

REDBOX HACK

Playtest Copy, 2nd Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second edition of The Redbox Hack. What started out as an attempt to boil down the elements of red box D&D I found entertaining has turned into something with a life of it's own. You don't have to squint too hard to see some of those original D&D elements here. Classes, levels, and a system that revolves around killing monsters survived the hacking. But there's a lot of indie-game sensibilities in here too.

The first time I played this thing, I was surprised at how fun it was. I've written quite a few games over the years and most of them have been stinkers. Or they took quite a bit of work to convert them from something with a little bit of promise into a fun and playable game.

I'm excited to present you with this updated edition. But I want to tell you that this edition would not have been written if not for the enthusiasm of the folks who have played it. The micro-fanbase of RBH has been a huge motivation for making these improvements. You guys know who you are.

Thank you.

p.s. The wonderful heading fonts are courtesy of www.blambot.com. They rock.

SETTING

The world is a dangerous place filled with monsters to be slaughtered and treasures to liberate. There are fantastic places to explore and interesting people to meet. You're always far from home and on the move.

I've intentionally left most of the setting color blank, ready for you to fill in. I hint at lots of material in different sections, like Character, Monsters, and Adventures. I prefer a slightly Asian flavored setting with a heaping helping of *Heavy Metal* strangeness. But that's just how I like to play it. I want you to bring your own favorite fantasy material to the setting. Be creative. Steal from a variety of sources. Wow your players. Don't let me chain you down.

CREATING A CHARACTER

The PCs are all professional adventurers in search of fame and fortune. They're usually young and inexperienced, but don't necessarily have to be. This chapter will guide you through creating your character.

ATTRIBUTES

Your character will have six attributes, each rated -1 through +5. These values are used as modifiers to most of your die rolls.

ALERTNESS

Does your character have sharp eyes? Or are they surprised by every little thing? This attribute tells us about how much your character tends to pay attention to the world around them. The GM can call for an Alertness roll to see if your character noticed something important happening. In combat, Alertness is used for your initiative roll and for the Assist action.

DARING

Does your character have the guts to jump across that river of lava? How about to sneak past those well-armed guards? Use this attribute when your character is trying to accomplishing something that might have disastrous results. In combat, Daring affects your ability to Show Off.

ELOQUENCE

Smooth talker or mush-mouth? When your character is trying to accomplish something with talk, this is the attribute. Eloquence has no direct influence on combat.

SNEAKINESS

Can your character tiptoe past mice without waking them or does he wake the dead just by strolling past the tomb? Roll Sneakiness whenever your character is trying to do something without being noticed.

SIZE

Big adventurers are strong adventurers who can carry lots of stuff. This attribute has lots of fantastic non-combat utility. Like for intimidating people. Or reaching things on high shelves. Size has an indirect influence on combat by determining how much heavy stuff you can wield and a direct influence on the Push action.

STUBBORNNESS

Stubbornness is the catch-all reactive attribute. Someone's trying to seduce *you*? Or to talk you into giving up your favorite shirt? Roll your stubbornness to oppose them. Stubbornness has no direct influence on combat.

INITIAL SCORES

To determine the initial value of your attributes, roll 2d10 and consult the chart. Assign the modifier to one attribute of your choice. For example, if you roll a 17 that's worth a +4 modifier. If you want to assign that modifier to your Size, all you have to do is write +4 in the box next to Size on your character sheet. Easy. Now repeat the process until each of your attributes has a modifier.

MULLIGAN

If you just don't like how your scores turned out ask your GM about either swapping a couple scores around or maybe just re-rolling the whole batch. Remember that these scores will not look as high as regular D&D scores. If all your attributes add up to +6 or better, and you've got at least one score of +3 or better, then you've got a pretty good set of attributes. You probably don't need to re-roll.

WHAT SCORES DO YOU NEED?

Unlike D&D, you don't need any particular scores to make a good character. If you want to make a Warrior with -1 Daring and -1 Size, that's acceptable. Funny, but acceptable.

Attribute Chart

19 or 20	+5
17 or 18	+4
15 or 16	+3
13 or 14	+2
11 or 12	+1
7 to 10	+0
6 or lower	-1

CLASS

Now that you have your character's attributes, you need to choose a class for them. Your character's class outlines their special skills that they bring to adventuring. There are 7 classes to choose from. Four of the classes represent human professions (if speaking to trees were a profession) and three represent anthropomorphic animal characters. The next chapter outlines the seven classes.

DIBS

There should only ever be one character of a given class in each adventuring party. If two or more players want to play the same class the player with the lowest total Attribute points should get their first choice. If there's a tie, flip a coin.

LIMITATIONS

Each class has an innate limitation. There are certain things that some characters just can't do, or can't do as well as other characters. But taking on the limitation is an option. If you choose to deal with your character's limitation, jot it onto your character sheet.

It won't break a thing if you want to author your own limitations. Similarly, it'll be ok for you to take on a limitation from a different class if you like.

TALENTS

Now pick out a single talent from your class' list. You may choose any one of the talents on the list. Each talent is either something your character can do that no one else can or something that everyone can do, but you can do extraordinarily well.

CROSS-CLASS TALENTS

When your character levels up you may be able to choose talents from other classes' lists. There are two limitations on cross-classing. The first is that you may never have more cross-class talents than you have talents from your own class. The second is, if anyone else is playing a character of the class you want to pull a talent from, you have to get their permission.

