

Questing

Questing lies at the heart of any good adventure, but more than that, the Quest is the penultimate means by which adventurers can make their mark on the world. To that end, the following rules provide for a systemic, living world that will, over time, react and change as the players make decisions in the gameworld.

Social Interaction:

Questing's core system relies on Social Interaction, governed by two core mechanics: Improvised Dialogue (ID) and Saving Throws.

Improvised Dialogue (ID):

ID involves natural conversation, which you can take as far as you are comfortable with. It can be great fun to put on an acting performance, but this is not necessary; you can instead just talk as you normally would, and if you like, you can also do so descriptively. Descriptive dialogue would involve describing the intentions and desires of the would be dialogue, rather than speaking the dialogue itself. Any of these are acceptable and players should be encouraged to do what they are most comfortable with.

The guiding principle, no matter which way you go, is "Yes, and," encouraging acceptance and continuity in dialogue, avoiding irrelevant tangents and always keeping the dialogue to point. This principle applies to attempts to influence others as well.

Saving Throws:

ID's consistency is vital for this system, respecting each player's skill while acknowledging their characters' abilities. During ID, any attempt to Influence another character into doing something will trigger Charisma saving throws. The target number will be based on the influencer's Charisma Talent Modifier, with additional modifiers possible through Grading and character abilities.

Success means resisting influence; failure may yield pressure to comply, with potential repercussions on reputation.

Grading Improvised Dialogue:

Effort in ID is rewarded with bonuses to saving throws, graded in +5 increments, making influence more potent. Special efforts, like in-person or in-game actions, enhance effectiveness. For instance, intimidation during combat might receive a +5 bonus, while a more dramatic approach could yield a higher bonus.

Kinds of Influence:

Four primary methods of influence—Provoke, Appeal, Deceive, and Charm—are available as the Skill's of the Charisma Talent, with Insight offering a fifth option under the Intuition Talent.

Insight allows leveraging other skills or talents, enhancing influence based on character strengths. A character with a high Smithing skill will likely fare better, or at least be competitive, in attempts to influence fellow smiths than one with only a high charisma.

If an attempt to Influence another character is being made, but it cannot be cleanly associated with any of these listed methods, it can be assumed that raw Charisma is being utilized, and the Charisma Talent mod will be used without any specific Skill being invoked.

Debates:

In most cases, characters tend to avoid extended arguments, either due to lacking specific intentions or preferring solitude. However, Keeper Player Characters (KPCs), as explained later, may actively engage the player in a Debate, potentially turning their attempts to influence back on them.

Debates involve prolonged social exchanges where characters attempt to sway each other. The objective is to cause opponents to fail Charisma saves a set number of times before you fail your own a set number of times. Thresholds can be preset or dynamically determined based on participants' Charisma values. For instance, a negotiation over the price of a unique item might require causing the merchant to fail four times before the speaker fails once. In any on the fly Debate, each character can withstand a minimum of one failure, plus an additional failure for every +5 in Charisma.

Engaging in Debate:

Winning a debate involves using Charisma skills, raw Charisma, or Insight to influence, with the risk of facing counter-arguments, which involves utilizing the same kind of Influence to counter an attempt. Failing to save against a counter results in two failures, but succeeding will impose two failures on the opponent. Both parties can counter or shift arguments, opting not to counter, though excessive countering can backfire.

Consequences of Agency:

Characters retain full agency in social interactions, regardless of dice rolls. However, resisting successful influence negatively impacts personal reputation, potentially portraying them negatively. Public interactions increase the likelihood of succumbing to influence, with additional present characters (whether they are PCs, NPCs, or other KPCs) increasing the likelihood. NPCs and KPCs have varying thresholds for yielding to influence, typically rooted in their shared Passions. In general, if they are known for more positive Traits, they will be unlikely to bend under peer pressure. (See **Traits** for more information)

Reputation, Party and Personal:

Reputation is a vital cornerstone to social interaction. A characters reputation is reflective not only of their personality and desires, but the means by which actions are judged and the world reacts as characters make their way.

