

# No-GM Fate

## Introduction

Fate of the Dice is an attempt at making Fate Core or Fate Accelerated playable without a Game Master so that everyone at the table can add to the story and everyone can play a character. This hack does require that all players know the rules of Fate, as I do not change them or go over them. This document only covers the additions made to the rules in order to play without a GM.

## Before we get started

### Action Words

Before I get to the meat and potatoes of this hack, we are going to go over the Action Words which help facilitate this kind of play. The action words are: **Pause**, **Dispute**, **Veto**. The action words can be used at any point during play. Yes, this includes game creation, character creation, scene framing, etc. If you are using this hack to play a solo game, you can skip the Action Words section, as these words are used to facilitate collaboration within groups.

How these action words are used in play may look differently in every group. Maybe you have cards that you can tap to signal a word, or maybe you just say them, or maybe you all know each other well enough that you all know when an action word is being used based on the context. Regardless of how you do this, the group should know these action words beforehand and know that they all have the power to use them. This is especially crucial in pickup games with people you do not know very well. Role playing can be intimidating and these action words provide space to avoid misunderstandings and broken social boundaries.

### Pause

The **Pause** action word does exactly what it sounds like it would; it calls for a pause in the game. This word gives a chance to break out of character and talk about what is going on. This could be to clarify something that wasn't clear to you, or discuss what might happen

next, or ask questions about the current scene. When you are done with a **Pause**, resume play as normal.

## Dispute

**Dispute** is used when there is a disagreement about something in the game. A simple **Pause** can resolve questions or incongruities in the scene, but a **Dispute** is used when two players believe their idea to be the one that is correct, more fun, more interesting, etc. Someone can call a **Dispute** when this is determined to be the case. Each side should state their idea if it hasn't already been made clear. Then, all players at the table vote on which idea they wish to continue with and the majority vote wins. If there is ever a tie, the player that currently has the **Framing Card** in front of her decides, even if she was the one to call the dispute.

**Disputes**, like the other action words, can be used at any point in play. But because **Dispute** involves “rewriting” what has already been said, it can function a little differently during the framing of a scene. Say someone frames a scene, and you think that there is something else that should happen first. A **Dispute** can then be used to “steal the scene”. If you successfully steal the scene by getting the majority vote, you get to frame the scene. The player that had the **Framing Card** keeps it, and gets to frame the next scene instead of the current one.

## Veto

**Veto** is the last action word and it is used to state when a player, plain and simple, does not want something in the game. This action word is meant to be used with no questions asked. If someone in game says “Veto”, you can ask questions to ask what exactly they are vetoing if it wasn't clear. After that, the players should work together to edit that part out of the story and continue.

Again, this is usable during game and character creation, so it has a ton of power. Although, it should not be used lightly. This action word is not meant to be used by a specific player that only wants to play a certain type of game. It is meant to avoid touchy subjects, or soft spots of your players. If someone just lost a relative, you probably wouldn't want to play a game where a PC had also recently lost that relative. Some people might feel uncomfortable explaining that though, so instead, they should be able to just say **Veto** so that everyone can continue to enjoy the game. This is just one example though. It is not meant to be a template.

## Rule Changes

Although this hack attempts to be an unmodified version of Fate without a GM, it is modified because . . . wait for it . . . there is no GM. So some rules have to change even though I tried to stick as close to vanilla Fate as possible. Below are the changes made to the rules. If you don't see a rule change stated in this document, you can assume that it is handled as stated in Fate Core and/or Fate Accelerated.

## GM Roll/Fate Points & Refresh

Since there is no GM, the easiest thing to do is eliminate GM rolls altogether. Instead, all opposition to the PCs is static and set by the group. Now, to continue the trend of simplicity, it would also make sense to eliminate GM Fate Points rather than having players use them against themselves or each other. Finally, if there are no GM Fate Points, the default refresh should be dropped down to 1 to compensate for the lack of negative invokes.

