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YARN is a tabletop role playing game (TTRPG) system using even polyhedral [dice](#), from d2 to d12. For d2, roll any die, with odd (1) or even (2).

Characters

In a TTRPG you play the role of a character in a story. Your player character (PC) will develop features that make them interesting, such as a back story, description, personality and other details, but functionally they are composed of *qualities* which reflect their capabilities and limitations. You start with a set of *points* to assign *ranks* to your qualities, from 1 to 12.

rank	points
1	1
2	3
3	6
4	10
5	15
6	21
7	28
8	36
9	45
10	55
11	66
12	78

In Yarn always round down, including to the nearest die.

Level

You get 15 points for each attribute, enough for rank 5. Any points above that determine your *level*. The minimum points for a level are the matching rank's point cost x 10.

points	level	benefit
x15	-	-
10	1	S
30	2	d2
60	3	S
100	4	d4
150	5	S
210	6	d6
280	7	S
360	8	d8
450	9	S
550	10	d10
660	11	S
780	12	d12

You get a bonus die equal to your level for most rolls.

You also gains a new specialty at odd levels.

In addition, you get your level in fortune each session.

You also gain one flashback with each level.

Attributes

Attributes are qualities innate to all characters. Each of your attributes has a rank, from 1 to 12, usually ranging from 3 to 10, with 5 being average. These will be the *base dice* for your activities. Assign a rank to each using starting points. Each has an associated *descriptive*.

These are six attributes common to many settings. Three are *physical* (strength, dexterity and health) while three are *mental* (intelligence, will and charisma). You may also have *esoteric* attributes (such as magic or luck).

Strength: Use *strength* to lift or move things. Your strength rank is also your base for melee attack damage, and can be part of some resistance rolls.

Dexterity: When trying to be physically nimble, coordinated or quick, use *dexterity*. When you're attacked, your dexterity rank is the base for defense.

Health: Resistance rolls always include your *health* rank as the primary. This also measures endurance, and so you get your health rank in effort when fully rested.

Intelligence: If you're trying to think, solve a problem, remember something or recognize patterns, use *intelligence*. Some perception rolls also use intelligence.

Will: To focus, or to resist something mentally, or make some perception rolls, use *will*. Your will can also be part of some resistance rolls.

Charisma: If you're trying to persuade, entertain, deceive, befriend or seduce, use *charisma*. You may use charisma in some perception rolls as well.

rank	descriptive
0	nothing
1	minimal
2	disabled
3	impaired
4	below average
5	average
6	above average
7	very -
8	remarkably -
9	extremely -
10	incredibly -
11	-est
12	legendary

Skills

A *skill* is a quality you've learned, rather than something innate. [Feats](#) are usually associated with skills. If you don't start with a skill, you have to learn it at rank 0 in play before you can later raise it to rank 1.

Most skills give a bonus die of twice the rank. This caps skill ranks at 6 (+d12). Some skills are common to everyone. You can roll on a [basic](#) skill you haven't learned, but keep one less die (the unfamiliarity penalty).

A skill may be [advanced](#), with prerequisites for learning it or raising its rank, such as a minimum rank in another quality. Advanced skills require you to be rank 0 in order to attempt feats.

Specialties

As your character gains experience, they become exceptionally good at certain things. A specialty allows you to keep another die for feats that qualify. This is more specific than a skill. If you have sword as a skill, you might have katana as a specialty. Similarly, if you have guns as a skill, pistols could be a specialty.

Skills may vary in their generality, depending on the game. In a Renaissance setting, science may be a skill, in which case biology is a specialty. In a modern setting, scientist might be an archetype, and biology a skill, so a specialty would be epidemiology.

Advantages

An *advantage* is beneficial, but unlike attributes, it's not innate, nor is it learned like a skill. Choose three advantages for your character to start. You may acquire more during play.

Some advantages also have an accompanying rank that you can spend points to improve. If an advantage can be ranked, then its starting rank may be limited.

Some qualities can be depicted as attributes or advantages. If everyone has it to one degree or another, then it's an attribute. For instance, if you're in a world where everyone has some degree of innate magic, then magic is an attribute, and you don't have to use one of your advantages to acquire it. If humans are inherently non-magical, then it would be an advantage.

Far too many advantages are possible to have a comprehensive list for all genres, settings and styles. Some ideas to illustrate how advantages can work in general are included in the [Examples](#) section.

Drawbacks

Choose three drawbacks, qualities that disadvantage your character. A drawback may also have a rank that gives you extra points. These do not count towards level.

As with advantages, the drawbacks available and the way they work will depend on the setting. The important thing is that you play your character with the drawbacks in mind. If you're afraid of snakes, then you won't easily agree to having one in your presence.

If you're not playing your drawbacks, the narrator may insist you pay them off as you get points.

See the [Examples](#) section for some ideas of how drawbacks can be handled.

Property

You will start with the tools of your trade, as well as clothes and starting money that you can spend to get more equipment and property. If you have specific weapons or other special items, their information can be kept track of as qualities that can be taken away.

Powers

In some games, your character may have abilities beyond the ordinary. See the [Examples](#) section for ideas about how this can work.

Playing the Game

One participant at a time will be the narrator of the story, describing the setting, as well as helping determine factors not decided by the players. During the game, you and the other players decide what your player characters, or PCs, do and say, while the narrator decides the actions and words of non-player characters, or NPCs.

