result of almost drowning. But even then... maybe their voice gets a hacking, wheezing quality for a few days, or

maybe they have this haunted, wasted look from their brush with death? I dunno. Ask the player to justify it.

Variations

If you want to **make this harder on the PCs**, also make them pick from the list when they take damage. Careful, though, because you get into a death spiral pretty easily!

If you want to **make this easier on the PCs**, give them more Breath. Maybe CON+2 by default (min 1), and CON+5 if they take a deep breath. (That's probably what I'd do if I was going to run some sort of seafaring campaign.)

Likewise, if you're using [my alternate debilities](#) (where you have only 3 debilities instead of 6), I'd keep the move the same but make it easier for them to clear debilities caused by this move. A few minutes of rest (with plenty of air to breathe) should clear debilities caused by holding your breath.

You can easily adapt this move for other situations where you need to hold your breath, such as:

- ★ A cloud of poisonous vapors
- ★ A smoke-filled, burning building
- ★ An evil spirit that sucks out your breath
- ★ An entity that possesses you by forcing itself into your mouth or nose
- ★ An airless room (like a vault or a particularly nasty forcecage)

In cases like those, maybe you give a little extra Breath because they're not *also* swimming.

GM Moves

★ *Show the downsides of the gear:*

- “Oh, jeez, you’re wearing your armor? You feel yourself sinking, floundering, it’s so damn heavy. What do you do?”
- “You’ve got a shield, a sword, a pack stuffed with gear, and you’re trying to swim? We’re going to treat that as if you’re encumbered. Each time you make a move, drop something and roll at -1 or miss the move.”

★ *Tell them the consequences and ask*

- “Sure, you can try to cast a spell underwater, but if you do it’s gonna cost you 1 Breath and you’ll have to Defy Danger to get the words out right... probably with CON, unless you can justify something else. You do it?”
- “That’s really deep, like 15 feet down. You’ll have to spend 1 Breath to swim down to it.”

★ *Use up their resources*

- “The kraken’s tentacles SQUEEZE you! Take 1d10+5 damage and lose all your Breath!”

★ *Put them in a spot*

- “After all that thrashing about, you lose your bearings... you can’t even tell which way is up anymore, much less how to get out of this sunken ship. What do you do?”

★ *Turn their move back on them*

- “You biffed your Discern Realities roll? Why don’t you tell me about the first time you almost drowned, and why it haunts you still?”

Falling

When you **glimpse just how far down it is**, pick 1:

- Describe why it doesn't bother you in the least
 - Tell us about an experience that's given you a healthy respect for falling
 - Mark XP and tell us about your crippling fear of heights.
-

When you **leap across the ravine**, roll+STR (or +DEX if unencumbered and you got a running start): on a 10+, you make it look easy; on a 7-9, you either stop yourself before you jump or you find yourself hanging, half-on and half-off (your choice which); on a 6-, so close! Try to catch yourself or brace for impact!

When you **make a desperate leap across the yawning chasm**, get a running start and roll+STR: on a 10+, holy crap, you made it, but you're hanging half-on and half-off; on a 7-9, so close—try to catch yourself or brace for impact; on a 6-, happy landings.

When you **try to catch yourself as you fall**, roll+STR or +DEX (your choice): on a 10+, phew, got it; on a 7-9, you catch yourself but pick 1 from the list below; on a 6-, down you go.

- Something you were carrying falls and is lost; ask the GM what it was
 - Your grip is slipping or your handhold is crumbling; think fast!
 - Freeze up, holding on for dear life until you overcome your fear.
-

When you **fall**...

- ... a few feet (like off a table or a horse), take 4d4 damage
- ... from a modest height (out a first story window, while climbing a tree), take 8d8 damage
- ... from a serious height (off a roof, down a ravine), take 10d10 damage (*ignores armor*)
- ... onto something soft and yielding (water, pillows), roll twice and take the lower roll
- ... onto something hard, jagged (rocks, stairs), roll twice and take the higher roll
- ... onto something sharp and pointy, take an extra die of *messy* damage
- ... from a great height (off a cliff, from the ramparts), roll Last Breath.

Design Notes

There's a lot going on here, most of which has to do with the *threat* of falling and not the falling itself.

The first move (“*When you **glimpse just how far down it is**...*”) doesn't resolve a situation but rather paints the scene and sets stakes. A great way to highlight an unpleasant experience is to ask the player to describe a time their character has experienced that sort of thing before. You, the GM, don't have to spend time describing the dizzying heights and the sense of vertigo. Instead, you get the player to put themselves in their character's head, think about how they've dealt with heights before and how they might respond to it now. You don't need a custom move for this, of course. But having it as a custom move serves as a reminder to you (the GM) to ask these questions. It also structures the player's responses a bit, and gives an incentive (the XP) for players to decide that their characters are afraid of heights.

The next move (“***leap across the ravine***”) is just a predefined Defy Danger. The basic structure is the same: trigger the move >> roll an appropriate stat based on the fiction >> 10+ you do it // 7-9 hard bargain // 6- uh oh.

So why bother? Preparation. You don't have to adjudicate it on the fly. You've decided what using STR vs. DEX will require, and you've decided what the 7-9 and 6- results will look like.

Also, if you let the players see this move before they trigger it, you're communicating difficulty and stakes. You're telling them what the possible

outcomes are, so they can judge whether it's worth it. This makes the decision to try jumping across the ravine a meaningful choice. (Relevant: [this post about awesome action vs. tangible obstacles.](#))

Folks often criticize moves with an explicit 6- result, arguing that it's better to leave the result vague and up to the GM to decide in the moment based on their principles. I generally agree. But by including a specific, fairly forgiving 6- result, I'm deciding (and communicating) the difficulty and stakes of the move. This is most valuable if I'm sharing the move text with players, but also helps me disclaim decision making during play.

The third move ("***make a desperate leap across the yawning chasm***") is an example of how you can use a custom move to reflect difficulty. It's clearly the riskier, harder, more dangerous of the two moves. It achieves this by:

- ★ *Adding a requirement to the trigger*, in this case the instruction to "get a running start and roll..." It's like how you can't trigger Hack and Slash if you can't reasonably hurt your enemy, or how you can't Parley if you don't have leverage. You can't even attempt a desperate leap across the yawning chasm without a running start. You've got to fictionally position yourself to *get* that running start in order to trigger the move.
- ★ *Requiring that you roll a specific stat*, as opposed to Defy Danger or the more forgiving ***leap across the ravine*** move. Sure, *most* moves require that you roll a specific stat, but moves that give you a choice are generally easier to succeed at.
- ★ *Defining the consequences of a miss*, and defining them hard. If you roll a 6-, you're falling. Full stop. No chance to catch yourself.
- ★ *Reducing what success gets you*. Defy Danger is generally considered the "template" for moves, with the 10+ result being "you do it" and the 7-9 result being "you do it, but...". To make a custom move reflect something that's harder, you can make the 10+ result be "you do it but..." and the 7-9 result be "it's bad but it could be worse". That's what this move does.

You can also make custom moves *less* difficult by moving the "full success" to the 7-9 range and making 10+ give you an extra benefit. For example, see the Ranger's Hunt and Track move or even the Discern Realities basic move. [Rob Donoghue wrote a nice blog post about this.](#) It's worth a read.

Notice that I avoided a mechanical modifier on the ***make a desperate leap*** move. I certainly could have included one (“...get a running start and roll+STR, taking -2 to the roll”). That’d make the task more difficult, for sure! But it’s not really necessary, or worth it. Adjusting the trigger and the possible outcomes is so much more interesting. And if I was going to put a -2 penalty onto that move, I’d probably just say “dude, you can’t make that jump.”

The ***try to catch yourself*** move is another example of a predefined Defy Danger. A few things of note, here:

- ★ I’m making the move *easier* by allowing either STR or DEX, player’s choice. That’s a design decision. I want this move to be somewhat forgiving, because it often represents a last desperate chance! I’m also pre-empting the discussion at the table (“Why do I have to roll STR? Aren’t I reacting quickly?” “Dude, it’s not about reflexes it’s about grip strength.” “But in the real world....” Ugh.)
- ★ On a 7-9, I’m presenting an ugly choice between 3 unpleasant outcomes. The neat thing, I think, is that the choices let the player make a statement about their character. You might choose to be safe but at the expense of something... that’s the cautious choice, the choice that prioritizes safety over possessions. Or you might choose to find yourself in a worsening situation... the sort of scrape Indiana Jones would get into. Or you might choose to make a statement about your character: they’re freezing up, scared to fall! You can make the choice based on tactics, sure, but you can also choose the one that feels right for your character.
- ★ Originally, that last choice (“Freeze up, holding on for dear life until you overcome your fear”) was actually “Develop a fear of heights.” The idea was to let you get out of danger, but with a long-term effect on your character’s personality. There’s something to be said for that, but I felt that it was too severe for a 7-9 result. Also, what if the PC already *had* a fear of heights (see the first custom move)? The choice wouldn’t make sense—but freezing up in fear certainly would.

Finally: the ***when you fall*** move itself is elaborating on the “other sources of damage” table on page 21 of *Dungeon World*. I like to have something like this handy to avoid conversations like “well, in the *real world*, people die from

falling off horses, so it should be d10 damage, right?” I also like the way that the landing surface modifies the damage, and I like having a nice, simple rule for what happens when you fall off a cliff: you roll Last Breath.

Variations

You can use the structure of the ***glimpse how far down it is*** move for all sorts of unpleasant situations, like:

- ★ When you **find yourself crawling through the cramped tunnel of damp earth...**
- ★ When you **find yourself locked in the chamber with the water slowly rising...**
- ★ When you **find yourself trapped in the burning building...**

Just tweak the choices to match the situation!

The triggers of the two leaping moves could easily be tweaked to match a specific scenario, like jumping from rooftop to rooftop or launching yourself from a rampart onto a dragon’s back! The results barely need to change.

You could also use the leaping moves to model a dangerous climb. Obviously the wording would change, but you could definitely reuse the concept of “on a challenging climb, roll... 10+, you do it, 7-9, choose 1, 6- try to catch yourself” and “on a really hard climb, roll... 10+ you barely do it and are in a bad position; on a 7-9 try to catch yourself, on a 6- see ya”.

For the falling damage table, you could easily change the details to reflect your sense of how dangerous any given fall was.

GM Moves

★ *Use a monster, danger, or location move*

- “The choker hisses as you stab it, uncoiling and flinging you away, and you find yourself staggering over the rampart. What do you do?”
- “*WHAM*, it snatches you in its talons—take $1d10+3$ damage—and the earth drops away as it carries you aloft! What do you do?”

★ *Reveal an unwelcome truth*

- “You drop the coin into the pit, and wait to hear how long it takes to hit bottom, but it’s like... .. nothing... .. *clack-clack-clack*. A faint echo, from very far down. What do you do?”

★ *Show signs of an approaching threat*

- “As you step onto the rope bridge, it creaks and sways ominously. About a third of the way out, one of the planks just snaps under your weight, a chunk of rotten wood spinning down down down endlessly into the ravine. You’re fine, you catch yourself, but there’s still more than half of the bridge to go. What do you do?”

★ *Use up their resources*

- “You tumble down the rocky slope, OW UMPH OW SMACK. Take $[b]2d10$ damage, ignoring armor, and a bunch of your gear got smashed or flung out as you fell. Lose $1d4+1$ uses of adventuring gear, and you can no longer use it to produce anything fragile or breakable.”
- “You land on the ledge, taking only a $d4$ damage, but drop your lantern with the impact... it goes tumbling down into the darkness. You’re left in the pitch black, on a narrow ledge, over a yawning abyss. What do you do?”

★ ***Turn their move back on them***

- “Okay, so, you try to dodge as the gnoll comes barreling at you, and you sort of do, but not all the way. It gets one of its claws on the edge of your shield and hangs on as it goes past you over the edge, dragging you with it. There’s a lurch and you find yourself on the ground, half over the ledge yourself, the gnoll hanging on to your shield, dangling over the drop, and the shield strapped to your arm, and you’re starting to slide over the edge, what do you do?”

★ ***Separate them***

- “Sigmund, you see Hawke’s ax chop into the worg’s skull, but its momentum takes it and Hawke over the edge and into the ravine. What do you do?”

★ ***Show a downside to their class, race, or equipment***

- “Jarl, you start climbing and the ropes are just creaking under the weight of you and all that armor. About halfway up, there’s snap and pop and you drop like a foot, and there’s this creaking noise as the rope starts to give way, what do you do?”

★ ***Put someone in a spot***

- “Dagoliir, you smack one cultist in the head with the pipe, but the other one tackles you. You land at the edge of the tower, your head and right arm dangling over the edge, the pipe in your right arm, and the cultist kneeling over you, choking you, his eyes on fire above his red silk mask. What do you do?”
- “Okay, well... I guess you lose your grip then and go tumbling off the airship’s rigging. Your guts lurch as you fall, the airship quickly getting smaller, the wind buffeting you, the ground slowly but inexorably getting closer. What do you do?”

★ **Tell them the requirements or consequences, and ask**

- “Yeah, you can try to leap across the ravine. Here’s how we’ll resolve that...” <hands them text of **leap across the ravine** move>
- “Sure you can try to scale the wall, but it’s pretty sheer and a long way up. You’ll be Defying Danger to make the climb, for sure, and on a miss you’ll be taking [b]2d10 damage that ignores armor when you fall. Are you doing it?”

Burning

When you **take damage from fire** (incidental damage, not damage from a creature), you take...

- ★ 1d4 damage if it’d cause small, localized burns: a torch, a sleeve on fire, etc.
- ★ 1d6 damage if it’d cause sizable, painful burns: a campfire, a brazier full of hot coals, getting splashed with flaming lamp oil, etc.
- ★ 1d8 damage if it’s a big and engulfing: a bonfire, a house fire
- ★ 1d10 damage if it’s incinerating: hellfire, a roaring wildfire, lava

Fire damage is often *messy*.

When you **stop, drop, and roll**, roll+CON; **on a 10+**, the flames go out, but the GM might ask you to pick 1 if you were seriously lit up; **on a 7-9**, the flames go out but the GM picks 1, and might ask you to pick another; **on a 6-**, burn, baby, burn.

- Mark a debility: Weakened, Shaky, Sickened, or Scarred (your choice)
 - Something you were wearing burns up; ask the GM what
 - Take damage from the flames; ask the GM how much
-

When you are **on fire**, it’s safe to assume that you’ll be Defying Danger (probably with CON) to do anything other than try to put the fire out (the danger being: you’re on fire!).

On a 7-9, the GM might choose something like:

- *Worse outcomes*: you find the fire distracting, so...
 - take -2 forward
 - the best you can do on the task at hand is get a 7-9
- *Hard bargains*: sure, you can do ___, but...
 - you'll take damage
 - you'll have to mark the Scarred debility
 - the fire will spread to your cloak
 - the thatched roof will catch fire as well!
- *Ugly choice*: cool, yeah, you do that just fine, but...
 - the fire has spread! stop, drop, and roll *right now* or take 1d8 damage and lose your cloak

Scouting Ahead

When you **go off on your own to explore a dangerous area**, tell us how you do it and add...

...+DEX if you rely on stealth and agility

...+CON if your path is one of hardship and endurance

...+CHA if you blend in with the locals

On a 7+, you make it back safely and the GM will describe what you encountered. Then, **on a 10+** pick 3; **on a 7-9** pick 1:

- Ask a question from Discern Realities about what you encountered (you can choose this more than once)
- You were able to sneak something out of there; ask the GM what
- You made some preparation or created some advantage to exploit upon your return; work out the details with the GM
- You got away clean: leaving no trace, rousing no suspicion, etc.

Regardless of your choices, answer the GMs questions about what happened out there.

On a 6-, choose 1:

- You make it back to the others but with trouble hot on your heels!
- You're missing in action; the details will be revealed later

Design Notes

You know what sucks, in pretty much every game system? When the sneaky/stealthy/social character sneaks off ahead of the party into some dangerous situation, and you follow that character's actions and play that out while everyone else sits and twiddles their thumbs.

It can be particularly bad in fantasy PbtA games because of the 7-9 results' tendency to escalate situations, and because of how you GM: describe the situation, make moves, ask "what do you do?"

One of the best experiences I can recall having with "the sneaky guy" was playing D&D, where the party's rogue was an NPC with very little personal initiative. He'd scout ahead if we asked him to, and he'd disappear for a bit and then the GM would tell us whether he returned and what he found.

That got me thinking... is there a way to frame "scouting ahead" in such a way that the scouting happens off-camera, and the details come out as what *happened?* (Rather than playing them out *as they happen.*) And that led me to this move.

Because the move's outcomes jump us squarely to the end of the scouting action, the situation is now in the past and the triggering player has just experienced it. That means the GM can ask the player leading questions about what happened without [crossing The Line](#). *"So you scoped out the bandit encampment, figured out that the young sorceress was in charge, realized that most of the wealth was being stored in her tent, and snuck out of there with that weird totem thing. But you didn't get away clean, so... what happened? What clear sign did you leave that will alert them that you were there?"*

A great question to ask the scout is: *"What made you decide to get out of there?"* Or something like that. Basically, get them to tell you what made them turn back and return to the others.

I'm not normally a fan of moves that mix-and-match positive choices (like "you were able to sneak something out of there") with choices that avoid a negative (like "you got away clean"). In this case, though, I think it makes sense. You might not always *care* about getting away clean. Like, if you sneak into a cave and find it's inhabited by ornery owlbears, you might not care if they catch your scent and start sniffing about because, screw that, you'll just avoid that cave. On the other hand, having that choice sometimes provokes an interesting choice, especially on a 7-9. Yeah, you slipped forward and spotted the kobolds working on something in the tunnel, but it's not clear what. Did

you stick around and get more info or did you slip away unnoticed? Tough call.

When I first presented this move, someone asked whether the choices on the 6- result were necessary. I think they are. Without them, we could easily make the mistake of zooming in on the scout's predicament and playing that out—which is exactly what this move is trying to avoid.

Variations

You could probably tinker with the approaches and the rolled stats pretty easily. The three examples I used cover the majority of cases I can imagine (sneaking, pulling a stakeout, or going incognito) but maybe you can imagine others. Don't push it, though... some attributes just aren't that useful for gathering intel.

You could give a mystical character an advanced move that lets them Scout Ahead via astral projection or scrying, rolling +INT or +WIS but changing the "missing in action" result to "your spirit is somehow ensnared and your body lies insensate; the details will be revealed later."

Speaking of intel, you could use something very similar to this to cover doing research. Tell the GM what you're researching and how, roll the approach stat, and then zoom ahead to the end and the results tell us what you've learned and/or what the complications were.

GM Moves

- ***Reveal an Unwelcome Truth***
 - “What did you see? Hobgoblins. Dozens of them, alert and hunkered down in a fortified camp.”
 - “Okay, cool, so you managed to slink up the walls of the abandoned temple and peer through the broken stained glass, and what you saw chilled you to the bone: they had Malcor! He was tied up and bloodied, and they were clearly setting something up near the altar. Maybe a ritual or something. It didn’t look good.”
- ***Show Signs of an Approaching Threat***
 - “As you finish filling everyone in, you hear something back the way you came. Voices, getting nearer! What do you do?”
 - “About a hundred paces down the ravine, you rounded a corner and spotted a trio of trolls lumbering in your direction. You’ll run smack into each other if you keep on your current course. You got a 7-9, right. What do you choose?”
- ***Turn Their Move Back on Them***
 - “Vaughn’s been gone for, what, maybe 30 minutes now. Ropar, you hear a noise in the dark from the way he went, and you’re thinking it’s him returning to camp. But when you look that way, you catch a glimpse of something short and hunched, eyes reflecting the light of the campfire, then blink, it’s gone. What do you do?”
- ***Separate Them***
 - “You’re slinking forward towards the archway, about to slip inside and see what’s what. The camera’s looking out of the archway at you, we see your face getting closer, eyes wide to peer into the darkness, and then GLARB something thick and ropey shoots out of the dark, grabs you and drags you in before you can make a sound! Ovid, Krikor... Trixie’s been gone entirely too long now... what do you do?”
 - “Yeah, now that the fight’s over and you have a chance to look around, Zil’s nowhere to be found. Zil, you were scouting ahead

and never came back... what happened that caused you to head off alone, further into the Necropolis? What's chasing you, or drawing you in?"

- ***Give an Opportunity that Fits a Class's Abilities***
 - "You exit the pass just as the sun is dropping low, putting you all in shadow. Below, you see some sort of encampment down on the edge of the woods. A couple small fires, at least a dozen or so figures moving about, maybe more. You can't make out any more detail from up here. Anyone want to scout it out?"
 - "What's useful or valuable to you? Well, you're not sure exactly, but it's probably whatever they've got locked up in that fancy chest. You haven't seen a lock like that since you left the civilized lands of Pertjia... definitely beyond your skills but maybe Guyver could get it open. What do you do?"
- ***Show a Downside to Their Race, Class, or Equipment***
 - "You didn't get away clean, though, right? Let's say that, while you were spying on them, one of the trolls looked up abruptly and starting sniffing the air. 'Y'small dat?' it grunted to the others. 'I smells halfling.' The others started sniffing too, and the one closest to you turned in your direction and licked its horrible lips and growled 'Delicious, delicious halfling.' Seemed like a good time to slip away, yeah?"
- ***Offer an Opportunity, with or without Cost***
 - "What should you be on the lookout for? That sorcerer, for sure. He gives you the willies. And what's useful or valuable to you? Well, he left that golden rod in the tent, unattended. You've got one choice left, right? You could use it to grab the rod and get out of there, or you could get away clean. Or ask another question, I guess. What do you do?"
 - "Lady Etrias looks at the map and frowns. 'I dare not commit our troops without knowing what's waiting for us in the swamps.' Diana, she looks you dead in the eye. 'I already owe you so much. But I need to ask another favor. Be my eyes, Diana. The House of Etrias will be in your debt.' What do you do?"

- **Put Someone in a Spot**

- “You pick up Mouse’s bullseye lantern from where it fell and shine it around. At first, the place appears to be just a smallish room, one of the walls caved in and the floor covered in dirt and straw and the rest of Mouse’s things. But a noise above you makes you shine the light up, to see a chimney-like tunnel in the ceiling and, Mouse hanging limply from the top of it, his legs bound up in some gooey mass stuck to the ceiling. He moans a little as you shine the light on him, but he’s clearly out of it. What do you do?”
- “Danbrethe, you’re hauling ass back to the clearing and the others, the gnolls yapping and cackling at your heels. Your friends are clearly on alert and hear the commotion, but don’t seem to have spotted you yet. Then, out of nowhere, this big ropey gnoll bursts out of the brush ahead of you, blocking your path. You’re charging straight into his claws and his leering grin, what do you do?”

Sneaking...

When you **infiltrate a place by stealth**, roll+DEX: **on a 10+**, both; **on a 7-9**, choose 1; **on a 6-**, neither.

- You get in
- You go unnoticed.

Chase Scenes

When you **pursue your quarry**, roll and add...:

- ...+DEX if you attempt to outrun or outmaneuver them
- ...+CON if you must outlast them
- ...+WIS if you track them.

On a 10+, you corner your prey or catch them in the open; on a 7-9, your prey picks one:

- You’ve all but got them, there’s just one challenge in the way
- They’ve gone to ground; you know where they are but they’re hard to get
- They wheel unexpectedly and attack.

When you **run away from determined pursuit**, roll and add...:

...+DEX if you attempt to outrun or outmaneuver them

...+CON if you must outlast them

...+WIS if you seek to lose or befuddle them.

On a 10+, you get away clean; on a 7-9, pick one:

- Ask the GM to describe one last obstacle or challenge; clear it and you'll get away
- Lead them to a place of your choosing, say where
- Turn on them unexpectedly and attack.

Mind Control

When you are **compelled to act against your will**, mark XP if you act as bidden. **If you resist**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, you shake off the compulsion and act as you wish; on a 7-9, choose 1:

- Stand dazed, fighting for control of your mind
- Start acting as compelled but stop yourself at the last moment
- Harm yourself to regain control (1d6 damage, ignores armor)

On a 6-, pick 1:

- Run with it. You come to your senses having done gods-know-what.
- Mark a debility, take 1d6 damage (ignores armor), and do something drastic to regain control.

When you are **ensorcelled, beguiled, or charmed**, ask the GM to describe what the enchantment would have you do (such as "*keep the secret of the Blue Idol*," "*please the dryad and earn her affection*," "*treat Bargle as a trusted friend and confidant*," or "*burn it all down*"). Write this directive down, along with as many boxes as the GM says (1 box for a weak enchantment, 3 for a powerful one, 5 for a truly mighty one).

While you are so enchanted, the GM gains this move:

- Compel them to act on their enchantment

When you **act according to your enchantment, without being compelled to do so**, mark XP. Each session, you can mark XP this way only once per box you have drawn (marked or not).

When you **would act contrary to your enchantment**, it compels you to do otherwise.

When you **resist the compulsion of your enchantment and roll a 10+**, mark one of the boxes. On a 6-, add another box. When you **mark the last box**, you break free.

Design Notes

Mind control is tricky. It violates the one thing that a player typically has complete authority over: their character. But it's also a trope of fantasy and horror. It's going to come up. We should have some way of dealing with it.

As with many things, you could handle mind control with a combination of GM moves and (usually) Defy Danger. The GM uses a monster move (like a vampire's "charm someone") and describes the strange feelings and compulsions, then asks the player what they do. If they acquiesce, cool. If they resist, they're Defying Danger.

But why would they acquiesce? There's no incentive to just go along with the compulsion. This is the kind of situation that benefits from both a stick *and* carrot.

If you're familiar with Apocalypse World ie, you'll recognize the carrot & stick structure from Seduce/Manipulate. When you use it against another PC, on a 10+, they mark XP if they do it and Act Under Fire if they don't. It's a pretty solid move. That's what the **compelled to act against your will** move is modeled on.

I thought about making the move simply "mark XP if you act as bidden; if you resist, you're Defying Danger." That has the advantage of simply asking the player "what do you do" and resolving it appropriately. But the custom move makes for faster resolution. It also establishes that WIS is the resist-mind-control stat (which aligns with rolling +WIS to Defy Danger "through mental fortitude").

More importantly, this move establishes a specific result on a 6-, whereas Defy Danger doesn't. And this specific 6- result is important: you still have a choice. And if you choose to lose control, that loss happens as a fugue state. You don't force the player to play out their character doing things they don't want to do. You just (from that character's standpoint, at least) fade to black and the GM tells when you come to your senses and maybe you remember what you did or maybe you're just leaning up against the wall as the sun

comes up, panting and sweating, with someone's blood on your hands and *what do you do?*

If other PCs interact with the mind-controlled PC during this fugue state, treat the mind-controlled PC as an NPC: make GM moves with them, not player moves like Hack & Slash. Use the character's damage, HP, and Armor, but otherwise wield them like any other NPC or monster you control. Because, for the time being, that's what they are.

Why Two Moves?

The first one (***compelled to act against your will***) is the broader move. I use it by itself for in-the-moment compulsions, like the Voice of a Bene Gesserit (you've read *Dune*, right?) or the hypnotic gaze of a Derro's "fill a mind with foreign thoughts."

The second move (***ensorcelled, beguiled, or charmed***) represents longer-lasting mental influence: a vampire's charming gaze, a dryad's enticement, a demon's curse, the overpowering weight of the One Ring, etc. You'll note that this one also directly ties into and triggers the first one; it doesn't really work on its own.

Ensorcelled, Beguiled, or Charmed

There's a lot going on with this move. You could even argue it's actually multiple moves, but whatever.

The "directive" part was inspired by [Jason Cordova's mind control move presented in the Discern Realities podcast](#):

When you come under the influence of X, the GM gets Y hold (*3 is a good number, but more/less as you see fit*). The GM can spend 1 hold to suggest a course of action that conforms to the following statement...

e.g. I want to cause death and destruction

e.g. I must support Lord Crabapple in his incursion

e.g. Pait the Torchbearer is a traitor

If you take the course of action, mark XP. If you refuse, the GM regains 1 hold.

Jason's move does a nice job of providing a carrot, but I've got four problems with his version:

1. There's no stick. You can just choose to ignore the influence, to no real effect. (Yeah, the GM can keep suggesting courses of action to you, but you can keep ignoring them indefinitely.)
2. There's no incentive for the character to proactively act on the enchantment. It's up to the GM to push it on them.
3. There's nothing inherently preventing you from acting contrary to the enchantment. The GM has to spend 1 hold to keep you in line.
4. You weaken the influence by doing what it wants, rather than by standing up to it. That doesn't jibe with my sense of how manipulation and coercion work. You overcome oppression through resistance, not acquiescence.

The version I've presented here is an attempt to address all four of those concerns. There is both a carrot and a stick (because the GM can trigger the **compelled to act** move whenever). The player marks XP if they act (unbidden) according to the enchantment. The enchantment itself compels them to stay in line. And the mark-the-boxes-when-you-successfully-resist mechanic models the process of standing up for yourself, asserting your will, breaking free of subjugation.

The part where you add an extra box on a miss? That's me being cynical.

Final thought: giving the GM new moves ("compel them to act on their enchantment") in response to conditions (in this case, being enchanted) is something I've played with in other PbtA designs (most notably, in [Heartbreaker World](#)). I think it's valuable here because without it, the GM doesn't *really* have a good GM move that represents "I think you should do this because enchanted." You could argue it's to offer **an opportunity with a cost** or maybe **put them in a spot**, but that's a stretch. More importantly: giving the GM this specific move serves as a reminder that they can and should use it.

Variations

Resisting is Defy Danger

You always roll+WIS to resist when you are **compelled to act**. That might bug you. (It bugs me a little.) Here's a variation that's avoids that:

When you are **compelled to act against your will**, mark XP if you act as bidden. **If you resist**, you're Defying Danger (where the danger is the compulsion to act). Tell us how!

This approach allows your players to tell you *how* they resist, and roll whatever stat makes the most sense based on their description. In this case, the fighter might choose to stab himself in the leg to break free, taking 1d4 damage and rolling +CON. The wizard might mutter a counterspell to herself, rolling +INT. The thief might try to convince himself that such a course of action is silly and totally not something that they'd do, rolling +CHA. You'd then resolve it like any other Defy Danger: on a 10+, it works! On a 7-9, offer a worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice based on the fictional circumstances. On a 6-, make a hard move.

The downsides of this approach are:

- 1) Increased handling time. You've got to negotiate exactly how the PC resists, and on a 7-9 or you've got to come up with something interesting and appropriate
- 2) Players fishing for their best stat. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it can get annoying when players stretch logic to justify using their best stat. *Especially* if they're under an enchantment and are going to be resisting a lot.
- 3) On a 6-, the outcome isn't defined. You make as hard of a GM move as you like.

#3 might not look like a downside, but compare it to the 6- result on the original version ("you come to your senses having done gods-know-what"). That specific result is pretty brutal: they do the thing they didn't want, and the GM controls exactly how far they went. Without that guidance, there are a lot of ways you *could* handle a 6-, and a lot of them aren't great.

Insanity

You could easily tweak these moves to reflect insanity, phobias, or other mental disorders: First, replace the trigger of “When you are ***ensorcelled, beguiled, or charmed...***” with “When ***your mind snaps from the horrors you have seen...***” (or something like that). Then, make the directive reflect the nature of the insanity, such as:

- Hear voices telling you what to do
- View everything (including inanimate objects) as either on your side or against you
- Freak out when confined to small places / exposed to heights / encounter spiders / etc.
- Set things on fire
- Act and think as if you are the Royal Prince of Andalusia, dead some 40 odd years
- Vacillate between hopeless lethargy and manic, barely controlled agitation

This shouldn't need to be said, but: if you're going to include insanity and mental disorders in your game, make sure everyone playing is okay with that, and is okay how such disorders will be represented, and is willing to speak up if they get uncomfortable. This shit is real. To the people it affects (and their loved ones), it's not a fucking joke.

Posthypnotic Suggestions

Want to invoke a creepy, my-mind-is-not-my-own feeling in your players?
Give them a note card that has something like this written on it:

When **your mind touches that of the elder horror**, write your character's name below and give this card back to the GM.

When the **GM gives this card back to you**, read what's on the back.

Read the following command (silently, not out loud):

If you **do what it says**, mark XP and give this card back to the GM.

If you **resist**, roll+WIS: on a 7+, you resist the compulsion but choose 1 (on a 10+) or 2 (on a 7-9):

- Give this card back to the GM.
- Drop to your knees, clutch your head, and lose 1d10 HP
- Start acting on the command, but stop yourself partway through

On a 6-, you come to your senses having done gods-knows-what. Give this card back to the GM.

This doesn't have the "carrot" part of the *ensorcelled, beguiled, or charmed* move. And it's easier to shake off (on a single 7+, you can choose *not* to give the card back).

But it's way creepier. Why? Because at first, the player doesn't *really* know the consequences of giving you the card. They might have suspicions, but unless they look at the back (or have seen this happen to someone else), they don't know for sure what's coming. Even if they've seen you use this trick before, they won't know what the command will be. Suspense builds! Then, when you give them the card, there's the suspense everyone else feels as they read the card and decide what to do. (Oh, also: plenty of players have had terrible, dysfunctional experiences with note-passing at the table. This taps into that unease, too. But, you know, for good!)

GM Moves

- *Use a monster, danger, or location move:*
 - "The vampire's gaze catches your eyes and you feel yourself drowning in them, drowning, losing yourself. What do you do?"
 - "The naga's head sways gracefully back and forth. 'Peacccece,' it hisses. 'Lay down your armsssss and come to meeee.' Your mind fogs and you'd like nothing more than to do what it says. I'll give you 1 XP if you do, or you can roll+WIS to resist."
- *Reveal an unwelcome truth:*
 - "You wake up in the middle of the woods, in your nightshirt, clutching a dagger and soaked in blood. It doesn't appear to be yours. What do you do?"
- *Show signs of an approaching threat:*
 - "As you approach the idol, you hear a noise. It takes a moment before you realize it's not really a *noise*, more like a voice, in your head, saying *sooo looong... waaaaited... sooo... longgggg...*"

- *Turn their move back on them:*
 - “You cast the *charm person* spell, but as you touch Lady Bhalzar, you sense something... wrong. But only for a moment. Now, you’re just thinking about how nice it is to see her and how pleasant her smile is. Write down ‘*Treat Lady Bhalzar as a trusted friend*’ and put two boxes next to it.”
 - “The *contact other plane* spell works, but... uh oh. You feel... *something* in your mind, something unexpected, and dark, and terrible. You try to cut the connection but it won’t let you. ‘TELL ME’ it belows. ‘TELL ME WHERE YOU HAVE HIDDEN THE BLOODTHORN KEY.’”
- *Give an opportunity that fits a class’ abilities:*
 - “Rook is just standing there, glassy eyed, like he’s listening to something you can’t see. You want to use Arcane Art to shake his mind clear? Or what?”
- *Offer an opportunity with a cost:*
 - “‘*Great power! Knowledge!*’ whispers the spirit. “*The strength to crush your foes! Just let me in... let me... in....*’ What do you do?”
 - “You feel the sword, like, *ask*. Not so much with words but with a deep and endless longing. It wants you to plunge into the prisoner’s heart and let it soak in her lifeblood. If you do, you sense it’ll reveal one of its powers to you.”
- *Put someone in a spot*
 - “Bilshi, your faithful porter, turns towards you, touching his cheek where the dryad kissed him. His eyes lock on yours and go cold, then hot with rage. He charges!”

- *Make them backtrack*
 - “Try as you might, you just can’t force yourself to approach the door. The enchantment is too strong. You’ll need to find another way.”
 - “You search and search and search, but can’t find the Red Door, even though you’re sure you saw it earlier! In fact, you don’t even realize how long you’ve been searching until you start to get shaky from hunger. There must be some sort of enchantment keeping you from finding it.”

Reaction Check

When you **approach a wary or hostile NPC and try to communicate**, roll+CHA: on a 10+, they’ll hear you out and choose 1 from the list below; on a 7-9, they’ll hear you out.

- They are impressed, intrigued, or amused by you, as the GM sees fit (*otherwise, they remain wary or hostile*)
- You’ve got their complete attention, for now at least (*otherwise, they remain alert*)
- You glean a valuable insight; ask a question from the Discern Realities list at take +1 forward to act on the answer.

Design Notes

- 1) It’s a callback to old school play.
- 2) It encourages a sort of fairy tale/fantastic setting where high Charisma is universally appealing, regardless of species/cultural norm. Which is both a hugely problematic but hugely interesting trope.
- 3) It’s an encouragement to “try talking first” instead of reacting to hostility with hostility. Talk about the trigger, and why this isn’t something you can (or at least, would want to) use in the middle of a pitched fight.

Distant Shores

by Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

This adds moves and mechanics for more collaborative world-building.

New Moves

Tavern Tales

When the party **researches or swaps tales about a dangerous place you have yet to explore**, choose one or more pieces of information from the list and say how you get it:

- You acquire part of a map, draw it out or otherwise present it to the group.
- You learn of a trap or similar hazard, describe it. When you encounter it, gain advantage on a move that follows.
- You learn of a valuable treasure, describe it and where it is kept.
- You learn of a dangerous enemy or group in the area, describe and/or name them. When you encounter them, gain advantage on a move that follows.
- You learn something useful about the area's history, layout, or politics, say what it is.
- You acquire something that will be particularly useful there (a key, a password, etc.), describe what you got.

Then roll-1 for each piece of information chosen beyond the first. On a 10+, the GM chooses 1 from this list. On a 7-9, the GM chooses 2. On a 6-, the GM chooses 3 and doesn't mark XP.

- Someone or something is following you
- There is a rival ahead of you
- You'll need some help to properly use your information
- The place will be ready for you
- Your research comes at an additional cost (time, money, etc.)
- One of your pieces of information will be incomplete, slightly off, or come with a catch, you'll only discover this when you get there or try to use it.

Commentary

Tavern Tales is a method for the players to take an active role in shaping the world by saying what lies ahead in while allowing the GM to make moves to establish future dangers. It allows you to easily establish details about a place in a quick montage to get to the next leg of the adventure.

Raid

When you **plan an attack on a place**, describe your approach and your primary objective, then whoever made the plan rolls...

- +1 if you exploit a known weakness or vulnerability in your target
- +1 if you have allies to coordinate your attack with or someone on the inside
- +1 if you have detailed knowledge of the terrain, either from a map or a scouting report
- +1 if you have the drop on them or the element of surprise on your side.

On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one:

- You have the initiative; your enemies are either caught off-guard, demoralized, or in disarray
- You have seized some tactical advantage that gives you the upper hand in the fight, the GM will tell you what
- There are no unexpected complications present.

On a 6-, your plan has gone awry; the GM will describe the scene with you already at a disadvantage or in a desperate situation.

The GM will describe the starting point of the action as the battle is joined or as your main forces breach the perimeter, based on your roll and options chosen. They will also ask some establishing questions as to what happened and present you with the opportunity to act.

Commentary

Raid is a move to get into the action quickly without getting bogged down in excessive planning or coordination.

Downtime

When **the party has a few weeks of downtime in a steading**, each character spends a valuable item, or a shiny item if someone else is covering their lodgings, then each player rolls...

- +1 for each additional valuable item spent
- +1 if they have returned triumphant after dealing with a nearby threat
- +1 if the steading is safe
- +1 if they have some support here (a patron, a family, some loyal followers, etc.)

On a 10+, pick 2 Benefits. On a 7-9, pick 2 Benefits and 1 Complication. On a 6-, pick 1 Benefit, and the GM will pick a Complication for you, which they get to describe for you.

Any Complications chosen cannot contradict a Benefit you have chosen for this roll. If you can't or won't spend the required item, don't roll; just take the 6- result and don't mark XP.

While you are having downtime, the world moves on.

Regardless of your rolls or choices, the GM will describe how any fronts or threats in the world advance during your downtime.

The action will begin again when the party has gathered and is setting off on their next adventure. Set the premise up front, informed by the goals and interests established during the previous adventure and Downtime.

Commentary

This move replaces and supersedes the Bolster and Carouse moves from. Any move or ability that grants advantage or disadvantage to Carouse grants the same to Downtime.

Benefits

- ★ You train and prepare for your next adventure; hold 3 preparation. When you roll for any move, you can spend a preparation after rolling to add +1 to the roll, describing how your training aids you in this situation.
- ★ You get some rest and medical attention; remove all of your debilities and heal any lingering diseases or conditions.
- ★ You do some research; name a dangerous place you have yet to explore and choose an option from the Tavern Tales list. (Don't make that

move; just choose an option, it's yours.) You may choose this Benefit more than once.

- ★ You work on a project; tell the GM what you wish to accomplish (something built or crafted, something repaired, something achieved, etc.) and work with the GM to determine what the lasting benefits might be. The GM will then tell you one or more of the following:
 - It will cost something extra (money, etc.)
 - You'll need to do something else first
 - You'll need help from someone else
 - It will take more time than you currently have to complete, you'll have to pick it up again later
 - It will come with an obligation once complete
 - It's going to mean exposing yourself—and others—to danger
- ★ When you fulfill all of the GM's requirements, your project is complete and you gain its benefits.
 - You build a relationship with someone important, perhaps a useful contact, an influential group, or a treasured family member; say who they are and describe how you earn their gratitude, assuage your guilt to them, or make a real difference in their life. If you use them to find or recruit Followers, you can also make the Recruit move right now, with advantage.
- ★ You work a regular job for a while; say what you do, and gain a purse of coins (valuable, 1 weight).

Complications

- ★ One of your possessions has been lost, stolen, or decayed; say which one and how it was lost. (This is in addition to the item spent at the start of this move)
- ★ You've made an enemy, damaged your reputation, or ruined a relationship with someone, say who and how. Rest assured, they'll collect.
- ★ You've gotten yourself entangled in some complication for your next adventure, say either who is now involved or how things have become more complicated.
- ★ You have an unsavory or cumbersome task to do on your next adventure; describe it and why you feel obliged to do it.
- ★ You've incurred an ongoing obligation; describe it, write it down, and say why you feel bound to uphold it.

- ★ You've drawn the attention of a threat or an enemy; say who they are, and they'll be ready for you, they are on your trail, or they have a head start.

New Mechanics

Dungeon Crawling

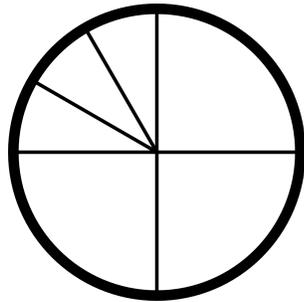
The following is a new method for procedural dungeon creation. Rather than having a planned map in mind, the GM instead has themes and features they would like to include. What is revealed is determined randomly. The methods presented here are adapted from *The Perilous Wilds* by Jason Lutes.

To create a dungeon using this method, the GM starts with an overall description or title for the dungeon, such as "Dwarven Prison," "Natural Lair," or "Cult Library". From there, the GM can brainstorm a few themes; more specific words or phrases that describe the atmosphere of the dungeon. A dungeon's theme is a reference point for you to describe the environment as the party explores, and should ideally create a few ideas for locations or encounters within the dungeon. A given theme might obviously relate to the dungeon's overall environment, or it might not; you get to make sense of the juxtaposition through play. An unusual theme may represent an interloper or a recent change. Generally speaking, the more themes a dungeon has, the greater its variety of contents.

Examples of themes:

- ★ Criminal activity
- ★ Torture or punishment
- ★ Rot and decay
- ★ Forgotten knowledge
- ★ Chaos and destruction
- ★ Planar powers
- ★ Elemental power (which one?)
- ★ Scheming evil
- ★ Secrets and trickery
- ★ Endless hunger
- ★ Holy war
- ★ Undeath

When you enter a dungeon, the GM will start a dungeon clock. This clock represents the state of alertness of the dungeon and ambient danger from being inside of hostile territory. Just like in *Apocalypse World*, the clock has six segments, three that take a quarter of the circle and the final three each taking a twelfth of the circle:



Source: [Nakade](#). Used by permission.