For example:

Lisa is playing a Bear, Mark is playing a Magus, and no one in the group is playing a Warrior. At second level Lisa decides that she would like to take Puppet Strings as her new talent. Mark's magus doesn't have the Puppet Strings talent yet, but he still has the option of denying permission to Lisa for her character to have it. On the other hand, Lisa could take any one of the Warrior talents without worrying about stepping on anyone's toes.

ARMS AND ARMOR

This system doesn't have a shopping list of weapons and armors. Not that I'm opposed to shopping lists. Quite the contrary. But in this system I want you to bring your own fantasy accessories to your character. Does your warrior wear shiny plate mail or lacquered wooden armor? Maybe your character wears a mish-mash of iron cookware as their armor. Does your character wield a katana? A bow? A small tree trunk with a rock tied to the end?

Whatever your character may bring into a fight, you can probably easily qualify it as one of five different categories of weapon: Light, Reach, Ranged, Heavy or Very Heavy. Or one of four categories of armor: None, Light, Heavy, and Very Heavy.

ENCUMBRANCE

Some things are heavy. Some things are very heavy. Your character may carry a number of heavy things equal to their Size bonus without being encumbered. Very heavy things count as two heavy things. If your Size bonus is zero, or less than zero, you may not carry any heavy things at all.

When your character is carrying more heavy things than their Size rating, they are encumbered. You can still move and talk and stuff, but you'll *fail every roll you make* until you are no longer encumbered. So taking a heavy weapon and heavy armor is no good for your character if their Size is less than two (for example).

WEAPON TYPES

A light weapon is small, easy to wield, easy to conceal and handy for getting between the chinks in your enemy's armor. Roll an extra d10 when wielding a light weapon.

A reach weapon is very long. You can use it to keep your enemies at bay. Your armor class is one higher when you're wielding a reach weapon.

A ranged weapon can hit foes at great distances. You may attack targets in adjacent arenas with a ranged weapon.

ARMOR TYPES

Light armor is very basic. It either only covers the vital organs or only covers the part of your body you intend to show to your enemy.

Heavy armor covers most of your body. It usually leaves gaps at your joints to allow freedom of movement.

A heavy weapon takes a big adventurer to wield it. It's not fancy or elegant, but it hurts a lot when it hits. A heavy weapon does 2 points of damage instead of 1 when you hit your target.

A very heavy weapon makes heavy weapons look meek. It takes a huge adventurer to wield one of these monsters. A very heavy weapon does 3 points of damage when you hit your target.

Very heavy armor covers your entire body. Joints are covered up with armor that is slightly more flexible than the rest.

ARM YOUR CHARACTER

Choose a weapon and a type of armor for your character. Be certain that your weapon and armor don't make you encumbered. Record the Bonus and Favored Arena for each of your weapons.

SPECIALIST GEAR

In addition to your weapon and your armor, your character has a single piece of special gear that he or she uses when adventuring. It can be just about anything. It might be a set of lockpicks, a mount, a set of papers from a high ranking magistrate, or even a fancy set of clothes. Whenever you use your character's specialist gear in a conflict, you'll gain a bonus to your roll. Specialist gear never has any effect on combat. Make a note of your specialist gear on your character sheet.

SECONDARY WEAPON

As an option, you may choose to have a secondary weapon *instead* of taking any specialist gear. In combat you may switch between your primary weapon and your secondary weapon at any time.

MOTIVATION

The last step in creating a character is to determine why your character is out adventuring. Why is your character killing monsters and hunting for treasures? To get rich and famous, yeah. But *why*? One or two sentences will suffice.

WARRIOR

You kill things professionally. Not that the other classes aren't good at killing, you just focus on it a little bit more.

LIMITATION: SELF ABSORBED

You should never pass up an opportunity to steer the conversation towards yourself and your exploits. When someone isn't paying attention to you then you should do whatever it takes to make them pay attention to you.

TALENTS

ARMOR OF SCARS

Getting beat up as often as you do has it's advantages. You're tougher. Lots tougher. Instead of five hit points you have eight. That's a lot more punishment you can take.

BEEFCAKE / CHEESECAKE

You may look good in a full suit of armor, but you look much better without one. Gain a +2 bonus on Eloquence rolls and a +2 bonus on Show Off rolls when your character is wearing light armor or no armor at all.

CHARGER

After moving, you may take a free attack action against anyone in your new arena.

STRATEGIST

Your character has a particularly good eye for guiding others in fights. You gain a +5 bonus to Assist rolls and you may divide the Awesome Tokens you receive from those actions between any allies you can communicate with.

WEAPON BOND

Pick one specific weapon for your character. Your character either has gone through, or will go through soon, a special warrior's rite for bonding her soul to that weapon. After the rite is completed the weapon cannot be broken, stolen, lost, or damaged in any way until the death of the character.

Furthermore, while wielding that particular weapon, all of your attack dice are face dice.

MAGUS

You are a student of the supernatural forces.

LIMITATION: SPARKER

You suffer from the side effects of being a conduit for powerful energy. Candles and lanterns spontaneously light in your presence and your eyes have a tendency to glow in an unnatural way.

