



DECKBOX ADVENTURES

One Simple Roleplaying Engine, Endless Adventures

V0.3

CORE RULES • Prototype v0.3

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PART I — LEARNING THE GAME

1. Welcome to Deckbox Adventures

Overview

This is Deckbox Adventures, a tabletop roleplaying Game (TTRPG). I wrote this game to play with my kids. This game is designed to be easily picked up and played by new players of any age and experience level (I wrote a character for my 4 year old). This rulebook assumes you, the reader, are familiar with TTRPGs and will be the Game Master (GM).

What's Special About Deckbox Adventures?

The goal of this game is that this book is not needed. All of the Player Characters (PCs), Player Actions, Monsters, etc. are all on cards. The keywords are supposed to make enough sense to everyone so that the cards are all you need. If that is not in fact the case, please let me know. This game is still being playtested.

The Basic Game Loop

The GM creates and describes the world. Players control Characters within that world and describe what their Characters want to do. The GM determines how those choices resolve and tells the players what happens next.

Most of the game is handled through conversation, roleplaying, cards, and GM judgment. When an outcome is uncertain, the GM may call for a Check which will involve rolling dice. When multiple Characters need to make decisions at the same time, the game may use an Encounter and one or more Exchanges.

How to Play as a Player

You get the easier job. You probably don't even need to read this. But if you do remember these few guidelines and everyone will have more fun:

- Don't worry about the rules. The GM will keep telling you about the scene. Your job is to act in the world. For example, the GM might say, "You come to a locked door." You can say, "I want to pick the lock" or "I want to turn the door into paper so I can tear it up."
- Read your cards and ask if you have any questions. The GM is keeping a lot of stuff in their head. By reading your cards you can help the GM run a smooth game.

Describe what your Character does instead of naming the game mechanic. For example, say "I am going to take a running leap to cross the ravine" instead of "I would like to make a Check to see if I can jump across."

How to Play as the GM

You get the bigger job. It is your job to describe the scene, act as all the non-player characters, and generally create a space for imagination to exist in.

You describe the world and the players tell you what they are doing in it. When a Character attempts something with an uncertain outcome, you determine whether a Check is needed and explain how to resolve it.

PART II — THE CORE RULES

2. Characters

Characters

When playing a TTRPG, you're telling a story together. That story has Characters. Players each control one Character and the GM controls the rest. Characters embody classic roleplaying game genres such as close combat fighters, ranged attackers, healers, and magic users. The cards they have access to are representative of their role in the fiction. For example, close combat Characters will have attacks that target enemies that are close to them and healers will keep themselves or others in the story longer.

Character Profiles

Character Profile Cards have the stats of your Character and determine some of the other cards players can use. These cards stay on the table. The Character Profile is split into two cards:

- The **Character Profile** has an image of the player's Character as well as their **Resolve**, **Armor**, and **Resistance**. It also has a Resolve tracker along one side. Players can use a paper clip to track their Resolve throughout the game.
- The **Attribute Profile** has the Character's stats used for accomplishing tasks. It tells you how much Might, Agility, Mind, and Spirit a Character has and gives Advantage to things your Character is particularly good at. This Advantage is intended for role playing and not Combat Encounters.



Resolve, Armor, and Resistance

Resolve represents a Character's ability to remain in the fight. When reduced it may mean the Character has been injured such as a cut or a hit on the head, it may mean they are getting really tired, or they are becoming scared and are getting close to running away.

- Resolve is reduced when a Character takes damage.
- When a Character's Resolve reaches 0 they are Defeated. Defeat is not death. This can be represented fictionally by a Character being knocked unconscious, physically exhausted, completely losing the will to fight, running away, or whatever the fiction dictates.
- A player Character at 0 Resolve may be affected by cards or rules that recover Resolve.
- Death should be an intentional action taken after a Character is at 0 Resolve. Use this intentionally and sparingly (possibly not at all).
- Characters at 0 Resolve can no longer interact in the active Encounter. Enemy Characters at 0 Resolve will never come back into the story unless the GM decides to bring them back, such as when players want to question them. Do not bring Enemy Characters back to punish the players. This will result in players going out of their way to kill Enemies and becoming murder hobos.

Armor represents a Character's ability to resist physical damage. This can be from wearing armor, having tough skin or a shell, or being very nimble and able to jump out of the way.

- Armor is used when determining if most attacks deal damage to a target.
- When a source of damage is uncertain, a roll will be made and the total will be compared to the Armor number. If the result is equal to or more than the number it hits.

Resistance represents a Character's ability to resist Magical damage. This can be from mental resilience, a sixth-sense, or spiritual fortitude.

- Resistance is used to determine whether attacks that specifically target Resistance hit.
- When a source of damage is uncertain, a roll will be made and the total will be compared to the Resistance number. If the result is equal to or more than the number it hits.

GM Note: I did not want this game to include killing. I would like this game to be as family friendly as possible. When able, reward players for not using violence or when they do not kill Enemies. For instance they can question Defeated Enemies or maybe later on they meet an Enemy that they defeated earlier that then assists them for not killing them. Use death sparingly and make it a real choice. There may be a time when the players do feel the need to kill an Enemy. Allow those decisions to be talked about and not something that is made in the heat of the moment. For this reason Enemies should not recover from 0 Resolve unless there is a very good reason for it.

