

D12 Roleplaying System

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For the purposes of these rules, the male shall embrace the female.

1 Fundamentals

The premises of the system are simplicity and ease of use, whilst still remaining robust enough to add structure to a game. Significant amounts of freedom is left to the players in terms of character creation and skills, whilst game play flows freely, without getting bogged down in detailed mechanics.

- All rolls are made using d12s.
- There is a single table for all rolls.
- There are no attributes, just skills, in which characters can have ranks.

The game can be easily adapted to any setting, each setting module providing a short description, a list of professions and, optionally, any special rules. Two settings currently exist (see Setting Annex): Colonial Era (1880s-1920s) and High Fantasy.

2 Mechanics

As stated, all rolls are made using a d12 using a single table:

- Natural 1: Critical failure.
- < 5: Fail
- 6 – 7: Partial success
- 8 – 11: Success
- 12+: Critical success

Example 1 (Shooting a crossbow). Assuming the character has a crossbow and the strength to wield it, the result of a roll would be as follows:

- < 5: Miss
- 6 – 7: Light wound (-2HP)
- 8 – 11: Hit (-5HP)
- 12+: Kill

A critical failure could involve shooting one of your own side or similar. It would not mean dropping your crossbow.

Example 2 (Fixing a car). Your party is travelling by automobile through the deserts of Eastern China in the hopes of locating the lost city of Loulan. You break down and desperately, with the aid of a crowbar and several hours under the bonnet in the stifling midday heat you...

- < 5: ...can't get it to start
- 6 – 7: ...get it to start, but it can only go about 10mph and breaks down every couple of miles.

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- 8 – 11: ...get it working reasonably well.
- 12+: ...get it working perfectly. You even seem to have fixed that little rattling noise that's been driving everyone mad since you bought the damn thing in Kashgar.

A critical failure could involve the car blowing up or catching fire.

Example 3 (Swimming). You fall off a galleon into the ice-cold sea.

- < 5: You slowly start to submerge, swallowing water (lose 1HP/round).
- 6 – 7: You manage to tread water with minimal gulping (lose 1HP/2 rounds).
- 8 – 11: You make some progress against the waves. You'll reach the ship in a few rounds.
- 12+: You slice quickly through the water, ignoring the cold, and catch up with the boat.

3 Skills

A character may gain skill ranks (SR) in different skills. These are then added to the result of a die roll testing that particular skill. For example, a character with Rifle rank 1 would roll 1d12+1 to test if he hit the target. Although a rank of 2 might seem small, it makes a significant difference. Compared to a character with 0SR, one with 2SR would have almost half the chance (only 1 in 4) of missing, and three times the chance of killing the enemy (also 1 in 4).

Some skills (for example, using a knife) are classed as generic skills, meaning that any character can attempt them, even if they do not have skill ranks. Other skills are classed as specialist skills and can only be used if a character has at least 1SR. Examples would include making a suit of armour, flying a plane or forgery. Whether a skill is generic or specialist will depend on the setting and is ultimately the discretion of the GM.

Similarly, some skills (forgery or firing a crossbow) will always require a roll, others (such as flying a plane) do not - if the character has a nonzero rank then he can do it (most pilots don't crash 4 times in 12). However, a roll would be needed for difficult manoeuvres (such as landing in a storm).

- Some skill rolls can be opposed rolls: each player rolls a d12, adds his skill rank, and the higher wins.
- The GM may add bonuses or penalties to a roll; for example, the standard penalty for shooting at people who are trying to run away or who have some cover is -2.

4 Hit points

All characters have 12 hit points (what else?). These may be traded during character creation for skill ranks (1HP buys 1SR, 2SR buys 1HP). If a PC is reduced to zero hit points (or suffers a "kill" result, as above), s/he is rendered incapacitated and s/his permanent number of HP is reduced by 1. For NPCs,

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being reduced to zero hit points results in death.