Yarn is played in sessions, scenes and rounds. Some sessions may include several scenes, while others might focus on one or two. In a scene, you might not need dice for your character to move about, perform routine tasks, ask questions and make plans. But if your action isn't routine, you roll dice to determine the outcome.

Sessions

A single session is like an episode or chapter. Whoever is narrating may open a session with an introduction, including a brief recap of the previous events.

Then the game proceeds in scenes, which depict the immediate experiences of the characters. A session may consist of multiple scenes.

Scenes

Before a scene, the narrator may summarize intervening events in a montage, and you may have a roll to make for your announced activity from the last scene.

The narrator then starts by describing the situation in which your characters find themselves. This may be fairly general, but more information can be revealed later.

The game then proceeds in rounds for the rest of the scene. If there isn't time pressure or imminent danger, you don't need initiative. During your turns, you can ask questions, decide what your characters are doing and saying, and rolling dice when an outcome is in doubt. If needed, you can use initiative.

After a scene, if enough time in the game may pass before the next scene, the narrator may ask you what you're planning to do with that time.

A session may end in the middle of a scene. When this happens, the group can choose a good spot to leave it on a cliff-hanger, to foster anticipation for the next session.

Feats

You can do routine things, such as moving around, picking things up, reading, driving, etc... without needing to roll dice. When attempting a feat, you're trying to do something that isn't routine (or impossible), so you roll dice to determine the outcome.

Challenge

The narrator sets a challenge number based on the difficulty of what you're trying to do.

Success roll

Roll dice, and if the total is equal to or greater than the challenge, then you succeed.

Margin

The difference is the margin, or how successful you are. If your roll is under the challenge, the margin is negative.

Getting Dice

Each feat has a primary attribute that gives one base die. For example, when dancing, dexterity is the primary. You must roll your base die. You may choose bonus dice that apply, but no more than one of each type.

Level: You get a bonus die for most rolls equal to your character's level.

Secondary: For most feats, you can get a die from a secondary attribute, usually chosen by the narrator. For example, if you're dancing, the narrator may allow you a bonus die for your charisma.

Skill: If it applies, a skill bonus die is twice the rank.

Advantage: You can get an advantage die towards some feats, such as for being quick, or having a good memory.

Enhancement: A feat may be enhanced by another factor, usually an outside force or piece of equipment. This could include a targeting device, or powered armor, or a bless spell, or a library computer.

Time: You can double the step cost for a feat as many times as your skill rank. The first x2 adds a +d2, then x4 to make it a d4, or x8 for a d6, x16 gives a d8, etc...

Effort: You start with as much unused effort as your health rank. Effort can be used to add a die to a roll for certain actions. The die you gain is equal to the lower of your primary and secondary attributes.

To regain effort, you need to rest. A full recharge requires a full sleep (8 hours), but you can get part of your effort back with a shorter rest.

Rolling

When you have gotten your dice, roll them all and then determine the total as follows:

Kept Dice

Unless otherwise specified, you keep your choice of two of the dice you rolled. You may wind up keeping fewer or more dice.

If you are attempting a basic skill in which you don't have at least rank 0, then keep one less die.

If you're attacking someone who is evading, keep one less die.

If you're using one of your specialties, then keep an additional die.

If you're using a ranged weapon in the same zone (point blank range), keep an additional die.

Fortune

You can use one fortune to keep an additional die.

A fortune can also be used to 'explode' a die. When a kept die has come up maximum (an 8 on a d8 for instance), then after you add it to your total, you can use a fortune to re-roll it and add that to the total as well. If the die comes up maximum again, you can use another fortune to explode it again, and so on.

Total

Add all of your kept and exploded dice to get the total.

Rounds

Universal Event: In a round, first the narrator may have a universal event affecting multiple characters. You may have an object roll to make, such as resistance.

Turn Order: The players then decide which of them will take the first turn. If they can't decide, the narrator chooses. After the first player is done with their turn, they select which player will take the next turn, who then chooses the next player, and so on, until all of the players have had a turn. Then start the next round.

Turns

For your turn, the story is from your character's point of view. They affect or are affected directly by what happens.

Current Attribute: The first thing you do on your turn is choose a current attribute. When your actions are aligned with this attribute, you can do more.

Initiative: Next, if the order of events is important, roll an initiative feat, with your current attribute as the primary, and a secondary (usually dexterity).

Events and phases: Events, including your character's phase, are resolved in descending order of initiatives. For ties, you decide the order of events within that initiative.

Subject: You are only active once in a round, during your phase, when your character is the subject of the story. While your character is active, you can do things and move around, with any remaining steps, in any order.

Other characters, including PCs, can't initiate independent actions or movement. They may be able to use reactions based on your activities.

Usually, you will only get one dice roll for a feat during your turn, so put some thought into it. All of your other activities will be routine (moving around, picking things up, reading, driving, riding, etc...) or preparatory.

Object: When your character is the object, you're passive; you can't initiate independent actions, but you may have saved steps for a reaction. An event or attack that targets your character while they are the object takes place either before or after your phase.

You may have two object rolls to make during your turn, one before and one after your phase.

Other Turns: During other players' turns your character is passive, not the object or subject, and can't be directly targeted by NPCs, but may become a secondary target, and may have an opportunity for a declared reaction.