Attribute Profiles

Characters have **Might**, **Agility**, **Mind**, and **Spirit**. These are Attributes and they represent a Character's strengths and weaknesses. They cover things like how easy it is for a Character to physically break down a door or how persuasive they are when talking to people. The GM should use Attributes to determine how difficult it is for Characters to accomplish choices with uncertain outcomes.

- **Might** represents physical force, endurance, strength of the body and it covers things like breaking down a door, lifting something heavy, overpowering someone, or the ability to endure damage.
- **Agility** represents movement, precision, evasion and covers things like sneaking, dodging, balance, moving quickly, or performing precise actions.
- **Mind** represents knowledge, perception, tactics, some magical effects and it covers things like recalling knowledge, noticing something, solving a puzzle, or understanding magic.
- **Spirit** represents charisma, influence, inspiration, internal fortitude, some magical effects and covers things like persuasion, inspiration, ability to influence others, resistance to supernatural effects.

3. Cards

This game heavily utilizes cards to provide information to the players. Cards may modify the core rules. Card text supersedes core rules when they differ. There are several types of cards that have varied functions.

Equipment Cards

Things the Characters are holding, such as weapons and gear. These cards stay on the table and are used to reference things like attack damage or special effects. Enemies may carry

Equipment Cards from time to time so the Characters can pick them up after defeating them.



Action Cards

The players use these cards when instructed by the GM to do specific things, mostly during combat encounters but may be useful outside of combat as well. The text on the cards are used to interpret how your dice roll impacts your action. There are 4 primary action card subtypes:

- **Attack** Actions are used to deal damage to targets. Players can only use one Attack card each Exchange unless changed through other cards. When an Attack is made, roll dice and use the result, interpreted by the card text, to determine the outcome.
- **Defense** Actions are used to decrease incoming damage. Players can only use one Defense card each Exchange unless changed through other cards. When a Defense is used, roll dice and use the result, interpreted by the card text, to determine the outcome.
- **Move** Actions are used to reposition Characters on the table. When played, tell the GM where you want to go. If for any reason you cannot move to the desired location the GM will let you know and help you rectify your choice. Players can use more than 1 Move card in a single Exchange.

The MOVE card has a special feature, that all Character's can use, that allows them to cancel an action to use MOVE a second time.

- **Interact** Actions are used to do things that are not specifically attacking, defending, or moving. Some Character Actions use the Interact subtype. When a card with Interact is used, roll dice and use the result, interpreted by the card text, to determine the outcome. Players can use more than 1 Interaction card in a single exchange.

The INTERACT card is also used for doing any number of things such as hiding, climbing a ladder, opening a door, or grabbing a target. When applicable the GM will ask the players to make a Check to see if the Action succeeds.



Card Tags

Many cards have additional tags on them to help understand how they are played. Some cards may even have more than one additional tag. When a card with a tag is played follow these rules for those cards:

Control Tag: Control Actions have effects that will manipulate what the target can and cannot do or how well they do it. For example, effects that move other Characters around, grant Advantage or Disadvantage, or change the number of actions that can be taken would all have the Control tag.

Exhaust Tag: Exhaust represents actions that are extremely straining to accomplish. When an Action with Exhaust is played it will not be available for use again during the current Encounter. After the Encounter is over players can use exhausted Actions again.

Fatigue Tag: Fatigue represents actions that are straining to accomplish. When an Action with Fatigue is played it will not be available for use again until a number of Exchanges have happened. For instance, an Action with Fatigue 2 will not be able to be played again for 2 Exchanges. Once the number has been reached players can use the Action again.

You can track how long a card is fatigued for by placing a paper clip on the card and removing it at the end of each Exchange. If a card has no paper clips on it then the card can be returned to the hand for use. A die or designated areas on the table can also be used for tracking as well.

Limited Use: The Limited Use tag lets you know that the card is not permanent. Once the limit on the card's use has expired, the card will be given back to the GM.

Near / Far Tag: Near and Far tags let you know the distance some Actions can be used in relation to the target. Near means it can affect things close and Far means it can affect things at a distance.

Priority Tag: Priority Actions resolve before Actions without Priority. They have effects that can impact the resolution of other Actions such as adding armor or giving Advantage. If multiple Priority Actions are being resolved, the GM determines their order.

Reaction Tag: Reaction Actions are played after Actions are revealed in response to a specific Action or event. When the triggering event occurs, the player may replace one of their chosen Actions with the Reaction Action.

If a Reaction affects the Action or event that triggered it, the Reaction resolves immediately before that Action or event.

Reactions do not supersede the allotted card limits. For example, you cannot use a Defense Reaction if you have already played a Defense card.

Companion Cards

Companions are special Characters that allow younger children or very drunk adults to play the game with very limited restrictions on what they can do. The Companion has a special Attribute Profile that gives them specific rules and the freedom to roleplay with almost no restrictions. My 4 year old likes to make up fun things like turning into a robot and shooting lightning or throwing meatballs at enemies. This Character allows those things to happen.

Optionally you can give a small party the Companion to assist them in their adventure. The Companion was designed to be a really good tank with easy action resolution.



Enemy Cards

Enemies are the baddies the players will face during the story. The GM will play these Characters to create Encounters for the players and contain all of the stats the GM and players need to know. There are 3 enemy card types:

- **Enemy Profiles** tell the GM and players which bad guy they are fighting. It will have an image of the enemy, enemy Difficulty, Resolve, Armor, and Resistance, stats for attacking, and suggested Augments.

