

[2d6] Roleplaying System

Gamma Edition

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What is a Roleplaying Game?

A roleplaying game (often abbreviated RPG) is one in which players take on the role of a particular character (often called the player character or PC) within a story. There are many different types of roleplaying games these days, but the type that this book is designed to help you play is generally referred to as the “pencil-and-paper” style of RPG. These kinds of RPGs are played without the aid of a computer, and rely on one of the players to narrate the action of the story and manage the non-player characters (NPCs) within the game. This person is called, most frequently, the Game Master or Game Mistress (GM for short).

I'm sure that if you're new to the RPG scene, the tendency of experienced gamers to reduce long titles to acronyms is a bit confusing, but trust me when I say that it will save a lot of time later on if you can just remember these four, so I'll just list them out for the more visual learners out there:

Roleplaying Game (RPG) – A game in which players take on the roles of characters within a story and direct their actions.

Player Character (PC) – The character that a player controls while playing the game.

Non-Player Character (NPC) – Any character within the story not controlled by a player.

Game Master/Mistress (GM) – The person who creates and runs the game. They also control the actions of the NPCs and make rulings on disputed situations.

RPGs are played for many reasons. Some people like the escapism of adventuring in a world more fantastic and exciting than their own. Some like to step into someone else's shoes for a while, to see what different lives are like. Some just enjoy the creative aspect of designing and running the game itself. Whatever draws you to the idea of roleplaying, RPGs can be a lot of fun, but to play them takes a bit of setup.

First off, you should try to find several other people in your area who are also interested in roleplaying. This is your gaming group. Generally speaking a group of 4 to 6 people works best, and if you're all new to the RPG scene, you should probably try to keep the group size small at first (it makes the job of the GM easier).

Make sure everyone reads the rules to whatever game you decide to run. This system, 2d6, is just one of many sets of rules for how you could run an RPG. I, along with a number of my friends, designed 2d6 because we felt a lot of other RPGs on the market today were too complex and took too much time to set up.

Thus, 2d6 is engineered to be simple, quick, and fun, while still allowing you to have a lot of control over the game you're playing. Character creation, which we'll get to in a minute, can take as little as ten minutes once you know the rules.

Certain sections of this text have been bolded for easier reference. These sections contain the most condensed core rules, and are often the most important parts.

That said, thank you for choosing 2d6, and enjoy your game!

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The Basics

If you're still reading this, you've chosen to use 2d6 as your game system – thank you! This page is all about the bare mechanics of the 2d6 system.

Using 2d6 is a way to introduce randomness to your games. Instead of the players telling the GM what they're going to do and the GM simply telling them how their decisions play out, 2d6 (like most other RPGs), uses dice to add chance to the situation.

Whenever your character is in a situation where there's the possibility that they might fail, you roll two six-sided dice and add whatever bonuses or penalties you have that are appropriate to the situation (don't worry, there's a lot more about these later on). This rolling of dice is referred to as making a “check.”

For instance, let's say that I was playing in a game where my character was a professional chef who, for one reason or another, was on the run from the law. He sneaks into an old farmhouse looking for a soft bed and finds an old woman sitting at the kitchen table in the middle of eating her dinner. Frightened, the old woman picks up her fork, brandishing it like a weapon. My chef thinks fast and tries to convince her that he's just looking for a place to sleep, and that he'll do chores around her house if she'll let him stay the night.

Here's where the dice come in:

I would roll **2 six-sided dice (referred to in gamer notation as 2d6, hence the title of this system)**, and add to them my bonus in the Diplomacy skill, as well as my bonus or penalty to the Charisma stat. This would be called “making a diplomacy check.”

If the result of my diplomacy check is high enough, my chef succeeds, and the old woman allows him to stay the night in return for labor. If it fails, she tells him to leave or she'll call the police. If he succeeds by a lot, she may even feed him, if he fails by a lot, she may fling the fork at his head and run screaming into the night.

The number you have to match to succeed on a check is called the difficulty class, or DC for short. I know, another acronym, but trust me when I say that they're very helpful for shorthand notation later on.

If your roll (plus any bonuses or penalties) is the same as or higher than the DC, you succeed, if it's lower, then you fail. How much you succeed or fail by determines how well or how poorly you did, and the GM will choose an appropriate course of events after your roll.

And that's the game in a nutshell. There are some specifics you need to learn about creating your character, but the entire mechanic of the game is as simple as this:

GM explains situation, Players react, Players roll checks, GM decides what happens based on checks. Rinse. Repeat.

The next section will tell you how to create your character so you can begin playing the game!

Character Creation

Before you can play any game, you'll need to create your Player Character (PC). This is your avatar in the game world; you direct their actions, decide what they say, do, eat, drink, where they go and who they associate with. There are four parts to character creation:

Part 1: Stats – a representation of your character's physical and mental aptitude.

Part 2: Talents – special abilities that distinguish your character from those around them.

Part 3: Skills – how good your character is at specific tasks.

Part 4: Starting Items – this depends on the game, but your characters may or may not start with objects in their possession.

Each of these will be covered in greater detail on the next few pages.

While making your character, try to think of a backstory for them. Who are they? Why do they do what they do? Do they have friends or family? What about a job? Are they famous? Homeless? Beautiful? Insane? This is the most important part of any roleplaying game. You can be literally anyone that you want. The only restriction is your own creativity.

That said, there may be guidelines for the particular campaign you're playing in (a campaign is a series of adventures that are all connected to form a big story, more on this later). For instance, you can't be a computer hacker in a traditional swords & sorcery fantasy game, where the level of technology is on a rough equivalent with medieval Europe. Talk to your GM about what kind of setting your game is going to be in and then try to figure out where your character fits into that world.

While it doesn't exactly pertain to character creation, this chart of all the possible rolls on two six-sided dice may come in handy when you play:

+	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6	7	8	9	10	11	12

This shows you all the probabilities of each outcome. For example, the fact that there are 6 ways of getting a 7 means that you have a 6/36, or 1/6 chance of rolling a 7, compared to the only 1/36 chance of rolling a 12. This means most of your rolls will be near 7.

Stats

Stats (short for statistics) are the basic attributes of your character's physical and mental abilities. They are used to modify your skill checks, as well as for a few other things within the game. There are eight stats, four physical and four mental. They are:

The Physical:

Strength (STR): a measure of your character's strength, strength is often used to modify combat rolls and athletics checks involving strength.

Agility (AGI): a measure of your character's speed and grace, agility is often used to modify combat rolls, athletics checks involving agility, and certain performance checks like dancing or acrobatics. Agility is also used to determine combat initiative.

Dexterity (DEX): a measure of your character's control over their own body, dexterity is often used for ranged combat rolls, sleight of hand checks, crafting checks, and some performance checks like playing an instrument, or doing card tricks.

Toughness (TOU): a measure of your character's overall hardiness, toughness is used to determine the number of wounds (health) your character has, as well as to make resolve checks against disease and poison.

The Mental:

Intelligence (INT): a measure of your character's total knowledge, intelligence is used to modify some crafting and knowledge checks, as well as medicine checks. Intelligence also determines the number of languages your character knows and if they're literate.