The above changes are for simplicity and minimal confusion during play. If your group would like to play with GM Rolls and Fate Points, by all means go for it! It just means that another player has to roll against you (like the person to your left), and each player gets a negative fate point each scene which must be used against the PCs (it's a good idea to use different colored fate points for this). It is generally expected that all GM Fate points be used in a scene. Failure to use negative fate points means they carry over to the next scene. At the end of the session, each unused negative fate point lowers your refresh by one for the next session. If you have more unused negative fate points than refresh at the end of a session, subtract your refresh from the amount of negative fate points you have. Next session, you will receive that many negative fate points to start, and no normal fate points. For example, Sally has 3 refresh. She has been hoarding negative fate points and ends up with 5 of them at the end of a session. Next session she will start with 0 normal fate points and 2 negative fate points before receiving any for the first scene. These rules promote the usage of negative fate points since a GM is generally expected to use all of her fate points.

## Compels

Compels also function as normal for the most part. The difference is that if a player wants to compel another player, the compelled player(s) receives a Fate point from the bank, not from the player who suggested it. Compels should happen often since this is your primary way of gaining Fate points. It also makes for interesting and fun stories!

# Playing the Game

## Starting a Session

At a new session, assuming that game and character creation have already been taken care of, start off with a recap. Everyone at the table can contribute to the recap and explain what happened in the previous session(s). This is a time to make sure that you are all on the same page and that nothing was forgotten from last time. This is a time to talk only about what has already happened, and not what will happen next.

If it is your first session or the first session after a Major Milestone, this would be a good time to talk about the world, what is going on in it, how it has changed, etc. Use this time to update any Game Aspects. If it fits your setting, you may also wish to come up with a bit of news that was overheard, seen on TV, or come by in some other way. This news should reflect any changes made to Game Aspects.

## Setting a Scene

Setting a scene is something the GM usually does. Since we don't have a GM, we are going to pass that responsibility around. Take an index card and write "Framing" on it. This is the framing card and determines who gets to set a scene. At the start of a session, you can give it to the person who would have gotten it next in the previous session or you can roll dice to determine it. Either way, once a player has set a scene, the card is passed to the person on their left (clockwise).

When you have the framing card and the previous scene has ended, you get to decide the following things about the next scene:

- Purpose: What is the purpose of the scene?
- Location: Where is the scene?
- Time: When is the scene taking place in comparison to the previous scene?
- People: Who is in the scene? This includes NPCs. You don't have to list every NPC that is there, just the important ones. If an NPC isn't stated as being there during framing, they may still be present without mention until it is relevant, unless it is specifically stated that they aren't there during framing.
- Aspects: Write out 2 aspects on separate index cards about the scene. A good way to do this is make one aspect describe the environment and have a second that

represents an obstacle. The obstacle should be in direct conflict with the purpose of the scene.

The purpose is especially important, as are the aspects. A scene in Fate needs to have a purpose and something that makes it dramatic/interesting. A scene where the PCs read books in a library would be pretty boring. But a scene where they are trying to find the book that holds a map to the secret entrance to an ancient ruin while avoiding their pursuers sounds like a lot of fun to play out. If a scene is not worthy of playing out, don't play it. Skip to the good parts and briefly say what happened in between.

When you are done framing the scene, pass the framing card to your left.

## Playing a Scene

Once the scene has been framed, we get to interact with the world. Hooray! This is Fate, so anything you can normally do applies. But on top of that, you can also add to the scene. Every player is allowed to describe things in the scene, interact with it, and play the NPCs. Though, there are a few tips on how to do this.

Just add to it already. . .

There are many things in a scene that can just be added. Where you draw the line is kind of grey and dependent on your group, but you'll get a better idea after playing a few sessions. In general, things like what the location looks like, who you talk to, what they say, can all be added freely, and by anyone. If there are any questions or disagreements, use **Pauses** and **Disputes** to resolve them.

A very simple rule of improvisation is the "Yes, and" rule. This means that when you are improvising a scene in a group, don't shut down what someone else says. It is boring and it loses momentum in the scene. Instead, it is better to agree and expand on what they said. If someone says, "I like your hat", you could say "I don't have a hat on" but that drops the immersion and just makes things confusing. Instead say something like, "Oh thanks. My dad gave it to me." This not only continues the story, but it adds interesting new questions like "What kind of relationship does the character have to her dad?" Alternatively, if you really don't want to wear a hat, you could say something like "Oh, I still have this on? I was painting." and throw the hat to the side.