GM Note: You can make these enemies anything you want. Just because a Profile says it's a Goblin you can make it a Kobold or Gnome. Make these cards fit into your story and do not feel forced to make your story fit the cards.

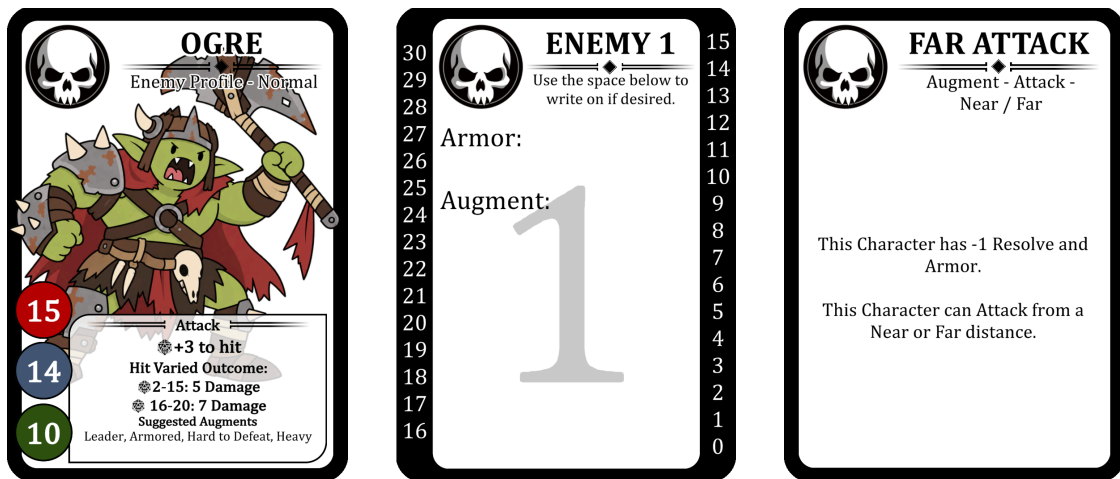
- **Enemy Tokens** are used to represent the Enemies during Encounters. There is only one of each Enemy Character Profile card. If the Encounter has 5 goblins, these token cards will represent those enemies on the table and the stats for each will come from the Enemy Character Profile. They have Resolve bars on the side that can be used to track their Resolve during play.

- **Augments** can be played in conjunction with the Enemy Character Profiles to create varied enemies. The GM can also choose to use any Augments desired with Enemy Character Profiles to create varied enemy types and not just the suggested ones.

Not all enemies in a given encounter have to use the same or any of the Augments. For instance if the “Goblin” Enemy Character Profile is used with the “Far Attack” augment some of the goblins can be using the bows and slings and others may not. Make sure to communicate with the players which enemy has which Augment.

GM Note: If the cards are put into standard card sleeves you can use a dry or wet erase marker to write information straight onto your cards.

Any number of Augments can be used with the Enemy Character Profiles to create many different enemy types. Be careful not to add too many Augments to the enemies. Just because the party can handle 5 Easy enemies does not mean they can handle the same number of enemies with many Augments. The Suggested Augments on an Enemy Character Profile are ideas for you to choose from to vary the play experience. Unless you want a truly epic enemy, do not use all of them. Many enemies are fine without any.



4. Actions

What Is an Action?

Not everything a Character does requires an Action. Players can freely roleplay in the world, making decisions about what their Characters are doing. Characters can talk to each other and others, move around the world, and interact with objects in the story.

Actions are very specific things Characters are doing and are defined by cards. When an Action is taken follow the text on the card to determine the result of your action. Most Actions require die rolls to generate a varied result.

Targets

Many Actions use the term “target.” This is a blanket term for the thing a Character is trying to do something to or with. Usually during normal roleplaying players will not need to

designate a target. The description of what is being done will imply a target. Target will mainly come up during Encounters when an Action tells you to choose one or more targets. Use the term target for the Character, object, or other thing affected by an Action. Cards may specify distance, number of targets, restrictions, or other conditions to what may be targeted by an Action.

5. Dice, Checks, and Results

When Do You Roll?

During the story, while roleplaying, the GM determines when a player's decision requires a Check. Checks are used when a Character attempts something with an uncertain outcome. This could be swinging a sword, using magic, finding a trap, recalling knowledge, or any other thing the Characters are trying to do. The GM will tell players when to make a Check after they explain what they are trying to accomplish. Players should not refer to Checks when roleplaying.

Sometimes players will use cards and Actions that require them to roll dice. These are also Checks but when to roll while using cards tends to be a bit more scripted. In those situations, the card will direct you on what Check needs to be made and what the roll result means.

The Action Die

The Action Die, AD, or d20 icon, is a d20. The Action Die measures how well a Character performs an Action. Unless an Action says otherwise, roll an Action Die whenever you perform an Action.

Some Actions do not use the Action Die result. The card text will tell you when the Action Die result is used. When an Action does not use the Action Die result, ignore the number rolled unless you roll a natural 1 or natural 20.

A natural 1 causes the Action to fail and a natural 20 provides the benefits described under Critical Success.

Some Actions may specifically instruct you not to roll an Action Die.

Modifiers

When an Action requires a roll, the Action will tell you what modifier to add to your Action Die. The numbers indicated on these actions will ask you to add or subtract from the Action Die roll number to figure out a new total.

For example, the Guardian using ATTACK has a +1 Modifier. If they rolled a 14 on the d20 they would add 1 to it for a total of 15. The number 15 would be compared to the Armor value to see if they hit or not.