Willpower (WIL): a measure of your character's force of personality and will to live, will is used to modify some intimidate and lie checks, as well as resolve checks against fear, unconsciousness and death. Will also affects the number of trained skills you begin with.

Charisma (CHA): a measure of your character's wits and physical appearance, charisma is used to modify most bluff and diplomacy checks, and perform checks like storytelling or singing.

Perception (PER): a measure of your character's senses and the attention they pay to them, perception modifies notice checks and some craft checks like forgery and disguise. Perception is also used for combat initiative and aiming.

Stats in 2d6 are situational. This means that there is no hard and fast link between a skill and a particular stat. When rolling a check, the GM will choose whichever stat is most appropriate for the situation. For example: a beggar using the diplomacy skill to panhandle money from passerby might add their willpower to represent the soulful look in their eyes, while a spy trying to smooth-talk information out of a foreign ambassador would probably add their charisma bonus.

Stats (cont.)

All of your stats begin at a -2 penalty, meaning they take 2 away from the value of a roll associated with them. **You then have 24 points to distribute among your stats at a 1:1 ratio.** This means that if you put 1 point into a stat, it becomes a -1 penalty. If you put another point into it, it would become a +0. One more and it becomes +1, then +2, +3. This means you get just enough points to make all your stats +1 if you want to keep things even, however, most people have some 0's and +2's, and some may even have a -1, -2, or +3.

The maximum bonus you can ever have for a stat at this point in character creation is +3. You can, however, raise a stat to +4 if you have the appropriate Stat boost talent for it. As far as what different stat bonuses represent in the real world:

-2: very poor, haven't used this stat in a while

-1: below average

+0: average human level, mediocre

+1: above average

+2: amazing, someone very devoted to this stat

+3: absolute pinnacle of normal ability, someone with a +3 will go down in history books

+4: beyond normal human ability; nearly supernatural

For some games, you may want to increase or decrease the amount of starting stat points depending on the kind of characters you like to play:

Commoners: 20 points (slice of life games, challenging difficulty)

Heroes: 24 points (traditional games, average difficulty)

Superheroes: 28 points (high-powered games, easy difficulty)

Deities: 32 points (armageddon/plane-hopping games)

A caveat about stats:

While it may be tempting to put all your eggs in one basket and push one stat up to a +3, you should probably try to avoid doing this all the time. Someone who has a +3 stat is either incredibly brilliant in their field (Olympic gold medalist, Nobel prize winner, etc.), or a sort of savant, who has very poor scores for the rest of their stats, but has superhuman ability with one of them. While these characters are fun to play once in a while, it often gets on other gamers' nerves if you play them too frequently. Besides, having disadvantages can make games more interesting and challenging!

Talents

Talents are special abilities that set your character apart from those around them. A list of sample talents has been provided that should cover most of the basic options. **Characters begin play with their racial talent plus two free talents of their choosing.**

Talent Name	Description
Acrobat	Can use Athletics for tumble, flip, contortion, precision jump
Altered state	Can enter state with stat shift
Alternate form	Can shift into another physical form
Animal Kinship	Can use diplomacy on animals without penalty
Armor proficiency	No penalty for wearing medium or heavy armor
Companion	Sidekick or friend follows you everywhere
Computer literacy	Able to use computers
Connections	Can use a special contact to obtain rare/free goods/services
Credentials	Belong to an organization that gives benefits
Dual wield	Two items modify a particular skill instead of one
Extra organ	Have extra limbs, wings, poison glands etc.
Extra sense	Can sense heat, magic, danger etc.
Extra wound	+1 wound permanently, can only take once
Fast caster	Casting time reduced to half-round
Favored enemy/culture	+1 on combat or social rolls with specific race/culture
Graceful	Can move while performing a half action once per turn
Improvisation	No penalty for improvised materials
Literacy	Can read
Mass spell	Can cast spells on multiple targets
Multiattack	Reduces attack time to half-round action
Polyglot	Learn one language
Rich	Extra starting items/money
Sneak "attack"	Stealth gives bonus on "attack" rolls
Sniper	Aiming bonus doubled
Stat boost	+1 to a stat, can only be taken once per stat
Spell turning	Can reflect spells onto caster when defending
Vicious parry	Can parry attacks when defending

Acrobat

Characters with the acrobat talent can use athletics to tumble, flip, contort their body, and do precision jumps (like diving through a window or leaping onto a thin beam).

Altered State

A character with the altered state receives a +1 bonus to one stat and a -1 penalty to another while the state is active. This could be a drunken master who, when inebriated, gains a +1 agility and a -1 intelligence, or it might be a barbarian who, when raging, gets a +1 strength and a -1 charisma. It might even be a monk's meditative state, where they get a +1 to intelligence but a -1 to agility. Whatever the case, each time this talent is taken it either applies to a new state, or adds another +1 and -1 to the same stats in the first state.

Alternate Form

A character with alternate form can transform into another physical shape. Whether this is something as simple as changing to a different sentient race, or as drastic as changing from a human to a moth is up to the GM. The limitations of this talent depend on your setting. In fact in some settings it may not even be appropriate at all (realistic or modern settings). Altered State can be linked to an alternate form if a character wishes (one state to one form).

Animal Kinship

Characters with the Animal kinship talent don't take any penalty when using diplomacy to affect animals. Normally, there is a -2 penalty for this.

Armor Proficiency

This talent allows characters to use medium and heavy armor without negative effects. Normally if a character without training tries to use medium or heavy armor, they only get a +1 bonus to defense (as if they were wearing light armor), but still incur the full penalties of the armor they're wearing (-2 for medium armor, or -3 for heavy armor).

Companion

A character with the companion talent has a strong connection with a particular NPC. This could take the form of a significant other, a crew member, a sidekick, or simply a very good friend. The companion will generally go wherever your character goes, and will also usually follow orders within reason, though if an order would put them into danger they may refuse. The GM ultimately controls any companions you may have. Companions should be started out as starting, and they grow and level the way normal characters do. Each time this talent is taken it applies to a new companion.

Computer Literacy

In appropriate settings, this allows a character to use the basic functions of a computer. Data processing, internet use, emailing, and document creation all fall into this category. In some settings (futuristic or sci-fi settings usually), characters receive this talent for free at the GM's discretion.

Connections

Each time the connections talent is taken, you may pick one NPC as a connection. This might be a rare art collector, a doctor who takes any case, no questions asked, or a black market dealer who trades in illegal goods. This talent doesn't mean that the NPC necessarily helps you for free. Rather, they allow rare goods to be obtained at all, common goods to be obtained at a

deep discount, and very common or cheap services or goods to be obtained for free. It could also be an informant who gathers local gossip or does research for the character, usually for a price. Often this price is information or a favor.

Credentials

A character with the credentials talent has access to an ability or a geographical location that others may not. This could be security clearance, a cop's badge, a driver's license, or even a freemason membership. Generally speaking, credentials are anything that requires the character to carry a membership card or badge on them at all times. Each time this talent is taken it applies to a new set of credentials.

