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Introduction

Argothald has been a work in progress since I started it in 1977.

These pages are a blend of new material from 2011, a revised game system from 1988, and a world designed from 1977-1989.Chunks of text are cut-and-pasted from computer files created by programs that no longer exist. The core rules are based on West End Games’ D6 System. *

I have a problem with brevity. I’ve worked on it. The more verbose the paragraph, the younger I was when I wrote it.

Start with “Background”; it’s only one page. If you want to play a non-human, skim the section on the race you’d like to be. If you don’t want to absorb the rest of the rules, send me a description of your character and I’ll generate the numbers for you.

There are gaps, inconsistencies, and errors in these rules. If we like to play Argothald, we’ll work to fix the problems. Both the story and the system of Argothald are a collaborative effort. Together we’ll make this a game we enjoy.

Yes, you are alpha-testing the game. Please excuse the bugs. Some of them are features. Others are giant insects trying to kill you.

Have fun!

* West End Games used the D6 System for their Star Wars game (© and ™ by Lucasfilm Ltd), where I first saw those rules. I’ve made substantial changes for Argothald. That’s legal, since West End Games released the D6 System under the Open Gaming License (see page 42). I haven’t indicated every change I’ve made to the D6 System in these rules, so it may violate the terms of the license. Therefore, please keep these rules for our personal use; in particular, don’t post them on the Internet.
Recent rule changes

Important changes since April 2011:
Clarification (page 9): The Charisma/Presence bonus for wearing more expensive items only applies if the character is wearing at least three better visible items. If the items have different bonuses, the Charisma/Presence bonus is based on the lowest common bonus of the visible items.

Important changes since March 2011:
All the changes have to do with continuous spells that modify attributes (“buffs” and “debuffs”) (page 22):
- A buff or debuff can only be +1D or -1D to an attribute.
- The difficulty of casting a continuous spell is now based on the number of dice in the target attribute; it’s harder to improve an attribute if it’s already high.
- Table 14 on page 19 has a clarification: If target is out of line-of-sight, the +4D is added to the difficulty. The practical result is that to maintain a continuous spell on a target, you have to be able to see them.
- Clarification: The “to hit” difficulty is not based on an attribute, and so can’t be modified by a continuous spell.
- Clarification: For each continuous spell maintained by a caster, their movement speed is halved.
- Clarification: buffs and debuffs do not stack.

Important changes since February 2011:
- If a spell uses dice to determine an attribute adjustment, the difficulty and adjustment rolls are separate.
- Combat scales.
- Minor change to armor table.

Important changes since January 2011:
- Character creation now based on “skill dice” instead of skill points.
- A fumble table for melee combat.
- A backlash table for spellcasting.
- Environment adjustments in combat.
- The silver-piece costs for advancing abilities and character upkeep.
Background

The world is Tala.

Long ago, Civilization covered the world. It was based on both the physical rules of science and the non-physical rules of magic. Something in Ironmaw Mountain made the combination possible; that secret is now hidden or lost.

Seven centuries ago, the Forces of Chaos came to Tala, pouring in from another dimension. Everything changed, both physical and magical. Civilization ended overnight. Nine-tenths of the people perished.

The Chaos leader is the Mekatrig. From his throne in the far south he dominates the world using the power of the Argothald (“Helm of the Evil Sorcerer King”).

There was resistance to the Mekatrig’s rule. The most successful was centered on Ironmaw Mountain. The Resistance leaders resolved the principles of mechanics and magic that still worked despite the Argothald. Those principles are still in use.

The Ironmaw Resistance began shortly after the fall of Civilization. It grew strong over the next one-and-a-half centuries. Finally, the Mekatrig could stand it no longer. He left his throne and travelled for the first and only time, halfway across the world, to Ironmaw. He brought the Argothald with him. No one survived.

The Mekatrig returned to his throne. He declared his punishment: The lands once freed by the Resistance were divided into small nations. A Demon Ruler controls each nation and rules it as he or she sees fit.

The Mekatrig found another use for Ironmaw. He has many punishments to control the teaming billions of his Chaos army. The cruelest penalty is to exile offenders into Ironmaw. The prisoners cannot escape. They can die of neither hunger nor thirst. No thought is given to who went before, who will go after, or who shall prey upon them.

Ironmaw lies in one of the smallest nations, Aeykia. The Demon Ruler of Aeykia is Crytolos. He chose to let Aeykia fend for itself, with the exception of Grenn, the town nearest Ironmaw. Crytolos rules Grenn utterly: judge, jury, and executioner. If you are guilty, Crytolos eats you.

Crytolos eats people for punishment, not for nourishment. Once a month, he posts a list of a few people in Grenn who are to report to his palace, and will not be seen again. The food of Crytolos is the soul.

There is only one reason why anyone comes to Grenn: Ironmaw.

Ironmaw: mine, stronghold, prison. If you were not sentenced there, you can enter and leave freely, and seek out its dangers and riches. The Mekatrig’s prisoners, exiled from their home worlds, still have their possessions. The desperate, the contemptible, and the criminal hide there to avoid pursuit. Some say the secrets of the old Resistance and the ancient Civilization may be found within.

In the past five hundred years, anyone who made a difference in the world, whose name became legend, visited Grenn and entered Ironmaw. You are an adventurer. Your chance to be a hero starts here.
Aspects, Attributes, Skills, and Powers

Abilities

The level of an ability is represented by a die roll: nD+m; “n” is the number of six-sided dice you roll, “m” is a fixed number added to the result. “3D+1” means to roll 3 six-sided dice and add 1 to the sum of the numbers on the dice.

There are three tiers of abilities: aspects, attributes, and skills or powers. For most characters, the three aspects are Body, Mind, and Spirit. There are no fixed lists of attributes within aspects or skills/powers within attributes. Here are some example attributes for each aspect; attributes within the same box are different names for the same thing:

Table 1: Examples of attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexterity</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>Karma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexes</td>
<td>some flavors of magic</td>
<td>other flavors of magic; e.g. healing (page 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Luck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina</td>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>Karma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toughness</td>
<td>some flavors of magic</td>
<td>other flavors of magic; e.g. healing (page 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Resistance (e.g., magic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>Charisma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Alchemy (see page 25)</td>
<td>Sanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melee Weapon</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Chutzpah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moxie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unarmed combat</td>
<td>Aimed Weapon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breath (Dragons)</td>
<td>Stone sense (Dwarves)</td>
<td>Nature sense (Elves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight (Fairies, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suppose we have three characters with these simplified ability lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ariel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body 3D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility 4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrobatics 6D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beatrice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body 3D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexterity 4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickpocket 5D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cressida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body 2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Magic 4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice Dart 5D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ariel, Beatrice, and Cressida encounter a wall that’s difficult to climb. The GM says that the Acrobatics skill applies to getting over this wall, so Ariel rolls 6D to see if she succeeds. Beatrice doesn’t have a specific skill that applies to this situation; the GM says Dexterity is equivalent to Agility, so she rolls her Dexterity attribute of 4D. Cressida doesn’t even have an attribute that relates to physical activity, so she rolls using her 2D Body aspect.

In this example, the GM might have said “Acrobatics or Climbing, under Agility, under Body.” This can be written Acrobatics/Climbing>Agility>Body. This is shorthand for “Use the Acrobatics or Climbing skill if you have it, the Agility attribute if you don’t have those skills, the Body aspect if you don’t have that attribute.”

**Defining abilities**

The list of abilities in Table 1 are guidelines, not a fixed list of permitted attributes. The ability rolls given in these rules (e.g., Climbing>Agility>Body) are meant as defaults or illustrations of how the abilities are selected to perform tasks.

Here are examples to illustrate how different concepts of “lore” relate to abilities:

- The History>Knowledge>Mind skill could determine a statue you find was made about 200 years ago in Evermorn.
- A Lore>Mind spell might determine that the statue has a magical property that relates to fire. It could also determine that the last owner was a young prince who was slain by his brother.
- A dwarf’s sense could determine that the statue is mostly made of bronze alloy covered with gold foil. It could also determine that there’s a hidden compartment in the base.
- Either Lockpicking/Traps>Agility>Body could be used to try to open the compartment without any risk of destroying the contents of the compartment.
- Intuition>Mind might reveal that the sculptor of that statue was in a rush.
- Intuition>Spirit could reveal that the sculptor of that statue was afraid.

As players become used to these concepts, the question will arise: What defines a skill or an attribute? As a rule of thumb, the choice of whether an ability is an aspect, attribute, or a skill depends on its limits. An ability that can be used to both pick locks and climb walls is not a skill, it’s an attribute; an ability that can be used to both attack and heal may be an aspect rather than an attribute. The GM has to approve of anything that’s different or unusual.

Here’s an example of shifting definitions: Normally, the attack ability with a sword is determined by Sword>Melee Weapon>Body, and the defensive ability by Melee Parry>Agility>Body. Suppose a player wanted to create a Sword attribute, with Sword Attack>Sword>Body and Sword Parry>Sword>Body as skills. This would be allowed, but the GM will impose an restriction: the character would have to wield a particular type of sword, perhaps one made by dwarves and cost five times as much.

If the player wanted to go further, and use the sword as a focus for rallying people to a cause (normally Presence>Spirit), then perhaps Sword should be an aspect for that character, replacing Body. Again, the GM will allow it, with the restriction that there would be one particular sword that the character must use. One encounter with a rust monster and the character might become useless.
Building a character

The initial aspects and additional dice for a brand-new character depends on the character’s race:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Spirit</th>
<th>Additional skill dice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elf</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>3D</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarf</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>3D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faire</td>
<td>1D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>3D (Honor)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Dragon</td>
<td>1D</td>
<td>3D</td>
<td>2D</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “skill dice” represent the training your character received before they become adventurers. They must all be used when you build your character; they cannot be converted into skill points to be spent later.