Some Actions have a **Hit Varied Outcome** range for an effect. When determining the outcome use the same number total used for determining the to hit value.

For example, the Guardian using SWEEPING ATTACK will use the same process to see if they hit their targets and the same number to determine the outcome. If they rolled a 12 on the

d20 they would add 1 to it for a total of 13. The number 13 would be compared to the Armor value of the enemy and let them know they can Damage 2 targets.



Difficulty

When the GM calls for a Check, they may assign a Difficulty based on how challenging the task is. The GM can use any number when a situation falls between these benchmarks.

Difficulty	Target Roll
Easy	7 (65–85% chance of success)
Normal	11 (45–65% chance of success)
Hard	15 (25–45% chance of success)

Attribute Checks

Attribute Checks are done when an Action needs to be compared to your Character's proficiencies. Some Characters are better or worse than others in various things. For instance the Arcane is not as proficient in Might as the Brute but the Brute is not as proficient in Mind.

When the GM or a card asks for an Attribute Check it will be referred to by its name such as Spirit Check. When rolling the Action Die for that Check the player will look and use the modifier associated with that Attribute from their Character's Attribute Profile.

For example, "You want to leap across the gap. That's a Normal Agility Check." The Character has Agility +2, so the player rolls an Action Die and adds 2 to the result. The Character succeeds if the final result is 11 or higher.

Critical Success

If a player rolls a natural 20 on an Action Die, this is a Critical Success and they may immediately take an additional Action.

When Advantage or Disadvantage applies, use the Action Die result chosen by Advantage or Disadvantage.

The additional Action will allow you to take more than 2 Actions. It may be any available Action, including an additional Attack or Defense Action. If you have already used the ATTACK card, you may use that card a second time.

Critical Failure

A natural 1 on an Action Die is a Critical Failure. No matter if the Action compares the result to a Check or not, the Action is Canceled.

The GM may decide if a Character has an additional negative result such as falling down, damaging an ally, or causing a social interaction to have an adverse effect.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Advantage and Disadvantage are applied when a rule, card, or circumstance grants them. Advantage and Disadvantage represent circumstances that make your success of an Action substantially better or worse.

The GM can award Advantage to players for making smart plays, such as creating a distraction before trying to hide.

The GM can award Disadvantage to players for making less optimal decisions, such as trying to convince guards to let them go after watching them commit a crime.

- **Advantage:** Roll an additional Action Die and use the highest Action Die result.
- **Disadvantage:** Roll an additional Action Die and use the lowest Action Die result.

A Character can only have Advantage or Disadvantage once. Additional sources of Advantage or Disadvantage do not add additional dice.

If a Character has both Advantage and Disadvantage, they cancel each other out one-for-one. Multiple sources of one can therefore overcome sources of the other.

For example, if a Character has Advantage twice and Disadvantage once, the Disadvantage cancels one Advantage, leaving the Character with Advantage.

6. Encounters

Encounters are situations where the GM uses a more structured set of rules to resolve what is happening, allowing many things in the fiction to happen at the same time. These can be Social Encounters, Combat Encounters, or Story Encounters. Some Encounters use one or more Exchanges when Characters need to make decisions at the same time.

Social Encounters

Social Encounters are times the players are trying to get a result from the conversation that they want. If the players are trying to convince someone to give up information unwillingly, deceive someone into making a decision they may otherwise not, or any other manner of choice made during a conversation it is a Social Encounter.

Players should not say “I am going to lie to them and make them think their friend sold them out.” They should instead say “Your friend in the other room has already told us that you know where the princess is.” At this time stop the conversation and let the player know that they will need to make a Check. Choose the right Check for the situation. Be lenient in which Attribute you choose for the player. For instance the Brute can use a Might Check to intimidate

them or a Muse can use a Spirit Check to sway them with their charisma. Try to lean into what your players are best at.

Combat Encounters

Combat Encounters are for when it is time to beat down some baddies. Players and the GM will move their Characters around the table and use Actions to complete the Encounter.

Story Encounters

Story Encounters are challenges in the world around the players. If the party is trying to cross a swift moving stream, leap off of a collapsing bridge, or navigate their boat during a storm you will be creating a Story Encounter. You can set a number of successful Checks before a number of failures to determine the outcome.

A good formula is that easy Story Encounters can have 3 successes before 3 failures, normal can be 5 successes before 3 failures, and hard can be 7 successes before 4 failures. To play a Story Encounter build a situation and tell a story of how the situation develops with the successes and failures from the party.

For instance, "You see a thief steal a purse from an old lady and run off." Before the players make any decisions you can stop and have the players start using cards like a Combat Encounter or just begin telling you what they want to do. Either way each action should have a Check involved.

Recovering Resolve

After each Encounter Characters recover missing Resolve. This represents the Characters using magical healing, drinking potions, taking a rest, using first aid, or any other means that fit within the story.

The GM will decide if players recover all missing Resolve if there is a significant enough time between Encounters, or half of their missing Resolve if the following Encounter is happening in rapid succession. The GM will tell players how much Resolve to recover after the Encounter finishes.

The GM may allow Characters to recover half of their Resolve and later allow them to fully recover their Resolve if players end up avoiding an Encounter that would be happening in rapid succession.