NPCs: Each NPC gets one phase in a round, usually with at least five steps. In order to target you, they have to be active during your turn. If an NPC has a higher initiative than yours, they're active before you. If their initiative is less than yours, they wait until after your phase.

An NPC that is active during your turn moves and acts in relation to your character, or to other NPCs. Another PC can't be directly targeted, but they may become a secondary target (auto-fire, area effect, etc...).

Steps

Think of steps as either increments of movement, or as the steps involved in performing some task.

Your current attribute's rank is how many steps you get for the round when your dice would include that attribute.

You can use two steps to get one step for a feat not based on your current primary or secondary attribute.

When you're active, you can use your remaining steps to move around and do things in any order you wish.

Movement

As long as you are mobile and still have enough steps remaining, you can move. You only get one feat during your phase, but you can move both before and after attempting the feat.

Movement is only aligned with physical attributes. If your current attribute is mental, each individual *shift* actually requires two of your steps.

Zones

If relative position becomes important, such as in combat, the setting for the scene can be expressed in simplified *zones*. The exact size of zones is not as important as their relationship to each other.

More than one character can be in a zone, but they are not automatically close.

Moving to an adjacent zone usually takes two shifts. This can be situational, such as waiting around the corner one shift away from the adjacent zone.

Closing with someone in the same zone takes only one shift, as does pulling away.

Attacking

When you attack, first announce a location on your target. The narrator gives that location a number.

You then commit the steps for the attack, and roll, using the target's defense as the challenge, to see if you succeed and to get the margin. If you do succeed, determine damage. Subtract protection from damage to see what gets through. The target then makes a resistance roll to see how severely they are injured.

Using Margin

If you succeed, you can use margin as a resource for that attack. You can split your margin up between uses.

If the margin from your attack is enough, you can use it to hit your declared location for specific effects.

Margin can also be used to increase the damage from some attacks. For melee attacks, the limit for extra damage is your strength rank.

You can use margin to increase knock-back.

If you miss a roll, the narrator may use negative margin to complicate the outcome for you. See Examples.

Melee reach

A standard melee weapon (or a kick) can hit a target in the same zone without closing.

A long weapon can attack someone in an adjacent zone.

A short weapon or punch can attack if you've closed.

Some weapons operate at a penalty for closer ranges, or might even have a minimum range.

Distance attacks

Thrown or propelled weapons may have an increased challenge, based on distance. A target in the same zone is *point blank* (keep an extra die). For each distance *increment*, add one to the challenge.

For example, you're firing a pistol with an increment of 2, so anything less than 2 zones away has no penalty. If your target is 2 zones away, add one to the challenge, at 4 zones, add two, at 6 zones, add three, etc...

Defense

Your defense, assuming you're fully mobile and aware, starts with your dexterity rank. To this you add other factors, such as distance, lighting, cover, etc... If you're actively defending, also add your skill rank if applicable. You can't both evade and actively defend.

Damage

Damage is a standard number base on the weapon; you don't roll for it. You may be able to use margin to increased the damage, depending on the attack.

Melee damage is your strength rank, plus a modifier for a weapon, and possibly your margin.

Some weapons might do special damage, or have special armor considerations. A game could be much more specific, with calibers of weapons, even specific models.

Protection

If you do take damage, subtract the location's protection (usually torso armor) from the damage, and if any clears through, your character is injured.

Resistance and Injury

If you're injured, make a resistance roll with the cleared damage as the challenge. Resistance rolls use health, and either strength or will (depending on the the attack).

If you succeed, the injury is severity of one. If you miss the roll, increase the severity by the difference.

Each time you accrue your health in total severity, you're at an additional +1 penalty for every roll you make.

Location

When you've announced a location in your attack, and your margin is at least equal to the location number, then you can use that margin to make it a more specific injury. In that case, use the location's protection.

If your attack does hit a location, then in addition to the standard penalty for total severity, the injury is specific, with corresponding effects on the target See the Examples section for ideas.

Death

The group should decide if it's even possible for a player character to die as a result of the events in the story. If it is, you may all agree it will be scripted in some way, that it doesn't come as a surprise, at least not to the player whose character doesn't make it.

Then there is letting the dice decide. When it's possible to perish unpredictably in your game, most players are more circumspect about their activities. The daredevil may become the exception.

If it is possible for your character to die from injuries, you should all agree to a total severity that, if reached, is fatal. A standard suggested total is one plus level, times your health. So, with a health rank of 7, at level 0 you would die at 7 severity; at level 1 you would die at 14 severity; at level 2, you 'd die at 21 severity; etc...

More specific injuries may incapacitate, or even be fatal. You may agree that a called shot to the head, with severity equal to your character's health, means unconsciousness, and if to the vitals, death.

In a long enough story, your character may of course die of old age. If so, then physical and eventual mental decline would first begin at an appropriate age.

If your character does die, or become incapacitated for an extended period, you may be able to create a new character to join the story, or the narrator may have back-up characters on hand to choose from. When bringing in a new character, they start at the minimum points for the lowest level PC in the group.

Healing

Your character reduces their total severity by 1 at a time, usually once per day of relative rest. If you have specific injuries, you decide which injury heals by one severity, but the same injury can't heal twice in a row.

Your rate of healing may change based on medical treatment or on level of activity. Some injuries may be serious enough to require more time, special care, or even be impossible to heal from without something like magic or advanced technology.

Flashbacks

You have a flashback for each level, usable on your phase during a scene, allowing you to claim a previously unspecified quality, by means of a remembered sequence in which you attained that benefit.