- You can spend 4 skill dice to improve an aspect by 1D. You only improve an aspect by up to 1D over its starting value.
- You can spend 2 skill dice to create an attribute under an aspect, with a value of 1D above its parent aspect. You can only improve an attribute by up to 1D over its parent aspect.
- You can spend 1 skill die to create a skill or power under an attribute, with a value of 1D over its parent attribute. You can only improve a skill or power by up to 1D over its parent attribute.
- One skill die is equivalent to three “pips.” For example, if you have an attribute with 3D, you can use one skill die to create a skill with 3D+1 and another skill with 3D+2.
- The spending limits in the above rules only apply when creating new characters. When you advance your character with skill points, you can increase your skills more than 1D above their attributes, etc.
- You don’t need to add dice to a separate attribute in order to have a skill. However, every skill must have a defining attribute. For example, you can have an “Elf Language” skill under your Mind aspect without adding any dice to a Knowledge attribute, as long as you note that the assumed parent attribute was Knowledge.

Here’s an example:

Alexander is human and starts with Body 2D. He can spend 4 skill dice to get Body 3D. He can’t get a higher Body value than that at the start of the game.

He decides to have the Melee Weapon attribute. He spends 2 skill dice to establish Melee Weapon 4D.

Alexander then decides to have a particular skill with one-handed swords. He spends one skill die to get Sword 5D.

He has spent a total of seven skill dice so far, and still has five more to spend.

Alexander wants to purchase Melee Parry, and is told by the GM that this is a skill under the Agility/Dexterity attribute. So he spends 2 dice to get Agility 4D. He decides he wants a better chance to both parry in melee and dodge ranged attacks, so he breaks up a die to create Melee Parry 4D+2 and Dodge 4D+1. He spends two dice on the attribute Stamina 4D.
Finally, Alexander wants a better chance to impress people. He spends his last four dice to increase his Spirit to 3D.

His abilities look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Body 3D</th>
<th>Mind 2D</th>
<th>Spirit 3D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melee Weapon</td>
<td>4D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>5D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>4D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melee Parry</td>
<td>4D+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge</td>
<td>4D+1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina</td>
<td>4D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advancement**

After each adventure, the GM will award skill points to each character. Typical numbers are 3-5 points if the adventure is “average,” 5-10 for “interesting,” 10-15 for “memorable,” and 15-20 for “epic.”

Suppose you had a skill that is at 1D. It costs 1 skill point to increase that skill to 1D+1; 1 more skill point to increase it to 1D+2; 1 more to increase it to 2D. To increase the skill from 2D to 2D+1 costs 2 skill points. The number before the “D” tell you the cost to improve the skill by +1.

To be formal: To increase a skill from nD+m to nD+m+1 costs “n” skill points. If m+1=(d/2), where “d” is the number of sides on the die (3 for six-sided dice), then the increase is to (n+1)D.

The cost for increasing an attribute is 10 × the cost of increasing a skill. It costs 30 skill points to increase an attribute from 3D to 3D+1. Any “children” skills or powers of that attribute are increased as well.

The cost for increasing an aspect is 25 × the cost of increasing a skill. It costs 50 skill points to increase an aspect from 2D+1 to 2D+2. Any skills, powers, and attributes underneath that aspect are increased as well.

In addition to the cost in skill points, you typically have to pay a fee in silver pieces to people who are training you in the skill; see page 28.

If you create a skill without allocating points or dice into a parent attribute, then you must assign an assumed attribute for that skill. Once you've done that, you can’t change that attribute. For example, assume a character created a Politics skill under Mind, and stated that it was defined by a Knowledge>Mind attribute. Later, the player wished they had put the skill under Intuition>Spirit, but the defining attribute for the skill cannot be changed.
Money and Equipment

100 copper pieces = 1 silver piece
100 silver pieces = 1 gold piece
10 gold pieces = 1 platinum piece
Starting characters receive 100 silver pieces.

Items

The prices listed are for used or well-worn items. Better-quality items can be purchased: every time you double the cost of an item, it adds +1 to the damage (for weapons), +1 to the Stamina (for armor), and (if at least three visible items are at the same bonus or higher) +1 to Appearance/Charisma rolls. Three +1s become 1D. This quality bonus is limited to a total of +5. If you’re wearing items with different quality bonuses, the Charisma bonus is based on the lowest common quality.

For example, if you spend 320 silver pieces on a dagger, it will do Agil+1D+2 damage.

Weapons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Melee Weapon</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hands (Brawling)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Str</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claws</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Str+1D</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fist (Ogres only)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Str/2+5D</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Str+1D</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Str+1D+2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spear</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Str+1D+1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortsword</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Str+3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Str+1D+3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axe</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Str+2D–2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-hand Axe</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Str+3D</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadsword (two-hand)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Str+2D+3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatsword (two-hand)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Str+4D</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagger</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Agil</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutlass</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Agil+1D+3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapier</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Agil+2D</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saber</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Melee</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (two-hand)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2D+3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aimed Weapon</th>
<th>Range (in yards)</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spear</td>
<td>3*Strength dice</td>
<td>Aimed+2D</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throwing Dagger</td>
<td>Aimed dice</td>
<td>Aimed+1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sling</td>
<td>2*Agility dice</td>
<td>Aimed/2+4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bow</td>
<td>4*Aimed dice</td>
<td>Aimed+1D</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow</td>
<td>3*Aimed dice</td>
<td>Aimed+2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is said that, before the Argothald came, ranged weapons were more powerful and armor almost useless against them. Those days are gone.

The difficulty numbers for a ranged attack (magical or physical) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>point-blank</td>
<td>Very Easy</td>
<td>&lt; 2 yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>up to range on weapon table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>up to 2*range on table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long</td>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>up to 4*range on table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very long</td>
<td>Very Hard</td>
<td>up to 6*range on table</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Armor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armor</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Stamina</th>
<th>“Freedom”</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+1D</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yak leather</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>+2D</td>
<td>-1D-2</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale Mail</td>
<td>+15</td>
<td>+2D</td>
<td>-2D</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain Mail</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+3D</td>
<td>-1D</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate Mail</td>
<td>+20</td>
<td>+3D</td>
<td>-3D</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helmet</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Shield</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1D</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Shield</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+1D</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Difficulty” is the number added to attacker’s difficulty number when attempting to hit. “Stamina” is the amount added to the armor-wearer’s roll to resist damage. “Freedom” is the amount subtracted from the armor-wearer’s Agility/Dexterity/Speed>Body or spellcasting rolls.

**Other items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reduction to “Freedom”</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiver and 12 Arrows</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Arrow</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpack (500 coins)</td>
<td>-3 (when full)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sack (250 coins)</td>
<td>-2 (when full)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 yards rope</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 torches - 3 hours duration</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lantern - 12 hours duration</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Spikes or Pitons</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Flask</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid Supplies (page 21)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50 for 5 uses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Upkeep

The nominal cost for feeding and housing your character is 30 silver/month, at least in the area of Grenn.

You can improve your standing by spending more. For every factor of two above nominal that you spend in a given month (60, 120, 240, ...) you will get +1 on Appearance>Body and Charisma/Presence>Spirit rolls when you interact with others.

You don’t have to spend anything on upkeep; this is called “dining on foodberries.” You’ll become smelly and scruffy-looking, but you won't suffer any penalties in combat. Your difficulty will increase when rolling Appearance or Charisma; typically by +1 for every month you live on the cheap.
Game Mechanics

Tasks

Difficulty Numbers

To attempt a given task, the player rolls six-sided dice. The character succeeds if the roll is greater than or equal to the difficulty number for the task. The GM determines the difficulty number for a given task using the following guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Dice needed to roll more than half the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Automatic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivial</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Easy</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>5D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>7D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Hard</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>8D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroic</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>9D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legendary</td>
<td>36+</td>
<td>10D+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If two characters compete at a task, the one who both rolls highest and rolls over the difficulty number succeeds. If competing die rolls are tied, the player character succeeds.

If a given ability is reduced to zero dice, then you automatically fail that ability, even for trivial tasks. For example, if you’re wearing enough armor to reduce your Speed to 1D, and you are stunned in combat, any attempt to run will cause you to trip and fall.

Example

The difficulties for coming up with a piece of information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone knows</td>
<td>Very Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common knowledge</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No secret, but not widely known</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized knowledge</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert knowledge</td>
<td>Very Hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difficulties for hitting with weapons are in the item lists.

Difficulty modifiers

The second column Table 8 is a range of numbers the GM can assign, independent of any other difficulty adjustment. The difficulty will be at the lower end of the range for unremarkable events (fighting an orc in Ironmaw), but might be adjusted to the upper end for unusual or generally tense events (attacking the head of the Assassin’s Guild).

There are other factors that can increase or decrease the difficulty. Table 10 illustrates how difficulty numbers can be adjusted due to circumstances.
Table 10: Generic difficulty modifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifier</th>
<th>Situational Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+16 or more</td>
<td>Overwhelming disadvantage: Something affects the skill use in an almost crippling fashion (repairing armor without any proper tools).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+11–15</td>
<td>Decisive disadvantage: The skill use is very limited by circumstance (trying to find someone in complete darkness).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+6–10</td>
<td>Significant disadvantage: The skill use is affected negatively (tracking someone through drizzling rain).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1–5</td>
<td>Slight disadvantage: There is an annoying problem (picking a lock by candlelight).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1–5</td>
<td>Slight advantage: A tool or modification that makes the skill use a little easier (a springy surface for <em>jumping</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-6–10</td>
<td>Significant advantage: A tool or modification that makes the skill use much easier (rope with knots is used for <em>climbing</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-11–15</td>
<td>Decisive advantage: A tool specifically designed to make the job easier (a well-stocked set of herbs and bandages for <em>healing</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-16 or more</td>
<td>Overwhelming advantage: An exceptional tool or modification that specifically makes the skill use much easier (complete set of wilderness tools and equipment specially designed to help with <em>survival</em>).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Success

Here are some guidelines for describing different levels of success. Use the result points of the roll — the difference between the skill total and the difficulty — to decide on the exact level.