Dual Wield

This talent allows characters to apply the bonuses from two items to a single skill, instead of the normal one. Each time this talent is taken it applies to a different skill.

Extra Organ

A character with the extra organ talent might have a tail, opposable thumbs on their feet, chloroplasts in their skin that let them photosynthesize food, wings, or even an extra set of arms. This talent, with a few rare exceptions, must be taken during character creation, and is usually meant for racial talents (more on races later). Each time this talent is taken, it applies to a new organ.

Extra Sense

Characters with extra sense have the ability to detect other phenomena above and beyond the traditional five. This might be heat vision, tremor sense, the nose of a bloodhound, the ability to taste magic, or even a danger sense that entitles characters to a notice check if danger is afoot. Each time this is taken it applies to a different sense.

Extra Wound

This talent gives a character one extra wound on top of their normal amount. This talent can only be taken once.

Fast Caster

Characters with the fast caster talent can cast spells that would normally be a full round action as a half-round action instead.

Favored Enemy / Culture

Characters with this talent are particularly used to dealing with one race or culture. They receive a +1 on all combat rolls against this race if they take this talent as favored enemy, and a +1 on all diplomacy, bluff, and intimidate checks if they take it as favored culture. The two best examples of this are a fighter who spent their career in a foreign country (favored enemy), or an ambassador (favored culture).

Graceful

This talent allows a character to move 20 feet and perform another half-round action in the space of a single half-round action once per turn. A character with this talent can essentially move 50 feet and still do something that would normally count as a half-round action in one round.

Improvisation

This talent allows a character to forgo the normal -2 penalty that comes with using improvised tools or weapons.

Literacy

Not all characters begin with the ability to read. In many settings the literacy talent is restricted only to those who have had formal educations. However, in other settings, this may be given as a free talent by your GM (modern or futuristic settings).

Mass Spell

Casters with the mass spell talent can cast spells on multiple targets at once.

Multiattack

This talent reduces the duration of an attack to a half-round action, rather than a full-round, allowing characters to attack twice in the same round. Each attack may still contain up to 20 feet of movement.

Polyglot

This talent allows a character to speak one language fluently, without the possibility of mistranslation or misspeaking. When a character hits rank 5 of the language skill they automatically receive the corresponding polyglot talent.

Rich

Characters with the rich talent start with twice as much starting money as other characters if you're using the slow method of item generation. If you're using the fast method, they receive another special item and each mundane item slot they expend on money is worth twice as much. This talent must be taken during character creation.

Savant

A character who plays a savant is in something of a unique position. This talent allows a character to break the normal cap on their maximum skill bonus for one skill. They can have up to a +5 bonus on a single skill, even at first level. They still have to spend skill points on it as normal. However, this does come at a price. Savant characters are basically autistic, and as such may never have above a -3 charisma modifier. High functioning savants should take ranks in social skills like diplomacy if they want to counteract the charisma penalty. A character can only take this talent once, during character creation.

Sneak "Attack"

A character with the sneak attack talent is adept at using stealth to their advantage with a particular skill, either in or out of combat. When a character with sneak attack succeeds on a stealth check against a target character's notice before an attack or some social rolls [melee (), archery, throw, shoot, diplomacy, intimidate], they get an additional +1 on their next "attack." Each time this talent is taken it either applies to a new skill or compounds onto an existing sneak attack bonus.

Sniper

Characters with this talent double their bonus when aiming for a shooting, archery, or throwing check.

Spell Turning

A character with the spell turning talent can turn magical attacks back on their casters. When trying to counterspell (defend against a spell using magic), if a character with the spell turning talent doubles an attackers casting check with their opposed casting check, they may reflect the spell back onto the caster.

Stat Boost

This talent gives a permanent +1 bonus on a particular stat. It can be taken once per stat.

Vicious Parry

When a character with the vicious parry talent doubles an attacker's melee () roll while defending, they may choose to perform one of the following actions on their opponent: disarm, trip, 5-foot shove, or grapple.

MAGIC SPELLS:

Spell Name	Description
Armor	As if wearing armor, no proficiency needed
Animate	Brings objects to life
Blast	Shoots ranged attack
Charm	Use casting instead of diplomacy
Control	Allows control over material (fire, metal, water, etc.)
Create	Can create objects from nothing
Destroy	Reduce objects to dust
Entangle	Ranged grapple
Fly/jump	Travel great distances through the air
Heal	Can heal target as with trade (healing) check and then some
Illusion	Make target hallucinate
Levitate	Move objects with mind
Natural Phenomenon	Can stimulate a natural phenomenon (rain, plant growth, etc.)
Negate	Cancel the powers of another caster
Repel attack	Use cast for defense
Ritual	Can perform magic ritual
Runes	Store spell in symbol, triggered by certain events
Stick to walls	Climb walls, ceiling like insect
Summon	Call spirits, supernatural entities for guidance, deals
Transmute	Change one thing into another
Ward	Alarm or protect an area or object

Armor

This spell lasts all day and take ten minutes to cast. It gives the target all the bonuses and penalties of light, medium or heavy armor. This does not require the armor proficiency talent to use.

Animate

This spell allows you to bring an object to life and give it a simple task like “guard,” “follow,” or “clean.” It's often used by mages to keep their workplaces clean or carry heavy things.

Blast

Blast creates a blast of something, whether it's fire, force, wind, or simply raw emotion. This functions as a ranged attack roll, though it may have other effects (i.e. fireball starts fires).

Charm

This allows a caster to use cast in place of the diplomacy skill. If the attempt fails, the GM may wish to make the target of the spell realize someone's been trying to charm them.

Control

You can control a particular thing without touching it. This might be fire, metal, rope/chain, doors, you name it. To move anything of a significant mass or volume would take a high DC. Each time this spell is taken it applies to a new thing.

Create

You create something out of nothing. This could be food, money, or an object of some kind – even the raw materials to build something else. The DC of this spell varies depending on what is trying to be created, and is set by the GM, though it's usually very high.

Destroy

With a wave of your hand you can reduce something to dust. Lower-power versions of this spell might simply break an object, but higher versions could disintegrate it entirely. The DC is determined by the size and power of the target, and is decided by the GM. This is generally a very high DC.

Entangle

This spell functions like a Melee (Unarmed) used to grapple. You roll an opposed check with the target you're trying to grapple. The range on this spell is up to the GM.

Fly/Jump

This spell lets the target fly a short distance or perform a huge jump. Higher DCs increase fly duration or jump length.

Heal

At low DCs, heal can be used the same way trade (healing) can to double the normal healing rate for a wounded character. At high DCs, however, it can heal wounds directly. The DCs for these tasks are up to the GM.

Illusion

This spell makes a target think they see, smell, taste, touch, or hear what isn't really there. Lower DC versions include small noises or static images, medium DC versions might incorporate two senses or move, high DC might make victims think they're on fire or falling.

Levitate

This spell allows a caster to move objects around without touching them. If the object in question is particularly heavy, use the cast skill like an athletics check. If the object is being thrown at another character like a weapon, treat it as a throw attack with an improvised weapon. While this spell can – at high DCs – be used to fly, it is extremely slow.