You do this by spending saved points, and the group determines the specifics of the remembered events, with guidance from the Narrator. The group may not give you exactly what you wanted (it's a bit like a Genie's wish). New drawbacks can factor into flashbacks as well, for extra points during the game.

The group may give you a flashback rank for one less point, if your idea is really enjoyable (meaning a new rank 1 quality could be free).

Attainment

Acquiring new qualities isn't done with points. Something happens in the game, and you get the new quality, usually at rank 0 unless it's a fixed quality (losing a hand for example). You can raise it later with points, or pay it down in the case of drawbacks, if the group approves.

You get at least one point per session. Depending on the rate of advancement the group prefers, it may be more.

It costs the rank to be achieved in points to raise a quality. For example, if you are rank 4 with sword, it would cost 5 points to raise your skill rank to 5.

You can't raise a quality more than one rank at a time. Ordinarily, you assign points as you get them rather than saving them indefinitely.

There are three times when you can spend points. If none of them occur, your points accumulate from session to session.

1. Choose a quality in which your character is actively training in between scenes. When you get enough points, they are automatically applied to that quality to raise its rank.
2. If you use a quality extensively during the session, and you have enough points, at the end of the session you may be able to raise its rank if you have enough points.
3. You may also wind up using points during a session, for a flashback and its attendant revealed quality.

Examples

Skill Ranks

You may have a limit on the starting ranks for your skills. One way is to limit your starting ranks to your level, except for one skill which can exceed your level by one.

The ranks within a skill can correspond to different degrees or certifications.

rank	degree	die
0	Novice	-
1	Trainee	d2
2	Apprentice/professional	d4
3	Journeyman/expert	d6
4	Master	d8
5	Grandmaster/doctor/professor	d10
6	Leading edge	d12

Common Skills

Common skills, such as literacy and basic math, may start at rank 0 for everyone. depending on the setting.

Basic Skills

Basic skills are available for everyone, and feats using those skills can be attempted even if you don't have them at rank 0, albeit with the unfamiliarity penalty.

First Aid

This allows you to provide emergency basic medical care, staunch bleeding, possibly even remove bullets and arrows, stitch wounds, make splints and tourniquets. A specialty could be stabilization, keeping another die when trying to keep someone alive as long as possible.

Fight

You can attack and defend yourself in unarmed combat. This basic skill usually focuses on punching and grappling, and also low kicks. A specialty could be punching, kicking, or grappling.

Drive

You know how to operate wheeled vehicles. It applies to regular vehicles (cars, trucks). Drive heavy vehicle, and ride motorcycle, are both different skills. If you have a specialty, you have to choose between car and truck.

Guns

In a modern society, people can figure out a simple gun fairly easily. Some features require more than what you see in a movie, and the challenge would be higher. A specialty would be pistol, rifle, shotgun or automatic.

Advanced Skills

An advanced skill is based on another factor. When you're making your character, this is usually the rank of another quality, such as an affiliation or archetype. During play, learning or improving an advanced skill may have a quest requirement, such as traveling to the place where it is taught, to study with a master.

Surgeon

You can safely and effectively operate on a patient, as long as you know the diagnosis and objective.

A specialty could be heart surgery, or transplantation.

Pilot

You know how to pilot fixed wing aircraft.

A specialty could be airliner, or fighter.

Chemist

You understand the science of atoms and molecules, how they combine and interact.

Specialties could include organic and analytical chemistry.

Martial Artist

This is more sophisticated than simply knowing how to fight. Other attacks and defenses, as well as options like parrying and multiple attacks, become possible.

Depending on the setting, a specialty could be a particular form, such as judo. In some games, the form may be a skill unto itself. For judo, a specialty could be flipping the opponent.

Mechanic

You can maintain and repair mechanical devices and equipment.

Depending on the setting, auto-mechanic might be its own skill, in which case a specialty could be diesel mechanic, or European car mechanic.

Ventriloquist

You know how to make it appear as though your voice is coming from somewhere else, such as from a dummy.

Specialties could include not moving your lips, as well as throwing your voice, or having a special character's voice.

Marksman

Knowing how to accurately shoot a distant target is not a basic skill. This increases the increment by one as long as you take one step to aim.

A specialty could be snap shot, and another could be tracking a moving target (eliminating the evasion penalty).

Advantages

Affiliation

Your character is affiliated with or is a member of some group, organization or order. By having an affiliation, you may be rank 0 in some basic skills (no unfamiliarity penalty). It can lend you credibility on related matters, though it need not be public. This may also unlock advanced skills, and/or provide patronage benefits. The affiliation may have requirements for gaining and/or maintaining membership, to retain the full benefit.

Once you have an affiliation, in addition to access to advanced skills, you can raise the rank of your status within the organization. Most affiliations cap at about six ranks, but some can go as high as rank 12, such as for royalty and other heads of state in major countries, or for

leaders of major world religions. Higher ranks may convey additional benefits, such as increased access to resources, or authority over lower ranked members.

Here are some ideas for affiliations:

- **A guild/union**
- **A martial arts school**
- **A magical discipline**
- **A college or university**
- **A religion**
- **A government**
- **A royal family**
- **A political party**
- **A military branch**
- **A sports team or league**

Archetype

This is different from an affiliation. Your character is a certain type more generally. Examples could include adventurer, fighter, sage, or scientist. It functions in a similar way to an affiliation, except that no organization provides support, and the skills in an archetype may be more diverse or generalized than those in an affiliation. An archetype usually has a rank that can be raised.