Table 11: Effects of a good result (= skill total - difficulty)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Success</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>The total was just barely enough. The character hardly succeeded at all, and only the most minimal effects apply. If “minimal effects” are not an option, then maybe the action took longer than normal to succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>The action was performed completely, but without frills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>5–8</td>
<td>The results were better than necessary and there may be added benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>There are almost certainly additional benefits to doing an action this well. The character performed the action better, faster, or more adeptly than expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectacular</td>
<td>13–16</td>
<td>The character performed the action deftly and expertly. Observers would notice the ease or grace with which the action was performed (if applicable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incredible</td>
<td>17+</td>
<td>The character performed the skill with such dazzling quality that, if appropriate to the task, it could become the subject of conversation for some time — it’s at least worth writing home about.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: A character who is trying to use the *survival* skill to forage for food gets a *minimal* success — she finds “subsistence level” food; it’s barely better than garbage. The next day she gets a *spectacular* result — not only does she locate good, wholesome food, but she finds enough for two days instead of one.

In combat, it’s possible to suffer the consequences of a bad result; see Fumble (page 18) and Backlash (page 23).

**Combinations and synergies**

If two characters co-operate on a task, add +1 for each 1D of the relevant ability the assistant has.

It’s possible for a character’s abilities to combine together. Such combinations are handled on a case-by-case basis. For example:

- Florentine: The “to hit” roll is increased by +1 for each 1D of the secondary weapon; the difficulty number is multiplied by 1.5. The damage is increased by +1 for each 1D of damage of the secondary weapon. Improving the secondary weapon is always a separate skill; e.g., “Dagger (Florentine).”
- Dragon Breath: For every 1D associated with Breath>Body, +1 is added to the damage roll for magic spells of that same type; e.g., a Fiery Breath improves a Young Dragon’s fire-based spells.

**Advanced Game Mechanics**

**Wild die (optional)**

*In the D6 System, the wild die is mandatory. For now, I’m willing to let the wild die be optional.*

Before you roll dice, you may designate a particular one of a different style or color to be a “wild die.” If that die rolls 2-5, treat its result normally. If the roll is 1, discard that die from the sum. If the die rolls a 6, include it in the sum and roll it again, treating the new result as another wild die roll.

There is no limit to the number of times you can re-roll a wild die, as long as you keep rolling a 6.

**Emergency dice**

A player may, if they wish, choose to spend skill points to add dice to a roll. The cost is one skill point per additional “emergency” die.

An emergency die is always a wild die (see above), except that a roll of 1 is not ignored. The player can choose to buy emergency dice before or after they make an ability roll, but they must make the decision before the GM announces whether the roll has succeeded. The GM will never advise a player whether they should purchase more emergency dice in order to succeed.

Skill points spent on emergency dice are not refunded. Make sure you really want to succeed before you decide to spend skill points in this way.

**Fate points**

*I’m not allowing the use of Fate points in Argothald yet. The reason is that the last time I used them (as Force points in a Star Wars game), the players started arguing about whether or not their actions were “heroic.” I want to see how the game “feels” before letting a controversial mechanic into the game.*
Before you start begging for Fate points, remember that important NPCs get them too!

All characters start the game with one Fate point.

When a character spends a Fate point, all of their ability statistics are doubled for one combat round. For example, if a character normally has Strength $5D+2$, for that round it is treated as $10D+4$.

The player must decide whether to spend a Fate point at the start of the combat round, before any dice are rolled.

A Fate point does not change anything that is not part of the character. Any such adjustments are made to the doubled ability. A Fate point does not double any of the following:

- wound penalties
- penalties or bonuses due to equipment
- bonuses or additions due to items
- wild die (there’s still only one)
- number of emergency dice added to a specific roll
- effects of magic spells
- multiple actions in a combat

A player can only spend one Fate point per combat round.

In general, once a Fate point is spent, it’s gone. There are some important exceptions:

- At the start of an adventure, if a character has no Fate points from previous adventures, they start out with one. The start of a new adventure can be obvious: a new trip into Ironmaw, a fresh journey into the wilderness. If there are any doubts, the GM will determine when a new adventure begins.
- If the Fate point was spent to perform actions that are especially in keeping with the goals and purposes of the character, as established by the character’s previous actions and the player’s role-playing, then that Fate point will be restored at the end of the adventure.
- If the Fate point was spent in a way that fits the character, and at a climactic moment, then that Fate point will be restored and the character will gain an additional Fate point.*

To be added: leadership.

* An informal approach: You can earn an extra Fate point if you get a result that makes everyone go “whoa!” and tell the story afterwards. Fake “whoa”s and forced storytelling will result in the loss of Fate points.
### Combat

#### Combat Sequence

A four-second combat round consists of these phases:

1) **Determine Initiative.** All characters roll Initiation/Reaction>Mind.

2) **Declare actions.** Characters declare all actions for this combat round. Any full reactions must be declared now. The character with lowest Initiative declares actions first, followed by the other characters in ascending order of Initiative.

3) **Declare reactions.** Characters declare any reactions. The character with the lowest Initiative declares first, followed by the other characters in ascending order of Initiative.

4) **Roll reactions.** Characters who declared the use of any reactions roll dice. The GM determines the to-hit difficulty numbers for this combat round.

5) **Roll actions.** Characters who declared actions roll dice. Actions are resolved in descending order of the number of haste actions taken (see below). Actions with the same degree of haste are resolved simultaneously, with all non-movement actions occurring first, then all movement.

6) **Calculate Damage.** Roll damage and stamina dice for all targets that were hit and determine their effects. Any targets hit early in the fourth phase because of haste actions must calculate damage at that time, before lesser hastes or simultaneous actions occur. The damage results affect the outcomes of the remaining actions in the segment.

#### Actions in Combat

An **action ability** is one that requires initiative on the part of the character. Examples of action abilities are attempting to hit with a sword, or attempting to freeze someone with an ice blast.

A **reaction ability** is one that responds to someone else’s initiative. Examples of reactions are parrying a sword thrust, or resisting the effects of a spell.

In combat, an **action** is doing anything that requires a die roll. In addition, haste (described below), getting up from a prone position, and drawing a weapon are all actions. Falling down is not an action.

If you declare an action ability in the “Declare Actions” phase, then you roll against a difficulty number to see if the action succeeds.

A reaction ability declared in the “Declare Actions” phase is called a **full reaction.** The number you roll is *added* to the difficulty numbers for all opponents making appropriate attacks (e.g., dodge vs. arrows, parry vs. melee weapons, resistance vs. magic). It also must be the *only* action declared in the entire round.

If you declare a reaction skill in the second phase, then the number you roll *replaces* the difficulty number for all opponents; the original difficulty number is used if it’s higher.

You can move up to 5 yards/round without penalty. You can move up to 10 yards/round (“running”) and subtract 1D from all skill rolls. This may be reduced when fighting on difficult terrain.

Preparing an action takes one round; it lets you add 1D to a die roll the following round. You can perform no actions or reactions during the round of preparation.
A **haste** action lets your actions take place before any other characters’. You can declare more than one haste action in a phase (but see the following rule). All actions with the same degree of haste are resolved before actions with a lower degree of haste.

If a character performs more than one action in the first and second phases, 1D is subtracted from all skill rolls for each additional action performed in both phases.

**Damage**

Table 12, Table 13, and Table 20 are experimental. We may have to adjust these tables, or the weapons table, so that combat is neither too easy, too hard, nor takes a long time to achieve a result.

If the attack roll succeeds, the attacker rolls the damage dice of the weapon or spell. The defender rolls Stamina. The damage roll is compared to the Stamina roll; Stamina is never affected by wound status:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Damage roll ≥ Stamina roll by</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>Stun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>Incapacitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>Mortal Wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+</td>
<td>Killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Stun:* -1D on all die rolls for the rest of this round and all the next. A stun no longer reduces the die roll after the second round, but it still “affects” the character for a half hour unless they can rest for one minute.

If a total number stuns equal to their Stamina dice affects a character, they are knocked unconscious for 2D minutes.

*Wound:* Falls down. No actions for the rest of the round, -1D on all die rolls for the rest of the combat. A character who is wounded a second time is incapacitated.

*Incapacitated:* No actions for the rest of combat (until healed). Falls prone; will remain unconscious for 10D minutes. An incapacitated character who is wounded or incapacitated again is mortally wounded.

*Mortal Wound:* Falls down, unconscious. No actions until healed. Defender must roll 2D against the number of rounds since mortally wounded; if the player rolls less then the number of rounds the character has been mortally wounded, they die.

*Killed:* That’s it.

Damage can be healed by spells, by medical assistance, or by time (page 21).

**Success in combat**

The success rolls for skills (see page 13) can apply in combat: If a player rolls a Superior success or better, they can either:

- Choose a lesser combat result (e.g., they can choose to incapacitate instead of killing their opponent);
- Describe exactly how the combat result was inflicted on the opponent (the classic example: if they kill their opponent, they can say, “I chop its head off!”). This is
typically only a role-playing benefit, though if you leave your enemy with a nasty scar they may seek revenge later on...

**Fumble**

If your “to hit” roll with a melee weapon is much lower than the difficulty, then you may have fumbled the attack.

You only have to roll on Table 13 if:

- Your character attacks an active defender; you can’t fumble if you’re trying to bash down a door (page 19).
- You’re rolling against a difficulty number determined by your weapon, or by the target’s Melee Parry>Agility>Body roll, whichever is higher. If you’re rolling against your opponent’s Dodge roll, then you don’t fumble.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty &gt; To Hit roll by:</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Disarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>Numb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>Trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Notch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Disarm:* Your character has dropped their weapon. They will either have to draw a new one or pick up the fallen weapon. Either way, it counts as an action in combat.

*Numb:* Your character is disarmed, and the arm holding the weapon has been rendered numb for the rest of combat unless healed; treat as a “Wound” on the healing table. Your character can’t use that arm to hold a weapon or a shield. Spellcasters have -1D to their “to hit” rolls.

*Trip:* Your character is both disarmed and falls down. Getting back up and recovering the weapon counts as two combat actions.

*Notch:* Your character is disarmed, falls down, and the weapon itself is damaged. It will have -1 on all future “to hit” and damage rolls until repaired. Multiple Notch results are cumulative. A smith can repair a notched weapon; the typical fee is 1/5 the price of the weapon for each notch. Magical weapons may require specially-trained smiths.