Example: The party is assaulting a bandit camp. They ambush the sentries on lookout in the first Encounter. Before proceeding further they recover half of their missing Resolve. Next Encounter they face off against a group of bandits around a camp fire. They recover half of their missing Resolve again. If they want to storm into the cave where the bandit leader is they would do so at less than full strength. If instead they decide to barricade the entrance and wait until they have rested up then the GM may decide they can recover all of their Resolve. Either way once all of the bandits are dealt with the Characters would recover all of their Resolve.

7. Exchanges

Some Encounters are resolved in Exchanges. These typically start when multiple Characters need to make decisions simultaneously. Combat is a good example of when many Characters are making decisions, but Exchanges can also apply to non-combat Encounters such as a building collapsing or chasing a target.

At the start of an Exchange, each player chooses up to 2 Action cards and the GM determines Enemy Actions when applicable. Players choose their Actions before the GM tells them what is happening next in the Story. Once players have chosen their Actions, they cannot change them, unless playing a Reaction, after the GM reveals enemy Actions and environmental effects.

Environmental effects are events or hazards that affect Characters during an Exchange, such as a collapsing building, spreading fire, or moving vehicle.

The Exchange Sequence

Players Choose Actions:

Players secretly choose up to two cards for the Exchange. Cards remain hidden. Chosen cards should be separated from the other cards to make sure the choice is not changed.

GM Reveals Enemy Actions:

Once all players have chosen their Actions, the GM announces the Actions and targets of all Enemies or environmental effects.

Players Reveal Actions:

Players reveal their cards and announce their Actions and targets.

Players Use Reactions:

Players may use any Reactions triggered by the Actions or events revealed during the Exchange. A Reaction replaces one of the Actions the player chose for the Exchange. Follow the rules on the Reaction card to determine which Action it replaces and when it resolves.

Resolve Priority Actions:

The GM and players resolve all Priority Actions.

Resolve Non-Priority Actions:

The GM and players resolve all remaining Actions.

Exchange Resolution

In the fiction of the Story, all Actions in an Exchange are happening at roughly the same time. Resolving one Action before another is simply a way to organize the game and does not mean that the Actions are happening separately in the Story.

The GM determines the order in which Actions are resolved and communicates that order to the players. The GM may use a consistent order around the table or choose an order based on the fiction. Players should know when their Actions will be resolved so they can follow the Exchange and be ready to resolve their Actions.

For example, if a Character uses CHARGE to begin an encounter, the GM may choose that Character to resolve their Actions first. The GM might say, "Tony, you're starting this one. We'll resolve clockwise from you."

Once an Action has been chosen and revealed, resolving another Action does not prevent that Action from occurring unless a card or rule specifically says otherwise. For example, if an Enemy chooses to make a Near Attack and a Character chooses to Move away, the Attack will still occur because the Attack was chosen when the Character was Near the Enemy.

Damage and Defeat

Track all Damage dealt while Actions are being resolved.

Characters are not considered Defeated until all Actions in the Exchange have been resolved. This means a Character who is reduced to 0 Resolve during an Exchange can still resolve any Actions they chose for that Exchange.

After all Actions have been resolved, determine which Characters have been reduced to 0 Resolve and apply the rules for Defeat.

Enemy Actions

Enemy Actions mimic player choices. The GM chooses up to 2 Actions for each Enemy, following the same Action limits as players. An Enemy can use no more than one Attack Action and one Defense Action each Exchange. Enemies may use up to two Move Actions or two Interact Actions. Some Augments may change the Actions an Enemy can take.

Enemies do not have Attributes like Characters the players use. If making a Might, Agility, Mind, or Spirit Check with an Enemy, either use a base Action Die roll against a target or use a modifier announced by the GM.

Example: If a Troll is trying to break down a door they might have +2 added to their Action Die for a Might Check because they are really strong. That same Troll may have a -1 subtracted to their Action Die for an Agility Check while trying to climb a slope because they are not very nimble.

Enemy Resolution

Enemies use the same Action Die + Modifier resolution system as Characters. Enemy Profiles establish baseline statistics, while Augment cards and Equipment cards may change what they can do.

8. Positioning and Movement

Positioning

The physical position of Characters on the table represents their position in the fiction. Positioning is intentionally loose; there are no exact measurements or distances. When positioning matters, the GM establishes where Characters are located using Zones and communicates whether Characters are Near or Far from one another.

Zones

During roleplaying or an Encounter, when positioning matters, the table is divided into two areas: **The Outskirts** and **The Brawl**.

- **The Outskirts** consist of areas close to the Players and GM but away from the middle of the table. In the fiction, The Outskirts represents areas away from where Characters are engaged in close combat.
- **The Brawl** consists of areas in the middle of the table. In the fiction, The Brawl represents areas where Characters are exchanging blows in close combat.

Multiple Outskirt Zones and Brawl Zones can exist at the same time. In the fiction, each Zone represents a separate area where something is happening. For example, the Overwatch might be hiding behind a tree while the Arcane stands on a carriage in separate Outskirt Zones. Meanwhile, the Brute and Guardian might be holding back an Ogre in one Brawl Zone while the Striker prepares to Ambush a pair of Goblins in another Brawl Zone.

Allied Characters can be Near one another in Outskirt Zones or Brawl Zones to represent Characters standing close to one another. Non-allied Characters cannot be Near one another in an Outskirt Zone. If non-allied Characters would ever end up in the same Outskirt Zone, move them to the middle of the table and create a new Brawl Zone for them.

Characters in different Zones are always Far from one another.

Near and Far

Near means Characters are close enough to interact with one another directly. Characters that are Near one another should be placed close together or touching when practical.