For a relatively safe and uncomplicated dungeon, the crawl starts with all six segments clear. A more dangerous or complex dungeon begins with one segment filled in (3:00), and a deathtrap or very paranoid dungeon begins with two segments filled in (6:00).

Dungeon Crawl

When you **delve into the unknown regions of a dungeon**, whoever is leading the way rolls...

- +1 if the way is illuminated or you don't need to carry a light source
- +1 if they have been to this place before or if they have a map of this place
- +1 if the enemies here are unalert, distracted, or have recently retreated or suffered defeat

On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one:

- You are in an advantageous position to face whatever threat lies ahead, describe how after the GM describes the next area
- The area ahead is unique somehow and/or connected to a theme of the dungeon; the GM will describe it and may also prompt you for input, the GM will then make an appropriate dungeon move, and you gain 1 Progress
- Clear one dungeon clock segment, and describe how you secure or mark the path, or find a notable landmark.

On a 6-, fill one dungeon clock segment, and you will be at a disadvantage in the next room, with the person who led the way being placed most directly in harm's way.

Commentary

The mechanism of the clock is mostly descriptive. When the clock is unfilled, the path ahead and behind you is clear. As the clock fills up, the inhabitants of the dungeon become more alert and proactive towards the PCs presence within their home. The GM should have the dungeon respond to the actions of the PCs based upon how full the clock is. As the clock ticks closer to midnight, the dungeon's defenses come into play. Monsters may send out patrols or take up defensive positions. Bosses may accelerate their plans or begin preparations to flee—possibly taking the loot with them. The more filled the clock, the greater the sense of urgency and fog of war that should be conveyed; there is less time to plan or analyze the situation before trouble comes knocking. By 12:00, the dungeon is actively attacking the PCs and the monsters completing their own objectives. There should be no rest or safety until the dungeon is completely empty of foes or until the PCs are running for their lives.

Time and safety are both resources that can be consumed as per the GM move “use up their resources”. If the characters spend some time waiting around, performing a time-consuming task, or doing something that draws attention to themselves, the GM may fill a clock segment to reflect the dungeon becoming more alert to their presence.

Go to Ground

When you **seal or conceal yourself in a secure or hidden place to Make Camp while in the dungeon**, whoever is taking watch rolls+unfilled dungeon clock segments. On a 10+, choose one. On a 7-9, choose two. On a 6-, all three.

- The enemy regroups while you rest, fill a clock segment
- You must backtrack a bit, lose 1 Progress
- Your rest will be interrupted

If you do anything except keep a strict watch—including resting, refocusing, anything that draws away your concentration—you roll with disadvantage.

When the dungeon clock is at 12:00, you can't make this move; there is no safety to be found here.

Commentary

Progress represents how much of the dungeon you have explored and how close you are to your goal. When you have acquired enough Progress, you have reached your goal in this area; the exit on the opposite side, the dungeon's heart where the treasure lies, or the dungeon's master. Small dungeons should require 3 Progress to complete, longer dungeons between 5 to 7 Progress, and a truly epic dungeon can require 10 Progress to complete.

Progress is not kept between expeditions, though beginning from a known place part of the way through may warrant requiring less Progress to reach your goal than if you started from the dungeon entrance.

Reaching your goal does not necessarily mean that you have found everything in the dungeon. There may yet be more to find, in some hidden wing of the dungeon that remains undiscovered or sealed for the next expedition here. Hold on to your maps!

Progress may also be used as a spendable resource to accomplish side goals, such as finding hidden caches of loot, making important discoveries, revealing clues, or mapping an area.

Plunder

When you **search side paths of the dungeon for something useful**, choose what you want to find or make and roll +Progress or unfilled dungeon clock segments, whichever is less:

- A way to escape the dungeon (all of your Progress, even if you hold no Progress)
- A map of the dungeon up to this point (1 Progress)
- A defensible position where you can rest; describe how, and if you make the Go To Ground move now, choose one less option, hit or miss (1 Progress)
- Some useful information or a clue about this dungeon (1 Progress)
- A few useful Supplies (1 weight, 1 use for 1 Progress, or 3 uses for 2 Progress)
- Treasure, ask the GM what it is (typically 1 weight, shiny for 1 Progress, or valuable for 2 Progress)

On a hit, you find what you're looking for if you spend the indicated amount of Progress. On a 7-9, you either encounter trouble on the way or it takes a long time (fill a dungeon clock segment), your choice.

While the dungeon clock is at 12:00, you have disadvantage when you make this move.

Return to the Dungeon

When you **travel a known path through the dungeon to a specific place**, name your destination and ask the GM what it will cost (clock segments filled, uses of Supplies, etc.), then roll as per the Dungeon Crawl move. On a hit, you reach your destination without incident and it costs no more than what the GM said it would. On a 10+, choose one:

- It takes less time and/or resources to make it there
- You discover something interesting or useful along the way, such as a resource, shelter, or a landmark
- You get the drop on a threat, either on the path or at your destination
- You can make a map to this place.

On a 6-, your journey is interrupted; the GM will tell you how, with the person who led the way being placed most directly in harm's way.

Commentary

If you're having trouble coming up with interesting themes or encounters, ask yourself the following questions to try and get a brainstorm going. These questions may also help you answer any questions the players have about the dungeon—or you can turn the tables and ask them what they know instead—in character, of course.

- ★ Who or what is believed to have built this place?
- ★ For what purpose was it built?
- ★ How did it come to ruin?
- ★ What remains of this place from before?
- ★ What do you notice right away when you enter? (smells, temperature, humidity, sounds, etc.)
- ★ What dangers is it rumored to conceal? (monsters, forces, traps, etc.)
- ★ What discoveries may lie within? (clues, puzzles, treasure, etc.)
- ★ How can things go wrong, or become more complicated?
- ★ What's at stake for the PCs?

- ★ What is the dungeon's Instinct? (what does the dungeon want to do, which usually causes trouble)
 - To harrow them with relentless destruction
 - To consume and destroy all who enter
 - To spew raiders and marauders on neighboring lands
 - To erupt and destroy with lava and ash
 - To harbor the terrors of the night
 - To trap them in labyrinthine tunnels
 - To drown them in the ever rising tides
 - To confuse and disorient them with tricks, illusions, or secrets
 - To bleed them of all hope and happiness
 - To isolate them in darkness
 - To corrupt their thoughts with dark impulses
 - To sustain the Eternal Sleeper's dream
 - To awe them with its majesty
 - To eternally relive an ancient battle
- ★ What dungeon moves does the Instinct suggest?
- ★ What established dangers or fronts are involved, or could be involved?

Compendium Classes

Once a character has reached level 10, they can no longer make the Level Up move. Their level will forever stay at 10. This does not, however, mean that their growth or story is over. Characters who wish to advance further must acquire a compendium class in order to do so.

A compendium class is a prestige award given to characters who have accomplished something truly significant. When your character performs the task that would entitle them to learn the starting move of a compendium class, the GM will give them the corresponding compendium class insert to add to their character's playbook.

Compendium classes have a starting move and a few additional advanced moves. The first move in each compendium class must be taken first; after that, any additional moves in that compendium class can be gained in any order. Multiclass moves, such as the Bard's Jack of All Trades move, or the option to take an advanced move from another playbook via Level Up at level 6 or higher can never gain moves from compendium classes.

Moves from compendium classes are gained by spending XP. When you have at least 20 XP and enough downtime and meet the qualifications for a compendium class, you may spend 20 XP to gain a move from one of your compendium classes. Note that this is not the same as leveling up; you cannot choose any other options from the Level Up list, nor does your level increase.

You can take compendium class moves before level 10, but once you reach level 10, you can only gain new moves by taking compendium class moves.

When a character performs a deed which would unlock a compendium class, the GM may, at their discretion, offer a "loan" of XP to the character so they may purchase the opening move right away. The loaned XP must be paid back before the character can resume progress to their next level or purchase other compendium class moves. This option should be exercised when both the player and the GM consider it fictionally appropriate for the character to gain the compendium class' move; for example, if there is about to be some downtime for the character to hone their new ability.

We present here several examples of compendium classes suitable for most campaigns. However, you are encouraged to develop your own compendium classes as rewards that are more specifically tailored to your own individual games, worlds and styles of play.

Oathkeeper

by Chris Sakkas

After you swear an oath to keep someone, some place or something safe, and that oath remains unfulfilled and unbroken, you may take this move when you level up.

Zealous

Your oath to keep someone, some place or something ('that which you love') safe lasts while that person, place or thing survives or until you void your oath. When your oath ends (for whatever reason), you can swear another to protect the same or a different person, place or thing.

When you're **dying**, you do not take your Last Breath immediately. Succumbing to your wounds is a Danger you must Defy if you are to do anything else.

Once you've taken Zealous, the following moves count as class moves for you. In addition to your normal list of moves, you may choose from this list when you level up.

Perceptive Link

Add this question to Discern Realities: "How could this threaten that which I love?"

Loyal Defender

While **in sight of that which you love**, you and that which you love both gain +1 armor.

Blood for Blood

When you **inflict an amount of damage on yourself**, that which you love heals the same amount.

Holy Protection

Requires Loyal Defender

That which you love cannot be harmed or damaged until you are dead, unconscious or helpless.

Runemaster

by Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

When you have mastered the carving of runes and learned one of the great Runes of power, you may purchase the following move.

Rune-Crafter

You have learned a rune of power that can imbue objects with magic. Select the rune you have learned; when you learn other runes, add them to your list too:

- Mountain
- Fire
- Ice
- Moon
- Shadow
- Sun
- Thunder
- Law
- _____
- _____

When you **carve a rune onto something to imbue it with that rune's power**, describe the effect that your rune has, and if the GM agrees that it makes sense in the context of your chosen rune, roll+INT. On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one.

- The effect is permanent, as long as the rune remains whole and unmarred
- The effect does not have any known side effects
- The effect does not have any weird limitations.

On a 6-, the item is cursed. The GM will tell you the nature of the curse, but only after it is too late.

A given object can hold only one rune at a time, but you can always end any effect you create by erasing your rune. Any item you enchant always has at least 1 weight.

If you have the move Rune-Crafter, you may purchase these moves as well.

Carved In Stone

The runes you carve can easily withstand the ravages of time, nature, and casual use; they cannot be removed by anything short of deliberate magic, and even then the person dispelling your rune takes 1d6 damage of magical backlash when they do so. This does not affect you willingly erasing your own rune, which you can always do without risk.

Soulforger

You can now carve runes upon living objects, including people (ouch!). Your subject must be either willing or restrained for you to enchant them, and the GM will also tell you a complication that arises from trying to carve runes upon them.

Runic Mastery

When you carve a rune, on a 12+ the GM will tell you one further thing you can do to perfect your enchantment. When you do it, you get the third option from the list.

Scout

by Jason Lutes, [The Perilous Wilds](#)

When you have Scouted Ahead on at least three forays into the wild and back, this compendium class becomes available, with the following starting move.

Know the Land

This move may be taken multiple times. Each time you take this move, choose 1 region in which you have spent at least a week traveling. This region is considered familiar to you.

When you **Spout Lore about a familiar region**, roll+WIS instead of +INT.

When you have Know the Land, you may take one of the following advanced moves when you Level Up.

Read the Land

When you **survey the territory ahead from a good vantage point**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, the GM must answer all 3 questions from the list below. On a 7-9, ask the GM 2 questions from the list below. On a 6-, mark XP, and ask 1 question:

- What danger lies ahead?
- What is the safest route across this territory?
- Where ahead will I find refuge?

In any case, take +I forward to the next time you act on any answer.

Be the Land

When you **conceal yourself in a familiar region**, say how you do it and roll+DEX. On a 10+, you become nigh invisible, and difficult to locate even with senses other than sight, as long as you do not attract attention to yourself. On a 7-9, as above, but you must remain still to go unnoticed.

Sense Danger

When you **are subject to an imminent but unseen threat**, the GM must tell you; then, roll+WIS. On a 10+, the GM tells you which way it's coming from, and you can do two things before the threat manifests. On a 7-9, as above, but you only get to do one thing.

Survivor

by Jacob Randolph and Timekeeper,
from [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

When you survive a terrible doom or cataclysm against overwhelming odds, you may purchase the following move.

Eater of Ashes

You have endured terrible ordeals, which have left their mark upon you. Choose two marks, and describe them:

- Burning Scars: When you are in danger, the scar glows and burns.
- Testament Written Upon Flesh: When you take damage, your next damage roll gains advantage.
- Bloodied Hands: Your body is a weapon with the *hand* and *forceful* tags.
- Broken Heart: You never need to Defy Danger against fear or pain, just take the 10+ result for such a move.
- Shattered Mind: Any force that would control or manipulate your mind does not affect you.
- Burdened Soul: When you take your Last Breath, you roll with advantage.
- Hardened Bones: You have +1 armor.

Additionally, when you gain a new Survivor move (not this one), hold +1 Pain. When you suffer great personal harm, you may spend a Pain to ignore that harm and choose another mark from the above list.

If you have the move Eater of Ashes, you may purchase these moves as well.

Unstoppable Force

When you **suffer a debility, condition, or restraint and act in spite of it**, roll+CON. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 2. On a 6-, hold 1 anyway, but after you spend it your debility, condition, or restraint grows worse. You can spend a hold from this move to completely ignore all debilities, conditions, and restraints upon you for a few crucial moments.

Immovable Object

When you **Defend**, you get +1 hold, even on a miss, and add the following options to the Defend list:

- You take the full brunt of their attack, but their weapons break against you
- You glare at an approaching enemy, stopping them in their tracks.

Alone Against the World

When you **stand alone against a major approaching threat**, roll+CON. On a 10+, after a glorious standoff, you drive the threat back, taking some damage. On a 7-9, after a grueling struggle, you drive the threat back, but you suffer a permanent scar—physical, mental, or emotional, the GM will describe it. On a 6-, take your Last Breath; after a desperate attempt, you have failed. Pain (c.f. Hardened) cannot prevent or mitigate any harm suffered from this move.

Wielder

adapted from [Unlimited Dungeons](#), by Timekeeper

When you **acquire a legendary weapon or imbue your own weapon with power from a legendary monster slain by it**, you may purchase the following move:

Signature Weapon

This is your weapon. There are many like it, but this one is yours. Your weapon is your best friend. It is your life. You master it as you master your life. Your weapon, without you, is useless. Without your weapon, you are useless. You must wield your weapon true.

Choose a special power for your weapon, or if you found your weapon, the GM will choose a power for you:

- Blazes with fire when drawn, add the fiery tag
- Blessed by the gods, add the divine tag
- Bane, instantly kills with a single hit one type of enemy (name them! _____)
- Vorpal blade, ignores armor
- Wounds delivered with this weapon never heal without powerful magic
- Amazingly hard, can cut through solid stone like butter
- Breaks enchantments upon enemies it strikes
- Glows when danger is near
- _____
- _____

The GM will also tell you something of what your weapon desires. When you perform a mighty deed that satisfies your weapon's desires, you may choose another special power for your weapon as it grows in legendary power. When you act against your weapon's desires, it may fight against you or deny you its powers. If you have the move Signature Weapon, you may purchase these moves as well.

Blacksmith

When you have **access to a forge**, you can graft the magical properties of another weapon onto your signature weapon. This process destroys the magical weapon. Your signature weapon gains the magical powers of the destroyed weapon.

Heirloom

When you **consult the spirits that reside within your signature weapon**, they will give you an insight relating to the current situation, and might ask you some questions in return, roll+CHA. On a 10+, the GM will give you good detail. On a 7-9, the GM will give you an impression.

Hunger

When you **attack an enemy you have vowed to defeat**, your weapon deals damage with Advantage against that enemy. When you **attack anyone else**, you deal damage with Disadvantage. The hunger is sated, and the effect ends, only once your weapon delivers the killing blow to any enemy.

Trophy Hunter

by Heads, "[Hunger](#)"

When you **slay an important or dangerous creature**, you may claim a trophy from its body. You gain +1 damage for every trophy you carry on your person, but no more than one trophy per creature and each trophy weighs 1.

Alternative Subsystems

Abstracted Wealth

by TimeKeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#),
adapted from material by Jeremy Strandberg

No longer do you have to count every coin spent or track every arrow used. The bulk of the player characters' equipment is replaced with a single resource called Supplies. Treasure discovered is not tracked in value of coins but by a tag associated with that type of loot.

Supplies (3 uses, 1 weight)

When you **search your pack for something useful and spend 1 use of Supplies**, you produce a common, mundane item, something that you could have conceivably been carrying. Add the item to your inventory.

Supplies are a catch-all resource for any type of useful gear that an adventurer might carry in their pack, including food, water, bandages, and arrows. Supplies are similar to adventuring gear, but their utility encompasses additional purposes.

One use of Supplies is...

- ❖ Enough food to feed everyone in the party for one day's travel or one instance of Making Camp
- ❖ A use of adventuring gear or something worth a few coins
- ❖ Some extra arrows (c.f. Volley), a throwing knife, or a dagger
- ❖ Healing supplies for the First Aid move (see below)

Commentary

At the GM's option, Supplies may have additional properties, limitations, or utility, based upon fictional circumstances. For example, Supplies bought in a dirt-poor steading may have only very crude or simple uses, or if your pack has been soaked with sewage, you can't produce food from your Supplies anymore.

First Aid

by TimeKeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

When you **spend a few minutes tending to someone's injuries**, spend 1 use of Supplies and roll+INT. On a 10+, do both if needed; on a 7-9, choose one:

- Roll 1d6 to determine how much HP the injured recovers.
- You stabilize any dangerous wounds they have.

On a 6-, or if the injured had recently suffered a *messy* attack, the GM may introduce an additional complication from the injury.

New Tags for Treasure

Loot is no longer measured in valuation of coins. Instead, pieces of loot are assigned a tag, stating roughly how much they are worth. There are four tags which describe loot, in order of increasing value: *shiny*, *valuable*, *precious*, and *priceless*.

A *shiny* piece of loot is enough for...

- ★ A handful of coins
- ★ A pretty trinket or bauble
- ★ A night at a poor-quality inn for the party—two nights if you don't mind the floor of the common room, or a week for just you
- ★ A bag of Supplies (3 uses, 1 weight)
- ★ A common weapon (1 or 2 weight)
- ★ A shield (+1 armor, 2 weight)
- ★ A suit of leather armor (1 armor, 1 weight)
- ★ A week's wages of unskilled labor
- ★ A dose of antitoxin
- ★ Medical attention from an apprentice priest or surgeon

A *valuable* piece of loot is enough for...

- ★ A purse of coins (1 weight)
- ★ A shipment of trade goods, enough to fill a small cart
- ★ A fine gem or a handful of semi-precious gemstones
- ★ A week's stay at an inn for the party, or a month for yourself
- ★ A bag of Supplies for every member of the party
- ★ A quality weapon (add one of precise, forceful, far, 1 piercing, or +1 damage)
- ★ A horse and cart

- ★ A riding horse with saddle
- ★ A suit of chainmail (2 armor, clumsy, 3 weight)
- ★ A healing potion
- ★ A night of feasting, strong drink, and entertainment
- ★ A week's wages of skilled labor
- ★ A fine musical instrument
- ★ A holy relic of moderate importance
- ★ Some arcane materials (scrolls, crystals, enchanted candles)
- ★ Medical care from a skilled priest or surgeon

A *precious* piece of loot is enough for...

- ★ A chest of coins (3 weight)
- ★ A work of fine art, jewelry or similar relic, like a crown
- ★ People to notice and start talking when you're waving around that kind of wealth; expect stories about how you looted this
- ★ Knowledge that people will kill for
- ★ A month's stay at a upscale inn for the party, including meals, or a season for just yourself
- ★ A small cottage for yourself or a simple workshop
- ★ A small ship, single-masted and seaworthy but little more
- ★ A trained warhorse, complete with barding
- ★ A suit of plate armor (3 armor, clumsy, 4 weight) or similar custom work of quality craftsmanship by a trained professional
- ★ A holy relic of exceptional importance

A *priceless* piece of loot is enough for...

- ★ An entire treasure horde
- ★ A truly legendary artifact or piece of art
- ★ Weapons and armor to outfit a small army
- ★ Knowledge that could shift the balance of power in the land
- ★ A fine house or manor, including lands
- ★ Someone to start or buy a major business establishment for themselves, like an fine-quality inn or guildhouse
- ★ A large merchant ship or galley, capable of carrying a lot
- ★ A year of living in luxury for the entire party or several years for just you
- ★ Some serious attention drawn your way; just talking about it will get even kings and nobles' eyeing you
- ★ Most adventurers to seriously consider retirement

The precise exchange rates between tags is imprecise and variable, but in general, a valuable piece of loot is worth 3-5 shiny pieces of loot, and a precious piece of loot is worth 3-5 valuable pieces of loot. Priceless loot is just that, it can't be traded for and it is very difficult to exchange for coin.

Some types of loot like sacks of coins can be divvied up; others, like objects of art, need to be fenced. This may present further complications; small villages will be unlikely to have the resources to exchange a precious work of art for usable coin.

Random Treasure

The changes to the way loot works necessitate a new random treasure table.

Monsters, like adventurers, collect shiny and useful things. When the players search the belongings of a monster (be they on their person or tucked away somewhere), describe them honestly. If the monster has accumulated some wealth, you can roll that randomly. Start with the monster's damage, modified as follows if the monster is:

- ★ Hoarder: roll twice on this table, taking both results
- ★ Far from home: add at least one use of Supplies worth of food (usable by anyone with similar taste)
- ★ Magical: add some strange, possibly magical item that reflects their nature
- ★ Divine: add a sign of a deity (or deities)
- ★ Planar: add something alien or otherwise not of this earth that reflects their nature
- ★ Lord over others: +1d6 to the roll
- ★ Ancient and noteworthy: +1d6 to the roll

Roll the monster's damage plus any added dice to find the monster's treasure:

1. Nothing but a few worthless scraps, sorry
2. A pretty trinket or bauble (shiny, 1 weight)
3. A handful of coins or a semi-valuable piece of jewelry, such as a plain silver ring or a gold earring (shiny, 0 weight)
4. Some mundane items useful to the current situation (1d6-3 uses of Supplies, minimum 1 use)
5. A piece of useful information (clues, notes, etc.) and roll again
6. A shipment of trade goods or commodities (valuable, 1d6+1 weight)

7. A piece of treasure, such as a silver statuette, a bottle of exotic perfume, a silk robe embroidered with gold, or a jade chess set (valuable, 1 weight)
8. A purse of coins (valuable, 1 weight)
9. A gem or small piece of jewelry (valuable, 0 weight)
10. A minor magical trinket (valuable, weight varies)
11. A chest of coins and other valuables (precious, 3 weight)
12. Information people would kill for (blackmail, the location of a hoard, powerful magic, etc.) and roll again
13. A work of fine art or a rare, sought-after relic (precious, 1 weight, fragile)
14. A piece of very fine treasure, such as a crown or scepter, made of gold, jewels, and other precious things (precious, 2 weight)
15. A potent magical item (precious, weight varies)
16. Precious gems or pieces of exquisite jewelry (precious, 1 weight)
17. Information people would kill for (blackmail, the location of a hoard, world-shattering magic, etc.) and roll again
18. A fantastic treasure of great renown, thought lost forever (priceless, 2d6 weight)
19. A hoard (priceless, 2d6 weight), which also contains 1d6 additional rolls (ignore future 19+ results)

Have What You Need

by Jeremy Strandberg, [Homebrew World](#)

Add to your playbook six diamonds—◇◇◇◇◇◇—and lightly pencil them in.

When you **decide that you had something all along**, clear a ◇ (or ◇◇) from your undefined gear and mark an item or slot to indicate that you have it. If you mark a slot, fill it in with a common, mundane item.

Alternately, expend 1 use of Supplies (instead of undefined gear) to produce a small, common, mundane, item.

Expendables (rations, bandages, etc.) are condensed into “Supplies.” Adventuring gear is now a combo of “undefined” items and expending Supplies. Track ammo as a status on weapons/equipment.

Common, Mundane Items

Examples of stuff you can produce when you Have What You Need. What constitutes common and mundane will vary. A mirror might be common and mundane in some games, but might be the height of luxury in others. Small items: tinderbox, candle, vial of oil, chalk, ball of yarn, whistle, bandages, water skin, flask of whiskey, hardtack, spoon, small bowl, drinking jack, strip of jerky, tin of lard, bar of soap, needle & thread, snow goggles (with the slits), extra pair of wool socks, thick leather gloves, grappling hook, empty sack, medicinal herbs, ball of wax, climbing piton, teapot, parchment, ink pot & quill, metal file, etc.

◇ items: coil of rope (~50 ft), length of chain, torch, lantern, pick, shovel, mattock, prybar, mallet, hacksaw, block & tackle, blacksmith's tongs, belows, bee smoker, walking stick, fishing pole, snowshoes, bedroll, change of clothes, cloak, blanket, book, harp, drum, keepsake box, pouch of flour, etc.

◇◇ items: firewood, fishing net, roll-out sledge, quern stone, birdcage, pop-tent, full set of manacles, maul, ten-foot pole, 100-ft coil of sailing rope, quarter-keg of ale, bear trap, saddlebags, oilcloth tarp, etc.

Valuable Items

A valuable item (like a pouch of coins or a gemstone) is worth enough for:

- ★ Everyone in the party to Resupply
- ★ A decent horse, with saddle or a cart
- ★ A sturdy, covered wagon
- ★ A few weeks in a decent inn
- ★ A night of high living and decadence
- ★ A bribe for a merchant or minor official
- ★ A skilled laborer's wages for a week
- ★ A group of unskilled laborers' wages for a week, or a single laborer's wages for a month.

Precious and Priceless Items

A precious item (like a gold idol, a jeweled scepter, a chest of coins, etc.) is worth enough for:

- ★ A few months of high living
- ★ A small cottage and land to farm
- ★ A modest shop in town
- ★ A small ship, single-masted and seaworthy
- ★ A trained warhorse, barding and all

A priceless item is worth enough to set you up for life, if you can sell it. Good luck with that.

Random Treasure Table

Roll the monster's damage (or if no monster is around, a d6). If...

- ★ It hoards wealth roll twice, take both
- ★ It lords over others, +1d4 to roll
- ★ It's ancient or noteworthy, +1d4 to roll
- ★ It's "civilized"..
 - and far from home, +Supplies (1 use)
 - this is its lair, +Supplies (2d4 uses)
- ★ It's magical, +something *strange, magic*
- ★ It's divine, +some sign of its god(s)
- ★ It's planar, +something not of this world

Results:

1. Bauble, shiny, handful of coins (*small*)
2. Mundane item, useful to current situation*
3. Pouch of coins (*valuable, small*)
4. Minor magical trinket (magical, *)
5. Clue, foreshadowing, or useful intel*
6. Trade goods (*valuable, immobile*)
7. Expensive yet mundane item (*valuable, **)
8. Gem or tiny art object (*valuable, small*)
9. Magical aura/artifice/portal/effect/etc. (*immobile*)
10. Something big and really heavy, but really valuable, like a masterwork marble statue or a gold-plated altar (*precious, immobile*)
11. Chest of coins/valuables (*precious, ◇◇, clumsy*)
12. Work of fine art or rare/sought-after relic (*precious, clumsy, **)
13. Potent magical item (*)
14. Crown, scepter, orb, etc. (*precious, ◇*)
15. Precious gem or tiny art object (*precious, small*)
16. Lore people would kill for—blackmail, the location of a hoard, the info needed to learn a new spell, etc. (*precious, **)
17. Lore that could start wars (*priceless, **)
18. A hoard (*priceless, immobile*) containing 2d4 additional rolls (ignore future i8+ results).

* : it's small: it doesn't take up a gear slot; ◇: it takes up a gear slot;

◇◇: it takes up two gear slots

Wealth in a Modern Campaign

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Wealth is an abstract measure of how much a character can afford to spend on something, right now (in credit, debit, or cash) and how easily they can get that cash in hand to spend.

Starting characters are assumed to have enough wealth to buy a meal, keep their car in gas, throw a cheap party if needed, and satisfy their existing interest payments.

They also have a source of income that more or less covers the above. Usually this is a steady job, but a pension or trust fund works too. Wealth, and sources of it, are resources, ones you can take away, threaten, or offer chances to improve or replace with supernatural ones that are far more lucrative • and messy.

As long as a character has a source of income that covers their living expenses, they're fine, though you can and should use the implied fiction of "being late for work" or "a partner who wonders what they really are".

If they don't have an income, bring pressure to bear when you have an opportunity to make a suitable move.

Handle loot (finite treasure and small windfalls won on adventures) on a case-by-case basis. Generally, loot opens doors or allows the character to buy something they otherwise couldn't, or gives a bonus to moves where flashing around cash (or that kind of loot, in the case of art or jewelry or security chips) matters.

Bonuses from loot can be ongoing or forward, depending on the situation. When a player opts to use a loot bonus, ask them the source and tell them how much it's worth and if it'll likely be used up, before they commit to using it.

Remember that loot is a resource and subject to GM Moves. Modern day loot, the kind you take off a guy you just killed who you know was a vampire but maybe doesn't look so much like one now, isn't easily transferable, or it has serious strings attached, often of the legal variety. Don't be afraid to ask your players, "hey, you killed him before you got his atm password, how are you going to get into his bank account now?" And if they do make a big score, ask them how they're hiding it or laundering it.

Otherwise, use common sense: if a character steals a million dollars, buying everyone lunch isn't an issue in the fiction. The mobster who is owed that cash? That's the issue that's going to make for a good story.

Attributes, Streamlined

The six standard attributes are a key part of compatibility with 5e and its predecessors, and important for easily incorporating community-made material. However, if you really dislike the six attributes, check out “[Dungeon World with 4 Ability Scores](#)” by Matthew Danyeur or [Chasing Adventure](#) (which removes Constitution).

Blood Magic

by Lester Ward, [Fourth World](#)

CW: self-harm

Blood magic draws its power from sacrifice, usually a small amount of blood. At best, blood magic is a moral gray area, as its practice once provided the only defense against the horrors, but also a tool for corruption. Even so, its practice is common enough that most know what it is and probably know someone who uses it.

Not all namegivers practice blood magic, but many do. The label “namegiver” is not merely an honorific, nor some sort of gauge of intelligence. Giving something a name can alter its pattern, making naming a magical act.

Practicing blood magic is a one way street: once you start down the path, you can never go back. It makes use of the following moves.

First Blood

When you **first practice blood magic**, you perform a short ritual to prepare your blood. Once this ritual completes, you...

- ★ Reduce your maximum HP by one. You may never get this HP back. Not by magic, not after a year and a day, never.
- ★ Take 5 Blood. Blood may be committed to power blood magic, as indicated by other moves. While blood remains committed to one thing, it may not be committed to anything else. Blood may be uncommitted with a few minutes concentration, ending whatever it

was powering, and making the blood available for use. Blood may also be spent. Spent blood is consumed and lost forever.

★ You must conceal your use of blood magic or face social consequences.

While using blood magic may improve your standing with some people, most frown on the practice and some actively shun or persecute those who use it.

You may repeat this move to gain more blood, reducing your hit points further.

Self-Mutilation

When a **blood charm is implanted into your flesh with your consent**, you must pay the cost in blood (usually a commitment of a few blood). If you lack the available blood to pay the cost, you may uncommit blood powering other effects immediately, if you choose. If you still lack enough, you immediately make the first blood move until you have enough blood to pay. The blood charm provides its benefit so long as the blood it needs remains committed.

Swap Parts

When you **uncommit blood to an active blood charm**, the charm immediately goes dead. If not removed from your body, it will begin to rot. Once removed, it may leave a void. For example, if the charm was installed in an eye socket, the socket remains empty when the charm is removed.

Push Talents

When you **sacrifice part of yourself to succeed at a move**, describe how you do so, then spend 1 Blood. You succeed as if you rolled a 12+.

Blood Peace

When you **swear to a truce with another namegiver**, you both cut the wrist of your dominant weapon arm and commit 1 Blood. The cut forms a crescent-shaped scar, easily seen and deciphered by those who know to look. For the next year and a day, so long as you maintain the truce, you take +1 ongoing to Taking Your Last Breath (not cumulative). If a truce is violated, the blood the culprit committed to the truce becomes spent, and the other party's is uncommitted. Truces may be extended.

Blood Promise

When you **swear to perform a task for another namegiver**, you cut your forehead, name a talent you intend to use to fulfill this task, and commit 2 Blood. Often, the other namegiver will make a blood promise of their own to you at the same time. You may only make one blood promise at a time. For the next year and a day, or until the task is completed (whichever comes first), you gain +1 ongoing to using the talent you named. If you fail to complete the task in time, the blood is spent.

Blood Sworn

When you and another namegiver **swear loyalty to each other for the rest of your lives**, you place a cut over your hearts and commit 3 Blood. So long as you remain loyal to the other, you gain +2 to one ability score and +1 to another (18 max, as always). You may also, any time you like, take 1d6 damage and heal the other of the same amount, no matter where they are. Should the loyalty of either of you fail, for the next three years and three days, you lose your ability bonuses, but the blood remains committed. After this period, if you renew your vows of loyalty, you gain benefits as before. If one of you dies, the other uncommits their blood. You may only swear this oath once in your life.

Forge a Group Pattern

When a group **bonds together magically**, the members of the group perform a long ritual to create the group's pattern, during which:

- ★ The group's name is decided and declared.
- ★ A symbol is created representing the group and its history.
- ★ Each member commits 1 Blood.
- ★ Each member of the group weaves a thread into the group's pattern, making those threads unavailable for other purposes as long as the group pattern exists.

Once completed, the group is magically linked together. All members of the group gain access to the bonded group moves.

Oath Scars

When namegivers **swear to oaths bound in blood** (see Blood Peace, Blood Promise and Blood Sworn), part of the magic that enforces the oath manifests by tinting the scar created by the oath in particular ways. Those who know what to look for can use the coloring of oath scars to see how well someone keeps their oaths:

- ★ Red scars mean your oath is active and being maintained.
- ★ Gold scars are like red, but indicate a more serious oath, such as a renewed truce, or life oath.
- ★ Black scars mean you broke your oath.
- ★ White scars mean you kept your oath, but the other party did not.
- ★ Silver scars mean the oath was kept, but no longer binds you. That is, the oath completed successfully

Magic Items for Blood Magic

- ★ *implant*: The item (usually a blood charm) must be implanted into the body to function.
- ★ *n Blood*: The item works through blood magic, only usable by committing n Blood to it.
- ★ *n sacrifice*: The item works through blood magic, only usable by spending n Blood as it is implanted.

Amber Eyes *living, implant, 1 sacrifice, 350 coins, 0 weight*

This pair of amber spheres replace a character's own eyes. While they are implanted, the character may use the astral sight move.

Blood Pebbles *+1 armor, living, implant, 3 blood, 500 coins, 0 weight*

Hundreds of small elemental stones implanted into the skin deflect harm, drawing power from the host's blood.

Horn Needle *implant, 1 blood, 200 coins, 0 weight*

These thin ivory needles are implanted under the skin. Should you be poisoned while using one, roll+con. On a hit, the needle absorbs the poison, delaying the poison's effects by several days. If you remove the used needle before that, you remove the poison from your body entirely. On a 10+, when you remove the needle, you may extract one dose of the poison from it. On a miss, the needle is overwhelmed and ruined, and the poison affects you normally.

Horror Fend *implant, 2 blood, 500 coins, 0 weight*

When implanted, this charm of gold and silver around a kernel of true earth provides +1 armor against monsters with the *horror* tag, or constructs created by horrors.

Life Extender *living, implant, 1 blood, 150 coins, 0 weight*

These crystal blood charms absorb damage inflicted on the host once they are implanted, if the host chooses. Once the charm has absorbed seven points of damage, it becomes inert. The charm must be removed to uncommit the blood.

Stat Boost *living, implant, 2 blood, 400 coins, 0 weight*

When implanted, this blood charm increases one of the host's stats (determined when the charm is made) by +1. If implanted into someone whose score in that stat naturally is or becomes 18, the charm shatters and the blood committed to it is spent. This type of trifle takes on a variety of forms, usually related to which stat is being boosted.

Bonds

by J. Alan Henning

For alternatives to Bonds, see [Entanglements](#), [Flags](#), and [Threads](#).

Bonds are a system of connecting PCs. Many fantasy PbtA playbooks have ideas for starting bonds written on them. For instance, *Unlimited Dungeons'* Alchemist playbook has these bonds, phrased as questions:

- ★ Who is most likely to be the subject of my studies?
- ★ Who is most likely to help me with my projects?
- ★ Who needs to be shown that science and rationality are superior to their own ways?

Note that other playbooks might phrase these as statements:

- ★ ____ is most likely to be the subject of my studies.
- ★ ____ is most likely to help me with my projects.
- ★ I need to show ____ that science and rationality are superior to their own ways.

If any bond is resolved during play, it earns the PC one XP. Here's the wording from the End of Session move in *Unlimited Dungeons*:

Choose one of your bonds that you feel is resolved (completely explored, no longer relevant, or otherwise). Ask the player of the character you have the bond with if they agree. If they do, mark XP and write a new bond with whomever you wish.

Many hacks, such as *Freebooters on the Frontier*, *Homebrew World*, and *Uncommon World*, remove bonds altogether, while others replace them, such as Flags in *Fourth World* and the Favor system in *Chasing Adventure*. According to [a survey I conducted of Dungeon World players](#), 26% use Flags instead of Bonds.

Homebrew World, and *Stonetop* (by the same author), replace bonds with two lightweight alternatives: an XP opportunity and questions specific to backgrounds to ask other PCs during character creation. Sample questions, from the Fighter's Gladiator background (one of four backgrounds for the *Homebrew World* Fighter):

- ★ Which of you has faced me in battle?
- ★ Which of you is the most fun?
- ★ Which of you is scared of me?
- ★ Which of you do I trust the most?

The XP opportunity comes in a revised Make Camp move:

Describe how your opinion of or relationship with another character has changed; if everyone agrees, mark XP.

While a few legacy moves may have “roll+Bond” (e.g., Aid or Interfere), all the moves in this book have been rewritten to not use +Bond.

D6 Only

by Timekeeper, [Unlimited Dungeons](#)

All moves and mechanics now use a single type of die: the d6. This change removes the complexity of using multiple types of dice while still allowing for the variance that dice bring to the table. This is most noticeable during combat, lessening the divide between classes and making “+” damage bonuses feel more impactful, be it from weapons, class choice, or other factors. This change also alters monster damage as follows/

Here is how to convert from other dice to a d6:

- If an effect uses 1d4, it now uses 1d6-1 (minimum of 1)
- If an effect uses 1d8, it now uses 1d6+1
- If an effect uses 1d10, it now uses 1d6+2
- If an effect uses 1d12, it now uses 1d6+3.

Example: An ogre's damage die in *Dungeon World* is d8+5 damage. With a d6-only system, a d8 is treated as a d6+1, so the ogre's damage would now be d6+6.

Other D6-Only Systems

For a system where the low roll of the 2d6 move roll is used, see "[A Single-roll Damage Hack for Dungeon World](#)" by Yochai Gal and Addramyr Palinor:

Whenever a player triggers a move that would deal damage (and rolls 2d6 in the process), they take the lower of the two dice rolled for that move, then add their relevant damage bonus [+1 for d4, +2 for d6, +3 for d8, +4 for d10], as well as any weapon bonus.

From [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#) by Tam H:

UMF handles damage dealt by players a bit differently than standard *Dungeon World* does. A player no longer rolls damage on a successful attack, though monsters still do.

After determining if an attack is a hit, the damage dealt is the lower of the two kept dice plus the appropriate stat modifier.

If a move or item grants bonus damage and you want to convert it to this system, use this chart:

1d4	1d6	1d8	1d10	1d12
+2	+3	+4	+5	+6

If you need to determine what damage a player deals in a situation without a to-hit roll, roll 2d6 and keep the lowest, plus a modifier, if any.

Debilities as Ability Damage

adapted from [Freebooters on the Frontier](#), by Jason Lutes

Certain moves, made by players or the GM, may cause ability damage. When a given ability is damaged, it is temporarily reduced, and its modifier is adjusted accordingly. For instance, Domino the Thief has a DEX of +1, but if she suffers 2 points of Dexterity damage her Dexterity is reduced to -1.

The GM should consider inflicting ability damage when making the “deal damage” and “use up their resources” moves, or as a monster move. As a rule of thumb, 1 point ability score damage is significant, 2 is serious, and 3 is major.

Taking ability damage is also called “burning” an ability, and when you incur permanent ability damage (reducing your maximum score in that ability), it’s called “perma-burning.”

The Ability Damage Descriptor table gives some examples of how ability score damage might be described in terms of the fiction. Ability scores may never drop below 3.

Healing Ability Damage

Lost ability points can be regained using modified Make Camp and Recover moves. Instead of healing a debility, they can remove one point of ability damage.

Ability Damage Descriptor

Ability	-1	-2	-3
STR	weak	drained	immobilized
CON	tired / hungry	exhausted / sick	dying
DEX	clumsy	shaky	palsied
INT	stunned / confused	scattered	mindless
WIS	weak-willed	pliant	broken
CHA	off-putting / scarred	repellant / disfigured	repulsive
LUC	unlucky	cursed	doomed

(For LUC, see the alternative [Luck system](#).)

Debilities, Streamlined

by Jeremy Strandberg

STATS Assign these scores (and modifiers): 16 (+2), 15 (+1), 13 (+1), 12 (+0), 9 (+0), 8 (-1)

Strength (STR)	Dexterity (DEX)	Intelligence (INT)	Wisdom (WIS)	Constitution (CON)	Charisma (CHA)
<input type="radio"/> Weakened (-1 to STR & DEX)	<input type="radio"/> Dazed (-1 to INT & WIS)	<input type="radio"/> Miserable (-1 to CON & CHA)			
Damage die d6	Armor	HP (Constitution+8)	XP	Level	

Debilities

Debilities are ongoing states that reflect the tolls that characters have taken.

There are three debilities—

- ★ *Weakened*: fatigued, tired, sluggish, shaky. -1 ongoing to STR and DEX.
- ★ *Dazed*: out of it; not thinking quickly or clearly; befuddled. -1 ongoing to INT and WIS.
- ★ *Miserable*: distressed, unwell, grumpy, weary, uncomfortable, in pain. -1 ongoing to CON and CHA.

When a debility is marked, the character takes -1 ongoing to the two stats associated with that debility. They also suffer the fictional consequences; a Weakened character might struggle under their burden; a Dazed character might miss something important. A debility might even force them to Defy Danger in order to do something they could normally just do. A Miserable character might need to Defy Danger to hike a few miles (the danger being that they collapse or give up); a Dazed character might be Defying Danger when they tend to someone's wounds (the danger being that they screw up, make it worse, waste supplies, etc.).

Like damage, debilities can be both prescriptive and descriptive—

- *Prescriptive*: a move says to mark the debility, so the character takes the penalty and suffers the fictional consequences. When the Lightbearer (a Stonetop class) marks Weakened as a result Invoking the Sun God, she's left exhausted and her hands are shaking and she takes -1 ongoing to STR and DEX.
- *Descriptive*: the character suffers some fictional mishap or harm, and the debility is an obvious way to represent it. When the Fox (another Stonetop playbook) tries to keep up drinking with the miners from Gordin's Delve, you might decide to hurt them and give the Fox a raging hangover, marking Miserable to reflect it.

Also like damage, debilities are something you can dish out as a GM move (usually hurt someone or use up their resources), or as part of another GM move. For example, if you use a monster's paralytic damage move, you should describe how their opponent's limbs go numb but you should also have them mark Weakened and tell them to take damage.