Typically, an archetype is a package of rank 0 skills, as well as another benefit of some kind, such as a bonus die for certain feats that qualify, usually equal to their rank in the archetype. For example, as a berserker, you might get a bonus die while enraged.

Special Item

If your character has a special item, such as a weapon, artifact or device, then in addition to other effects, it may provide an advantage bonus die. The fact that it can be taken away means it is all the more powerful.

For a weapon this could be any benefit that is approved by the group. It could be an enhancement bonus to the attack roll, or to range, or or a combination or benefits, depending on how you divvy up the ranks.

For example, a rank 7 magic sword could be four ranks for +d8 to hit, and three ranks to add 3 to active defense.

Wealth

Multiply your starting money by 4 for each rank (cumulative). So, multiply starting money by 4^{rank} . In a possible modern setting, your character might get \$5000, plus another 5,000 in assets for every year past 18, to start. So, at rank 11, you could have over 200 billion dollars, and be the wealthiest.

Influence

Your words and decisions reach and affect a lot of people. This is different than an affiliation or archetype, but it can enhance either. A freelance reporter might want to have both the reporter archetype, and the advantage of influence on top of that, to signify a wide readership. This is also not fame, which would be a disadvantage (you could have both).

Depending on the setting and style of the game, influence may be variable, with an accompanying rank.

Improved sense

One of your senses is heightened, improved in range and/or effectiveness. You keep one extra die with that sense. If you also have rank, then sight and sound give your rank as a bonus die, and for another sense the bonus is twice your rank.

Quickness

Add a bonus die to initiative rolls.

Dark vision

You are able to see in the dark. What form this takes depends on the setting.

Ally

Someone is willing to act on your behalf. The rank tells you their level of capability, and how often they show up.

Drawbacks.

Though you start with three drawbacks, you may acquire more during the game, or pay off existing drawbacks.

When you pay down a drawback, you're reducing its rank by one. This costs the current rank in points. You can't usually go below rank 0 (a residual effect).

Fame

Your face is known, and it's hard for you to move unnoticed in public. If you're famous, you may have paparazzi lying in wait to get you in an embarrassing moment. This can be in addition to influence, which can alleviate some of the pitfalls of fame.

Physical impairment

A physiological condition, disfigurement, or limitation to an anatomical function. This could include something as simple as a limp (for perhaps 3 points), to being missing an arm (which could be 36 points), to being a disembodied brain (78 points). The penalty for some impairments would be variable, and could affect the difficulty for some success rolls, or for movement.

Infamy

Your reputation is such that if your identity is known, people will distrust, dislike or fear you. You can be both famous and infamous.

Impaired sense

One of your senses (usually the standard 5) functions at a penalty. For primary senses (sight and hearing), the penalty is the rank. For other senses it's twice the rank.

Dependent

Someone or something looks to you for support of some kind. The rank reflects how much help, how often they need it, and how far you will go to meet those needs. A retired grandparent who still has some mobility might be worth 21 points. A younger child would need frequent and substantial care, and so would be worth 36 points. A whole family or small group could be worth up to 45 points. A large group (a species for example) that depends on you, and that you would stop at nothing to protect, is -est.

Enemy or rival

Someone or something wishes you ill. Their capabilities, how often they show up, and the intensity of their animus, all add to the rank.

Phobia/vulnerability

You're vulnerable to or afraid of something. If it's rare (like hairless cats), then your reaction is probably worse. If you choose something common (like large bodies of water) then it's more of a background impairment. When it applies, you are inhibited (keep one fewer die). Your rank is also added to penalties.

Powers

If powers beyond the ordinary are possible, they can be handled in a variety of ways.

Power points

One method is to have a separate pool for points used to purchase powers. Your character has regular points for the usual qualities (attributes, skills, advantages), and a separate set of power points. If this is the case, the game may allow for exchange rate of one power point for two regular points when assigning ranks to your other qualities, to make elite non-powered characters viable alongside their super compatriots.

Power skills

In some games, powers may be handled as skills. For this reason, they are all advanced, requiring another quality such as an archetype or affiliation of sufficient rank.

A magical affiliation typically has a spell list and a system

for learning and casting them. The list may be extensive, and all of the spells are advanced, with your rank with the affiliation as the prerequisite.

A magical archetype typically also has a spell list, perhaps not quite as extensive as an affiliation, but they also gain some additional benefit, such as an advantage bonus for something related to the archetype.

Psionics similarly can work with power points or as power skills.

Talents

Your game may have low-level powers that are available as advantages. These should never be full-blown super-powers. For example, you might have feather-fall, where you always land lightly (just how lightly might be rank dependent), but not levitation.

Bases

There are 15 possible combinations of two attributes, if you have the standard six. Not all combinations may be of use to you, but here are some examples of types of feats, along with the primary attribute and the range.

Fighting

If you're striking a target in melee combat, you probably uses strength and dexterity, but which is the primary depends on the weapon or fighting technique.

In some situations, such as when grappling, health can even provide one of the dice.

Shooting

When you fire a gun or bow, or throw something, dexterity will probably be the primary. If you're running around while you're shooting, health will be the secondary. If you're throwing an ax, it will be strength. If you're manning a turret, use intelligence. If you're aiming and shooting at a target, use will. If you want to sign your name with bullet holes in the wall, obviously charisma is the secondary attribute.

