

**Chronicles**  
**RPG**  
**Core Rules**

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**Version 1.0**

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# Chronicles RPG

Version 1.0

## The Main Rules

### Rule #1 – Have Fun!

### Rule #2 – Be kind. (Unless your character would do differently...)

### Rule #3 – GH's may cut and splice this game as they see fit. Please note the Creative Commons License.

## Introduction

The Chronicles RPG was designed for the purpose of streamlined role-playing and game play. It needs a minimum of one ten sided die (2 - 4 dice would be better) and most characters can fit on a 3x5 card if needed. It's meant to take on all the needs of a group roleplaying session. It can also work well as a system for solo gaming. Characters can be built quickly and combat is designed to be descriptive and done in as little as one to four turns. Even though streamlined, it is also intended for longer campaign play and watching characters, and the world, grow and change.

A Chronicles game should capture the feeling of your favorite stories, whether they are a series of novels, a favorite television series or a movie. It's a storytelling game. What these rules provide is just enough structure to have a game but not enough that it restricts storytelling. In essence, it uses the die rolls around skill attempts to generate creativity that helps build the next scene, the next challenge.

Is there a setting for the rules? No. The rules are meant to be generic and able to handle any world setting, from fantasy, to modern day mystery, to apocalyptic science fiction.

These rules make the assumption the reader already knows the basics of a roleplaying game. For instance, the difference between a player and a character, what is a non-player character and what the Game Host does or does not do. If you are absolutely new to roleplaying you might want to find some of this information out first before proceeding.

A big difference between Chronicles and standard RPG's is that the world setting is meant to be a shared space. Players are to take as much ownership of the world they are encountering as the Game Host. Players have this ability through the use of Chronicle points and the Game Host should empower the players to use them as much as possible.

## **Initial Concepts**

### **The Game Host (Or GH)**

Instead of the traditional Gamemaster term typically used in roleplaying games, I've opted for the term Game Host. For Chronicles I wanted to lessen the perceived power of the person "running" the game and present them more as the host of the session, the person who is at the center of the interactions but whose sole responsibility lies in weaving the characters, players and setting into enjoyable, shared game. This will often be abbreviated as GH throughout the rules.

### **Roll Codes**

At the heart of the system is the concept of rolling dice and keeping them. (Instead of large numbers of dice, I opted to stick to the original inspiration of the game and to keep the dice numbers low so the game could be used in small spaces and during travel.)

The die codes are very simple. The first number is the number of D10s that will be rolled all together. This will be followed by a K# which is the number of highest rolling dice you will keep from the original pool.

For instance, a code of 2K1 simply means you roll 2 D10s and keep the highest roll.

### **Exploding Dice**

If a roll on any die comes up a 10 on a Skill roll then the player gets to keep the 10 and then roll the die again. The following die roll after the ten is then added to the total. If the following die roll is a 10 then they may add that 10 and roll again! Needless to say this can add up to some large roll totals! Once past a certain point, the high number means little technically. However, on a narrative level, the character has succeeded with an amazing success which should be figured into the description of the action. There is more on this in the Skill Check section.

## **Building the Character**

### **Attributes**

Each player character, and some Non-Player characters, has four attributes. The GH may decide to add an attribute if he feels it is necessary. The default attributes are as follows.

**Body** : This is mainly a measure of the character's strength, physical ability and, to a certain extent, endurance. Good for soldiers and athletes.

**Agility** : This is a representation of how quick, dexterous, and "sure on their feet" the character can be. This could, possibly, be a measure of how nimble-fingered a character is. This should be covered in the PC's background. This is good for dancers, acrobats and jewel thieves.

**Intellect** : This is a measure of not only the character's overall intelligence but how fast they can think through a problem, deal with puzzles and/or logic problems. This attribute is good for scholars, generals, and doctors.

**Spirit** : Spirit is a mix of a character's charm and their willpower. It can also be used for quick wit. It is used in conjunction with Body to figure out a character's Health Points and a character's Intellect to calculate their Soul points. This is good for priests, investigators, actors and entertainers.

An attributes score is ranked on a number scale from -2 to +3. This number will be added to all skill rolls where that attribute is involved. More on this as we get into Skill rolls.

### **Attribute Rankings**

1K1-5 -- Very weak in this category. Possibly an infant, elderly or disadvantaged. (-2 to skill roll)

1K1-3 -- Weak and below average. (-1 to skill roll)

1K1 -- Average for Humans. (0 or no modifier)

2K1 -- Above Average. In shape. Mildly Intelligent. Driven. (+1 to skill roll)

2K2 -- Trained Athlete. Educated Scholar. Experienced Public Speaker (+2 to skill roll.)

3K2 -- Olympic level athlete, Brilliant Physician, World Class (+3 to skill roll)

All Attributes begin at 0 for free.

A beginning character begins with 4-6 points which they may use to build their character's attributes. The number is dependent on the GH and the style of game they wish to have.

Attribute bonus cost as many points as they are. For instance a +1 costs 1 point, a +2 costs two points, etc.

A character may, if the player wants, be assigned a negative attribute. When a character takes a negative Attribute this gives them bonus points they may use in the following way.

- If a character takes a -1, they will gain 1 more point to use on Attributes and they may take one extra bonus skill at Beginner (1K1) ability.
- If a character takes a -2 they will gain 1 more point to use on Attributes and they may also take one extra bonus Skill at Average (2k1) ability.

**Remember, the +/- modifier for each Attribute is added to a character's final skill roll.**

### **Use Attributes in place of Skill**

If the character does not have the proper skill or if the character is attempting a task that relies heavily on a particular attribute then the character would roll their attribute die code. If the task involved would require a decent amount of skill which the character does not have the GH may require the Attribute roll but with a penalty attached. The penalty will typically be anywhere from -2 to -5 depending on the task.

Example – A character needs to climb a tree quickly to get away from a charging black bear. The character does not have Climbing but does have a Strength of 2K1. The GH simply asks the character to roll his 2K2 for Strength and subtract 2 from the highest total. If they needed to climb a sheer rock wall and the character did not have climbing, the GH might have the character roll but hit them with a -3 or a -5.

### **Cinematic Level**

Before any game, the GH will determine what the Cinematic Level (CL) is of the game. This simply represents how “real” the game world will feel to the characters. The only place the CL comes into play is determining a character’s Secondary Attributes like health, mental strength, etc.

The CL can range from 1 to 3 or even higher for games based on exaggerated cartoon violence or epic superhero games.

- 1 is the highest reality level and will result in characters who cannot take large amounts of damage. Mortality rate will be a bit high in these games.
- 2 is the standard default setting for most Chronicle games as it provides a nice balance between realism and a more cinematic feel for players.
- 3 gets into the realms of over the top action movies as characters can take significant levels of damage and distress before falling over. Action and fight scenes will run quite a bit longer in these games.

### **Racial Bonuses for Fantasy and Science Fiction**

A GH may want to designate bonuses for characters of other races besides Human. This should be done with balance and caution. Below are some examples of some classic fantasy races and possible racial bonuses a character would receive to their Attributes after creation.

Elf = Body -1, Agility 0, Intellect +1, Spirit +1

Dwarf = Body +1, Agility -1, Intellect 0, Spirit +1

½ Orc = Body +1, Agility +1, Intellect -2, Spirit 0

Halfling = Body -2, Agility +0, Intellect 0, Spirit +2

## **Secondary Attributes**

Once attribute points are assigned a player should generate the character's Health Points, Psyche points and Initiative bonus. The Body and the Psyche points are multiplied by the Cinematic Level which is assigned by the GH.

The default Cinematic Level is considered to be 2.

**Health Points** - A player adds up the combination of her Body and his Spirit. This is how many ten sided dice they will roll and then keep for their health points. Tens do NOT explode. Once they total their dice, they then multiply it by the Cinematic Level for their total. Health points do not necessarily represent physical damage to the character. They can represent stamina, exhaustion and the simple wearing down of the character in extreme situations. (Example: A character with a Body of 2K1 and Spirit of 1K1 would roll 3K2.)

**Psyche Points** - A player adds up the combination of his Intellect and Spirit. This follows the same procedure as the Health Points above. Psyche points represent mental resilience, intellectual fatigue, etc. They can be used to power magical or psychic abilities. They may also be used to represent a person's hold on reality and a character may take damage to their Psyche points when encountering shocking and traumatic situations or creatures that challenge their perception of reality.

**Initiative** - A player adds up the combination of their character's Agility and Intellect modifiers. This score will be added to a character's Initiative roll for combat scene. If the character has -1 Agility and +2 Intellect her Initiative score will be +1. It is possible to have a negative initiative score.

## **SKILLS, PERKS AND ABILITIES**

There are two different ways to record Skills, Perks and Abilities. They are broken down into two different "styles" of play. They are called Focused and Descriptive. Technically, within game play and dice rolls, there is little difference between the two styles. However, they are very different when it comes to the "feel" of the game and how a character is created. Each are described below and it is up to the GH to decide with the players what style would best suit the group and the gameplay.