Natural Phenomenon

You can call on, stimulate, or suppress one natural phenomenon like rain, plant growth, lightning, or wind. This spell usually takes five minutes of uninterrupted concentration to execute. Each time this spell is taken it applies to a new natural phenomenon.

Negate

You can use a full round action to negate the powers of another caster for a their next turn if you succeed on an opposed Cast check.

Repel Attack

You can use magic the way other characters use melee defense skills. In addition, you can also use this to defend against ranged attacks like throwing, archery, and shooting. This could manifest as a shield or perhaps the attack simply bounces off you - whatever the case it's only able to be used in defense from another attack.

Ritual

Rituals are a way of enhancing spells. If a caster who knows a particular spell has the help of another caster who also knows the spell, they can reduce the DC of the spell. For each caster who participates in the ritual, lower the DC by 2. All casters participating in the ritual must have this spell talent, as well as the spell being performed. When making a ritual, each caster must make a cast check at the new, lowered DC for the spell. If any casters in the ritual fail, the entire ritual falls apart. Often this results in a wild release of magical energy, the results of which are up to the GM.

Runes

Runes are a way of storing spells. Scribing a rune on a surface can essentially store a spell so that when another character touches (low DC), passes by (medium DC), or looks at (high DC) the rune, they set off the spell. This doesn't actually count as it's own spell, but if a character wants to scribe other spells into runes, they must take this spell talent.

Stick to Walls

This spell allows the target to stick to walls or other surfaces as though they were walking on the ground. Their items may or may not be subject to this spell based on the DC.

Summon

This spell summons a spirit or soul from the spirit realm. This can only be used to make deals with spirits, talk with them (including the dead) or seek advice, though high-DC versions might involve temporarily summoning the spirit in the flesh if it's willing.

Transmute

You change something into something else. Weak examples include changing the color, texture, flavor, or smell of an object. More powerful examples might be changing an object's chemical composition, size, or shape.

Ward

Warding is used to put a sort of alarm on an area or object. If a warded area is entered, or the object is interacted with by a creature other than the caster, any of several things might happen. Low DC wardings might make a loud noise or pungent smell. Medium DCs might mark the intruder or psychically warn the caster if they're not present. High DCs may even incapacitate or imprison the creature that set them off.

[This would be a great spot for a picture wouldn't it...]

Skills

Skills are quite possibly the most important part of the 2d6 system. Your ranks in a skill give you a numeric bonus on rolls that have to do with that particular field. They're meant to represent training in a particular area, work experience in a field, or just a general knowledge about the subject.

If a character has no ranks in a skill, they receive no bonus on related rolls. Each player begins with their racial skill, plus five skill points to distribute. Each rank of a skill costs its own numeric bonus in skill points to buy.

Rank	Cost for that rank	Total cost to get to that rank
1	1 point	1 point (1)
2	2 points	3 points (1+2)
3	3 points	6 points (1+2+3)
4	4 points	10 points (1+2+3+4)
5	5 points	15 points (1+2+3+4+5)

Each rank a character has in a skill gives them an additional +1 bonus on related checks. For example: A character with 3 ranks in the “Trade (Chef)” skill (which would cost a total of 6 skill points to get to) would get a +3 bonus on all checks involving cooking or other chef-like activities. There is no limit to the number of ranks a character can have in a particular skill, though in a realistic setting, only people like Lance Armstrong, Benazir Bhutto, Simo Hayha, Lise Mietner, or Joshua Norton would ever have a skill of a +5 or above.

Sample Skills:

Each skill will be accompanied by the stats most commonly associated with it, as well as a brief description of the actions it covers. Skills with a set of parentheses after the name indicate that each time the skill is taken a specific subset must also be chosen.

Archery [DEX]

Archery is any sort of combat using bows. Archery can be used to attack, but not to defend. Archery is almost always modified by dexterity. The only thing that can defend against archery is magic, though GMs should assign -1 or -2 penalties on archery checks if the target is moving or partially behind cover.

Athletics [STR] [AGI] [DEX]

Athletics is used for running, climbing, general jumping, lifting, pushing, dragging, swimming and, if the “Acrobat” talent is taken, for flips, tumbling, contortion and precision jumping (diving through a window or landing on a beam as opposed to leaping a gap).

Bluff [CHA] [WIL]

Bluff is used to lie, and is opposed by another character's Notice or Bluff. After all, when it comes to liars, it takes one to know one.

Cast [INT] [WIL]

Casting is the actual bonus your character gets on magic rolls. Because magic is such a specialized thing, there's a whole section about it later on, but for now, suffice it to say that your spells are given as talents and how well you can cast them is determined by your cast check results. Depending on your setting you may have a variety of options for spells, or none at all. Casting can be used for offense or defense depending on the spell used. Casting can be opposed by a defensive combat check, a resolve check, or even an athletics check depending on the circumstances, but can always be opposed by another casting roll.

Trade () [INT] [DEX]

A trade could be anything from cooking to blacksmithing. Any field where a product is created or a service is performed is considered a craft. There's a list of example crafts and what those can do later on. Healing is also considered a Trade.

Diplomacy [CHA]

Diplomacy is the art of getting people to think the way you want them to. Whether this is calming an enraged dinner guest, negotiating a good price at the market, or even flirting with a potential crush. While Diplomacy is almost always modified by charisma, there may be times where will or even intelligence would be appropriate modifiers. Diplomacy is opposed by diplomacy, since you have to have the social skills necessary to understand when you're being manipulated. A character using diplomacy on animals takes a -2 penalty on the roll unless they have the "Animal Kinship" talent.

Drive [DEX]

Drive allows your character to operate automobiles or wagons. In some settings you may also want to take the talent "Credentials: driver's license" as well. Drive is almost always modified by dexterity.

Forgery [INT] [DEX] [PER]

Forgery is used to create false documents, counterfeit money, or copied art. The type of forgery dictates the stat used to modify it (intelligence to know the techniques, dexterity to forge a signature, perception to get the detail work done right, etc.). Forgery is opposed by Notice.

Hacking [INT]

Hacking is used to gain access to private digital information, create viruses, and alter protected programs. It is almost always modified by intelligence, and is opposed by Craft(Programming).

Intimidate [WIL] [STR]

Intimidate is used to make other people afraid of you. Whether this makes them submit to your will, flee, or attack you out of fear is situational. Intimidation in combat is almost always modified by strength. Social intimidation is often accomplished by using willpower, though strength is sometimes appropriate too. Intimidate is opposed by resolve.

Knowledge () [INT]

Knowledge is a working understanding of a particular field. This skill can be taken multiple times, each one applying to a new field of study. Knowledge is almost always modified by intelligence.

Language () [INT] [CHA]

Language is used to speak other languages that aren't your native tongue(s). This skill can be taken multiple times, each time applying to a new language. It is a unique skill in that, when a character hits their fifth rank of a particular language, they instead receive the “Polyglot” talent for the corresponding language (this means you no longer have to roll language checks for that language, since you speak it fluently). Without the talent, there is a chance that the character could mistranslate and either discern an incorrect meaning or accidentally say something they didn't mean.