*Break:* The character falls down. The weapon is broken and useless. The usual repair fee is 1.5 times the price of the weapon; this may be important if the weapon is an heirloom, a magic weapon, or unique in some other way. Again, you may have to search for a smith with the skill to make repairs.
Table 14: Cover Modifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover</th>
<th>Difficulty increase by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light smoke</td>
<td>+1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick smoke</td>
<td>+2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very thick smoke</td>
<td>+4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor light</td>
<td>+1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonlit night</td>
<td>+2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete darkness</td>
<td>+4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiming at someone standing in the midst of a group</td>
<td>+1D for each additional row of people between caster and target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target is not in caster’s line-of-sight</td>
<td>+4D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Character is:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cover</th>
<th>Difficulty increase by...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¼ covered</td>
<td>+1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ covered</td>
<td>+2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¾ covered</td>
<td>+3D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully covered</td>
<td>Cannot hit; must eliminate protection first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sample Protection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stamina of object</th>
<th>Sample Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flimsy wooden door</td>
<td>1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal wooden door</td>
<td>2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal-reinforced wooden door</td>
<td>3D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal door</td>
<td>4D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Object is:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reduce weapon damage by:</th>
<th>Sample Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stunned/Undamaged</td>
<td>Character is protected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounded/Light damage</td>
<td>-4D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitated/Heavy damage</td>
<td>-2D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortally wounded/Severe damage</td>
<td>-1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed/Destroyed</td>
<td>None; full damage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 illustrates how objects in the environment can protect characters. For example, if a character were behind a typical wooden door, the attacker would have to hack through the door to get at their target. The door would be treated as if it had Stamina 2D. Depending on the “wound status” of the door, it might be possible to attack through the door to get at the target on the other side... provided the target still stood at the other side of the door.

Difficulty adjustments due to environment are not included when determining if a character fumbled or suffered backlash (see pages 18 and 23).

**Scales**

Occasionally, objects of vastly different sizes get involved in fights. The scale modifier accounts for the fact that bigger items are easier to hit, and usually can take more damage, than smaller ones. Use Table 15 as a guide for determining the appropriate value for the two combat participants. The GM may further subdivide between levels.

If both opponents are either larger than or equal to a human or smaller than or equal to a human, subtract the larger number from the smaller one to calculate the scale modifier. If
one opponent is smaller than a human while the other is larger, then add together the two values.

For most cases, use these rules: If the attacker is larger than the defender, then the scale modifier is added to the combat difficulty and the damage total. If the attacker is smaller than the defender, then the scale modifier is added to the attacker’s combat skill total and the defender’s Stamina/Toughness.

Table 15: Combat scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Participant Size</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eight-story castle</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War galley</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-story building</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-story building</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longship</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-story building</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogre</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yak</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Human</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human child</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small keg, house cat</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coin</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ant</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Healing

Most healing in the game will probably be magical. At close range, the difficulty numbers for healing damage up by one level are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stun</td>
<td>Very Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wound</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitated</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortally Wounded</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without healing magic, characters can use First Aid > Knowledge > Mind, against the difficulty on the above table. Failure means the wound level increases by two (e.g., Incapacitated to Critical). Success means that the character will heal at the following rate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wound</td>
<td>1D hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitated</td>
<td>4D hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortally Wounded</td>
<td>1D days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If no healing is available at all, the character must heal naturally. A character who does nothing but rest and eat during the indicated rest period rolls using their Healing > Stamina > Body:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Rest period</th>
<th>Stamina roll</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wound</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Worsens to incapacitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>Stays wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7+</td>
<td>Fully healed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incapacitated</td>
<td>Two weeks</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>Worsens to mortally wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Stays incapacitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9+</td>
<td>Improves to wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortally Wounded</td>
<td>One month</td>
<td>2-6</td>
<td>Dies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Stays mortally wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9+</td>
<td>Improves to incapacitated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A character who keeps moving or is otherwise active during the rest period subtracts 1D from their Stamina roll. A character who maintains absolute bed-rest for twice the rest period adds 1D to their Stamina roll.

Resurrection

Any attempt at resurrecting a dead character adds at least +50 to the difficulty. It’s out of reach of player characters.

There are temples in the town of Grenn that will perform resurrections, for a high fee (see page 28).
Magic

A magic “skill” or power is an individual spell with specific effects. In general, an attempt to use magic works as any other ability: the die roll for the ability is compared against a difficulty number assigned by the GM.

Magic in Combat

The basic prototype for a magical is one that does 3D damage, at short range, to a single target. The “short range” in yards for a magic attack is the number of dice in the magic attribute. According to the table on page 10, that is a “Very Easy” ability roll.

That’s usually not enough to be effective, so the caster has the option of increasing the effectiveness of the spell at the cost of increasing the difficulty:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Additional difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1D damage</td>
<td>one difficulty level (+5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additional target</td>
<td>one difficulty level (+5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prevents combat for one round</td>
<td>two difficulty levels (+10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prevents combat indefinitely</td>
<td>three difficulty levels (+15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area-of-effect = circle of radius #MD</td>
<td>two difficulty levels (+10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area-of-effect = circle of radius 2*#MD</td>
<td>four difficulty levels (+20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avoiding “friendly fire” (i.e., enemies are affected but not allies)</td>
<td>the same additional difficulty for area-of-effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a +1D bonus to an ally’s attribute</td>
<td>one level for each die of the target attribute above 1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a -1D penalty to a target’s attribute</td>
<td>one level for each die of the target attribute above 1D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for targets that are fully or partially blocked, or out of line-of-sight</td>
<td>see Table 14 on page 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuous spells

When you give a bonus (“buff”) or a penalty (“debuff”) to an attribute, you can treat it as a continuous spell. When you roll success on the spell, keep track of the roll; if the difficulty changes (e.g., the ally moves farther away, the caster is stunned) then the spell might fail.

The chief benefit of a continuous spell is that its effects last from the previous combat round(s) to the initial phases of the following combat round(s). This benefit is lost if you want to re-cast the spell; e.g., you want a higher success roll so the ally can move further from you.

Each sustained continuous spell counts as an action in combat. In particular, a caster’s movement speed is halved for each continuous spell they maintain.
As noted in Table 19, the larger the target’s attribute, the harder it is to modify it. For example, to increase Stamina 3D by +1D adds two levels of difficulty; to increase Agility 5D by +1D adds four levels of difficulty.

Buffs and debuffs do not stack. Assume Cressida improves Beatrice’s Stamina 4D to 5D. If Desdemona were to cast the same spell on Beatrice, it would do the same thing: improve Stamina 4D to 5D. Desdemona might still choose to do this if she thought that Cressida was about to be attacked, and wanted to make sure Beatrice’s buff did not lapse.

Note that the “to hit” difficulty is not an attribute.

**Backlash**

Magic is inherently risky. If a spellcaster rolls too far below the difficulty number for a spell, they suffer a magical backlash. It is similar to fumbling with a melee weapon (page 18), with some important differences:

- A spellcaster may suffer backlash when they are rolling against *any* difficulty number, not just those associated with combat. For example, there’s an inherent risk in trying to read the mind of an adult dragon, or floating a multi-ton weight.
- In combat, a spellcaster may suffer backlash when they are rolling against the difficulty number for the spell, or when the target is reacting with Magic Resistance > Will > Spirit. However, a spellcaster will *not* suffer backlash if they are rolling against an opponent’s Dodge roll.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty &gt; To Hit roll by:</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Heals as if...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Dazed</td>
<td>Stun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>Staggered</td>
<td>Wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>Bewildered</td>
<td>Incapacitated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>Crazed</td>
<td>Mortal Wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26+</td>
<td>Insane</td>
<td>Killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dazed:* -1D on all die rolls for the rest of a combat round and all the next. A daze no longer reduces the die roll after the second round, but it still “affects” the spellcaster for a half hour unless they can rest for one minute.

If a total number of dazes equal to their Magic Resistance dice affect a character, they are knocked unconscious for 2D minutes.

*Staggered:* Falls down. No actions for the rest of a combat round, -1D on all die rolls for the rest of the combat or 2D minutes, whichever is longer. A spellcaster who is staggered a second time is bewildered.

*Bewildered:* No actions for the rest of combat. Falls prone; will remain awake but unable to perform any actions that require a die roll for 10D minutes.

*Crazed:* Behaves insanely (see below) until healed. The spellcaster must roll 2D against the number of rounds since crazed; if the player rolls less then the number of rounds the character has been crazed, they become insane.

*Insane:* Permanent insanity until magically healed.

The GM will determine the nature of the insane behavior. The magnitude of the insanity will generally depend on what the spellcaster was trying to do:
• If the caster were attempting to identify the powers of a magic ring, they might merely have the delusion that all their friends are talking pigs.
• If the caster goes crazed or insane in the middle of combat, they will probably decide that everyone around them is an enemy and attack random targets with their most powerful abilities.

If a spellcaster suffers multiple insanities from backlash, it requires a separate healing attempt for each case of insanity.

**Aspects of Magic**

It's to the players' advantage for many types of magic to exist so spells can be related in many ways. Magic colors are additional types that are used to group spells together; they are from *Real Magic* by P. E. I. Bonewits.

**Mind Magic**

The following types are normally associated with a character's Mind:

- **Earth:** The ground, soil, rock, stone, earthquakes, earth elementals, metals, transmutation.
- **Air:** Lightning, clouds, winds, fog, air elementals.
- **Water:** Ice, storms, ice storms, water elementals, parting water, waves, tides, rain, rivers, oceans, lakes.
- **Fire:** Lights, fireballs, fire elementals, flames, heat.
- **Lore:** Detection spells, reading languages and magic, discovering secrets, communing and consulting with the gods, researching.
- **Illusion:** Images, illusions, shadows, phantasms, hallucinations, blurs, and prestidigitation.
- **Yellow:** Mind, nervous system, and the mental sciences like mathematics, magic, philosophy, learning, theorizing, organization, and technology.
- **Green:** Fertility, creativity, beauty, art, fine arts, botany, and the geographical sciences.
- **Indigo:** Weather control, meteorology, astronomy, astrophysics, space and time travel.
- **Brown:** Sensuality, primitive and animalistic powers, woods, glens, wilderness, animals, hunting, and the ecological sciences.
- **Gold:** The sun, gold, gold ores, treasure, flight, castles, chariots, and perfection.
- **Silver:** The moon(s) (i.e., Diana, Cynthia, or Selene), silver, silver ores, jewelry, gems, sailing, nocturnal creatures, mirrors, vanity, shame, and horror.