**Descriptive Style** – The Descriptive Style is the default style for the game. A character's Skills, Perks, and Abilities are made of a phrase or description that encompasses a particular set of skills or abilities. This is called a Skill set. This style is more freeform and allows for more elements of story and improvisation to come into play. It also allows players to be a bit more creative and descriptive in their character's history and ability.

For instance a character might have Skill set of "Thief of Lantern Street", "Interstellar Cargo Pilot", or "Horse Raider of the Red Moon Clan." Skillsets may describe past experiences, titles or employment.

When a character wants or needs to do a particular action they can hopefully pull from their skill sets by explaining why that action would be a part of that skillset. For instance, an Interstellar Cargo Pilot could have skills in Space Piloting, Navigation, Mercantile, Bargaining, Ship Weaponry and Knowledge of the Outer Rim Worlds. However, being an Interstellar Cargo Pilot does not give you much in the way of Brawling, Laser Pistol, Seduction or Tracking. Finally, any skill used which references that main descriptor will all have the same level and the main descriptor. If a character has 2K2 in Interstellar Cargo Pilot, all rolls of Navigation, Space Piloting, etc, would be at 2K2.

Other Examples of Skill Sets – Ambidextrous Thief, Son of a Hunter, Young Merchant, Bartender of the Black Dog Tavern, World Travelling Scholar.

On the occasion it might be easier to describe a character's Perk or Skill with a simple description. This is, of course, fine but we encourage you to find something that fits the character. "Danger Sense" is fine but "Tingles on My Shoulders" is much better!

A word of caution – It is important that skill descriptions are avoided in a character's descriptive phrase. This is because the skill is already described by the die code. It could be included if the description comes close to the skill level. Consult your GH if you have questions. An example of this would be "Amazing Swordsmen" or "High Skilled Wrestler." An "Amazing Swordsmen" doesn't seem so amazing when he is only rolling 1K1!

Also, the Descriptive Style does open the game up to allow players a chance to say what their character may or may not do in the game. In turn, this can be exploited by experienced players and misunderstood by inexperienced players.

A player may decide that "Interstellar Cargo Pilot" allows the player to fly any kind of starship and speak any type of interstellar language. It is up to the GH how much he or she would want to control this or allow it. If it is being abused, a good rule of thumb might be to have the player list out the abilities or skills they have used so far underneath the central skill idea and those are the major skills. Perhaps only allow a certain number of them in that list or just to keep a list of what the character has done so far? The GH might want to have a character face a penalty of -5 or maybe even the loss of 1 die from the skill total if the player is abusing this too much.

Example – An Interstellar Cargo Pilot has already stated he speaks Kaget, Inner Rim, and Feldagan languages. He now claims to be fluent in a fourth language and the GH decides enough is enough. He asks the player to write down the first three languages and that any after that will be at a penalty. He may "think" he knows that fourth language but he's just not as good at it as he would like. He might also add this fourth language into his skillset through gameplay and/or when he has a chance to improve the skill.

Typically, characters in a Descriptive style will have fewer Skills, Perks and Abilities listed but each Skill Set will have a very wide spectrum of skills and abilities the character might have underneath it. If the playstyle is Descriptive then the characters will have a set number of skills based on the Descriptive Style list in the Beginning Skills Section below.

**Focused Style** – This style represents a tightly focused set of skills and abilities that a character will have at their disposal. This could be considered a more “traditional” way of listing skills in a roleplaying game. Pistol skill is exactly that skill with only pistols being covered by the ranking. The character would need another skill to show skill with a Rifle. Fast Talk is all about fast, verbal charm and manipulating people but would be different from Seduction. Language (Dwarven) is, of course, only dwarven language and not any other.

Many traditional RPGs work this way with their skill listings. This style allows GH’s and Players to build characters and a world where what each character knows is literally what is written down on the sheet.

If the playstyle will be Focused then the characters will be able to choose the number of skills based on the Focused Skill list in the Beginning Skills Section below. Typically, characters in a Focused style will have more starting skills but each skill will have a narrower focus.

### **Beginning Skills and Perks**

A standard beginning character may choose the following for their character.

<u>Descriptive</u>	<u>Focused</u>
1 Skillset at Level 2K2	1 Skill/Ability at 2K2
1 Skillsets at Level 2K1	3 Skill/Abilities at 2K1
2 Skillsets at Level 1K1	4 Skill/Abilities at 1K1

(Of course, a GH may modify the starting list as they see fit. This list is for a standard character with beginning life experience. For younger characters you might want to remove the skill at 2K2 and offer more skills at 1K1, etc...)

To encourage flexibility with early characters, a player may leave one or two skill slots open for the first few games. The player may, at any time, decide that their character "would know that skill" and assign it in the appropriate blank skill level. A player may opt for any skill level to be left open, including the one for Level 3. The GH will need to be very clear as to when this initial grace period closes and thus forcing the player to place a skill in the open skill level or lose it. This can vary a great deal game to game but it should be during the first few introductory game sessions.

### **Starting Special Abilities**

This is dependent on the GH and the game world they will be running. Special Abilities covers the range of things like magical spells, superpowers, etc. A GH may require characters to keep to the Starting list above and include Special Abilities in that list. Alternatively, a GH may allow a secondary list of starting Special Abilities. This is up to the GH and their game.

## More on Skills, Perks and Special Abilities

Skills and Perks are essentially the same thing as far as their place on the character sheet. They are all listed together. However, each one allows the character to leverage the story in slightly different ways.

- **Skills are learned abilities and knowledge which are rarely lost, rarely degrade and improve with use. Examples:**

Descriptive: City Cop, Swordman of the 5<sup>th</sup> Circle, Track Athlete, Wheelman, Smart Ad Man  
Focused : Pistol, Fishing, Driving, Lockpicking, Charm

- **Perks are different. They may change over the course of the adventure, can be modified with Chronicles points, can actually degrade through use or even be lost entirely. Here are a few examples of the different types of Perks.**

### Influences:

Descriptive: Knows Some Mob Guys, Friends with some Patrolmen, Uncle is a Professor, Well-Known at the Market.

Focused : Underworld Contacts, Law Enforcement, University Contacts, Merchant Guild

### Advantages:

Descriptive: Tingles on the Shoulders, Talks to Animals, Just Knows Where She Is

Focused: Danger Sense, Ambidexterity, Animal Empathy, Direction Sense

### Possessions: *(This is one of the few types that can work well as Descriptive or Focused.)*

Descriptive: Owns a Horse Farm, Multi-millionaire, Blacksmith Apprentice

Focused - A Company, A Fast Horse, The Family Revolver, Fine Longbow

- **Special Abilities are a bit different and are discussed further in Appendix 2. Remember, they can be listed in Descriptive or Focused style. Some examples of Special Abilities are below.**

### Magical Spells:

Descriptive: Fire Mage, Shaman of the Desert Wind, Master of Summoning

Focused: Fireball, Detect Magic, Summon Insects (See Appendix on Magic)

### Superpowers:

Descriptive: Enhanced Soldier, Teleporting Alien Mutant, Thunder God

Focused: Flight, Invisibility, Leaping, Teleportation

### Psychic Powers:

Descriptive: Government Psychic, Inquisitor of Truth, Rogue Mind Reader

Focused: Telepathy, Telekinesis, Emotional Manipulation

All of the above are listed in the same list and are all ranked in the same format. In the case of a Perk, a player may need to roll that Skill but the ranking itself determines how effective or powerful the skill is. For instance, if a character owns a company at 3K2 they are going to have much more at their disposal than someone with the same possession at 1K1. (see below)

### **Rankings of Skills, Perks and Special Abilities**

Skills, Perks and Special Abilities are ranked in the following way.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Level</u>
1K1	Raw beginner
2K1	Initial skills, Decent knowledge
2K2	Skilled, Well Trained, Experienced
3K2	Master level.

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1K1 --- Player rolls 1 die and keeps the result.

2K1 --- Player rolls 2 dice and keeps the higher of the two rolls.

2K2 --- Player rolls 2 dice and keeps both results, adding them together.

3K2 --- Player rolls 3 dice and keeps the two highest result, adding them together.

### **Disadvantages**

A player may take up to two disadvantages for their starting character. Disadvantages could be a wide range of things from physical ailments to phobias to enemies trying to track and kill the character. These do not need to be ranked and, instead, just need to be listed. A character can have up to 3 disadvantages.

Disadvantages allow the players to build Chronicle Points from those disadvantages. They allow creative players to pull on their character's disadvantages to renew their pool of Chronicle Points which they can then use, in turn, to improve their chances with die rolls or to even change the game world around them. (This is explained further in the Chronicle Point section.)

Example - Leeroy the Barbarian has the disadvantage of Impulsive. He runs into a dungeon room filled with traps and goblins without consulting the rest of the party. Though it's a horrible idea, the character is working with the disadvantage while staying in character. The GH awards Leeroy 2 Chronicle Points to add to his temporary pool. He will need those to stay alive!