There are two kinds of Reputation: the Party's Reputation, and Personal Reputation.

Party Reputation:

The Party, whether it is one person or many, will accumulate a Reputation in the world as they pursue quests, fame or glory. The Party's Reputation, unlike Personal Reputation, is merely reflective of how well known the Party's members have become, and as such is primarily used to determine if a given NPC or KPC will have heard about the Party and their exploits.

Party Reputation runs on a scale from 0 to 100. Whenever it becomes necessary to check if a given character has heard of either someone in the Party or all of them collectively, the Keeper will roll 1d100, aiming to roll under the Party Reputation. If they do, then the character will recognize them, and will be aware of the Party's individual Reputations and exploits.

Personal Reputation:

Personal Reputation is more involved than Party Reputation, and involves a series of 10 paired Traits that each exist on a scale from -9 to +10. These Traits will be the direct consequence of actions and attitudes taken by the characters, and they will have distinct effects not only on how others in the world react to them, but also in the kinds of Quests they may be offered.

The Traits in Detail:

On the backside of the character sheet, all 10 Traits will be listed alongside a space to track the current value. These Traits are listed below alongside their descriptions:

Honorable to Deceitful: This represents a character's adherence to principles of honesty, integrity, and honor, contrasted with their willingness to deceive, manipulate, or break promises for personal gain.

Loyal to Treacherous: This pairing reflects a character's commitment to their allies and causes, contrasted with their potential for betrayal, disloyalty, or backstabbing.

Generous to Greedy: Characters on the generous end of this spectrum are known for their willingness to share resources, help others in need, and prioritize the well-being of the community, while those on the greedy end prioritize their own interests and desires above all else.

Chivalrous to Ruthless: While inspired by chivalry, this pairing can still be applicable in your setting. Characters who are chivalrous uphold ideals of courtesy, courage, and protection, whereas those who are ruthless prioritize achieving their goals through any means necessary, even if it means disregarding honor or empathy.

Cunning to Naive: Characters who are cunning are adept at scheming, strategizing, and outmaneuvering their opponents, often seeking opportunities for personal gain or advancement. On the other hand, naive characters are trusting, innocent, and easily deceived, often lacking awareness of ulterior motives or hidden agendas.

Compassionate to Callous: Similar to Merciful to Cruel, this pairing focuses on a character's capacity for empathy, kindness, and understanding, contrasted with their indifference or lack of concern for the suffering of others.

Brave to Cowardly: This pairing reflects a character's bravery, willingness to face danger, and steadfastness in the face of adversity, contrasted with their tendency to avoid risks, flee from threats, or act out of fear.

Respectful to Disrespectful: Characters who are respectful demonstrate deference, politeness, and consideration towards others, while those who are disrespectful show disregard, rudeness, or contempt for authority, traditions, or social norms.

Noble to Common: This pairing contrasts characters who embody the values and behaviors associated with nobility, such as grace, refinement, and a sense of duty, with those who are more grounded in commoner virtues, such as pragmatism, resourcefulness, and solidarity with the common folk.

Merciful to Cruel: Characters on the merciful end of this spectrum show compassion, empathy, and leniency towards others, even in difficult situations, while those on the cruel end exhibit a lack of mercy, enjoying inflicting suffering or harm upon others.

Developing Traits:

Each Player Character's Traits will develop overtime as they take actions in the gameworld. It will be primarily the Keeper's responsibility to identify actions that merit a check against a Trait to see if it will change, whether that change is Positive or Negative. If a Player feels, however, that a check should be called for, they can ask for one.

Actions that merit a check, whether they're positive or negative, are going to be those that significantly reflect a particular trait. For example, charging a dragon head on would be considered particularly Brave, whereas fleeing before you've even drawn your weapon would be considered Cowardly. But, if one were to instead take a more calculated approach, trying to trap or otherwise get an advantage on the Dragon, this might not reflect a change at all, or, depending on how it was gone about, might be considered a Cunning action.