Lockpicking [DEX] [INT]

Lockpicking and safecracking are indispensable skills for burglars and art thieves everywhere. With the proper tools, lockpicking can be used to disable or open locks. Lockpicking is opposed by Craft (Lock).

Melee () [STR] [AGI]

Melee combat comes in three flavors: Heavy, Light, and Unarmed. Heavy is any style where blocking is the primary form of defense (large swordfighting, axes, polearms, clubs, or maces). Light melee is any kind of melee where the primary defense is dodging or parrying. This includes styles like knife fighting or fencing. Unarmed could be anything from bar-brawling to aikido. Heavy is almost always modified by strength, Light is almost always modified by agility, and Unarmed could be modified by either depending on the situation. Each kind of combat can be defended from by any other. In addition, some magic may be used to oppose melee checks, as can athletics (dodging). This skill can be taken multiple times. Each time it is taken it applies to a different category of melee fighting. A note: Characters wishing to use two-weapon fighting (considered heavy or light Melee depending on the weapons used) get no special bonuses to combat unless they take the “Multiattack” or “Dual Wield” talents.

Notice [PER]

Notice is the skill used to see, hear, or smell things. In some cases taste and touch can come into play, though this is not very frequent in most games. Notice is almost always modified by perception. There are two kinds of notice checks: active and passive. Passive are checks that your character is unaware of, to see if they notice a particular environmental phenomenon, whereas active checks are when your character says something like “I put my ear against the wall and listen to the conversation in the next room.” Notice is most often opposed by stealth, but can also be opposed by forgery, lie, or certain other skills meant to hide things.

Perform () [CHA] [DEX] [AGI] [INT] [TOU] [STR] [WIL] [PER]

Perform is used to put on a show. Whether it's acting, dancing, juggling, feats of strength, magic tricks, or music, perform is often used as a distraction, a morale booster, or a way to make money. The stat that modifies a particular performance varies wildly depending on the nature of the performance. Perform is opposed by perform (if you want to one-up someone else).

Pilot [DEX] [INT]

Pilot allows a character to operate a boat, plane, spaceship or other large craft. It is most often associated with dexterity, but can also be modified by intelligence in certain situations.

Research [INT] [CHA]

Research can take two forms: looking things up or asking around. If a character wants to look up a piece of information, intelligence would probably be the appropriate stat to modify research. If, however, a person is traveling the local gossip channels to plumb for information, the check is most likely charisma-based.

Resolve [WIL] [TOU]

Resolve is a character's general stubbornness and commitment to their task. Resolve checks are used to defend against fear, to go through with grotesque or frightening situations, to keep from becoming sick in the presence of gore, and to make checks against unconsciousness and death. It is also used to oppose intimidate and some magic checks.

Ride [DEX] [AGI]

Ride applies to any kind of vehicle where balance or form is an issue. Skateboards, surfboards, bicycles, horses, and sleds all fall into this category.

Sleight of Hand [DEX]

Sleight of hand is used to palm objects, steal wallets or purses, switch cards, or do other feats of manual dexterity.

Shooting [DEX]

Shooting is used for guns and crossbows. It cannot be defended against, except by magic. This does not mean the defender get no opposed roll, they simply get no bonus to their defense roll (unless they're wearing armor), and are relying on their luck alone to carry them through. However, GMs should assign -1 or -2 penalties on shooting checks if the target is moving or partially behind cover. While a character can attack with shooting, they cannot use the shooting skill to defend. Shooting is almost always modified by dexterity.

Stealth [AGI]

Stealth is used to hide, sneak, or blend in. It is opposed by notice. If a character makes a successful stealth check against another character's notice before using the melee (), archery, shooting, throwing, intimidate, or diplomacy skills, the defender may not add any bonus to their roll in the subsequent check, other than those from armor.

Throwing [DEX]

Throwing is used both in and out of combat. In combat, throwing dictates weapons like throwing knives, slings, and bricks or stones, as well as shurikens, spears, nets, and the mighty trident! Out of combat, it's used for throwing in sports, lobbing grappling hooks onto roofs, and tossing something to another character over a significant distance. Throwing can be used for attacking, but cannot be used for defense. Melee (), athletics, and certain perform checks (like dancing or acrobatics) can be used to defend against throwing.

Critical Success/Failure:

Whenever you're making a skill check and you roll a natural 11 (meaning that the actual dice display a result of 11), roll again and add the result of this roll, without any bonuses, to your original result (use 11 for your original roll value). For the those visual people out there:

2d6 + stat modifier + skill modifier + item modifier (+ or -) another 2d6

Whenever you roll snakeeyes (the dice display a value of 2), however, you automatically fail the check, regardless of how high your bonus to the skill is.

[there's totally going to be a picture here eventually]

Races

Some settings have multiple races from which to choose when creating your character. If so, there are a few guidelines to follow when creating racial templates. A race is basically a framework that you overlay onto an existing character. Races are created as follows:

Racial Talents: Each race must have a racial Talent. These are most often Extra Organ or Extra Sense Talents, but they could be anything, depending on the race.

Racial Skills: Each race must have a racial skill. Racial skills are skills that automatically start at a +1 bonus (1 rank). These represent something the race is intrinsically or instinctually good at.

Sleep Cycle: Diurnal or Nocturnal

Diet: Carnivore, Herbivore, Omnivore, Insectivore, Mycovore (fungus-eater), Producer (plant), Energy (electricity, heat etc.), Blood, etc.

Reproductive Method: Sexual, Asexual, Magical (like vampires), or sterile.

Culture: A basic description of the culture that is common to this race.

Lands: If the races are particularly frequent in, or have control over a particular area of land, that information belongs here.

Life Span: How long the race lives on average.

Example Race: Goblin

Racial Talents: Darkvision.

Racial Skills: Stealth

Sleep Cycle: Nocturnal

Diet: Carnivorous

Reproductive Method: Sexual

Culture: Goblins are scavengers by nature. Most live in small villages on the edges of larger urban areas and make regular forays and raids into the surrounding countryside. They often ride large wolves into battle, having bred and trained them over the course of generations. Some Goblins adapt to city life by working as beggars or thieves, though a few more intelligent goblins have made good livings as merchants as well.

Lands: Goblins have no racial lands. They are often found in small villages on the outskirts of larger settlements, or squatting in abandoned structures.

Life Span: Most goblins live 30 to 40 years.

When creating a half-breed character, you take the talent of one parent and the skill of the other. Then pick the sleep cycle of one parent and the diet of the other. The reproductive method is always the same for both parents.

Items

There are two methods for generating starting items. If you're playing a quick game, or you want to get through character creation quickly and easily, then use the fast method. If you're playing a more long-term or serious campaign, then the slow version of item generation is probably more appropriate. Both methods are covered below.