**Spirit Magic**

The following types are normally associated with a character's Spirit:

- **Dark:** Dead, undead, half-dead, resurrections, incarnations, re-animations, and the soul.
- **Red:** Life, health, healing, the body (human and animal), killing, the medical and military sciences, strength, zoological sciences, curses, and blessings.
- **Orange:** Ego, charisma, materialism, pride, self-confidence, courage, security, the psychological, physical, and economic sciences.
- **Blue:** Emotions, religion, psychic powers, spiritualism, fortune-telling, theology, and the social sciences.
- **Purple:** Violence, physical passions, lust, hate, fear, anger, ecstasy, political power, and the political sciences.
**Violet:** Extremely intense and powerful emotions, ghosts, and powerful psychic energies.

**White:** Good, morals, ethics, civil rights, defense, escape, love, and joy.

**Black:** Evil, slavery, condemnation, damnation, destruction, confinement, attack, hate, and pain.

**Gray:** Freedom, struggle, hope, despair, insanity, sanity, wisdom, deduction, induction, hiding, seeking, and sleep.

**Bard:** Spells cast using music.

**Other types**

The players are free to create additional types, provided they are not too specific (rubies weighing a gram or less), general (any spell with an ingredient prepared with a mortar and pestle), or silly (everyone whose last name begins with a “D”).

**Ancient Magic**

In the times before the Argothald came, magic was better understood and more reliable. The ancient forms of magic are still more powerful that what is possible under the Argothald, but their effectiveness is dubious.

The ancient magic is still practiced today, handed down through the centuries by an apprenticeship system. Most of the practitioners have patrons, either royal houses or orders of knighthood, since these studies are expensive and time-consuming. However, these masters of the classic arts grow fewer with each passing decade. It's now hard to find someone willing to become an apprentice sorcerer or necromancer.

**Categories**

Before the fall of Civilization, there were seven important categories of magic:

**Daemonology:** Based on summoning of creatures from another dimension. The Mekatrig forbids this ancient art.

**Sorcery:** Based on creating creatures from innate magical forces in nature.

**Necromancy:** Magic derived from death and the dead.

**Alchemy:** Magic derived from the substances of the world. This is the most commonly-practiced ancient magic.

**Wizardry:** Magic derived from knowledge and wisdom.

**Magery:** Magic derived from semantics and symbols.

**Prophecy:** The art of divination.

There were other, less-common forms of ancient magic: conjury, which was creating something out of nothing; oneiromancy, which was magic through dreams; taromancy, which was magic through cards; bibliomancy, which was magic through books or scrolls; and others.

A special mention should be made of theurgy, which on Tala is interpreted to mean magic by invocation of the Architect. It is an unsuccessful form of magic practiced only by Architect worshippers. It's said that the only successful result of theurgy is the Theurgist's Amulet, which allows the wearer to monitor the thoughts of the Architect as he designs his next world. It's also said that the Amulet does not exist and is nothing more than an idle boast of a long line of unsuccessful theurgists.
**Using Ancient Magic**

You can pick one of the above forms of ancient magic for your character. If so, your character must have a patron who is willing to teach the art. Such trainers are known for their eccentricity, charge high fees, and often make heavy demands on their apprentices. Even the simplest of attempts to use ancient magic adds +20 to the difficulty. When an ancient magic attempt succeeds, the effects are usually... interesting. When an attempt fails, if the roll is 10 or more below the difficulty, nothing happens; if the roll is less than that, the results are... unpleasantly interesting.

In other words, attempting to use ancient magic puts your character at the whim of the GM.

*To be added: Death Curses and True Names*
World

Nation
The players start out in Aeykia. The King is the elf Bá-lon, often nick-named "the Harmless" in contrast to the nation’s last two kings, who were dangerous rulers indeed. The capitol of Aeykia is Merona, a city a few days to the west of Grenn.

Getting around
With one exception, the roads in Aeykia are in poor repair. Most adventurers prefer not use them: those with unfriendly agendas, including spies for Crytolos, often watch the roads; foodberries are usually hard to find near a road. Most adventurers find themselves travelling through the wilderness, off the trails.
When you first travel to a given location, the GM will tell you how long it will take to get there. If you return to the same place, you’ll gradually learn the route and the travel time will be halved. For example, Castle Earthrock is a day’s journey to the north for first-time visitors; frequent guests can get there in half a day.

Caravan trail
The one road that’s kept in good condition is the main caravan trail. The Mekatrig mandated this centuries ago. No matter how poor the government of Aeykia has been, they’ve taken care to keep that trail open.
The caravan trail runs from the nation of Evermorn to the north to the harbor town of Freeport on southern coast of Aeykia. It does not pass anywhere near Grenn.
Caravan masters receive a great deal of respect, as they travel “on the Mekatrig’s business.” They do not discuss their cargo with outsiders. This does not prevent bandits from raiding them, but even the most successful raider has discovered nothing but the usual trade items.

Foodberries
The foodberry is a small red-brown fruit. It grows on bushes that are found throughout most of the Twilight Kingdoms. It is so named because people can survive a long time eating nothing but foodberries.
The taste is overly sweet and slightly brackish. You’ve tried foodberries cooked any number of ways to try to make them appetizing: roasted, in jams, backed in pies, sauces, stews. It doesn’t work. They still taste like foodberries. No one would eat them regularly if they had a choice.
If an adventurer tells you they’ve been “dining on foodberries,” it means they’re having a run of bad luck and can’t afford to pay for meals. They’ve been forced to wander in the lands near Grenn, looking for foodberry bushes that have not yet been picked by someone else.
In other parts of the world, foodberries have acquired a reputation as a delicacy; you can’t imagine why. At times, merchants have traded foodberry preserves in exotic lands distant from Aeykia. It’s said the people in the Technology grant big favors in exchange for foodberry jam.
Town
Players start in Grenn. As described on page 4, the source of the town’s importance is its location near Ironmaw.

The town’s monthly broadsheet is *The Grenn Chronicles*. Finnegan the elf is the publisher. Crytolos’ list of victims is found here.

Crytolos
He is always available for an audience, if you wish to see him. Appointments may be made via his chief assistant, Scred.

Taverns
There are several taverns in the town. The most significant are:

*The Platinum Pin*, a favorite among adventurers.

*The Blank Slate*, where the drinks and life are both cheap. Its nickname is “Foodberries”; if that’s what you’re eating, then here’s where you’re drinking.

*The Bag o’ Gold*, the fanciest place in town. Go there to show off how wealthy you are.

Religions
There are more religions in Grenn than in any other town in Aeykia; adventurers are good customers, and any town with Crytolos in it needs a lot of prayer. The temples offer many services: resurrections, healing spells, magic item analysis, divinations, instruction. A temple can also be a place to meet people, make contacts, listen to rumors, gain information, learn about quests, and purchase magic items.

You are not forced to select a belief for your character. In fact, it’s usually a bad idea for a brand-new character to join a religion, since it can reduce a character’s options. For example, many religions require membership in exchange for favors and blessings; if you’re already in another religion you can’t get the blessing. If you want to join a religion, choose carefully. You only learn the full rites of a religion after you join, so it’s possible to be stuck in a religion whose practices you don’t like.

If you join a religion, its god shares 5% of the skill points you gain by adventuring. You can choose to donate more skill points, but any amount over 5% must be subtracted from what you earn. Keep careful track of how many skill points and silver pieces you give to your religion. The more you donate, the greater your chances for divine blessings and assistance.

The temples are also where adventurers improve their skills. When you “spend skill points,” your character is learning, researching, and practicing at the temples. Normally this is not an issue, but if your character becomes a total pariah to all the temples in Grenn, you may not be able to purchase any new abilities. The usual fee is 10 silver pieces for each skill point you spend.

The religions in Grenn can also be found elsewhere. Many religions don’t have temples in Grenn. All religions in Grenn are based on the “new” gods.

- Savers of the Soul: led by Hanala, Mistress of Dark Magic. She is responsible for most of the resurrections the players receive. Hanala charges 50 silver pieces to heal a person of all wounds. It costs 400 silver pieces to attempt to resurrect a character; 600 if you only have the body of her slayer; 800 if you have neither. Prices start at 800 SP to resurrect a fairie. If a resurrection attempt fails, the price for the next attempt is 200 SP more.
Resurrection can be attempted no more than three times. If any resurrections are attempted, then the character cannot become a spirit. The resurrection difficulty is greatly increased if the character has a true name unknown to the one performing the resurrection.

- **Church of Death**: led by Necros, Master of Fate. The Church offers a higher chance for successful resurrection than the Savers of the Soul at a lower cost, but you must join the Church if it resurrects you.
- **Church of the Sacred Frost**: led by Frieda, Sage of the Ice.
- **Church of the Holy Flame**: led by Phrygus, the Fire Mage. In the past, Phrygus has been friendly to adventurers, perhaps because he was an adventurer himself. Phrygus is Frieda’s father.
- **Temple of the Void**: Leader unknown. Found in Grenn irregularly, since it travels randomly through space and time.
- **Temple of the Way**: led by Enlightened Master Enduring Lotus.
- **House of Peace**: led by Lady Ambassador Helena. The House is known for its ability to send messages throughout the Twilight Kingdoms.
- **House of the Loremaster**: led by Doctor Skyring. Since Skyring suffers from mental illness, his assistant Fara handles most of the House’s duties. If you’re interested in becoming an apprentice in ancient magic, you look here first.
- **Temple of the Red Blade**: led by Somatan. The Temple is popular among fighting adventurers.
- **Agora of the Sky**: led by Air Mage Elevos.
- **House of the Phantasm**: led by Josephus, Master of Illusion.
- **The Church of the Ancestor**: led by Elron. He is an expert on demon rulers, Crytolos in particular. He charges one gold piece per sentence of useful information.
- **The Temple of the Holy Rain**: led by Lemuel. For some reason, there are two gods of the Holy Rain, Aquarius and Aquaria.
Races

In addition to the races listed below, there are other intelligent races native to the planet Tala. Among them are spirits, ogres, griffins, dolphins, and seafolk (mer-people). These races may become accessible to the players in the future.