TALENTS

BLAST

Your character can summon a great deal of destructive firepower from his fingertips. Just so long as you are able to move your hands freely, you may make a Ranged attack that does 2 points of damage. This attack treats all arenas as it's favored arena, giving you the +2 bonus to attack no matter where your target is standing.

ENCHANT

You can make ordinary things into enchanted things. An enchanted item gives it's wielder a +2 bonus to rolls when it's being used for the purpose it was created for. A hammer does not make a good boat, enchanted or not.

You may make an enchantment permanent by permanently reducing one of your attributes by one. You are not limited in the number of permanent enchantments you can make, but you are limited to one temporary enchantment at a time. Temporary enchantments fade after a couple days or when you will them to fade.

ILLUSIONS

Your character has the ability to fool the eyes and ears of those around you with realistic illusions. Roll your Stubbornness vs. the Alertness of skeptics. In combat you may use Stubbornness in place of Daring for a Show Off action.

MIRRORS

Your character has the ability to use reflective surfaces like they were cell phones. Video cell phones. Anything with a smooth reflection works nicely.

PUPPET STRINGS

You may cause inanimate objects to become animate. They are, for the most part, merely puppets under your control. A chair may be made to walk to you, an origami dragonfly made to fly about your head. They have no intelligence of their own, but they can follow very simple instructions, such as "Bring this letter to Yessif." The animation usually wears out after a few hours, or when the Magus chooses to release the spell

MYSTIC

One part Cleric, one part Augra from The Dark Crystal, and one part crazy cat lady, the Mystic is traditionally a travelling wise woman. One that has conversations with trees.

LIMITATION: WILD STYLE

Civilized things like beds and hairbrushes are just plain alien to you. Rail against so-called civilized contrivances whenever possible.

TALENTS

ANIMUS MEAL

Your character knows how to cook an interesting meal. It tastes horrid (utterly repulsive), but anyone who eats the whole thing is transformed into a woodland animal. They retain their intelligence, but are otherwise trapped in the body of an animal. The spell wears off at sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first.

COMMANDING VOICE

Your character can make their voice take on a particular and supernaturally powerful tone. When you do so, you can give others commands that they find particularly difficult to disobey. You may roll Eloquence vs. Stubbornness to force your subject to perform even self-destructive tasks. In combat you may use Eloquence in place of Daring for the Show Off action and you may use Eloquence in place of Alertness for the Assist action.

CONVERSATIONAL SPIRIT

You can freely converse with the spirits of plants, places, and the dead. What those spirits have to say is generally up to the GM.

COMPANION

Your character has attracted the long term friendship of one of the animal kingdom. The animal's attributes add up to +5, it can have one special ability (like Flight or something), and it can have any weapon and armor attributes that you think make sense (and are appropriate for it's Size). Treat the animal like an NPC under your control. There's no telepathic link, but you can converse freely with the animal. Your companion has the same plot immunity to death that your character does.

CRYSTAL AUGURY

Crystals can tell you secrets. Like where to find lost and hidden things. They can also answer questions for you. Usually 'yes' or 'no' questions like "Is this real gold?" The closer the crystal is to it's subject, the stronger a reading it can give to you.

LONGRUNNER

A little bit spy, a little bit ninja, and a lotta-bit *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

LIMITATION: FOLLOWER

All your training revolves around being part of a team. You are a cog in a machine. You don't need permission to do every little thing, but you look to others to instruct you when important decisions need to be made.

TALENTS

BIRD FEET

Any surface can support you while you're running. Water, leaves, crumbling rooftops, falling snowflakes, etc. If you stop running, you fall.

CHALK DOOR

Your character doesn't need to bother with locks and keys. Just so long as you have some chalk or some paint, you can draw your own door on any wall. These doors only open for you and for other folks with this talent. To normal people they are just drawings on walls.

GUILD CONTACTS

Wherever your character goes, there always seems to be someone around who's part of your guild. All you have to do is look, and there they are. A social network you can depend on for help and information. And a place to sleep when things get rough.

PERFECT DISGUISE

A good spy is one that cannot be seen. You are the kind of spy who can disguise himself as anyone or anything. From the general's best friend to a potted plant, your disguises are complete and compelling. When your character takes the time to disguise herself, you don't need to roll to deceive anyone. You always succeed.

TWO THINGS AT ONCE (IF ONE IS RUNNING)

Your character is so used to living his life on his feet that he's developed the ability to multi task. Eating, sleeping, or even composing poetry while running is well within his grasp. In combat you may follow any Attack, Assist, or Show Off action with a free Move action. Note that you only get one free Move action per turn, even if you have multiple attacks in a single turn.

SNAKE

The snake class is inspired by a bit from the Nagas of L5R and a bit from the Ancients of Call of Cthulhu. They're smart, invented written languages, and are generally very creepy.

LIMITATION: COLD BLOODED

Your character favors warm temperatures and shuns cold ones. Be lazy when it's cold outside and be active when it's warm. Seek warmth wherever you can find it.

TALENTS

3RD EYE

You have physically grown a third somewhere on your body. You can now see incorporeal things like ghosts and invisible monsters. You can also see through solid things like walls.

HOMUNCULUS

It's a complex and gross ritual, but you can split yourself into two identical individuals. Each individual has identical memories and attitudes right up until the moment of the split. You will have to split your HP between the two versions of the character. However, that's the only thing you split. Each copy has otherwise identical attributes and talents. If one copy eats (yes, eats) the other, then you have one character again with the combined HP.