5 Magic (*In settings that incorporate magic*)

Magic is treated as a special skill with a slight difference. Having xSR in magic allows one to use level y spells on a successful roll with a modifier $+(x - y)$ if $x - y \geq 0$. So $2SR$ in magic allows one to use level 1 spells on a successful $1d12+1$ roll and level 2 spells on a successful $1d12$ roll. What counts as a level y spell is left up to the GM. For example, level 1 spells include creating an aura of light or curing minor ailments whereas level 3 spells include fireballs and transmutation.

The particular spells a given character can cast are decided beforehand in consultation with the GM. Having xSR in magic allows one to learn $(x - y + 1)$ level y spells (or twice that if you're a wizard). For example, having $2SR$ allows one 4 level 1 spells and 2 level 2 spells.

6 Creating a Character

To create a character:

- Choose the character's profession (see below). This will grant the character a couple of skill ranks and abilities.
- Purchase ranks in skills. The first rank in each skill costs 1, the second costs 2, the third 3, etc. Each character has 15 points to spend. There is no fixed list of skills - a player may choose anything he likes as a skill (in consultation with the GM). Certain skills are defined, in that certain professions begin with them, but this is in no way meant to be a prescriptive list.
- Choose a flaw. This is something such as "extreme fear of heights", "suffers from attacks of malaria"; "very short-sighted without glasses"; "came from poor and looked-down-upon background"; "kleptomaniac", etc. You may choose any reasonable flaw you wish (in consultation with the GM).

N.B. 1. Characters may spend skill points on things other than skills. For example, should you have taken 2 ranks in "flying a plane" and wish to actually own that plane, the GM may decide that that will cost 3 points; being able to speak a foreign language might cost 1 point..

N.B. 2. Characters may take up to two additional flaws. For each additional flaw they will get extra skill points: 3 for a normal flaw or 1 for a minor flaw.

N.B. 3. The GM will usually award either 0, 1 or 2 bonus points to spend depending on the interest and imagination of the character concept and background.

N.B. 4. It should be noted that "+1" in a skill means that 1 rank is added AFTER normal ranks are bought. It is thus better than "1", which means that the player gets 1 rank BEFORE normal ranks are bought.

N.B. 5. Some notes on skills:

- Each "Penalty" refers to any skills in that category (agreed with the GM)

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- skills in that category cost twice as much and there is a -2 penalty to using them with Rank 0.
- If a skill is marked * then it can be replaced by a similar skill (e.g. “Swords” by “Axes”).
- HP can be traded for SR: 1 HP buys 1 SR, 2 SR buys 1 HP.
- A character who doesn't quite fit into any of the professions below can adapt them within reason and after consultation with the GM.

7 Professions

Professions are specific to each Setting – players should consult the Annex.

Each setting will typically have six professions, three of which are primarily physical and three of which are less so. Each profession will award a number of starting skill ranks or bonuses to skill ranks, together with a special bonus not available to other professions and a penalty to taking skills in a certain category.

8 Equipment

Characters can have any equipment that seems reasonable (in discussion with the GM). As discussed above, special equipment can be purchased with skill points. They may carry as much as a normal person could - someone with 1SR in Strength can clearly carry more than someone with 0SR in Strength.

9 A Final Note on Combat

As discussed above, the basic premises of fighting is as above. Weapons do partial, full or critical damage.

- Small weapons (e.g. daggers, knives or pistols) do -1HP, -3HP, -6HP respectively.
- Medium weapons (e.g. swords or rifles) do -2HP, -5HP, kill respectively.
- Large weapons (e.g. claymores, battleaxes, machine guns) do -3HP, -7HP, kill respectively.