In general, common sense will be the best guide in determining if an action merits a check and which Trait the action most represents. A good rule of thumb, however, is to think of the Traits stereotypically; whichever Trait is the most obvious fit is likely to be the best one to be affected.

Trait Checks:

When a Trait check is called for, the Keeper or the Player will roll 1d10. If the action reflects the positive side of the Trait, like Bravery, the number rolled must be greater than the current value of the Trait, and if so, the Trait will gain +1.

If the action reflects the negative side of the Trait, like Cowardly, then the number rolled must be lower than the current value of the Trait or otherwise the Trait will gain -1. In these cases, any negative Trait values will be treated as if they are positive. For example, if a character does something cowardly, and they are at -2 for Brave/Cowardly, then they will roll 1d10, looking to roll a 1. If they do not, they will drop to -3.

As a result of how Personal Reputation is developed, Positive Traits will grow progressively harder to achieve and maintain, and conversely Negative Trait will grow progressively harder to shake. Being a generally good person will be a difficult path, but for those who don't mind their Reputations being tarnished, embracing negative traits can be a but easier. But, having a bad reputation still has its consequences, and so one must carefully consider how they behave. It is often best to simply do as you will, and to not think so hard about who you want to be, and instead to simply be who you are.

Focus and Distraction:

Occasionally, there may be cause to make it significantly easier or harder to see a specific Trait change occur, such as if the action was especially cowardly; if one refused to fight a weaker opponent, this might call for a Trait check made with Distraction. The roll will be made twice, and the lower value must be used.

Likewise, if the action was especially Brave, such as being willing to fight a much stronger opponent alone, then the roll would be made with Focus, rolling it twice and taking the higher value.

In some rare cases, if the action is so severe or otherwise intense that it begs for a further step, such as being so cowardly as to run screaming from the sudden appearance of a child, the Trait could receive a change automatically, in addition to the roll. In that example, the character would take -1 to their Brave/Cowardly Trait regardless of their roll.

Reputation Decay:

Reputation, Party and Personal, is not a permanent fixture. Reputations will decay overtime on their own if not maintained.

Party Reputation is checked against once a month if no changes to it have been achieved in the preceding Month (the Keeper should mark if a change has happened on the Party sheet to record this, and reset it at months end). They will roll 1d100 looking to roll under the current value. If this fails, the value will be reduced by 10.

Personal Reputation decays at the same time, but with constant regularity. Personal Reputations, if no changes have occurred in the previous Month, will change by a value of 1 towards zero.

Carousing:

Occasionally, Players will have a reason to want to change their Reputations, and they can attempt to do this by pursuing the Carousing Travel Task, which is available while Rambling in a City. By doing so, the player may choose to invoke a Decay roll on theirs or the Partys Reputation, or they can attempt to spread stories or rumors, or even lies, to try and change their Reputations.

Note, however, that while lying about one's exploits can easily result in substantial changes to Reputation, this will make one vulnerable to being revealed as a Liar, which will have deep impacts on their Reputation, reversing the benefits of the lie, and automatically placing them at -5 Deceitful.

For more information on Carousing, see the Travel Task section under the Traversal chapter.

The Consequences of Reputation:

Both Reputations will have considerable effects in the gameworld.

Party Reputation will often be a factor in Questing, oftentimes gating certain quests from even being offered. A party that is barely known isn't likely to be trusted with the King's Quest, whereas the Party that is very well known might find themselves requested specifically by that King.

Personal Reputation will also be a factor in that decision. If the Party is collectively seen as a Chivalrous bunch, they might still be granted the Quest despite being unknown. Conversely, a Treacherous Party wouldn't be trusted at all, despite being well known. Those skilled in Deceit would, naturally, find it valuable to keep a low profile, and thus not develop too high of a Party Reputation. It will be much easier to lie when you're not already recognized as a liar.