Lifting and moving

Lifting and moving are always going to have strength as the primary, but the secondary attribute can vary. For explosive strength, will is the secondary. For pushing an heavy wagon up a hill, health is the secondary. If you're loading a wagon with cargo, then intelligence could even be the secondary.

Perception rolls

During your phase you can ask the narrator questions about what is readily apparent in the situation. Anything not immediately obvious requires you to use a step to make a perception roll. This counts as your feat.

For example, if there is an obvious chest in the corner, you will see it. You could ask the narrator what color it is, or rough dimensions, or its general condition, because those are readily apparent on first glance. If you want to determine if the chest is booby trapped, that would require a roll.

When you do have to roll, there are three combinations of mental attributes. Each offers a different kind of perception roll. Which attribute is primary may be important in some situations, and you decide this. The applicable attributes should be decided on a case-by-case basis, but as usual, the narrator will be able to choose the secondary attribute.

Intelligence and will are the base dice for most things like spotting or listening, and other sense-based rolls.

Intelligence and charisma are used for understanding the hidden meaning of text, art and other creative content.

Will and charisma are the dice for determining if someone is bluffing.

Control

Things like driving a car, riding a horse, flying a plane, operating machinery, even telepathic manipulation, involve controlling something. Different feats can call for different bases, even within the same skill. For example, fleeing on a horse through the forest, avoiding trees, would use intelligence and dexterity. If during the chase something spooked your horse, you might need to use ride skill with will and charisma, to settle it down.

Weapons

weapon	damage	range	notes
punch	0+m	close	
kick	+1+m	0	
knife	+2+m	close	
short sword	+3+m	0	
long sword	+4+m	0	
rapier	+4+m	0	
pistol (.38)	10	2	
rifle (30.06)	12	4	3 steps
shotgun (12g)	14	2	Armor doubled, 3 steps
spear	+4 + m	1	3 steps
glave	+5 + m	1	3 steps
great axe	+6 + m	1	3 steps

Locations

There shouldn't be an exhaustive list of locations to target on an opponent, or of the effects of specific injuries. A player should be able to target as specifically as they want, and the margin required to hit that target will be commensurately higher.

location	margin	effects
arm	3	Severity is penalty for that arm
leg	3	Severity slows relative speed
weapon	4	1xhealth, drop weapon
hand	5	1xhealth incapacitates.
head	6	1xhealth causes unconsciousness
neck	7	1xhealth impairs breathing
eye	8	½ health blinds
heart/lungs	9	1xhealth is soon fatal
brain	10	1xhealth is instant death
injury	+1	Adds to injury's severity

Protection

You may have a barrier against injury, usually worn as armor, subtracting from damage inflicted by an attack. Usually, only damage that clears your armor will result in injury. Armor may be affected by type of damage.

type	armor	notes
Heavy cloth	1	
leather	2	
Heavy leather	3	
Chain mail	4	
Scale mail	5	
Partial plate	6	
Plate mail	7	
ballistic	8	
lt. advanced	10-11	
md. advanced	12-14	
Hvy advanced	15-18	

Steps

An action takes one or more steps during your turn. The steps for defensive actions are committed at the end of your phase. You can adopt a stance for active defense for one step in a physical turn, or two in a mental turn. You can instead choose to evade for one step. Either way it's in effect till your next turn unless something happens to interrupt.

action	steps	notes
Shift	1	x2 if non-physical turn
Punch, knife, pistol	2	
Kick, sword, rifle	3	
active defense	1	
heavy weapon	4	
grab	1	
drop	0	
Actively defend	1	Add rank to defense
Evade	1	Attacker keeps one less die.

Challenges

Some things are automatic, and you don't need to roll. This set of routine actions should actually grow as your character increases in skill rank, so that what once required a roll now happens without using your feat for the turn. Keep track of what actions become routine. Similarly, the difficulty of a feat can depend on your rank with the skill.

Usually, things that help the character's chances are in the form of bonuses, but sometimes, a bonus die isn't

quite right for the situation. When the player has described how they will proceed in a way that convinces the group they've bypassed some of the difficulty facing them in a clever way, the narrator may reduce the challenge for that feat.

Flashbacks

Your characters find themselves in a dusty old library, closed for several decades. The information you need is in there somewhere, but none of your characters, who are all millennials, has a clue about using a library, and no one has cell service. The Dewey Decimal System might as well be Aramaic.

Fortunately, your character, the oldest of the PCs, sees the library, and it triggers a memory of your time as a grad student, helping sort and digitize the contents of local physical collections throughout the region. The narrator works with the group to flesh this idea out in a short scene, where we also learn that your character is color blind. This gives you 3 points, to go with 2 you have saved. The group thinks it's a cool idea and gives you an extra point, so you spend 6 points to be rank 3 in librarian. We also learn that you were fired by an administrator who made advances that you rejected. We then return to the present and you are an expert librarian who knows their way around.

Fighting

If you're striking a target in melee combat, you probably uses strength and dexterity, but which is the primary depends on the weapon or fighting technique.

In some situations, such as when grappling, health can even provide one of the dice.

Options

Other attributes

Depending on the setting, you may have attributes beyond the usual 6. These are some possibilities.