## **Chronicle Points**

Chronicle points may be used by a player at any time and are a valuable commodity within the game. They may be used in conjunction with their character's action, shared with another player who needs some help, shared with an NPC who could use a hand and, finally, used to even modify the game world itself.

The default Chronicle Points for a starting character is 3. The GH may feel free to modify this as they see fit for the game world they are running.

Chronicle points have different functions. Each function is separate and may not be used in any combination unless stated below.

1.) They may be added to the dice pool of any given Skill roll by ANY PLAYER. It must be stated before the dice roll! A player may not use more than 3 Chronicle points on a roll. One point equals one extra dice in the mix. The formula for the rolls kept stays the same. For instance, if a character is rolling 2K1 but then spends 2 Chronicle Points then the character may roll 4K1. This will increase their odds significantly as well as increasing the chance for a 10 which, of course, explodes.

2.) A player, at a ratio of 2 to 1, may use Chronicle points to add 1 die to their roll AFTER the initial roll has been done. A player may spend up to 4 Chronicle points like this.

3.) They may be used by a player to give a Matrix statement regarding the game world. Matrix statements are based on the Matrix game by Chris Engle and allow players to shift and play with the game world themselves. The ideas behind a Matrix statement, or argument, will be discussed in Appendix 1. For now, it allows players a chance to state something about the game world. Perhaps it's an addition to city? A new kind of NPC? A new villain?

Perhaps the player wants to invent an assassin's guild or a new kind of cult? Perhaps they want to affect the weather? A player states what they would like to see it happen. The GH decides how likely it is to happen on a scale of 1-10 (1 being very likely, 5 being average and 10 being nearly impossible) and the player rolls 1K1. The player must roll over the scale number and use the normal +3/-3 skill result curve to determine the answer to the Matrix statement. Note: A roll of 1 is ALWAYS a "No, and..." and a roll of 10 is always a "Yes, and..."

More information and examples can be found in Appendix 1.

4.) A player may use a Chronicle point to keep a character up even though their Health points are at zero. This can also be done for Psyche points in an attempt to keep a character sane or stable just a little bit longer.

5.) A Chronicle point may be used to allow your character (and your character only) to use a full, unused Direct Action statement instead of a Reaction statement. (See the Combat! Section for more info.)

6.) A player may use a Chronicle point to reduce a character's damage that might kill them to a single wound that simply knocks the player unconscious. A character may only do this ONCE. (GH's discretion, of course.)

#### **Examples of Chronicle Point Use:**

1.) A player would like for it to rain continuously through the night as it will make his character harder to spot by pursuers. The player plays a Chronicle point and states, "A steady rainstorm descends on the area. It begins in the afternoon and carries on well into the next morning." The GH sees no reason why it shouldn't and rates it a 4 on a scale of 1-10. The player rolls 1K1 and gets a 9. This is +3 over the roll and thus equals, "Yes, and..." The GH explains that things go exactly as the player stated and the player will not have to roll any stealth rolls at all. (Alternatively, if the player rolls 1K1 and gets a 1 then the result is -3 from the rating of 4 and the result is "No, and..." The GH states that it does not rain and, in fact, it is a perfectly clear, peaceful and calm night which will actually impede the player character's ability to sneak around.)

2.) The characters have just defeated a group of tribal orcs. They loot the bodies and move on down the path. One of the players decides to have some fun and spends a Chronicle point in order to create a new NPC villain. He describes a cut scene where a massive orc leader arrives on the remains of his patrol party. The player gives a great and elaborate description and tells how the angry orc leader's scouts find the party's tracks! The GH, loving the addition, gives the Statement a rating of 2. The player rolls a 4. The result being "Yes, but..." The GH decides that everything occurs exactly as the player stated BUT the leader's scouts are unable to immediately locate the player's trail. Regardless, there is now a savage orc leader looking for the group and the GH has a new villain to play with! (The GH might even reward the player by giving him Chronicle points once the leader is vanquished or at the end of the story, etc.)

3.) Kurg the Raider has one final chance to fire an arrow at the villain who is escaping on horseback. His skill roll with archery is 2K2 and his Attribute for the skill is +2. Due to the range and speed, the GH states the difficulty will be a whopping 18. The player wants to make the shot but only has one Chronicle point left. He decides to spend the Chronicle point which will up his roll to a 3K2+2. Two other players also want him to make the shot and they each offer one Chronicle point as well for two more. Now his roll, with the additional points, is 5K2+2. Looking good! He rolls and gets 5,3,1,10,3. He keeps the 5 and the 10, rerolls the exploding 10 for another 3. His total is  $5+10+3 = 18$ . Just made it!

4.) In addition to the above, after the roll if another player wished, they could give Kurg 2 Chronicle points from their characters to give Kurg one extra die roll to try and boost his number higher! If not, he still scored a hit.

5.) Vinnio the Mage has taken a massive hit from an orcish war axe. The damage from the hit is 12 and his health, which was already down to 8, drops to well below zero. Vinnio spends a Chronicle point to keep the death from occurring and simply drops unconscious from the hit. MEDIC!

### **Gaining Chronicle Points during Play**

There is no set system for gaining more Chronicle points. They are awarded by the Gamehost for a variety of reasons. Chronicle points are given to players during play whenever their character does something dramatic, funny, or entertaining. This can be for something as simple as an amazing skill roll at just the right time or it can be for acting out a great scene with an NPC or another player character. If a player has their character act on one of their disadvantages the Gamehost should reward the character with Chronicle Points. It's even possible that a player could be rewarded Chronicle points for spending them for a good matrix statement that causes the game to become even more enjoyable.

Ultimately, it is up to the Gamehost to set the tempo for how Chronicle points are given out during play. Too many and the player characters will be able to accomplish almost anything. Too few and they will be scrambling and barely surviving.

### **Gaining Chronicle Points at the end of a scene or session**

A Gamehost can also reward players Chronicle points if there is proper break between scenes or, for instance, if a plot thread is resolved. Perhaps the characters are travelling on a long journey? During the journey time the Gamehost could allow all players an extra 2 Chronicle points.

If the session is part of an ongoing campaign, the Gamehost should award all players anywhere from 1 – 3 Chronicle points at the end of the session.

### **Chronicle Point Amounts**

Chronicle points are very powerful if a group of players have them in quantity. It's recommended that a player not have more than 6 Chronicle points during play. Of course, a Gamehost may raise or lower this number for their game as they wish.

### **A Quick Checklist for Making a Character**

- A player comes up with an initial idea or concept and discusses this with the Gamehost and/or the other players in the group.
- Player buys the appropriate Attributes for the character
- Player rolls for Secondary Attributes.
- Player decides appropriate Skills, Abilities, Perks and any Special Abilities
- Player and Gamehost decide on Equipment
- Gamehost assigns starting Chronicle points.
- Have Fun!

## **MAKING A SKILL CHECK**

As the game moves along there will eventually come a time where a player would like for his character to perform an action in the game world. If it's a fairly easy thing to do then, quite often, the character will simply perform the action. However, anytime a skill is up against an average difficulty or worse, the Gamehost will require the player to roll to succeed in that action. Below is the procedure of how that happens.

1) A player tells the GH what he would like for his character to do with a description of how their character would like to react to a situation. If possible, The player should form their request into a yes/no question.

"I try to stab the goblin with my short sword, do I succeed?"

"Can I jump out of the way of the charging horseman?"

"Am I able to seduce the farmer's son?"

2.) The GH then assigns one Attribute to combine with One Skill, Perk or Special Ability in a skillset. (Body + Intimidation, Dexterity + Dodge, etc.) This allows the Gamehost to use Skills and Attributes in different combinations. For instance, A character who is a City Guard would combine his Body plus his skill for combat but later, when shopping for a better shield, would combine his City Guard skill with his Intellect.

3.)The GH may also allow other modifiers if the situation or character has other skills or assets that come into play. These extra modifiers are never more than a +2 or less than -2.

4.) If the player does not have the appropriate Skill then they can roll their Attribute dice. However, they will subtract -3 from their roll.

5.) The GH also assigns a difficulty number which the player is trying to beat with their roll.

The chart below gives the standard ranges for difficulty. The difficulty number is based on the overall average of the game world and NOT THE CHARACTER'S ABILITY. This is an important distinction to remember.

Example: A simple lock has a difficulty ranking of 7 (which is based on an average lock and an average thief's ability in the game world). The expert thief's 3K2 roll should have no problem opening the lock but an average skilled thief's 2K1 would have a little more trouble.

Any skill that could be designated as "Easy" should not need a roll. If the GH would like to have a character make an Easy skill roll than the Easy category would be any target number between 2 - 5.

On the other end of the spectrum, a GH could make a difficulty level as Epic and make it 20+

6.) The player rolls their Skill and add or subtract modifiers as necessary. They compare the roll to the Difficulty Table and gain their result.

## Difficulty Table

**Average/Standard = 5-10 (7)**

**Hard/Difficult = 10-15 (12)**

**Very Hard/Heroic = 15+ (15)**

The numbers in parenthesis represent the "middle" of the range for each level. A typical Average difficulty would be 7. A typical Hard difficulty would be 12, etc.