The fast method:

Each character begins with one special and ten mundane items. Mundane items give no bonus on rolls, but can allow a character to make checks that require tools (books for research, lockpicks for lockpicking, that sort of thing). Special items give a +1 bonus on checks with a particular skill (a beautifully crafted sword that gives +1 on light melee checks, a magic pendant that gives a +1 on casting checks, etc.), or they have some sort of power (a wand of fireball or a gun that can be loaded with anything. Each mundane item slot can be expended for a preset amount of money designated by the GM. If creating a character at a higher level, add one special item for each extra level.

Characters with the “Rich” talent get a second special item and each mundane item slot they expend is worth twice as much money.

The slow method:

Each character gets a set amount of money, designated by the GM. They can buy items from a premade list, also created by the GM. If they wish to buy items that are not on the list, they must talk it out with the GM to negotiate a price. Certain items, like a tree branch or a bag of dirt, might not cost anything at all. Any leftover money stays with the characters as they begin the game.

Characters with the “Rich” talent start with twice as much money.

Armor:

Armor differs from other items, in that it counts as a mundane item, but it still gives a bonus on certain checks. The defensive bonus from armor stacks with another item used to modify a combat check. There are three types of armor:

Light armor (leather jacket, oilskin greatcoat, leather jerkin, etc.):

Light armor is something that anyone can use. Most of the time it's just heavy clothing, but it could also be light armor like leather or padded cloth. Light armor gives a +1 on all defensive checks, but a -1 on all melee attacks, throwing, casting, and athletics checks.

Medium Armor (chainmail, breastplate, flak jacket, etc.):

Medium armor requires the “Armor Proficiency” talent to use. Characters attempting to use medium armor without the proper training receive only a +1 bonus to defense, but still

incur the full penalty of -2. Characters using medium armor properly receive a +2 on all defensive checks, but a -2 on all melee attacks, throwing, casting, and athletics checks.

Heavy Armor (plate mail, bulletproof vest, personal forcefield):

Heavy armor functions the same as medium armor except that the bonus to defense is +3 and the penalty to melee attacks, throw, cast, and athletics is -3.

Magic defensive items, or extremely well crafted armor (these count as special items for the fast method) may lessen the penalties associated with armor by 1 point. i.e. a good luck charm might give a character a +1 bonus on defensive checks with no penalty to other checks.

Only one item can modify a particular skill at a time, with the exception of armor, which stacks with other items to determine defensive bonuses.

Some Items might give more than a +1 bonus, but these are usually very powerful items that relate to the plot of the game in some way (a giant robot suit, a massive canon, or perhaps access to a vast library of information). These items can never be taken at character creation.

Not all characters begin with items. If your game begins in a jail cell or a slave caravan, it's doubtful you'll have access to any possessions.

A helpful hint about items: keep your item list on a sheet of paper and write it in pencil. That way, when you make changes to it you don't have to cross anything out.

Creating Magic Items:

There are no hard and fast rules for magic item creation, so discuss with your GM what the house rules are!

[totally gonna be a picture here too, I swear]

Combat

While a good story is more than just hacking and slashing through endless ranks of baddies, combat is often an integral part of most RPGs. Because it's such a dangerous business, it would seem to merit a few extra rules:

Combat, at its core, is nothing more than opposed skill checks. However, the manner in which these checks are made isn't the same as a normal opposed skill check.

Rounds:

Combat is done in rounds. Each round is meant to represent roughly five seconds of time. In a given round a character gets a certain number of actions as shown below:

Quick Actions: each character gets two quick action every round. Whether they use them or not is up to them. Quick actions are extremely brief things that can often be done while doing other actions. Drinking something already in your hand, drawing a weapon, speaking a sentence or two, or performing a passive skill check (like notice or knowledge)

Half-round Actions: each character gets two half-round actions per round. A half-round action is something that takes a bit of time to do, like making an active skill check (not including an attack or casting a spell), getting up from a prone position, picking something up off the ground, or moving twenty feet.

Full-round actions: instead of taking their two half-round actions, a character can take one full-round action. This is something that takes a while to do, like retrieving an item from a bag, making an attack, moving 50 feet, or spending a round to aim. An attack can include up to 20 feet of movement.

Initiative:

Combat order is determined by initiative. To make an initiative check, a character rolls 2d6 and adds their perception and agility modifiers to the roll (whether they're positive or negative). This represents how much attention they're paying to the situation, and how quick to action they are. The character with the highest initiative goes first, the second-highest goes second, etc. If two characters should tie, they reroll against one another to see who goes first.

Surprise Rounds:

If any characters are unaware that combat is being initiated, then a surprise round is in order. A surprise round means that any characters who are aware of combat get a full round to act before anyone rolls initiative, in which the defenders are not only unable to act, but also receive no bonuses to their defensive rolls (other than those given by armor).

Roll Mechanics:

When attacking, the attacker rolls 2d6 and adds the appropriate combat skill bonus (melee, throwing, archery, casting, or shooting). The defender then rolls 2d6 and adds the appropriate defensive skill (melee, athletics, casting, or certain perform checks). To both of these rolls the characters add the appropriate stat modifiers (as determined by the GM). They would also add the bonus from any item that modifies the skill they're using. **In the event of a tie, the defender always wins.**

For the more visual:

Attacker: $2d6 + 2$ ranks Melee (Heavy) + 1 Strength + Ancestral Longsword (+1)

Defender: $2d6 + 1$ rank Melee (Light) + 1 Agility + Well-made Knife (+1) + Leather Armor (+1)

So, the rolls might look like this:

Attacker: $2d6 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 11$ (this is the result if the attacker rolled a 7, the average for 2d6)

Defender: $2d6 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 10$ (if the defender also rolled a 7)

This means the attacker won this check, and has several options at their disposal. If the defender had won the check, nothing would have happened (unless they had the “Vicious Parry” Talent). Options available to a character that succeeds on an attack include:

- **deal the defender one wound**
- **disarm the defender**
- **distract the defender (the defender loses a half-round action on their next turn)**

Characters using melee attacks can also choose from the following:

- **knock the defender unconscious (they get a resolve check at a DC of the attacker's attack roll to remain conscious)**
- **trip the defender (prone characters take a -2 penalty on all melee checks, except to trip an opponent, to which they receive a +2)**
- **shove the defender five feet**
- **grapple the defender, but only using unarmed melee (characters involved in a grapple cannot act other than to speak, attack with Melee (Unarmed) or try to break the grapple with an unarmed combat roll)**

Characters must choose what they're trying to do before they make an attack. Attackers whose total check result is double the defender's result or higher may choose two results from the list above (or deal the defender two wounds). Alternatively an attacker who doubles a

defender's roll can incapacitate one of the defender's limbs (cut off, break, sever tendon). This renders the limb useless and deals the defender a wound. Most of the time, a useless limb will cause a character to take a significant penalty on any rolls that would normally involve using it (-2 or -3 depending on the severity).

In the rare event that an attacker should triple a defender's roll, they receive the same options as if they had doubled it, but the defender must make a DC 7 resolve check or immediately die. Even if they succeed on this check, they are automatically knocked unconscious. Unconscious characters receive no bonus to their defensive checks and take a -3 penalty to all checks.