Debilities last until they no longer make sense in the fiction or until a move (like Make Camp or Recover) says to clear them.

Design Notes

Debilities in standard DW are... weird. My issues with them:

- ★ Some (“Stunned” and “Sickened”) are too precise to be useful as general-purpose fictional descriptors, especially when the debility is imposed prescriptively. E.g. when the Paladin uses Bloody Aegis to shake off damage, do they really become Stunned as in standing there like a dope? If they mark Sickened, did they really just become ill? Or... nauseas, I guess? It's just... off.
- ★ I honestly think that the overly specific names lead people to generally ignore the fictional impact that debilities imply. [Based on my research](#), about half of groups generally say that the debility is mostly or only the -1 penalty, maybe with just some flavor.
- ★ “Scarred” and “Stunned” (and to a lesser extent, “Confused”) don't jibe with the way you recover from debilities (3 days of R&R).
- ★ A lot of the fictional effects that would cause one debility seem like they'd cause multiple (e.g., something that leaves you weakened, like

blood loss, would also often leave you Shaky; being drunk seems like it should give you a penalty to both INT and WIS).

- ★ The [game text](#) is really wishy washy regarding when and how to use them.

So, this is my attempt to tighten them up. I'm hoping that with only 3 debilities, they'll be more impactful. I think the names of the debilities (Weakened, Dazed, and Miserable) are more evocative of actual fictional conditions, without being crippling; e.g. you can imagine someone being "dazed" but carrying on, whereas if you described someone as "stunned" you'd assume they were just standing there slack-jawed. You can see how someone would get over being Miserable with some rest and recovery.

The rest of it is mostly just me rewriting the text to reflect how I want to see debilities work in play.

Merging 6 debilities into 3 definitely nerfs some classes who can use debilities as a resource. In Stonetop, the Heavy's Unfettered move (cribbed from the DW Barbarian) or the Marshal's Battlefield Grace (i.e. the Paladin's Bloody Aegis) are a lot more costly to use. The biggest one I'm worried about is the Lightbearer, as "mark a debility" is one of the potential consequences of using their magic, and they always choose a consequence. To make this more palatable, then, I'm expanding Make Camp to allow for recovering from debilities and tweaking Recover.

Make Camp [with 3-debility system]

When you **settle in to rest in an unsafe area**, answer the GM's questions about your campsite. Then, each player (including the GM) asks one of the following questions of a character in camp; that character's player must answer honestly.

- What do you do in camp that is so annoying/endearing?
- What do I do in camp that you find so annoying/endearing?
- Who or what seems to be on your mind?
- What do we find ourselves talking about?
- What do you do to pass the time?
- What do you reveal about yourself that I/we hadn't realized before.

The GM will decide what, if anything, happens during the night (possibly asking you to roll the Die of Fate).

When you've eaten 1 ration, drunk your fill, and gotten at least a few hours of sleep, pick 1. If your rest was particularly comfortable, peaceful, or enjoyable, pick 1 more.

- Heal damage equal to half your maximum HP (rounded up)
- Expend 1 use of an appropriate resource (rations, whisky, remedies, etc.) to clear a debility; everyone must agree that the resource makes sense
- Take +1 forward.

Design Notes

I added the questions to formally prompt what I think is a best practice—asking questions and actually prompting some intraparty role-playing. There's no mechanical impact to the questions: it's just a way to structure the conversation. The questions themselves might need a little tweaking, but I'm really fond of the idea.

As for the last part (the recovery part), the big change is allowing Debilities to be healed as part of Making Camp. That's new! Historically (in *Stonetop* and in *Dungeon World*), Debilities required the Recover move (3 days of R&R, or 2 with a healer). But my [inquiries into how people actually use debilities in play](#) made me question whether that made sense... it sure didn't seem to be how people were consistently playing. And if I'm going to reduce debilities from 6 down to 3 (with each one at least twice as impactful), then there needs to be a way to clear them "in the field." Make Camp seems like an obvious way.

But! I don't want Make Camp to become some 5e "Long Rest" where you basically recover all your woes. So: make them choose, HP or a debility (or, if you're all set, a +1 forward). Originally, I had the debility requiring the use of 1 remedy, but those are pretty expensive (in *Stonetop* at least), and it's hard to argue that you'd need a remedy to regain your strength. So I changed it to "Expend 1 use of an appropriate resource (rations, whisky, remedies, etc.)" with the group by-in requirement. And that lets remedies go back to their original thing: a way to treat disease, poisons, or debilities. Like so:

Remedies

3 uses, slow, 0 wt, poor, ~15 coins

When you **expend 1 use to prepare and administer the appropriate concoction**, your patient can attempt to recover from a disease, poison, or debility.

The way I would generally use remedies is as a Defy Danger roll (with INT for the caregiver or CON for the patient). But I don't want it to be hard-coded... there are definitely times I've just been like "okay, cool, mark off the remedies" (usually when the caregiver has already Defied Danger with INT to figure out how to treat this specific problem).

Recover

When you **spend a few days resting in safety and comfort**, restore your HP to maximum and clear all your debilities. If you have suffered some serious injury, ask the GM how long it'll take you to recover. If you've suffered a permanent disability, get with the GM and Make a Plan to adapt to it.

Design Notes

This used to be much more specific: 1 day of rest = heal all your HP, 3 days of rest (or 2 with a healer) = clear 1 debility. And the move never mentioned recovery from actual, lasting injuries. That always bugged me. This doesn't change much, it just acknowledges that the fictional injury and the HP might not be the same thing.

Also, I really like the notion of "oh, you're permanently maimed? No problem, just figure out how you're going to deal with that."

Dynamic Spells

by Jeremy Lutes, [Freebooters on the Frontier](#)

The spells, blessings, and curses wielded by Magic-Users and Clerics in *Freebooters on the Frontier* are broadly defined, extremely powerful, highly volatile, and subject to interpretation. Ultimately, their effects are arbitrated by the GM.

As a rule of thumb, keep in mind that when a spell or invocation goes wrong, its repercussions should be in proportion to the intended effect. If Magdalia the Magic-User casts Kullonius' Delicate Fire in an attempt to light a candle and fails, the tip of her finger might be singed; if she uses the same spell to attempt to cause a foe to burst into flame and fails, she or an ally may burst into flame instead. See the Arcane Accident and Test of Faith tables in the Magic-user and Cleric playbooks, respectively, to get an idea of how things can go wrong.

To generate a spell name, roll d10 to find a spell name template. Then roll a d20 for each bracketed term and cross-reference the result in the accompanying table. [Note: The actual table in *Freebooters of the Frontier* contains 100 rows! This excerpt has 20.]

d10	Spell Name Template		Spell Name Template
1	[Element][Form]	6	[Form] of [Adjective][Element]
2	[Adjective][Form]	7	[Wizard Name]'s [Adjective][Form]
3	[Adjective][Element]	8	[Wizard Name]'s [Adjective][Element]
4	[Form] of [Element]	9	[Wizard Name]'s [Form] of [Element]
5	[Form] of the [Adjective][Form]	10	[Wizard Name]'s [Element][Form]

dzo	Form	Element	Adjective	Name (1st part)	Name (2nd part)
1	Beast	Ash	Binding	Apoll-	-aris
2	Blood	Bone	Bright	Bal-	-by
3	Burst	Copper	Consuming	Cinni-	-din
4	Cloak	Despair	Delicate	Darg-	-dula
5	Curse	Earth	Draining	Elez-	-fia
6	Door	Fire	Entangling	Flo-	-goria
7	Feast	Gluttony	Expanding	Gil-	-iala
8	Gaze	Health	Freezing	Hog-	-jobulon
9	Guide	Iron	Icy	In-	-leius
10	Heart	Life	Instant	Kul-	-lonius
11	Mark	Lust	Maddening	Mercu-	-mast
12	Oath	Mud	Omnipotent	Naf-	-mut
13	Pocket	Plane	Poisonous	Par-	-o
14	Scream	Rot	Screaming	Rhi-	-phim
15	Shield	Smoke	Sleeping	She-	-ro
16	Spell	Spirit	Stupefying	Tcha-	-te
17	Strike	Storm	Transmuting	Vag-	-toomb
18	Trap	Truth	Untiring	Wa-	-u
19	Wave	Water	Viridian	Zal-	-xa
20	Word	Youth	Yellow	Zza-	-zred

Moves for Dynamic Spells

Suggested Gear

You start with this stuff, plus basic clothing. Your spellbook (1 wt)

Rations (5 uses, 1 wt)

2d6+Luck silver pieces (sp)

Roll 1d6 to determine your personal magical focus:

1-2	Magic wand (+1 power, 0 wt)
3-5	Magic staff (1d4, close, 2-handed, +1 power, 1 wt)
6	Arcane orb (+2 power, 1 wt)

Roll 1d6 twice: (reroll duplicates if you choose)

1-2	Bag of books (5 uses, 2 wt)
3	Dagger (1d4, 1 piercing, precise, hand, 0 wt)
4	Healing potion (heal 1d8 HP, 0 weight)
5-6	Spell components (+1 power, 3 uses, 0 wt)

Spellbook

You start with a spellbook that holds 2 spells.

Roll them up on the Spell Name table. Each time a spell is cast, the following aspects must be defined:

Effect: minor (1p +1/1d6), moderate (2p,+2/2d6), major (5p, +3/3d6), spectacular (7p, +4/4d6), historic (11p, +5/5d6)

Duration: instantaneous (0p), duration 1 (1p), duration 3 (3p), duration 5 (5p), permanent (9p)

Range: touch (0p), close or reach (1p), near (3p), far (5p)



Area of Effect: self (0p), single target (1p), small area (2p), large area (5p)

Numbers in parentheses denote power cost (#p) and suggested value in terms of a modifier/number of dice (i.e., a moderate effect costs 2 power and can be used to create a +2 modifier to a move roll, +2 armor, or 2d6 worth of damage). Note that spell effects are not limited to numbers! Use your imagination.

Your casting power is equal to your current level +INT. Each time you cast a spell, you start with full power and spend it to increase aspects of the spell.

Study Spellbook

When you **spend at least a few hours studying your spellbook**, forget all memorized spells and memorize a number of spells equal to your level +1. Make a note of which ones you memorize.

Inscribe Spell

When you **spend 1 week of downtime transcribing a new spell from another source**, add it to your own spellbook.

Cast Spell

When you **cast a memorized spell**, say what effect you want to create within the scope of the spell's name, spend power to define its aspects, and roll+INT: on a 10+, it does what you want; on a 7-9, it works as intended, but choose 1 from the list below; on a 6-, mark XP, choose 1 from the list below, and then roll on the Arcane Accident table:

- You forget the spell and may not cast it again until you re-memorize it
- You draw unwanted attention to yourself, from this world or another
- You suffer -1 ongoing until the next time you cast any spell.

1d12	Arcane Accident
1	You suffer a permanent affliction in proportion to the spell's Effect.
2	An ally suffers a permanent affliction in proportion to the spell's Effect.
3	Arcane forces disrupt reality for the worse, at 1 level greater than the spell's Effect.
4	Arcane forces disrupt reality for the worse, in proportion to the spell's Effect.
5	Mind wipe: burn INT (see Debilities as Ability Damage), and forget all of your memorized spells.
6	Soul drain: burn WIS (see Debilities as Ability Damage), and momentarily lose your grip on reality.
7	You suffer a temporary affliction in proportion to the spell's Effect.
8	An ally suffers a temporary affliction in proportion to the spell's Effect.
9	The spell backfires, affecting the opposite of the intended target.
10	The spell misfires, affecting something other than the intended target.
11	Arcane illness: take -1 ongoing until you Make Camp or Recover.
12	You draw unwanted attention, from this world or another.

Advanced Moves

Choose 1 of these moves each time you reach an odd-numbered level (3, 5, etc.)

Overdraw

When you **Cast a Spell**, you may take ability damage on an attribute of your choice to increase your available power, at a cost of 1 ability point per point of power, provided your ability won't drop below -3.

Discern Properties

When you **spend 1 day of downtime studying a magical item**, roll+INT: on a 10+, the GM will tell you precisely what it does; on a 7-9, the GM will tell you something useful about it.

Arcane Research

When you **spend 1 week of downtime studying arcane lore in order to create your own spell**, roll+INT: on a 10+, hold 3; on a 7-9, hold 2. Spend your hold to complete each of the following steps:

- 1) Spend 1 hold to roll a Spell Name
- 2) Spend 1 hold to fill in 1 Spell Name part (Form, Adjective etc.) on your rolled template, using words from spells already inscribed in your spellbook. If you fill in a Wizard's Name, make it your own. You will need to spend more than 1 hold on this step to complete the spell name before moving on to the next.
- 3) Spend 1 hold to pay 50sp per Spell Name part (i.e., a spell consisting of [Wizard Name][Element][Form] costs 150 coins).
- 4) Spend 1 hold to inscribe the spell in your spellbook.

Note that researching a spell is usually a multi-week process, and those weeks need not be consecutive.

When you **Cast a Spell named for you**, take +1.

Arcanist

When you **roll an Arcane Accident**, roll twice and choose the best result.

Diabolist

When you **slay a living creature with a hand weapon and offer its blood to a demonic force**, you gain power equal to half the creature's HP (rounded up), but may only use that power the next time you Cast a Spell. After that, it's gone.

Enchanter

When you **Cast a Spell with the duration 5 or permanent tag**, you take +1 to do so, and it costs 1 less power.

Necromancer

When you **Discern Realities**, on a 7+ you sense any spirits of the dead in the vicinity in addition to the usual result, and may ask your questions directly of them.

Sorcerer

When you **Cast a Spell**, you may burn 1 CON to recombine words from all the spell names in your spellbook to make a new spell on the spot, using any Spell Name Template of your choice. However, if you suffer an Arcane Accident, roll 1d6 instead of 1d12 on the Arcane Accident table.

Wizard

When you **Study your Spellbook**, forget all memorized spells and memorize a number of spells equal to your level +INT.

Entanglements

adapted from [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#), by Tam H

As an alternative to Bonds, consider Entanglements. When you look at your character in total, consider their Entanglements. Entanglements are simple statements of how your character feels towards another character, generally in the form:

Name (relationship to me) is, has, or does something important to me, and this is how I feel about it.

Create at least one Entanglement that ties the character to an NPC and at least one that ties them to another PC.

I talk to Kim about how Hero knows her ex-military Tough Weapon Expert. “Joe (my dad’s best friend) has special gifts too, but unlike him I don’t want to be a superhero.”

I also decide that Hero has an NPC best friend, a detective she used to be partners with. I write down “Sam, my ex-partner, doesn’t know I have psychic powers and I want to keep it that way.”

NPCs and Entanglements provide context. There’s no faster way to make it feel real than to set up situations where everyone wants something from someone else that they can’t have right now.

At the end of a session, ask yourself if you significantly explored any of your Entanglements. If the answer’s yes to either of these, mark one XP. You can change it now, regardless, if the fiction supports it.

Flags: Inverse Bonds

by Lester Ward, [Fourth World](#)

All characters also demonstrate foibles and eccentricities which serve to complicate their lives. In *Fourth World*, these are represented by flags. Flags replace Dungeon World's use of bonds, inverting their pattern. Instead of bonds connecting your character to other characters, your flags define behaviors that other players enable. By selecting a flag, you signal what sorts of interactions and complications you are looking to explore, giving other players permission and encouragement to complicate your life by incorporating your flag into play.

Flags are phrased as instructions, requests to the other players to treat your character a certain way. As such, the best flags...

- ★ Suggest an action specific enough that it is obvious when another character hits it
- ★ Create some sort of conflict or tension, usually by giving your character a choice to make
- ★ Give you an opportunity to demonstrate something about your character that might not otherwise be showcased
- ★ Enable taking action in a way meaningful to your character
- ★ Bring enough consequence to the story to develop a relationship between your character and another.

When another player follows the instruction indicated by your flag (called "hitting" your flag), use an End of Session move that will reward them for doing so, adding:

If you hit a flag of any other characters during the session at least once, mark 1 XP.

This means that players should be aware of the flags of the characters at the table, and think about how they might hit them in play. Note that hitting another player's flag usually means confronting them with a tough choice that pits their personality against a situation. They may choose to embrace their personality or compromise it for the situation. Either way, just setting up the choice means you hit their flag.

Each character should choose two flags (though some disciplines choose three). As flags are intended to represent deep-seated personality traits, they

tend to resist change; however, if it makes sense to drop a flag and/or gain a new one, go for it.

Some example flags—

- ★ *Accommodating*: counter my proposal with a less attractive one I must either accept or disrupt the harmony of the group.
- ★ *Aspiring*: make me an offer that threatens my social standing.
- ★ *Bumptious*: challenge my knowledge and prove that I have more to learn.
- ★ *Compassionate*: offer me an easier solution that requires I exploit those weaker than me.
- ★ *Curious*: convince me to try something I probably shouldn't.
- ★ *Deceitful*: believe and act on a lie I've told you.
- ★ *Devoted*: offer me an easier solution that requires I compromise my relationship with _____. (Choices include: family or a family member, a particular organization, another party member, a lover, a friend, someone to whom you have sworn allegiance, etc.)
- ★ *Graceless*: include me in a beneficial social interaction I must spoil with blunt observation or crass behavior.
- ★ *Greedy*: offer me financial reward to undermine a friend.
- ★ *Gullible*: tell me a lie I believe.
- ★ *Heroic*: let me keep you from going first into danger so I can go myself
- ★ *Honest*: involve me in a deception I must ruin.
- ★ *Irresponsible*: convince me to shirk my duty.
- ★ *Peculiar*: refuse my aid because I'm different.
- ★ *Portentous*: seek my divinations in a moment of uncertainty and trust them implicitly.
- ★ *Righteous*: offer me an easier solution that requires I violate my principle of _____. (Choices include: 'non-violence', various religious beliefs, moral code, sworn vows, 'chastity', 'might makes right', entitlement, institutional prejudice, etc.)
- ★ *Selfish*: suggest I sacrifice something (tangible or intangible) to improve the lot of others.
- ★ *Sycophantic*: insist I publicly compare the greatness of two people from whom I seek favor.
- ★ *Trustworthy*: confide in me a secret that would damage you if revealed.
- ★ *Unsophisticated*: exemplify a social convention or intricate concept I must misunderstand.
- ★ *Visionary*: offer me an easier solution that interferes with my dream of

Keys

by Yochai Gal, "[Keys for Dungeon World](#)"

This supplement is based on "Drives for Dungeon World" by Jeremy Strandberg, as well as John Harper's Lady Blackbird.

Keys are goals, ties, beliefs, or vows a character has. They are meant to replace Alignment or Drives completely. You hit the key when you do something appropriate to it. You hit the Buyoff when (through action) you forsake your Key and replace it with another. You can only hit a Key once per session. The Buyoff is worth 3 XP.

Barbarian

Key of the Stranger

Gain 1 XP when you explain one of your beliefs or traditions to an ally, or when you offend someone important with your strange ways.

Buyoff: When you discard one of your own rituals or customs in favor of a local one.

Key of the Melancholic

Gain 1 XP when your somber mood keeps you from reveling in the spoils, or when you let a problem escalate by brooding or drowning your sorrows.

Buyoff: When you allow yourself to be infected by another person's joy.

Key of the Mirthful

Gain 1 XP when you indulge one of your appetites despite great personal risk, or when you convince an ally to indulge in revelry or debauchery.

Buyoff: Pass up the opportunity to indulge an appetite in favor of safety, politeness, or rest.

Key of the Honorable

Gain 1 XP when you fulfill a promise, oath or vow, or when an ally urges you to break a promise, oath or vow and you refuse, even at the detriment of you and your allies.

Buyoff: When you knowingly break a sworn oath.

Key of the Noble

Gain 1 XP when you refuse an order or request that is beneath you, or when you encounter hardship or pain rather than suffer an indignity.

Buyoff: When you follow an order that is beneath your status or delivered by someone you do not respect.

Bard

Key of the Harper

Gain 1 XP when you take bold actions to impress a stranger, or when you publicly claim credit for a deed or work even when it'd be safer not to.

Buyoff: When you allow someone else to claim credit for one of your accomplishments.

Key of the Discordant

Gain 1 XP when you sow the seeds of distrust between two friends, or when your actions spark a conflict between or within factions.

Buyoff: When you help settle a disagreement with honesty, even though it costs you.

Key of the Lover

Gain 1 XP when you fall in and out of love again, or when you successfully romance a former foe.

Buyoff: When you stay faithful to the person you love, and give up your rakish lifestyle forever.

Key of the Cunning

Gain 1 XP when you offer advice to someone and they actually follow it, or when you come up with a plan that helps you or your allies out of a bad situation.

Buyoff: When you deliberately follow flawed advice and don't correct their faulty logic.

Key of the Awestruck

Gain 1 XP when you dwell on the beauty, majesty, or wonder of a place, or when your elation over a wondrous place, object or person distracts you from real danger.

Buyoff: When you've had enough: the once awe-inspiring is now dismissed as only mundane.

Cleric

Key of the Ambitious

Gain 1 XP when you perform a favor for an NPC of importance, or when you perform a favor for an important NPC and demand that they repay you.

Buyoff: When you forgive a debt that might have helped you advance up the ladder.

Key of the Charitable

Gain 1 XP when you ease an NPC's suffering at some cost to yourself, or when you ease the suffering of a sworn enemy.

Buyoff: When you ignore the suffering of someone you could have helped.

Key of the Evangelist

Gain 1 XP when you perform a ritual or service of your faith for at least one unconverted NPC, or when you convert an ally or NPC to your faith.

Buyoff: When you willingly let another guide/lead your faith.

Key of the Inquisitor

Gain 1 XP when you point out a lie or falsehood told with the intent to deceive, or when your investigations reveal a great truth about those under your scrutiny.

Buyoff: When you allow a gainful lie to pass unchallenged.

Key of the Orthodox

Gain 1 XP when you adhere to doctrine despite opposition, or when you suffer a hardship over your adherence to strict doctrine.

Buyoff: When you disobey your doctrine by bending a rule for personal gain, or to help another.

Druid

Key of the Cultivator

Gain 1 XP when you encourage an ally or NPC to exceed their boundaries and limits, or when you guide a group, faction or township to do the same.

Buyoff: When you see an opportunity for growth but prevent the person from it.

Key of the Dispassionate

Gain 1 XP when you allow a natural harm or calamity to occur and don't interfere, or when you allow a friend or foe to perish as a result of the natural order.

Buyoff: When you intervene to save someone from an otherwise natural occurrence.

Key of the Reverential

Gain 1 XP when you contravene society's expectations as due to your attachment to nature, or when you eschew magical aid in favor of a more "natural" approach.

Buyoff: When you destroy a natural element in order to gain some advantage.

Key of the Ablator

Gain 1 XP when you deface, destroy, or bury a symbol or artifice of civilization, or when your actions drive away those who would cause damage to a natural element.

Buyoff: When you help create a new symbol of civilization where none was before.

Key of the Weird

Gain 1 XP when your actions disturb or unsettle a potential ally, or when your unusual behavior creates friction and distrust amongst civilized folk.

Buyoff: When you embrace a norm, shedding your previously strange disposition.

Fighter

Key of the Contender

Gain 1 XP when you face an equal in combat and more than your life is at stake, or when a foe is more skilled than you, or you are severely injured and you overcome anyways.

Buyoff: When you refuse a personal challenge from a worthy adversary or from one who has done you harm.

Key of the Glorious

Gain 1 XP when you boast to a notable NPC of a great deed you've accomplished, or when an accomplishment came at the expense of another seeking that same fame or glory.

Buyoff: When you pass up the opportunity for real glory, and others speak ill of you as a result.

Key of the Peacemaker

Gain 1 XP when you use your reputation as a skilled fighter to settle a dispute without violence, or when your words and actions are able to prevent a larger conflict from ensuing.

Buyoff: When you use violence to accomplish your goals while a peaceful option exists.

Key of the Proudful

Gain 1 XP when you demand the respect your fighting prowess deserves, or when you teach someone who disrespected you or your fighting abilities a lesson they will not soon forget.

Buyoff: When you let an insult to you or your fighting prowess go unanswered.

Key of the Vengeful

Gain 1 XP when you go out of your way to exact vengeance for a minor slight, or when you expose yourself or your allies to danger in pursuit of vengeance.

Buyoff: When those who have wronged you are at your mercy, but you choose to forgive them instead.

Immolator

Key of the Psychopath

Gain 1 XP when you cause widespread destruction and chaos or when allies become collateral damage in your wake.

Buyoff: When you learn to control your baser instincts, and reign in your dangerous behavior.

Key of the Radical

Gain 1 XP when you help spread a dangerous new idea or when your ideas lead to some blowback against you or your allies.

Buyoff: When you relinquish an especially dangerous idea, and openly decry it to others.

Key of the Wasteful

Gain 1 XP when you wastefully consume a resource or when your selfishness causes your allies problems as a result.

Buyoff: When you thoughtfully reserve an item or resource that another was going to use.

Key of the Provocateur

Gain 1 XP when you spur an ally to act in a way they would otherwise have avoided or when your words or actions drive a neutral party into attacking.

Buyoff: When you let another guide you to a course of action you would prefer to have avoided.

Key of the Ritualist

Gain 1 XP when you sacrifice an important entity (item, person, etc) to the flames or when you force another to give up something or someone to the flames.

Buyoff: When you resign yourself to only using your power when absolutely necessary.

Paladin

Key of the Merciful

Gain 1 XP when you show mercy when doing otherwise would be easier, or when you allow an enemy who has wronged you to flee.

Buyoff: When you punish someone deserving, even as their salvation was in sight.

Key of the Courageous

Gain 1 XP when you act despite a terrifying obstacle, or when your words or deeds fill others with courage.

Buyoff: When you would allow fear to overcome you, but another instills within you the courage to persevere.

Key of the Judge

Gain 1 XP when you bring justice to someone who deserved it, or when you successfully mediate a conflict between parties that results in a just outcome.

Buyoff: When you allow a person who richly deserves punishment to avoid it.

Key of the Martyr

Gain 1 XP when you shoulder someone else's worries, difficulties or burdens for them, or when you defend another, and are harmed deeply as a result.

Buyoff: When you allow another who needs your help to carry on alone or suffer great pains.

Key of the Vigilante

Gain 1 XP when you bring someone to justice by any means necessary, or when you pursue justice, even against the wishes of your friends, allies or the local authorities.

Buyoff: When you relent and face the lawful judgment of another.

Ranger

Key of the Companion

Gain 1 XP when you put your animal companion's needs over those of others or when you allow a friend to risk harm in order to protect a wild creature.

Buyoff: When your animal companion faces harm and you protect someone else instead.

Key of the Hunter

Gain 1 XP when you successfully locate a creature you've been tracking, or when you single-handedly defeat a wild creature of considerable might or cunning.

Buyoff: When you allow a dangerous creature you've been tracking to roam free.

Key of the Liberator

Gain 1 XP when you free a wild creature that has been imprisoned or when you guide a creature back to its home or sanctuary.

Buyoff: When you turn a blind eye to the plight of a wild (or imprisoned) creature.

Key of the Tenacious

Gain 1 XP when you overcome multiple obstacles to accomplish a personal goal or when you are defeated in your task, but rise up and try again.

Buyoff: When you give up on an important ambition, because it would be too difficult to proceed.

Key of the Protector

Gain 1 XP when you avert an immediate threat to a wild place or when you successfully convince a group of people to live more harmoniously with the wilds.

Buyoff: When you allow a wild place to be despoiled, exploited or destroyed by civilized folk.

Thief

Key of the Reckless

Gain 1 XP when you act without thinking and things get out of hand or when your poorly-laid plans come to fruition and you somehow benefit, while others do not.

Buyoff: When you control your instinctual recklessness in favor of a more sobering plan.

Key of the Ringleader

Gain 1 XP when you take the lead in a difficult situation or when someone takes your advice and it actually pays off.

Buyoff: When you abdicate your position and acknowledge another as the true leader of your group.

Key of the Conniver

Gain 1 XP when you narrowly escape punishment for a criminal act or when you betray another for personal gain.

Buyoff: When you give yourself up as the perpetrator of a crime or when you back out of a double-cross.

Key of the Ladder

Gain 1 XP when the power, connections or prestige you've acquired gives you a clear advantage or when you move up in the ranks of a faction, guild or gang.

Buyoff: When you eschew advancement in favor of a principle or personal bond.

Key of the Trickster

Gain 1 XP when false information you've divulged forces someone to act accordingly or when you are able to convincingly masquerade as someone else.

Buyoff: When you unravel one of your lies and face the wrath that truth will wrought.

Wizard

Key of the Curious

Gain 1 XP when you get yourself into trouble by tinkering with something best left alone or when careful experimentation teaches you something profound about magic.

Buyoff: When you ignore a mysterious phenomenon that you might otherwise have explored.

Key of the Overlord

Gain 1 XP when you force others to respect your magical prowess or when your magic cause fear and terror amongst a group of innocents.

Buyoff: When you sacrifice something important to help another, with no benefit to yourself.

Key of the Enigma

Gain 1 XP when you successfully deflect or evade an inquiry into your doings or when your mysterious nature costs you a friend or ally.

Buyoff: When you open up to an ally about a secret that you've never shared with anyone.

Key of the Scholar

Gain 1 XP when you alone have the knowledge needed to avert disaster or when you get others to acknowledge your superior intellect.

Buyoff: When you admit ignorance on a subject you should know about and decide to do nothing about it.

Key of the Meddler

Gain 1 XP when you use magic to change something tangible in a lasting way or when your magic is self-perpetuating or contagious.

Buyoff: When you leave well enough alone and ignore a harmless magical entity or effect.

Light

by Jarrod Ingram, edited by Mitchell Parry, [Absurd World](#)

Summary:

- ★ The standard period of time is a “round”.
- ★ The amount of time that’s passed to dictate a round is at the GM’s discretion. An example round is the resolution of a conflict, be that combat, negotiation, etc.
- ★ Light sources last between 2-4 rounds.
- ★ Depending on the source, light is provided for a certain amount of characters, while dim or no light is provided for the rest.
- ★ Dim light is -1 ongoing. Darkness is either negotiate or flee.
- ★ An additional GM move is that of light sources being put out, either from the extent of their duration or from some other means appropriate to the fiction.

This hack simulates light sources; namely their duration and effectiveness. There are three tiers of lighting: that of a candle, a torch (a tier that includes the wizard and cleric spells of the same name, “Light”), and a lantern.

A candle has a duration of 2 turns and provides light for 1 character and dim light for another, the rest are in darkness, it lasts for 2 rounds. A torch has a duration of 3 rounds and provides light for 2 characters and dim light for another 2. A lantern has a duration of 4 rounds, requires a flask of oil to operate, and provides light for 3 characters and dim light for an additional 3. If a character puts down a light source to free up a hand, then it casts its dim light, the rest of the characters are in darkness.

It should be noted that dim light has a -1 ongoing effect on characters. Darkness has the effect that the character’s only action is to negotiate, if applicable, or flee from dangers.

Depending on the fiction, light sources can be put out prematurely. For example, in a fight to the death, an orc might swipe the torch out of a player's hand, putting it out and shrouding the characters in darkness.

The primary thing to take away from the light mechanic is that it shouldn't get in the way of the fiction but enhance it. Don't try to methodically keep track of rounds but let them naturally come about from the fiction.

Love Letters

See [What's a Love Letter?](#) for what to do when players miss a session, by [Joe Banner](#).

Luck

Adapted from [Freebooters on the Frontier](#) and [Funnel World](#), by Jeremy Lutes

When creating a character, roll 3d6 for Luck and record the results. Track both the ability score and its modifier.

Ability Score	Modifier
3	-3
4-5	-2
6-8	-1
9-12	0
13-15	+1
16-17	+2
18	+3

Luck may be lost (see below), and is restored each time a player levels up, but never past its original value. Unlike other abilities, Luck may not be increased upon leveling up.

This system adds two moves and updates Level Up.

Get Lucky

When you **hope things will go your way**, roll+LUC: on a 10+, they do, this time; on a 7-9, they do, but there's a tradeoff—ask the GM what; on a 6-, **do not** mark XP, and you get the opposite of what you hoped for.

Burn Luck

When you have made any roll except a +LUC roll, you may burn 1 Luck to raise or lower the result of that roll by 1.

Level Up

Each time you reach a new level, you regain 1 point of burned Luck.

You may not choose to heal Luck.

Mounts & Vehicles

by Andri Erlingsson, [Mounted Combat](#)

The *Passenger* stat is the maximum number of people that can safely ride this mount or vehicle, not including the rider/pilot. Small people might not count towards the limit, and large people might take extra space.

Control is the quality or effectiveness of your mount or vehicle, their ease of control and the good nature, training or design inherent in them. A mount with a low Control stat is cantankerous and disloyal, while a mount with a high Control stat is obedient and well suited to riding. A vehicle with a high Control stat is intuitive to control and handles smoothly, while one with a low Control stat is complicated or handles poorly.

The following is a Basic Move when you are playing with Mounts in your campaign.

Control Mount (+Control)

When **your mount bucks due to fear, injury or shock**, roll+Control. On a 10+, you remain mounted. On a 7-9, you become unhorsed, and your mount leaves the scene but will not go so far that you cannot mount it again when the danger has passed. On a 6-, your mount also becomes too injured, tired or frightened to carry you until it has received care and rest when you Make Camp.

Vehicle-Specific Rules

Vehicles have a special form of damage known as Stress. A vehicle has 3 marks of Stress, unless otherwise noted. When a vehicle takes 10 or more points of damage from a single attack, mark off one point of Stress damage. Each time a vehicle takes Stress damage, it triggers the Damage Report move.

The Piercing tag reduces the amount of damage needed to cause Stress by an equal amount to the Piercing value. For example, a weapon with Piercing 2 only needs to deal 8 or more damage in a single blow to cause a point of Stress.

When your vehicle removes a point of Stress, choose one option from the Jury Rig list.

Here are the new Basic Moves to use when you are playing with Vehicles in your campaign.

Control Vehicle

When **your vehicle skids and shakes under difficult conditions or a powerful attack**, roll+Control. On a 10+, you maintain control of the vehicle.

On a 7-9, the GM chooses one:

- A passenger or crew member is briefly stunned as they slam into something.
- A sudden mechanical fault makes the situation more precarious.
- The vehicle briefly spins out of control and doesn't quite go where the pilot intended.

Damage Report

When **a vehicle marks a point of Stress**, the GM chooses one of the following:

- Choose a move the Vehicle has. It loses that move.
- -1 ongoing to Control.
- -1 ongoing to Armor.
- -1 or -2 ongoing to Passengers. If this brings the Passenger stat below the number of people on board, someone just lost their seat.
- There's a problem – a fuel leak, a broken rudder, or something else you'll need to deal with to keep the vehicle working properly.

Jury Rig (+INT)

When you **have to repair damage to a vehicle on the fly**, roll+INT. On a 10+, choose two. On a 7-9, choose one.

- The vehicle regains the use of one move.
- The vehicle suffers one less ongoing penalty.
- You repair any onboard equipment which requires it.
- You give the vehicle a temporary boost, granting the pilot +1 forward on the next roll involving Control.

On a 6-, choose one anyway, but some side effect of the repair will cause another fault at an inopportune moment (the GM will tell you when).

Note: The Jury Rig move does not remove a mark of Stress from the vehicle, even if you used the move to repair something that was caused by gaining Stress.

Mounts and Vehicles

Camel, Dromedary

The Ship of the Desert, with more teeth and attitude.

Large, Control +1, 1 Passengers

Humpy

So long as this mount gets to drink its fill before a journey, it doesn't need rations during the journey.

Cantankerous

When someone **annoys this mount or its rider**, it will spit at or bite at them immediately, whether you like it or not.

Long Live the Fighters

When you **charge at your foe with intent to kill**, add this mount's Control stat to all Defy Danger rolls, but any negative consequences that come up will affect your mount.

Chariot

A two-wheeled vehicle drawn by a team of animals, this is a tool of war.

Large, Control +1, Vehicle, 2 Passengers, +1 Armor

Wheel Scythes (Pilot Move)

When a **foe attempts to leap onto your chariot**, they take 1d6 damage first. When you charge an enemy from atop your chariot, add its Control value to your Hack & Slash roll.

Arrow Platform (Passenger Move)

When you Volley while onboard a Chariot, add the chariot's Control to your damage.

Elephant

You probably want to get out of its way.

Huge, Control +1, Fearless, Armor +1

Tusks and Screaming

When you **Hack & Slash while riding an elephant**, your attacks gain the 1 *Piercing* and *Terrifying* tags. Enemies who cannot reach you will attack your elephant instead.

Strongest Nose in the Animal Kingdom

The Elephant can lift large objects and/or people with its trunk and manipulate obstacles like levers and gates.

Flaming

An elephant is afraid of flames. It will not usually try to buck you on seeing flames unless it is already in danger, but it will not approach fire willingly.

Horse

Of course, of course.

Large, Control +2, Passengers 1

Joust

When you deal **your damage with a lance or other polearm while atop your horse**, it gains the *Forceful* tag.

Ride like the Wind

When you **Defy Danger to reach a destination as quickly as possible while on a horse**, you can add the horse's Control stat as a bonus to the Defy Danger roll. If you do, the horse dies from exhaustion at the end of the ride.

Sailing Ship

Ar, she be a fine vessel.

Huge, Control +1, Aquatic, Vehicle, 20+ Passengers

Sailing Vessel

The ship only sails on top of water, not under it. It has sails and oars, comes with plenty of nautical-related equipment and rope, and can carry far more cargo than a beast of its size could.

Man the Cannon! (Passenger Move)

Your ship is loaded with a cannon. It deals 2d6 damage or a point of Stress, and has the *Messy*, *Forceful*, and *Reload* tags. When you volley with this cannon, on a 7-9, choose from the following list instead of the normal Volley list:

- Misfire! The cannon must be cleaned and reloaded twice as long before the next shot.
- Too Much Powder: The attack only deals 2d4 damage, but the explosion sure was nice.
- Uneven Fuse: The cannon fired too early or too late, and the operator is briefly stunned.

Crow's Nest (Pilot Move)

When you **look out from the crow's nest**, ask the following question: What can I see on the horizon? The DM must answer honestly.

Get 'em, Lads! (Pilot and Passenger Move)

When you **swing on the ship's rigging to attack an opponent**, add the ship's Control rating to your damage roll. If you roll a Miss during the attack, in addition to the usual effects, you drop into the ocean.

For many more mounts and vehicles, check out [Mounted Combat](#).

Stress

by Jarrod Ingram, edited by Mitchell Parry, [Absurd World](#)

Summary:

- A debility inducing status, the character becomes hungry and thirsty, becoming *weak*; or exhausted, becoming *shaky*.
- A condition check is made at certain points in a story or at the GM's discretion.
- *Weak* is relieved through eating while *shaky* is relieved through sleep. Other debilities require more time to be relieved.
- Failing to attend to a character's needs escalates their stress until they have all debilities and even the slightest knock will leave them near death.

The world is gritty, filled with terrifying individuals which will inflict stress on a character. The player is given tools to manage stress through vices and purpose [see Vices & Virtues], but at the end of the day the GM is encouraged to hard press the characters from not developing symptoms of mental illness.

Stress is another major form of damage. That is, stress creates debilities which makes it easier for a character to die if they sustain wounds. Starting off *hungry & thirsty*, making the character weak, adding on *exhaustion* later making the character *shaky*, and then progressing into *sick, stunned, confused*, and *scarred* depending on what the fiction demands.

Condition checks at given points in the story or at the GM's discretion are what generate stressful situations like hunger and exhaustion. Failing to cater to a character's needs, that of eating and sleeping will result in a stress spiral that could lead to a character's premature death.

Think of stress as mental exhaustion as well as the character fights with hunger and sleep deprivation. Sure they can push through it but it still has its toll. Mental and physical exhaustion causing stress debilities combined with wound debilities make for a character that isn't at peak performance and this should feel natural in the fiction.

Threads

by Cameron Burns, "[Threads in Dungeon World](#)",
and Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Threads are an alternative to Bonds and Alignments for troupe, West Marches, or open table play. They are similar in concept to Keys (as in *Lady Blackbird*) and are closely derived from Hooks (as in *Impulse Drive*).

Threads take on a few forms:

Goals represent something that your character has set out to do. They might be short-term, like setting out to eliminate a local bandit camp, or long-term, like bringing peace to the land.

- ★ *I will keep peace in this land, at any cost.*
- ★ *I will slay the great dragon Marduthrax.*
- ★ *I will usurp the barbarian chieftain and claim his tribe as my own.*

Instincts represent something that your character is driven to do whenever possible - a habit, an impulse, or some other type of behavior.

- ★ *My strange ways and foreign customs often bring me trouble.*
- ★ *I bow to no one.*
- ★ *I always help those in trouble.*

Traits represent something that is inherent to your character, like a physical quirk.

- ★ *I am utterly forgettable.*
- ★ *I excrete a slimy residue.*
- ★ *I have a limp that makes me awkward.*
- ★ *I have a face that only a mother could love.*

Connections represent the ties your character has with other people and places.

- ★ _____ *doesn't trust me, and for good reason.*
- ★ *I've adventured with _____ before and found them wanting.*
- ★ _____ *is out to get me. I need to lay low.*

Instead of filling out your Bonds and Alignments on your playbooks, you'll fill out these instead - as many or as few as you like, but at least three, and at least one relating to another PC. You can, and should, create additional Threads beyond these when it is appropriate to do so.

During Sessions

At the start of each session, you will highlight three of your Threads. By highlighting a Thread, you're telling everyone else at the table "hey, I want to express this aspect of my character this session." The GM and your fellow players should take your highlighted Threads into consideration during play.

Add "use or use up a thread, dread, desire, or entanglement" to your moves. All four of these are resources, things you can do to challenge the character in question and to encourage a dramatic arc for them.

Use threads frequently, to call back to earlier events, to recall themes to your group's mind, and to really drive a character's changes and growth over the course of the campaign home.

Also use threads in place of, or to supplement, a more formal Fronts mechanic. Refer to them when you aren't sure what should happen next, or want to bring a past event back to the forefront.

Finally, your players have told you that their characters are afraid of something (their Dread), that they want something (their Desires), and that they relate to the people around them in a specific way (their Entanglements). Use the hooks the players have given you, both on their sheet and in play, to fuel your other moves and to give personal impact to your descriptions of what happens in the fiction.

At the end of each session, instead of checking whether you've resolved your Bonds or fulfilled your Alignment, take turns with the following:

"Choose one or more of your highlighted Threads. For each one, tell us how you expressed that Thread during play. If everyone agrees, mark XP for each Thread you expressed in this way."

Conclusion

Threads (motifs, callbacks, hooks) are narrative currents that run through the story that will be interesting to weave in again later. Anything that comes up in play can be a thread, as long as someone finds it intriguing enough to declare it is.

"Respect must be earned" is a thread. So is "stained glass fragments lying in snow", and so is "who was that masked man?" Dreads, Desires, and Entanglements are all threads.

Whenever something strikes you as a valuable thread, write it down. Bring it back in later, when you see an appropriate moment to do so. The more threads you can weave in, the stronger your narrative will be, and the more satisfying the game.