Out in the world, Reputations will also be a factor in combat. Depending on the Party's Reputation and their Traits, they might find enemies fleeing before them, or, in some cases, hunting them down. It will be hard to know ahead of time if this will happen, but it will make for an interesting experience nonetheless.

Non-Player Characters:

Where the Players will have their individual Characters (and perhaps eventually Families), the Keeper will have all of the world's other characters under their control. NPCs will comprise the bulk of all sapient characters in the world (ie, those that are not merely Beast or Monster), and will mostly be unimportant socially. NPCs can be interacted with, but in general will be push overs, more likely to avoid social conflict. While NPCs are meant to be a minor part of Questing, they are very important in other areas of the game, particularly Settlements and Domains, which are described in a different chapter.

Keeper Player Characters:

Separate from NPCs are a special class of characters called Keeper Player Characters, or KPCs. Individual KPCs can be as complex and fully developed as any Player Character is, up to and including utilizing the same overall mechanics, but can also be as relatively simple as any given NPC.

The difference a KPC introduces, compared to NPCs, are Passions and Motivations.

Passions:

Passions are essentially ideals and beliefs held by the KPCs. They can be the same as the Traits of Personal Reputation, acting directly as personality traits, but they can also go into more specific ideas. Hate for example could be a passion, targeted at a specific person, group, race, or culture. Rarely, Motivations can be upgraded into Passions depending on the circumstances.

Passions in general will rarely change or disappear. These are deeply held and it will take significant events in the gameworld to disrupt them. Passions will also often reflect the KPCs connection to their respective Culture(s), and as such will be Satisfied by serving or otherwise benefiting that Culture. This in turn will give rise to a Passion marking the Player(s) as friends. Likewise, harming that culture will do the opposite.

Motivations:

Motivations, unlike Passions, are more specific desires and needs. Sometimes these can reflect physical needs, such as Hunger, but often Motivations will be more about desires.

Motivations form the basis for Quests that might be offered by KPCs.

Passion and Motivation Values:

Each Passion and certain kinds of Motivations (those not tied to a close ended Quest) will have a number value associated with it. This number value will essentially reflect the Party's reputation with that KPC, and will be what gates the opening of new Passions relating to the Party, such as seeing them as friends or foes, and subsequently can give rise to new Motivations.

For example, if a King KPC has come to see the Party as his enemies, then he may develop a Passion to Hate the Party. He may then also develop a new Motivation to imprison the Party. The King will act on this Motivation if he can, but may also end up having it satisfied by other KPCs, should they manage to capture and imprison the Party.

Satisfying, Denying, and Defying:

Both Passions and Motivations can either be Satisfied, Denied, or Defied, which will change the number value of each one.

Satisfying a Passion or Motivation, as it implies, involves doing something that will positively impacts the KPC in relation to that Passion and/or Motivation. If they are Greedy, satisfying that Greed could involve gifts, gold, or some other similarly beneficial action. If the Motivation is central to a Quest they have offered to the Party, then completing the Quest will count as satisfying. The Passion and/or Motivation, if they are not eliminated as a result (See Gaining and Losing Passions and Motivations), then the value will increase by +1.

Denying that Passion or Motivation, conversely, involves negatively impacting the KPC in relation to them. If they're Greedy, stealing from them or otherwise preventing their gains will be considered a denial. The value will decrease by -1 in these cases.

Defying a Passion or Motivation can have varying effects depending on the specifics, most often involving challenging and even changing them outright. Defying a KPCs Greed, for example, might result from Influencing them, as part of a Debate, to letting go of their greed for the greater good. In this specific instance, a Trait check would be rolled on the KPC, to see if their Generous/Greedy Trait will change. If it does so into either 0 or a positive number, then that KPC will loose their Greedy Passion.