## How it Works

All of these results come from a single die roll made by the player. Once a character rolls and has totaled up their complete result it is compared against the difficulty number. The amount in which they succeed or fail is determined by how well or how poorly they rolled.

Die Result =	<u>More than -3</u>	<u>-3 to -1</u>	<u>Target # to +3</u>	<u>More than +3</u>
Skill Result =	No, and...	No, But	Yes, but...	Yes, and...

## The Big Result!

Chronicles RPG uses a storytelling device for character results called "Yes and/No but..." This aids the players and the GM in telling a more creative story. The four different results are described below.

**Yes and...** -- The best result. You've accomplished your action AND something else occurs which aids you in the moment. It should be something related to the action you are trying to perform.

A character picks the lock AND does so in a blink of an eye losing no time at all.

Another character is trying to get information out of a security guard. He does so AND is given a phone number to another contact with more information.

**Yes but...** -- Not bad. You've accomplished your task BUT something else occurs which could hinder you either immediately or in the future. It should not be a result that is disastrous. That is for a different result below.

A character picks the lock BUT makes a bunch of noise doing it.

A character gains information from a security guard BUT the security guard doesn't really trust him and calls the executive office.

**No but...** -- You were unable to accomplish your task BUT something has occurred to smooth the way down the road or to give you assistance for later.

A character is unable to pick the lock completely BUT does feel the first tumbler click into place.  
A character is unable to fast talk the security guard BUT he sees a maintenance man walk around the corner. Maybe he knows something?

**No and...** -- Uh-oh. Not your day. You are unable to complete your task AND it's going to get worse. Maybe a lot worse!

The lock does not get opened AND your character breaks the lock pick in the lock.  
The security guard does not give up any information AND calls in the police.

## **EXAMPLES**

**Example 1 :** A spy is trying to gain access to a private, diplomatic fundraiser in order to gain information. The spy is decent at forging documents. The spy does so and tries to gain access to the party. The difficulty at the door is a 7. His forgery skill is 2K1 and the GH decides he will need to add his Intellect which is +2. The die roll gives 6 and a 4. The player takes the 6 and then adds his Intellect of +2 for a total of 8. This is +1 versus the difficulty of 7 and the result is "Yes, but..." The character succeeds at the attempt but NOT completely. The spy is allowed in but he has raised some suspicion amongst security as a party crasher or perhaps an uninvited journalist. (The player may or may not be told this given the GH's style of play!)

**Example 2:** The spy at the party is now attempting to seduce a target in order to gain more information. The spy is skilled and is rolling a total of 2K2 for his Seduction skill. The GH wants the character to combine his Spirit score which is a 0. The GH decides the seduction will be a bit more difficult and decides on a target of 12. The player rolls 2K2 and scores a 5, 4 which equals 9. This is 3 less than the target number and will equal a "No, and..." result.

**Example 3:** With the seduction attempt gone horribly wrong, the spy is attempting to get out of the location while guards armed with automatic weapons give chase. The spy attempts to leap from the stairs, grab a chandelier, swing over the ballroom to then escape out an open balcony on the other side. The GH determines this is pretty heroic and gives it a difficulty of 16. The player will normally roll 2K2 on the roll and will add his Agility score of +2. He also decides to spend 2 Chronicle points on the roll giving him 2 extra dice. His roll is now 4K2+2. The spy's player rolls 3,5,3,10 and keeps the 5 and the 10 and adds his +2 for a 17. Normally, this would only be +1 over the target number for "Yes, but..." However, he's rolled an exploding ten! The player rerolls the 10, gains an extra 6 giving the Spy a full total of 23 (17+6)! Now, the result is "Yes, and..." The spy player breathes a sigh of relief as escape is in clear site on the other side of the balcony.

## **An Important Note Regarding Skill Checks!**

Chronicles is designed so players are the ones that do most of the rolling. If a monster or NPC attacks, then it attacks and the player needs to explain how the character will defend or get out of the way. The resulting roll is for the Character's action, not the monster. The only time a GH would roll for a GH controlled character is if that GH controlled character is attempting something on their own and not something that would affect the PC's.

Georgio the Alchemist is brewing a potion? Roll for him. Vitzie the Blacksmith is attempting to repair a PC's armor? Roll for him. Guhk the orc is trying to kill a PC? **Don't roll for him!** Guhk the Orc swings at the character. The character needs to state what happens next and then roll for it! (See the Combat! section for more information on this.)

This way the majority of the rolls are done by the players and not the GH who is now free to run the game, build surprises and twist away at plot twists!

However, if two PC's need to have an argument or a bar fight or maybe just a Chess match then they will need to do a conflict roll.

Conflict rolls are very straight forward. The players state their intentions, roll their skill dice, add the appropriate Attribute and the highest roll wins. The winning player's statement is what occurs. Depending on the conflict, a GH may also want to have the players involved go through a Sustained Success challenge.

## **Sustained Success**

Occasionally, a GH may assign something that has to have a certain number of sustained successes against it before it's captured/won/defeated/knocked down. Things that would apply for this would be a huge wooden door that can't just be kicked in with one shot. It could also apply to a race or a game between two characters and you would have to score so many points to score a "win."

The GH assigns a difficulty number and typically, the normal effect results do not apply and instead score "successes." A score result of "Yes!" and "Yes, But..." serve as one success. A "Yes, and..." count as 2 successes. Chronicle points may be used on these rolls as normal. On a particularly high success from exploding dice, the GH may assign more successes than 2.

Some examples are below.

**The Big Door** -- The characters are trying to get through a massive wooden door with a door ram. The GH decides the characters need to win 3 successes against the door with a difficulty of 10. The first roll they score a "Yes, and..." result. They score two successes and the GH states that one of the door hinges pops off from the impact and the wood begins to splinter. It won't take much more! The characters roll again and score another success and they are through!

**The Big Game** -- Two characters sit down to play a game of poker. They agree they both start with \$500. The GH decides that each success will equal \$100 and the difficulty level will be simple base 5. Each player rolls and the one with the highest total wins that round.

Player 1 Stats -- Gambling 3, Intellect +1 = 2K2 +1

Player 2 Stats -- Gambling 2, Intellect 0 = 2K1

-----

Round 1 -- Player 1 rolls a total of 9. Player 2 rolls a 4. Player 1 wins and 9 is 4 points over the difficulty level. This equals a "Yes, and..." and Player 1 wins 2 successes and \$200 from Player 2.

Round 2 -- Player 1 rolls a total of 4. Player 2 rolls 8. Player 2 wins and it is again worth 2 successes and he wins his \$200 back.

Round 3 -- Player 1 rolls 5. Player 2 rolls a 10 which explodes into 16. Player 2 wins again and not only does the player win 2 successes, the GH throws in an extra for a total of 3 or \$300. Play continues in this way until one of them is out of money.

(And yes, Chronicle points could be used here to increase their chances! Perhaps it's luck? Perhaps it's cheating?)

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**The Big Race** -- Characters are being chased by the City Guard on horseback. The GH states that each player must score three successes in three rounds of "chasing" to lose the guardsmen. Also, each player must roll 1d10 of Stamina loss to their health totals. Each player rolls and does their best. Two players score their successes quickly but are nearly exhausted. One character only scores two successes and the GH states the character is caught up to, run down and then taken into custody.

### **Variant Rule with Skills**

One variant is to have not only the Skill Level as a roll but also having a ranking for Skill Effect. This is particularly useful if the skill possibly uses Health or Psyche points to power it. In a superhero world, for instance, you may want to have the skill of Super Strength. The character would have their normal skill ranking and then be given (or be able to choose) a Skill Effect ranking.

The skill level shows how good they are with that particular skill. Skill Effects gives an idea of what they can do with that skill, what they can lift AND how many Health points it takes to power what the character wants to do. Examples of Skill Levels / Skill Effects can be found in the both Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

## **Physical and Mental Endurance**

Health points and Psyche points are used as a gauge to determine a character's stamina and ability to take physical and mental/spiritual strain. Not only will health points get whittled down in a fight, they will get taken down for prolonged physical or mental exertion. When a GH deems it necessary he may have the players roll to determine how much stamina or exhaustion damage they take. Note – As these are not Skill rolls, if a player rolls a 10 they DO NOT explode. When a player gets to half their full total they are winded and starting to become exhausted. When they get to zero they physically collapse or have a mental breakdown. Some examples are below.

Running -- A character decides to run half the day to make up time on the trial. The GH decides the player will roll 2d10 for each half hour of running and that the player can restore his health through 6-8 hours of rest.

Staying up all Day -- Stuck in a dungeon, the characters try to find a way out and do not sleep. The GH has them roll 2D10 which they can take off either their Health points or their Sanity points, players choice. The characters point totals will not refresh until they get a full night of rest.

Poison - An NPC is successful in slipping poison into a character's drink. The character is told to roll 2K1 points of Health damage over 5 rounds until they either pass out or press through the poison. (A good time to use a Chronicle point to stay alive!)