Note that it's possible for one or the other of the copies to die. The first one to run out of HP is the dead one. The remaining twin holds onto his plot immunity from death. If one twin dies, the other regains his full HP at the beginning of the next adventure.

THE WORDS

You have discovered the secret of finding something's true name. That true name is usually pages and pages long. But, with some time, and careful observation, you can convert any inanimate unliving object into words on a page. The size of the object is no barrier. When someone reads the words again, the object is returned to its former state, immediately in front of the reader.

WATER BREATHER

You've developed the ability to breathe water. Also, you can move about beneath the water as freely as you could on dry land.

YARI MASTER

You may make one free attack with a reach weapon every turn. Assuming you're wielding a reach weapon.

BEAR

I can't tell you how many of my games of D&D included talking bears in floppy hats. Maybe it was from watching The Jungle Book one too many times. In any event, the Bears are a kind of Mystic-Fighter. They're peaceful, until they're not. Then look out.

LIMITATION: PARTY ANIMAL

Your character cannot pass up a celebration. If no one else is going to start a celebration then you're perfectly willing and able to start one yourself.

TALENTS

A MIGHTY GRIP

You are able to wield some crazy big weapons. You have five weapon categories available to you that no one else gets. Heavy Reach, Heavy Ranged, Very Heavy Reach, Very Heavy Ranged, and Very-Very Heavy. Very-Very Heavy weapons are like Very Heavy weapons, but they do 4 points of damage instead.

HEART SONG

Anyone can fix things. You do it with style. And in very little time and without any spare parts. Just sing a happy song and the object (or person) knits it's self right back together. When you heal a PC, treat them like they have more than 3 HP left. Your song and a good drink is enough to heal any wound.

LONG SHADOW

When you guard someone, you really guard them. As a combat action you may declare your character to be Guarding. While Guarding, whenever anyone in your arena is attacked, you may designate yourself as the target instead. Furthermore, while Guarding you may try to prevent anyone from leaving the arena with a Size vs. Size roll.

ROCK MUSIC

With a good musical instrument, you can play a tune that "wakes up" the rocks within earshot. Boulders, pebbles, and even stone carvings attain a basic animal-like intelligence, and tend to follow you around like rats to the piper. Sometimes they'll even do chores for you. If your music is really good. When the music stops the rocks go back to sleep.

SKY DANCE

You can lead a dance to move the moon and stars. The weather, the phase of the moon, and even the setting and rising of the sun follow your desires when you get enough people to dance for you.

FOX

Uppity little fur balls of doom. Don't corner one if you know what's good for you. Part thief, part Cuisinart. All attitude.

LIMITATION: OVERWHELMING CURIOSITY

From the mysteries of the universe to the inner workings of a poison needle trap to whether or not Eleanor is really in love with Geoff, or if she's really just faking it... these are the things your character needs to know about. Leave no stone unturned and no question unanswered.

TALENTS

FRENZY

Your character is particularly dangerous when cornered. When you are in a Tight arena you do an additional point of damage on all your attacks.

DREAM THIEF

Your character has the ability to physically enter someone's dreams. Not only that, but you can steal things from within their dreams. If you can hold it in your hand you can take it with you. When the dreams aren't showing you what you want to see, you may make a Stubborn vs. Stubborn roll to direct the dream. Things you steal from people's dreams evaporate in direct sunlight and when the dreamer wakes. To enter someone's dream you must inhale their breath while they sleep.

NIGHT EYES

Your night vision is super developed. And it makes you pretty confident. You can see perfectly well in any level of low light, even if there is no light present at all. When there is either no light at all or a near complete lack of light, the confidence you gain gives you a +2 bonus to all your attribute rolls. In combat or out.

SHAPE SHIFTER

You can slip between three different forms, your natural anthro-fox form, a full-fox form, and a mostly-human form. No matter what form you are in, you are always recognizable for who you are to people who know you. Your attributes change a bit when you change form too. Gain +1 Size/-1 Alertness in human form, and the opposite in full-fox form.

Note: If you are cross-classing from Bear or Snake, you will use those animals instead of Fox. If you are cross-classing from any of the human classes, you may choose any animal form to take.

THREE TAILS

You've got three tails. They allow you to fly. If and when you are transformed into a form that has no tails (or less than three tails) you lose the ability to fly until you get your tails back.

CONFLICT

Technically, the combat system is a form of conflict resolution. However, for clarity, when these rules refer to a conflict what I mean is a non-combat conflict.

THE DANGERS OF ACTION

Your character might try to do all sorts of things. You might try things like seducing a young prince, jumping across a river of lava, or opening a locked vault door. Sometimes there's a chance your action will fail. Sometimes there's a chance your action will cause bad things to happen. Those bad things are the dangers of your action.

When the GM thinks it's appropriate, he should respond to your characters actions with some dangers. No individual action should have more than three dangers attached. One at a time, roll for each danger to see if it comes true or not. If there is a chance of failure, that particular danger should always be rolled last.

Note that all the dangers of an action should be laid out up-front, before the first roll is made. The player should have the opportunity to back out of an action if they decided that the dangers associated with that action are just too great to risk.