Gaining and Losing Passions and Motivations:

Passions, as noted, will often come from Traits. Each Trait a KPC has automatically grants the corresponding Passion. If a Motivation has reached a value of 10, it will be upgraded into a Passion. There is no limit to how many Passions a KPC can accumulate. However, each KPC can only retain up to 4 Motivations at a time, which if not already selected, can be randomly rolled for. (**note: a section detailing a system for this will be added later**)

Reactivity:

Often, Motivations will have the capability of introducing special Complications into the gameworld, the party could inadvertently trigger as part of the Time mechanics. These Complications will be specific to the Motivation, and often to whatever Quest is associated with it.

Unlike regular Complications, which can trigger very easily, Reactive Complications will require specific dice combinations to be rolled, such as triple 3s. As a result of the rarer occurrence, these Complications will generally be much more consequential, and could easily escalate into Encounters.

For example, a KPC might have a Motivation to get a specific item, which in turn will set up a Fetch Quest. If the Party pursues this Quest, they could trigger a possible Complication relating to a rival Party who, unbeknownst to the Party, is also attempting to fulfill the Quest.

These Complications, and their Triggers, will be listed in the Quest Block. (see Questing)

Systemic Culture:

In order to support and build up the Living World, KPCs act as cultural pillars. Each KPC is associated with a particular City, Domain, and/or Region in the gameworld, and they collectively contribute their Passions to each, which together create the "Culture" of those areas. An area's Culture governs how all of its NPCs will generally act and behave when interacted with.

To do this, each Culture will have a specific sheet associated with it that will break down the Passions in that Culture, as well as the KPCs they came from. This in turn will provide an easy reference for the Keeper to utilize whenever any sort of NPC is interacted with from that Culture, even if the specific NPC is created on the fly or otherwise has their direct info not immediately available.

For example, a given City may have a number of KPCs that maintain a Passion for Greediness (which means all of those KPCs carry a negative Generous/Greedy Trait value). As such, that city will essentially be known as a greed driven place, and any NPCs associated with it will likely display that Trait, per the Keepers discretion.

Cultures in Play:

On the Culture sheet, each associated KPC should be listed, alongside their individual Passions. From these, any Passions that are shared between at least two of the KPCs will be listed in the Cultural Passions section, and they should be listed in order from most shared to least. For example, if the Culture only has 3 KPCs, and all three share a Chivalrous Passion, but only two share a Generous Passion, then the Passions will be ranked with Chivalrous first, and Generous second.

What this means is that all NPCs within that Culture will generally be Chivalrous most of all, but will also occasionally be Generous. As more KPCs are introduced with more Passions, the Culture will become more complex and nuanced, and as such so will its NPCs.

The Chivalrous Culture, for example, might be a Knightly Order, which is one of the possible Domains. Most of its NPCs will be squires and knights, and as such they should predictably act in accordance with their Culture. Exceptions, as noted, might be revealed per the Keepers discretion, but in general most NPCs will not defy their own Cultures. KPCs, meanwhile, often already will be in some capacity, reflecting that they are more deeply developed characters.

Quests:

The culmination of all of these systems is in the Quest. As noted previously, most Quests will be rooted in Motivations. A given KPC will have a Motivation to accomplish some sort of task or goal, and they might offer up a Quest to a requesting Party to do so on their behalf. If the Party or another KPC should happen to do this on their own through play, then this will also satisfy the Motivation, even if the Quest was never offered.

The Quantum Quest:

To support Quests, a tool called the Quest Block is available for Keepers to utilize. If a Motivation isn't already tied to a bespoke, prewritten Quest, the Quest Block can be referenced to help construct a Quest on the fly.

In general, Quest Blocks come in numbered units called “Acts”, and will be typically come in pairs of three, so pairs of 4, 5 or even 6 could be had. Each Quest Block lists a number of different Quest Types, such as Fetch or Explore quests, as well as the specific, yet generic actions required to satisfy the Act. As the Party satisfies these steps, the Keeper will move to the next Act and set up the circumstances required.

A Fetch quest for example might start with Act 1 stating that an item or items have to be located. Upon the party doing this, Act 2 will require they retrieve the Item. And upon doing that, Act 3 will require that they deliver the item.