Humans

The most numerous race on Tala.

Religion

When the world was created, the Architect assigned humans to worship the following gods: Zeus, Hera, Dis, Hephaestos, Ares, Artemis, Hermes, Dionysus, and Poseidon. Humans did not stick to their assigned religious duties for long, and worship spread to the deities and forces worshipped by other races. They even started creating gods of their own. Humans are responsible for creating most new religions.

Elves

The elves are a race of people searching for perfect union with the world. Taller and slimmer than humans, they always appear to be on the verge of change, as if they are about to become part of their surroundings. Elves are graceful and move quickly; they are known for their skills in dance and archery. They are always polite: it makes their insults twice as deadly.

Nature sense

Elves are in tune with nature, and are able to sense changes and abnormalities in the natural world. This sensing ability can detect rock, water, life, some forms of treasure, and danger. It cannot detect magic. The range of this sensing ability is three meters (ten feet). Elves can use the sense on what they can see; they can sense through doors but at half the range.

This sense detects dangers only when the danger is immediate. An elf will not sense danger if there are orcs with swords on the other side of a door, since it is not definite that the orcs will attack and pose a danger to the elf. An elf will sense danger if there is poisonous gas on the other side of the door, or if there is a troll who specifically intends to kill the creatures on who are standing on his doorstep.

The Life of an Elf

Elves are raised in large group families. In their youth, elves pick a type of tree (e.g., beech, larch, oak, pine, willow) and consider themselves friends to that type of tree. As long as elflings are near their tree, they cannot be lost and always know their way home.

Every elf has a critical choice to make in life: to pick a “center.” The center is the basis for the elf’s entire existence; elves have the potential be transformed as they achieve perfect union with their centers. Many elves follow the paths of their elf-sense and pick an element of nature as their center: wood-elves transform into their tree-friends, and watch over their fellow trees; sea-elves become aquatic, and swim in the depths of lakes or oceans; rock-elves become columns of stone, strengthening and enriching the soil; air-elves become like clouds, and flow with the winds. Some elves pick an animal for their center: there are wolf-elves, swan-elves, deer-elves, tiger-elves, etc.; they preserve and protect their fellow creatures.
It is even said that a few elves can choose the stars for their centers, and become one with the stars. But star-elves, if they exist, have never returned to share their secrets.

Not all elves choose the physical world for their centers. Some elves choose leadership and politics; they become the rulers of nations. There are those who choose fighting as their center, and become great warriors. Others choose a particular art or craft, becoming smith-elves, mason-elves, dance-elves. One example of an exotic center is the choice of Finnegan, who found his center publishing the newspaper, *The Grenn Chronicles*.

However, not all elves find their centers. For elves, the tragedy is not to ever find a center, but to pick the wrong one, or for elven mates to discover they have different centers. Many elves spend decades deciding what their center is; some of these elves, in their search for a center, become adventurers.

Elves are interfertile with humans, but the offspring are also human; there are no half-elven.

All elven adventurers are assumed to be still searching for their centers. It need not be the elf character’s primary goal, but the player should keep it in mind. When they have a chance, the player should pick a tree-friend for the elf character.

**Social Organization**

Some elves choose the family and the rearing of children for their centers; they become the heads of the elf families. The families raise the children of any elves who cannot raise their own; for example, the offspring of two air-elves is a normal elfling who cannot be reared in the clouds. Any child, elven or not, who is found on the doorstep of an elf family house is welcomed and cared for.

Because of their crucial role in maintaining the elven race, the elf-families are also the focal point of elven politics. The status of an elf family is determined by its size; a junior family may have only twenty members while a senior family may have three hundred or more. It is the senior elf families who are the leaders of the elves. They protect the elven traditions, especially the right of an elf to seek a center, and they preserve elven art and literature. The elves still talk with pride about the Elf-Family Redmourn, who were wiped out as they defended a museum from barbarians.

The senior family with authority over Aeykia is the Skyshield family. Since they are located in western Narlorn, Aeykian elves are effectively cut off from elven politics.

**Religion**

The Architect assigned the elves to worship the following gods: Jupiter, Juno, Pluto, Vulcan, Mars, Diana, Mercury, Bacchus, and Neptune. The elves are more compliant than humans in following the Architect’s wishes, but elves have been known to follow other deities.

Elves who pick religion as their center normally become priests in one of the above religions.

**Dwarves**

Dwarves are shorter than humans; they range in height from three to five feet tall. They are stocky and strong for their size. Dwarves are proud, practical, and deal with the immediate realities of life.
Stone sense

Dwarves have a sensing ability similar to that of the elves. While the elves sense natural things, dwarves sense changes and differences in the artificial. They can detect unusual constructions, hidden traps, secret compartments, and so forth. Like elves, they cannot sense magic. Their sensing ability works under the same rules as the elvish sensing ability.

Each dwarf picks a type of rock (e.g., mica, pumice, marble, limestone, basalt) and considers himself or herself a friend to that rock. When dwarves touch their rock-friend, they can sense the shape and direction of that vein of rock no matter how far it extends.

When they have a chance, the player should try to pick a rock-friend for the dwarf character.

The Life of a Dwarf

Dwarves are a proud, brave, and stubborn people, easy to take offense and slow to forgive. As warriors, they are fierce and unrelenting. As diplomats, they are clumsy and uncouth. The mild, calm, placid dwarf is rare to see.

Dwarves can carry on feuds for a long time. Almost everyone underestimates the sheer malevolence of a dwarf when they declare that someone is their enemy. They feel that no trick is too low, no lie too wicked, no deed too evil as long as it causes the downfall of a foe.

A dwarf is capable of pretending love and friendship for years until their opponent has let their guard down. This character trait has not made the dwarves well-liked, but it also encourages people to stay on the dwarves’ good side.

Dwarves are extremely good with anything artificial. Their hands have short, stubby fingers, but their skill with tools is unrivaled. Dwarves are in great demand as builders, forgers of weapons, and makers of artifacts. However, dwarves will never forget if their payment is short by even a copper piece. They are scrupulous about setting a price that is exactly equal to the value of their work, and any attempt to cheat them is regarded as a personal insult to their skills.

Dwarves love nature, but their skill with the artificial is matched by their clumsiness with the natural world. Apart from sculpting rocks, dwarves cannot improve the beauty of the world, they can only admire it. A dwarf, encountering a deer in the forest, is as likely to offer it a haunch of meat as any other food; the dwarf may then beat the deer to death when it refuses the meat.

Dwarves and Elves

Another dwarven trait is their dislike of elves. They don’t consider the elves to be their enemies, but they don’t offer them friendship either. Elves don’t particularly dislike dwarves, but it’s hard to return friendship for distrust.

Three reasons are offered for the dwarves’ unfriendliness. The first is the dwarven explanation: The elves don’t like it when dwarves cut down tree-elves or mine rock-elves to make artifacts. However, the elves have never raised any objection to this; in fact, they freely purchase such items.

The second explanation is the elven one: Dwarves resent the elves’ ability to sense nature and become one with a center. Dwarves would dearly love to be able to do this, and are envious of those who can. However, the dwarves deny that they desire to be like elves.
The third explanation is one accepted by most non-elves and non-dwarves: Dwarves still hold a grudge against the elves from the time of the Barbarian Wars, but it’s been so long that the dwarves have forgotten the cause. Only the grudge remains.

Whatever the reason, a dwarf may speak politely to an elf, but rarely with civility.

Social Organization
The dwarven social unit is called the family, but unlike elves each dwarven family is a ruling community unto itself. Many, but not all, dwarves live in their family community. Whether or not they are part of a community, every dwarf can trace their lineage back to their family’s founding members. There are two dwarvish family castles in Aeykia, the Castle Earthrock and the Orctomb Mansion, but not all Aeykian dwarves belong to those two families.

If dwarves mate with elves or humans, the result is a short elf or human respectively. Such offspring are not automatically part of the dwarvish family they were born in. They can become member of a family, as can anyone else, by proving themselves to the satisfaction of the family heads. However, this rarely happens.

Religion
The Architect assigned the dwarves to worship Odin, Frigga, Hela, Fafnir, Tyr, Freya, Hermod, Frey, and Thor. Most dwarves are not religious, both those who are almost always worship one of these deities.

Fairies
Fairies look like humans with two beautiful iridescent wings extending from their shoulders. They have the ability to change their size, ranging from a maximum of 7 feet to a minimum of half an inch. They can change themselves into small birds or insects. They cannot bear the touch of cold iron.

They have no souls, and are resistant to gods and healing spells. They do not have a Spirit aspect; their third aspect is Honor (page 7).

Flying
A fairie’s wingspan varies in proportion to height, from six feet when the fairie is three feet tall to an inch when the fairie is at minimum height. A fairie cannot fly when more than three feet high.

Fairies may voluntarily shed their wings at any time, not only when they enlarge above three feet. It takes a month for shed wings to grow back. Once shed, the wings slowly dissolve and become a pile of dust after three hours. If exposed to running water, they dissolve instantly. A fairie’s wings, while attached, take about five hours to dissolve if they’re continuously immersed in water.

At three feet tall, a fairie's flying speed is twice human speed. The smaller they become, the faster they fly. This is implemented in the game rules by reducing the difficulty numbers when a fairie rolls against their Flight attribute.

Changing Size
The “normal” height for a fairie is about six feet. They can enlarge to a maximum of five meters, but if they grow above normal height they immediately shed their wings and cannot fly. There is a limit to how much they can grow or shrink: A fairie cannot grow more
than twice the minimum height the fairie was during the past day, nor shrink below one-half the maximum height the fairie the past day.

For every factor of two above/below normal height, 3 is added to the combat scale in the appropriate direction (page 19)

Fairies are automatically prevented from enlarging or shrinking to a point that would kill them. This protection works even if the fairie is unconscious or does not want it to work, and no matter what means are employed to grow or shrink the fairie. For example, if a fairie were inside a 1-foot cage, and either intentionally or through a spell tried to enlarge to 2 feet, the fairie would grow to 1 foot and then stop.