THE ROLL

Once you've determined what the dangers are, you'll be rolling one at a time to see which dangers are avoided and which dangers hit you square in the face. For each danger the player will roll 1d12 plus the bonus from an appropriate attribute. With a little luck, which attribute is appropriate will be obvious at the time. If it's not obvious, get creative. Make one of your attributes match up. At the same time the GM will roll 1d12 and add in the value of the NPC's appropriate attribute. If there's no NPC on the opposing side, assume an attribute modifier of +0. If the player's roll is equal to or higher than the GM's roll the danger is averted. If the GM's roll is higher than the player's the danger is realized.

For example:

Lisa says that her character, Rarl, is going to try to gather up the whole town and throw a party. The GM decides that there are two potential dangers here. The first danger is that she might not be able to convince everyone in the town that the night after a mass funeral is a good time for a shindig. The second danger is that the party may insult the recently dead and cause them to come haunt the town.

Lisa decides that she doesn't want either of those dangers coming true, so we decide to roll.

For the first danger we pick out a particular NPC to represent the folks that don't want to party. We role play it out a bit and eventually Lisa rolls Rarl's Eloquence vs. the NPC's Stubbornness. Lisa loses, so not everyone comes to the party. Note that the GM did not say that there was a danger that the party might not happen, just that attendance might not be one hundred percent. So the party kicks off that evening a few townfolk short.

A bit of role playing the party later, the GM reminds Lisa of the danger of waking the dead. Even though Rarl isn't exactly trying to keep the noise down, Lisa still rolls Rarl's Sneakiness versus the Alertness of the dead (which the GM decides is -1). This time Lisa wins and the celebration does not rouse the spirits of the recently deceased.

SPECIALIST GEAR

Whenever you can invoke your character's specialist gear in a danger roll, you gain a +2 bonus.

THE DANGER OF BODILY HARM

When your character is in danger of getting hurt, say by falling off of a steep cliff face or by falling onto a pit of sharp spikes, failing to avoid the danger may result in a loss of Hit Points. A danger of this sort should always be worth 2 Hit Points. This is enough damage to have the danger be meaningful, without being so much damage as to make the danger excessive.

Note that this means that a single action might cause a player as much as 6 points of damage, which is enough to potentially kill their character. For this reason, I suggest that the GM rarely assign much bodily harm danger to a single action. It's cool to do once in a while, but not for every action.

THE DANGER OF FAILURE

I think I've been pretty clear that sometimes it's just not fun for a character to be in danger of failing. But then again, sometimes it's really important for that possibility to exist. After all, the game could start to feel a bit flat and lame if you know your character will be successful at every attempt.

When the danger of failure is one of the dangers a character is about to face, I want you to keep two things in mind. First, the danger of failure should usually be rolled last. It's the climatic part of the action. Secondly, the other dangers should not conflict with the possibility of failure. In the previous example of *Rarl's* party, it would wouldn't make much sense for the spirits to haunt a town over a party that doesn't happen. I mean, sure it could happen, but you'd be stretching the story a bit to make it happen. Instead of the danger of the spirits haunting the *town* maybe the danger would be of a spirit or two haunting *Rarl*. Just for her inappropriate behavior. That would make sense whether the party happened or not.

WHEN TALENTS TRUMP DANGER

Sometimes the GM might forget what cool powers your character has and might describe a danger that your character couldn't possibly succumb to. A character with Bird Feet is in no danger of falling though a crumbling rooftop. Neither is a Water Breather ever in danger of drowning. If the GM accidentally tosses a danger at you that one of your talents trumps, just remind him of how awesome your character is, then invite him to try again.

MULTIPLE CHARACTERS IN DANGER

How do you resolve the danger when more than one character is attempting the same action? There are three possible ways to roll this out. Which one you use depends on the situation.

When the characters are pooling their strengths and helping each other out, like when everyone is working together to lift something heavy, have everyone roll and only take the highest roll. When failure on the part of any one of the characters will bring the danger down on the entire group, like when everyone is trying to sneak past some guards at once, then have everyone roll and only take the lowest roll. When the danger is individual, like when everyone is in danger of falling through a crumbling rooftop, everyone rolls and only those who fail suffer the consequences.

COMBAT

The combat system is virtually unchanged since the last version of the game. However, I want to point out how character death has changed. Hitting zero HP can kill your character. It isn't very likely, but it is a possibility that you need to be aware of.

INITIATIVE

The turn order is determined with a simple 1d12 + Alertness roll. The highest rollers take the first actions. Initiative is only rolled once per combat. When there is a tie between PCs, then the players should choose who amongst them goes first. When there is a tie between PCs and NPCs, the ties should go to the PCs.

SURPRISE!

If, due to the circumstances in the fiction, it's reasonable to assume that one character has surprised another, then the characters on the sneaky side gain a +5 bonus on their initiative roll.

DON'T LAY IT ON THE GM

Classically, it's the GM's job to keep track of who's turn it is and who's turn comes after who's. However, I don't want you to dump all that on the GM. The GM has enough to keep track of. You should keep track of which player goes before you and which player goes after you. Take it upon yourself to know when it's your turn and to tell the next player when it's their turn.

ACTIONS

On your turn your character will get at least one action. Some talents will provide your character with bonus actions under certain circumstances. Some talents will provide you with additional action choices. There are five basic actions that any character can perform: Attack, Move, Push, Show Off, and Assist.