Armour (if appropriate to the setting – armour would not stop a bullet) reduces damage (to a minimum of zero):

- Actions are carried out in an order determined by a Speed check.
- At the beginning of each round, all combat actions must be declared. Combat then resolves in order.
- For ranged combat, attacks are made by carrying out an appropriate skill check. Actions are carried out in an order determined by a Speed check.
- When fighting in a melee, both people roll simultaneously and the winner does the damage (the damage is determined by the score of the roll that wins, you don't roll again).
 - If one person is attacked by more than one person in a round, a

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separate opposed roll is made for each attacker. The lone fighter may only do damage against one attacker (his choice); against the others, if he wins, no damage is done to either party. The lone fighter gets a -1 to each roll penalty for each attacker beyond the first, meaning even a skilled fighter can be brought down if surrounded by many opponents.

- If one person wishes to do something other than attack the other then they can do no damage if they win the opposed role. Their own action resolves as normal.
- Evasion or dodging is possible: it's a special skill and it always has an additional modifier of $-x$ where the attacker has xSR in Speed.
- A ranged weapon cannot be used at close range without a -3 penalty.
- If fighting bare-handed, the combat roll is $d12+Strength+Brawl$. On a success, damage done is equal to $1 + x$ where the attacker has xSR in Strength.

SETTING ANNEX

Setting 1: Colonial World (1880s – 1920s)

The game is set in the period of the 1880s to the 1920s. Characters will typically have been in the colonies for approximately 10 or more years; they may have been serving in the army, worked as a mining engineer or been in the diplomatic service. They are now, for whatever reasons – retirement, flight from a public scandal, boredom, "made their pile" – at a loose end and seeking adventure. An adventure might typically begin in London (with characters perhaps responding to a newspaper advertisement such as that of Shackleton's or the fictitious Professor Challenger's, or being tasked with a special mission by the Government) or else in a city in the colonies – perhaps Delhi, Johannesburg or Hong Kong – where something out of the ordinary is occurring.

It is assumed that all PCs are in possession of certain basic abilities, including the ability to read, ride a horse, shoot a gun and similar; also that they have certain things such as a place to live, some degree of private income or means of supporting themselves.

Magic is not operative in this setting. Players should ignore Section 5 of the rules.

Professions

- Soldier
- Explorer
- Engineer
- Diplomat
- Trader
- Missionary

Soldier: *A professional army officer, trained in the science of modern warfare and military discipline? Or a hard-bitten mercenary, veteran of a thousand bloody squabbles in forgotten corners of the globe?*

Rifle: +1

Pistol: +1

Leadership: 1

"Weapons": Can use military weapons (machine guns, mortars, etc.) should they be found

Penalty: Intellectual skills ("I'd sooner see my son hanged than be a bookworm!")

Explorer: *The dour, muscular climber who rediscovered the lost lakes of Kallarkand? Or the redoubtable noblewoman, who spurned a life in court for the irresistible pull of the deserts?*

Navigate: +1

Track: 1

Rifle: 1

"Tough": Loses 1 fewer hit points than other characters to non-weapon damage and, when incapacitated, may continue acting at half speed (though any other wound, however minor, will incapacitate you).

Penalty: Diplomatic skills ("Long time in the bush, don't you know?")

Engineer: *The mathematician and draughtsman who, from his windowless office, calculates the building of a canal to join the oceans? Or the practical 'jack-of-all-trades' who can fix anything whilst still holding his own in any workers' brawl?*

Repair: +1

Strength: 1

Pistol: 1

Brawl: 1

"Machinery": Can understand and use most machinery

Penalty: Spiritual skills ("Practical man, me")

Diplomat: *The eloquent, self-assured statesman, discussing high politics at a state banquet in Berlin? Or the secret agent, as deadly as she is beautiful?*

Diplomacy: +1

Lie: 1

Politics: 1

One unusual language skill.

"Contacts": Will know useful government or embassy contacts in most major cities or locations.

Penalty: Practical skills ("Get my hands dirty?")

Trader: *A consummate swindler, wanted by the police of the five continents? Or a powerful magnate with investments across the globe?*

Barter: +1

Diplomacy: 1

Geography: 1

"Wealthy": Wealthier than usual and so can afford better equipment/access to credit in foreign cities etc.

