MICRO FACE

EIGHTH POLICE MURDERED

WHAT ARE THE CITY OFFICIALS GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

MAYOR DEM ARRESTS

Freighter At At S. J. Pier

Guide to Narrating: Marvel Multiverse RPG

Hi folks Microface here, your resident expert on heroic narrating. I've written this guide for all those narrators out there looking to step into the MARVELous MULTIVERSE of comic book RPGs.

Chapter 1 – Preparing your next issue!

When developing a new 'issue' or session for a game of Marvel Multiverse you should do your best to be efficient. Your time is valuable and it can be frustrating or even panic-inducing when we're at the table and our players decide to zig when we prepare for them to zag. So here's the five step system I use to prepare for a session.

1. Understand your heroes.

2. Outline your villains

3. Create a cover

4. Develop story beats

5. Describe scenes

To start this process may take you an hour or even two. But as you get more practice at narrating and confident with your abilities this process can take less than 30 minutes.

- Understand your heroes.

Just as each hero in a comic book has their own distinctive style, so too do your group's PCs. You may have an adventure idea that is amazing for the Punisher but if you're running a game for Moon Girl or Thor that idea probably won't work.

- Outline your villain.

A hero is only as good as their villains. Having an overarching villain for multisession stories is fun, but choosing a new villain to be the main threat of each session is important. You can have Thanos be the big threat our heroes are building up to, but if they only battle unnamed henchmen in the four sessions before they finally meet Thanos, they are going to get bored. So having a variety of villains, each staring in their own session is a good idea. It will also give us inspiration for what the heroes will face in the upcoming session since we can build that environment around this session's villain.

- Create a cover.

The start of a session is likely the most important part of it. Every great comic issue has an eye-catching cover that draws its readers in, and your sessions should start the same. An issue of Thor starts with him aboard his father's ship battling off waves of frost giants, not sitting in an office waiting for adventure to happen. We are expecting our players to commit the next 2, 4 or sometimes even 10 hours of their time to this story so we should never make them wait for the good bit, we should start with it.

- Develop story beats.

The fun of role playing games which makes them unique from other mediums is the ability for players to change their tactics, go against the expected, and take things off the rails. We want to foster that behaviour since it usually leads to the most fun parts of a session. However, most of us aren't improvisation machines so we need to create some sort of structure to our planning. To do this we can create story beats, encounters or moments that we want to have happen in the session and can dynamically move around to best fit our session as it happens.

- Describe the scenes.

Comic book characters are larger than life, so they need places interesting enough to hold them. Just as with needing to understand our heroes we need to understand where they will be. A simple trick for creating interesting and evocative locations is to write down three sentences which encapsulate the area. For example, if our heroes are travelling to Knowhere for the first time we can write down the sentences: "A bustling city built into a planet sized skull." "Swarms of miners cover the exterior, their equipment occasionally flashing against the dark of space." and "Members of every conceivable species have made their homes here."

If our session is more about fighting through a single location, we can also describe each room. In this case we could create three sentences for each room but simply keeping it to three sensory feelings should be more than enough. For example, the heroes are bursting through a hydra base and come to a research lab: "The occasional bubble can be heard popping from within the tanks of strange liquid which fill this oddly humid room." Now the characters know what the room looks, sounds and feels like. If there is additional information that we want to convey, we can add that in as a second or third sentence. "A whiteboard covered in scientific formulas has been shoved into the far corner, a small keycard hanging
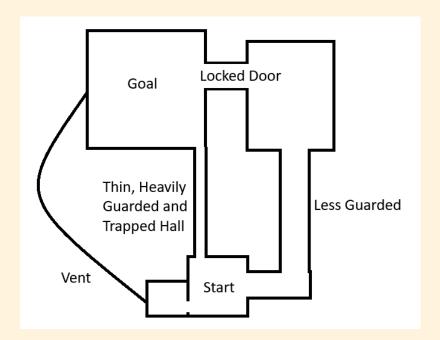
off its side. Most of the computers have been smashed to pieces but a few may be salvageable."

- Building a Combat Arena.