**Disputes** are technically a form of saying no, and in a sense, an exception to the “Yes, and” rule. Although, **Disputes** probably shouldn’t be happening every time someone comments on the small details of a scene. They should be used to rewrite more significant parts of the story. Either way, the “Yes, and” rule, like most in this document, is a helpful tip rather than a strong ruling.

## Ask the dice

Some things in the scene may seem more iffy, or it might not sit right with you to just add it to the scene. If this is the case, you can ask the dice. To do this, form a yes or no question. State it out loud and the group should determine how likely it is. Starting at Mediocre (+0), adjust the target number up or down by 1 or 2 depending on how likely it is (just like how a GM would determine the difficulty of a roll). Then roll the dice and compare the result, without any modifiers, to the target number determined by the likeliness. Use the Outcomes chart below to determine your outcome. The difference between the roll and the target number determines your outcome, just like any other roll. Failing Miserably is if you fail by 3 or more. It is the opposite of Succeeding with style.

<u>Outcomes</u>	
<b>Succeed with Style</b>	Yes, and . . .
<b>Succeed</b>	Yes
<b>Tie</b>	Yes, but . . . OR No, but . . .
<b>Fail</b>	No
<b>Fail Miserably</b>	No, and . . .

The Succeed and Fail results are clear answers, but the rest are a little vague. Don’t worry, it is intentional. The “and” and “but” answers provide a springboard for improvisation. At a very basic level, “Yes, and . . .” means the answer is yes, plus it is better than expected, and “Yes, but . . .” means that the answer is yes, but it is worse than expected. So for example, let’s say we are trying to infiltrate a cave, but the main entrance is heavily guarded. I could ask the dice, “Is there a secret entrance to the cave?” Your outcomes might look like this:

- **Success with Style (Yes, and . . .)** - There is a secret entrance and only I know about it.
- **Success (Yes)** - There is a secret entrance to the cave.

- **Tie (Yes, but . . .)** - There is a secret entrance, but a creature took up residence in it.
- **Tie (No, but . . .)** - There is not a secret entrance, but the guards are slightly preoccupied watching a bear that just wandered into the area.
- **Fail (No)** - There is not a secret entrance to the cave.
- **Fail Miserably (No, and . . .)** - There is not a secret entrance and you just found out that there are more guards patrolling and headed your direction.

Notice that a Tie allows for two outcomes. To determine which answer it is you can look at the left-most die (ignoring blanks). If it is a plus, go with “Yes, but . . .”. If it is a minus, go with “No, but . . .”. If you ever get all blanks, the roller gets to choose.

These outcomes can sometimes lead to compels. Treat them as normal compels and give or pay fate points depending on whether they are accepted or rejected.

## Interact with the scene

Many times you will interact with other PCs, NPCs, things, or the environment of the scene. For the most part you can just do it if it makes sense for your character. When something calls for a die roll though, your group will need to come up with a difficulty for the roll. You can do this as normal except for the fact that you are all working together to do it. Decide on a difficulty on the ladder and stick to it. Then you roll the dice and see what happens.

Difficulty should be set high. If the game is too easy, it is boring. Failure should happen from time to time, and when it does, work together to make it interesting.

## Stat out an NPC

Now static difficulties work for passive opposition, but what about NPCs that actually fight back? Well for this we have a simplified version of NPC creation. To easily stat out the NPCs we will only give them a skill called **Good At** and another called **Decent At**. The **Good At** skill will be their highest skill, and basically anytime they try to do something that the group decides they would be good at, they roll this skill. The **Decent At** skill should be half of the level of the **Good At** skill (rounded up), and should be rolled for anything the NPC is decent at. Use aspects to help determine what might fit in those categories. Everything else is rolled at Average (+0).

How many stress and consequences they have can be determined by the “Good At” skill. If you have the “Good At” skill at +1, +2, or +3, then they would get the stress and

consequences of a Average (+1), Fair (+2), or Good (+3) Nameless NPC. Otherwise, stat them as a full character.