Wounds:

Every character has a number of wounds equal to 3 + their toughness modifier (even if the modifier is a negative number). An extra wound can also be gained by taking the "Extra Wound" talent. Wounds are a representation of your character's physical health.

When a character is reduced to 2 wounds (not if they normally have two wounds), they must make a DC 7 resolve check or be knocked unconscious (either from bludgeoning or blood loss).

When a character is reduced to 1 wound (not if they normally have 1 wound), they must make a DC 9 resolve check or be knocked unconscious.

When a character is reduced to 0 wounds, they automatically fall unconscious and must make a DC 7 resolve check or die. If they succeed, they are unconscious until they regain at least one wound. Characters with 0 wounds that suffer any additional wounds die immediately.

Be forewarned, this combat system is designed for realism. In the real world, no matter how good a fighter someone is, they can still get taken down in a single punch under the right conditions. You should approach combat with this in mind.

Healing:

A character who rests for eight hours a day and is properly fed regains wounds at a rate of 1 per day. A character who does not get enough sleep or doesn't eat much only regains wounds at a rate of 1 wound every 2 days. These rates can be doubled if a successful trade (Healing) check is made. In some settings, very powerful magic or technology may be able to instantly heal wounds directly.

Critical Hits:

In combat, just like with any other skill check, rolling a natural 11 or a natural 2 means you scored a critical hit. Roll again and add the result of this roll to your original check, using 11 as the original roll value if you score a critical success. If you score a critical failure, you automatically lose the combat roll, regardless of modifiers.

Aiming:

If a character spends a full round action aiming, they receive a bonus on their next shooting, throwing, archery, casting (as appropriate), athletics (as appropriate), perform (as appropriate), or ride checks equal to their perception modifier (minimum +1). This bonus can be doubled by taking the “Sniper” talent.

[what do I owe you now, four pictures?]

Character Growth

As you play through the game, your character will progressively gain experience and become more powerful. Each time you complete an adventure, defeat an antagonist, solve a puzzle, or do something generally awesome, you get one dot of experience. Character growth goes in a three-dot cycle as given below:

Dot Number	Award
1	Skill Point and Cinematic
2	Skill Point and Stat Rearrange
3	New Talent

Cinematics:

At the first dot of the cycle, you receive a cinematic. Cinematics are a sort of magic fix-it button for your character. You can spend a cinematic at any point in the game to do one of the following things:

- Gain an extra turn in combat (this does not change your place in the initiative order)
- reroll a failed check
- automatically score a critical success with any check (must use this before the roll)
- call an NPC to help you (usually with a skill you don't have, or to save you in a fight)
- ignore a failed save against death

Your GM may have other things added to this list as house rules, so check with them before you play. There is no limit to the number of cinematics a player can have at one time.

Stat Rearranges:

At the second dot of the cycle, you are given a chance to rearrange one stat point to represent whatever you've been doing for the last three dot's worth of story. For example, if your character had recently moved from the city to the wilderness, they might shift a point from charisma into toughness. This would represent them getting harder from their time in the wild, but losing the edge on their social skills, since they'd spent so much time out of human contact. Only one point can be moved per Stat Rearrange.

Points gained from taking a stat boost talent cannot be rearranged. This means that if you have a stat boost talent for a stat, it can never be lowered below -1 by rearranging.

Magic

Magic bears special mention because of the diverse and powerful nature of the stuff. Magic can take many forms, have many roots, and come in varying levels of power. A magical superhero might be flashy or showy, with magic that reflects that. Huge sweeping gouts of flame or glowing purple shields might be more their thing, while a more reserved occultist might make use of subtle magic like hypnosis, astral projection or divination (telling the future).

The way I've organized magic to work is given in a moment, but if you don't like it, feel free to experiment with your own systems of magic. There is no right answer, just what works for you and your group.

Essentially magic comes in two parts, the spells and the casting rolls. Casting is a skill, but you may want to divide it into sub skills the way melee () or knowledge () is divided. For instance, in a game where the only magic is low-key, like in many old folktales, you may want to just have "Cast" as a skill. However, if you're playing in a game world with elemental controllers, you may want to divide it into "Cast (Fire), Cast (Air), Cast (Earth), and Cast (Water)." how many times you divide this skill, or if you even do is up to your GM to decide. They'll pick whatever works best with your game.

Spells are given as talents. Each spell is given as a sort of vague, generally applicable archetype like "Blast," or "Entangle." Most of the time these spells allow a caster to use Cast to mimic other skills like attack, defend, athletics, or the like, though they might also have extra functions. For instance, a blast could take the form of a fireball, which could catch things on fire, or a telekinetic blast that could knock things over. Some spells may be more abstract like "Create" or "Transmute." The rules for these spells are given in the descriptions.

When attacking or defending with magic, make opposed rolls as normal, if your check result isn't high enough to cast the spell, then it fails and you receive no bonus on the roll. Magic is powerful, but unpredictable.

All spells take a full round to cast unless otherwise specified. The Talent "Fast Caster" Reduces the time of full round spells to a half-round action. The DC of each spell is determined by the power and duration of the spell, and is decided by the GM.

It's often a good idea to put things into your campaign that can negate or suppress a caster's ability to do magic. This keeps powerful mages in check. In addition, most spells can normally only be used against one target at a time. This can be increased by taking the "Mass Spell" Talent.

Making your own Spells:

In all likelihood, there will be times when you'd like to use a spell that's not on the spell list. This is fine, but make sure you talk it over with your GM before you take it. When making your own spells, keep in mind that they shouldn't give you limitless ability to do anything you want, otherwise it sort of takes the fun out of the game for you and the other players.

Running the Game

This section is for those brave souls that take on the burden of running the game for their fellow gamers. Being the GM is a big job, but it can be a lot of fun once you know the basics. Running the game can be a great creative outlet for those with a more active imagination. Even if the role of GM is thrust upon you out of necessity, this section should have enough information to help you keep your head afloat when running your own roleplaying game.

DCs:

Possibly the most important part of running a game is knowing how high to set the DCs. The difficulty of varying DCs are listed below:

DC 5 – extremely easy

DC 7 – easy

DC 9 – average for a normal person, easy for someone well-versed in this field

DC 11 – difficult for a normal person, average for someone well-versed in this field

DC 13 – nearly impossible for a normal person, difficult for someone well-versed in this field

DC 15 – extremely difficult for a person well-versed in this field, impossible without training

DC 17 – next to impossible to do on a regular basis, feats of extreme awesomeness

DC 19 – the absolute limit of human ability

These are not meant to be used as a hard and fast reference list, rather, as a general set of guidelines for setting DC's. Also, **remember situational modifiers!** Situational modifiers are things that raise or lower the DC based on the conditions present. For example:

example DCs for climbing walls:

small wall – DC 5

small wall covered in seaweed – DC 7

small wall covered in seaweed topped with broken glass – DC 9

medium wall – DC 7

medium wall covered in seaweed – DC 9

medium wall covered in seaweed topped with broken glass – DC 11

tall wall – DC 9

tall wall covered in seaweed – DC 11

tall wall covered in seaweed topped by broken glass – DC 13

DCs don't have to be odd, these are just general, relative DCs. It's up to you as the GM to decide what DC is appropriate for a specific task.