I've included rules for hazards and traps later in this guide, but they aren't the only methods of integrating the environment into your combat. A good combat arena should have three things: flow, structure, and story.
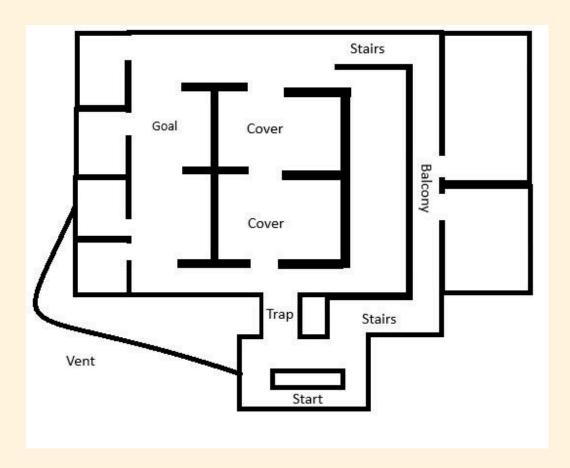
Flow. The flow of the combat arena is what makes it feel good to play in. A combat arena should be designed to naturally flow heroes from the entrance to their goal. This means that, even if there are multiple paths a player can take and multiple strategies villains can use against them, the players will be able to intuit where they need to go.

In this example the players have three choices on how to approach and each approach has its own dangers, but they all flow towards the goal allowing the players more freedom and opportunity to be creative.

Structure. The structure of the combat arena is what makes it interesting to fight in. Structure should offer ways of breaking line of sight to hide, different elevations for characters to utilise, and a mixture of wide and thin environments with opportunities for cover.

In this example the players can go upstairs to gain a vantage point over the villains, going through the main entrance will give them lots of cover, and taking the vent lets them flank the enemy.

Story. Once the structure and flow of an encounter have been finalised you can add in story elements. These elements have the two-fold effect of giving players insight into the world they're characters inhabit and offering players a deeper opportunity to be creative with their environment. When you describe that this is a Stark lab instead of an office building it paints a picture of what the place looks like. That the manager's office has a gun in its drawer or the gum under the receptionist's desk make the people in the world feel more real. Mentioning that there are bulky grey photocopiers can inspire a player to use it in the fight.

With a little bit of practice, creating interesting combat arenas can be done quickly. If you'd like to practise before you present them to your players, try creating some by yourself. I recommend going to your favourite virtual tabletop, drawing out a map, and placing down some tokens down on it. Focus on what each character can see and who they can attack. Where would you naturally go to hide and think about if it feels like a real place.

Chapter 2 – Tools for a Session

Running a Combat Encounter

Running combat encounters is one of the most stressful parts of any narrator's role in a TTRPG. A well-run encounter can feel like a breeze that invigorates and intrigues the players while a poorly run one will quickly devolve into yawning and social media scrolling. So here are some tips for ensuring your combats don't drag and keep your players engaged.

Firstly, there are four quick things you should be able to do.

1. Answer questions quickly. If there is a rule you don't know the answer to you can delegate the job of looking it up to another player if possible. If you need the answer right now, make a ruling using your best judgement and look it up after the game is finished. Be open with your players over whether you know the answer or not and make it clear that this ruling is subject to change. When you make these rulings it's almost always better to favour the players since it's likely that outcome will be the most interesting.

2. Use character names. By referring to players by their names or the role of their character it creates a barrier between what they're feeling and what their character is feeling.

3. Let players know when they are going next. At the start of each character's turn, announce who's turn it is and who is going next. Using phrases like "It's Cyclopes' turn, Wolverine you're on Deck" readies Wolverine's player so that their turn goes quicker and helps reengage them into the fight if they had been distracted.

4. Show the consequences. By showing players the consequences of their actions immediately it makes the action of the combat feel more immediate.

Once you feel comfortable with these techniques you can also start using narrative structure in your encounters. While most combat encounters last between 2-5 rounds we can actually use the 8 step narrative structure common to comic book fight scenes within that time to create a more memorable experience.

Before Combat

1.   The characters start in their comfort zone.

Before the heroes start most combat encounters, they should feel in control. They decide when the combat starts and can prepare for it. How true this feeling actually is will depend on what you want to do.