Example Threads

★ The Barbarian

- *[PC] is puny and foolish, but amusing to me.*
- *I owe [PC] a life debt. I'll always be there for them.*
- *[PC]'s ways are strange and confusing to me.*
- *[PC] shares my hunger for [Appetite].*
- *I am out of place here. My foreign customs often bring me trouble.*
- *I will always choose to suffer hardship over indignity.*
- *I will never forgive [NPC/Group] for casting me out from my homeland.*

★ The Bard

- *I heard stories of [PC] long before meeting them.*
- *[PC] is my muse.*
- *I am chronicling [PC]'s adventures.*
- *[PC] has entrusted me with a secret.*
- *[PC] is often the butt of my jokes.*
- *[PC] cares for me, not my talents.*

★ The Cleric

- *[PC] shares in my convictions. Together, we can achieve great things.*
- *[PC] has a [wickedness/kindness] in their heart that only I have seen.*
- *I'm beginning to think my order is misguided and I'm questioning my faith.*

★ The Druid

- *I have forged a blood-bond with [PC].*
- *[PC] mistakenly believes that I must be tamed.*
- *I must choose between duty to nature and my bonds with my companions.*

★ The Fighter

- *[PC]'s morality will make them hesitate at the wrong time. When they do, I won't.*
- *I often drown myself in [Vice] to dull the scars on my soul.*
- *[PC] and I have seen all of each others' scars. That's a sacred bond.*
- *War has numbed me to suffering, whether it's others or my own.*
- *I have an unsettled score with [NPC/Group].*

- *I have fought alongside [NPC] for years. I will always come to their aid.*
- ★ **The Immolator**
 - *I made a sacrifice for [PC] once before, and they still owe me.*
 - *I become obsessed over peoples' hidden desires.*
 - *I take risks just for the thrill of it.*
 - *[NPC/Group] ruined my life. I'll see them incinerated.*
- ★ **The Paladin**
 - *I'll protect [PC] from anything, even themselves.*
 - *[PC] lacks [honor/mercy/virtue], and it's going to cause problems.*
 - *I will teach [PC] that they can't always break the rules and get away with it.*
 - *My order is hunted by [Group] for our beliefs. I must stay incognito.*
 - *I am supposed to be a bastion of wisdom, but I cannot let go of my [Powerful Emotion/Vice].*
- ★ **The Ranger**
 - *[PC] may be as cunning as I am. I'll test their skills to see if they're worthy.*
 - *[PC] might suspect what I've done, but I'll make sure they can never prove it.*
 - *[PC] got between me and my target in the past. Next time, I won't hesitate.*
 - *I was trained by [NPC/Group]. When they call on me, I must answer.*
 - *I'm suspicious of everyone. I can't let a secret stay unknown.*
- ★ **The Thief**
 - *[PC] and I are closer than family. Nothing will pull us apart.*
 - *[PC] is an easy mark. I'll wrap them around my finger.*
 - *I can't resist engaging in a complex deception when the truth would work perfectly well.*
 - *If I know there's something valuable around, I must have it.*
 - *I stole from [NPC/Group] and now they're after me.*
 - *I owe [NPC] big time, for a caper that went very, very bad.*
- ★ **The Wizard**
 - *I have foreseen [PC]'s destiny. It must come to pass.*
 - *[PC]'s mind is an empty page. I will fill it with knowledge.*
 - *I can't help but tinker with curiosities better left alone.*

Wounds

by Jarrod Ingram, edited by Mitchell Parry, [Absurd World](#)

Summary:

- Blood loss plays a part in determining a character's condition.
- A wound starts at a designated stage depending on damage and progresses to the next stage as debilities are accumulated.
- Damage has been modified to just use a single d6 to better cater to groups with just a pair of six-sided dice on hand.
- The formula for damage conversion is: $\text{dmg} = 1\text{d}6 + (x-6)/2$, where $\text{dmg} > 0$ and x is the size of the original damage die.

An Absurd World is a harsh world where the abstraction of hit points doesn't exist but rather bleeding out and corresponding debilities affect a character's condition. Wounds progress through stages as the character takes on more debilities eventually taking on the near death status where if they're left unattended they'll die.

Sustained wounds are more descriptive in nature. A character could take on a limp, find it hard to hold a weapon, or straight up lose an arm, but like most things the fiction dictates how this comes into effect. Healing spells are usually ineffective at treating sustained wounds with more mundane methods and even just time being the deciding factor.

Damage and armor still play a part in causing and preventing wounds. Use the following table as a guide to how damaging a wound is:

Damage to Wound Conversion

Roll	Stage	Result
1-3	Minor	Nothing happens.
4-6	Moderate	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on a physical debility resulting from the pain. If a character has all physical debilities, roll+CON. On a miss , their wounds become major.
7-9	Major	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on a physical debility from the pain, as per moderate wounds, and a mental debility from the blood loss. If a character has all debilities, roll+CON. On a miss , their wounds become critical.
10+	Critical	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on all debilities from the pain and blood loss and they are incapacitated, take -1 forward . If a character has all debilities while their wounds are critical, roll+CON the next time they take the spotlight. On a miss , they take their death move.

The first obvious interaction with the new system is that of debilities and wounds. That is, debilities signify the state of a character. For example a character with all the debilities from being near death will have a hard time taking another hit. If that hit is another major wound or worse, the next time they take the spotlight they'll be near death again which makes sense; if you're near death, healed, but then hit again you should probably be near death.

Another obvious interaction between debilities and wounds is the time it takes to Recover. The standard Recover move from *Dungeon World* takes three days to heal a debility, two with a healer. This feels right since sustained wounds are hard to heal and it's up to the body's natural healing abilities to see the character in fighting shape again.

Healing to Wound Conversion

Roll	Description
I-4	Stabilize someone, ceasing pain or blood loss.
4-8	Stabilize someone, ceasing pain and blood loss.
9+	Resuscitate someone, ceasing pain, blood loss, and incapacitation.
n/a	As above, but all wounds are nullified.

Debilities should be assigned based on the following guidelines.

Debilities Caused from Wounds

Debility	Reason
<i>Weak</i>	The pain is too much. You've had some muscles slashed, or something has been crushed.
<i>Shaky</i>	The pain is too much, your hands are shaky and you're unsteady on your feet.
<i>Sick</i>	The pain is too much, you feel nauseous.
<i>Stunned</i>	The blood loss is too much. You're having trouble reasoning.
<i>Confused</i>	The blood loss is too much. Your ears are ringing, your visions blurred.
<i>Scarred</i>	The blood loss is too much. You look pale.

Damage

For less variance behind PC and NPC attacks, consider the D6 Only rules. You may want to use a d6 for Wizard damage as a buff, if you consider the d4 too weak to begin with.

Vices & Virtues

by Jarrod Ingram, edited by Mitchell Parry, [Absurd World](#)

Vice & virtue replace alignments and bonds. The vices & virtues are: pride & humility, envy & gratitude, wrath & patience, sloth & diligence, avarice & charity, gluttony & temperance, and lust & chastity. They are an additional means of relieving debilities caused by stress or marking XP respectively.

A vice can come in many forms but overall they're separated into the following categories: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Each vice has a corresponding action to go along with it. For example, Envy demands that you interfere with another player as you're jealous of what they have. Interestingly, performing a vice relieves stress resulting in the ability to relieve a debility of choice at the next camp.

The polar opposite of vice is virtue. There's humility, gratitude, patience, diligence, charity, temperance, and chastity. Each virtue has a corresponding action to go along with it. For example, Gratitude has the character requiring them to aid another character as you're thankful for what you have and want to provide it to others. Performing a virtuous act results in the ability to mark XP at the next camp.

Think of the relief of a debility caused by stress or the marking of XP as a reward system for being filled with vice or virtue. Naturally the players should act in their own interest when they have debilities up to their ears, inconveniencing other players. While a character who is going well will perform a virtuous act for those in need. It typically takes two to three days to normally recover from a debility so this is a tempting compromise for most players.

Vice & virtue are actions that characters can undertake to relieve stress or mark XP. For the purposes of relieving stress or marking XP the following guidelines should be followed:

- *Camp* can also correspond to any steading where the characters are given time to roam by the GM.
- A character cannot use two or more vices or virtues to relieve stress or mark XP multiple times.

Pride & Humility

“Mirror, mirror on the wall...”

Also known as vanity, Pride is excessive love of oneself that can become an obsession if left unchecked. Pride usually results in a denial of the gods and any higher power, and isolation from others. They're a bit of a know it all, and if your character successfully spouts lore or discerns reality, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you don't spout lore or discern realities, mark XP at the next camp.

Envy & Gratitude

“That's a fine looking possession you have there, shame if something were to happen to it.”
- Monty the Thief

Also known as jealousy, Envy is the resentment of others for their possessions. Typically a thief, if we're talking about jealousy of material possessions, Envy comes in many forms. From envy of a relationship between two other people to envy of particular skills another possesses. Envious characters can relieve stress by stripping another of their possessions through whatever sinister means are necessary. If you interfere with another hunter's actions, relieve stress at the next camp. An envious character is nefarious and would rather have everyone with nothing than go through the trials and labors of earning it themselves. However, if you aid another hunter, mark XP at the next camp.

Wrath & Patience

“You looking at me!?”

A wrathful character is here to pick a fight, they are quick to anger and quicker to bring their sword to bear. Typically relieving stress by taking on avoidable conflict or by enacting their own perverted sense of justice. They cannot find purpose normally and, similar to a prideful character, they can only fulfill purpose in a specific manner, namely through self-righteous combat. If a character starts a fight, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you avoid a fight, mark XP at the next camp.

Sloth & Diligence

“I don’t wanna...”

A lazy character gets their kicks from watching others do the work while they reap the rewards; even if they don’t admit it. Typically found in codependent relationships, a lazy character usually has sound purpose but the actual act of having that purpose fulfilled has much to be desired. If you are defended by one of your fellow hunters, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you defend one of your fellow hunters, mark XP at the next camp.

Avarice & Charity

“Greed is good!”

A hoarder of coin and wealth by nature, a greedy character will deny others opportunity so they can get ahead. A greedy character is simple, if they get the better end of a deal, such as when distributing coin given to the party or successfully parlaying a better price, they’ll relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you give to the poor or to one of your fellow hunters then mark XP at the next camp.

Gluttony & Temperance

“Just a little bit of the good stuff.”

Be it food, alcohol, or intoxicants, or simply an excessive love of pleasure, the gluttonous character is another simple beast similar to the greedy character, they relieve stress by overindulgence. Simple to relieve stress with but the consequences of overindulgence can be dire. From obesity, to constant hangovers, to addiction and worse. The overindulgent character eventually pays for their vice with preordained afflictions and debilities. At camp, if your character overindulges in food, alcohol, or intoxicants, relieve stress. However, if you choose to consume a normal amount of food, alcohol, or intoxicants, mark XP.

Lust & Chastity

Licks lips

Excessive sexual desire, naturally the lustful character relieves stress through having intimacy. At camp, if you're intimate with a fellow hunter or stranger, relieve stress. However, if you abstain from intimacy or are only intimate with your "true love", mark XP at the next camp.

Running the Game

Introduction

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Describe the situation around the players at all times, honestly. This is your primary job, as the GM. Describe what the characters see, what their senses pick up, as concretely as you can, preferably from their perspectives.

Exploit your prep. This doesn't mean writing up thousands of pages of notes; it means knowing that vampires, and one very angry serpent demon, lair in the old sewers under the city. It means when the players explore those sewers, you keep that prep in mind, and when they roll a miss, you know why there's an ominous hiss from the shadows, even if they don't yet.

Follow your rules, and act when moves trigger. When the players look to you to see what happens next (it's your turn in the conversation), they hand you a golden opportunity (they narrate doing something your prep says is very dangerous, or they ignore a threat), or they roll a 6-, consult your list of moves and choose one that fits the fiction as established.

Make characters together. Be clear which supernatural paths are open to players, and which are not. As the players make their characters, consider what jumps out at you about the paths, themes, and other aspects of the character, and how you'll complicate their premise in play. Ask lots of questions.

A session of a fantasy PbtA game will follow a group of fantastical adventurers (your players) as they adventure in a fantastical world.

While the players get to describe what their characters think, feel and do, as Game Master you get to play everything else. This section teaches you how you can do that. Every idea will flow into the next. As a GM, you will be setting the scene, following your Agenda, upholding your Principles, and making your moves. If you stick to these, you will not go wrong.

Agenda

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

This is your general purpose as a GM, your reason for being. As long as you can say that you've done the following 3 things in a given session, you are playing correctly!

Portray a fantastic world: Give your players a world that is different from our own. While you and your players can decide what kind of fantasy you want to have, make sure it is outlandish, bizarre, adventurous, and fantastical!

Fill the characters' lives with adventure: Action, intrigue, danger, and quests should be around every corner. Whatever your players choose to do, it should feed into an adventure! That doesn't mean they need to save the world from ending every minute, only that they find themselves struggling to overcome an obstacle to achieve a goal, big or small.

Play to find out what happens: The entire table shares in the fun of finding out how the characters react to and change the world you're portraying, including YOU! This means that you shouldn't come to the session with a script of how everything should go. You're going to improvise! If that seems scary, don't worry. We are going to go over how you do this.

Intertwine the mundane and the fantastic: Add "intertwine the mundane and the fantastic" to your agenda. Contrast the mundane world of drudgery and toil with the fantastic one that lies beneath: whether that's a world filled with diamond heists and double-crosses or one filled with vampires and werewolves, or both.

Principles

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

Never speak the name of your move

You have a list of moves you can perform as the GM. If you've read ahead or looked at the playbooks, you've likely seen the lists of moves (moves are a big deal in this game).

Your moves are prompts to you, not things you say directly. Never show the players that you're picking a move from a list.

Give every monster life

Monsters are not just obstacles for your players to fight, they are fantastic creatures with their own motivations. Describe them by the details that bring them to life: their smells, sights, and sounds.

Name every person

People in your world are not simply “quest-givers”, anyone that the players speak with has a name, a personality, and goals. It is ok to figure the details out as you go.

Think offscreen too

Just because you’re a fan of the characters doesn’t mean everything happens right in front of them. Sometimes your best move is in the next room, or another part of the dungeon, or even back in town.

Begin and end with the fiction

When the players make a move, they take a fictional action to trigger it, apply the rules, and get a fictional effect. This isn’t a dice game, it is a story. The same applies to your moves.

Draw maps, leave blanks

Any time there’s a new location described, make sure it gets added to a map. Every time a creature, person, or object is described, write it down! Don’t write the encyclopedia entry for it, leave room for the unknown! You and your players can fill it in as you go. Everything and everything can become something useful later on.

Address the characters, not the players

Don’t use your player’s names! Pay attention to their names when they introduce their characters, because that is the name you will be using to speak to them!

Embrace the fantastic

The world you portray should be just as magical, frightening, powerful, and weird as your player’s characters.

Ask questions and use the answers

If you don’t know something, or you don’t have an idea, ask the players and use what they say. Most players love feeling like they added to the world they are adventuring in!

Make a move that follows

Every world has rules, even fantastical ones. When you make a move, you are taking an element of the fiction and using it to tell the story. Moves should make sense within the fiction as well as the rules, so no having monsters appearing out of thin air *unless that can happen in your world!*

Be a fan of the characters

You are not the director of this story, you are just participating in the fiction that features your players. Your goal shouldn't be to push them in any direction, but to cheer for their victories, laugh at their antics, and cry for their defeats. (Yes, you can still be a fan of the characters even when they are losing).

Think dangerous

Nothing is safe in your world, including the players, the dungeon, relationships, or that tavern-keeper you just spent 20 minutes practicing a voice for. Whenever you have the chance, think "how can this be put in danger or break?"

Everyone has an agenda; everyone wants something

Add "everyone has an agenda; everyone wants something" to your principles! This is part of "give every monster life" and "name every person", but bigger, more messily complicated, and more human (even if the person in question is actually a literal monster).

Give every NPC, monster or human, something they want or need that they haven't already seized because they can't, and figure out why that is. Use that desire to create situations where most people, even the most monstrous ones, are willing to negotiate to get what they want from someone who might be able to provide it. That's what gives your fragile mortal heroes a fighting chance.

Frame it like a movie or novel; skip the boring bits

Add "frame it like a movie or novel; skip the boring bits" to your principles. If you frame a scene, something interesting should happen, character development should occur, a subtle move towards a goal or a scheme should be revealed. If not, sum it up in a few words and skip to the next thing.

Your Agenda, Principles, and GM Moves are not just good ideas, they are the rules you, as the GM, have agreed to follow. Over time, you'll find ways to

expand beyond them, but if you take the time now to look at them before you narrate, you'll find the system rewards you with a smooth experience.

Communication

by Tam H, [*Urban/Modern/Fantasy*](#)

Always take the time to clarify the player's intent and to make sure they have the same understanding of the situation you've presented as you do before you call a move triggered or narrate the results of an action. Don't hesitate to back up if there's been a miscommunication.

Remember to "ask questions and use the answers". Ask the shapeshifter what it looks like when they transform, and if it hurts. Ask the demon what they do to appease that greater demon who they owe a debt to. Ask the ranger how they got that scar, and who died when they did.

Try to avoid asking questions that require a player to answer something their character wouldn't know or that require them to challenge their own characters. Especially if you're teaching new players, ask very narrow, leading questions often, always framed from the character's perspective, about the character's feelings, history, and current emotions.

Always ask yourself, "if this is true, what else is true?" Look at the fiction you've established together at the table, at your threads and NPCs, and at your "prep", the things you know to be true about the situation, area, and world but that might not yet have been revealed in play, then narrate the logical consequences of the players' actions or inaction.

Don't be afraid to pause at any point and say "that sounds interesting, but I need a minute to think this through". You don't need to be mysterious or all-knowing! The GM's role in this game is to facilitate play, to set up challenges, and to describe what's illuminated by the spotlight the players shine on the game world with their questions and actions.

Most games assume the player characters are generally on the same team. If a PC decides to act against another, the one who declares action goes first unless the fiction says otherwise. But communicate with the players and make sure everyone consents before proceeding. Then, if a move triggers, roll as usual, otherwise, treat the declared action as an open-ended GM Move and ask the other player, "What do you do?"

You can always talk to the players involved about how it should resolve instead or just treat it as a "golden opportunity" to make a GM Move, and resolve it logically.

GM Moves

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

The basic setup for gameplay in PbtA games is simple:

- ★ The GM gives the setup of a threat, but not the conclusion.
- ★ The player responds and probably rolls some dice.
- ★ The GM narrates the results, based on the player's roll.

Your moves are different from players' moves. There is no trigger or right time to use any of them. Really, they just describe something you can do to help make the fiction more compelling for your players. They are a list of prompts that you can turn to whenever you aren't sure what to do, or want to do something different. As you get more and more comfortable as a GM, you might find yourself referencing this less and less. That is okay!

- ★ **Separate them:** Something forces your players to be further apart!
- ★ **Deal Damage:** Your players suffer harm! When dealing damage, remember the fiction! Injury isn't just a number.
- ★ **Show a downside to their class, race, or equipment:** a malfunction, glitch, weakness, anything Your heroes are not perfect, especially when it matters most!
- ★ **Offer an opportunity, with or without cost:** Treasure glimpsed through a door, the drafty breeze of an escape route. But what will it cost them?
- ★ **Put someone in a spot:** This isn't a general threat. Address a single player. Something is happening to them right now! What do they do?
- ★ **Give an opportunity that fits a character's abilities:** make your players glad they made their character the way they did. Give them something to overcome, feel cool, and be special. Thieves need locks to pick, wizards need magic to dispel.
- ★ **Use a monster, danger, or location move:** Use a move from any of their lists just like you would a move from this list!
- ★ **Reveal an unwelcome truth:** Your players can't even rely on their past successes! The beast doesn't have the crucial weak-spot they

thought it did, and that “bandit” they killed turned out to be a local prince...

- ★ **Show signs of an approaching threat:** Lightning filled clouds gather around the wizards tower, the rumble of hungry beasts echoes down the hall. They better pay attention and act decisively. The approaching threat might arrive in 5 seconds, it might arrive in a whole month! Your players must get ready either way.
- ★ **Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask:** your players just had a great idea to overcome a challenge! Instead of saying no, say “yes, but here is what it will take, and here are the risks”. Then let them decide if they still want to do it!
- ★ **Use up their resources:** Everything eventually breaks or disappears. A sword breaks, an important ally goes missing. And how much longer can they stay in the cave after rats ate all their rations?
- ★ **Turn their move back on them:** Think about the benefits a move might grant a character and turn them around in a negative way. Alternately, grant the same advantage to someone who has it out for the characters. If Ivy has learned of Duke Horst’s men approaching from the east, maybe a scout has spotted her, too.

Added GM Moves

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Introduce, entangle, endanger, or harm an NPC

Add “introduce, entangle, endanger, or harm an NPC” to your moves.

Introduce new or existing NPCs when they're needed, entangle them with the heroes, put them in harm's way, or break them just to show the PCs how dangerous a threat is.

Remember, too, that NPCs are tools and resources for you to use with any of your other moves.

Cut to a new scene

Add “cut to a new scene” to your moves. Use this to end a scene and pick up the next morning, say, or to condense a long talk into a few words and pick up immediately after. Try not to use this if the players are still interested in a scene; always “be a fan” of the characters and “play to find out”.

Which Move Should I Make?

by Yochai Gal, [*One Shot World*](#)

There is no right answer. It is up to you! But if you have any one rule to follow, make it this: follow the fiction! Be in the scene with your players. Whatever your move is, it should affect them now or in the near future.

To choose a move, start by looking at the obvious consequences of the action that triggered it. If your first instinct is that this won't hurt them now, but it'll come back to bite them later, great! That's part of your principles (think offscreen too).

When making a move, keep your principles in mind. In particular, never speak the name of your move and address the characters, not the players. Your moves are not mechanical actions happening around the table. They are concrete events happening to the characters in the fictional world you are describing.

Moves are a way of fulfilling your Agenda, part of which is to fill the characters' lives with adventure.

When a spell misfires or the floor drops out from under them, the adventurers must react, or suffer the consequences of inaction.

No matter what move you make, always follow up by asking, "What do you do?"

When to Take a Move

Make a move (any move you want!) when any of the following three occur:

- When everyone looks to you to find out what happens. (This will happen **all the time**. Whenever a player starts listening to hear how the world responds to their actions, then you can make a move.)
- When the players give you a Golden Opportunity. A Golden Opportunity is:
 - When they roll a 6 or lower. Speaks for itself! Most player moves will say what happens when a player rolls 7+ (a success). Hardly any say what happens on a 6- (a failure). That is because you are given free reign to do whatever you want!
 - A soft move ignored becomes a golden opportunity for a hard move. When the players choose to ignore an established threat, they're giving you an opportunity. If the players do nothing about the hail of arrows flying towards them, it's a golden opportunity to use the Deal Damage move.

Soft vs. Hard Moves

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

While you can make any move you want, no one will have fun if your players get struck by lightning one foot out of the tavern, and no one will have fun if they never have any challenge at all! An important GM skill is learning how to pace the intensity of the fiction.

Enter the idea of soft and hard moves. Any of the GM moves listed previously can be soft or hard.

Soft moves are moves you make that don't present immediate and unavoidable consequences for the player. Example: "The trap is sprung, and the boulder begins rolling down the passageway! *You have time to get out of the way*. What do you do?" See? The players are not automatically crushed or hurt! They might avoid the consequences, and they might even look cool doing it! Key word: *might*.

These are appropriate to use whenever a player looks to you to find out what happens.

Hard moves are moves you make that do present immediate and unavoidable consequences; example: getting crushed by a boulder.

It is generally appropriate to take a hard move whenever you have a golden opportunity or the player rolls a 6-.

In the example mentioned previously, the players had time to evade the boulder. Let's say they can't decide on a way to evade, or simply choose to ignore it. That is your Golden Opportunity. They get crushed.

Let's say they do figure out a way to evade the boulder: The barbarian is going to use her brute strength to hold the boulder back! She rolled a 6-, though. The barbarian's arms give out, and they get crushed! (Getting crushed by a boulder would also be an appropriate response if the thief trying to disarm the trap rolled a 6-.) Hard moves don't always have to be quite so dramatic. Anything that results in the loss of HP is considered a hard move.

Some examples—

- ★ *Soft move*: A guard is suspicious of the player at the city wall.
- ★ *Hard move*: A guard has decided to not let the player in the city.
- ★ *Soft move*: A player feels the necromancer trying to take possession of their body.
- ★ *Hard move*: The player is overcome by the ancient spirit, their body is no longer their own.

Hard moves do not need to happen after a soft move! Feel free to use hard moves when it is appropriate for the fiction.

You have complete control over how hard or soft you are being with your players. While it is a good rule of thumb to go hard on golden opportunities or failed rolls, listen to your gut. Sometimes a softer or harder move is more appropriate for the fiction!

As [Arn writes](#)—

I would describe the difference between soft and hard moves like this:

Soft Move - Describe what happens, but stop before the effect. The Goblin swings at you with his short sword. What do you do?

Hard Move - Describe what happens, including the effect. The Goblin hits you with his short sword, drawing blood. Take 3 HP damage. What do you do? “

For more, see “[Example GM Moves](#)” by Jeremy Strandberg.

Ideas for Hard and Soft Moves During Combat

by J. Alan Henning

Soft Moves	Hard Moves
<p>Adjusts at the last second Adrenaline surge of opponent Aims at you Anticipates attack Avoids attack Blood flows Blood sprays from you Bullrushes you Bypasses shield Change to visibility Charges Dodges Feints Gashes forehead, blinding with blood Goes airborne Gust of wind Hurls through the air Improvises a weapon Innocent party enters field of combat Jump kicks Jumps Leaps Makes a lucky move Maneuvers into better position Moves fast Parries Punches Rushes Shoots at you Sweeps you Takes defensive stance Tosses you Trips you Twists away from you Vermin scatter Wrestles you You become winded You slip Your vision is impaired</p>	<p>Attack of opportunity Bashes Bites Blinded Breaks your arm / jaw / leg / neck Breaks your ribs / shield / teeth Catches weapon Chokes you Cracks armor Crunch of bones Crushes limb Cuts armor Decapitates Disarms you Disarms your shield Disorients you Does a body blow Entangles you Grapples Headbutts you Hits your groin Kicks Knocks down Knocks out OVERRUNS you Rattles Severs limb Shoots you Slam tackles you Smashes into you Snaps your bone Spinkicks you Stabs you Strikes you through the heart Stuns you Sunders your shield Sweepkicks you Takes you down at the knees Throws weapon at you</p>

Ideas for Questions

Brennan O'Brien ("Veilheim") has compiled the following list of questions to ask players in play.

	Who? (identity, relationships)	What? (traits, objectives)	Where? (locations, places)	When? (timelines, destiny)	Why? (emotions, motives)	How? (methods, tools)
People (Any living being Family, lovers, mentors, friends, rivals, allies, enemies, great beasts, avatars and gods)	Who are they? Who are they to you? Who are they to the world? Who do they love/hate? Who do they respect?	What are they like? What is their job? What motivates them? What do they desire? fear? What will happen to them? What makes them special?	Where are they going? Where have they been? Where do they live? Where do they want to live? Where do you take them?	When did their fate become clear? When will be their finest moment? When will they be at their weakest?	Why are they like that? Why do they despair? Why are they joyful? Why are they so stubborn? Why do they hate you?	How will they take power? How will they die? How will they live? How opulent are they? How knowledgeable are they?
Groups (any collection of creatures - factions, guilds, masses)	Who are members? Who leads them? Who is joining them? Who opposes them? Who are their potential allies? Who are their potential enemies?	What are their objectives? What stands in their way? What are their methods? What are they willing to sacrifice? What do they hold dear? What plans within plans do they have?	Where are their headquarters? Where are they moving to? Where are their friends and enemies?	When will their plans come to fruition? When will they be exposed? When will they be at their strongest? When will they be at their weakest?	Why do members oppose the objective? Why do members support the objective? Why are they secretive? Why are they willing to stop at nothing?	How will they enact their will? How will they be defeated? How are you linked to them? How wealthy are they? How brutal are they?
Beliefs (philosophical convictions, religion, points of view)	Who believes this? Who does not? Who can be swayed?	What do they believe? What do they oppose? What happens to heretics? What are they willing to do for their belief?	Where do they express their belief? Where is holy/unholy?	When are the important celebrations of this belief? When are believers called on?	Why is this belief the only true way? Why are others opposed to this belief?	How is the belief expressed? How is the belief taught? How does the belief expand?

Places (Anything from civilizations to steadings, wonders magical and natural, wilderness)	Who rules here? Who has influence? Who wants this place for themselves?	What has/will happen here? What is so secret about this place? What happens if you gain/lose control of it?	Where is it located? Where is it rumored to be? Where do you have to go to get to it?	When did this place peak? When did this place fall? When will it be rediscovered? When will it be utterly destroyed?	Why do you get a sense of foreboding here? Why are you so happy here? Why are you leaving? Why do you stay?	How can you find it? How do you bend it to your will? How will you get there?
Things (objects, artifacts, weapons, scrolls, rings)	Who last possessed it? Who desires it now? Who is destined for it? Who wants it destroyed? Who can find it?	What does it look like? Sound like? Taste like? What does it do? What do the legends say? What happens if it falls into the wrong hands?	Where is it right now? Where is it destined to be? Where was its true power first shown?	When will this object be at the focal point of history? When was this object forgotten?	Why is this item so powerful? Why aren't others interested in it? Why are you interested in it?	How does the bearer feel while they have it? How does the bearer appear to others? How could you destroy it?
Events (moments in time and the unfolding of history)	Who was involved? Who prevailed? Who was cast aside? Who foretold it?	What happened? What was foretold? What happens if the event doesn't occur?	Where did it happen? Where did they go? Where was it expected to happen?	When did it happen? When will it happen? When will the effects be known?	Why is it so important? Why is it rushing towards us?	How is it known today? How will it be known in the future?

See Also

See also:

- [GAMing Dungeon World: Inside My Head](#) by Mike Schmitz.
- [Running Dungeon World for New Adventurers](#) by Philip Wessels.

Essays

The Narrative Line

by J. Alan Henning

The Narrative Line in TTRPGs

Edge of the line:		Systems that draw the line here:
What the players can do in the moment		All RPGs, with constraints from the rules and fiction
Character backstory		RPGs without backstory generators
Character's people		Many PbtA games without established settings
Expand on the world's past		Many PbtA games
Flesh out GM's environmental descriptions		Describing other items in a room or locale
Choose between consequences of a poor roll		Many PbtA games
Flashbacks		<i>Blades in the Dark</i>
Resisting bad things that the GM has already narrated		<i>Blades in the Dark</i>
Create the world and setting		<i>One-Shot World</i>

<https://www.troypress.com>

[The Line](#) separates what the GM narrates vs. what the player narrates. In D&D, the player narrates their backstory and their current activity; the DM narrates everything else.

Of course, even some DMs in 5e shift the Line a little – “You killed it! Describe your final blow and its death throes!”

On the other extreme, take [One Shot World](#) by Yochai Gal. The players and GMs collaboratively develop the world. “Set out a blank sheet of paper and ask the player who is the most well-traveled to draw a rough outline of the region. Then ask the most social character to draw a point of interest they’ve heard rumors about. Finally, ask the most knowledgeable character to draw roads, rivers, forests, mountain ranges, etc. If anyone hasn’t drawn something on the map yet, they should then add a detail of their choice.”

There are many different places where games can draw the Line.

Where to draw the narrative line?	What can players do?
<i>Edge of the line:</i>	<i>Systems that draw the line here (illustrative examples rather than an exhaustive list):</i>
What the players can do in the moment	All RPGs, with constraints from the rules and fictional situation
Character backstory	RPGs without backstory generators
Character's people	Many PbtA games but not games with established campaign settings
Expand on the world's past	Many PbtA games
Flesh out GM's environmental descriptions	("Describe your death blow" at one end, to describing other items in a room at the other.)
Choose between two consequences of a poor roll	Many PbtA games
Flashbacks	<i>Blades in the Dark</i>
Resisting bad things the GM has already narrated	<i>Blades in the Dark</i>
Create the world and setting	Story games, esp. those planned for short campaign runs (e.g., <i>One-Shot World</i>)

For narrative authority over a character's people, [Fellowship](#) offers a great example: "You are playing as a hero, a champion of your people, and you are the truth in all things related to your people. When you play as the Elf, you decide what the Elves are, what their culture is like, what they value and care about, what their relationship is with the rest of the world. When someone asks about the Elves, all eyes will turn to you for the answer."

[Stonetop](#) does this as well: players expound on their backgrounds, like The Blessed, who worships Danu, and is instructed in Session 0: “Tell us about Danu’s shrine in Stonetop and how she is worshiped.” But Stonetop draws the line even more on the side of player control. Like some other PbtA games, it has the GM principle “Ask questions and build on the answers.” Its setting often provides a sketch on a canvas upon which players are expected to paint details. For instance, the crinwin are a threat to the village, and upon the first encounter with them, players are asked a series of questions. Here’s half of them:

- “What odd noise, heard in the night, is attributed to the crinwin? What is it said to mean?”
- “What common thing do these vermin seem to covet above all else?”
- “When did crinwin last openly raid the village? What did they take?”

This has occasionally been a challenge to my *Stonetop* players. Sometimes there’s a flight to authority. The first instinct is often to assume it’s written down somewhere: What do the rules say about the Forest Folk? About creatures of darkness? About how to worship Helior? They have to be coaxed to co-create.

In my own games in other systems, I’ve been trying to move the line to where players can add details to the environment that fit the spirit of what has been described before. For instance, as GM I might say, “The thief runs off with your coin purse and ducks into a smithy down the street.” If the player says, “I duck into the shop and grab a poker from the fireplace” that works for me. If she had said she grabbed a tire iron, we’d discuss it! My general rule, taken from *Sly Flourish* I think, is to describe three aspects of the environment that players can interact with. But, in the players’ defense, that leaves a lot undefined. We can expand on the environment together based on common sense and our expectations of the world.

Some GMs may fear that if players share narrative control then they will just make life easier on their characters. That’s not been my experience. My players want to see how their characters surmount dangers. For instance, when I was GMing [Atma](#), one of my players said, “OK, I’m going to stash Sir Leonid in one of my pocket dimensions so he can take a power nap [special move he has].” The player who played Sir Leonid was fine with that. When he was later pulled out of the pocket dimension, his player then said, “I come out, looking disheveled, clearly having just been fighting something. But I see this new opponent and I charge...” Later the first player said, “OK, I pull out

whatever Sir Leonid was fighting, to defend me – it’s a chimordial! Argh! Oh, and GM, I fully expect it to turn on me at some point.” As GM, I hadn’t articulated what was happening in the pocket dimension, but these two players took it upon themselves to do so.

Not all players will embrace the ability to share narrative authority to the same extent. In my Stonetop campaign, the Fox, who has wandered the world (in her backstory), often co-creates details of the world. But the Blessed, who has been a homebody, rarely does; partly because of the character, but more because the player doesn’t enjoy that. That’s fine – one game can accommodate different players’ enthusiasm for co-creation, and a good GM can draw the line in different places for these players.

If you haven’t yet experimented with shared narrative control, a one-shot game is a great place to do that. Again, check out [One-Shot World](#), or my resources for running [Dungeon World one-shots](#).

[My Session Zeroes](#) have not historically asked about The Line and where it should be drawn. It’s been implicit – as GM, I’m in charge of creation. In the future, I’m going to have to make it explicit: What do the players want? Where are they most comfortable drawing the Line? But then I’m going to challenge them: let’s push the line a little bit past your comfort zone, as you just might find that you enjoy playing even more when you can bring a bit more creativity into the world.

(As always, thanks to the [Dungeon World+](#) and [Stonetop](#) Discord groups for helping develop these ideas.)

Stealth

by Kasper Brohus Allersle

Stealth is tricky for many newcomers to the system, and I can honestly understand the confusion. So, here’s stealth from my point of view.

The “problem” with stealth...

... is that it isn’t really covered by neither basic, starting nor advanced moves. A lot of people think that it is a sort of Defy Danger using DEX, but it really isn’t, as they aren’t “Defying Danger by getting out of the way or acting fast”. OK, some cases exist where this is the case, but that sort of implies that you are about to get discovered, and it doesn’t cover all stealth situations. You

could house-rule it to work like this, but I recommend not to. I'll explain why in a bit.

Some seem to think that stealth is an excellent opportunity to make highly specific custom moves, with triggers like “when you sneak your way into the duke’s castle...” or “when hide yourself in a barrel...” and similar. While custom moves are always nice, this means that you specifically have to prepare every stealth roll in advance, for every situation and for every way of “stealthing”. That’s a lot of work and is frankly not feasible. You can’t prepare for everything. Play to find out, right?

Instead, my recommendation is to use...

GM moves!

This is the most “elegant” way of handling it in my opinion, as it makes you able to react to an unforeseen stealth situation, no prep required. I’m not talking about hard moves here, but making a chain of soft moves to explain the situations helps the players know what’s at stake, and lets them find “smart ways” to solve problems instead of relying on the dice. Unless they find a way to exploit a move they have that requires a roll of course.

To really illustrate what I mean I’ll give an example on how to do this:

Castor (the human fighter): OK, I take off my scale mail. Does the armor of the guard I just stabbed fit me?

GM: What?! Why?

Castor: I figured sneaking in would save us a lot of hassle. But I’d prefer being at least clad in some armor, some that won’t attract attention.

GM: Oh, good point! Yeah, it sort of fits. It’s a bit tight around the crotch, but otherwise it fits just fine. You’ll have to wipe off the blood first though.

GM move here is “offer an opportunity, with or without a cost”. In this case without a cost.

Lanethe (the elven ranger): While Castor dons the armor, I’ll scout ahead, looking for an easy entry to the Duke’s castle.

GM: You move through the undergrowth, and before long the castle is in sight. A few guards are taking rounds on horses, and a few are guarding the main gate. Around the castle is a somewhat wide moat. What do you do?

Reveal an unwelcome truth...

Lanethe: Can I spot some other entrances from here?

GM: No, not from here, you're too far away. Maybe if you sneak closer to the castle, but that would risk pulling attention from the guards.

Tell them the requirements or consequences and ask...

Lanethe: OK, I mark a use from my Adventuring Gear to produce a spyglass. Close enough now?

GM: Fair enough! Well, looking closer, you see that there's an open window above the moat on one side of the castle. If you could find a way to breach the gap, then you could easily get through. But you'd need to create a distraction first, otherwise the rider could easily spot you. What do you do?

Another offered opportunity, but this time with a cost, or more correctly, a requirement.

Lanethe: Well, I'm sure that I have a grappling hook and a rope in my Adventuring Gear, in case that is necessary. I head back to the others and tell them what I've found.

GM: OK, Lanethe has returned and told both of you what she has learned. What do you do?

Robard (the halfling druid): So we just need to create a distraction? I could easily provide that.

Castor: Without raising the alert?

Robard: Sure! I'll just shapeshift into a wolf and scare the horses! That should keep them preoccupied!

Lanethe: And then I'll throw my grappling hook through the window, so we can climb in. Robard can turn into a bird and fly through afterwards.

Castor: OK, that's the plan then. Lanethe and I will go into position and wait for the distraction!

GM: OK, you two wait for a while. Robard! You see the two riders come close to your hideout behind some bushes near the edge of the woods! What do you do?

Robard: I turn myself into a fearsome and savage wolf, of course! I call on a wolf spirit and demand that it changes my form!

GM: Roll+WIS then!

Notice that this is the first roll, because no player had triggered a move until now. Robard rolls a 9.

GM: A spirit wolf appears and leaps into you, changing your shape to that of a big, red wolf, as by your tell! You get two hold. What do you do?

Robard: Oh yeah, I go red when I shapeshift... No matter! I leap out in front of the horses, growling as I go. Can I spend a hold to leap and go for the throat on one of the horses?

GM: Sure! You feel your fangs penetrate the soft flesh, the warm blood starts pouring out of you. The horse rears and collapses, whinnying. The other horse rears as well, nearly throwing off its rider. The rider on the ground rushes to his feet, and with fear in his eyes he draws a longsword! The other rider draws her sword as well! What do you do?

Putting Robard in a spot. If he uses his last hold to defend himself, he will revert to his halfling form. If he does nothing, they'll probably hurt him really bad.

Robard: I have no idea why I didn't see this coming. I flee back into the woods. Can I spend hold to outrun them?

GM: Well, yes, but only briefly as you will revert. What do you do?

Robard: Well, I do it! I flee back into the woods and hide behind a tree, then revert.

GM: Well, it happens as you say. As you get behind the tree, you feel the spirit wolf pulling free from your body. You have returned to your halfling self. The remaining rider is close behind you though, and you only have seconds before she'll catch up with you, and subsequently put two and two together. What do you do?

Keeping up the pressure by keeping him locked in the situation as what he did didn't actually solve anything, with the exception of giving him a chance to inconspicuously shapeshift into a bird...

Robard: I turn into a raven by calling on a raven spirit in my mind!

GM: Roll!

Robard rolls a 7.

Robard: Phew! I fly back towards the castle!

GM: In the meantime, Lanethe and Castor have climbed through the window, unnoticed as far as they know. You are currently standing in a larder. A moment later, a red raven flies through the window. You have now all successfully entered the castle, and to your knowledge without discovery. You all hear some chatter outside. It sounds like a kitchen crew bantering about some porridge. You hear a female voice saying "I'll just go fetch some more flour from the larder!" Someone yells in consent. What do you do?

Reveal an approaching threat, namely the threat of discovery...

That's it!

The above would continue until a player triggered a move and rolled a miss or gave me a golden opportunity, in which case I would make a hard move instead of a soft one. I left that out from the example, but one remark on hard moves in stealth situations; it is all too easy to make a hard move into a "you get discovered!" move.

While it makes sense in many situations, it can also feel like the players did a lot of work for no gain, especially if a lot of other obstacles on the way were handled with significant cost to the party, like using scrolls to avoid rolling to cast spells or equipment from Adventurer Gear. Keep that in mind and be a fan of the characters!

But that's not all!

As a finishing remark, I'd like to point out that stealth isn't really a "special" situation. A lot of stuff isn't covered by player moves, such as hunting and foraging in the wilderness or navigating underground caverns. No matter the situation, it is important to understand one simple thing about fantasy PbtA games (and Apocalypse World hacks in general): It is all about the conversation!

Happy sneaking!

Suddenly Ogres

“What to do on Spout Lore and Discern Realities misses”

by Vasiliy Shapovalov

Special thanks to the Dungeon World Tavern community, Mike Harvey, Radaghast Kary, Alex Valuishko, Anthony Gulotta, and Mike Burnett.

I find Discern Realities and Spout Lore to be the hardest moves to react to as a GM. Telling a truth on a hit is easy and awesome, but I often had no idea what to do on a miss. So I gathered here every trick I used myself or have read about in online discussions.

How to Trigger a Move

First thing to remember is that players do not just roll. Moves are always triggered through fiction. Discern Realities and Spout Lore are pretty straightforward in this sense: you need no elaborate descriptions for sounds, smells or memories.

This simplicity makes it hard to come up with a move on a miss. Not much can go wrong when you're recalling lessons of your mentor. That's why I never ask players to roll for simple things: everything that is easy to spot or remember I say right up front.

A move is triggered only after a character makes an effort and is clear about it: looks under the rock, climbs the highest tree, puts an ear next to the door, sneaks closer to the guard, checks if that snake's back is red or green.

What to Do on a Miss

You should keep in mind that a miss is not necessarily a failure; a miss is trouble. Failure is just the simplest and the most boring option you've got. Most often it adds nothing to the fiction and makes PC look incompetent. Consider these examples:

- ★ Traps? You don't know if there are any.
- ★ Who's in control of this masquerade ball? You have no idea, you're a ranger.

I never interpret a miss as a simple failure, without a twist of some kind. I prefer to use one of the tricks below.

Worse than It Seemed

Tell the character an unwelcome truth about what she wants to know. Most of these other tricks are annoying when used too often, thus requiring you to alternate, but this one is not. It strongly follows the fiction and looks very diverse in practice.

- ★ Tarrasque's weak spot? It hasn't got one.
- ★ Who's in control of this masquerade ball? It's your rival, Duke Dupont, just as you feared!
- ★ Looking for traps? You found them, that room is, like, made of traps. And there's one behind you, too.
- ★ Eavesdropping behind the door? Sound of dozens of boots coming from the other side.