Far means Characters are not close enough to interact directly. Characters in different Zones are always Far from one another.

Characters in The Brawl or The Outskirts do not automatically have to be Near one another. The GM determines which Characters are Near based on their position in the fiction.

All Far attacks made into a Brawl with an ally also in that Brawl are done with Disadvantage.

Moving

When a Character uses an Action that allows them to move, they may:

- Move their Character from an Outskirt Zone to any Brawl Zone, or create a new one;
- Move their Character to another ally's Outskirt Zone;
- Move their Character from a Brawl Zone to another Brawl Zone;
- Move their Character from a Brawl Zone to an allied Outskirt Zone, or create a new one; or
- If already in a Brawl Zone, move another Character or group of Characters to the Brawl Zone, creating a new Brawl. If Characters are grouped together in an Outskirt Zone, the created Brawl will include all of them.

When a Character moves into a The Brawl, they can be positioned Near another Character or Far from other Characters in The Brawl. The GM determines the positioning based on the fiction.

Representing Position on the Table

Use Character cards, Enemy Tokens, models, or other objects to represent Characters on the table. Group Characters together when they are in the same Zone.

Characters that are Near one another should be placed close together or touching when practical. Leave space between Characters or groups that are Far from one another.

There are no exact measurements for Zones. Small changes in the physical position of cards or models do not change their position in the fiction.

Players can ask the GM about positioning before choosing an Action. The GM should clearly communicate whether a Character is Near or Far from a target and explain any positioning that would affect the available Actions.

GM Positioning

When setting up an Encounter, the GM will build the scene. This includes placing all Characters in The Brawl or The Outskirts as appropriate before any Exchanges begin.

For example, if 2 Player Characters are arguing with 3 guards, another Player Character is hanging back and watching from a stairwell, and a guard captain is just walking through the door, the setup would be:

- 2 Player Characters and 3 guards in one Brawl Zone;
- 1 Player Character in their own Outskirt Zone; and
- The guard captain in another Outskirt Zone.

Characters in any Zone can be repositioned as determined by the GM to help establish which Characters are Near or Far from one another or which Zone they should be in.

When the fiction changes significantly, the GM can reposition Characters or create new Zones to represent the new situation.

9. Game Terms

Ambush

The Character is taking an Action against a target that they are Hidden from. When a Character Ambushes a target to begin a Combat Encounter the ambusher(s) will get a free Exchange to declare Actions. The normal Exchange Sequence will continue after the first Exchange.

Hidden

When Hidden, other Characters cannot target the Hidden Character with Actions. Hidden is played slightly differently outside and during an Encounter.

Outside of an Encounter:

While roleplaying, the GM can have a Character make an Agility Check to determine if they become Hidden. This may happen when a player says something like, "I want to sneak past the guards." A Character remains Hidden until the GM decides they need to make another Check or the Character does something that could cause them to no longer be Hidden.

During an Encounter:

A Character may use INTERACT to make an Agility Check to become Hidden. If successful, the Character is Hidden for the next Exchange. To remain Hidden, the Character must successfully make another Agility Check. This Check will usually have an easier Difficulty because the Character is already Hidden.

The GM will communicate the Difficulty required for each Check before the Character makes it.

Restrained

Restrained Characters must successfully complete a Might or Agility Check using an Interaction to become unrestrained. Actions against Characters that are Restrained have Advantage. Any other Actions declared when Restrained are canceled if the Check is failed.

Surprised

Characters that were not ready for a story element to happen have been Surprised. This can come from a Character attacking without warning, a carriage flipping over, or being grabbed unexpectedly. When a Character is surprised they roll any required Checks during the next Exchange with Disadvantage. The GM will let players know what Characters are Surprised before dice are rolled.

Knocked Down

Characters that have been Knocked Down must use a Move Action to get back up. Actions against Characters that started an Exchange Knocked Down have Advantage. Any Action taken while Knocked Down that does not accompany a Move Action to get up will be done with Disadvantage.

PART III — RUNNING THE GAME

10. The Game Master

Your Job as GM

As the Game Master your job is to build the world the players are experiencing. You will create a collaborative story, describe the world, act as the characters your players experience, build Encounters, and help the players throughout the game. You are telling a story with the help of the players. You build the world and the players tell you what they are doing in it.

Yes, And

Try your best not to force your players into a decision. Use the “Yes, And” mentality. This means that if the players tell you that they want to do something you find a way to make it work. If a player says “I want to fill a wagon with explosives and roll it down the hill to blow up the gates to the castle,” you can reply with “That is a fantastic idea. You will need to travel back to town and find some explosives to fill the wagon. This will probably take you about a day to accomplish and the enemies may try to intervene.” They can either do that or come up with a new idea. You don't have to randomly decide that they have a bunch of explosives or whatever wacky thing they come up with. You should give them an option to accomplish their desires.

Communicate Clearly

It is very important that you try to communicate anything the players may need to know. Do not punish your players for not fully understanding the environment you have described. If they make a decision based on how they understand the world either go with it or let them make another decision after communicating more thoroughly.

Preparing an Adventure

Deckbox Adventures puts a lot of information for you and the players on cards but these cards may not fully replace a notebook and pen. I would recommend sitting down before a play session and writing an outline for your adventure, especially if it is something you would like to continue over multiple sessions. You can pull Enemy Character Profiles, Augments, and Enemy Tokens out beforehand so they are ready for use. It is possible to play short one-shot adventures with just the cards creating the fiction on the fly. Use this for casual play, teaching someone the game, or as a creativity exercise.