While generic and simple, this gives a clear structure to add more interesting details to. Additionally, each Act is designed to pair up complementary Quest Types, with which the Keeper can construct a more complex Quest.

Fetch Quests, for example, might also be paired with Explore Quests, which call for the Party to Research, Travel, Explore, and then Report. These two Quests could then easily be run together as one Quest, and the 4th Act could introduce the possibility of utilizing a Twist for the Fetch Quest, which would be listed on Blocks that go beyond the typical number of Acts. In this case, the 4th Act wouldn't be relevant for Fetch Quests, so that part of Block will list one or two generic Twists that could be introduced.

Questlines:

While the base Questing system revolves around improvisation and systemically constructed Quests, Questlines provide another angle to the system, allowing for a more dynamic and unpredictable world.

Questlines are pre-written Quests that are designed with the assumption that the Party will never become involved, even to witness their individual events. As such, each Questline is broken up into individual Acts, which will break down what happens during each Act.

If the Party never becomes involved, then at a certain time the Act will fulfill itself, and its events will backfill into the “canon” of the gameworld, becoming established fact that the party could then find out about if they should wish. Each Act in sequence will work in this way until the entire Questline resolves itself.

If, however, the Party does get involved at any point, then the Questline will be run by the Keeper in accordance with what the Party does. The Party will be free to follow the Questline as written, fulfilling the required steps (if any) in whatever way they see fit. As Questlines are essentially stories, the Party will have a large potential to disrupt their events. The benefit of having the full Questline available, however, is that the Keeper will be able to adapt and fulfill the overall story regardless of the Party's actions. Collectively, the Keeper and the Party will create a worthwhile story, whether they follow it to the letter, or completely derail it.

Each Questline will typically involve at least one KPC, if not many, and as such may introduce bespoke Passions and/or Motivations related to the Questline.

The Calendar:

In Labyrinthian, Time is tracked as part of the turn taking structure of the game. To assist in this, Keepers are recommended to keep a Calendar, which will allow them to track the current date and season.

The Calendar is also recommended as it will be utilized to track Questlines and Quests, as well as Reputation and Motivation updates , which ties everything together to create the living world this system is aiming for.

Tracking Quests and Questlines:

As each Act in a questline is intended to take place regardless of the Party's actions, each Act upon becoming active will have a specific date chosen for it to self-fulfill. Each Act will list a die and a unit of time, and the Keeper will, in secret, roll the die to determine the date of that Acts fulfillment, and will mark it on the calendar. Most often, this will be either days, weeks, or months, and will be assumed to be from the date the Questline activates.

Quests will not always have cut off dates, but those that will will have a similar listing of a die and a unit of time. If this date is reached, the Quest will fail automatically.

Tracking Motivations:

Similarly to Quests, some Motivations will have cut off dates. If the Motivation is not updated by this date, then the Motivation will be considered denied and the corresponding effects will be applied. The same will occur if the Motivation has become a Passion.

When to Update:

This system, while exciting, can easily become overwhelming if careful consideration isn't taken.

Firstly, it should be noted that this system takes place in the long term, over potentially months if not years of in-game time, which in turn will take a great many sessions to realize, even if playing exclusively at the Domain level, which sees Turns measured in Months. As such, even with a lot of ongoing Questlines, Quests, and Motivations, many simply will be spread far enough apart that there should be no danger of having too many to juggle.

Secondly, as an added tool, Motivations and Questlines may carry a star symbol next to their name. This symbol is called the "Global" tag, which means they should always be checked and updated, and as such should be written directly onto the Calendar so that they can be consistently updated.

All others can be left off, as they will only need to be updated if the Party should interact with either the corresponding KPC or events of the Act. If the latter, the Keeper will simply note the new canon. If the former, the Keeper should make a Reputation check to see if the KPC has become aware of any actions the Party has taken towards their Passions and Motivations, and they should be updated accordingly.

These measures should make running the system very smooth for the Keeper.