Worse than You Thought

Ask a question, then craftily twist the answer. That's my personal favorite. You've got some player input to jump off and players know that the problem is co-created and generally won't feel like you're trying to screw them.

- ★ Tarrasque's weak spot? What did they tell you back in the academy? Eyes? Well, everything but the eyes are clad in carapace as thick as Fighter's leg, and the eyes are the size of a pig's and are higher than you can reach. What do you do?
- ★ Eavesdropping behind the door? Who do you hear? Your good buddy, Jasper the Herald? You hear Jasper muttering darkly about your party to the captain of the guard—apparently you've overstayed your welcome.

Your Answer is in Another Castle

Turn it into a quest. This is a great tactic because it redirects and delays the question, and it adds to the story. The important thing on a miss is to make it interesting.

- ★ Who's in control of this masquerade ball? You don't know, but you spot Jasper the herald on the balcony, flirting with Lady Beatrice. You remember Beatrice: she hates you. Anyway, he would know.
- ★ Tarrasque's weak spot? The Great Library of Kanthros would certainly have that information.

- ★ Praying for answers? A voice speaks. “You are unclean. First go perform the Ritual of Ablution in the pool at the falls of the Griffin River.” [Perhaps there is a nymph in the pool who can provide guidance. Or maybe GM is buying time.]

The Abyss Gazes into You

While the character is examining something, it takes notice of her. What exactly happens depends on what she’s examining and the way she does it. Maybe it was too long, or too obvious, or just the place was wrong.

- ★ Who’s in control at that masquerade ball? That’s your rival, Duke Dupont, just as you feared! He spots you and whispers a few words to his valet, who runs off towards the guard post.
- ★ Want to know what’s dangerous here? The answer has just stabbed you between your ribs.

Missed the Obvious

While the character is looking for one thing, something different makes a strike. That’s a solid one, but don’t overuse it. Being caught unaware all the time makes character seem incompetent and many players don’t like it. Also, if you keep hitting them with new dangers every time, it may feel like a *deus ex machina*.

- ★ Looking for traps? Well, you should have been looking for giant spiders, one of them is descending on you right now. What do you do?
- ★ Quizzing the town guards? They decide to arrest you and ask you to come with them. What do you do?

Suddenly Ogres

Don’t answer the question, change the subject... forcefully. Works every time. Just throw them into combat, you don't even have to explain or justify it. Play to find out why! Don’t overdo it, though; your move must follow the fiction, remember?

- ★ Looking for traps? Suddenly an ogre is attacking you!
- ★ Who’s in control at that masked ball? Suddenly, ogres are everywhere! Chaos ensues, people are screaming, and blood splatters your cheek

from somewhere off to the left... Hmm, I suppose that means that ogres are in control now.

- ★ Eavesdropping behind the door? Ogres burst through it right on you!
- ★ Want to know what's dangerous here? The ogre. It's not clear just where he came from, but it is obvious what he wants to do.
- ★ Looking for tracks all over the place? You are looking at the ground and, suddenly, there's a pair of ogre's feet...

Too Late

Character spent too much time contemplating and investigating instead of acting. Or was too concentrated to notice important things around her. This trick is often combined with others: concentration and spent time are not bad per se, but only when there are other threats around. This is a good one, albeit it tends to become boring if overused. Very often this trick comes first to your mind, but take some time, there might be a better choice.

- ★ Who's in control at that masquerade ball? While you tried to figure that out, your rival Duke Dupont is leaving with the bishop you wanted to talk to, they are at the door now, what do you do? Rush there, ruthlessly pushing nobles from your path?
- ★ Eavesdropping behind the door? The voices on the other side just got a lot louder, and the door is being opened. What do you do?

Got Separated

Exploration took the character away from the rest of her group. It's a good time to throw in the threat that would be easily defeated otherwise.

- ★ Looking for tracks all over the place? Well, while you were at it, orcs came upon you. You're on your own for now.
- ★ So while your Cleric is praying for answers in a sacred space, you hear moaning. Yep, zombies. Hundreds of them. And you've got no one to turn undead.

Trouble Halfway

Sometimes, the action the character takes in order to gain information is dangerous by itself. Think of what can go wrong when the character acts. Another way to phrase this would be "When the player endangers himself using Spout Lore, make that danger happen."

- ★ Climbing a tree to get a look at the surroundings? The branch under you cracks, what do you do?
- ★ You had to use a few spikes climbing that rock, mark off one use of Adventuring Gear.

Trouble You Missed Earlier

Think of what could go wrong before and how the problem would remain unnoticed. Don't overuse it, as players may begin going into too much detail to keep their characters safe. It is useful when someone rolled a miss before, and you saved it for later for whatever reason.

- ★ Using a looking glass? You must have lost it when you were crawling away from the troll lair. Want to return and find it?

Lies, Damn Lies, and Damn Obvious Lies

Obvious Lies

That's when you tell a lie and the players suspect it. Either because you're making it obvious or because the players don't believe what you say. They will be suspicious when you've got a hard move to make.

Personally I don't like this trick. It's against the principles - you have to say what the truth demands, remember? More importantly, it's not that fun for all the trouble. Now your group has two imaginary situations to track: the "real" one and one that the character thinks to be "real". Also using it makes players suspicious about what you say. I never force this trick on players, but use it from time to time on their initiative, like "Oh crap, 6. What if I believe that the path is clear?". Also, if you use that trick a lot, you'll have a hard time actually deceiving your players.

- ★ Tarrasque's weak spot? You somehow think it's the abdomen.
- ★ Whose coat of arms is that? It's your ally's. Tell him everything.

Infectious Lies

On a miss, the GM makes up some wrong fact and tells the player it's wrong. But if the PC acts on the information or makes someone act on it, she gets 1 XP. Sometimes it leads to a fun game of crossing each other up.

- ★ Tarrasque's weak spot? Mark XP if you go for abdomen or make another PC do it.

Devious Lies

That's when you deceive your players for real. You can do it and still stick to the principles: say truth, but not all the truth. I like it as a player - it makes you, a player, share the miss with the character and helps to commit to the game. But it's hard to pull off as a GM, and you need to use it sparingly at most. Wait until players get comfortable with their delusion (up to a few game sessions, maybe) and then come clean when a golden opportunity arises. If you want players to react emotionally, you'll need them to build quite a story on a not-so-true foundation. You have to be truly devious: make it look like another kind of miss.

- ★ Whose coat of arms is that? That's Duke Dupont's man, you've had a deadly feud with him and his family for generations. [if they kill the guy, you'll tell them it was their only ally after some time passes].

Front or Dungeon Move, Grim Portent

If a front or a dungeon move fits the picture, you can use it as well.

- ★ So you're spying on an orc horde? They are numerous and strong, warriors are battle-scarred and shamans are literally sparkling with power. No sane man would mess with such force. (you're making "perform a show of dominance" move from Wandering Barbarians front).

Offscreen Move

If nothing comes to your mind, you can tell the truth and then make the move offscreen. I like my move to follow the fiction directly, though.

- ★ Who's in control at that masquerade ball? Duke Dupont's lackeys are serving the food (meanwhile, Duke Dupont makes his monster move "issue an order" offscreen - he commands every exit blocked, so that no one could escape the slaughter).

You may also be interested in [In Defense of Discern Realities](#) by Jeremy Strandberg.

Running a Session

After you've run your [First Session](#) or your [Funnel Session](#), you'll find it helpful to fall into a routine for preparing for and running sessions.

Prepping for a Session

by J. Alan Henning, adapted from "[RPG Session Prep Techniques](#)"

GMs have a lot of different ways they can prep for role-playing sessions, as I've learnt over the past three years

Prewritten Modules and Adventure Starters – Authors publish adventures for free and on [DriveThruRPG](#). These give you everything you need to begin a session.

Lazy DM's Homebrew – [Matt Shea's Return of the Lazy DM template](#) has 8 types of items to prep. This is a great technique – minimalist but not too minimal.

Campaign Setting with Random Generators – You can homebrew your own setting using [Text Mapper to create a random map](#) and Hex Describe to create a hexcrawl.

Location-Based Prep – The classic technique, which began with the birth of the RPG hobby in the 70s, is to do a dungeon map and annotate what is in each room. Here is a [one-page dungeon generator](#) and a [one-page generator for keeps and settlements](#) to get you started.

Laptop Improv – I found myself using a laptop while DMing (I had used a three-ring binder before) and found that I could [rely on Google to help improvise](#) during play.

Monty Hall Prep – [Prep three encounters](#) players could start off the night with, then foreshadow them and let the PCs choose between them in play.

PbtA Move Prep – When first learning to GM a PbtA game, you may find it useful to [brainstorm the outcomes of PbtA moves in advance](#). Keep in mind the End of Session move you are using: what would players earn XP for? Best to prepare items that will get them XP.

Specialist Prep – For some sessions, you might want [to prepare a mystery structure](#), a [party plan or social event](#), or a [Monster of the Week](#) countdown.

Threat Maps – These diagrams provide a structured overview of a campaign centered on a holding or base. I use [threat maps as campaign prep](#) before I do my session prep for Stonetop.

Other General Prep – For other sessions, consider [the 7-3-1 technique](#) or [10-item prep](#).

Switching prep techniques can help you be more creative and motivate you to actually do some prep.

See also:

- [Dungeon World Session Prep](#) by DeepSixDelver.
- [The 7-3-1 Technique](#) by Jason Cordova.

Session Start

adapted from [One Shot World](#), by Yochai Gal

Try to paint a vivid, specific situation and then ask: “What do you do?”

Start the session with a group of player characters caught up in a tense situation. Use anything that demands action: standing outside the entrance to a dungeon, ambushed in a fetid swamp, peeking through some bushes at armed guards, or being sentenced before a powerful lord.

Give the players a chance to think, ask questions, or take action; but when the curtain rises, they should be compelled to react (not necessarily with violence). This is also a great opportunity to ask questions and use the answers; let them fill the world out for you. (See [Questions for Players](#).)

Eventually, the players will start saying and doing things as their characters, which means they’ll start making moves. When a move triggers let them know. Say, “It sounds like you’re trying to…” and then walk them through the move. When a player says “I hack and slash him” be quick to ask, “so what are you actually doing? With which weapon? Are you going for his head, or simply trying to knock him back?”

Impressions

When you introduce a new location, describe a notable impression and ask one of your players to describe a notable impression too:

- ★ Sources of light
- ★ A notable feature that fits the location's theme or history
- ★ Ambient sounds
- ★ Moisture and smell of the air
- ★ Natural hazards

Dangers

When you speak of the dangers that lurk in the wild, ask questions to establish the following details, but keep one or two answers for yourself as surprises:

- ★ The danger that threatens the village.
- ★ Who leads them, and what makes them special or unusual (Use this to write a location move for their lair).
- ★ A valuable treasure kept in their lair.
- ★ What they want (Choose an established person, place, or thing) and why they want it.
- ★ An established NPC who has already become involved, and how.
- ★ What else is involved or at stake that might cause a distraction, a moral quandary, make it personal, or complicate things.
- ★ What pushes the characters to act.
- ★ The location of their lair (Choose an established place).

Places / Things

Answer the following prompts about places and things within the dungeon, using what has already been established:

- ★ What guards the entrance, or otherwise prevents entry?
- ★ What remains of this place from before?
- ★ How does the terrain change as you explore?
- ★ What mystery, puzzle, or foe cannot be defeated with violence?
- ★ How can things go wrong, or become more complicated?
- ★ What unwelcome truth or hints of further trouble await?

Tips on Combat

Combat works exactly like everything else: the GM narrates the beginning of a tense scene or situation, and the players respond. Depending on the move(s) triggered, dice are rolled, and the GM then narrates the result.

There is no initiative or turns; instead the GM manages the spotlight. Think of this like an action movie, with the GM as the director, calling the shots. Focus on a single player, highlighting an exciting scene; then pull away for a moment, leaving them with a cliffhanger, to zoom in on the next player!

See [General Discussions of Combat](#) for articles to refer to.

In the event of the death of a PC, check out [this discussion on the Dungeon World+ Discord](#).

Ending the Session

by J. Alan Henning

Most sessions seem to be played in two to four hours. Sometimes you'll need to end a session at a predetermined time and, on other occasions, at a natural break in the action. This can be when the PCs request taking some downtime, for instance, or want to pursue some long-term goals (see [Downtime Moves](#)). But don't be afraid to end a session at the start or even in the middle of combat: serialized shows often end an episode on a cliffhanger, after all!

Of course, don't forget to wrap up with the [End of Session](#) move. If you also integrate Stars & Wishes (see the move's commentary), you'll have a great tool for learning what players value and want to see in future sessions. Keep a list of [wishes and review it when you prep](#), which puts you back at [Prepping for a Session](#)!

Settings & Campaigns

Campaign Frames

adapted from [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#), by Tam H

Campaign frames are packages, intended to get you started with minimal prep if you feel comfortable improvising at the table. Each has a hook, both for the players' imagination and to build characters around, and a series of questions to ask as you create characters together.

Note any NPCs implied by the questions and the answers your players give. Use the tables in the back of the book to flesh out those NPCs, then write down how each of those NPCs has friction with at least one PC.

Read over the scene starters, choose a suitable monster if needed, then read the starter aloud (or paraphrase it). Start right in the middle of the action; look at the nearest player or the one with the most to lose and ask, "what do you do?"

Here are four campaign frames. For additional frames, as well as missions and cases, check out [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#).

Those Who Hunt Monsters

"We aren't official. We don't have badges, or an HQ, or, hell, much of a clue. What we do have is the chance to fight back, to make the world safer. And maybe to make a little money. Ammo ain't cheap."

Ask each of your players one or more of the following:

- "Who did you lose when you entered this life? Why do you keep fighting anyway?"
- "You fought something that almost beat you, once, and it's still out there. What was it? Who died so you could live?"
- "What's the scariest thing you've defeated? How sure are you that it's dead? Who did it take with it?"
- "What keeps you from going home? Who probably won't be there if you do?"

Choose one to start the campaign:

- ★ Rusty rails run down the old mining tunnel, as a dry, musky scent kicks your flight or fight instincts into overdrive. The darkness writhes as black scales gleam under torchlight, pouring endlessly out of the tunnel ahead. The serpent's maw opens to reveal fangs as long as your forearm as it lunges.
- ★ You stand on the end of a pier under a moonless sky. A city looms, dark and empty. Where are you? Why are you here? Why are the shadows crawling towards you, gleaming with sharp edges and too many eyes?
- ★ The swamp burps again, the stench of decaying plant matter making you briefly dizzy. The glassy surface ripples outward from a point a few feet out, and then shatters upwards into the sky, sending a shower of filthy pungent water flying everywhere. The creature hauling itself out is the size of an elephant, and it crawls with dead things.
- ★ The huge, high-ceiling cavern is thronging with fae. An ogre grunts at you from next to a dingy tent, as a pack of hobgoblins trots past, carrying something squirming in a sack. The center of the market is cordoned off, with what looks like a temporary livestock auction. Most of the stock's weird, or dangerous, but one cage catches your eye, a shivering lemur with desperate, all too human eyes. "20 coins? Do I hear 20 coins?"
- ★ The kitchen is quiet and dark, the light from your flashlight picking up the dust motes that swirl in the draft from the now open door. There's a flicker of shadow where it shouldn't be, over by the door to the cellar, like it wants you to come look.
- ★ Dark things skitter into the shadows as the light pours out, illuminating the old rail tunnel. There's a sign in a 40's block print that declares "BETTER BE CAREFUL THAN SORRY". You hear a voice, singing a sad song of abandonment and loss, from somewhere up ahead, and then dark shapes erupt from the floor of the tunnel, shambling husks of the long-dead clawing their way out of the earth.
- ★ The smell of the lake cuts through the cold air like a wet dishrag. The street's cracked and empty, a vacant lot and a squat wood building next to it without any signs but a half dozen motorcycles in front of it. The bartender, scarred and surly, pauses to give you an appraising look as everyone in the place turns to look at you.

- ★ It's 3 am, cold and dark gray outside as sleet threatens, washed out and uneasy under the fluorescent lights of the Smile-o-Mart. You're contemplating the endless row of slushie machines when you hear someone from the registers bark out, "And the cash, now!"

Invasion

"We don't know where they came from, or what they want, or why they're here. They could be inside anyone. You're still clean, you can fight them."

Ask each of your players one or more of the following:

- "You can tell if someone's infected. How do you know? Why can you tell?"
- "Someone you know is important and infected. Who is it?"
- "You can force them out of a host. How? What does it cost the host? What does it cost you?"
- "You were exposed. What happened? Are you infected? Is this a secret?"

Choose one to start the campaign:

- ★ The sun's bright, the park green despite the chill of fall. The woman walking by glances at you out of the corner of her eye, herding her kids faster, as screaming kids chase each other around. No. It's empty, the illusions gone, the silence deafening as the white worms slither through the dead leaves towards you.
- ★ "They're already here," Agent Garcia hisses, and the radio goes dead. The hall's shrouded and dim, the doors off each side like holes into darkness. There's a flash of white, to your right, and then they erupt.
- ★ The lab's white, sterile, cold under the fluorescent lights, and deserted, the only sound is the crunch of glass from the shattered window to the observation room. And then you hear it, from the vents, a low rustle like something crawling through.

My Bloody Valentine

"You're at this fancy party because you owe somebody, or somebody owes you. Maybe that's cash, or blood, or revenge, or something harder to define, but whatever it is, you're here to finish it."

Ask each of your players one or more of the following:

- "Who here owes you something? What is it? Why haven't you collected it yet?"
- "Someone you know is working tonight, with an eye on a big score. Who is it? What did they tell you to do?"
- "Tonight's the night. What are you going to settle? What do you think it might cost you?"
- "You see an old rival in the crowd. Which of you screwed the other over last? How? Any scars?"

Choose one to start the campaign:

- ★ The band is loud, the brightly garbed guests dazzling. The prince waits, indolently lounging against the stair railing, watching as his most hated foe talks with his consort below. The crowd parts as his chief enforcer forges towards you, a grim look on her face.
- ★ You know your quarry lies beyond that nondescript door next to the stairs, just behind the punchbowl, where a bored guard stands, watching the jeweled crowd intently.
- ★ The night air is cool, carrying the scent of jasmine across the gardens to this cramped balcony. "I cannot afford to ignore your threats," the woman in the sapphire serpent mask in the shadows says, obviously having mistaken you for someone else. "What price do you put on your silence?"

The Long Con

"You're all here because you've got skills, skills that society frowns on. Let's see if we can put those skills to good use."

Ask each of your players one or more of the following:

- "What was your biggest score? Who took it from you?"
- "What legendary feat did you perform during a heist that everyone in certain circles knows about?"
- "You're only in this for a purpose; what is it? What will you do when you accomplish it?"
- "You used to be official or on a payroll. Whose? Now you're not. Why?"

Choose one to start the campaign:

- ★ From up here in the wizard tower, next to the door to the stairs, the people in the plaza below look like ants. The glass roof slopes up to the balcony, fifty feet of slick glass between you and the arcana. The door behind you rattles as someone grabs the handle.
- ★ The train rattles as it passes through a tunnel, the car you're in dimming briefly. You have four hours to retrieve the prototype before you reach the station. The woman across from you smiles thinly. "How much are you willing to pay?"
- ★ The law firm's lobby is quiet and well-lit, the receptionist's desk occupied, the door you need to get through to get to the prototype behind him. He's discussing the day's schedule with a young woman in a suit. They both look up as you enter.

Mini Settings

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

Borsa River Mine

- ★ Partly submerged stone buildings hint at a large network of structures underwater.
- ★ Flies buzz around statues of strange frog-like creatures erected on dry patches of land.
- ★ Fresh humanoid footprints appear in the mud seemingly at random and then disappear.

The Fallen Maharib

- ★ A hidden bay shelters an enormous, collapsed statue from ancient times.
- ★ Desolated beaches made of dark sand surrounded by bleak, imposing cliffs.
- ★ Only the sounds of tranquil waves washing ashore and distant birds can be heard.

Gárgola Apex

- ★ A city situated between two peaks; grand bridges act as entrances on both sides.
- ★ Sits on a massive rotating disc that spins slow enough to accommodate foot traffic.
- ★ Purple-robed guardians are overheard warning that the disc has been erratic lately.

Hrakkan's Pass

- ★ Stone cockroaches the size of horses scattered and half buried along the valley floor.
- ★ A dense and acrid fog that never completely dissipates.
- ★ The sound of shuffling and whispering cuts off whenever you stop to listen.

Littlewit Manor

- ★ An ornate old mansion, colorful, orderly, and beautifully decorated & empty.
- ★ Blood stains the carpets and leads up the staircase to the higher floors.
- ★ An exquisite painting of a many-tentacled abomination hangs prominently in the lobby.

Medina At Beyt Kvora

- ★ A massive city with gothic architecture and spires rising as far as the eye can see.
- ★ Dead rise unless proper rites and rituals are used during burial.
- ★ Graveyard “districts” built around moats separate the living city from the dead.

The Sleeping Burj

- ★ A fallen silver tower atop a small hill.
- ★ Round doorways that open when you approach them, revealing right-side up rooms.
- ★ Tables and desks are covered in knobs and lights which unexpectedly react to the touch.

The Swamp of Paráxenos

- ★ A fetid stench hangs in the far-too humid air.
- ★ Ruins of an ancient civilization lie half-sunken in green, slick mud.
- ★ Howling, recognizable (or familiar) speech can be heard at night.

The Tsavni Host

- ★ A city of nomads settling down for the night; the smell of fire, meat and manure.
- ★ Children are laughing; adults stare at strangers curiously from multi-colored tents.
- ★ The sounds of men arguing over a game; they stand guard before a chained woman.

Wahah, Jewel of the East

- ★ A desert city of magic, glass, and wonder hidden by faint mirage.
- ★ Men & women fill bustling streets with slippered feet and veiled faces.
- ★ There are whispers that the magic is drawn from something deep below.

See also [Mini Fantasy Settings from the DW Discord](#) by [Thomas Schellenberg](#).

Dungeon Starters

by Mark Tygart, [20 Dungeon Starters](#)

I read a blog about a Dungeon World session a few years ago that had really frustrated a newbie GM. The party entered a new city and went wild creating bizarre stores that sold cages full of giant talking mosquitoes.

This behavior may have seemed unruly, but it's hard to fault players that invent cages of talking mosquitoes. What the hell would anyone do with a bunch of talking mosquitoes? The ideal Dungeon World response would be to reshape the adventure so that it was about talking mosquitoes.

A Dungeon World adventure, or indeed any fantasy PbtA adventure, should be like a pitch session for a well-run television show. The GM is the executive in charge of production—the show runner—while the players fill in for the writing staff. The writers should know that playing a Gygaxian fantasy adventure invites certain tropes, conventions, and subject matter. If the characters decide that they want to have a pirate adventure instead of climbing Mount Icy Doom, the GM should be prepared to reconfigure the Ice Gnomes as Jungle Goblins and revamp the horrific Wendigo Mage as the equally disturbing Cannibal Wraith.

Marshall Miller invented “dungeon starters” to help in this process. He wrote and posted the first ones for free on the web, along with a blank template for others to use.

He then encouraged others to go forth and create their own dungeon starters. (They're not all dungeons!) The rest, as they say, is history.

These starters are like the notes you might bring to a session, with plenty of blanks left in for improvisation at the table. A GM can use a starter as a one-shot, fold it into an ongoing campaign, or even as a link in a chain of

starters that lead from one to the other. Say you want to run “Castle Death”. The characters may decide that the dragon in the basement is too powerful to kill without special help, and look into other solutions; a clever GM might tell them rumors of a gorgon, the sight of whose severed head might petrify the dragon, and send them off to the lost “City of Pillars” to find that horrible creature. The key is the blank spaces. A thoughtful GM once suggested to me that the entirety of

Castle Death should be decorated with draconic art, and that the former warlord loved dragons so much that he had transformed himself by some dark art into a dragon; another thought that the warlord could have been devoured by the dragon, and that his friendly ghost would be a good addition to the monster roster. Whether your dragon needs slaying or liberation, there’s no right answer. These starters were written in that spirit.

How to Use A Starter

A dungeon starter is a collection of themed prompts, mechanics, and monsters intended to help the GM get an RPG game rolling quickly. It’s easy enough to play with no prepared material whatsoever, but sometimes it’s nice to have someone else set the stage for you. To that end, this book is a collection of sets, props, special effects, and characters, but there’s no set script.

To get started, just follow these steps:

- 1) Browse the web and [choose a dungeon starter](#) that appeals to you.
- 2) Print out the pages that comprise your chosen starter.
- 3) Read it through before you sit down to play, and keep it in front of you during play.
- 4) Start by asking the players some or all of the listed Questions, and take note of their answers. Their answers are more important than the text of the dungeon starter; if their answers contradict the content or point in a different direction, prioritize their answers!
- 5) Refer to the Agenda, Goals, and Dungeon Moves throughout play whenever you feel stuck.
- 6) Relay some or all of the Impressions to the players as you see fit (and not necessarily in the order listed).
- 7) Bring the written Discoveries, Dangers, and other elements into play when the opportunity arises, but remember that the things described

are only part of the picture. They are like points on a map with blank space in between, ready to be filled by your imagination and the flow of the game.

- 8) After your first session with a dungeon starter, if the game is going to be continued, take a little time to prep before the next session. Reflecting on how the first session went, consider what the players did, what they didn't do, and what seemed to engage them the most. Use your prep time to write some Fronts based on that analysis.
- 9) Wait eagerly for the next session.

The Goblin Hole

by Marshall Miller, [20 Dungeon Starters](#)

Agenda

- ★ Make the world fantastic
- ★ Fill the characters' lives with adventure
- ★ Play to find out what happens

Goals

- ★ Establish details, describe
- ★ Use what they give you
- ★ Ask questions
- ★ Leave blanks
- ★ Look for interesting facts
- ★ Help the players understand the moves
- ★ Give each character a chance to shine
- ★ Introduce NPCs
- ★ Fill out your worksheet

Dungeon Moves

- ★ Change the environment
- ★ Point to a looming threat
- ★ Introduce a new faction or type of creature
- ★ Use a threat from an existing faction or creature
- ★ Make them backtrack
- ★ Present riches at a price
- ★ Present a challenge to one of the characters

Questions

- ★ Whose idea was it to come here?
- ★ How long will the ponies be OK without you?
- ★ This far from civilization, what was the last thing you saw as you entered the cavern?
- ★ You weren't sure before but what is the smell that keeps getting stronger as the cave's entrance disappears from view?
- ★ What have you sworn to do here?
- ★ What scares you the most as darkness looms closer?

Impressions

- A hole in the dirt just big enough for a man to squeeze through
- A goblin's corpse, hand stretched toward the well
- A goblin with his hand tied to a ring in the ceiling
- Thick smoke, sweet-smelling, filling the air
- A vertical shaft filled with debris
- A series of shallow algae-filled pools
- A talking bird skull on a string
- A pack of slumbering feral dogs
- A chattering of starlings, desperate to reach the surface
- Hairless, blind rabbits in hutches
- A weeping willow whose tendrils extend into the depths below
- A tunnel to somewhere else entirely
- The throne-ridden patriarch of the goblins, slumped and staring
- Two hollow-eyed children in a cage
- A heavy, antler-covered log swinging in from above
- A well-covered pit where you might not expect
- Five fish on a spit over coals
- Black land-nettles that sting like crazy
- A narrow ledge along a roughly carved canal
- A flight of arrows in mid arc

Custom Moves

When you are **hit by a swinging log**, roll+DEX: on a 10+, choose 1 from the list below; on a 7-9, choose 2:

- You're gored by an antler and take 1d6 damage
- You're knocked back a ways and land on your back
- You knock over the nearest ally but keep your footing.

When you are **in the midst of a chattering of starlings**, all torches are extinguished as the birds flood the area. Take -1 forward until their chattering passes.

When you **sneak past the slumbering feral dogs**, roll+party (number of PCs + NPCs): on a 10+, the pack leaps upon you—take -1 forward; on a 7-9, choose 1 from the list below; on a 6-, let sleeping dogs lie and creep on by.

- Your approaching footsteps awake the pack and they bark and snarl, blocking your path; take +1 forward
- As you congratulate yourselves on bypassing the pack, they awake and give chase.

When you **traverse the debris-filled shaft**, roll+weight carried: on a 10+, choose 3 from the list below; on a 7-9, choose 2.

- The debris gives way and disappears down the shaft
- You plummet to a yet deeper part of the cavern
- You suffer harm
- You make a terrible clatter.

On a 6-, choose 1 of the following:

- Take +2 forward to Aid others negotiating the debris
- Collect enough debris to gain 1 use of adventuring gear.

When you **brush up against the black land-nettles**, roll+weight carried: on a 10+, your gear shields you from their stinging toxin; on a 7-9, take 3 stun damage.

When you **consume a cavern rabbit**, you know what they know, as per the Wizard spell Revelation.

Discoveries

Talking bird skull

0 weight

Strange things happen when a familiar dies. When not covered or contained, the skull mercilessly heckles those nearby.

When you **witness an NPC being heckled by a talking bird skull**, take +1 forward to Parley with them. When you roll a 6- in the presence of the skull, you gain the bond, “The talking bird skull knows the extent of my failure and won’t let me forget it.”

Rabbit totem

0 weight

A small rabbit figurine carved from white limestone.

When you are **Good and hold the totem in the presence of cavern rabbits**, you form a telepathic bond with a single person you touch, enabling you to converse with that person through your thoughts. You can only have one telepathic bond at a time.

Goblin incense

0 weight, 3 uses, slow

When you **smell the surprisingly sweet smoke of goblin incense** (considering it's made from dung), take +2 forward to parley but also -1 forward to WIS and INT.

Goblin grotesquery

4 weight, clumsy

When you **return to civilization with this monstrosity**, it's bound to cause a stir; when you Carouse, add "You draw quite the crowd" to your list of options as you display your grotesque trophy.

Sling

1 weight, near, stunning

Cave fish

1 weight, 2 uses, ration

Dangers

Cave rat

Horde, Small, Cautious, Stealthy

Damage: Bite 1 (hand)

HP 6 Armor 0

Special Qualities: None

Rats living in the same tunnels as goblins become decidedly more dangerous. Having bred to the size of house cats, they can chew through just about anything.

Instinct: To devour and spawn

- Overrun a person or place
- Pierce leather armor with sharp incisors
- Retreat into dark places

Feral dog

Group, Small

Damage: Bite 1d4 (hand)

HP 6 Armor 0

Special Qualities: None

Feral dogs assemble on the outskirts of civilization and in forgotten places; that is, assuming they aren't pushed out by wolves or wargs.

Instinct: To protect the pack

- Bark loudly
- If it runs, chase it
- Bring down the prey

Assassin root

Group, Large, Stealthy

Damage: Constrict 1d6 (close, reach)

HP 1 Armor 0

Special Qualities: Plant

The viney roots of this shrub-like specimen of subterranean flora extend deep underground.

Instinct: To fertilize with flesh

- Entangle someone in strangling roots
- Attack from any crack or loose soil
- Encapsulate unconscious creatures in root balls

Infected child

Group, Small, Cautious

Damage: Flailing arms and legs 1 (close)

HP 6 Armor 0

Special Qualities: Infected

Scared, not feeling well, they just want to be held.

Instinct: To be carried to safety

- Hug with desperate arms
- Whimper, babble, cry big wet tears
- Infect them with Goblin Pox

Goblin

Horde, Small, Intelligent, Organized

Damage: Small sword or jabby spear 1d6 (close)

HP 3 Armor 1

Special Qualities: None

Slimy green creatures, filled with hatred.

Instinct: To overwhelm greater creatures, civilizations

- Sound the alarm
- Attack with poisoned weapons
- Learn from past encounters, prepare for the next

Goblin orkaster

Solitary, Small, Intelligent, Organized, Magical

Damage: Acid orb 1d10+1 (near, far, ignores armor)

HP 12 Armor 0

Special Qualities: Spellcaster

Oh, lord, who taught them magic?

Instinct: To prove goblin superiority

- Unleash a poorly understood spell
- Use underlings as shields
- Cast Pox Upon Them, inflicting Goblin Pox

Goblin Pox

When you go to sleep after contracting Goblin Pox, roll+CON: on a 10+, no new sores break out; on a 7-9, a few more sores appear—take -1 ongoing to CHA rolls until cured, but +1 forward to your next Goblin Pox roll; on a 6-, just more stinking sores (-1 ongoing to CHA rolls until cured).

Castle Death

adapted from [20 Dungeon Starters](#), by Mark Tygart

Agenda

- ★ Make the world fantastic
- ★ Fill the characters' lives with adventure
- ★ Play to find out what happens

Goals

- ★ Establish details, describe
- ★ Use what they give you
- ★ Ask questions
- ★ Leave blanks
- ★ Look for interesting facts
- ★ Help the players understand the moves
- ★ Give each character a chance to shine
- ★ Introduce NPCs
- ★ Fill out your worksheet

Dungeon Moves

- ★ Change the environment
- ★ Point to a looming threat
- ★ Introduce a new faction or type of creature
- ★ Use a threat from an existing faction or creature
- ★ Make them backtrack
- ★ Present riches at a price
- ★ Present a challenge to one of the characters

Questions

- ★ What brings you here, to Castle Death?
- ★ Have you been in this adventuring business for long?
- ★ What stories have you heard about the cruel tyrant said to have once ruled this place?
- ★ What do the locals say they see or hear at night when the battlements are observed from a safe distance?
- ★ What rumors of wealth are associated with the keep?
- ★ Do you believe in the prophecy of the return of a rightful lord?

Impressions

- A stark silhouette against a stormy sky
- Ancient stonework, vine-cloaked walls
- A flash of lightning, deafening thunder
- Rain and wind across the crumbling battlements
- The gaping maw of the front gate
- A raised portcullis, like a line of iron teeth
- The stench of goblin
- The flickering light of torches, here and there
- A high-ceiling passage, dense with thick webs
- Rich and soiled furnishings, looted from elsewhere
- The distant sound of guttural laughter

Places

Hidden Sanctuary

When you **take a short rest in the Hidden Sanctuary**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, choose 3 from the list below; on 7-9, choose 1.

- You Recover as if you have rested for three days
- You eat and drink your fill and collect 1d6 rations
- You experience a vision (ask the GM what you see)
- You do not collapse into mystical sleep

Throne Room

When you **enter the Throne Room for the first time**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, both things on the list apply; on 7-9, the GM chooses 1.

- You notice the Pit Trap
- Bongaz the Bugbear Overlord is asleep

Discoveries

Old Map

o weight

A 3'x3' piece of vellum, soft as silk from a lifetime of folding and unfolding. Fingerprints, scratch marks, and unidentifiable stains (blood? tea?) obscure a detailed architectural schematic in faded brown ink.

When you **examine the Old Map**, you can tell it's a floorplan of Castle Death. With a little effort, you may discern the location of the Hidden Sanctuary, and one or more of the Architect's Pit Traps.

Salamander Amulet

o weight, magical

An arrowhead-shaped amulet of polished black onyx on a square-linked chain.

When you **bear the Salamander Amulet**, you are immune to the effects of mundane and magical heat and flame.

Lightblade

o weight, 1 piercing, close, magical

A short sword, as easy to wield as a willow switch.

When you **first wield the Lightblade this day**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, both apply. On a 7-9, choose one. On a 6-, you suffer 1d4 damage and are momentarily blinded by a flash of white light.

- It glows white, illuminating the area as brightly as a torch and revealing anything hidden.
- For each successful attack with it this day, roll your damage with Advantage.

Codex of Wonders

1 weight, magical

A thick tome with a latching cover, bound in canvas that appears gray, but upon close examination swirls with living color.

When you **use the Codex to research an artifact or magic item**, roll+INT: on a 10+, you may ask the GM 2 questions about it, which must be answered truthfully; on a 7-9, you may ask 1 question, but the answer may or may not be complete.

Ring of Shadows

0 weight, worn

A simple band of smoky quartz.

When you are **wear the Ring of Shadows**, you become invisible to the naked eye, but roll+nothing: on a 10+, GM chooses 1 side effect from the list below that applies for as long as you wear the ring; on a 7-9, the GM chooses 2 that apply as long as you wear it.

- All light sources in your vicinity flicker and go out
- You draw the attention of nearby creatures of shadow
- You'll have to Defy Danger with WIS to take it off

Deed to Castle Death

0 weight

A sheaf of yellowed pages, tied up with string.

When you **decipher the ridiculous legal language of the Deed**, you learn that a member of your party is the true and rightful heir to Castle Death! Ask the GM who it is.

Dangers

Architect's pit trap

When you **fall into an ancient hidden pit**, you suffer 1d8 damage from the fall.

Goblin dart trap

When you are **struck by what looks like a pathetic goblin dart**, roll+CON: on a 10+, you suffer 1 damage; on a 7-9, you suffer 1 damage and start to gradually stiffen from the spider venom—you'll soon be unable to move at all.

Goblin lackey

Horde, Small, Intelligent, Cautious, Hoarder

Damage: Shiv, crude club, pointy stick 1d4+1 (close)

HP 3 Armor 0

Yellow-eyed, snaggle-toothed, underfed; oppressed.

Instinct: To obey Bongaz

- Pelt them with rocks, sticks, dried excrement
- Assault en masse with raucous enthusiasm
- Retreat in a disorganized panic

Skeleton

Horde

Damage: Rusted or makeshift weapon 1d4 (close)

HP 4 Armor 1

Special Qualities: Undead, resistant to piercing damage

Instinct: To increase their ranks

- Advance relentlessly
- Drag them down
- Cease movement only when skull is smashed

Giant spider

Group, Small, Stealthy, Devious, Hoarder

Damage: Fangs 1d6+1 (1 piercing, close)

HP 6 Armor 0

Instinct: To capture and feed

- Entangle them in a clot of webbing
- Inject them with paralyzing venom
- Avoid halflings like the plague

Bongaz, Bugbear Overlord

Leader, Large, Intelligent, Organized, Stealthy, Cautious, Hoarder

Damage: Morningstar 1d8+4 (close, forceful)

HP 10 Armor 2

Hulking, gray-skinned, goblin-blooded, with a head, neck, and back covered with thinning black hair. Self-proclaimed master of Castle Death and bullying ruler of its goblin inhabitants. Surprisingly sneaky, always hungry, not above eating his subjects.

Instinct: To bully or eat the weak

- Command lesser goblins
- Ambush or flank them
- Wrench a weapon or shield away

Mordrivaug, Dragon of Death

Solitary, Huge, Magical, Intelligent, Hoarder, Terrifying

Damage: Tail swipe 2d6 (reach, forceful) or bite 2d6 (2 piercing, close, messy)

HP 20 Armor 3

Special Qualities: Flying, immune to fire, vulnerable to divine power

The true master of Castle Death.

Instinct: To rule

- Act with disdain
- Demand tribute
- Blast all before him with black fire

When you are **about to be blasted by the black fire of Mordrivaug**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, if suitable cover exists, you find it and escape harm, but that cover is destroyed (if suitable cover doesn't exist, treat as a 7-9); on a 7-9, you hit the dirt just in time, but must choose to either sacrifice an item of the GM's choice to the black fire or suffer 1d6 damage; on a 6-, 2 items of the GM's choice are destroyed and you suffer 2d6 damage.

City of Peril

Agenda

- ★ Make the world fantastic
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Goals

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- ★ Present riches at a price
- ★ Present a challenge to one of the characters

Questions

- ★ Why do you seek the head of a gorgon?
- ★ How did you learn of the Omanu, the City of Pillars?
- ★ Why do you believe a gorgon dwells there?
- ★ How much time have you spent in the desert called Albyr Matruq, the Sea-of-No-Tracks?
- ★ Why do the people of Shis fear the desert?
- ★ Who among you worships Hamia, the Protector?

Impressions

Baking heat

- More kinds of sand than you knew existed—powdery, crusted, gritty like the teeth of mice
- The shadows of carrion birds, wheeling slowly across the dunes
- Thirst, pursuing you like an implacable foe
- A measured swig from a clay jug
- An inviting shimmer in the near distance
- Evening falling like a blessing of the gods
- The desert wind, whipping at tent flaps
- A silver moon and rivers of stars, shining in the blackness of an infinite night
- A profusion of shattered pillars and stonework, half-buried in drifts of sand

Custom Move

When you **consult a scholar in the town of Shis about the lost city of Omanu**, pay 20 coins and roll+CHA: on a 10+, the GM chooses 3 things from the list below; on a 7-9, the GM chooses 2; on a 6-, the GM chooses 1, and there may be strings attached.

- You are shown a map of the lost city and are permitted to make your own copy
- You are warned about the ghuls, eaters of the dead who prey upon unwary desert travelers
- You are regaled with the legend of the Colorless Cloak, and how Princess Iffa used it to escape Omanu before the fall
- You are shown an ancient drawing of Alqatil, the blade of Omanu's priest-king, which was said to cut through stone itself.

Deity

Hamia, the Protector

Goddess of the Omanu people, forsaken when the city fell, but still worshiped in some quarters. Believers claim that she grants oracular visions and protection to the truly devout. Her symbols are the evening star and a lone acacia tree; in statuary and other carvings, she is depicted as a somber, tall woman with a star in the center of her forehead.

Tenets

- ★ The defenseless must be protected
- ★ Life is more precious than material goods
- ★ Sacrifice of material goods honors the goddess
- ★ Nonbelievers must be exiled to the Sea-of-No-Tracks

Discoveries

Alqatil, the King's Razor

1 weight, close, magical, ignores armor

A curved blue-black blade, with a cutting edge so thin as to be transparent.

When you **approach an enemy of the long-dead people of Omanu**, Alqatil begins to vibrate.

When you **raise Alqatil for all to see**, enemies that recognize the King's Razor may cower and flee.

When you **roll a 10+ to Hack and Slash with Alqatil**, your foe is decapitated.

Blessed urn

2 weight, divine

A vessel of red clay, large enough to hold a human head, filled with water tinted with oil of acacia, and blessed by a priestess of Hamia.

When you **place a gorgon's head in a blessed urn**, it will remain perfectly preserved and potent, allowing you to draw it forth and inflict its gaze upon enemies at will.

Colorless Cloak

0 weight, worn, magical

A simple garment of pale silk, frayed with the passage of time and covered with a dense pattern of tiny, star-shaped stitches.

When you **wear the Colorless Cloak and invoke the name of Hamia**, she veils your presence from all living things until you utter a sound or commit an act of aggression, whichever comes first.

When you **violate any tenet of Hamia**, the Colorless Cloak turns to dust and you are revealed for all to see.

Garden of Stone

When you **discover an intact archway that opens into a courtyard full of lifelike statues**, roll+WIS: on a 10+, choose 2 from the list below; on a 7-9, choose 1.

You notice something important about the archway (ask the GM what)

If there's anything in the courtyard, it hasn't noticed you yet

You recognize one of the statues (ask the GM whom it resembles)

Nether-Eyed Helm

0 weight, magical

A bronze helm with a visor of smokey quartz.

When you **wear the Nether-Eyed Helm**, you are unaffected by any power that depends upon making eye contact (including the gaze of Phorcysa).

Dangers

Alhajar poison

When you **suffer from the effects of the toxin called "stone blood" by the people of Shis**, roll+CON: on a 10+, your skin grows temporarily hard as you metabolize the poison—take +1 armor forward to the next time you suffer damage; on a 7-9, your limbs begin to stiffen, and you will soon become immobilized.

Bolt trap

When you **step on a pressure-sensitive flagstone and hear a sudden THWIT**, roll+DEX: on a 10+, your reflexes save you from a stone-tipped bolt that whistles past; on a 7-9, you suffer 1d6 damage (1 piercing) and the effects of Alhajar poison.