ATTACK

You may choose to attack anyone in the same arena as your character, or anyone in an adjacent arena if your character is wielding a ranged weapon. Roll 2d10 versus the target number corresponding to your target's armor class. Add in any bonuses you may receive from the Arena and from any Awesome Tokens you want to spend. If you hit the target number or beat it, you do damage. Usually 1 point. If you miss, then no damage. Next turn.

Armor & Target Number

Uber	16
Very Heavy	14
Heavy	12
Light	10
None	8

Spending Awesome Tokens

Don't spend any Awesome Tokens until after you roll the dice. Each one you spend gives you either a +2 bonus on your roll or +1 damage. Feel free to mix and match. Say you rolled a 13, but you needed a 14 to hit that Very Heavy armor class. You can spend one Awesome Token to bump your roll to 15 and then two more to do two extra points of damage.

Armor Class & Target Number

There are five possible target numbers, four of which are represented by types of armor you can wear. The fifth armor class, "Uber" is not a kind of armor to wear. It's a place marker for when

you have an armor class that's even better than "Very Heavy".

The Face Die

One of your two d10s should be red. That's your face die. If your face die comes up a 10 and you've hit your target, you've hit them *in the face*. You deal an additional point of damage.

Rolling Extra Dice

Sometimes you'll have the opportunity to roll more than two 10-sided dice. Like when you're wielding a light weapon. In these cases, roll all the dice at once but only take the best two dice to add together.

MOVE

You may move your character into any adjacent arena as your action.

PUSH

Sometimes you don't just want to move, you want to bring an enemy or two with you. Assuming that they don't want to make this move, they each get to roll their Size against yours. If any of them roll higher than you, then you've failed to move at all. Therefore, it's generally safer to try to push one enemy at a time. And generally only when they're a little bit smaller than you.

SHOW OFF

In order to gain a tactical advantage, your character attempts something dramatically foolish. The particular flair and drama is up to you. But be impressive. Roll 1d12 plus Daring to see just how impressive and useful your action was. Compare your roll to the Awesome Token Table and take the appropriate number of Awesome Tokens for yourself. If you roll lower than 8, you've opened yourself to trouble. Give a single Awesome Token to an opponent.

Awesome Token Table

Roll	Tokens
16 or higher	5
14 or 15	4
12 or 13	3
10 or 11	2
8 or 9	1

ASSIST

Mechanically, Assisting is similar to Showing Off. However, instead of doing something foolish for yourself, you'll do something helpful to gain someone else some tokens. Roll 1d12 plus your Alertness. Compare your roll to the Awesome Token Table and give the appropriate number of Awesome Tokens to any other single player whose character is in the same arena as yours. Don't forget to describe how you're helping (or *trying* to help) that other character.

DAMAGE

When your character is reduced to zero hit points, they're out of the combat. They may not necessarily be unconscious, but they can't add anything to winning the combat either. There are no negative hit points in this game. Zero is as low as you go.

MERCY

You've fought the high priest and all his goons and you've won. But now you're not sure if you really want to kill him. If only he would promise to be good, you'd really much rather just send him on his way.

At the end of any combat scene where the adventurers stand victorious, the players may elect to let their enemies live. If you like, you can make the lives of your enemies dependant on a single promise or action. Demand that they let their prisoners go. Ask them to swear an oath to your gods. Anything that can be done here and now, in this scene, is probably acceptable. However, just because you've got them at knife-point doesn't mean that they have to give in to your demands. That's up to the GM. Of course, if they refuse your demands you're still free to finish them off.

MOOKS

Not all NPCs are created equal. Some are just nameless goons that are thrown into combat to fall on the pointy end of your sword. We will call these faceless masses *mooks*, and we'll use a couple special rules for them.

- A Mook always has crappy weapons. They have no favored arenas and no special effects.
- A Mook only gets 1d10 to attack. Unless they're attacking as a group. In that case, roll a number of d10s equal to the number of Mooks in the attack, adding together the best two.
- Mooks never have face dice.
- Mooks only have 1 hit point each. When you do more than 1 damage to a single mook, you kill a number of mooks equal to the damage dealt. Assuming there are that many mooks in the arena.

ARENAS

An arena is a place where you fight. Different arenas have different advantages for different weapons. An arena might be a road, a field, a busy city marketplace, or a deep watery cave. Over the course of a combat we'll probably see several different arenas come into play. You might have your character run from the middle of the city marketplace to the top of a nearby building to get a better shot with her bow. Your target might then take refuge inside a nearby shop, forcing you to move into the attic of that shop to get your shot. We might define each of those places (the marketplace, the top of the building, inside the shop, and in the attic of the shop) as completely different arenas, each with different attributes and each with different connections to other arenas.

ARENA TYPES

There are five different categories for arenas: Hazardous, Tight, Open, Dense, and Neutral. Most arenas give a bonus to hit to a different weapon category. This bonus generally reflects the idea that the particular weapon type has an advantage in this terrain. When you've got the right kind of weapon and you're in the right kind of arena, gain a +2 bonus to hit.

Hazardous

A hazardous arena is one where your footing is bad or one where visibility is low. The crumbling rooftop of a tall building or a closed chamber devoid of light are hazardous arenas. Hazardous arenas give their bonus to reach weapons.

Open

There's nothing to block your view or your shot in an open terrain. A field or a long road can be open arenas. Open arenas give their bonus to ranged weapons. Note that you only get the arena bonus when your target is in the open terrain.