## **Sanity checks**

When a character encounters something either particularly grisly or out of touch with their known reality, the GH may have that character make a Sanity check. They will need to roll as normal with a yes/no question to avoid the effects. The GH will state the difficulty level. Depending on how well or poorly the character does, the GH will have the character roll to take damage to their Sanity. One option in a horror game is to have that Sanity loss be permanent to the character unless the character receives mental health assistance at some point in the game. This simulates the slow spiral of the character losing his mind as he goes up repeatedly against things that shake his reality.

## **COMBAT!**

First off, let's be clear about something. Fight scenes in Chronicles are not intended to be grueling, crunchy, multi-turn, multi-roll events. There are numerous other systems which will capture this kind of fight. Chronicles RPG is not one of them. Instead, it pulls the scale back a bit and asks the players to describe what might happen in a longer time period.

Players need to give descriptions of not only what the characters are attempting but what results they want to occur. As stated previously, nearly all of these rolls should be done by the players. If they fail, the bad guys will most likely get some damage in. If they succeed, well, they succeed!

### **Phases of Combat**

1. **Initiative** – All players involved roll a 1d10 (non-exploding) and add their Initiative score. The GH rolls for any NPC. This happens at every combat round.
2. **Actions and Results** – On their turn in the initiative order, players may give their Direct action statement describing what they would like to accomplish and roll for that action in in the ranked order of initiative from the rolls.

Due to NPC actions (or even actions from another player) a Player character can then describe their Reaction statement and roll for results.

**Resolution** – The overall scene is summed up by the GH and the players and, if necessary, a new round is begun with rolling Initiative again and GH giving out any momentum bonuses. If the GH feels that no new round is necessary they will announce the end of combat and a return to normal game play.

### **Initiative Roll**

When it is time for combat, the GH will ask all players to roll their initiative. Players roll 1K1 (non-exploding) and add their initiative. The GH will roll for any NPCs involved. Scores are ranked from highest roll to lowest. Tied rolls act simultaneously in game time but highest Agility getting to state first. The GH may grant a bonus or penalty to a player or NPC's initiative due to factors such as surprise or terrain advantage. This is called a momentum modifier.

The momentum modifier is a variable bonus which can be granted to characters for a variety of situations. Some things that might grant a momentum bonus or penalty would be surprise, hazardous footing such as mud or ice, being out of position or attacking/being attacked from behind. The momentum modifier usually stays in the +/- 1 – 3 range but could go higher.

### **Actions and Results**

A player in conflict may make one of two different statements. Direct or Reaction.

On each round of initiative, a character may only use one Direct statement. Direct statements move the character, are used to inflict harm on an opponent, and, in general, is the character's main opportunity to react and engage with their environment.

Direct action statements represent a longer action and the moment the camera is focused on them in the action. The Direct statement is used on their round in initiative. This statement can be detailed and cover a decent amount of the "screen time." The GH will help you determine how many "screen seconds" you get when it is your turn.

A Direct action statement could be any of the below.

- A.) As shots impact around me I launch myself behind the cargo crates. As I slide to a stop, I'm grabbing a grenade, pulling the pin and with a quick look over the crates I lob the grenade into the machine gun nest!
- B.) I run towards the Princess to protect her and slam my shield into the ogre attacking her carriage!
- C.) I hold my arrow steady and scan the field from cover. I will wait until an opportunity arises and finish my Action then.

NOTE: C.) is a powerful tactic. This would be considered a holding or waiting action which would allow the player to go out of his turn and to continue his Action statement.

Reaction statements are quick statements that are typically used to get a character out of harm's way. A character may, if they wish, use multiple reaction statements if they are the target of multiple threats. However, multiple reaction statements will incur a penalty!

Remember, only the players roll dice so when an NPC attacks, it's up to the players to describe how they get out of the situation. Therefore, the reaction statement is to respond to immediate threats from NPC's or the environment at hand. Generally, these tend to be defensive and avoidance actions and cannot be used to directly cause damage and, accordingly, reaction statements need to be short and to the point.

Each character gets one reaction statement for free a round. After that, any further reaction statements the character has to make comes at a cumulative -1 to their roll.

For instance – First Reactive statement: 0, Second Reactive statement: -1, Third Reactive statement: -2, etc.

A reactive statement could be any of the following.

- A.) I sidestep the ogre's clumsy swing.
- B.) At the last second I dive to the left of the charging black sedan.
- C.) I jump back trying to gain some distance from the mugger.

## Combat Examples

Because this is a little unusual from your standard RPG, we'll go through two examples to help demonstrate the feel of Chronicles combat.

### **Example 1:**

A hunter character is out in the woods. He is following some odd tracks and has an arrow knocked in his bow when three goblins come charging out of the underbrush at him! The GH asks, "What does the hunter do?"

Incorrect Response: I shoot one of the goblins. Do I hit?

Why is it incorrect? It's too scaled in. It's too specific and it's kind of boring! Dial it out and spice it up a bit.

Incorrect Response: I want to calculate just how fast they are moving. Do they really have the movement to get to me? Can I move to the side and get a flanking bonus? I'll hide behind a tree to give me +2 of extra protection and cover.

Why is it incorrect? Uhm. Wrong game. Give me a description of what your character would do if they were in a movie!

Correct Response: I stop and as they charge at me and drop to one knee. I shoot one of them with the knocked arrow. I quickly draw a second and hit the second one before he gets to me. If possible I will then drop my bow, roll to the side and go for my woodsman's axe to get ready for the third!

Why is this correct? It takes into account about the right amount of "camera time." Unlike some game systems in Chronicles this can be several seconds. It also gives a chunk of description that not only helps the scene come to life but gives the GH (and the players) something to play with if you should get a "yes, but" or a "No, but" result.

Continuing the example -- Given the response above, the hunter checks his skills and the GH asks the player to combine his Archery skill of 2K1 and Intellect of +1. The GH gives the player a difficulty of 10 to pull everything in his description off. The player rolls and gets a 7 and a 1. The player takes the 7 and adds his Intellect of +1. The total is 8 and is less than 3 from the difficulty total. The result is "No, but..." The GH explains that the hunter missed his shots but that two of the goblins, out of fear, dove to the side and will not be arriving on time. The hunter can get his axe and will only have to face a single goblin next turn!

### **Example 2:**

The single goblin gets to the hunter and launches itself at him with snarl and his short sword out! (Remember: The GH does not roll to see if the goblin hits! He simply states what the goblin is doing. It is the player's responsibility to respond to the threat with a Reaction statement. If they fail, then they will take damage.)

Incorrect Response: I hit it with my axe.

Why incorrect? This is a direct statement, not a reaction statement. Besides, it's way too simple.

Incorrect Response: I place most of my weight on my right foot which gives me a +2 to my damage roll when swinging with my right hand. I step out of the way which should give me that flanking bonus. The sun will be behind me which will give the Goblin a -4 to its defense roll as I make one attack. It'll be a bit of a negative but I will try to sever the goblin's back at the fourth vertebrae.

Why is it incorrect? Dude. Wrong game.

Correct Response: As the goblin leaps at me, I gain my footing just in time to sidestep. It flies past me, over-reaching with the attack. Do I sidestep him?

Why is it correct? It's concise and paints a better picture of the scene. It is also a Reaction statement that, by itself, causes no direct action or harm to the goblin.

Using the last response, Since the action really speaks about movement and agility, the GH decides to make the character roll her Woodland Ranger skillset + Agility but only sets the difficulty at 6 this time because the goblin is really going all out with the attack.

The hunter rolls 2K2 for being a Woodland Ranger and his Agility is +2. The roll is a 4 and a 3 which equals 7.  $7+2$  (Agility)= 9. 9 is three points over the difficulty number and results in a "Yes, and..." The GH explains that the hunter makes his move. Yes, the character can sidestep the goblin and is also rewarded by seeing the out of control goblin trip on a tree root and go flailing.

This puts the character in a much better position and the next Direct action statement should be good!

### **Scaling Combat**

An option available to the GH is to scale combat out even further and ask for players to give statements that are very large summaries of the actions they wish to take in combat. This could work for personal combat all the way out to large unit battles. Players can be asked to tell the entire story of the scene and how they would like the entire fight or sections of the fight to play out.

For instance, with the above example, the GH may ask to give a complete overview as to how he is going to handle the three goblins not with a blow by blow account but more over-arching. The player is invited to narrate the entire scene and it's conclusion. The GH picks an appropriate skill set and attribute and the skill roll is rolled as normal and the result applied. Perhaps the roll is "No, but... The battle wages back and forth for several seconds and the GH assigns 1d10 of Health damage/Stamina loss to the player. The GH asks the character for one more statement as to how it ends...

As stated, this could work itself out to larger units including squads, national armies, cities, or even planets.

### **Combat Ranges**

To keep things simple, there are only 3 ranges in Cinch. Distant, Near and Close. They can be summed up the following way.

Distant - Anywhere from 100 yards to a mile. Several turns to get to Close range.

Near - Within close range anywhere from 2 - 4 turns. Anywhere from 10 to 60 feet away.

Close - Within 10 feet to point blank range. Hand to hand combat or grabbling range.