The body of a fairie can change size, but normal clothes cannot. Each fairie owns a fairie robe, which not only changes size with the fairie, but also adds the same defense as cloth armor. This robe is of no value to anyone but a fairie.

**Changing Shape**

Fairies can change shape as well as size. When they shrink to the size of a given type of bird or insect, they can change into that bird or insect. The insect or bird must be non-predatory; it cannot be a type that could seriously harm anyone. A fairie of the proper size could change into a swallow, pigeon, parrot, sparrow, sea gull, butterfly, moth, or bee, but not into a vulture, eagle, hawk, mosquito, emu, ostrich, black widow spider, etc.

In their altered state, a fairie can talk to other fairies, or to creatures of the same species. This does not mean that those creatures will have anything interesting to say.

A fairie can change shape no more than three times per day. Changing into a sparrow, changing back into a fairie, and changing into a sparrow again is all the shape-shifting the fairie can do in one day.

When fairies change shape, the fairie robe is part of the transformation. A fairie can arrange to have the robe dyed in a certain way so the colors or markings on the robe appear on the creatures the fairie changes into. Any tailor knows how to do this; the cost depends on the complexity of the dye job.

**Cold Iron**

The bane of every fairie is cold iron. If fairies come into contact with iron or steel, their skin begins to burn and they are paralyzed with pain. Because of the paralysis, any amount of cold iron that can affect a fairie at all can be fatal unless the fairie is rescued.

The amount of iron it takes to affect a fairie depends on the fairie’s size. When fairies are 2 meters tall, they would not enter a room made of iron and would not wear full plate armor. At 1 meter tall, a fairie would not carry a greatsword and would stay away from those who did. If a fairie were an inch or less, a metal rivet could kill instantly.

The exact effect of cold iron depends on the size of the fairie, the amount of metal involved, and how the metal is applied. Metal foil could not hurt a normal-sized fairie, would cause a three-foot fairie to shy away and touch the foil only gingerly, and would immolate a one-inch fairie. An iron sword would do normal damage to a normal-sized fairie, double damage to a fairie half-sized or less, and would kill a fairie ten centimeters tall. The GM decides how an amount of iron affects a given fairie at a given height.

**Souls**

Fairies do not have souls. They are proud of that fact, and would not have souls if they had a choice. Fairies feel that someone has a soul because, without one, that person could not...
distinguish good from evil. A fairie knows what is right and wrong without a soul, and makes free, independent choices based on that inner knowledge. To assert that a fairie needs a soul is to assert that the fairie must be imprisoned to deal with life.

That is the reason for the important fairie custom that applies to all people, not just to other fairies: No one may say “thank you” to a fairie. To thank them is to imply that they did something from a sense of obligation, which is a result of having a soul. Fairies do things because they want to, not because a soul forces them. Thanks may be exchanged between close friends or lovers, but to give thanks casually to a fairie can mean that an entire circle will declare a blood feud against you.

The rule about giving thanks also applies to directly paying a fairie for services. To pay a fairie, leave the money on a table, turn away, and let the fairie pick it up. But don’t try to avoid the fee; fairies are just as greedy as anyone else.

To dicker on a price with a fairie, suggest what you want to the fairie, then leave half the fee on a nearby table. If the fairie does not pick up the money, you’ll have to put more money down. To barter with a fairie, put down your goods; the fairie will put down what seems to be a fair exchange. Each side alters what it has put down until the barter reaches its conclusion: either you pick up your own goods or you pick up the other’s.

A god or disembodied spirit cannot perceive a fairie; there is nothing on the spiritual plane for a god to see. Fairies are immune to spells cast by gods that have no physical effects and they are immune to being cursed by gods or religions. In turn, fairies cannot sense the presence of gods or spirits.

Fairies are immune to spells that affect people spiritually; for example, healing spells. All healing spells add +10 to the difficulty number.

Social Organization

Fairies have the most complex social castes and customs of any race on Tala. Many prejudices were discarded in the past, but every fairie inherits a background of social turmoil that has not yet died. Only a fairie can understand all the complexities and histories of the social classes. The relationships between classes are so complex that there are existing social classes with no surviving members.

Fairies must choose how to deal with their heritage. One choice is to ignore it; all people are created equal. This is the modern point of view.

Another choice is to preserve some of the social pride that fairies receive from their parents. To simplify the complexities of the fairie class structure, a fairie’s player rolls a “social class” on a ten-sided die. (The numerical value of social class is a convenience; 5s are not higher or lower than 6s, just different.)

If that fairie meets another fairie of the same social class, they can be friends. If two fairies meet of different social classes, they can choose to ignore this difference. However, they may choose to be social rivals. Each will continually attempt to prove that their social class is better than the other’s by playing elaborate ego games.

The social unit of the fairies is the circle. There are only seven fairie circles on Tala. The one with jurisdiction over Aeykia is the Circle of Telleron, and almost all fairies in this circle have Telleron as their personal hero. Each fairie circle contains at least one member, if there are enough left, of each social class.
**Customs and Beliefs**

Fairies do not have a religion; they know is there is no afterlife for them. Instead they have a form of hero worship. Almost every fairie chooses one hero from the past to be a personal hero. To a fairie, the hero represents the triumph of good over evil, of right over wrong, of fairie freedom over the tyranny of a soul.

The four major fairie heroes are Felena and Melissa, who were female, and Menelon and Telleron, who were male. Menelon was an evil fairie magician who did many wicked deeds. Felena was a fairie warrior who, through personal example and a few blows to the head, converted Menelon to the ways of good. Together they had a daughter, Melissa, who became an evil magician like her father. Telleron, also a warrior, converted Melissa to the side of good through force of argument and some dirty tricks.

A player is not required to select a hero for a fairie character, nor does the hero have to be Felena, Melissa, Menelon, or Telleron. The hero should be someone the fairie character respects and can aspire to emulate.

Fairies are interfertile with humans, elves, and dwarves. The offspring have a 50% chance to have each of the following attributes: wings, size change, shape change, sensitivity to cold iron, and lack of a soul. “Souled” fairies are soiled fairies; they are excluded from fairie society. Otherwise half-fairies are socially considered to be full fairies, even if they are brought up by non-fairie relations. The half-fairies and their non-souled descendants are watched over by the local fairie community; one never knows if one has a fairie godparent.

**Game note:** If a player wants to consider the possibility that their non-fairie character has a fairie godparent, the GM will roll percentile dice; if he rolls a 00, then the character has no soul (and so can't be easily healed, can't be seen by gods, etc.). The GM will then privately determine if the character has a fairie godparent.

**Fairie Tales**

Fairies are excellent at telling stories that enthral children. There is no child who has not read at least one book of fairie tales.

Here's one such tale: According to human legend, somewhere in the world there is a hidden fairie kingdom. This kingdom is filled with wealth and treasure; the streets are paved with gold, the castles are walled with silver, the people dress in diamonds. It's ruled over by the King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, whose authority is superior to that of any fairie circle. If anyone with a soul looks upon the kingdom, they will be forced to stay there forever or be blinded; if a souled one eats any food there, they are incapable of leaving.

However, if you ask a fairie about the legend, they either say that it's all nonsense or they say, “Sure, kid, sure, a kingdom with lots of treasure. Just leave a pile of gold on that table over there and maybe you'll learn where it is.”

**Dragons**

The word “dragon” is a derived from “children of Drake,” the original god that forged dragons without permission of the Architect. Except for seafolk, they are the youngest race on Tala, but they are the wisest and most magical of all the races. Even their breath is magical.

Dragons come in two forms, young and adult. Young dragons look like humanoid lizards, ranging from four to seven feet tall, with thick, long tails about four feet long. Adult dragons
vary in shape, color, and size; they never stop growing. Their natural lifespans are extremely long; no dragon is known to have died of old age.

**Young Dragons**

Young dragons are bipedal, scaly, have non-prehensile tails, decorative fangs and claws, and range in color from gray to brown to black to green. Despite their appearance, young dragons are physically weak due to their immaturity. They are prone to injury and disease; only one-tenth of those who leave their nest ever return to it.

A female dragon lays eggs once every ten to twenty years. There are about ten eggs to a clutch; an average of two hatch. For their first 15 years, young dragons are educated by their parents and by other dragons in their nest. About half pass the tests of adolescence and are allowed to leave the nest and explore the world. Young dragons who don’t pass are not allowed to leave; they are cared for, but they never mature and they die after about ten years.

Young dragons are kicked out of their nest with a “sink-or-swim” attitude. They can do whatever they like: explore, study, run a business, rule a country, conquer a continent, or even become an adventurer. Young dragons are not fertile, and may dally with young dragons of the opposite sex with no risk of offspring.

Young dragons acquire as many abilities as they can over the next 25 years. The abilities they learn during this period are the base for the more powerful abilities the youngster will gain at adulthood. No skill is too minor, no detail too petty, no ability too trivial for a developing dragon.

As they near the end of their 25 years out of the nest, the young dragon’s wrists and elbows move further up their arms, and their ankles and knees move up their legs, which begin to enlarge. Finally, wing buds begin to form. When that happens, a dragon will close out all affairs and return to the nest. A dragon who does not return to the nest in time for the final maturation process can be permanently deformed.

No dragon will harm another dragon. A young dragon, no matter how rash or impetuous, will never hurt nor slay another of his kind, and an adult dragon will never slay any youngster. This restriction does not apply to non-dragons in the same group as the youngster.

Only young dragons may be player characters. If somehow a player’s young dragon matures within the time-frame of the campaign then the player loses the dragon as a character.

**Magic Breath**

A young dragon’s magic breath follows the same rules as a magic spell, but it’s an attribute based on Breath>Body. Once a player has chosen the nature of the breath, they are limited to effects within that type; a spellcaster can try to use their Mind aspect to cast a spell outside their expertise, but a Fiery breath stays that way.

As noted on page 14, there is a synergy between a dragon’s breath and spells cast of the same type.

**Adult Dragons**

A young dragon returns to the nest at an age of about 40 years. The next 10 years are spent fully maturing in mind and body. The physical and mental skills gained while young are greatly amplified when adult. Adult dragons finish their adolescence completely formed in
tooth, claw, tail, and breath, but continue to grow at an asymptotic rate for the rest of their lives. The average length of a newly-adult dragon is about six meters from nose to tail; a two-century-old dragon is usually about thirty meters long. Adult dragons usually mate within a century or two of becoming adult, and mate for life.