Tight

A tight arena is one with very little room to move. A small bedroom, a narrow hallway, or a

low-ceilinged attic may be tight arenas. Tight arenas give their bonus to light weapons.

Dense

A dense arena is one where bits of the scenery regularly get in the way of swinging a weapon. A wooded path or the middle of a crowded shop may qualify as a dense arena. Dense arenas give their bonus to heavy and very heavy weapons.

Neutral

When you just cannot imagine what kind of arena it might be, or when it seems like the area might be several different kinds of arenas all at once, call it neutral. No one gets a bonus in neutral arenas.

CONNECTIONS

A nearby or adjacent arena is an arena that's connected to yours. Makes sense, right? Well, there's different kinds of potential connections

Regular

A regular connection is the default connection. You can make ranged attacks and move through them, in either direction.

One-Way

A one-way connection represents your ability to only attack and move from Arena A to Arena B, and not from B to A. This might come up when you encounter a particularly slope, a trap door that only opens one way, or maybe a heavy wind that keeps you from moving in the other direction.

Move Only or Ranged Only

There are some connections where you can either move through them or you can shoot through them, but not both. Arrow slits are an example of being able to shoot but not move.

Barriers

Sometimes a connection might have some kind of barrier that has to be overcome in order to open it up. Like a locked door or something. The GM may require a successful attribute check to get through the barrier. Or something like that.

HEALING

The number one way your character is going to lose hit points is through combat. But dangerous actions can hurt them too. When your character heals they regain all of their HP all at once. How they heal and *if* they heal is determined by how many HP they have remaining.

0 HP REMAINING

Your character is on the verge of death. Roll 1d12. If you get a 1, 2, or 3, then your character will need a healer to survive. Without that healer, the character will die soon. If you get a healer roll 1d12 again. On a 1, 2, or 3, that healer is unable to do anything for you. This is the end of your character's story. Take a minute or two to talk about their last few minutes. Or their last few days. After all, your character might not die on the battlefield. They might die slowly, of infection, over the next couple of weeks. That's up to you.

Assuming you roll a 4 or higher on either of those rolls, your character will survive. Regain your HP when you have a scene where your character gets an extended rest and someone takes care of their wounds for them.

1 OR 2 HP REMAINING

Your character is beaten and bloodied, but they'll survive. Regain your HP when you have a scene where your character gets a few days rest and someone takes care of their wounds for them.

3 OR MORE HP REMAINING

You can't really call this a beating. More like a strenuous workout. You don't need to be healed as much as you just need some relaxation. Regain your HP when you have a scene where your character has a good meal, a good drink, or a good conversation.

ADVENTURE CONSTRUCTION

Adventures will be episodic. Sure you can construct one adventure to build on the events of a previous one, but these rules are about creating stand-alone adventures that can be shared between groups. Each adventure contains three very important things: Monsters, Treasures, and NPCs.

TREASURES

Every adventure will have at least one treasure worth stealing. Many adventures will have two or three of them. Treasures are never casual in their value. The smallest of treasures is valuable enough to feed a small village for a year.

THE REAL VALUE OF A TREASURE

Whenever you include a treasure, the players need to know what value it has to the characters around it. Is it an important idol for the local god? Is it a treasured heirloom? Good things or bad things (or both) will happen to people if the adventurers walk off with the treasure.

USEFUL TREASURE

No treasure is ever useful for adventuring. They're just XP waiting to happen. A treasure might be a big golden idol, but it's never a big golden idol that gives the adventurer +2 to hit.

THE XP VALUE OF TREASURES

Taking and keeping a treasure to the end of an adventure is worth an amount of experience points based on how famous the treasure is. An unnamed and unknown treasure is worth less than a famous treasure once owned by a famous person. You can find further details in the chapter on experience points and advancement.

MONSTERS

Monsters are creatures that do terrible things with terrible consequences. A dragon isn't necessarily a monster. A dragon that steals the village livestock is a monster, because it's messing with the livelihood of the villagers. Each adventure has at least one monster.

MONSTER STATISTICS

Monsters are here to be killed. So you'll probably want to know exactly how tough they are and what they can do in combat. I'm not sure about how to properly balance the monsters against the PCs yet. But I think it may have to do with the ratio of players to powers. That is, the more players you have, the more powers you'll want your monsters to have.

Hit Points

Monsters always have 10 hit points, no matter how big or small.

Weapon

Choose a single weapon type for the monster. Light, Ranged, Reach, Heavy or Very Heavy.

Armor

The base armor class of a monster is Light.

Powers

Each monster has at least one power. Most have more than one. Each power can only be taken once, unless it's description says otherwise.

Attributes

Monsters usually have attributes that add up to about +10 or +15. A monster never has any individual attributes that are over +10 and usually only has one or two attributes that are over +5.

MONSTER POWERS

Throw

Monster chooses a single target and makes an opposed Size roll. If the monster wins the PC is moved into an adjacent arena. This action is a free action when it follows a successful Attack action.

Siren

Monster makes an Eloquence roll against all targets in adjacent arenas. Targets may resist with Stubborn rolls. Everyone failing their roll must move into the same arena as the monster.

Entangle

Monster makes the terrain in it's arena grab hold of the PCs. PCs attempting to Move or Push out of the arena after being entangled must roll Size vs. 7 or lose their action.