Ghul

Group, Intelligent, Organized, Cautious, Stealthy

Damage: Black nails and teeth 1d6 (close)

HP 8 Armor 0

A desert-dwelling demon, jealous of life. Able to assume the form of those it consumes, the ghul moves from body to body, extending its existence in defiance of the laws of mortality. Incautious investigators of forsaken places may find themselves surrounded by a hideous congregation, in search of feast.

Instinct: To consume still-living flesh

- Fall slavering upon them
- Rend at the joint
- Break and flee as soon as the edge is lost

Nasnas

Horde

Damage: Fist 1d4 (hand)

HP 5 Armor 0

Special Qualities: Undead, immune to Phorcysa's gaze

“Half a human being; having half a head, half a body, one arm, and one leg, with which it hops with much agility.” — *The Thousand and One Nights*, translated by Edward Lane

Former citizens of Omanu, cursed for their crimes and committed to Phorcysa in undeath.

Instinct: To serve Phorcysa

- Hop like a herd of obscene pogo sticks
- Assault them in a mindless, hopping mob
- Relent only when its half-heart is destroyed

Phorcysa, Gorgon of Omanu

Solitary, Intelligent, Devious, Terrifying, Hoarder

Damage: Claws 1d6 (close)

HP 14 Armor 1

Special Qualities: Petrifying gaze

The half-serpent daughter of a serpent-haired mother, birthed in ancient times and rendered lonely and mad with the passage of centuries. Phorcysa collects works of art, foremost among them her victims (though she is known to destroy less successful pieces on fits of pique).

Instinct: To collect the vain and foolish

- Welcome the intrusion
- Glance at them just so, to capture the proper pose
- Become incensed at any sign of clever defiance

Locations

by Yochai Gal, “[Alternate Location Rules For Dungeon World](#)”

We use Locations as the frame for which an adventure will take place; it can help tell a satisfying story by providing the player characters with the NPCs, critical plot elements and scenarios they care about, all within an interesting backdrop. With that in mind, try to make Location tags *actionable*! Finally, remember that this is just a tool to aid you as a GM; change or throw out anything you don't like! ***See the end of this document for an example Location.***

First, decide what type of Location you'll be creating; it might be a **Steading** (village, city), a Dungeon (ruins, lair, etc), or **something else entirely**. Geographic elements can work as Locations as well. *The Shifting Sands* (a desert region, an oasis), or *The Barrens* (an ancient battlefield, now a tent city for those picking through the remains) would contain all of the properties of a proper **Location**.

Then, choose a **Name**. There is already a lot out there on how this should be done; [The Perilous Wilds](#) supplement has a ton of great tables with translations from different languages. Highly recommended! Quick tip: try to think of the purpose of the town and combine its description with a prefix/suffix indicating the type of place; for example a trading village nestled in the side of a mountain road might be called Bluff's Hold; or a major port city that acts as a critical trading junction between the Capital city could be called Port Royale.

Next, choose 3-4 tags to describe the level of **safety** within the **Location**: how well-protected it is against attackers as well as its level of prosperity. Example tags: *safe, sketchy, dangerous, protected, vulnerable, fortified, wealthy, poor, comfortable*.

Decide what **Ties** (if any) your Location may have with other People or Locations around the world. Remember, it isn't enough to just list the name of another place, you have to make them actionable. *Pledges Allegiance To The Drak'mar Horde, Trades Exclusively With The Royal Council, or Relies On Cloud City Refuse* are a few such examples.

Impressions are special qualities that the player characters would notice right away; they are what makes the place unique and memorable. Try to use evocative (but memorable) language to illustrate the “feel” of a place; phrases like *labyrinthine ruins, obscured by fog, accessible only by sky-ship, or renowned*

libraries. Remember, **Impressions** aren't supposed to be **Moves**; instead they paint a picture of the place and its populace that an outsider would notice right away. Locations shouldn't be static or boring, they should feel alive, but most especially, *lived in*. Actionable, memorable tags really help drive this home.

Impulses help represent the overall attitude of a Location towards the player characters, how its denizens may react to outsiders, and what the **Cast** may want from the player characters. Examples include *Reject Unclean Elements*, *This Community Above All Else*, or *The Destitute Will Rise Up, And Soon*. They should above all be actionable, and describe in simple terms what a **Location** will do to achieve its goals. Try to pick as few **Impulses** as possible; they aren't **Moves** (though they do tend to go hand-in-hand).

The **Cast** of your **Location** represents the primary actors within a place, in particular those that the player characters may run into. Don't simply list the leadership of a place; instead think of NPCs (or NPC concepts) that will be interesting for the players to interact with while visiting the **Location**. Examples might be *Lorsa, the Faith Healer*, *Town Elder Kvareto*, or *a Familiar Face*.

Moves represent any actions that the **Location** might take against the player characters. This doesn't always have to be something negative, of course: they simply offer a possible counterpoint or reaction to the player characters. Take the **Impressions** and **Impulses** you already have, and think about how they might translate into actionable **Moves**. Some examples:

- *Take Advantage Of Outsiders*
- *Lavish Them With False Praise*
- *Reveal A Forgotten Truth*
- *Sell Them Something They Need, But Not What They Want*

History: Some may find it useful to write information and descriptions beyond what is represented here. If you do, try to keep them shorter than a few sentences! Remember, the **Location** should be *alive*, and too much detail may spoil that as it would limit player input.

Example Location From *The Hobbit*

Lake-town (or Esgaroth)

Steading (*dangerous, protected, moderately wealthy*)

Ties: The Lonely Mountain (once-feared, now forgotten)

Impressions:

- Barrels tied together like rafts being poled up stream
- A wide circle of quiet water surrounded by the tall poles of the greater houses
- Long wooden quays with many steps and ladders, thronged with hurrying feet

Impulses: *Selfishness*

Cast: *The Master, Bard The Bowman*

Moves

- Make them pay for anything and everything.
- Honor heroes publicly, only to mock them later.
- Damn the ancient legends and their role to play.

History

- Close to the ruins of Dale; where the dragon *Smaug* lives.
- *The Master* thirsts for power, and will seduce any that might further his goals.
- *Bard the Bowman* (a true believer) protects the town from any and all threats.

Factions

adapted from *Blades in the Dark*, by John Harper

Tier

Rank each notable faction in your campaign by Tier—a measure of wealth, influence, and scale. At the highest level are the Tier V and VI factions, the true powers of your campaign. Your band of adventurers begins at Tier 0.

Tier determines the quality level of a faction's items as well as the quality and scale of the gangs they employ.

Gang Scale by Tier

- O. (1-2 people)
- I. Small gangs (3-6 people)
- II. Medium gangs (12 people)
- III. Large gangs (20 people)
- IV. Huge gangs (40 people)
- V. Massive gangs (80 people)

Faction Status

Keep a list of factions and their tiers. Your adventurers' status with each faction indicates how well you are liked or hated. Status is rated from -3 to +3, with zero (neutral) being the default starting status. You track your status with each faction on the faction sheet.

When you create your crew, you assign some positive and negative status ratings to reflect recent history. The ratings will then change over time based on your actions in play.

When you execute an operation, you gain -1 or -2 status with factions that are hurt by your actions. You may also gain +1 status with a faction that your operation helps. (If you keep your operation completely quiet then your status doesn't change.) Your status may also change if you do a favor for a faction or if you refuse one of their demands.

Faction Status Levels

- +3: **Allies.** This faction will help you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same for them.
- +2: **Friendly.** This faction will help you if it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same.
- +1: **Helpful.** This faction will help you if it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.
- 0: **Neutral.**
- 1: **Interfering.** This faction will look for opportunities to cause trouble for you (or profit from your misfortune) as long as it causes no problems or significant cost for them. They expect the same from you.
- 2: **Hostile.** This faction will look for opportunities to hurt you as long as it doesn't create serious problems for them. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you.
- 3: **War.** This faction will go out of its way to hurt you even if it's not in their best interest to do so. They expect you to do the same, and take precautions against you. When you're at war with any number of factions, your crew suffers +1 heat from scores, temporarily loses 1 hold, and PCs get only one downtime action rather than two. You can end a war by eliminating your enemy or by negotiating a mutual agreement to establish a new status rating.

NPC & Faction Downtime

NPCs and factions also do things when the PCs have downtime. The GM advances their project clocks and chooses a downtime maneuver or two for each faction that they're interested in at the moment. Choose any maneuver that makes sense for that faction to pursue. For example:

- ★ Seize a claim or increase hold, make an enemy vulnerable, or reduce the hold of a vulnerable enemy.
- ★ Gather information on the PCs (may be opposed by a PC roll) or another subject.
- ★ Achieve a short-term goal they're in position to accomplish.
- ★ Acquire a new asset.
- ★ Call in a favor from another faction.
- ★ Employ political pressure or threats to force someone's hand.

GM: Choose downtime maneuvers and advance clocks for the factions you're interested in right now. Don't worry about the rest. Later, when you turn your attention to a faction you've ignored for a while, go ahead and give them several downtime phases and project clock ticks to "catch up" to current events.

If you're not sure how far to progress a faction's clock, make a fortune roll using their Tier as the base trait, modified up or down depending on the opposition or circumstances. Tick 1 segment for a 6- result, 2 segments for a 7-8 result, 3 segments for a 10+ result but 5 segments for a natural 12.

When factions do things that are known in the criminal underworld, tell the players about it through one of their friends or contacts or vice purveyors. These rumors and bits of gossip can lead to future scores and opportunities for the PCs.

See also [How To Write Up Fronts](#) by Jeremy Strandberg.

Clocks

by John Harper, *Blades in the Dark*

A progress clock is a circle divided into segments (see examples at right). Draw a progress clock when you need to track ongoing effort against an obstacle or the approach of impending trouble.

Sneaking into the constables watch tower? Make a clock to track the alert level of the patrolling guards. When the PCs suffer consequences from partial successes or missed rolls, fill in segments on the clock until the alarm is raised.

Generally, the more complex the problem, the more segments in the progress clock.

A complex obstacle is a 4-segment clock. A more complicated obstacle is a 6-clock. A daunting obstacle is an 8-segment clock.

When you create a clock, make it about the obstacle, not the method. The clocks for an infiltration should be "Interior Patrols" and "The Tower," not "Sneak Past the Guards" or "Climb the Tower." The patrols and the tower are the obstacles—the PCs can attempt to overcome them in a variety of ways.



Complex enemy threats can be broken into several “layers,” each with its own progress clock. For example, the dockside gangs’ HQ might have a “Perimeter Security” clock, an “Interior Guards” clock, and an “Office Security” clock. The crew would have to make their way through all three layers to reach the gang boss’ personal safe and valuables within.

Remember that a clock tracks progress. It reflects the fictional situation, so the group can gauge how they’re doing. A clock is like a speedometer in a car. It shows the speed of the vehicle—it doesn’t determine the speed.

Simple Obstacles

Not every situation and obstacle requires a clock. Use clocks when a situation is complex or layered and you need to track something over time—otherwise, resolve the result of an action with a single roll.

Examples of progress clocks follow.

Danger Clocks

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert level of guards on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the consequence level. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the hounds, etc.

Racing Clocks

Create two opposed clocks to represent a race. The PCs might have a progress clock called “Escape” while the constables have a clock called “Cornered.” If the PCs finish their clock before the constables fill theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they’re cornered and can’t flee. If both complete at the same time, the PCs escape to their lair, but the hunting officers are outside!

You can also use racing clocks for an environmental hazard. Maybe the PCs are trying to complete the “Search” clock to find the lockbox on the sinking ship before the GM fills the “Sunk” clock and the vessel goes down.

Linked Clocks

You can make a clock that unlocks another clock once it's filled. For example, the GM might make a linked clock called "Trapped" after an "Alert" clock fills up. When you fight a veteran warrior, she might have a clock for her "Defense" and then a linked clock for "Vulnerable." Once you overcome the "Defense" clock, then you can attempt to overcome the "Vulnerable" clock and defeat her. You might affect the "Defense" clock with violence in a knife-fight, or you lower her defense with deception if you have the opportunity. As always, the method of action is up to the players and the details of the fiction at hand.

Mission Clocks

The GM can make a clock for a time-sensitive mission, to represent the window of opportunity you have to complete it. If the countdown runs out, the mission changes or is scrubbed—the target escapes, the household wakes up for the day, etc.

Tug-of-war Clocks

You can make a clock that can be filled and emptied by events, to represent a back-and-forth situation. You might make a "Revolution!" clock that indicates when the refugees start to riot over poor treatment. Some events will tick the clock up and some will tick it down. Once it fills, the revolution begins. A tug-of-war clock is also perfect for an ongoing turf war between two crews or factions.

Long-term Project

Some projects will take a long time. A basic long-term project (like tinkering up a new feature for a device) is eight segments. Truly long-term projects (like creating a new designer drug) can be two, three, or even four clocks, representing all the phases of development, testing, and final completion. Add or subtract clocks depending on the details of the situation and complexity of the project.

A long-term project is a good catch-all for dealing with any unusual player goal, including things that circumvent or change elements of the mechanics or the setting.

Faction Clocks

Each faction has a long-term goal. When the PCs have downtime, the GM ticks forward the faction clocks that they're interested in. In this way, the world around the PCs is dynamic and things happen that they're not directly connected to, changing the overall situation in the city and creating new opportunities and challenges.

The PCs may also directly affect NPC faction clocks, based on the missions and scores they pull off. Discuss known faction projects that they might aid or interfere with, and also consider how a PC operation might affect the NPC clocks, whether the players intended it or not.

NPCs

adapted from [One Shot World](#), by Yochai Gal

As the GM, you may find it helpful to generate interesting, memorable NPCs on the fly. All that's required are some memorable Traits, an Instinct, and a means to pursue it. Some NPCs have Knacks (a special ability) as well.

d20	Trait	Instinct	Knack
1	Artistic	Act impulsively	An eye for detail
2	Asthmatic	Be cautious	A tie to a monster
3	Awkward	Defy death	A way with knots
4	Bloodshot Eyes	Die gloriously	Baking
5	Caring	Discover	Balance
6	Clean	Find love	Cooking
7	Diseased	Indulge	Criminal connections
8	Disfigured	Keep quiet	Hedge wizardry
9	Dreamer	Lord over others	Heroic
10	Easygoing	Make money	Hidden knowledge
11	Emaciated	Make the best of it	Inventive
12	Kind	Pillage	Local info
13	Naive	Preserve law	Magical awareness
14	Paranoid	Question authority	Muscle
15	Peaceful	Reunite with a lover	One-of-a-kind item
16	Rude	Restore their name	Skilled warrior
17	Scrawny	Save someone	Speaks to animals
18	Skeptic	Seek payback	Special destiny
19	Spendthrift	Show off	Speed
20	Well-dressed	Spread religion	Writing

Check out *Funnel World* by Jason Lutes for an excellent collection of tables for generating villages and villagers. Also see his books [The Perilous Wilds](#) and [Perilous Deeps](#) for even more tables.

Check out Brian Holland's [One-roll NPC generators](#).

NPC Examples

Baldric

Trait: Bad leg, Shabby Clothes, Easygoing

Instinct: Give in to temptation

Knack: Exotic weapon skill

Freya

Trait: Bloodshot Eyes, Well-Dressed, Angry

Instinct: To atone for what she's done

Knack: Perfect Memory

Genesai

Trait: Empty smile, Graceful, Squeezes a locket around her neck

Instinct: To defend her family's legacy

Knacks: Charismatic, Reputable

Hevaral the Unclean

Trait: Weather-beaten, Handsome, Nervous speech

Instinct: To battle

Knack: Poison brewing

Illian (Prince Illian)

Trait: Calculating eyes, Flowing hair, Explosive temper

Instinct: Reclaim his throne

Knack: Has a backup plan

Lim

Trait: Tall, Long Hair, Awkward

Instinct: Question authority

Knack: A spell of his own devising

Milo

Trait: Curly hair, Squints through eyeglass, Nervous

Instinct: To meddle where he shouldn't

Knack: Metalworking

Numos

Trait: Abnormally large, Passive face, Intelligent eyes

Instinct: To locate something lost

Knack: Quicker than you might think

Seldar the Wise

Trait: Bushy eyebrows, Low-pitched speech, Wears tattered clothes

Instinct: To find wonder, one last time

Knack: Sense of direction

Tyla

Trait: Short, Crooked teeth, Unbearably honest

Instinct: To uncover secrets

Knack: Knows where the monster is

Wesley

Trait: Thick mustache, Beady eyes, Hums out of tune

Instinct: To gain riches, no matter what

Knack: To betray when it hurts the most

Yilla

Trait: Youthful energy, Fast speech, Stands too close

Instinct: To spread news far and wide

Knack: Access to a library=

NPCs as People

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Don't get too attached to your NPCs. They're not the protagonists of this story; at best, they're extras, love interests, and sidekicks. But do make them real.

Provide just a couple of simple but vivid details:

- ★ spidery fingers clutching an eagle-headed cane
- ★ a patron's insistence on a meal with every meeting

Your players will tell you who interests them, who you should focus on, by how they play.

Consider including the NPCs in “be a fan of the characters,” too! Sure, you'll be harder on them than you'd ever be on a PC, down-right unfair as needed, but that's what makes the audience sympathize with them... and gives the PCs a reason to hunt down those who wrong them.

NPCs and Entanglements provide context. There's no faster way to make it feel real than to set up situations where everyone wants something from someone else that they can't have right now.

Running a Modern Setting

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

Running a modern game with fantasy PbtA isn't that different from running the fantasy version. It just requires a bit of adjustment, of looking past the specific words to the intent, and a willingness to improvise.

Modern games shine when you have a strong sense of place, of the real world ties that bind all of us to our favorite locations and the people who occupy them.

Use what you know, but don't feel you have to be limited by it. If you can, use a real world city, town, national park, or similar location that you're familiar with, or one you can convincingly assemble from the pieces of your own experiences.

Use specifics; look for opportunities to tie the characters in. They don't go to a diner, they go to Mel's, where the service stinks but the fries are to die for. They don't drive to a church, they drive to the old church their grandma used to attend every Sunday. The call they get is from their sister's ex, and he needs a favor or some very unhappy werewolves are going to break his kneecaps.

Assume a modern setting, just like the one outside your window. Well, maybe if you lived in an action movie! This is a world of high-tech heists, car chases, and hard deals on the street, of fast living and dangerous bargains. It's also a world where, if you want to see it, the supernatural seethes, just under the surface, waiting for a few good heroes to come along and try to kick it in the teeth.

Here's how to handle some common situations specific to a modern setting, using the Basic and Special Moves and some common sense.

Car Chases

Handle chases with Defy Danger; when your characters are being chased, the danger's being caught, and when they're chasing someone else, it's that their quarry will escape.

Possible complications: fruit cart (!) or taco truck crossing the road; an expensive car, double-parked; a fire hydrant shooting water across the windshield; a tunnel filled with crawling commuters; a big pile of dirt from construction; a shopping cart, out of control.

Gunplay

Volley will come up frequently; be prepared with suitable complications, impending dangers, and disasters. If a character shoots in melee, they're almost certainly opening themselves up to an attack, requiring a Defy Danger, or they might just get smacked down.

Possible complications: the gun misfires, jams, or overheats; something's damaged and the environment changes for the worse; someone's hit or bleeding out; a foe reveals better armor, weaponry, or position; a foe takes it to melee; you're outflanked by a new foe.

Cover

When someone wants to take cover during a firefight, that's probably Defy Danger to get there. If they make it to good cover, the enemy can't hit them immediately, but they can't move or return fire without exposing themselves to the risk inherent in Volley, Defend, or Defy.

Interpret "stand in defense" for Defend generously; use it if they're trying to stay covered during that hail of bullets, or laying down cover fire so someone can make a run for it.

If the cover is flawed, exploit that on complications and on misses. A rule of thumb is to treat partial cover as 1 Armor, major cover as 2 Armor, but try to focus on exploiting, changing • or even having the other side negotiate • over whittling down HP.

Possible complications: your cover's being chewed up; your cover fails or is destroyed; you don't quite make it unscathed; there's not enough room for both of you; the enemy moves to get a clear shot; you drop something.

Outstanding Warrants

Consider "a civilized place" to refer to a specific law enforcement jurisdiction. Who knows, on a miss during a gunfight you might just discover that one jurisdiction has reciprocity with another!Ç^a

My assumption is you're going for an action-heavy feel with an emphasis on drama and tv-style investigation, within a frame where the PCs are actively trying to make the world, if not better, at least a little safer.

Consider what keeps the PCs together; are they monster hunters, unsanctioned but ignored as long as they don't make too much trouble for the wrong people? Or do they work for a shadowy agency with an on-call clean-up crew? Build characters together.

Be flexible with NPCs. Several of the playbooks have moves that call in NPCs. When a player uses one, ask "how did you meet?" and "do you owe them or do they owe you?" and "are you entangled with them?" If the PC wants to define them, encourage them to!

Don't be afraid to make up new Entanglements. And jot down motifs, threads, and hooks whenever they appear.

Running the Supernaturals

by Tam H, [Urban/Modern/Fantasy](#)

When a supernatural PC acts, ask questions that explore the premise inherent in each path. Ask: What does that look like? How do you do that? What's it cost you? Then use the answers.

Let the player do the heavy lifting on how their supernatural nature impacts the world, and don't feel like you need to make all demonics in the campaign red just because The Demonic is.

The Angelic

The Angel is a powerful divine force trapped in a mortal body • they can do terrible, wondrous things, as long as they're willing to suffer for it. When the Angel uses a spell, ask them how it impacts their mortal shell. Remind them they might die, or be exposed for what they are. Powerful forces earn powerful enemies.

Nomen might seem hard to handle, but really, it's as much a tool for you as it is for them.

"Where" and "how far" doesn't tell you safest or easiest, not unless you generously narrate it like that, of course. Ask them to word their request to their sixth sense and then stick to it.

"Speaking someone's language" is a powerful tool; you can speak the language of violence to thugs, the language of chivalry to knights, the language of love to lovers, the language of statistics to accountants. Watch for bystanders to assume things about the PC that might not be true. Use an unexpected new Entanglement when someone they've spoken to takes things too far. Make a target demand they walk the walk since they can talk the talk.

If the Angel is lucky, give them opportunities to use their nomen when luck might help them ameliorate or escape a miss or a partial. Make the misses where they might've used luck but passed on it worse, just by sheer coincidence. Show someone they know suffering a run of bad luck, but don't tell them why.

On a miss or a partial, describe how they lose control of their divine power and get more than they asked for, or make a divine request of them, or offer

them a choice between burning their mortal shell and accomplishing their goal.

The Demonic

The Demon can change reality. Admittedly, it's only in small, temporary, subtle ways, but still... they can change reality.

So what's the downside? They can only do it if they have a bargain, a deal with someone to do something, and in pursuit of that goal. And when that bargain is met, they're less powerful until they strike another bargain.

On a miss, describe the taint of evil, the feel of brimstone and fire. Have the powerful supernatural creature they owe a debt to call that marker in. Take notes on the people they screw over and let live or who might be let out of hell just to hunt them down.

The Fae

The Seelie, UnSeelie, and Changelings each have their own problems, mostly related to being aliens in the modern world.

The Seelie are cruel and manipulative; never miss a chance to play up this reputation. Their magic is limited entirely by the enchantments they encounter; when you introduce a frog prince or a magical rose or a dire sleeping curse, expect the Seelie to want to replicate it.

The UnSeelie, on the other hand, are all about doing one or two things well, usually horrific monster things. Hash out with the player in advance what their monster moves do and how it looks when they do it. Don't be afraid to limit the scope of their monster moves; they can always manifest power to broaden them.

The Changeling is not as powerful as a true fae, but has access to all the same moves. If they want to use Faerie magic, they'll need a source of elan; taking Fuel or Absorption will cover it. Mostly, though, their drama is in being mortal but suddenly alien, in what they've lost in the meantime • and in what still wants them back.

When a Fae misses, complicate their life with the difficulties of technology, old courtly reflexes, or the sickness of unexpected iron.

The Galatea

The Galatea is a construct; a chance to play with the meaning of "soul" and "human".

They rely directly on provoking emotions; without a steady source of their chosen emotion, the Galatea will quickly find themselves balancing their need to spend essence to heal and remove debilities with their need not to die.

Be generous with the essence, but remember the source has to be within reach.

When the Galatea misses, remind them they're not human. Shove their inanimate nature in their faces. Break something on their hard skin, or melt away part of their flesh. Give a valued companion a glimpse of their true substance, or reveal a faux pas that everyone noticed.

The Ghost

The Ghost is dead. That's their biggest problem, even if they're effectively immortal, they're static. Unchanging. Never miss an opportunity to remind them that they've got no future, that they're just an echo of what once was.

On a partial, reveal unwelcome truths. Tell them one of their anchors is desperately in love with them, even though, or maybe because, they've got no future. Have other ghosts who can't manifest beg them for help.

On a Manifest or Materialize miss, tell them they're confused about what year it is, or that they're flickering wildly, or that they think they're still alive. Ask them what they still love and then put it in danger.

When they "die" again, you choose when they reform and where; use this to drive the message home • your fate is already written.

The Shapeshifter

The Shapeshifter is two intertwined paths, the animalistic Lycanthrope and the fluid Protean.

Even in human form, the Lycanthrope has improved senses. Tell them things humans wouldn't notice, like someone's heart racing or the sudden stink of sweat when the bouncer's afraid of them. Offer them incentives to transform whenever you can.

Complicate their lives with the offer of success for a few moments of no self-control, of glorious destruction and unbridled savagery. Then when the dust has settled, show them the pain they've caused.

The Protean has a wider range, but pays more for Regeneration if they want it. Their premise is all about retaining (or finding) a sense of self, of choosing to face the music for your deeds when you can easily shift the blame to a different face.

We're All Monsters Here

So you want to run an all supernaturals campaign? Go for it! Just remember to take time for each player to discuss and elaborate their premise, to talk about and play up the premise of their character's supernatural side.

Communication is your friend here; be upfront with your players and keep those lines of communication open.

Tools for Improv

See:

- [“Ask Questions, Gain +Improv”](#) by Mike Weem
- [Play Unsafe \(PDF Link\)](#) by Graham Walmsley

Supplements

- For “pulpy science fantasy” (think John Carter on Mars or Flash Gordon), check out [Adventures on Dungeon Planet](#), by Johnstone Metzger.
- For the Earthdawn setting, check out [Fourth World](#) by Lester Ward.
- For a Norse-themed (but not exactly Norse) setting, see [The Wyrld of Stromgard](#).

Equipment List

Tags

adapted from [Freebooters on the Frontier](#), by Jason Lutes

Items are often described with tags, italicized words that indicate some of the special properties of these items. While some tags have related rules, all should be handled in the fiction as appropriate.

Ammo: abstracted quantity of shots.

Awkward: potentially troublesome.

Burns: 1d6 damage on an ongoing basis.

Close: target must be in immediate vicinity.

Duration: abstracted length of time, to be marked off at GM's discretion

Far: target must be within sight.

Forceful: can force a foe back.

Hand: target must be within arm's reach.

Ignition: can be used to start fire.

Near: target must be within a stone's throw.

Piercing: amount of damage that ignores armor (e.g., when you deal damage with *n* *piercing*, you subtract *n* from the enemy's armor for that attack).

Point-blank: This item can be used to fire point-blank without penalties. When you do, add the tag *messy*.

Power: amount of increase to casting power.

Precise: roll+DEX instead of +STR to Hack & Slash.

Rare: hard to come by via common channels

Reach: target must be just outside the immediate area.

Reload: must be reloaded after each use.

Scatter-shot: When used at close range, add the tag *messy*.

Slow: takes a while to take effect.

Small: cannot protect against all attacks.

Throw: can be thrown effectively.

+Modifier The item has an inherent modifier between -1 and +3. When you use this item use its modifier instead of your own.

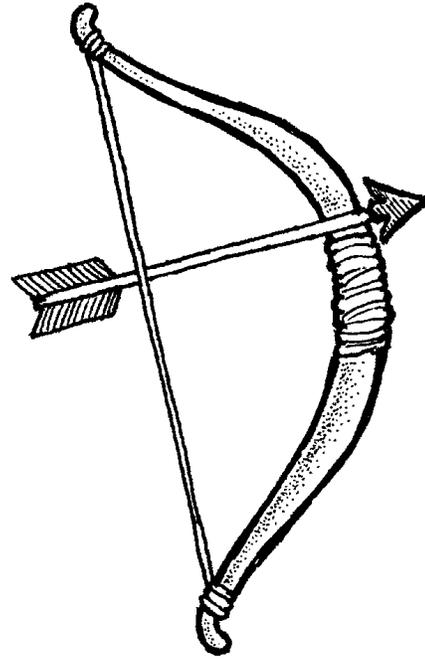
Equipment

PCs may buy items for the listed price in coins (cn) and may sell items for ½ that.

Most games rely on the playbook's damage, independent of weapon, but optional damage per weapon is listed for those who prefer it.

Weapons

- Axe** 14 cn (d8), *close*, 2 wt
- Club** 9 cn (d6), *close*, 1 wt
- Crook** 5 cn (d4), *reach*, *awkward*
- Dagger** 11 cn (d4), 1 *piercing*, *precise*, *hand*, 0 wt
- Flail** 18 cn (d8), *close*, *forceful*, 2 wt
- Great axe** 24 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), *close*, *rare*, 2-handed, 3 wt
- Great hammer** 20 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), *close*, *forceful*, *rare*, 2-handed, 4 wt
- Great sword** 30 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), *close*, *reach*, *rare*, 2-handed, 3 wt
- Handaxe** 8 cn (d4), *close*, 1 wt
- Hatchet** 10 cn (d4), *throw*, *close*, *near*, 1 wt
- Knife** 7 cn (d4), *precise*, *hand*, 0 wt
- Mace** 12 cn (d6), *close*, *forceful*, 1 wt
- Pick** 18 cn (d6), 2 *piercing*, *close*, *awkward*, 1 wt
- Pitchfork** 8 cn (d4), *close*, *reach*, 1 wt
- Polearm** 18 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), *reach*, 2-handed, 3 wt
- Shortsword** 12 cn (d6), *close*, 1 wt
- Spear** 16 cn (d8), *throw*, *reach*, *near*, 2 wt
- Staff** 6 cn (d4), *close*, 2-handed, 1 wt
- Sword** 14 cn (d8), *close*, 2 wt
- Warhammer** 12 cn (d6), 1 *piercing*, *close*, 1 wt



Weapons - Ranged

- Throwing knife** 8 cn (d4), *hand*, *close*, *reach*, *near*, *precise*, 0 wt
- Sling** 6 cn (d4), *near*, *far*, *reload*, 0 wt
- Shortbow** 16 cn (d6), *near*, *far*, 2-handed, 1 wt
- Longbow** 24 cn (d8), *near*, *far*, 2-handed, 1 wt
- Light crossbow** 20 cn (d6), 1 *piercing*, *near*, *far*, 2-handed, *reload*, 1 wt
- Heavy crossbow** 30 cn (d6), 2 *piercing*, *near*, *far*, 2-handed, *reload*, 2 wt

Guns

- As appropriate to your campaign, if at all.
- Matchlock** 100 cn (d8), 1 *piercing*, *near*, *noisy*, *dangerous*, *reload*, 1 wt
 - Musket** 200 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), 2 *piercing*, *near*, *far*, *noisy*, *dangerous*, *reload*, 2 wt
 - Pistol** 200 cn (d8), 1 *piercing*, *close*, *near*, *noisy*, 1 wt
 - Rifle** 400 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), 2 *piercing*, *far*, 2 wt
 - Shotgun** 500 cn, +1 *damage* (d10), *close*, *near*, *scatter-shot*, 2 wt

Ammunition

Slingstones 2 cn, 3 *ammo*, 0 wt
Arrows 4 cn, 3 *ammo*, 1 wt
Bolts 4 cn, 3 *ammo*, 1 wt
Bullets 10 cn, 3 *ammo*, 0 wt

Armor

Leather 30 cn, 1 *armor*, 1 wt
Chainmail 60 cn, 2 *armor*, 3 wt
Breastplate 80 cn, 2 *armor*, 2 wt
Scale mail 120 cn, 3 *armor*, *awkward*, 4 wt
Plate armor 200 cn, 4 *armor*, *awkward*, *rare*, 6 wt
Buckler 15 cn, +1 *armor*, *small*, 1 wt
Shield 25 cn, +1 *armor*, 2 wt
Helmet 5 cn, 0 *armor*, 0 wt

Garments

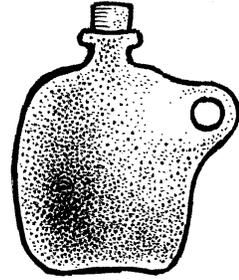
Poor clothes 1 cn, 0 wt
Common clothes 2 cn, 0 wt
Winter cloak 5 cn, 0 wt
Quality clothes 10 cn, 0 wt
Official vestment 20 cn, 0 wt
Elegant clothes 50 cn, *rare*, 0 wt

Gear

Adventuring gear 20 cn, 5 *uses*, 2 wt
Animal snare 2 cn, 1 wt
Animal trap 5 cn, 1 wt
Bag of books 10 cn, +1 *to Spout Lore*, 5 *uses*, 2 wt
Bedroll 2 cn, 1 wt
Fishing net 5 cn, *reach*, *thrown*, 1 wt
Fishing pole 5 cn, 0 wt
Grappling hook 7 cn, 1 wt
Horn 9 cn, *noisy*, 1 wt
Rope (20') 2 cn, 1 wt
Tent, large 15 cn, 3 wt
Tent, small 7 cn, 2 wt

Containers

Backpack 5 cn, 0 wt
Waterskin 2 cn, 0 wt
Scrollcase 2 cn, 0 wt
Sling pouch 3 cn, 0 wt
Quiver 4 cn, 0 wt
Saddlebags 7 cn, 1 wt



Lighting

Candles 2 cn, *dim*, 3 *duration*, 5 *uses*, 0 wt
Torches 2 cn, 3 *duration*, 3 *uses*, 1 wt
Firewood stick 1 cn, 5 *duration*, 1 *use*, 1 wt
Flint & steel, Tinderbox 4 cn, *ignition*, 0 wt
Flask of oil 5 cn, *burns*, 1 *use*, 1 wt
Lantern 16 cn, *needs oil*, 5 *duration*, 1 wt

Provisions

Rations 3 cn, 5 *uses*, 1 wt
Poor meal 1 cn p/4 *people*
Hearty meal 1 cn
Feast 15 cn
Spirits (1 pint) 15 cn, 0 wt
Grog (1 quart) 1 cn, 1 wt
Fine wine (1 pint) 10 cn, 0 wt
Bushel of crops 12 cn, 4 *rations*, 2 wt
Sheep, swine, goat, 12 cn

Tools

Whetstone 1 cn, 0 wt
Crowbar or shovel 5 cn, *d6*, *close*, *awkward*,
2-*handed*, 2 wt
Hand saw 8 cn, 1 wt
Pole (10') 2 cn, 1 wt
Lockpicks 10 cn, 0 wt
Writing kit 10 cn, 0 wt
Crafting tools 15 cn, 2 wt
Navigation charts 15 cn, 1 wt
Mapmaking tools 20 cn, 0 wt

Healing

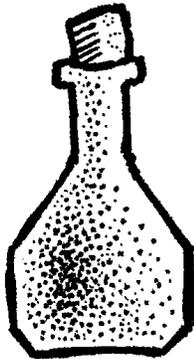
Antitoxin 10 cn, 0 wt

Bandages 3 cn, *slow*, *heal* 1, 3 uses, 0 wt

Poultices & herbs 10 cn, *slow*, *heal* 1d4, 2 uses, 1 wt

Healer's kit 24 cn, *slow*, *heal* 1d6, 2 uses, 1 wt

Healing potion 50 cn, *heal* 1d8, 0 wt



Magic

For **Dynamic Spells**

Spell component 2 cn, +1 *power*, 1 *use*, 0 wt

Magic staff 200 cn, d4, *close*, *2-handed*, +1 *power*, *rare*, 1 wt

Magic orb 400 cn, +2 *power*, *rare*, 1 wt

Poisons

Name and describe the form, application, effect, and speed of the potion. The price of 1 dose is effect multiplied by speed:

Effect = *minor* (8 cn), *moderate* (15 cn), *major* (30 cn), *fatal* (100 cn)

Speed = *slow* (x1), *fast* (x2), *instant* (x5).

Passage

Safe route 1 cn

Unsafe route 10 cn

Perilous 100 cn

Transport

Cart and donkey 50 cn, load 18

Horse 75 cn, load 12

Warhorse 400 cn, load 14

Wagon 100 cn, load 32

Barge 75 cn, load 24

River boat 150 cn, load 32

Merchant ship 5,000 cn, load 200

Warship 20,000 cn, load 100

Services

Poor inn 6-CHA sp/week

Modest inn 12-CHA sp/week

Comfortable inn 24-CHA sp/week

Unskilled labor 10 cn/week

Military service 30 cn/month

"Companionship" 12-CHA cn/night

Entertainment 10-CHA cn/evening

Armed escort—

Safe route 6sp per guard per day

Unsafe route 12 cn/guard/day

Perilous 24 cn/guard/day

Common murder 5 cn

Assassination 120 cn

Healing 1 cn/1 ability point/1 HP

Prayers 1 cn/month

Craft custom item Base cost x2

Repair item Base cost x ¼

Messenger, local 1 cn

Messenger, steading-to-steading 10 cn

Library access 8 coins

Real Estate

A hovel 20 cn

A cottage 250 cn

A house 2,500 cn

A manse 10,000 cn

A keep 75,000 cn

A castle 250,000 cn

A grand castle 500,000 cn

Upkeep 1% of cost/month

Magic Items

Simple Magic Items

These are the kinds of things a skilled practitioner can create for you, with the right ingredients, suitable payment, and enough time and incentive. There's no mass production of magic here: every magic item bears the stamp of its creator and the methods used to create it.

Ball of String *250 coins, 0 weight* by Lester Ward

Activating this ball of silvery thread causes a strand to curl out of the ball and tie itself to a nearby landmark, marking a point of origin. As you walk, thread unwinds effortlessly. Played out string cannot easily be spotted and resists cutting. You may wind the string back onto the ball in order to find your way back. When you do, the string glows with a white light. When the thread is released, any played out string vanishes in a puff of light.

Contingency Ring *50 cn, 0 wt* by Tam H

Each ring has a trigger, like "if I fall more than ten feet" or "if I'm knocked out" and a spell that will be cast instantly in response to that trigger. Such rings are usually created with one charge, but two or three are not unheard of. Once used up, the ring is no longer magical.

Delving Quartz *300 coins, 1 weight* by Lester Ward

These fist-sized, irregular quartz crystals are a common sight in steadings, caravans, and exploratory ventures. Command the crystal to glow any color and brightness you like. This light may be generated without heat, if desired, but you may also make the crystal radiate warmth as it glows. One crystal cannot get much brighter or warmer than a typical hearth fire. Delving quartz is often mounted in lanterns or other fixtures.

Echo Stone *300 cn, 0 wt* by Lester Ward

These baubles capture sounds within their crystalline structure. If you tap the stone on the earth five times, then speak a password, the stone will remember everything you say next, until you say the password again or about a minute passes. From then on anyone who speaks the password to the stone will hear the captured message in your voice. The stone may hold different messages

under different passwords. Someone who knows a password can clear the message remembered under that password.

Fernweave *1 armor, living, worn, 125 cn, 1 wt* by Lester Ward

Armor made from living plant fibers and herbs, woven densely. It must be watered once every three days, or loses its armor tag until it is watered.

Firefly Chalk *12 cn, 0 wt* by Lester Ward

The enchantment within a stick of this chalk causes its writing to glow in the dark. It can also be used to decorate skin. Like all chalk, it washes off most surfaces if rubbed or doused with water.

Healing Shot *16 cn, 0 wt* via Tam H

When you **take a moment to pull out the stopper of this tiny flask and chug the contents**, your wounds scab and your bones cease to ache. Heal 1d8 Damage. Such potions are always built on a shot of hard spirits.

Inventory Scroll *160 coins, 0 weight* by Lester Ward

When you open this scroll within a room, glowing yellow or orange writing appears on the scroll as if written by an invisible pen, listing each item within the room in general terms (no names given). The scroll is thorough, but cannot detect concealed items. As the scroll is rolled back up, the writing disappears.

Luxury Bedroll *300 cn, 0 wt* by Lester Ward

This elaborately embroidered bedroll keeps anyone sleeping on it at a comfortable temperature and deters insects. If you use it while making camp, you heal +1 hp. When not in use, the bedroll folds up to a ludicrously small size.

Magic Wand +1 *100 cn 0 wt* by Tam H

The wand is imbued with a single spell of 3rd level or lower. The person holding it can cast this spell as if they are a 3rd level magic user. When they do, they mark two debilities and roll the appropriate spell-casting move, using the wand's modifier instead of their own. If they mark their third debility, the wand is completely discharged, for good.

Magic Wand *200 cn* by Jeremy Strandberg

Wand or mystic rod (ignore a -1 penalty to Cast a Spell).

Masquerade Plumage *160 coins, 0 weight* by Lester Ward

When you don one of these elaborate, feathered half-masks, only you may remove it. While it remains in place, you will not be recognized by anyone around you. People will remember your actions, but nothing about you (not even your voice or scent) will trigger recollection.

Night Chain *900 coins, 1 weight* by Lester Ward

This fine golden chain splits at one end, suspending two coin-like slugs of metal. The other end forms a loop, which you put around your head. Holding the coins just over the eyes of someone asleep connects you to the sleeper. Any dream they experience, you see. Should the target wake while the chain is in use, you gain the Stunned or Confused debility and the vision unravels.

Obstructing Whip *2,000 coins, reach, entangling, 1 weight* by Lester Ward

While you wield this otherwise typical leather whip, several cords of vibrant magical energy writhe from the handle, interfering with incoming attacks. When you defend while wielding these cords, gain +1 hold, even on a failure, and add the following choices:

- When the attack is completed, entangle the attacker
- Provide +1d8 armor against an incoming attack.

Orichalcum Container *5,000 coins, 1 weight* by Lester Ward

This ornate orichalcum box will store twenty kernels of any true elements without allowing them to interact.

Pocket Guardian *100 coins, 1 weight* by Lester Ward

Place this statue of a large stinging insect or arachnid in your pocket or pouch. The statue will allow you to add or remove items from its home, but will animate and then bite (1d6) and poison anyone else that tries (inflict a debility).

Preserving Pot *200 coins, 2 weight* by Lester Ward

When the lid of this large iron pot is closed, anything inside does not rot, dry out, cool down, heat up or otherwise change.

True Element 0 wt by Lester Ward

A kernel of a true element can be infused into an item to give it magical properties, or enhance those it already has. True elements must be harvested, making them rare (some are much harder to locate and harvest than others). They also react easily with other materials, so must be contained magically until used. Some kernels are more pure and/or stronger than others, which affects their price:

- ★ **True air, kernel** 50–100 coins
- ★ **True earth, kernel** 5–10 coins
- ★ **True fire, kernel** 50–100 coins
- ★ **True water, kernel** 5–10 coins
- ★ **True wood, kernel** 25–50 coins
- ★ **Orichalcum, kernel** 500–1,000 coins

True Skin 900 coins, 1 armor, 1 weight by Lester Ward

Though this armor was obviously fashioned from some kind of animal hide, the type of animal cannot be identified. Upon coming into possession of this armor, decide what type of animal most closely resembles your personality and temperament, and tell the GM. In return, the GM will tell you one or more moves associated with that animal. When you want to unleash your inner beast, gain hold equal to your CON. You and your possessions meld into a perfect copy of the animal you selected. You have any innate abilities and weaknesses of that form, retaining your stats. Spend 1 hold to make one of the animal moves. Once out of hold, you return to normal form and can't change back for an hour or so.