Drake, the god of the dragons, prophesied that no single creature will ever defeat an adult dragon. In the millennia since the prophecy, Drake's vision has remained true.

Dragons, as a race, worship Drake and Worm, the male and female gods of dragonkind. Dragonic legend states that the dragonic race came from the Great Drake-en Swamp in the Southern Continent, and that Drake and Worm live there still.

Dragons live in large group homes called nests. Traditionally, nests are located in the mountains, but some are elsewhere; it's said at least one dragon nest is underwater. Any dragon would commit suicide rather than reveal the location of any dragonic nest. The only people who know the location of any nests are the griffins, who also live in the high mountains. Griffins and dragons are close friends, and no giffin would reveal any dragonic secrets.

It is said that the dragonic language is so complex that only a dragon can learn it. Dragonic has an interesting property: Every statement made in dragonic is true. It is impossible to lie in dragonic.

The entire race of dragons often organizes itself into gigantic research endeavors, called Great Projects. A Great Project may involve from 60% to 90% of all dragons, young and adult. The current Great Project is to discover how to travel between dimensions and planes of existence. For that reason, many dragons joined the Chaos Army of the Mekatrig just to see what the Pathway is like.

**Ogres**

*Jan-2011: I'm including ogres in these rules, because I like them. However, I don't want to introduce them in the campaign yet. They are powerful in combat, and I'm not sure if their weakness to magic compensates for it. Before you start begging to be one: ogres are too big to travel in the corridors Ironmaw.*

Ogres are taller, stronger, hairier, and less intelligent than humans. They range in height from eight to ten feet tall.

Ogres are strong, and they are good at simple physical combat; however, ogres are unaware of their great strength. They are gentle, inoffensive, shy, and stubborn; they don't like to change their point of view. Their primary values are stability, consistency, honesty, and reliability. Ogres are easily confused and angered by deception. They can't stand practical jokes. Normally, ogres live separately from the other races in their own villages, since other races feel uncomfortable around them. There are few ogres in Aeykia due to the persecutions of King Krenshaw, and there are no ogre villages there.

In war, ogres are respected opponents; they are in high demand as infantry units in the armies of most nations. However, their brain-to-body-mass ratio is smaller than that of the other races, so they are not adept at magic and other mental disciplines. They learn slowly, but they don't forget what they know. In dark times, ogres are the last to give up the knowledge they have gained; ogres can be the most civilized group in a land whose society has collapsed.

The social unit of ogres is the council. At least one member of each ogre village is a member of an ogre council. A council meets about once every five years or when necessary. If ogres
feel a need for a council, one will go around to all the nearby villages and collect the council members; then they all sit in one spot and talk until the matter is decided.

Ogres are not interfertile with other races.

In the same way that humans are related to elves and dwarves, ogres are related to gorillas, chimpanzees, baboons, etc. These other races are not as intelligent as ogres. They live in remote forests and jungles and never interact with outsiders.

Male ogres worship the god Ogrus, and female ogres worship the god Ogra.

They do not have the weapons training the other races have. They use any weapon as if it were a club. They can use the Fist attribute instead of a weapon. Ogres add two levels of difficulty to any attempts using Speed/Agility/Dexterity attributes.

**Spirits**

*Jan-2011: I include these rules because they include useful background information. I am not allowing players to have spirit characters yet, because I don’t know how to implement some of their abilities in the current rule system in a balanced way.*

To discuss spirits, it is necessary to distinguish between the living, the spirits, and the undead.

Living things exist on both the material and the ethereal planes. Fairies are an exception; they only exist on the material plane.

Spirits are dead; they exist only on the ethereal plane. Spirits interact with the material plane via psychic energy and ectoplasm. A spirit can be of any race, except fairie or dragon; fairies have no souls and dragon spirits have a special destiny.

Undead are creatures in-between living and spirit. They exist weakly on both the material plane and the ethereal plane. It is difficult to hurt undead by purely physical means, unless they have a solid physical extension (and therefore a weaker ethereal extension). The category of undead includes vampires, ghosts, ghouls, wraiths, spectres, banshees, will-o-wisps, zombies, and all the other things that make death interesting. “Undead” does not include spirits, angels, devils, or gods.

**Development**

When living beings die, their souls may choose to seek their destiny in the infinite, or they may stay near the material plane. If resurrections are attempted and fail, spirits will be wrenched so strongly that they will eventually choose to leave the material plane. If no resurrection spells are cast on a dead person, that person may become a spirit and continue to interact with the material plane.

A problem for spirits is that the motivations and desires that ruled them in life still rule them in death. As spirits learn and develop, they may leave such concerns behind and act more in the interests of the present than the past. Spirits, like other adventurers, gain new abilities through research and experience. The type of research they do depends on their final goal: angel, devil, or god.

To be an angel or a devil means to declare a permanent alliance with either good or evil. These beings are powerful as individuals; their existence does not depend on the beliefs of others. However, angels or devils are only individuals, unable to combine the beliefs of others to further their goals.

A few spirits try to walk the line between good and evil, choosing neither. This is a trap. Though such spirits may gain powerful abilities, they will have no motivation for using
them. Instead of motivating others, they become motivated by others. Finally, the “neutral” spirit will do nothing but obey the orders of a mortal master. The first words they say to their new master are, “Your wish is my command.” These spirits are called genies.

To be a god means to acquire powers both through research and through other people’s beliefs. In a well-organized religion, a god wields power by performing sudden research using the energy of worshipers. The more gods are worshipped, the more powerful they are. If gods are not worshipped, their powers weaken and they fade away. The goal of every god is to get at least one billion skill points. At that point, gods become independent of belief and have an almost inexhaustible supply of energy; they can do anything they want. Only one spirit is believed to have made it: the Architect.

The potential of an angel, devil, or god is practically unlimited. The difference is that the powers of a devil or angel are unlimited only in the long term (centuries); that is how long it can take to gain powerful abilities through experience alone. A god can gain power over the short term (decades); a god who gained a million worshipers overnight could use the new energy immediately.

Few spirits decide to be angels or devils. Almost all decide to try for godhood.

Note: The main difference between a devil and a demon: a demon is alive; a devil is dead.

**Powers**

Spirits cannot be killed, since they are already dead. However, the only way spirits can interact with the material plane is with their ectoplasm. “Ectoplasm” is a half-energy half-matter substance that spirits manipulate psychically. A spirit whose ectoplasm is destroyed or used up can’t interact with the material plane. Spirits can’t truly own or use anything material; all they have is their ectoplasm.

Spirits can materialize, in addition to their own body, as many kilograms of ectoplasm as their Power attribute. Spirits must materialize the same body they had in life; they do not have to materialize any physical injuries they had in life, but they must develop abilities if they want to change their appearance. Ectoplasm takes one minute per pound to materialize or partially de-materialize, so it can take a spirit a couple of hours to materialize.

Full de-materialization takes one second. De-materialized spirits are invisible, have no physical substance, and are immune to physical weaponry (though not to spells or magic weapons). De-materialized spirits can fly, but no faster than they can normally walk; they are actually walking in the ethereal plane. De-materialized spirits can walk through walls, but they cannot see in the dark unaided.

Spirits can only materialize objects that help them to maintain a physical reference to the material plane. Spirits can materialize torches out of ectoplasm, but they cannot materialize spheres of glowing light; they can, of course, develop glowing-light spells. A spirit can materialize an object and give it to someone else. The spirit must both maintain eye contact with the item and concentrate on its existence. If either stops, the item disappears.

Materialized spirits interact with living things just as if their materializations were real. Their armor, weaponry, and spell equipment must appear realistic to affect people. However, non-living things cannot be fooled. A spirit who tries to pick a lock with materialized lockpicks will get nothing.

A spirit has limited telekinesis. Spirits can move objects as if they were 50 times their actual weight. Spirits communicate by voice and telepathy. They may speak or telesend just
to one person, or they may broadcast speech or thought in general, but they cannot send thoughts to, say, just two people at once.

**Combat**

Ectoplasm is part of the spirit for combat purposes, so if any ectoplasm is struck by a weapon it counts as damage to the spirit. While materialized, spirits take normal damage from non-magical weapons. When de-materialized, they may only be affected by magic and magical weaponry. They can only be affected by standard healing spells while materialized. When a materialized spirit uses a non-magical ectoplasmic weapon, it is the victim’s belief in the weapon that causes the damage. If the victim believes that the attacker is a spirit, the spirit’s weapon will be useless.

If a spirit is “killed” in combat, they can be resurrected, but +20 is added to the difficulty level; only +10 if the body of the slayer is available.

**Magic**

Spirits can use a magic item by taking its ectoplasmic essence. From then on, the original item is useless and the magic item is part of their own ectoplasm. They must keep track of how they materialize things from their ectoplasm from then on; if they use part of this magical ectoplasm for any other item, the magic vanishes from the ectoplasm of that item. They may materialize and de-materialize the ectoplasm of any of their magic items freely, as long as they don’t use that ectoplasm for anything else.

**Spirit Characters**

From the start, spirits are sensitive to the beliefs and desires of the people around them. Everyone in a party of adventurers must be willing to have spirits along, or they cannot adventure with them. Also, there is a well-known rite called exorcism that creates a temporary region that a spirit cannot enter. Spirits can do develop abilities to become immune to beliefs of others, but this bars them from the path to godhood.

**Becoming a Spirit**

All the rules that apply to spirits apply to characters who die in the campaign and become spirits, with the following additions.

No resurrection attempts may be made if a character is to become a spirit. Instead the character must make a Moderate difficulty roll using Spirit->Power; they’re resisting the lure of the infinite. If they become a spirit, they retain the same abilities and skill points they had before dying.

If possible, new spirit characters should use the ectoplasmic essence of the same magic items they used to own. The player should role-play the spirit with the same desires and motivations they had when they were alive, with a greater intensity if possible. After they have been a spirit for a while, they can discard the remnants of their living personality and become a different person, if their player wishes.

*To be added: Griffins*
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