Bloodlust

Every time monster injures a PC, the monster gains a single Awesome Token.

Frenzied

Every time monster is injured, the monster gains two Awesome Tokens.

Many Headed

Monster may attack once per turn as a free action. This power may be taken more than once.

Impressive Weaponry

Monster's weapons are crazy-big or otherwise impressive. Monster does 1 additional point of damage in every attack. This power may be taken more than once.

Blast

Every foe in the arena is subject to the monster's attack. Compare the monster's attack roll against every PC's armor class. Divide the damage amongst every PC that had a low enough AC.

Minions

Monster may redirect any successful attack against it at an NPC or Mook in it's same arena.

Heave

If the monster's weapon is a ranged weapon, it may attack a target up to 2 arenas away. If the monster's weapon is not a ranged weapon, it may attack a target in an adjacent arena.

Fast

Monster may move once per turn as a free action.

Internal Fire

When the monster spends Awesome Tokens, it gains +3 to hit or +2 damage.

Natural Weapons

Monster gains an additional d10 on it's attack rolls.

Flight

Monster can fly.

Vicious

Monster may follow a successful attack action with a Show Off action.

Thick Skin

Monster has +1 Armor Class.

Hard to See

Monster has +1 Armor Class.

Secondary Weapon

The monster has two weapon types instead of one.

Mist Summoner

Monster may summon a thick cloud of mist, obscuring vision and making it's current arena into a Hazardous arena.

NPCS

Every adventure should have at least a handful of people to interact with. NPCs don't have to be just humans, or even relegated to the PC races of human, bear, snake, and fox. NPCs can be any fantasy race, even so-called monstrous ones. What separates monsters from NPCs in this game is more than skin deep.

STATISTICS

If you get into a combat or a conflict with an NPC, you'll want to know how tough they are. Most NPCs rarely have better than 3 points total in their Attributes, and almost never have better than a +2 modifier in any single attributes. NPCs never have any powers or talents. At least nothing useful.

RELATIONSHIPS

Every NPC should be related to either a monster or a treasure or both. Maybe the monster is messing with their life. Or maybe they're responsible for setting the monster free. Maybe the treasure used to belong to them. Or maybe they're in the process of trying to hunt down the treasure for themselves.

With a little luck, by means of relating everyone to the monsters and to the treasures, we'll find that all the NPCs are also related to each other. Either directly or indirectly.

GAME MASTERING

This system hasn't had a great deal of playtesting yet, so I'm still a little up in the air about the best way to game master it. I know at least one GM has had success using a mostly improv style of running. However, since he used techniques and resources from outside this document, I'm not inclined to reproduce that information here. Instead, I'll try to document how I intend to run the thing the next time I get the chance.

BANGS

In addition to sketching out a monster, treasure, and NPCs, I'll jot down some bangs. Some little events that will prod the players into immediate action. The type of events where inaction on the part of the players is going to have an effect on the situation.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

I'm going to try using a 3-Chapter structure. In the first chapter I'll include lots of exposition. By the end of the first chapter I want the players to at least think they know everything that's going on. In the second chapter I'll escalate. I'll take the situation I introduced in chapter one and change it. Some of the information presented in the first chapter may be contradicted in the second chapter. In the third chapter I expect the players to be off after the monster and/or the treasures. I don't expect many bangs here, but there may be more exposition. The final bits of information should come to light.

I know that may not be very illuminating or instructive, but I think it's the best material I can provide you before I get to playtest again.

XP AND ADVANCEMENT

As your character kills monsters, defeats characters and acquires treasure, he or she becomes more rich and famous. And that's the goal. To become rich and famous. We keep track of your characters wealth and fame through the single currency of experience points. Or XP for short.

GAINING XP

There are several different ways to earn experience points for your character.

Kill a monster

The XP value of a monster is the sum of it's attribute points plus five for every power it has. Everyone involved in a fight where a monster was killed gains the full XP value of the monster. There is no XP splitting in this game.

Defeat an NPC

If you defeat an NPC in combat, whether you show mercy or not, you gain 5 XP. Defeating Mooks in combat is worth 1 XP per mook. Like monster XP, everyone involved in the fight gains the XP. Don't split anything.

Fight without Armor

If you've got the oomph to go through an entire fight without wearing any armor of any kind, that's worth a +5 XP bonus.

First one down

If you are the first PC to hit 0 HP in a combat, that's worth +5 XP bonus. This time it's about your character learning from their mistakes. Or, at least, getting famous for those mistakes.

Killing blow

If your character makes the attack that drops the monster (and only a monster), you gain a +5 XP bonus.

Acquiring Treasure

There are three levels to the value of a treasure. A treasure is either unknown, famous, or legendary. It's worth 10 XP, 20XP, or 50XP, respectively. This XP value is assigned to every member of the party who survived the adventure. No splitting. Note that you only get this XP if you take the treasure with you at the end of the adventure. If you lose it or give it away you get no XP for it.

ADVANCEMENT

The more XP you get, the cooler your character gets. When you reach a new level you get to take on a new talent and add one point to one attribute. You may raise attributes over +5 in this way.

XP	Level
0	1
100	2
200	3
500	4
800	5
1000	Retirement

Retirement?

Yup. Eventually your character will be so rich and famous that it's time to go home. That's the end of their story. Time to start a new character.