I will not go into depth here about how to create an adventure but I will share some basics I have learned over the years I have been roleplaying.

Start with an adventure hook that will give your players an idea that there is something interesting to do. This can be investigating a mystery, defending a town, looking for a lost pet, or anything else you feel is appropriate. Give them a reason to care about the outcome or your players may miss that they need to intervene. This can be as simple as saying “You don't have any money for food today but there is a sign on the restaurant's notice board that is asking for help getting rid of some rats.” Or “The town bell is ringing letting you know raider are coming to

steal all of the town's livestock". A hook should immediately tell the players that they will need to intervene or bad things will happen.

Plan for the players to prepare for the adventure. This may include questioning people, building defenses, searching for clues, or anything else THEY come up with (remember Yes, And). It may be helpful to keep a list of names on hand to use as players meet new people. If players come up with a really good plan reward them! Building a barricade could reduce damage taken from far attacks or bringing a lantern could help them spot enemies more easily.

Start building Encounters for the players. Keep these Encounters loose and able to be used in varied ways. These Encounters can be Social Encounters, Combat Encounters, or Story Encounters. When building Encounters come up with the sort of Checks you believe the players may need and enemies they may face. These encounters should eventually lead to an adventure conclusion. That can be a tough enemy Combat Encounter, a challenging puzzle, plot twist, or anything that is a bit more memorable than the Encounters leading up to this point. I have given an example adventure, Moe's Missing Caravan, at the end of this rulebook.

It is probably better to make Combat Encounters easier than you believe the players can handle. It's more difficult, fictionally, to make enemies run away or disappear than it is to make more show up. If the encounter seems way too easy you can have more bats swoop out of the darkness, the guard calls for back up, or goblins come out of nearby tents. Not all Combat Encounters should feel extremely dangerous but the most memorable fights will be the ones where the party just barely succeeds. Try to ride the line between what is too hard and what is just hard enough, especially in BOSS FIGHTS!

If you have made a Combat Encounter too difficult you can lessen the pressure by having an enemy leave the encounter such as running to their leader notifying them that the party is coming or having a tree fall on an enemy because the Brute's axe chopped it down.

Additionally, if the Characters have all been reduced to 0 resolve that does not mean the adventure is over. Use it to progress the story. The party can be captured and now have to escape cages before continuing. The raiders can steal all the livestock and now the party has to go get them back. Defeat isn't the end, it's a different path. This can even be used intentionally!

Using Other Adventures

You can also try using content you have from other games and replace the mechanics of that game with this system. Those products have amazing stories already planned out for you. Many include cool maps and artwork that players enjoy seeing. If there are enemies in those stories replace them as best as possible with provided Enemy Character Profiles or create your own!

When the Rules Don't Cover Something

The GM will occasionally encounter situations that aren't specifically covered by the rules or cards. When this happens, the GM makes a reasonable decision and the game continues. The GM does not need to find a rule for every possible situation. The best practice is to be on the player's team. If a situation is not defined, make it beneficial for the heroes.

When multiple rules or card effects interact in a way that isn't clearly defined, the GM decides how they interact. Use your best judgment and choose the ruling that makes the most sense for the situation.

The GM determines whether an action is possible, assigns Difficulty when a Check is required, determines applicable Attributes, establishes positioning and distance, and adjudicates situations not covered by cards or core rules. Do your best to keep the story advancing. Do not stress about getting every single rule correct. Make something up on the fly and look it up later. If you are on the player's team then your rule is probably a better outcome for them anyways.

PART IV — TUTORIAL ADVENTURE

Moe's Missing Caravan

Quick Overview

The party is expecting to find their friend Moe when they get to town but his caravan never arrived. Their investigation leads them to a wooded stretch of road where they are ambushed by goblins. After defeating the attackers, the party will learn the location of their camp. They infiltrate the camp and discover a cave where Moe is being held. Pursuing the goblins into a cave they will confront the Ogre holding Moe prisoner.

The adventure is designed to teach the fundamentals of the game naturally through the story, introducing new concepts as the players encounter situations that demonstrate them.

Prelude — Wolves on the Road

As the players are riding a wagon into town, they spot wolves on a ridge ahead coming toward them. They know they cannot outrun the wolves and must fight them off before continuing to town.

This initial Encounter is designed to show players how Encounters and Exchanges work. Do not worry about roleplaying yet. Use this Encounter to teach players how to use cards and roll dice. There should be very little or no use of the Attribute card here. This is a very simple Encounter. If you feel like the players have gotten the hang of the rules, you can have the wolves flee at any time.

I suggest only giving the players the MOVE, INTERACT, and ATTACK cards to begin with. You can add another card to their hand after a couple of Exchanges. Make sure you introduce cards with Priority and Reaction on them so you can teach what those tags mean.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Wolf

Enemy Augment suggestion: None

Act 1 — The Investigation

The players are in a town looking for their friend Moe, a local merchant. Moe is well behind the time they are expecting them to arrive, piquing their curiosity. The party should try to figure out what happened to their friend.

They can question people, speak with merchants or guards, examine evidence, search for tracks, or pursue any other approach they think might help. Their investigation will lead them

to a road leading into town that Moe would have been traveling. Following this lead will progress to Act 2.

Optionally you can have a local shady merchant that has orchestrated Moe's disappearance. They are a rival merchant to Moe and can benefit greatly from Moe going missing. They are working with an Ogre who they gave details to about when Moe would be traveling on the road.