Penalty: Physical skills ("Oof, I'm not as thin as I used to be!")

Missionary: *A fervent and devout evangelist, dedicated to spreading the gospel? Or a weathered, cynical priest, half-pickled in drink?*

Resistance: +1 (resists against hypnosis, evil possession, brainwashing, etc.)

Anthropology: +1

Medicine: 1

"Spiritual power": Can repel or banish evil influences, keep supernatural powers at bay, etc.

Penalty: Combat skills ("Thou shalt not kill")

Setting 2: High Fantasy

A classic High Fantasy setting, reminiscent of Tolkien. Technology and society are likely to be mediaeval or near-mediaeval, while magic abounds. Players should not be surprised to encounter mighty sorcerers, strange races, fire-breathing dragons or the dark realms of the undead. Depending on the wishes of the GM, skill with a sword or bow may be more common than literacy, whilst untamed wilds lie outside the familiar fields of civilisation.

Magic is operative in this setting.

Professions

- Warrior
- Explorer
- Thief
- Merchant
- Priest
- Wizard

Warrior: *A guilt-stricken paladin, stained with the blood of a hundred innocent infidels? Or a wily mercenary swordsman, no loyalty but to himself and his money?*

Sword*: +1
Bow*: +1
Leadership: 1
Strength: 1

'Weapon Familiarity' Is treated as having one skill rank when using any weapon, including unconventional or improvised weapons.

Penalty: Intellectual skills ("The sword is mightier than the pen")

*These skills may be exchanged for other weapon skills if desired.

Explorer: *The dour, muscular climber who rediscovered the lost lakes of Kallarkand? Or the redoubtable noblewoman, who spurned a life in court for the irresistible pull of the deserts?*

Navigate: +1
A foreign language.
Track: 1
Climb: 1

"Tough": Loses 1 fewer hit points than other characters to non-weapon damage and, when incapacitated, may continue acting at half speed (though any other wound, however minor, will incapacitate you).

Penalty: Diplomatic skills ("I speak the language of the wilderness; what need have I of human tongues?")

Merchant: *A lying trickster whose faulty goods are the curse of a thousand towns? Or a powerful magnate with investments across the globe?*

Barter: +1

Diplomacy: 1

Geography: 1

One foreign language skill

“Wealthy”: Wealthier than usual and so can afford better equipment/access to credit in foreign cities etc.

Penalty: Physical skills (“Oof, I’m not as thin as I used to be!”)

Priest: *An unswervingly devout acolyte? Or a weathered, cynical medicine-man, turned to drink?*

Resistance: +1 (resists against hypnosis, evil possession, brainwashing, etc.)

Anthropology: +1

Medicine: 1

“Faith”: Your deity of choice looks out for you. Use sparingly.

“Spiritual power”: Can repel or banish evil influences, keep supernatural powers at bay, etc.

Penalty: Combat skills (“Thou shalt not kill”)

Thief: *A one-eyed cutpurse with connections to unwholesome organisations? Or a throat-slitting yet romantic troubadour who sings cheeky folk-songs about her exploits outside the law?*

Dexterity: +1

Evasion: +1

Lockpick: 1

Knife: 1

“The family”: Knows people who can help out when things get tough.

Penalty: An outlaw is usually being looked for by somebody. Also gets “half-penalty” on scholarly or diplomatic skills.

Wizard: *A bumbling academic with a trailing beard and eyebrows singed by his latest experiment? Or an unnaturally bald woman with piercing eyes and an unhealthy ability to do calculations?*

Magic: 1 (there’s no royal road, so it’s not +1)

Also doubles the number of spells learned (see the Magic section of the rules)

Dagger: 1

Geography: 1

Perception: +1

Foreign languages, at least one of which is dead

“Polymath”: Starts with 20 instead of 15 points to spend on skills. Eight of these must be spent on “intellectual” pursuits.

Penalty: Practical skills (“I suppose I never really had to”). Also starts with only 9HP.