### **Damage!**

Damage is purposefully kept very simple in Roll N'Keep. Damage rolls are kept to five ranks of damage from Very Light to Ultra. A GH may modify the rolls to help with the effects of a skill roll. Perhaps a character rolled to hit and scored a "Yes, but..." and the GH decides that the character hits BUT will need to subtract -4 from his roll. Alternatively, a character who rolls a "Yes, and..." might get to add a die to the roll total or even do double damage. All of this will be up to the Gamehost.

Damage rolls come off of a characters Health score and can represent not only physical damage but also exertion, morale and the wear and tear of combat. When a character's Health points are taken to half the GH may require the character or NPC to make a roll to stay in the fight or to stay standing, especially if it was a particularly brutal hit. When a character's Health falls to 0 they are on the edge of death and will need to make a Body + Spirit roll to stay alive!

A character using non-lethal weapons or who states they are trying to be non-lethal with their weapon can score non-lethal damage. This will result in a character simply being knocked unconscious if they reach 0 Health points.

## **Ranks of Damage**

Below are some basic ideas of ranks of physical damage. GH's should feel free to modify this however they see fit.

### **Types of Damage**

Very Light -- 1K1-3

Light -- 1K1

Medium -- 2K1, 2K2

Heavy -- 3K2, 3K3

Ultra -- 4K4+

### **Very Light :**

1K1-3 = Darts, Rocks, Fists (punches),

### **Light weapons :**

1K1 = Knives, Clubs, Small bow

### **Medium :**

2K1 = Short Swords, Larger clubs, Small maces, Hatchets, Claws. Longbow  
(Modern age: small pistols)

2K2 = Most swords, Standard maces, Axes, Warclub, black powder pistol (Modern pistols, smaller hunting rifles, Rifles)

### **Heavy :**

3K2 = Katanas, Bastard Sword, 2 handed Battle Axe, Lighter polearms. (Modern age: Heavy pistol, shotguns, black powder rifles)

3K3 = Heavy polearms, Large or Masterwork Two handed weapons. (Heavy rifles, Sniper rifles, assault rifles. grenades)

### **Ultra :**

Siege equipment. Explosives. Cannons. Anything over 3K3 goes here. Damage at this level is best handled with GH description but a GH could easily roll 6K6 to see if characters survive being in the center of a bomb blast.

**NOTE -- Damage scores do NOT explode on a roll of a 10.** (A GH may decide to toggle this option on but should be forewarned it is VERY DEADLY for everyone involved!)

## Perception of a Character's Health Score

It's a bit more math but let's go through how a character's Health Score represents his exhaustion or state of mind. Let's say a character has a Health of 32. Breaking it down into percentages, it looks like this...

32 = 100%

24 = 75%

16 = 50%

8 = 25%

Now, think about the last time you were injured or you felt really sick? Maybe you took part in a very physically exhausting task? 75%? 50%? You might not have taken a sword to the gut, been burned by a fireball or chased by the Goblin King all night but what percentage of "OK" did you feel in real life? It was most likely less than 100%.

With that in mind, you can see how anything below 50% could begin to be detrimental to a character.

This is how the Health score comes into effect within the game.

Remember, Health points are not just an indicator of physical damage. They are also an indicator of stamina and exhaustion so a reduction may occur to a character's health points without a drop of blood being spilled.

## **2 Alternate Damage Systems**

If the GH and the players would rather not deal with the crunchiness of recording damage to their health points, here is an alternate system. This retains the body and psyche scores but takes out the need for a die roll for damage. Instead the GH takes into account the result of the skill roll and applies the damage appropriately without rolling the die. Perhaps a character took some light damage from a grazing arrow? The GH declares a simple 5 point hit. Maybe the character botched getting out of the way of a run-away semi-truck? The GH assigns 20+ points of damage to the character. The character saw a young lady devoured by a tentacled monstrosity from another dimension? The GH assigns 10 points of Psyche damage.

This system allows the GH to control several aspects of the game from its pacing to character death. It does, however, require the GH to strive towards staying fair and balanced in his assessment of the damage being dished out.

The second option is that all characters are able to take 4 "hits" to their Health score. Each of these hits represent 25% of their full score. Once a character has taken 2 notches against them they could begin to be penalized in their rolls and actions. Once at 3 notches things are looking dire. When they take

their 4<sup>th</sup> hit they are unconscious, exhausted, or, possibly near death. If the damage is Psyche related then they might be delusional, may be unresponsive, or have a complete psychotic break!

### **Armor**

For now, armor is not going to be included in the game in regards to damage and die rolling. It simply made the combat process too bulky and too complicated. Armor works differently based on different attacks and trying to capture all of that variance overcomplicates the game more than desired.

However, please note, armor DOES factor into things with not only the game but the story around it. It should be included on a character's equipment sheet. Instead of creating one more step in the damage process, armor is figured into the difficulty number of the original roll. The GH should take into account what armor is being worn and what weapons are being handled.

Example - An enemy attempts to hit a player in plate mail and shield. The attacker is wielding a small sword only. The player, in plate mail and shield, describes how he bats the enemy's attack away with his shield and charges into the attacker, knocking him down. The GH gives this a low difficulty and even if the roll is a failure any damage that might get through to the player's character would, most likely, be minimal.

Example 2 - An enemy attempts to hit a player in plate mail and shield. The attacker is wielding a .45 caliber handgun! The player frantically describes how the plate mail will deflect the bullet and will then charge into the attacker. The GH, needless to say, gives the player a high difficulty to beat because plate mail is fairly ineffective against a modern pistol.

So, in essence, common sense is called for when it comes to armor. It will be up to the GH to make fair calls, take into account the player's ideas and to keep the game moving while remembering which characters are armored and what their armor may or may not stop.

This game is about cinematics and theatrical stories and battles. How many times have you seen swords disappearing into some magical gap in an opponent's armor? A quick thrust of a knife working against a fully armored knight? Rocks and logs working against troops wearing Imperial Armor? This, then, is the GH's job and the one key rule of Chronicles.

Keep the fun going!

### **CHARACTER IMPROVEMENT**

It is said that we learn by repetition and failure and that success is only the accumulation of a number of failures. When it comes to character skill improvement, we use the same idea.

Whenever a character has a skill roll that results in "No and..." they should make a tally mark next to that skill. When a character has amassed the correct amount of Tally marks for the next level, they may,

with GH approval, improve that skill immediately, even if in the middle of a scene. When the skill improves the tally count resets back to zero and begins building again for the next skill level.

If a character makes a roll for a skill they do not have and gains a “No and...” result they should still make a note or a tally mark.

With GM permission, they may take the skill at 1K1 after 3 results. The GH may require the player to add narrative elements before granting the 1K1 skill. For instance, a character does not have climbing but over the course of an adventure has to climb a rickety ladder, a rope and a wall. They gain several “No and...” results. Somehow, the character survives and the GH allows the player to take a basic understanding of climbing at 1K1.

<u>Skill Level</u>	<u>Failed Results</u>
1K1	3
2K1	6
2K2	12***
3K2	24***

\*\*\* = Character must also provide RP storyline that explains the skills improvement. For instance, after toggling, the character must go to training somewhere or have SOMETHING occur which would explain the skill jump?

Characters cannot, repeat, CANNOT use the skill repetitively to try to gain the failures. For instance, throwing a knife over and over at a target to improve knife throwing skill, repeatedly hitting a wooden dummy with a wooden sword or anything similar should not be done. The ranks have to be gained during actual use in play. Remember, if the Skill is being used for an Easy roll or a "sure thing" then no roll is required!

Optionally, the Game Host may agree that a character can spend an agreed upon amount of time in game world time practicing and training a particular skill. These times should be long and create a difficult choice for the player in regards to taking his character “out of the game” for that period of time. The Game Host should feel free to use this option as they see fit.

### **Fight Scenes and Advancement**

Fight scenes tend to see a lot of skill rolls and, in particular, fighting skills could increase too rapidly. It would not be unusual to see a Broadsword or Arena Pit Fighter skill roll two or three failures and thus gain three tally marks in a single fight!

Typically, a character may only gain a set number of tally marks in any given skill within any given fight scene. This will keep the combat related skill scores from increasing too quickly.

A good default would be to say that a character may take ONE tally mark from any “No and..” roll in a fight scene. (Besides, if a character rolls too many “No and...” results they may not survive to see the XP advancement anyway!)

And, of course, a GH may modify this as they see fit for their game world.

## **THE BITS AT THE END**

### **Acknowledgements**

I’m what you would call a paleogamer. I’ve played a LOT of roleplaying games. I could not begin to list all of the systems and ideas that swirled together to help me create this system. From D&D Basic Set, Gamma World, GURPS to more modern games like Pathfinder, they are all in there and a part of it. I want to acknowledge the often unsung heroes that helped me get this game to the point it is now. A massive thank you has to go out to Chris Engle, Hamster Press and the Matrix Game for blowing open my doors when it came to roleplaying and story games. A big shout out to the Mythic GM Emulator for showing me that you really can play a roleplaying game solo. To the Fundamental Universal (FU) Roleplaying game for showing me the “Yes, but...” idea. To other games out there like Risus, Instant Game and Fiasco I want to acknowledge and say thank you.