For each additional attribute, give each player an additional 15 points to start.

- ◆ **Reflexes:** How fast do you respond to stimuli?
- ◆ **Body:** Not just size, but possibly density as well.
- ◆ **Perception:** Your senses, and perhaps insight.
- ◆ **Magic:** How powerful can your spells be?
- ◆ **Psionics:** The paranormal powers of your mind.
- ◆ **Luck:** Does chance seem to favor you?
- ◆ **Status:** Where in the social hierarchy are you?
- ◆ **Appearance:** How attractive are you?

Rolling attributes

Instead of getting extra points and buying your attribute ranks, your group can roll them up randomly. For each attribute, roll 3d10 and divide by 3, then add one. If the result is less than 6, round up, otherwise round down.

If you have no attributes at rank 7 or higher, re-roll your character. If you don't have at least 2 attributes at rank 7 or better, you can raise your next highest attribute to a 7.

This means you have one in a thousand chance of starting with an 11. It also means you have one in a thousand chance of starting with a 2.

Range

When you roll, there may be a range of possible results, based on the primary quality for that feat. Usually this mean you add the margin times 10% to the *minimum* for the result. Sometimes, you can achieve the minimum without having to roll. If you do roll for a chance at more, you of course run the risk of failure.

For example, when lifting, the minimum is your strength rank's point cost, times 10 lbs. (or 5 kg). With a strength of 7, the point cost is 28, so the minimum is 280 pounds. If your margin is 5, add 50% to that, to lift 420 lbs.

Cooperating

Two or more characters may choose to cooperate. When you are chosen to take the next turn, before initiative is rolled, other characters (including NPCs) can choose to join your turn, subject to your approval.

You then all determine each character's initiative. The actual initiative for the cooperating group is the lowest of the included characters.

All of the cooperating characters' phases are at that initiative, and all may have to make object rolls before and after their turns. As the current player, you still decide which order the events within that initiative will go in, including the other PCs' turns.

Complications

When you miss your roll, the margin is negative. If you

just barely miss it, failure is enough of a consequence. Anything more than that leads to complications, just how severe determined by how great the negative margin is.

For example, if you miss your roll by 5 the group might rule that you broke your bow string.

Trouble

When a player uses a fortune the narrator gets one trouble. These accumulate from session to session, and the narrator can later use them to impede any character or the whole group, in a variety of ways.

One trouble can be used by the narrator when you roll a 1 in a dice roll, to make you choose that as one of your kept dice.

Trouble may also be used to put impediments in your way, such as bringing in reinforcements when the group is winning, or revealing a trap. It can also be used to make you roll for what would ordinarily be routine.

Tension

In some situations the group may want a sudden outbreak of hostilities to be the exception. The scene may start calm and uneventful, but when something is at stake, especially when the scene reveals competing interests, the tier of tension may escalate to risk, or even danger.

The default is safe, when no one is an adversary. Any competition is about negotiation, debate and at most polite argument.

Risk

You may have to accept risk at some point, where you actually stand to lose something, even if it's just money or reputation. You can also risk exhaustion or injury, as with some athletic activity. When at risk, you're more on your guard. Any argument here is more likely to become heated. Risk usually means a state of vigilance.

Danger

Danger is when fight, flight or fright kicks in. It could be battle, or a hot chase, or a bomb ticking down, or a football player running headlong at you. You're having to deal with immediate potential harm or subdual. Constant danger is tiring, so it's hard to maintain for long periods.

Escalation

Normally, a situation only escalates or de-escalates one tier at a time. A conversation turns to debate, and then someone is misunderstood. A heated argument ensues, and then a vicious remark triggers a fight.

More Tiers

You may have additional tiers of tension, such as parlay, brink, or even battle, but remember that this reduces the chances of fighting occurring during the game.

The Imagining

A fun option for creating a game from scratch is to use the *Imagining*, where character creation and setting creation happen concurrently.

Process

Decide who will choose first, then go clockwise from there. The first player names a quality. The other players determine what type of quality it is, and that choice provides the first clue about the setting and what the game will entail. Then the next player chooses a quality, and so on, with each new quality narrowing the game further. After two or three rounds, the types of activities on which the game will focus will begin to come into focus, and subsequent choices can be informed by that.

After ten rounds, you have some details about the things your characters focus on, enough to complete your characters with points after the Imagining.

Then, you should all discuss more concretely the implications of the qualities chosen, agreeing on the general parameters of the setting and style for the game.

With the general ideas in place, each player helps the character to their left finish their character with points. The level may be decided before you start the Imagining, or you may all decide after ten rounds what the point totals should be for the characters.

Then you hand the game off to the first narrator.

Narrating

There is still only one narrator at a time. The last player in the circle is the narrator for the first session. The current narrator always chooses the next, until every player has had their time. The office can pass each session, or you may agree it will pass when the highest level character achieves their next level, or something in between.

While a player narrates, their character may play a subsidiary role, not gaining points for those sessions, possibly even being separated for a time, while the focus of the story remains on the other players' characters.

Setting and Style

As it emerges, the setting will affect the choices for qualities, and how advantages work. Some settings may have special rules, especially as relates to affiliations and archetypes. How skills are broken down into specialties will be unique in some settings.

The way the group likes to play should determine style. If you all strongly prefer a fast-paced action adventure, you should together be clear about that at the start. If you want a thoughtful mystery with clues and intellectual challenges mixed with the possibility of danger, that kind of game is fun too. Most players like a mix. They may have tendencies, but variety of experience is an important ingredient in a good story.