Writing for the Players:

Always try to make sure you include elements in your games that allow each player's individual abilities to shine through, as well as elements that allow the players to work together as a team. My personal advice is not to split up the party too much, since it makes for

a lot of bored players while you narrate the individual action of each character, but feel free to disregard this if you find that works for you.

Metagaming:

Metagaming is a term that refers to the tendency of players to talk with one another when their characters couldn't, or to have their characters act on information they wouldn't actually have in-game.

For example, John and Jane are playing a pair of wizards looking for a powerful magic artifact in the tomb of a dead sorcerer. For the sake of efficiency they split up. If John's character gets into a sticky situation and Jane gives him advice on how to get out of it while their characters are apart, and therefore couldn't talk, that's metagaming. Or if Jane is told by her GM to roll a notice check, and she fails, but then pulls out a wand of blasting because she wants to be ready for a sneak attack, this would be metagaming, since her character didn't notice anything unusual and would therefore have no reason to be on guard. Some people don't mind metagaming, and a little bit of it can help players if they get really stuck especially if they're new, but I find it's best to discourage too much of it. It tends to break the flow of the game up.

Types of Games:

There are two basic types of games, and within those, two sub-types.

Adventure Gaming – Adventure Gaming is when the players have been brought together for a specific reason like saving a noble, stealing a piece of art, fighting off a zombie horde, or trying to escape from a prison. Whatever the case, the plot is fairly straightforward, and is made up by the GM beforehand, though there should always be wiggle room in case a player thinks of something you haven't prepared beforehand.

Sandbox Gaming – Sandbox Gaming is a more free-form, open game style. The GM creates a game world, complete with geography, cultures, organizations, currency, language and history, and then the players are free to do whatever they want in it. Perhaps they'll start a business, or become thieves. Maybe they'll get married or learn how to ride a horse. Whatever happens, it's up to the players. The GM is just there to figure out what happens when they do what they do. Often it's a good idea, as the GM, to come up with a number of possible plots that could be interesting to the PCs and casually slip them into the game to give it direction. Otherwise many players find themselves drifting aimlessly. Sandbox games are certainly tougher to run because you have to think on the fly, but are very rewarding, since they're a product of both the GM's and the players' imaginations.

Now, within those two styles are two sub-styles: one-shots and campaigns. One-shots are adventures that are designed to be run and finished in one or two gaming sessions. Campaigns are long-term games that could span months or even years in some cases. One-shots usually focus less on plot and more on action, while campaigns often have a more cerebral, political focus to them. Players tend to get more attached to their characters in campaigns, so be wary of killing them off.

Which brings us to:

Killing Characters:

Sometimes you have to do it. Every now and then a player will do something remarkably stupid, or perhaps they'll just get in over their head. Whatever the reason, when it comes time to kill a character, always do it with panache and style. For instance, which of these two deaths is better?

1. Evil Max stabs Mary-Sue in the back and she dies.
2. Mary-Sue looks down to see the tip of Evil Max's rapier poking through her chest. With a look of confusion and a quiet whimper she slumps to the ground, the life fading from her cheeks.

Number two right? Players want to go out well. If they have to die, make sure that they at least die a good death.

Overpowered Characters:

In many games, players will complain about a particular character in the group being overpowered. I am personally of the opinion that there is no such thing as an overpowered character, only an under-creative GM. Try to find the character's weakness and exploit it. If they're a powerful fighter, give them a puzzle to solve, if they're an unstoppable social dynamo, give them a moral dilemma that could make them lose face in the public eye. If they're a high-unbeatable caster (magic-user), give them a physical challenge. Whatever the case, if a character seems like they're becoming too powerful, don't hesitate to take them down a peg.

Making your own Rules:

Because of the rules-light nature of 2d6, you will often be called upon to make a ruling on a given situation. For instance, there are no rules on drowning in this book. Perhaps you think the player should make an athletics check. Maybe they can hold their breath for a number of rounds equal to their roll. Or perhaps you think it would be more appropriate to have them simply take a wound every round. It's your call. Just remember to be fair. If all the players at the table complain about a ruling, you should probably change it. After all, the point of the game is to have fun.

Building your World:

In many cases it's fun to play in a universe that's not our own. Whether it's the deep reaches of space for a science fiction game, or a magical fantasy world for something more akin to swords and sorcery, you should give world-building a try. It's an incredibly rewarding and extremely creative process. There are a few things you should try to keep in mind when making your own game world though:

Geography – every good world has its own geography. Some people like making an overall world map and building inward, while others like to start by making a main city and building out from there. It's your call, but there are a lot of resources online and in books for ideas and help making maps.

Culture – Are there different sentient races on your world? Some worlds are full of orcs and goblins or strange spirits. Others might include aliens or automatons. It's your call, but it's generally good to give the players some variety when choosing their race. If you're playing a more realistic game, you may want to treat different societies as different races to represent the different customs and traditions in various cultures. Also, many settings include racism between one or more races or cultures. This can play a big part in the plot.

History – Your game world should have a bit of history behind it if you plan on having any sort of long-term campaign. Big events like wars, trade agreements, natural disasters and political shifts are usually a good place to start.

Language – most of the time, language plays a major role in gaming. Some characters might even make a living acting as translators or transliterators. Language can provide a very frustrating barrier for characters. After all, no matter how powerful a fighter is, throwing in a language barrier is a good way to present them with a challenge every time.

Money – is there a unified currency? Multiple currencies? Or do the people of your world barter? Money is important for all the peripherals like items, lodging, food, and services, and can often be a good motivator for a plot.

There are plenty of other things to consider when building a game world, but these should be enough to get you started.

Other Resources:

If you get stuck, here's a list of resources you may find useful:

<http://www.reddit.com/r/rpg>

<http://www.rpg.net>

<http://www.giantitp.com/forums>

In addition to these, here are some great authors that you may want to check out:

J.R.R. Tolkien – description, environment

Frank Herbert – politics, human interaction

Terry Pratchett – humor, satire, culture

Warren Ellis – technology, politics

H.P. Lovecraft – horror, suspense

Mike Carey – philosophy, theology, morality

GOOD LUCK!

Credits!

Josh Gager – Lead Papergazer

Micah Brandt – Broodiness Taster

Mark Ishman – Starer at Things

Josh Brandt – Moral Compass

Drew Whit – Head Audio Technician

Joe Busch – Cornish Game Hen Wrangler

Chris Carlino – Redhead Enthusiast

Ismaa Viqar – Enthusiastic Redhead

David Evans – Beverage Consumption Specialist

Linda Gager – Monkey Handler

Dave Gager – Artificial Intelligence Destroyer

SheepInDisguise – Playtesting and Design Advice

Slashrunner – Playtesting and Design Advice

Vonwalt – Playtesting

Razoroftruth – Playtesting

Michael Mocerì – Design Advice

All the gamers at giant in the playground forums, rpgnet, and the reddit rpg board! Thanks!