I also need to acknowledge my wife and my kids who have listened to me ramble on like a mad scientist well as sitting through playtests and offering up great ideas. Thanks to my oldest who took the game, made it his and has been running it with friends. You helped me realize that, “Hey, this thing works.” You’re all amazing and thanks for sharing your life with me. I also have to thank my friends in dice, Michael R. Underwood, Scott Hippensteel, Kyle Niedzwiecki, Andrew Reyes, Daniel McDeavitt, Kyle Tim Skinner, James McWilliams and, of course, Chris Engle for all the hours of knowledge and gaming fun. For your comments, your wit and your wisdom, you have my gratitude.

### **On Ruleset Flexibility**

What you are holding is an organic document. It was never my intention for this to be a static set of rules. The minute you read it you will have your own ideas, your own thoughts on what you should do with the framework. Here is what I want you to do... use them! Make it fit with your style of play. I promise you, I’ll be doing the same on my end and fully expect these rules to go through numerous small modifications and iterations as I prune, graft and grow them.

## **For Free?**

These core rules may shift and develop but they will always be free. It's my way of saying "Thank you" to the amazing, supportive and wonderful gaming community. After so many months and years of work, why would I make them free? For that answer, I will tell you a brief story.

A few years ago I was looking forward to going to GenCon after a multi-year hiatus. Like most of us, it was the big event of the year for me. The extra bonus was that it would be the first time I could afford to bring my whole family with me. Within twenty minutes of walking in the con doors, disaster hit in the form of a desperate phone call concerning the family pet that required either my wife or I to return home (Luckily, we only live a few hours away.) We did not want to throw away the money invested in Con admission and lodging for four days so my wife returned home to deal with the situation and I was to stay with my son.

Things escalated and I was stuck at the Con trying to have a good time with my kids. Tired and a bit busted, I spent a lot of time on the phone with my wife as we tried to manage the situation. At one point, I had withdrawn to a side hall of the Con and after the phone call the tears came. As hundreds of gamers walked by I just sunk my head and let them come. From a seat over I heard a voice, "Excuse me, sir, can I help with anything?" I expected a security guard or a Con employee. What I saw was another gamer complete with backpack, badge, rolled up map and bags of merchant floor loot.

We talked briefly and he did not pry. I explained that I had just gotten a rough phone call. He offered simple platitudes and asked if there was anything he could get me. His only concern was that I was upset and possibly needed help. Amazingly, a second gamer sitting on my left, leaned over and silently handed me a new water bottle from his backpack. "Here, drink this."

I had to take another phone call and after thanking them profusely and assuring them all was as good as it could be, both of them wandered off in separate directions. I did not see them again for the remainder of the Con.

I will never forget the kindness of those strangers, those who saw a fellow gamer struggling with something and without caring or asking for explanations took the time to offer some support.

This is one of the hundreds of reasons these rules will always remain free.

## **Final Words**

The game is actually 20 years old, almost to the month. It has walked a long and winding path and started in 1996 (?) with a three week overseas vacation. I was making a game that I could play with 2 ten-sided dice in my pocket and a notebook in my backpack. It was called Cinch because it was a "cinch" to play. Time passes. Life occurs. During that time I ran a game store and I plinked around on the game but was never able to come up with a combination that made me say, "This is it!" Shortly afterwards, I

discovered Matrix Games by Chris Engle and the concept behind them stood me on my head and shifted me firmly into the storytelling/narrative camp of game makers.

The old Cinch rules became lost (this was before Dropbox) and I created another set of rules that leaned heavily on the concepts in Engle's Matrix games from Hamster Press. It was called "Cinematrix" and although fun it just never got out of the nest. Then, events conspired to shift me away from roleplaying and things like a family and work and more Life came into focus. In late 2014, during a move, I found the original Cinch 2.0 ruleset again buried in the corner of a box and decided to see if I could combine bits of Cinematrix into it. I wanted the rules to work well for solo RPG games as well as I'd discovered how fun they could be. This first attempt worked just enough to give me some more inspiration.

I wanted a game that was more on creating shared story spaces instead of dictating out too many crunchy numbers. RPGs have always had a problem in that they are right brain activities (storytelling) meshed with a left brain exercise (math). It's been determined that jugglers get a high from juggling because as you juggle you actually activate both sides of your brain at the same time with the ambidextrous movements. The best games create that same kind of feeling and I wanted the "fizz" that comes when you've got just the right amount of story and you're still trying to count out your health points to make it all work.

In my experience this is what has made the best "there we were" stories you hear among friends. You know the ones, "The dragon was swooping in, coming down on us. The trees around us were on fire and we were cut off. The healer was down, the archer had two arrows left and I had a fireball spell left in me. I needed 20 points of magic to cast the fireball I needed and I had 21. I went for it and..." Do you see the combination of the left and right brain going on there?

Finally, sometime around Feb. 2015 I had what I felt was a game system which seemed to work to my liking. After more tweaks, playtests and sporadic writing sessions, here we are at the Spring of 2016. I've got an end product I'm finally happy with and able to release out into the wild.

In addition, I wanted to give back to a gaming community that I've seen evolve and grow and blossom since I first walked the hallowed halls of Gencon in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin dressed up like a ranger and carrying a Crown Royale dice bag. It's a community that has given me fantastic experiences, inspiration and some of the best friends I have ever made. This core ruleset is for them, for you, and, in the spirit of it all, will remain forever free.

Enjoy!

~ Bryan Roberts, Spring 2016 ~



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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Matrix Statements**

It is mentioned that Chronicle Points can be used for something called a Matrix statement. Matrix statements are based on the Matrix game by Chris Engle from Hamster Press. The original Matrix games were built around a setting, a cast of characters and typically a “hook”. They function very much like a story driven board game where players were allowed a single Matrix argument a turn. Successful arguments would then build the “matrix” of what was known in the game world. A player could attempt to make any situation or event come to pass, from national decrees of war, assassinations, espionage and intrigue as well as weather events and natural disasters.

The strategy behind this was that smaller statements with a higher degree of success could be built towards a larger statement that may not have a high degree of success if stated at first.

An example of this would be, “The king is assassinated.” This would have a low degree of success stated right off the bat. However, if the player spent turns making successful statements like, “The king decides to raise taxes.”, “The King embarrasses a high ranking and rich merchant noble.” “The king’s brother storms away after a horrible argument over the military” and “The kingdom’s coffers are dry due to the king demanding large expenditures on parties and gatherings” then you can see how a structure is being put in place that might make the initial assassination statement more successful.

This is the heart of the Matrix game and why I’ve included it inside the Chronicles system. This is what gives the narrative power to the players so they can work with the Gamehost to build a shared world together. Some players, at first, might only see how these statements could be made to improve their characters. Below I’ve listed some as to how Chronicle points could be used to do so much more!

- Building sub-plots for other players
- Building and adding details to kingdoms
- Creating global conflicts
- Building villains

### **The Gamehost and Final Say**

When matrix statement are being used the Gamehost works as a mediator and has final say over something that might be too ridiculous. A GH should consider all statements fairly and work with the sentiment of the table. However, if a statement is just too off base for the game’s setting or theme the GH can decline the idea or perhaps suggest a different angle. Some examples might be a player suggesting a science fiction spaceship suddenly appearing over a fantasy castle, any kind of repeated divine intervention to save a character’s life or helping the characters, etc. It is ultimately up to the GH to let the players feel included without swatting down every idea they have.

## **Ranking the Statement**

Every Matrix statement has a probability of success that a GH will need to determine. This can be called it's Strength, or it's likelihood of "being true." That strength will oftentimes work off of other "known things" in the game world. Below is a table using a standard d10 to determine the chance of success. The numbers below are guidelines and a GH can slide these numbers within a digit or two as they see fit.

Very Strong	Roll 2+
Strong	Roll 4+
Average	Roll 5+
Weak	Roll 7+
Very Weak	Roll 9+

If a player beats the number with the roll of a d10 than their statement is fact in the game world. However, it may also be modified down the road by another Matrix statement.

The ranking is subjective and a Gamehost may allow himself to be swayed by how fitting a statement works with the established narrative. On the other hand, a GH should feel free to rank a statement Very Weak if it just does not make sense in the setting or the current game world. Usually, you will feel it in your gut when a statement makes sense or not. If a statement is completely out of line, which may happen with young or particularly silly players, then the Gamehost can simply disregard the statement or, if the gamehost is feeling kind, make the player roll a succession of 10's on a d10. (For instance, a players makes the statement that a starfighter appears in a fantasy world. The Gamehost could ask the player to roll three 10's in a row.)

## **Using Matrix Statements in-Game**

### **Setting**

The best matrix statements in a Chronicles game effect the world around the characters. As a gamehost, allow players the creativity to get their creative fingers into your game world. A gamehost may need to offer suggestions at first to new players of things they could possibly spend their Chronicle points towards. It won't take long before players get the idea. When a player asks a question about a detail this is a perfect time to suggest they could use a Chronicle point for a matrix statement.