Part of style is power level. The setting isn't going to inherently provide that. A western could have superheroes. A super-magical far future can still have a role for normal people on a low-power but vital mission

(like Frodo). During the Imagining, the power level should be somewhat clearer after two rounds, and everyone should honor that increasingly with subsequent choices. If everyone for four rounds has chosen knowledge, skills and connections to focus on, and suddenly you come out with 'telekinesis', they will justifiably make it a minor advantage, to preserve balance with the other qualities.

Co-moderation

Once all of the players have some experience as narrators of the story, you can if you wish begin to move towards co-moderation, where all of you share that role during play. During your turns, the other players narrate for you. The NPCs are divvied up between all of you, based on who you agree will best embody those characters, or who fit the relationship needs of the current situation.

One player may still be the official narrator for just that session, acting mostly as an organizer of the ideas and a describer of some things, and possibly writing a summary of the session afterwards. The idea is to stay out of the way during most of the session, so that the players all contribute to developments in the story.

Using Yarn

Yarn is Not...

As with most TTRPGs, Yarn is not win or lose. The objective is to have fun, enrich our experience and collaboratively tell stories, hopefully in ways that are enjoyable. Characters may experience major successes and victories in the story, but they could as interestingly be defeated and flee into hiding, or wind up on an unexpected path.

Yarn is fairly simple, but not basic. The framework is here for using dice, expressing qualities and organizing events, and for giving the players a variety of options, but it should only be a framework. The extrapolation and elaboration of the players ideally help create the content, filling in blanks, and that requires a commitment from them. The narrator is an improvisational director or conductor, and your turn is a chance to take a solo.

Though Yarn is flexible, it is not a 'universal game engine'. Two games may use different attribute combinations, magic, if any, may work differently, and power levels between two games may be very dissimilar. The things they will all share are the dice conventions, points and the idea of qualities, so that they speak the same language.

Yarn is not labor intensive. A setting and its denizens might be expressed in great detail, but that element should be above the game system, which should remain as simple as possible for the group's preferred style.

Boundaries

If there are boundaries any player might not be willing to cross in the story-telling, agree on that from the start. Some players may prefer not to depict certain content, such as explicit violence or sexuality. If events lead that way, the group may decide it will be handled 'off-camera'. You may agree to avoid some types of content entirely.

Starting Level

While it is possible to start with a first level character and work your way up, like an enlistee in the military, most games will probably have more able characters. For a character suitable for special missions and other major challenges, you want the characters to start at 3rd level or higher. To be a full-fledged hero you should be at least 5th level. A 10th level character could be a super-hero.

The Group

Often it's not you or the narrator who decides things. Many of the details of what happens, especially for things like complications and flashbacks, can be decided by the group. That means all of the players other than you suggest possibilities for what happens to your character, then the narrator incorporates the most interesting or entertaining ideas, weaving them into the story.

This follows a larger spirit of co-moderation, where the narrator is not in complete control, and where the role of narrator may even pass from player to player

Scale

The rules don't specify time or distance scales. This is for a reason. A scene could be immediate, like combat, or it could have a longer time-frame, such as an extended chase sequence or research in a library. Rounds could even be minutes. Longer periods can also be covered in montages between scenes, but this flexibility allows the focus to stay on the most interesting events, regardless of the scale, and doesn't slow the game by zooming in too close for what are by nature long activities.

The activity that constitutes a step is going to vary depending on the scale. A chemist could be mixing individual contents of two beakers, where a step is the same as one footstep, or it could be preparing an experiment over the course of minutes or longer.

Melee combat won't be an option at longer scales. At some point it's a battle. Adjust step costs and increments for ranged weapons for longer time scales.

If the characters have split up, the sequences can be at different scales, as long as the players all get turns. You can catch one group up later, after a scene if needed.

Dialogue

An NPC may have a soliloquy, or there may be announcements over a speaker, etc..., but dialogue will mostly be during players' turns, where the story is focused. If a group is in a polite real-time conversation, you can allow everyone to cooperate, but it should still be someone's turn, and they will then decide the order characters get to speak in, if it ever becomes an issue.

NPCs

Some characters only appear in the background, like a random person in a market or a theater. If an NPC might interact with a PC, they may be just an extra, and they can be represented as a single number for challenges, and dice for active rolls. For example, a rookie cop might be challenge of 7 to hit, and have 3d6 (keep two) for feats, including attacks and resistance rolls. A worthy opponent might be challenge 11 and d8+3d6 keep three.

If an NPC is going to last longer than a battle, or a scene, then they may have qualities more akin to what a PC has. They may even have fortune, and use effort, etc...

Using Flashbacks

The best flashbacks are little scenes unto themselves, and NPCs from your character's past can even emerge as a result. The group should never let you off easy when you use a flashback. Just gaining a quality isn't enough; the game becomes more interesting because we find out more about how your character became who they are.

Your flashbacks shouldn't contradict what has already happened in play. If you've been ineffective in a fight, you're probably not going to suddenly remember your days as a prize fighter and come back to win. If you do want to introduce a seeming incongruity, explain it in a way that makes some sense in the context of the game, or the group may simply not allow it.

Your character may have a theme to their flashbacks, such as cases they've worked on, or battles fought, or teachings from a mentor.