Unique Magic Items

Unique magic items are rare, named, and special; the possessor of one is usually a high profile target for those who crave power.

They are often legacy items or storied artifacts, or a divine gift tied to a physical form.

In general, a unique magic item will grant a move, under specific conditions, with specific drawbacks.

Aegis +1 armor, 0 wt by Tam H

The Aegis is an embodiment of an ideal attached to a suitable symbol, like a badge representing justice, a gift from a slain friend representing retribution,

or a weapon representing wrath. When worn or displayed prominently, the Aegis grants +1 armor. When held in one hand and presented as a shield, it expands into a distinctive shield that grants +2 armor. It cannot be disarmed or destroyed, only suppressed, as long as the bearer believes in the ideal.

The Book of Night Without Moon 0 wt by Tam H

The Book grants a +1 ongoing against demons and to perform rituals involving demons. Possessing it counts as a place of power for the purposes of the Wizard's Ritual move. If you hit a demon with it, calculate damage by summing the dice, and if the dice match, double the sum.

Caliburn's Scabbard 1 wt by Tam H

A fine but well-used scabbard suitable for a longsword. The one bearing it cannot die of blood loss. Any blade kept in it regularly gains +1 *piercing* for as long as it is paired with the scabbard.

Tyrfing (close, 2 weight, 3 piercing) by Tam H

The wielder of Tyrfing will find it sharp and tough, and adds +2 to damage while wielding it. It is cursed to cause three great evils each time it finds a new wielder; when someone draws it for the first time, the GM holds 3 against them. This hold may be spent any time Tyrfing is unsheathed in their hand to have it cause a great evil or sorrow.

Wonders and Relics from Fourth World

adapted from [Fourth World](#), by Lester Ward

Threads and Ranks

Certain magic items contain stages of untapped potential (measured in ranks) that can be unlocked by finding out specific information about the item, performing deeds the item requires, and connecting the item to the wielder using one or more threads.

Each rank of the item mastered by the wielder provides a move. Powerful relics have multiple ranks (usually four), while less potent items will have only one, possibly even none.

As a practical matter, requiring that threads be woven into some utility items serves to limit “magic item bloat”, where one character uses huge numbers of magic items.

The most common expression of magic involves the weaving of threads between the pattern of the character and the pattern of something else, allowing the PC to access it. The number of threads a PC can weave at once is limited. PCs can weave no more than one thread per level; PCs using *Fourth Work* playbooks can weave two threads per level (“circle”), as certain moves require threads. An available thread is one that has not been woven into anything, and is available for the character to use for something. A woven thread is one that is in use and cannot be used for anything else.

The following two moves are used for attunement with magical items.

Integrate a Rank

When you **spend a day meditating on a magic item you possess with an unlocked and unused rank**, you may weave an available thread into the magic item, gaining the benefit of the unlocked rank. You may not make this move if someone else has woven threads into ranks of the same item.

Renounce an Item

When you **die or renounce possession of a magic item**, any threads you have woven into ranks of that item immediately become available. Just as immediately, you lose the benefit of the item and all its ranks. Some items

may take renunciation personally, demanding different keys or deeds should you try to weave a thread into them again.

Keys, Deeds and Demands

The more potent magical items carry a unique pattern and a name, and must be uniquely understood to be used. When a wonder or relic is first discovered, all of its ranks are locked. To weave a thread into an item, its next rank must be unlocked.

Unlocking a rank requires a key: the answer to a specific question about the item. For every magic item with ranks, the first question that must be answered is almost always “what is the item’s name?”

Studying the item’s pattern (several *Fourth World* playbooks have moves to do this) can lead to discovery of its name. Research and legwork can provide another avenue to learning a name. Some items may even inscribe the name on the item itself, making discovery of the first key trivial.

Many magic items contain only one rank, so the first key unlocks the item’s entire potential. More powerful items, however, contain additional ranks, each with their own key. Though magic can discover what question must be answered to reveal the key, few shortcuts are available to find the answer. Research and adventuring are typically a character’s only option. Discovering keys, therefore, often drives the story.

While powerful items are not (necessarily) intelligent, many of them want things. In particular, they may require deeds from a wielder. When a rank requires a deed to be unlocked, the deed acts as the key, unlocking the rank when the wielder (and only the wielder) completes the task. One difficulty surrounds deeds: no magic can reveal what deed must be performed, only that one must be performed.

Figuring out what is required often takes even more research and adventuring than discovering a key.

Lastly, some ranks may demand certain qualities from their wielder, in addition to a key or deed. Demands might include being a particular discipline, having an ability score at a certain value, being a certain species, or having reached a certain level. Fortunately, a wielder who has woven threads into all the prior ranks immediately understands what the demands of the next rank are.

Spouting Lore About Relics

Some playbooks have talents which grant magical insight into an item's ranks (e.g. Bow History, Psychometry, Item Disposition, Item History, Martial Insight). Such talents magically expose a character to information they might have no other way of discovering. So what happens when a character Spouts Lore about a relic?

Like much else in fantasy RPGs, it depends on the needs of the story. Often, discovering keys drives longer term story arcs in play, but sometimes keys may be more of a hindrance on the narrative the table finds interesting. Fun things can be discovered when a group has to track down and negotiate with the right kind of adept. On the other hand, sometimes that is just an unwelcome digression. So, when spouting lore about a relic comes up, the GM can easily use the outcome to pace revelations about the item. It's certainly possible that Spout Lore could reveal something about the item's ranks, should that be more interesting to the story. Perhaps the character spouting lore happens to remember the name of the item from a story or song. In cases where the preference may be to drive more investigation before ranks can be unlocked, spouting lore might be used to provide hints where to look. The GM might consider the following when revealing "something interesting and useful" related to an item with ranks:

- ★ If the use of the item is not obvious, describe the item's general purpose.
- ★ Discover the item's basic abilities (that is, abilities that may be used without weaving threads into the item).
- ★ Discover how many threads may be woven into the item, if any.
- ★ Understand exactly what must be done (and where) to learn the item's name.
- ★ Discover the question that must be answered to gain the next key to the item, if any.
- ★ Discover if the item requires that any deeds be performed.
- ★ Identify the style of the item's maker to the point that you would recognize it in other items.
- ★ If the item is cursed, discover what the curse will do.
- ★ If the item is cursed, discover how to abate the curse.
- ★ Avoid the effects of the item's curse, if any.
- ★ Provide a concrete lead about where more information could be discovered.

- ★ Open a door to a specific, fruitful line of investigation on a related topic.

Example answers:

- ★ “Items from that period were known to reveal their names in glowing writing when rubbed with grapeseed oil.”
- ★ “You realize that the markings on the pommel are much like a type of coded writing you learned as a child. How did you learn it?”
- ★ “The library in the city down the road is known to have a copy of *On Instruments*, which would almost certainly mention a magical trumpet like this. What is your connection to this library?”
- ★ “The alloy used in the handle could have only come from one place...”) ”
- ★ “From the style, you are certain that this is the work of master artificer Malgrave the Younger, who did most of his work for the aropagoi of the Serpent River. How do you know him?”

When revealing something merely “interesting” instead, the GM might consider more oblique or less specific hints:

- ★ Provide a tour-guide-like comment about the history of the item:
 - “Items of this kind were often used by [particular disciplines, species, peoples in a geographic region, followers of a particular Passion, etc.]...”
 - “This style was common prior to the completion of the Eternal Library...”
- ★ Provide a hint about the item’s purpose. “The symbol on the hilt was often used to mark the property of those who had been claimed by the invae.”
- ★ Provide a rumor. “You’ve heard that the crew of the Yrnilus has been destroying items like that.”

Wonders

A wonder must be tamed by weaving a single thread into it before it will allow itself to be used (i.e. they have one rank). While it may be possible to find the occasional wonder for sale, most must be found (or, perhaps, crafted).

When converting magic items to wonders, items that supply a continuous benefit or are not obviously turned on or off, but have a single purpose, are good candidates for wonders. This might include “common magic items” or even thread items that don’t seem complex enough to translate into relics.

Affirmation Cup *1 rank, 1 weight*

Orichalcum lines the rim of this large drinking vessel, fashioned from the horn of some long extinct animal. Intricate carvings depict scenes of revelry and joy.

- First rank* (key question: what is the cup's name?): When conversation during a full meal embraces life and accents the positive over the negative, the horn fills with a clear fluid. If imbibed immediately after the meal, this liquid acts as a healing potion. When in the presence of overwhelming life energy, the horn may fill as well.

Bracers of Firewind *1 rank, 1 weight*

Ornate engravings decorate these two golden arm bracers. One, studded with rubies, features images of flames. Images of clouds and storms grace the other, sapphire-studded bracer.

- First rank* (key question: what are the bracers named?): you may volley with a bolt of fire (near, +2 damage, can start fires) or a bolt of wind (near, far, forceful, stun). If you would spend ammo, instead that type of bolt may not be used until you next make camp.

Cloaksense Brooch *1 rank, 1 weight*

These metal cloak fasteners can be found in a variety of styles and materials. Often some sort of eye or other reference to senses dominates its decoration.

- First rank* (key question: what is the brooch's name?): when used to fasten any cloak, the brooch provides a tingling sensation any time you are in imminent danger of being attacked, making you very difficult to surprise or ambush.

Crystal Plate *1 rank, 1 armor, clumsy, living, worn, 5 weight*

The crystals forming this suit of plate mail slowly grow, repairing any damage done to the armor.

- First rank* (key question: what is the armor's name?): The armor resizes itself to perfectly fit. The tags for this armor become "*1 rank, 3 armor, living, worn, 2 weight*", replacing the tags listed above. In addition, the armor becomes largely buoyant and easy to swim in. Over time, the design engraved on the suit will change to reflect the personality of the wearer. What does that look like?

Elemental Spear *1 rank, reach, thrown, near, 1 weight*

These exceptionally well-made spears are fashioned using each of the five elements.

- First rank* (key question: what is the spear's name?): The spear's tags become "*1 rank, reach, thrown, far, forceful, 3 piercing, 0 weight*", replacing the tags listed above, and it becomes nearly impervious to harm. When scoring a 12+ with volley or hack and slash with the spear, the tip becomes searing hot, dealing +1d6 damage.

Frost Pouch *1 rank, thrown, reach, +1 damage, 0 weight*

The cloth of these small white or blue pouches always feels cool to the touch, seemingly always full of a fine white sand-like frost.

- First rank* (key question: what is the name of the air elemental who gave its power to the pouch?): Scattering a handful of frost over a natural fire no larger than a bonfire will instantly extinguish it. In addition, you may Volley with a handful of frost, dealing your damage with its icy sting. If you volley on a 10+, you may forgo damage and instead freeze the target in place; they cannot move for a minute or so, unless something deals damage to them. The pouch always remains full; however, if a volley would expend ammo, instead the pouch becomes unusable for an hour.

Lightning Bolt Earrings *1 rank, worn, 0 weight*

These intricate pieces of silver jewelry, shaped like forked lightning, attach to the owner's ear by a short chain of delicate links.

- First rank* (key question: what are the earrings named?): When you are the sole target of a harmful spell, you may attempt to fork the spell into two copies. If you do, roll+con. On a 10+, the spell forks and you choose the target of each copy. On 7-9, the spell forks, one copy affects you, and you choose the target of the other. On a miss, in addition to whatever else happens, the spell affects you normally.

Naga-Scale Brooch *1 rank, worn, 0 weight*

The naga scale set into the silver or gold backing of this jewelry changes color to match the wearer's clothing.

- First rank* (key question: what was the name of the naga who willingly donated the scale?): When you order a hireling on a 7–9, they will never come back with serious demands while a thread remains woven into the brooch and the brooch remains in your possession. Afterwards, they will realize they have been enchanted.

Oratory Necklace *1 rank, worn, 1 weight*

The large, semi-precious stones of this necklace sparkle subtly when their user speaks.

- First rank* (key question: what is the necklace's name?): While you wear the necklace, you cannot be enchanted by song or speech. Further, when you give a public oration within a steading on a relevant topic, all who can see you will hear you clearly and will not interrupt. When the speech is finished, roll+CHA. On a 10+, choose three. On a 7–9, choose one:
 - Your speech gathers more than just a smattering of people
 - People in the audience who agree with you far outnumber those who do not
 - Your speech reaches the ears of the steading's influential residents, of whom at least one will seek an audience with you
 - Some who hear your speech are moved to act on what you say before the next sunrise
 - By the following day, most in the steading will recognize you, for better or worse.

Spell Sword *1 rank, close, +1 damage, 2 weight*

Weapons of this type can be found in many varieties (not just swords), but always are of exceptional quality, often with a swirled appearance to the grain of the metal.

- First rank* (key question: what is the weapon named?): Any magician can place a spell requiring no more than one thread to weave into the weapon, which functions as a spell matrix would. When you hack and slash with this weapon, add the following choice: cast the spell within the weapon on the target (as if scoring a 10+ on the casting roll).

Relics

A relic contains multiple ranks, usually four. When converting other magic items to relics, care should be taken to focus on the narrative power granted by each rank, rather than the merely mechanical progression used in most of the source material (though the first rank may be more mechanical).

Bloodwall *4 ranks, +1 armor, clumsy, living, 2 weight*

Bloodwall is a large oval shield made from translucent red crystal, enabling the wielder to see through the shield as through red glass.

- First rank* (key question: what is the shield's name?): You are kept comfortable in heat and the shield provides a degree of defense against fire. The shield also loses the clumsy tag.
- Second rank* (key question: what is story of the shield's creation?): When you view an opponent through the shield, you are protected from effects directed at your eyes or relying on the gaze of, or eye contact with, that opponent.
- Third rank* (deed: use Bloodwall to protect or inspire a trollmoot; demand: level 4): When you look through the shield, you can see the astral plane. You gain the astral sight move, but only for what you see through the shield. If you already have the ability to use astral sight, you gain +1 ongoing to discerning realities through the shield while using it.
- Fourth rank* (deed: praise the talent of Bloodwall's creator to Upandal while walking across an active lava field): When you hold Bloodwall, you are completely impervious to fire and heat.

Crystal Spell Box 4 ranks, 1 weight

This box, forged from flat sheets of deep amber crystal with seams of metal, is not designed to be opened.

- First rank* (key question: what is the box's name?): When you are targeted by a monster's spell or magical effect, and there is space remaining in the box, you may roll 1d6. On a three or higher, the incoming spell has no effect and is, instead, captured in the box, from which you can later cast it. On a 1, a spell already in the box is lost. Casting the stored spell is done as if fully woven and cast through a spell matrix, requiring only the casting move, made using roll+nothing. If you are somehow familiar with the spell or its nature, take +2 on this roll. Initially, the box may only hold one spell at a time.
- Second rank* (key question: what is the name of one of the apprentices which helped make the box? deed: travel with the box to the apprentice's last resting place and leave an offering of thanks): The box can now hold up to two spells at a time.
- Third rank* (key question: what is the name of the mountain from which the crystal was extracted?): The box can now hold up to three spells at a time.
- Fourth rank* (key question: what is the name of the person who commissioned the box?): The box can now hold up to four spells.

Fool's Coin 4 ranks, 0 weight

This large brass coin contains the same symbol on both sides: a jester's hat.

- First rank* (key question: what is the coin's name?): When you make camp, hold three Luck. When you roll and miss, you may spend 1 Luck to re-roll and take the second result. If it is a hit, explain how you succeeded only through sheer luck. When you are out of Luck, you take -1 ongoing until you gain more.
- Second rank* (key question: whose hat is shown on the coin?): When someone nearby would take damage, you may describe stumbling into the attack. If you do, you take the damage instead and hold one additional luck. You may not spend luck to negate this damage.
- Third rank* (demand: wear no armor): When you take damage, you may spend 1 luck to ignore it. Describe the comedic, contrived, or outright miraculous circumstances that saved you from harm.
- Fourth rank* (deed: use the coin to fool someone): Spend 1 luck to deal 1D10 damage to an enemy. Describe how you embarrass, humiliate, or accidentally clobber them.

Limbrath 3 ranks, hand, 1 weight

Blackened runes stand out against the shining steel of this dagger's blade. A blue gem rests at the end of the ebony handle.

- First rank* (key question: what is the dagger's name?): So long as you are not tainted by a horror, the dagger gains the +1 damage and 2 piercing tags.
- Second rank* (key question: what is the name of the horror first wounded by the dagger?): When you come face to face with any horror, Limbrath may be used to hack and slash. If the horror cannot normally be hurt by weapons, hits deal no damage, but inflict some type of existential or physical injury on the horror.
- Third rank* (deed: at the tomb of Lambrath's first owner, pledge to spread the legend of the dagger): When a horror approaches within *far* range of you (even in astral space), the gem in Limbrath's pommel glows a faint blue. Take +1 ongoing to hack and slash horrors or discern realities about horrors, until horrors are no longer nearby.

Poison Ivy 3 ranks, 0 weight

When found, this armor has been reduced to a single (but very large) seed of indeterminate species.

- First rank* (key question: what is the armor's name?): Vines burst from the seed to entangle the owner in a suit of fernweave armor (*1 armor, living, worn, 1 weight*) which never needs watering and repairs itself rapidly. If you would take damage from fire, you may elect to sacrifice the armor's protection briefly to avoid it. If you do, you take none of the fire damage, but the armor reverts to a seed. You may also instruct the armor to revert to a seed at any time. Transformation to or from a seed takes a few minutes. Any time the seed regrows, the vines change to match the local flora.
- Second rank* (key question: from where the materials used to create the armor gathered?): When you stay still, the armor adjusts to match the appearance of your surroundings (even if you don't want it to). This blends flawlessly into natural settings (even cave walls), less so in more manufactured places. You become very difficult to spot unless you are moving and take +2 forward to act against a target unaware of your presence.
- Third rank* (deed: visit the sources of the armor's materials, performing a karma ritual in each): The armor takes on an oily sheen. If you rub a metal weapon on the armor for a few moments, it becomes covered in a poison which only affects the next target damaged by the weapon (Deal Damage at advantage).

Rainfall 4 ranks, near, far, 2 weight

Small grooves lined with fine red crystal line the sides of this longbow.

- First rank* (key question: what is the bow's name?): The bow gains the 2 *piercing* tag, and its weight becomes 1. When you spend 1 ammo and fire an arrow into the air, you may conjure a flash deluge that drenches any area you specify within range.
- Second rank* (key question: who first named the bow?): After you conjure a deluge, the water coalesces into an elemental. Treat it as your character, but with access to only the basic moves. It has +2 to one stat, +1 to other stats, 2 hp for each level you have, and uses your damage dice. It remains on this plane until it dies or you dismiss it.

- Third rank* (deed: carve a dozen arrowheads from the bones of enemies killed by the bow): When you Volley, after you roll, you may spend 1 ammo to spawn many copies of your arrow in flight. Choose up to as many targets as your level within range and apply the result of the volley to all of them.
- Fourth rank* (key question: what is the name of the first person killed by the bow?): when you Volley on a 12+, in addition to your damage you may spend 1 ammo to call a bolt of lightning down onto the target, dealing +2d8 damage.

Second Shadow 4 ranks, worn, 0 weight

No sound ever emanates from the diaphanous black cloth of this waist sash. Anyone who dons this sash gains a second shadow, though they may not notice.

- First rank* (key question: what is the sash's name?): You can control your second shadow, stretching and shaping it to fall as you like, so long as it remains attached to you. It will dim light sources it passes over, even extinguishing small flames. You may condense it into any solid object you can hold in one hand, which has no magical properties but behaves just like the object it mimics. If you desire a unique object and you know what it looks like—a particular key, perhaps—this object will work in its stead.
- Second rank* (key question: for whom was the sash originally made?; demand: level 3): With a few minutes work, you may form your second shadow into an imaginary mount appropriate to your size. If you dismount (or are forced off) the mount, it reverts back to shadow.
- Third rank* (key question: in what cave was the sash first created?; demand: level 6): With concentration, you can make one of your second shadow's arms solid enough to move objects, use weapons and tools, etc. Any actions you take that trigger rolls using a stat use +int instead of that stat. While you keep the limb solid, take -2 ongoing to anything else. You can reach any part of your second shadow (including the solid limb) into a nearby patch of shadow, and have it reach out of any other patch of shadow you can see. The solid limb can carry objects from one end of this connection to the other, in both directions.

- Fourth rank* (deed: find out what the descendants of the cave spiders who provided the silk for the sash want and what they need, then see at least the need fulfilled): With great effort, you may sprout hook-tipped tendrils from your second shadow. When you send these hooks into the shadow of another, roll+con. On a hit, you steal their shadow and gain 1 hold. On a 10+, also gain an additional 1 hold. While you retain hold, you cannot steal another shadow and they cast no shadow at all. Spend hold to:
- Until the next sunrise, command their shadow as a hireling with no cost and 1d4+2 skills (distributed as you like) that never need to make checks for loyalty.
 - Wear the shadow over your face to disguise yourself as its original owner.
 - Whisper up to a hundred words or so to the shadow. All within near range of the owner's current location hear the whisper, but the owner does not.
 - Alter the shadow in some way that will remain for a year and a day once its owner gets it back.

Surlycane 4 ranks, close, -1 damage, 1 weight

An orichalcum core provides this elegant white waxwood walking stick a good amount of heft, but it is not particularly suited to physical combat. Intricate patterns carved into the orichalcum knob confound the eye if gazed upon for long.

- First rank* (key question: what is the cane's name?): When you weave an enchantment spell with Surlycane in your hand, improve the result by one step. When you first weave a thread into this rank, the cane resizes itself to match your exact height and size.
- Second rank* (key question: what is the name of the cane's maker?; demand: level 3): When you tilt Surlycane towards someone, you sense the nature and purpose of any enchantments that may be affecting them. (This ability cannot detect the influence of horrors).

- Third rank* (deed: insult the tomb of the cane maker's chief rival; demand: level 6): You may use Surlycane as a spell matrix for any enchantment spell of a level lower than your level in the discipline that casts it. This matrix must be prepared as any other spell matrix. The spell in this matrix is not counted against the maximum total levels of spells you may hold in your matrices, but neither does it gain the benefit of any of your talents.
- Fourth rank* (deed: convince an ancestor of the maker's rival to renounce all family ties): While you hold Surlycane, your mind cannot be clouded, bewitched or enchanted.

Syzygy Orb 3 ranks, 1 weight

The metal surface of this grapefruit-sized perfect sphere reflects strangely moving features that you cannot quite keep in focus.

- First rank* (key question: what is the orb's name?): The orb floats over your shoulder at all times. When you call upon the orb while touching two objects no heavier than yourself, roll+con. On a hit, the objects are attracted to each other like an apple to the ground. On a 10+, choose three options from the list. On a 7–9, choose one:
 - There are no adverse side effects
 - This bond lasts until you choose to break it
 - You are able to weaken the bond without breaking it.
- Second rank* (key question: where was the orb first found?; demand: level 3): You can Volley with any object up to 2 weight by repelling it from yourself. Objects launched this way count as weapons (*near, far*). When volleying this way, use CON instead of DEX.
- Third rank* (deed: sever all ties with someone important to you; demand: level 6): When you bind two items, you may choose one of the following variations:
 - Bind any two objects you can see, not just those you touch
 - The objects repel each other instead of attracting
 - The attractive force is twice as strong
 - The attractive force is half as strong.

Other Collections of Magic Items

See “Blood Magic” for a list of magic items from Fourth World relics that require blood magic to the Alternative Subsystem chapter

- Products
 - [10+ Treasure Vault](#) - additional treasure and items; also teaches you how to create them.
- Free
 - [Magic Items](#) by [Agnate Hearthstone](#).
 - [30 Minor Magical Items, Ranger Edition](#) by Jeremy Strandberg.

Monsters

by Yochai Gal, [One Shot World](#)

A monster is any living (or undead) thing that stands in the characters' way. They exist to illustrate what a dangerous awful place the world can be, and how it will remain if the heroes don't step in. You shouldn't be rooting for the monsters to win, but they may challenge, and even sometimes defeat, the heroes.

The way you describe the monsters and adversaries the characters face can be a tool to help you fulfill your agenda of portraying a fantastic world. Describing those creatures and people in vivid detail will bring them to life.

To make a new monster on the fly, use one of these templates to start:

- ★ It appears as a horde (6 or more): 3 HP, 0 Armor, d6 damage
- ★ It appears as a small group (3-5): 6 HP, 1 armor, d8 damage
- ★ It appears by itself, or a leader: 12 HP, 2 Armor, d10+2 damage

If the monster has any of these properties, give them the listed tags or apply the listed modifiers to the monster's stats:

- ★ It doesn't have organs or discernible anatomy: *amorphous*, +1 armor, +3 HP
- ★ It's as smart as a human or thereabouts: *intelligent*
- ★ It's kept alive by something beyond simple biology: +4 HP
- ★ It's armaments are vicious and obvious: +2 *damage*
- ★ It wields spells and magic: *magical*, write a move about its spells
- ★ Armor doesn't help with the damage it deals (due to magic, size, etc.): *ignores armor*
- ★ It possesses exceptional strength or endurance: +2 damage, +2 HP, or both.

Give each monster an instinct that describes what it wants, a move to describe its favorite tactics, and another move that shows why it is dangerous. Note that monster moves don't involve rolls, just what the monster does (e.g., "steal something", "gnaw off a body part").

Make your monsters smart and proactive, not just punching bags full of HP. A razor boar that does 1d10 in damage doesn't feel like a threat. A razor boar that cuts through armor like paper and can mangle limbs with its tusks as it chases the party through the forest will!

Likewise, a monster that just sits there waiting for the PCs to come and vanquish it isn't dangerous. Like any other NPC, monsters have desires and instincts. Act on them to make them feel more real.

Details about monsters—

Tags describe how a monster deals damage, including the range of its attacks.

Damage is a measure of how much pain the monster can inflict at once. Just like player damage it's a die to roll, maybe with some modifiers.

HP (hit points) are a measure of how much damage it can take before it dies. Just like players, when a monster takes damage it subtracts that amount from its HP. At 0 HP it's dead, no last breath. When a monster with armor takes damage, it subtracts its armor from the damage done.

Instincts describe its goals at a fundamental level. Some monsters live for conquest, or treasure, or simply for blood.

Moves describe a monster's behavior and abilities. Just like the normal GM Moves, they're things that you do when there's a lull in the action or when the players give you a Golden Opportunity.

Treasure Table

See [Random Treasure](#) for a table for use with abstracted wealth.

If the monster has accumulated some wealth you can roll that randomly. Start with the monster's damage die, modified by the following tags:

- ★ *Ancient and noteworthy*: +1d4 to the roll
- ★ *Divine*: a sign of a deity (or deities)
- ★ *Far from home*: add 1d4 rations (usable by anyone with similar taste)
- ★ *Hoarder*: roll damage die twice, take higher result
- ★ *Lord over others*: +1d4 to the roll
- ★ *Magical*: some strange item, possibly magical
- ★ *Planar*: something not of this earth

Roll the monster's damage die plus any added dice for the above tags to find the monster's treasure:

1. A few coins, 2d8 or so
2. An item useful to the current situation
3. Several coins, about 4d10
4. A small item (gem, art) of considerable value, worth as much as 2d10×10 coins, 0 weight
5. Some minor magical trinket
6. Useful information (in the form of clues, notes, etc.)
7. A bag of coins, 1d4×100 or thereabouts. 1 weight per 100.
8. A very valuable small item (gem, art) worth 2d6×100, 0 weight
9. A chest of coins and other small valuables. 1 weight but worth 3d6×100 coins
10. A magical item or magical effect
11. Many bags of coins for a total of 2d4×100 or so
12. A sign of office (crown, banner) worth at least 3d4×100 coins
13. A large art item worth 4d4×100 coins, 1 weight
14. A unique item worth at least 5d4×100 coins
15. All the information needed to learn a new spell, and roll again
16. A portal or secret path (or directions to one), and roll again
17. Something relating to one of the characters, and roll again
18. A hoard: 1d10×1000 coins and 1d10×10 gems worth 2d6×100 each.

Monster List

Adapted from formatting by Ray Otus; uncredited items created by Sage Kobold. Format:

Creature Name: *tag1, tag2, tag+*. Special quality. Instinct: to whatever.
Moves: *move1, move2, move+*. Weapon (damage, *tag1, tag2, tag+*) n HP, n Armor.

Aboleth: *group, huge, intelligent*. Telepathy. Instinct: to command. Moves: invade a mind, turn minions on them, put a plan in motion. Tentacle (d10+3, *reach, forceful*), 18 HP, 0 Armor.

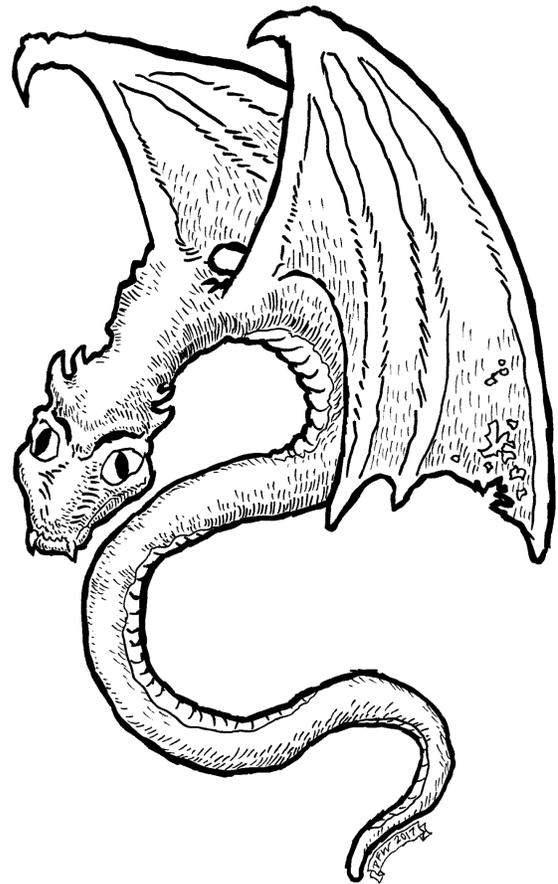
Abomination: *solitary, large, construct*. Terrifying, many limbs, heads. Instinct: to end life. Moves: tear flesh apart, spill forth putrid guts. Slam (d10+3, *close, reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 1 Armor.

Acolyte: Instinct: to serve dutifully. Moves: follow dogma, offer eternal reward for mortal deeds.

Adventurer: *horde, intelligent*. Endless enthusiasm. Instinct: to adventure or die trying. Moves: go on a fool's errand, act impulsively, share tales of past exploits. Sword (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Air Elemental: *group, magical, stealthy, organized, planar, amorphous*. Fly. Instinct: to destroy. Moves: creates whirlwinds fly from place to place call elemental use your stuff against you. Gale (d6, *close, near*), 10 HP, 1 Armor. [By Oney Clavijo.]

Amphiptere: *group, large, stealthy, devious, hoarder*. Flight. Instinct: to hunt. Moves: swoop down on prey, bite a target to poison them, poison the surrounding area. Breathe toxic gas (d6, *ignores armor, near*), 10 HP, 0 Armor. [By Zealot Vedas.]



Angel: *solitary, divine, intelligent, organized, terrifying.* Wings. Instinct: to share divine will. Moves: deliver visions and prophecy, stir mortals to action, expose sin and injustice. Sword of Flames (b[2d10]+4, *ignores armor, close, forceful*), 18 HP, 4 Armor.

Animated Armor: *solitary, cautious, amorphous.* Instinct: stop trespassers. Moves: fight with the strength of long forgotten ages, absorb blows by flying apart, reassemble from scattered parts, halt intruders. Ancient sword (d10+2, *close*), 19 HP, 7 Armor. [By Juan Manuel Avila.]

Ankheg: *group, large, burrowing.* Instinct: to undermine. Moves: undermine the ground, burst from the earth, spray forth acid, eating away at metal and flesh. Bite (d8+1, *close, reach*), 10 HP, 3 Armor.

Apocalypse Dragon: *solitary, huge, divine, magical.* Inch-thick metal hide, supernatural knowledge, wings. Instinct: to end the world. Moves: set a disaster in motion, breathe forth the elements, act with perfect foresight. Bite (b[2d12]+9, 4 *piercing, reach, forceful, messy*), 26 HP, 5 Armor.

Assassin Vine: *solitary, amorphous, stealthy.* Plant. Instinct: to grow. Moves: shoot forth new growth, attack the unwary. Thorns (d10, 1 *piercing, close, reach, messy*), 15 HP, 1 Armor.

Bakunawa: *solitary, large, forceful, intelligent, messy.* Amphibious. Instinct: to devour. Moves: lure prey with lies and illusions, lash out at light, devour. Bite (d10+3, 1 *piercing, close, reach*), 16 HP, 2 Armor.

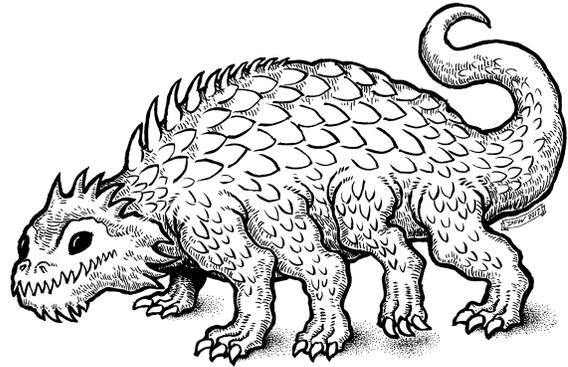
Bandit: *horde, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to rob. Moves: steal something, demand tribute. Dirk (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Bandit King: *solitary, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to lead. Moves: make a demand, extort, topple power. Trusty knife (b[2d10], *close*), 12 HP, 1 Armor.

Banshee: *solitary, intelligent, magical.* Insubstantial. Instinct: to get revenge. Moves: drown out all other sound with a ceaseless scream, unleash a skull-splitting noise, disappear into the mists. Scream (d10, *near*), 16 HP, 0 Armor.

Barbed Devil: *solitary, large, planar, terrifying.* Spines. Instinct: to rend flesh and spill blood. Moves: impale someone, kill indiscriminately. Spines (d10+3, 3 *piercing, close, reach, messy*), 16 HP, 3 Armor.

Basilisk: *solitary, hoarder*. Instinct: to create new statuary. Moves: turn flesh to stone with a gaze, retreat into a maze of stone. Bite (d10, *close*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.



Black Pudding: *solitary, amorphous*. Instinct: to dissolve. Moves: eat away (metal, flesh, or wood), ooze into a troubling place (food, armor, stomach). Corrosive touch (d10, *ignores armor, close*), 15 HP, 1 Armor.

Black Sap of Discord: *solitary, amorphous, chaotic*. Mindless, sticky. Instinct: to corrupt life of all kinds. Moves: drip from an injured tree, smelling like sweet syrup; be sticky in the most inconvenient way imaginable; find a way in through an open wound or orifice and seize control. Corrupting touch (1d10, *hand*), 15 HP, 1 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts*.]

Black Wyrm: *solitary, huge, stealthy, intelligent, hoarder, terrifying*. May crawl through narrow spaces, fearsome presence, cast spells. Instinct: to devour, grow, hoard. Moves: spit a stream of potent acid, corrupt with deceitful words, cloak itself in magical darkness, squeeze into a space that you thought was too small. Corrosive Bite (b[2d12+2], 1 *piercing, reach, near*), 16 HP, 3 Armor. [By Owen Kerr.]

Blink Dog: *group, small, magical, organized*. Illusion. Instinct: to hunt. Moves: give the appearance of being somewhere they're not, summon the pack, move with amazing speed. Bite (d8, *close*), 6 HP, 4 Armor.

Brain Horror: *group, stealthy, terrifying*. Causes pain. Instinct: feeds on thoughts and memories. Moves: attach to its victim's head and feed on its mind paralyse with a touch of its tentacles transfer pain to its attached victim. Brain feed/Shocking tentacles (d6, *close, ignores armor*), 6 HP, 0 Armor. [By Addramyr Palinor.]

Bugbear: *group, large, stealthy, cautious*. Instinct: to bully, to eat the weak. Moves: dominates lesser goblins, ambush or flank. Longsword (d8+4, *close, forceful*), 10 HP, 2 Armor. [By Krynos Pentegarn.]



Bulette: *solitary, huge, construct.* Burrowing. Instinct: to devour. Moves: drag prey into rough tunnels, burst from the earth, swallow whole. Bite (d10+5, 3 *piercing, close, forceful*), 20 HP, 3 Armor.

Bullywug: *group, organized, intelligent, cautious, hoarder.* Amphibious. Instinct: to expand territory. Moves: attack with grappling tongue, croak a warning, retreat and reinforce. Clubs, spears, javelins (d8, *close, far*), 6 HP, 2 Armor. [By Owen Kerr.]

Cave Rat: *horde, small.* Instinct: to devour. Moves: swarm, rip something (or someone) apart. Gnaw (d6 1 *piercing, close, messy*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.

Centaur: *horde, large, intelligent, organized.* Half-horse, half-man. Instinct: to rage. Moves: overrun them, fire a perfect bullseye, move with unrelenting speed. Bow (d6+2, 1 *piercing, close, reach, messy*), 11 HP, 1 Armor.

Chain Devil: *solitary, planar.* Instinct: to capture. Moves: take a captive, return to whence it came, torture with glee. Crush (d10, *ignores armor, close, reach*), 12 HP, 3 Armor.

Chaos Ooze: *solitary, amorphous, planar, terrifying.* Ooze, fragments of other planes embedded in it. Instinct: to change. Moves: cause a change in appearance or substance, briefly bridge the planes. Warping touch (d10 *ignores armor, close*), 23 HP, 1 Armor.

Chaos Spawn: *solitary, amorphous.* Chaos form. Instinct: to undermine the established order. Moves: rewrite reality, unleash chaos from containment. Chaotic touch (d10, *close, reach*), 19 HP, 1 Armor.

Chimera: *solitary, large, construct.* Instinct: to do as commanded, belch forth flame. Moves: run them over, poison them. Bite (d10+1, *reach*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Choker: *solitary, intelligent, stealthy.* Flexible. Instinct: to deny light. Moves: hold someone, wringing the breath from them, fling a held creature. Choke (d10, *close, reach*), 15 HP, 2 Armor.

Chuul: *group, large, cautious.* Amphibious. Instinct: to split. Moves: split something in two with mighty claws, retreat into water. Claws (d8+1, 3 *piercing, close, reach, messy*), 10 HP, 4 Armor.

Cloaker: *solitary, stealthy.* Looks like a cloak. Instinct: to engulf. Moves: engulf the unsuspecting. Constrict (d10 *ignores armor, close*), 12 HP, 1 Armor.

Clockwork Defender: *group, large, organized, construct.* Metal, clockwork, well-hidden weak spot. Instinct: destroy all intruders. Moves: display immense and uncaring strength; soldier on, ignoring all damage until the last; reveal a hidden function from the depths of its gearworks. Crushing blows from metal limbs (d8+2, *forceful*), 12 HP, 3 Armor. [By Eon Fontes-May.]

Cockatrice: *group, small, hoarder.* Stone touch. Instinct: to defend the nest. Moves: start a slow transformation to stone. Beak (d8, *close*), 6 HP, 1 Armor.

Concept Elemental: *solitary, amorphous, devious, planar.* Ideal form. Instinct: to perfect its concept. Moves: demonstrate its concept in its purest form.

Corpse Golem: *solitary, construct, terrifying.* Instinct: to serve its master. Moves: absorb arcane energies and use those forces to bolster its strength, horrify with its blasphemous visage. Sledgehammer fists (d10+4, *close, forceful*), 20 HP, 1 Armor. [By Lucid Dion.]

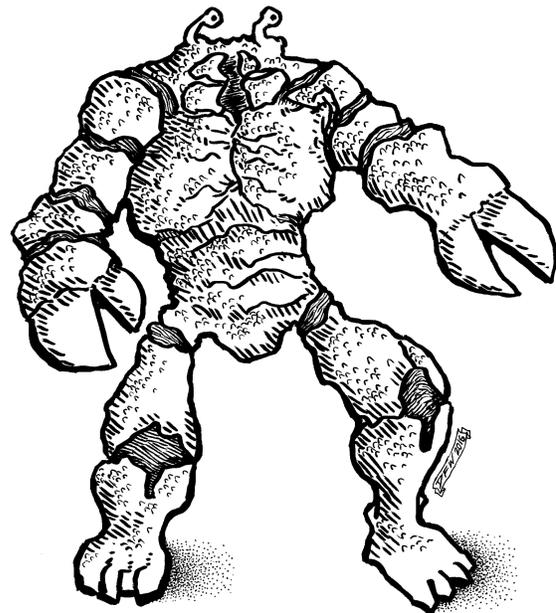
Corrupter: *solitary, devious, hoarder, planar.* Instinct: to bargain. Moves: offer a deal with horrible consequences, plumb the vaults of hell for a bargaining chip, make a show of power. Secret dagger (w[2d8], *close*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Coutal: *solitary, devious, intelligent.* Wings, halo. Instinct: to cleanse. Moves: pass judgment on a person or place, summon divine forces to cleanse, offer information in exchange for service. Light ray (d8, *ignores armor, close*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Crabblar: *group, small, cautious.* Aquatic, land-crawler. Instinct: drive land-dwellers out of the lair. Moves: parry a blow, grab and immobilize someone, tear off a limb. Claws (d8+4, 2 *piercing, close, messy*), 6 HP, 3 Armor. [By Gaptooth.]

Crocodilian: *group, large.* Amphibious, camouflage. Instinct: to eat. Moves: attack an unsuspecting victim, escape into the water, hold something tight in its jaws. Bite (d8+3, *close, reach*), 10 HP, 2 Armor.

Deep Elf Assassin: *group, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to spite the surface races. Moves: poison them, unleash an ancient spell, call reinforcements. Poisoned blade (d8, 1 *piercing, close*), 6 HP, 1 Armor.



Deep Elf Priest: *solitary, divine, intelligent, organized.* Divine connection. Instinct: to pass on divine vengeance. Moves: weave spells of hatred and malice, rally the deep elves, pass on divine knowledge. Smite (d10+2, *close*), 14 HP, 0 Armor.

Deep Elf Swordmaster: *group, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to punish unbelievers, inflict pain beyond measure. Moves: use the dark to advantage. Barbed blade (b[2d8]+2, 1 *piercing, close, reach*), 6 HP, 2 Armor.

Derro: *horde, devious, intelligent, organized.* Telepathic. Instinct: to replace dwarves. Moves: fill a mind with foreign thoughts, take control of a beast's mind. Pickaxe (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 2 Armor.

Devil Monkey: *horde, small, intelligent, organized, devious, planar.* Instinct: to find a way home, wreaking havoc along the way. Vulnerable to cold. Moves: chatter mockingly from the treetops, hurl flaming feces, reveal much greater numbers than anticipated. Hurling object (1d4, *reach, near*) or flaming flatulence (1d6, *close, reach*), 3 HP, 0 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts*.]

Devourer: *solitary, large, hoarder, intelligent.* Instinct: to feast on souls. Moves: devour or trap a dying soul, bargain for a soul's return. Smash (d10+3, *close, reach, forceful*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Digester: *solitary, large, construct.* Digest acid secretion. Instinct: to digest. Moves: eat away at something, draw sustenance. Acid (d10+1 *ignores armor, close, reach*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Dire Wolf: *group, stealthy, organized.* Instinct: to hunt. Moves: hunt man and beast without fear, strike with pack tactics, howl for the pack. Bite (d8+2, 1 *piercing, close, near*), 6 HP, 1 Armor. [By Tyler H.]

Djinn: *group, large, magical.* Made of flame. Instinct: to burn eternally. Moves: grant power for a price, summon the forces of the city of brass. Flame (d8+1, *ignores armor, close, reach*), 14 HP, 4 Armor.