### **Some examples**

"Does the town have a good blacksmith?"

"Far to the south, just beyond the known map is a land ruled by Red Wizards"

"Asteroid belts surround the mysterious Algani system"

## **Complications**

Players may also complicate the adventure as much as they like. The complications can be minor to quite extensive. The Gamehost, of course, will need to keep an eye on how “out of control” they want things to get. However, if a player has an idea, isn’t quite done with combat, or perhaps wants to add another villain, they can use a matrix statement to try and get that started.

“The innkeeper’s wife seems to REALLY like you.”

“Just as we finish, more guards pour through the airlock!”

“The Grand Emperor sends out his finest pirate hunter against us.”

In the case of complications, a GH should feel free to perhaps reward Chronicle points back to the player when the complication is encountered and/or handled by the group or player it focuses on.

## **In Conflict**

Players will perhaps use these the most; Matrix statements during a chase scene or a conflict to assist them against their opponents. (An excellent player will use them to give the bad guys a hand up.)

“Of course, there is a propane tank right behind the gangmembers.” (Which they can then shoot with their pistol to make it blow up.)

“We are in New Orleans so, of course, I run through a small musical parade that confuses the guys chasing me.”

“The ogre gets fascinated with the shiny crystal I just dropped.”

Matrix statements are infinite. When playing Chronicles, the players are encouraged to use them to build the world and the story around them just as much as the Gamehost. It creates a shared world where players can feel ownership of the world instead of just characters who are reacting to it. For Gamehosts, it can provide less work as players help flesh out the world and provide ideas for future plots.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Magic, Psionics, Superpowers and You**

Special abilities such as this require a bit more work on the part of the GH. However, with this ruleset we leave it up to the GH to design how special abilities work within his or her game world. Below are some “good ideas” to begin with and a system for magical spells is also included in Appendix II.

First off, what is the difference between a "special ability" skill and a normal skill?

**Having a skill deemed a “special ability” means that character can do things that the bulk of other “normal” characters in the game world cannot normally do and which costs the character points in order to do it.**

For instance, if one character has "Strong" or "Weightlifting" as a skill then that character may get rolls for doing actions involving his strength. He can possibly pick up heavy loads, carry large knapsacks, land a devastating punch, etc. However, that character may NOT attempt something like throwing a car or picking up a tank.

A character with the Super Strength skill would, of course, be given the option to do these things and could then roll as normal. In addition, a character with a Super Strength of 1K1 is going to have a much less chance of picking up a tank than a different character with a Super Strength of 2K2! This would apply to everything from Super Strength to Psychic Abilities to Flying to Super Speed. Much of this will be determined by the GH and the style of play he wants to evoke.

This also applies to magical spells as well and an example magic system is given Appendix 2.

Many of the examples below are based on a Magical setting as this is the most “familiar” to many who play RPG’s. Using this as a base it should be easy to see how it can be applied to anything from Superpowers to Psychic Space Knights.

### **Using Special Abilities**

Using a Special Ability comes in two parts, the Skill roll and the Effect roll. Like skills, each Special Ability will have a skill level and it will need to be rolled vs. a difficulty number for it to succeed.

Unlike skills, all special abilities also cost a particular amount of Health or Psyche points to use. This is the Effect Roll. The GH should decide if they want this to come off the character’s Psyche points or their Health points. Depending on the ability it could be either! Super strength makes more sense to cost Health points while Telepathy might make more sense to come off of Psyche points. (To present another option, a GH may decide that all Special Abilities come off a a different pool which is the total of a character’s Health and Psyche.)

Regardless, this cost represents the fickle cost that it takes out of the individual when they use those abilities. The amount they cost is based on a dice roll and how powerful the ability is deemed. Individually, each power might be modified slightly in the description. Players are encouraged to work with the GH on the description and effects of spells and powers.

The base mechanic for the Effect Roll is very simple and similar to damage rolls.

Low powered, small effect	--	1K1
Medium powered, Medium effect	--	2K1
High powered, large effect	--	2K2 Base 5
High+ power, larger effect	--	3K2 Base 10
Immense power, Massive effect	--	3K3 Base 15
Epic level power, Epic/Massive effect	--	4K4 Base 20

A player rolls as normal and just like a skill roll will keep the HIGHEST total. These rolls do NOT explode on a roll of a 10.

Because the higher range effects have the potential to cost very little for a BIG pay-off, the Base numbers represent the minimum amount of points it will cost the character in energy points. The player still rolls as normal however if their roll falls below the base number then they simply pay the base number. This keeps characters from doing high powered things and getting by with a lucky roll. IF a player rolls over the Base number than they take the amount rolled. NOTE - Base numbers ONLY apply to the energy points and have nothing to do with damage rolls. See below for more.

If a player wants to do damage with an effect they state how much damage they would like to attempt using the same Effect table. If successful, they roll damage and this is ALSO the cost to them in energy points. If their damage roll is under the base number for the level of effect then they will do less damage but still take the base cost to their energy points.

Important Note about the cost of special abilities -- GH's are encouraged to modify the cost based on what effect the player is trying to accomplish. If the character would like to simply have a small light, like a match, appear then the GH could simply state it would cost the player 1 or 2 points instead of them rolling and possibly getting a larger cost like an 8 for such a small thing. It is entirely up to the GH and the style of play she wants to generate!

This could be done in inverse as well should a player want a huge effect. Instead of having the player roll and get a small number the GH can let the player know beforehand that it will take 25 energy points to cast the spell. Of course, the GH may want energy costs to be more fickle and a character may never know how much it could cost him to tempt the winds of magic? It's up to the GH to decide.

**Examples of non-damaging use of an ability.**

A simple Light spell illuminating the area like a candle would only cost a character the amount of energy points equal to 1K1. If the character wished to illuminate a larger room or create the light of maybe a large lantern then it would 2K1. If the room was a massive courtroom or several acres then it would be 2K2. If the character wanted to cast a strong enough light to illuminate an entire town or city, basically a massive star in the sky, then it would be 3K2 or even 3K3, etc. This scale is the same for all powers, spells and abilities.

#### **Rolls for the above examples:**

Illuminating a small room, like candlelight: 1k1

Lighting up a larger room with a lantern like light: 2K1

Lighting up a courtyard indoor or outdoor: 2K2

Lighting up most of a village: 3K2

Lighting up an entire city area: 3K3

A massive star in the sky lighting up an entire county: 4K4

#### **Examples of doing damage with an ability:**

Another example might be a space knight character that wants to use a telekinetic push on an opponent. The player states he would like to shove the opponent away from him and into a wall. He states he wants it to be a firm, hard push and around 2K1 damage. The GH agrees and has the character roll as he would for any Skill. If successful, he would roll 2K1 points in damage to the opponent. For example he rolls a 9 and a 4 for damage. He keeps the largest, of course, and this is not only applied in damage to the opponent but also comes off his own energy total.

Example: A battle mage is throwing a large, exploding fireball at a castle wall. He declares it to be a 3K2 effect fireball. The player rolls his skill, gets a success and rolls 3K2 dice with a total result of 6 points. A decent blast but not what he was hoping for! 6 points of damage will be handed out to any NPC's or characters within ground zero of the explosion. Unfortunately, the character will then take 10 points off of his energy point total because it is the base total for that effect level. (See previous Effect Roll chart.)

Important note: Rolls of "Yes, and...", "No, and...", etc do not normally effect the damage totals. They can apply to the dramatic results and descriptions of the attempt. Occasionally, A GH may allow dice to be added or subtracted from the roll due to dramatic die rolls or conditions.

Example – The battle mage above may have received a “Yes, but...” roll on his fireball. In this case, the low damage roll provides the extra narrative from the “Yes, but...” In this case, “Yes you are able to cast the fireball but since the damage was so low, it was just not what you were hoping for.”

#### **Variant Rules for Martial Artists**

In the normal rules, hand to hand damage is very light. A simple punch or kick might do only 1d10-3 non-lethal to a target (plus or minus a strength bonus if applicable.) This can make for some very drawn out street fights if done purely by the numbers.

The variant for this is to treat all skills that feature unarmed combat as Special Abilities and allow the character to have ranks in a Skill Effect rank that matches the character's skill level. This would apply to anyone taking skills such as Martial Arts, Brawling, Hapkido, Boxing, Tai-Chi, Jeet-Kun-Do, etc. Use of the skill will not require any health or Psyche points but instead simply allows the character to inflict that level of damage, lethal or non-lethal, to an opponent. This type of damage only applies if the character is unarmed! Once the character becomes armed with a weapon, whether that is a staff, a chair or a sword then she will need to use the corresponding skill. If the corresponding skill is still the Martial Arts or Brawling skill the damage is applied per the weapon not to the Skill Effect.

This helps support the martial artist/monk classes of the game world and shows how they are able to aim their strikes precisely to hit the most damaging spots whether an opponent is armored or no.



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