Optional Encounter — Suspicious Thug

If the players become suspicious of a rival merchant to Moe they can be accosted by a thug or group of thugs for "sticking their noses in places they do not belong". In this encounter the thug(s) will reveal the plot against Moe to the players. The players do not have to fight the thug if they can get the information without violence. If you want to introduce combat here, you can choose for the enemy to simply stop talking to make an example out of the Characters showing others what happens if they don't mind their own business.

If the players bring the thugs to the local authorities with the evidence you can play that as you wish. You can play as a Non-player Character that goes with the players to help find Moe. This may be a really good choice if you only have 1 or 2 players. You can have the authorities not believe the thug because they are being bribed by the merchant or just don't believe them because the merchant "would never do that". You can have the thug(s) escape before they are brought in. Remember you need to allow the players to try and accomplish whatever they decide to do.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Thug

GM Note: I would suggest starting encounters with less enemies than you think are necessary until you get a good handle on how many the party can handle. During any encounter you can always increase the difficulty by introducing new enemies. The enemy can call out for back up or come into the Encounter from out of view.

Act 2 — The Ambush

The players travel to the location where Moe went missing. As they investigate the area, they encounter goblins blocking the road.

Encounter — Goblin Ambush

The goblins begin the encounter blocking the road and demanding a ridiculously high payment to pass. Unless the players pay the goblins this will eventually lead to a Combat Encounter.

At least one Goblin with a bow remains Hidden and attacks from Far, demonstrating Ambush. They will appear after an exchange or two.

After the encounter, the defeated goblins are still available for interaction. The players can question them and discover that the goblins have taken Moe and his caravan to a nearby camp in the woods.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Goblin

Enemy Augment suggestion: Far Attack

Encounter — Ravine

The party will come across a ravine they must cross with swift moving water between the two sides. Have the party make decisions about how they want to cross it. If the players decide to try and walk through the water with no preparation they will be swept away. If the players try to leap from stone to stone to cross or cut down a tree to make a bridge have them make a Check with the appropriate Attribute.

Optional Encounter — Beasts in the Woods

If you would like to add another Combat Encounter you may have the party Encounter some enemies that could be found naturally in the woods.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Wolf, Bat, Bear

Enemy Augment suggestion: Whatever you would like or None

Act 3 — The Goblin Camp

Encounter — Camp Lookouts

The players follow the information from the Defeated goblins to their camp. The players discover goblin lookouts with bows watching the approaches to the camp. If the players do not have some kind of plan to contain the goblins, either by sneaking up on them or cutting off their escape, then one will run back to camp to notify the other goblins.

They may sneak past them, ambush them, confront them, or find another solution.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Goblin

Enemy Augment suggestion: Far Attack

Encounter — Inside the Camp

The players enter the camp and encounter goblins and their trained wolves. The goblins will try to use their Wolves to target any ranged Characters.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Goblin, Wolf

Enemy Augment suggestion: Pack Hunter (for the wolves), Leader (for the goblin controlling the wolves)

The players discover evidence that Moe and his caravan have been taken deeper into the nearby cave. This can be in the form of questioning the goblins or finding goods scattered about leading to the cave.

Act 4 — The Cave

The players enter the cave and discover the stolen goods and signs that Moe is being held somewhere deeper inside. While advancing through the cave, they encounter goblins who reveal that the Ogre has Moe locked up in his lair.

Encounter — Cave Goblins

Have the goblins ready for the party's arrival. They can set up hasty barricades, position a trap like a swinging log (especially funny if you have it come back and hit the goblins), or simply taunt the Characters before they enter. Just sell that they know the party is coming.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Goblin

Enemy Augment suggestion: Magic (if you want one of the goblins to be a shaman), Far Attack

After defeating the goblins close to the entrance they can continue deeper into the cave.

Final Encounter — The Goblin Chieftain

The players confront the Ogre leading the goblins. He is a cruel leader who forces his followers back into combat rather than allowing them to retreat. The Ogre will not stay out of combat themselves; you can sell their Leader Augment by having a goblin try to run away from combat before the Ogre either threatens them or physically throws them back into combat.

Enemy Profile suggestion: Goblin, Ogre

Enemy Augment suggestion: Far Attack, Magic (if you want one of the goblins to be a shaman), Leader (for the Ogre)

After defeating the Ogre, the players obtain the key and free Moe and anyone else that may have been traveling with them.

Adventure Complete

The players rescue Moe and his stolen caravan. If the players encounter the shady merchant, you can have the party travel back to town and reveal the merchant's corruption with a letter or some other kind of incriminating evidence they found. They can even bring the Ogre in for the local authorities to deal with. This can help sell that the players should not become murder hobos.

The adventure has introduced the game's fundamental concepts through the fiction rather than through a tutorial or rules lecture.

Appendix — Playtest and Designer Notes

About This Prototype

This prototype is being actively playtested. If something does not feel intuitive or is difficult to understand, please make note of it. The goal is for the cards and core rules to be intuitive enough that players rarely need to reference this book.

Playtest Feedback

If you find yourself repeatedly using a game term, inventing a rule for the same situation, or explaining a card in a way that is not obvious from its text, make note of it. Those observations can help identify areas for future additions or revisions to the Core Rules.

Right of Use

These rules are for play testing purposes and are not meant to be copied or edited for individual gain. Please do not portray these rules as your own in an attempt to sell them to a third party.