Doppelgänger: *solitary, devious, intelligent.* Shapeshifting. Instinct: to infiltrate. Moves: assume the shape of a person whose flesh it's tasted, use another's identity to advantage, leave someone's reputation shattered. Dagger (d6, *close*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Dragon: *solitary, huge, cautious, hoarder, terrifying.* Elemental blood, wings. Instinct: to rule. Moves: bend an element to its will, demand tribute, act with disdain. Bite ($b[2d12]+5$, 4 *piercing, reach, messy*), 16 HP, 5 Armor.

Dragonbone: *solitary, huge.* Instinct: to serve. Moves: attack unrelentingly. Bite ($d10+3$, 3 *piercing, reach, messy*), 20 HP, 2 Armor.

Dragon Turtle: *solitary, huge, cautious.* Shell, amphibious. Instinct: to resist change. Moves: move forward implacably, bring its full bulk to bear, destroy structures and buildings. Bite ($d10+3$, *reach*), 20 HP, 4 Armor.

Dragon Whelp: *solitary, small, cautious, hoarder, intelligent.* Elemental blood, wings. Instinct: to grow in power. Moves: start a lair, form a base of power, call on family ties, demand oaths of servitude. Elemental breath ($d10+2$, *close, near*), 16 HP, 3 Armor.

Draugr: *horde, organized. Icy touch.* Instinct: to take from the living. Moves: freeze flesh, call on the unworthy dead. Rusty sword ($d6+1$, *close, reach*), 7 HP, 2 Armor.

Dryad: *solitary, devious, intelligent, magical.* Plant. Instinct: to love nature passionately. Moves: entice a mortal, merge into a tree, turn nature against them. Crushing vines ($w[2d8]$ damage, *close*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Dwarven Quarreller: *horde, organized, intelligent.* Instinct: to guard. Moves: lay down a hail of withering bolts, call up reinforcements. Crossbow ($d6$, 1 *piercing, close, near, far*), 7 HP, 2 Armor. [By Infinite Oregano.]

Dwarven Warrior: *horde, organized.* Instinct: to defend. Moves: drive them back, call up reinforcements. Axe ($d6$, *close*), 7 HP, 2 Armor.

Eagle Lord: *group, large, intelligent, organized.* Mighty wings. Instinct: to rule the heights. Moves: attack from the sky, pull someone into the air, call on ancient oaths. Talons ($b[2d8]+1$, 1 *piercing, close, reach*), 10 HP, 1 Armor.



Earth Elemental: *solitary, huge*. Made of stone. Instinct: to show the strength of earth. Moves: turn the ground into a weapon, meld into stone. Smash (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 27 HP, 4 Armor.

Ekek: *horde*. Wing-arms. Instinct: to lash out. Moves: attack from the air, carry out the bidding of a more powerful creature. Talons (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Elvish High Arcanist: *solitary, intelligent, magical, organized*. Sharp senses. Instinct: to unleash power. Moves: work the magic that nature demands, cast forth the elements. Arcane fire (d10 *ignores armor, near, far*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Elvish Warrior: *horde, intelligent, organized*. Sharp senses. Instinct: to seek perfection. Moves: strike at a weak point, set ancient plans in motion, use the woods to advantage. Sword (b[2d6], *close*), 3 HP, 2 Armor.

Ethereal Filcher: *solitary, devious, planar*. Burrowing. Instinct: to steal. Moves: take something important to its planar lair, retreat to the ethereal plane, use an item from its lair. Stolen dagger (w[2d8], *close, reach*), 12 HP, 1 Armor.

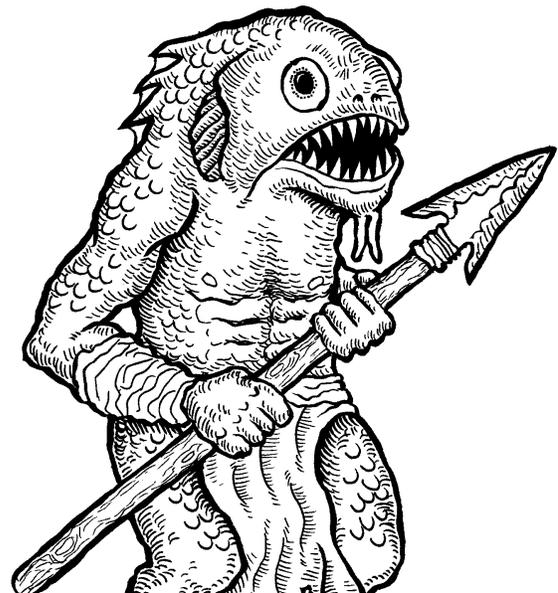
Ettin: *solitary, large, construct*. Two heads. Instinct: to smash. Moves: attack two enemies at once, defend its creator. Club (d10+3, *close, reach, forceful*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Fallen Giant: *solitary, huge, undead*. Instinct: to destroy disturbers of eternal rest. Moves: cause loose masonry to fall with a step, swallow one and express dismay at lack of ability to taste them, scatter them like tenpins. Skeletal hand (1d10+5, *reach, near, forceful*), 22 HP, 3 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts*.]

Fire Beetle: *horde, small*. Full of flames. Instinct: to enflame. Moves: undermine the ground, burst from the earth, spray forth flames. Flames (d6 *ignores armor, near*), 3 HP, 3 Armor.

Fire Eels: *horde, tiny*. Flammable oil, aquatic. Instinct: to ignite. Moves: catch someone or something on fire (even underwater), consume burning prey. Burning touch (d6-2, *ignores armor, hand*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Fishman: *horde, organized, intelligent, cautious*. Instinct: to bring glory to the ruinous king. Moves: appear suddenly from water, lay a curse of washing-away, let loose a blast of frigid water, call for fishmen. Spear or trident (d8, *close, reach, near*), 3 HP, 2 Armor. [By Alex Davis.]

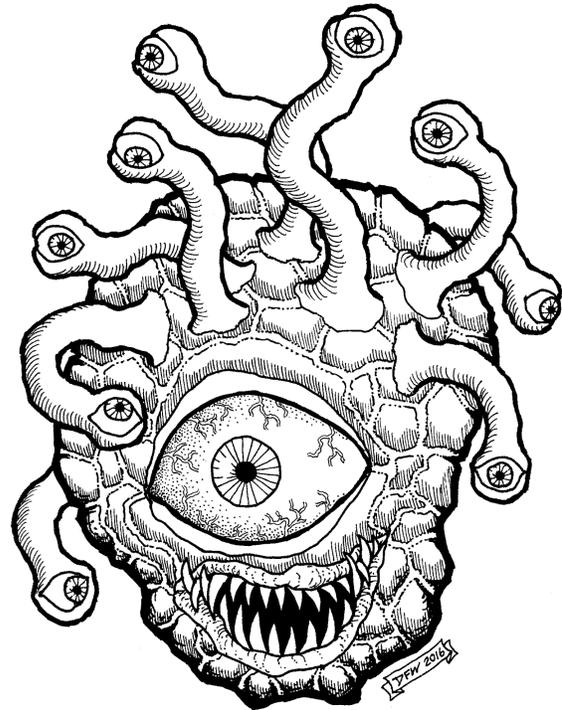


Flesh Golem: *horde*. Many body parts. Instinct: to live. Moves: follow orders, detach a body part. Miscellaneous Claws and Teeth (d6+2, *close, forceful*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Floating Eyeball: *solitary, magical, intelligent, hoarder*. Instinct: to spy and plot. Moves: detach and hide eye stalk, watch through detached eye stalk, summon minions, fire magical ray from any eye stalk. Magical Ray (d10, 1 *piercing, ignores armor, close, reach, far*). [By [J. Alan Henning](#).]

Fool. Instinct: to mock. Moves: expose injustice, play a trick.

Formian Centurion: *horde, intelligent, organized*. Hive connection, insectoid, wings. Instinct: to fight as ordered. Moves: advance as one, summon reinforcements, give a life for the hive. Barbed spear (b[2d6]+2, *close, reach*), 7 HP, 3 Armor.



Formian Drone: *horde, cautious, organized*. Hive connection, insectoid. Instinct: to follow orders. Moves: raise the alarm, create value for the hive, assimilate. Bite (d6, *close*), 7 HP, 4 Armor.

Formian Queen: *solitary, huge, hoarder, intelligent, organized*. Hive connection, insectoid. Instinct: to spread formians. Moves: call every formian it spawned, release a half-formed larval mutation, organize and issue orders. Crushing mandibles (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 24 HP, 3 Armor.

Formian Taskmaster: *group, intelligent, organized*. Hive connection, insectoid. Instinct: to command. Moves: order drones into battle, set great numbers in motion. Spiked whip (d8, *close, reach*), 6 HP, 3 Armor.

Frogman: *horde, small, intelligent*. Amphibious. Instinct: to wage war. Moves: launch an amphibious assault, heal at a prodigious rate. Spear (d6, *close*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.

Frost Giant: *group, huge, intelligent, planar*. Immune to cold. Instinct: to create an ice age. Moves: pelt with boulders, command ice and frost, shatter things, rend asunder. Giant-sized axe (b[2d10+5], *reach, forceful, near*), 18 HP, 3 Armor. [By [Infinite Oregano](#).]

Gargoyle: *horde, hoarder, stealthy.* Wings. Instinct: to guard. Moves: attack with the element of surprise, take to the air, blend into stonework. Claw (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 2 Armor.

Gelatinous Cube: *solitary, large, amorphous, stealthy.* Transparent. Instinct: to clean. Moves: fill an apparently empty space, dissolve. Engulf (d10+1 *ignores armor, hand*), 20 HP, 1 Armor.

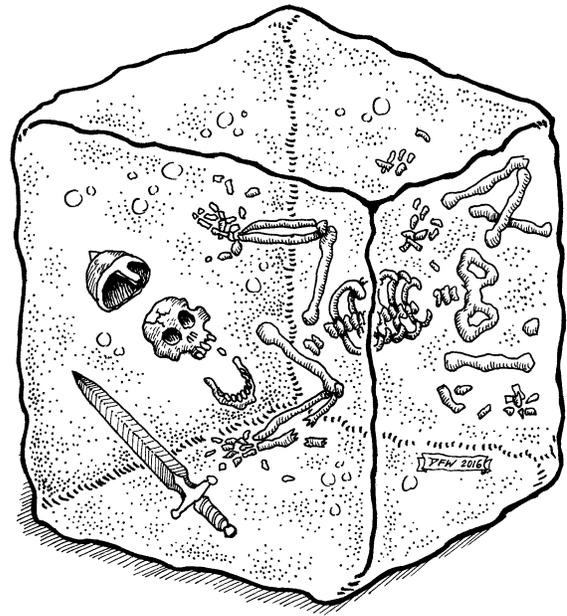
Ghost: *solitary, devious, terrifying.* Insubstantial. Instinct: to haunt. Moves: reveal the terrifying nature of death, haunt a place of importance, offer information from the other side, at a price. Phantom touch (d6, *close, reach*), 16 HP, 0 Armor.

Ghoul: *group.* Instinct: to eat. Moves: gnaw off a body part, gain the memories of their meal. Talons (d8, 1 *piercing, close, reach*), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Giant: *solitary, huge, intelligent, cautious, hoarder, terrifying.* Instinct: hunt or steal livestock for food. Moves: throw massive rocks, smash enemies with tree trunks, move with unrelenting speed, shake and break the ground. Massive rock or club (d12+7, *reach, forceful, ignores armor, near, far*), 24 HP, 2 Armor. [By The Watcher.]

Giant Spider: *solitary, large, devious, intelligent.* Burrowing. Instinct: to weave webs (literal and metaphorical). Moves: enmesh in webbing, collect victims, put a plot into motion. Mandibles (d8+4, *close, reach*), poison (d8, *debilitate Constitution*), 16 HP, 3 Armor.

Girallon: *solitary, huge.* Many arms. Instinct: to rule. Moves: answer the call of sacrifice, drive them from the jungle, throw someone. Rending hands (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 1 Armor.





Gnoll Alpha: *solitary, intelligent, organized.* Scent. Instinct: to drive the pack. Moves: demand obedience, send the pack to hunt. Sword (b[2d10], 1 piercing, close), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Gnoll Emissary: *solitary, divine, intelligent, organized.* Scent. Instinct: to share divine insight. Moves: pass on demonic influence, drive the pack into a fervor. Ceremonial dagger (d10+2, close, reach), 18 HP, 1 Armor.

Gnoll Tracker: *group, intelligent, organized.* Scent-tracker. Instinct: to prey on weakness. Moves: doggedly track prey, strike at a moment of weakness. Bow (d8, near, far), 6 HP, 1 Armor.

Goblin: *horde, small, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to multiply. Moves: charge, call more goblins, retreat and return with (many) more. Spear (d6, close, reach), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Goblin Orkaster: *solitary, small, intelligent, magical, organized.* Instinct: to tap power beyond their stature. Moves: unleash a poorly understood spell, pour forth magical chaos, use other goblins for shields. Acid orb (d10+1 ignores armor, near, far), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Goliath: *group, huge, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to retake, shake the earth. Moves: retreat, only to come back stronger. Mace (d8+7, reach, forceful), 14 HP, 1 Armor.

Gray Render: *solitary, large.* Instinct: to serve. Moves: tear something apart. Rending claws (d10+3, 3 piercing, close, reach, forceful), 16 HP, 1 Armor.



Great Armored Swamp Stoat: *group, large, devious.* Instinct: to eviscerate the soft-bellied, leap upon them from behind, fold into a ball of armor, spray them with stupefying musk. Incisor bite (1d8+3, close), 10 HP, 3 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts.*]

Griffin: *group, large, organized.* Wings. Instinct: to serve allies. Moves: judge someone's worthiness, carry an ally aloft, strike from above. Talons (d8+3, close, reach, forceful), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Guardman: *group, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to do as ordered. Moves: uphold the law, make a profit. Spear (d8, close, reach), 6 HP, 1 Armor.

Halfling Thief: *solitary, small, devious, intelligent, stealthy.* Instinct: to live a life of stolen luxury. Moves: steal, put on the appearance of friendship. Dagger (w[2d8], close), 12 HP, 1 Armor.

Hedge Wizard: *magical.* Instinct: to learn. Moves: cast almost the right spell (for a price), make deals beyond their ken.

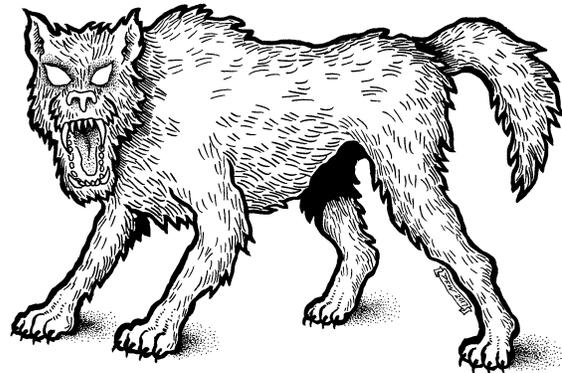
Hellhound: *group, organized, planar.* Hide of shadow. Instinct: to pursue. Moves: follow despite all obstacles, spew fire, summon the forces of hell on their target. Fiery Bite (d8, close), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

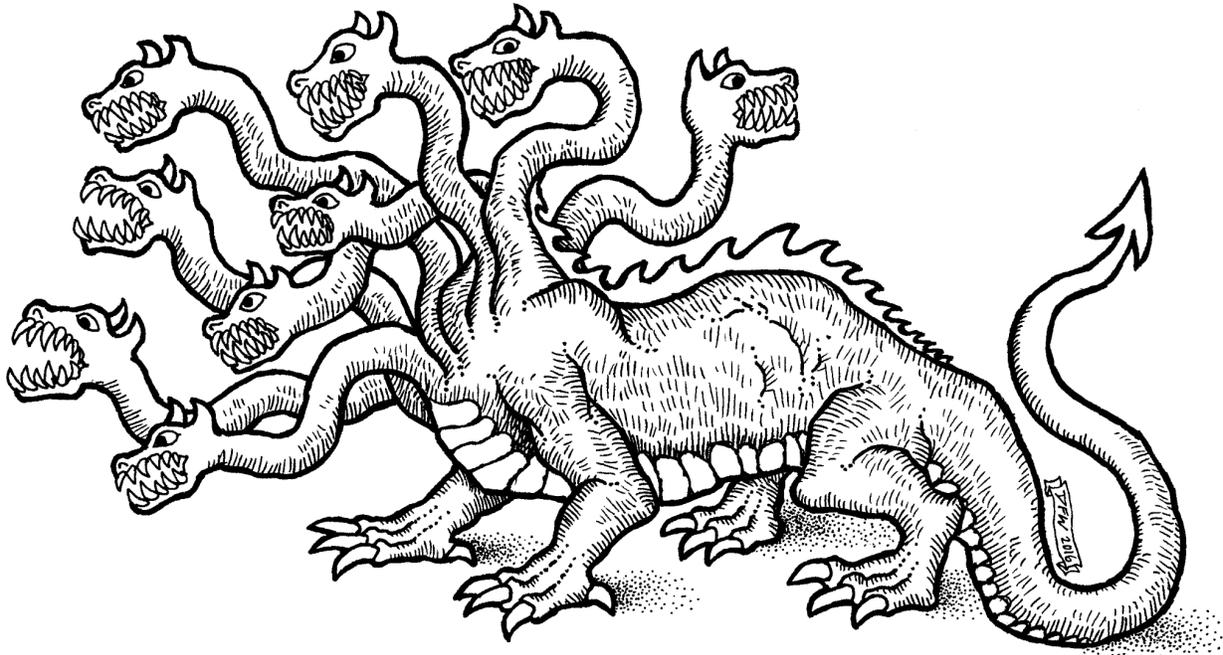
High Priest. Instinct: to lead. Moves: set down divine law, reveal divine secrets, commission divine undertakings.

Hill Giant: *group, huge, intelligent, organized.*

Instinct: to ruin everything. Moves: throw something, do something stupid, shake the earth. Thrown rocks (d8+3, reach, near, far, forceful), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Hunter: *group, intelligent.* Instinct: to survive, bring back news from the wilds. Moves: slay a beast. Ragged bow (d6, near, far), 6 HP, 1 Armor.





Hydra: *solitary, large.* Many heads, only killed by a blow to the heart. Instinct: to grow. Moves: attack many enemies at once, regenerate a body part (especially a head). Bite (d10+3, *close, reach*), 16 HP, 2 Armor.

Ice Elemental: *solitary, large, magical, planar, amorphous.* Insubstantial. Instinct: freeze the life from you. Moves: blinding snow and wind, block out the sun, answer secrets of the frozen wastes. Stinging slivers of ice (d12, *near*), 19 HP, 3 Armor. [By [Skalchemist](#).]

Imp: *horde, intelligent, organized, planar.* Instinct: to harass, send information back none. Moves: cause mischief. Flame gout (d6, *ignores armor, close, near, far*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.

Inevitable: *group, large, amorphous, cautious, planar, magical.* Made of order. Instinct: to preserve order. Moves: end a spell or effect, enforce a law of nature or man, give a glimpse of destiny. Hammer (d10+1, *close, reach*), 21 HP, 5 Armor.

Iron Golem: *group, large, construct.* Metal. Instinct: to serve. Moves: follow orders implacably, use a special tool or adaptation, built-in. Metal fists (d8+5, *close, reach, forceful*), 10 HP, 3 Armor.

Knight: *solitary, cautious, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to live by a code, make a moral stand. Moves: lead soldiers into battle. Sword (b[2d10], *close*), 12 HP, 4 Armor.

Kobold: *horde, small, intelligent, organized, stealthy, dragon connection.* Instinct: to serve dragons. Moves: lay a trap, call on dragons or draconic allies, retreat and regroup. Spear (d6, *close, reach*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Kraken: *solitary, huge.* Aquatic. Instinct: to rule the ocean. Moves: drag a person or ship to a watery grave, wrap them in tentacles. Giant tentacles (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 2 Armor.

Larvae: *horde, devious, intelligent, planar.* Instinct: to suffer, fill them with despair. Moves: beg for mercy, draw evil attention. Slime (w[2d4], *close*), 10 HP, 0 Armor.

Lava Elemental: *solitary, magical, planar, amorphous.* Made of lava. Instinct: to show the wrath of fire. Moves: change shape at a whim. Set enemies or the environment ablaze, unleash the power

of fire. Lava whip (d10+2, *close, reach, ignores armor, fiery*), 19 HP, 5 Armor. [By the Viper.]

Lich: *solitary, cautious, construct, hoarder, intelligent, magical.* Instinct: to un-live. Moves: cast a perfected spell of death or destruction, set a ritual or great working into motion, reveal a preparation or plan already completed. Magical Force (d10+3, *ignores armor, near, far*), 16 HP, 5 Armor.

Lizardman: *group, intelligent, organized, stealthy. Amphibious.* Instinct: to destroy civilization. Moves: ambush the unsuspecting, launch an amphibious assault. Spear (d8, *close, reach*), 6 HP, 2 Armor.



Maggot-Squid: *horde, small.* Amphibious, paralyzing tentacles. Instinct: to eat. Moves: paralyze with a touch. Chew (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

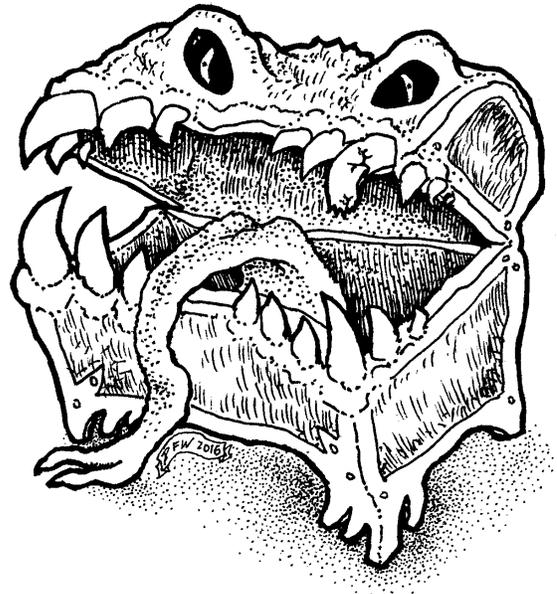
Magmin: *horde, hoarder, intelligent, organized.* Fiery blood. Instinct: to craft. Moves: offer a trade or deal, strike with fire or magic, provide just the right item, at a price. Flaming hammer (d6+2, *close, reach*), 7 HP, 4 Armor.

Manticore: *solitary, large, construct.* Wings. Instinct: to kill. Moves: poison them, rip something apart. Stinger (d10+1, *1 piercing, close, reach, messy*), 16 HP, 3 Armor.

Medusa: *solitary, devious, hoarder, intelligent.* Snake hair. Instinct: to stone. Moves: turn a body part to stone with a look, draw someone's gaze, show hidden terrible beauty. Claws (d6, *close*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Merchant. Instinct: to profit. Moves: propose a business venture, offer a "deal".

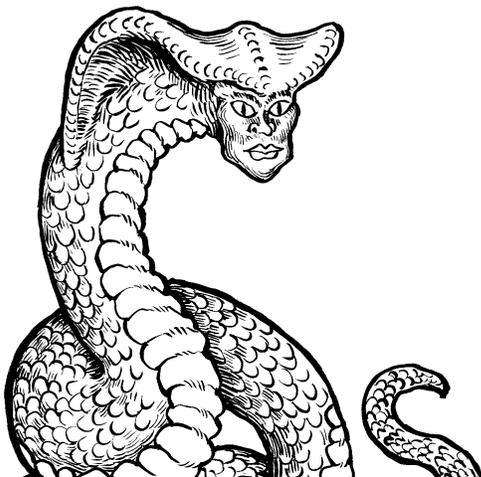
Mimic: *solitary, stealthy, hoarder.* Instinct: to deceive and devour. Moves: take the shape of an object, devour anyone that comes close, reveal its terrifying true form. Huge teeth and claws (d10, *1 piercing, close*), 12 HP, 1 Armor. [By Oase Menta.]



Minotaur: *solitary, large.* Unerring sense of direction. Instinct: to contain. Moves: confuse them, make them lost. Axe (d10+1, *close, reach*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Mohrg: *group.* Instinct: to wreak havoc, rage. Moves: add to their collection of guts. Bite (d8, *close*), 10 HP, 0 Armor.

Mummy: *solitary, divine, hoarder.* Instinct: to enjoy eternal rest, curse them. Moves: wrap them up, rise again. Smash (d10+2, *close*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.



Naga: *solitary, hoarder, intelligent, magical, organized.* Instinct: to lead. Moves: send a follower to their death, use old magic, offer a deal or bargain. Bite (d10, *close, reach*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Nightmare: *horde, large, magical, planar, terrifying.* Flame and shadow. Instinct: to ride rampant. Moves: sheath a rider in hellish flame, drive them away. Trample (d6+1, *close, reach*), 7 HP, 4 Armor.

Nightwing: *horde, stealthy.* Wings. Instinct: to hunt. Moves: attack from the night sky, fly away with prey. Rend (d6, *close*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.

Noble: Instinct: to rule. Moves: issue an order, offer a reward.

Obsidian Construct: *group, magical, intelligent, construct, amorphous.* Instinct: to prevent outsiders from learning the secrets of the black pyramid. Moves: shatter into smaller forms, activate nearby magical wards, cut to the bone. Claws of volcanic glass (b[2d8+2], *close*), 13 HP, 2 Armor. [By A Person With No Name.]

Ogre: *group, large.* Instinct: to kill and eat, and not necessarily in that order. Moves: smash something, fly into a rage, take something by force. Large club (b[2d8+4] damage, 1 *piercing, close, reach, forceful*), 14 HP, 1 Armor. [By Krynol Pentegarn.]

Ogre: *group, large, intelligent.* Instinct: to return to the world. Moves: destroy something, fly into a rage, take something by force. Club (d8+5, *close, reach, forceful*), 10 HP, 1 Armor.



Orc Berserker: *solitary, large, divine, intelligent, organized.*

Mutations. Instinct: to rage. Moves: fly into a frenzy, unleash chaos. Cleaver (d10+5, *close, reach*), 20 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Bloodwarrior: *horde, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to fight, fight with abandon. Moves: revel in destruction. Jagged blade (d6+2, 1 *piercing, close, messy*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Breaker: *solitary, large*. Instinct: to smash. Moves: destroy armor or protection, lay low the mighty. Hammer (d10+3 *ignores armor, close, reach, forceful*), 16 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc One-Eye: *group, divine, intelligent, magical, organized*. One eye. Instinct: to hate. Moves: rend flesh with divine magic, take an eye, make a sacrifice and grow in power. Inflict Wounds (d8+2 *ignores armor, close, reach, near, far*), 6 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Shadowhunter: *solitary, intelligent, magical, stealthy*. Shadow cloak. Instinct: to kill in darkness. Moves: poison them, melt into the shadows, cloak them in darkness. Poisoned dagger (d10, 1 *piercing, close, reach*), 10 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Shaman: *solitary, intelligent, organized*. Elemental power. Instinct: to strengthen orc-kind. Moves: give protection of earth, give power of fire, give swiftness of water, give clarity of air. Elemental blast (d10 *ignores armor, close, reach, near, far*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Slaver: *horde, intelligent, organized, stealthy*. Instinct: to take. Moves: take a captive, pin someone under a net, drug them. Whip (d6, *close, reach*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Orc Warchief: *solitary, intelligent, organized*. One-eye blessings, shaman blessings, divine protection from mortal harm. Instinct: to lead. Moves: start a war, make a show of power, enrage the tribes. Iron Sword of Ages (b[2d10]+2, *close, reach*), 16 HP, 0 Armor.

Otyugh: *solitary, large, filth fever*. Instinct: to befoul. Moves: infect someone with filth fever, fling someone or something. Tentacles (d10+3, *close, reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 1 Armor.

Owlbat: *group, small*. Winged. Instinct: to seek sustenance. Moves: strike like a bolt from above, seize a small thing, leave them with a verminous disease. Beak and talons (1d6, *close*), 6 HP, 0 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts*.]

Owlbear: *solitary, construct*. Instinct: to hunt. Moves: strike from darkness. Claws (d10, *close*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Peasant: Instinct: to get by. Moves: plead for help, offer a simple reward and gratitude.

Pegasus: *group, construct*. Wings. Instinct: to carry aloft. Moves: carry a rider into the air, give their rider an advantage. Sharp hooves (d8, *close*), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Purple Worm: *solitary, huge.* Burrowing. Instinct: to consume. Moves: tunnel through stone and earth, swallow whole. Bite (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 2 Armor.

Quasit: *horde, planar.* Adaptable form. Instinct: to serve. Moves: attack with abandon, inflict pain. Hellish weaponry (d6, *close*), 7 HP, 2 Armor.

Rat Dragon: *solitary, large, devious, terrifying, legendary.* Winged, aquatic. Instinct: to embody the notion of “majestic vermin.” Moves: send the peasants scurrying, let out a terrifying squeak, cough up a cloud of disease or a gout green fire. Massive incisors (1d10+3, *close, reach*), claws (1d8+2, *reach*), or tail whip (1d8+1, *reach, forceful*), 20 HP, 3 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts.*]

Ravenborn: *group, organized, intelligent.* Winged. Instinct: to curse the fate of being trapped between worlds. Moves: be an omen of worse things to come, call an unkindness to the scene, carry them aloft. Talons (1d8, *hand*), obsidian-tipped spear (1d8, *reach*), 7 HP, 0 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts.*]

Razor Boar: *solitary.* Instinct: to shred, rip them apart. Moves: rend armor and weapons. Tusks (d10, 3 *piercing, close, messy*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

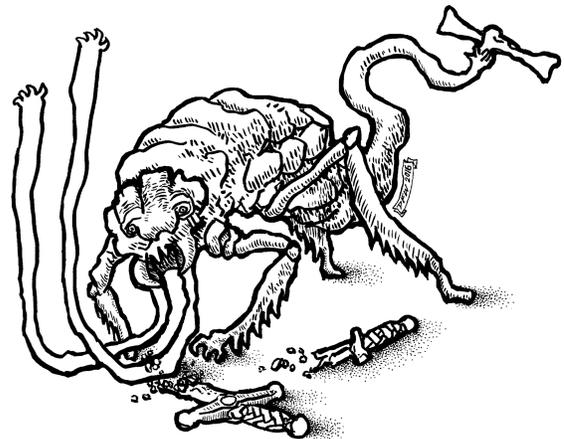
Rebel: *horde, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to upset order. Moves: die for a cause, inspire others. Axe (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Roper: *solitary, large, intelligent, stealthy.* Rock-like flesh. Instinct: to ambush. Moves: ensnare the unsuspecting, disarm a foe, chew on someone. Bite (d10+1, *close, reach*), 16 HP, 1 Armor.

Rot Grub: *horde, tiny.* Burrow in. Instinct: to flesh. Moves: burrow under flesh, lay eggs, burst forth from an infected creature. Burrow (d6-2, *hand*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Rust Monster: *group, construct.* Corrosive touch. Instinct: to decay. Moves: turn metal to rust, gain strength from consuming metal. Corrosive touch (d8, *ignores armor, close*), 6 HP, 3 Armor.

Sahuagin: *horde, intelligent.* Amphibious. Instinct: to spill blood. Moves: bite off a limb, hurl a poisoned spear, frenzy at the sight of blood. Endless teeth (d6+4, 1 *piercing, close, forceful, messy*), 3 HP, 2 Armor.



Salamander: *horde, large, intelligent, organized, planar.* Burrowing. Instinct: to consume in flame. Moves: summon elemental fire, melt away deception. Flaming spear (b[2d6]+3, close, reach, near), 7 HP, 3 Armor.

Sand Scarab: *group, tiny, cautious, hoarder.* Hard golden shell, sees in near darkness, afraid of fire. Instinct: to protect its hiding place. Moves: skitter around in the shadows, suddenly fly in for an attack, burrow into the ground, call for more scarabs. Sharp claws and mandibles (w[2d8], 1 *piercing, hand*), 4 HP, 1 Armor. [By [Ben Shares](#).]

Sand Snapper: *horde, small.* Instinct: to feed. Moves: find a chink in their defenses, start a feeding frenzy, force a loss of footing. Snapping teeth (1d6, *close*), 2 HP, 1 Armor. [From [A Book of Beasts](#).]

Satyr: *group, devious, hoarder, magical.* Enchantment. Instinct: to enjoy. Moves: pull others into revelry through magic, force gifts upon them, play jokes with illusions and tricks. Charge (w[2d8], *close*), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Sauropod: *group, huge, cautious.* Armor plated body. Instinct: to endure. Moves: stampede, knock something down, unleash a deafening bellow. Trample (d10+5, *reach*), 18 HP, 4 Armor.

Shadow: *horde, large, construct, magical.* Shadow form. Instinct: to darken. Moves: snuff out light, spawn another shadow from the dead. Shadow touch (d6+1, *close, reach*), 11 HP, 4 Armor.

Shadows That Melt Flesh: *horde, tiny, stealthy, intelligent, planar, amorphous.* Completely intangible swarms. Instinct: to spread. Moves: devour flesh, impersonate voices, absorb knowledge from those it kills. Millions of tiny bites (b[2d6-2], *hand, ignores armor*), 6 HP, 1 Armor. [By [First Son of Light](#).]

Sigben: *horde, large, construct.* Vampire spawn. Instinct: to disturb. Moves: poison them, do a vampire's bidding. Tail whip (d6+1, *close, reach*), 11 HP, 2 Armor.

Skeleton: *horde.* Instinct: to take the semblance of life. Moves: act out what it did in life, snuff out the warmth of life, reconstruct from miscellaneous bones. Slam (d6, *close*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.



Soldier: *horde, intelligent, organized.* Instinct: to fight. Moves: march into battle, fight as one. Spear (d6, *close, reach*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

Spectre: *solitary, hoarder.* Insubstantial. Instinct: to drive life from a place. Moves: turn their haunt against a creature, bring the environment to life. Withering touch (d10, *close*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Spiderlord: see *Giant Spider.*

Sprite: *horde, tiny, devious, intelligent, magical, stealthy.* Wings, fey magic. Instinct: to play tricks. Moves: play a trick to expose someone's true nature, confuse their senses, craft an illusion. Dagger (w[2d4], *hand*), 3 HP, 0 Armor.

Spy. Instinct: to infiltrate. Moves: report the truth, double cross.

Swamp Shambler: *solitary, large, magical.* Swamp form. Instinct: to preserve and create swamps. Moves: call on the swamp itself for aid, meld into the swamp, reassemble into a new form. Lash (d10+1, *close, reach, forceful*), 23 HP, 1 Armor.

Tarrasque: *solitary, huge, planar.* Impervious. Instinct: to consume. Moves: swallow a person, group, or place whole; release a remnant of a long-eaten place from its gullet.

Thing in the Well: *solitary, large, stealthy.* Instinct: to devour. Moves: politely collect tribute, leverage townspeople through secrets, purify water, hide in darkened waters. Dark tentacles (w[2d12], *reach, near*), 16 HP, 1 Armor. [By Esoteric.]

Time Elemental: *group, small, magical, divine, devious, organized, planar.* Instinct: to guard time. Moves: appear from nowhere, disappear into the timestream, age living flesh and matter alike, take them across the eras, summon duplicates from its own timeline, set their future in stone. The dusts of time (2d8+2, *close, ignores armor, near*), 10 HP, 4 Armor. [By Eric Nieudan.]

Tinkerer. Instinct: to create. Moves: offer an oddity at a price, spin tales of great danger and reward in far-off lands.

Treant: *group, huge, amorphous, intelligent.* Wooden. Instinct: to protect nature. Moves: move with implacable strength. Walloping branches (d10+5, *reach, forceful*), 21 HP, 4 Armor.



Triton Noble: *group, intelligent, organized.* Aquatic. Instinct: to lead. Moves: stir tritons to war, call reinforcements. Trident (d8, close, near, far), 6 HP, 2 Armor.

Triton Spy: *solitary, intelligent, organized, stealthy.* Aquatic. Instinct: to spy on the surface world. Moves: reveal their secrets, strike at weakness. Trident (w[2d10], close, near), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Triton Sub-Mariner: *group, intelligent, organized.* Aquatic. Instinct: to wage war. Moves: lead tritons to battle, pull them beneath the waves. Harpoon (b[2d8], close, near, far), 6 HP, 3 Armor.

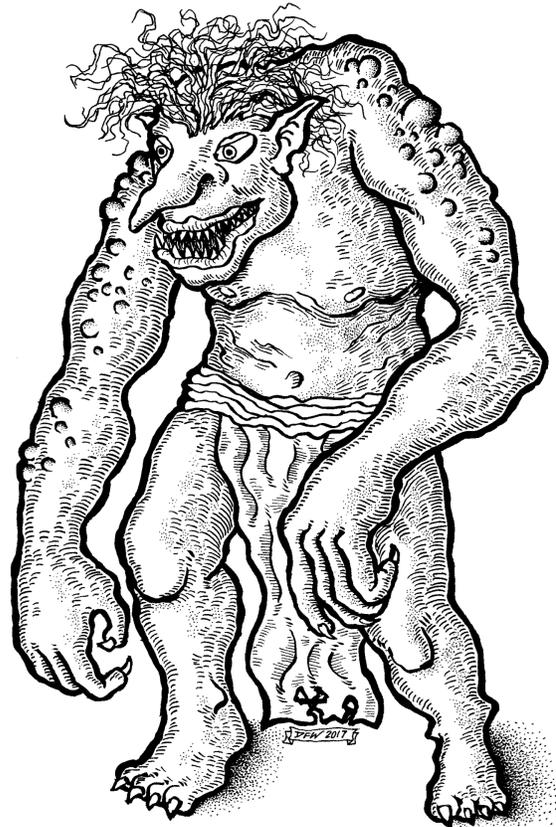
Triton Tidecaller: *group, divine, intelligent, magical.* Aquatic, mutations. Instinct: to bring on the flood. Moves: cast a spell of water and destruction, command beasts of the sea, reveal divine proclamation. Waves (d8+2, ignores armor, near, far), 6 HP, 2 Armor.

Troglodyte: *group, organized.* Instinct: to prey on civilization. Moves: raid and retreat, use scavenged weapons or magic. Club (d8, close), 10 HP, 1 Armor.

Troll: *solitary, large.* Regeneration. Instinct: to smash. Moves: undo the effects of an attack (unless caused by a weakness, your call); hurl something or someone. Club (d10+3, close, reach, forceful), 20 HP, 1 Armor.

Tusker: *horde, chaotic.* Instinct: to stay sharp, demolish, and slay. Moves: burst forth from the underbrush, take their legs out from under them, enter a blood frenzy. Goring tusks (1d6+4, close, forceful, messy), 3 HP, 1 Armor.
[From *A Book of Beasts.*]

Vampire: *group, intelligent, organized, stealthy.* Changing form, ancient mind. Instinct: to manipulate. Moves: charm someone, feed on their blood, retreat to plan again. Supernatural force (d8+5, 1 piercing, close, forceful), 10 HP, 2 Armor.



Werewolf: *solitary, intelligent.* Weak to silver. Instinct: to shed the appearance of civilization. Moves: transform to pass unnoticed as beast or man, strike from within, hunt like man and beast. Bite (d10+2, 1 *piercing, close, messy*), 12 HP, 1 Armor.

White Cat of One Hundred Paws: *group, small, organized, stealthy, lawful.* Instinct: to search for trouble. Moves: surround them, trip them up, dip in and out of snow like an eel in water. Bite (1d6, *hand*), 6 HP, 0 Armor. [From *A Book of Beasts.*]

Wight: *solitary, stealthy, undead, intelligent.* Instinct: to corrupt life. Moves: drain the strength of the living, burst forth from its burying place, raise a slain foe as a wight. Claws (d12, *close, ignores armor*), 16 HP, 1 Armor. [By Jon Bristow.]

Wight-Wolf: *horde, intelligent, organized.* Shadow form. Instinct: to hunt. Moves: encircle prey, summon the pack. Pounce (d6+1 1 *piercing, close*), 7 HP, 1 Armor.

Will-o-wisp: *solitary, tiny, magical. Body of light.* Instinct: to misguide. Moves: lead someone astray, clear a path to the worst place possible. Ray (w[2d8-2], *near*), 12 HP, 0 Armor.

Word Demon: *solitary, magical, planar.* Instinct: to further their word. Moves: cast a spell related to their word, bring their word into abundance.

Worg: *horde, organized.* Instinct: to serve. Moves: carry a rider into battle, give its rider an advantage. Bite (d6, *close*), 3 HP, 1 Armor.

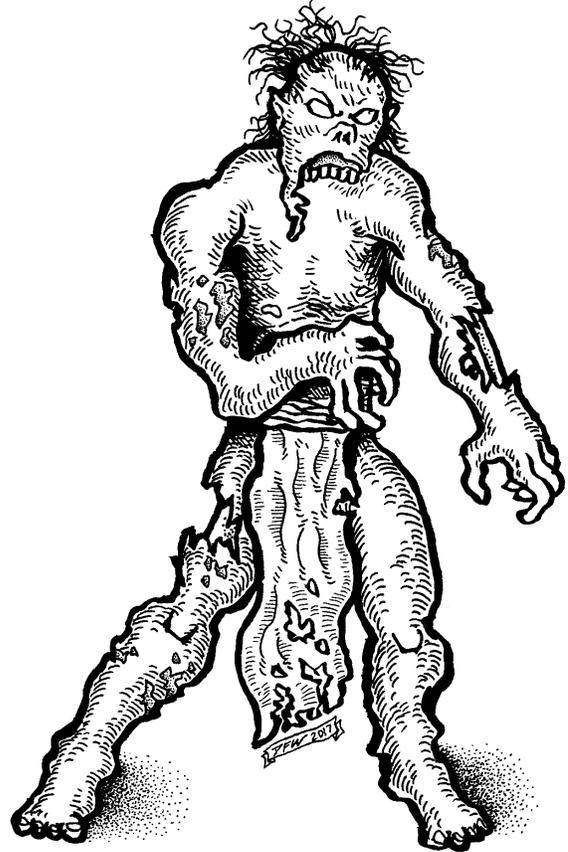
Wraith: *horde, devious, amorphous.* Only susceptible to magic weapons. Instinct: to steal life. Moves: sense the living flay soul. Life-draining touch (d12, *close, ignores armor*), 10 HP, 4 Armor. [By ArachCobra.]

Wyvern: *solitary, large, intelligent.* Flying. Instinct: to seize prey and carry off. Moves: swoop in, snatch into the sky, sting with poison, bite viciously. Poison tail stinger (d10+2, 1 *piercing, reach, near*), bite (b[2d6], *hand*), 16 HP, 2 Armor. [By Gilladian and Iggi Dee.]



Xorn: *solitary, large, construct. Burrowing.* Instinct: to eat. Moves: consume stone, give off a burst of light and heat. Maw (d10, *close, reach*), 12 HP, 2 Armor.

Zombie: *horde.* Instinct: braaaaaains. Moves: attack with overwhelming numbers, corner them, gain strength from the dead, spawn more zombies. Bite (d6, *close*), 11 HP, 1 Armor.



Other Collections of Monsters

- [Dungeon World Codex](#) hosted and maintained by Sage LaTorra contains a crowd-sourced collection of community-made monsters, of widely varying quality but a useful reference during play.
- See this [conversion of the Pathfinder Bestiary](#), sorted by monster type (aberration, celestial, etc.), by Corey Kenner.
- [A Book of Beasts](#), by Jason Lutes.
- [Fourth World](#) monsters, by Lester Ward.
- [Monster Roster](#), by Samantha Gundaker.
- [Trilemma Adventures Bestiary for Dungeon World](#), by Michael Prescott & Johnstone Metzger.
- [Dungeon World Monster Cards](#), by [Captain Sandwich](#).

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