Some NPCs will need Stunts and Aspects, but most will not. With this in mind, you can quickly create a character like this: *Disgruntled Blacksmith* (lvl 3). From that character description, and using the NPC creation method above, we can use *Disgruntled Blacksmith* as the High Concept and the level represents the **Good At** skill. So we know that everything the NPC is good at is rolled at Good (+3) and everything he is decent at is rolled at Fair (+2). Finally, we know that he has 3 stress boxes and no available consequences. Any additional details can come out through play.

When you are putting together a conflict, the amount of opponents is very important. Try to have somewhere around the same number of opponents as PCs. In more important fights, you might want to have more opponents, and in an easier fight you would place less. Determine this with your group when needed. Setting up conflicts has a bit of a learning curve, but once you do a few you will get an idea of what fits. Remember, failure should be fairly common and interesting in Fate, so don't be afraid of making it challenging.

## Player v Player

In some situations, it may be natural for a player to take over control of an NPC for a scene, rather than playing their normal PC. This can be especially useful if the party splits up - in scenes that involve only part of the party, those not in that part can play NPCs.

It's also possible to play a campaign with two or more groups, so that some PCs are antagonists to other PCs. However, this is only recommended if your group is good at separating in-game conflict from out-of-game conflict!

## Compel everything!

Compels are important in Fate and especially so in this hack. Compels are a chance to complicate the situation and make the audience (who also happen to be the players in this case) worried about whether or not the PCs will defeat the terrible odds. So compel, and do it often.

## End the scene

Many scenes will give rise to a conflict between one or more sides. In this case, the natural end point for the scene is when one side is either completely taken out or concedes the conflict.



Otherwise, the scene should naturally come to a conclusion at some point. If you notice this, call a **Pause** and state it to everyone. If it looks like everyone is content with the scene ending, the person with the framing card can start framing a new scene.

Remember that in Fate, we only want to give stage time to the important stuff. If you are travelling through the wilderness and nobody can come up with an obstacle that would fit, just skip it. Move on to the next interesting thing after that.

## Conclusion

As we all know, Fate is a game. It is meant to be fun for everyone at the table. When you play, play as a team. Set others up to do something awesome, and recognize when someone has done the same for you. Make it challenging so that you don't all feel like you were just swatting flies for an evening. And most of all, have fun. This hack might take some getting used to because it is a lot of improvisation, but don't worry about getting things wrong or looking like a fool. Just have fun.

# NO-GM FATE CHEAT SHEET

## ACTION WORDS

- **Pause** - Use pause to break out of character for clarifications, questions, etc.
- **Dispute** - Use a dispute when there is a disagreement about the story. Take a vote, and the winner is how the story actually went.
- **Veto** - Use this word when you don't want something in the game. No questions asked!

## FRAMING A SCENE

1. **Purpose** - What is the purpose of the scene?
2. **Location** - Where is the scene?
3. **Time** - When is the scene taking place in comparison to the previous scene?
4. **People** - Who is in the scene? This includes NPCs. You don't have to list every NPC that is there, just the important ones.
5. **Aspects** - Write out 2 aspects on separate index cards about the scene.
  - a. Environment - An aspect describing the scene's location or environment.
  - b. Obstacle - An aspect about what makes the scene challenging. Should be in direct conflict with the scene's purpose.
6. **Pass the framing card**

## NPC CREATION

- Give the NPC a title and a level
- The title is the high concept
- The level determines the level of the Good At skill
- The Decent At skill level is have of the Good At skill rounded up
- The level also determines the amount of stress and consequence an NPC has - everything above 3 has full stress and consequences
- Add additional aspects and stunts as necessary

## ASK THE DICE

- Ask a yes or no question
- Determine a target number based the likeliness of the answer being yes
- Roll the dice
- Compare the unmodified dice roll to the target number and determine the outcome
- (Failing miserably is when you fail by 3 or more)

Outcomes	
Succeed with Style	Yes, and . . .
Succeed	Yes
Tie	Yes, but . . . OR No, but . . .
Fail	No
Fail Miserably	No, and . . .

## RULE CHANGES

- **GM Fate Points** - Each player must use 1 GM fate point against a PC roll per scene. If a player does not use a GM fate point, they must pay their own fate point.
- **Compels** - When a player is compelled, they receive a fate point from the pot rather than from the player that compelled them.