Combat Starts

2.   The characters learn the goal of the combat.

This goal can be as simple as 'beat up all goons,' more complex like 'destroy the generator before the portal opens,' or as complex as you can imagine. Best practice is to usually keep it simple enough that one player can explain it within a sentence.

3.   Take the characters out of their comfort zone.

Do something unexpected with the opponents, such as revealing the Hydra soldiers have been genetically mutated to gain fire powers, or add a twist to the hero's goal, such as adding a civilian that needs to be saved from the room. This forces the heroes to change their usual approach, which makes the combat more interesting.

End of Combat

4.   The characters adapt.

The heroes change their plans as needed to defeat the villains.

5.   The characters achieve their goal.

The heroes meet the conditions to win the combat.

6.   The characters have lost something.

The heroes should feel like the combat cost them something. This could be their relationship with an NPC/other hero changing or a difficult moral decision having to be made. The easiest way to achieve this though is to have the heroes expend resources such as health, focus, or karma.

7.   The characters return to their comfort zone.

Now that the combat is over the heroes should feel like they're in control again.

8.   The characters learn something new.

Random encounters are a very 'old-school' mentality that most players today don't enjoy. The majority (but definitely not all) of your players are here for an interactive narrative so each combat should result in progression of the story. Eg. 'The A.I.M. scientists they defeated have a data drive with important information about M.O.D.O.K. 's new weapon on it.'

The number one rule though is to make things interesting. You know your players better than I ever will so play to their wants and needs, not mine.

Building Combat Encounters

When building an encounter, we want to ensure that it is as dangerous as we intend it to be. Using this danger threshold table, you can, at a glance, build combat encounters of roughly the correct danger level based on a hero's rank.

To build an encounter, start by figuring out your budget. It is based on both the rank of the heroes and level of danger you want them to face.

I have categorised four levels of danger: low, medium, high, and severe.

A low danger encounter is one where the heroes can expect to take little to no damage and can be defeated by using no focus.

A medium danger encounter is one where the heroes are not at risk of dying. They can expect to lose between 10-30% of their maximum health and focus.

A high danger encounter expects the heroes to take a significant amount of damage, though it is unlikely they will die unless they are already badly injured. They can expect to lose between 40-70% of their maximum health and focus.

A severe danger encounter is very likely to kill at least one hero. They can expect to lose 80% or more of their maximum health and focus.

For each hero in the encounter, refer to the table below and add the total together.

	Danger Level			
Rank	Low	Medium	High	Severe
1	-	-	1	2
2	-	2	4	6

3	1	6	9	12
4	3	12	16	21
5	8	21	25	33
6	13	33	36	48

Example: I want to build a medium level encounter for Black Panther (rank 4), Black Widow (rank 3), Captain America (rank 4), and Iron Man (rank 4). I would have a budget of 42 (12 + 6 + 12 + 12 = 42).

Now with our budget figured out we must decide how we will spend it. Each enemy has a cost based on its rank. The cost of each rank is shown in the table below.

Rank	Cost
1	1
2	4
3	9
4	16
5	25
6	36

Example: I want an encounter with the sinister six members Doctor Octopus (rank 4), Kraven the Hunter (rank 3), and Mysterio (rank 2). They have a total cost of 29 (16 + 9 + 4). This would be a medium encounter for a team of three rank 4 heroes.

Building Hazard Encounters (Traps and Dangers)

Superheroes can expect to not only contest with a villain's henchmen, but with treacherous traps and hideous hazards too. With the current rules we have no way of simulating the Fantastic Four exploring Rama-Tut's trap filled sphinx or avoiding the negative zone's black hole sun.

So let's make some hazards!

We will be talking about two different types of hazards, traps and dangers. A trap is a type of hazard that we use in place of a combat encounter all on its own. An example of a trap is a hallway that Kraven the Hunter has fitted with sleeping gas to knock out spiderman when he tries entering his lair. A danger is something present within a combat encounter which either makes it harder or threatens all characters. An example of a danger is a pair of enchanted lightning rods that Loki has created to catch Thor's electrical attacks and transforms the electricity into an arcing current which damages anyone that walks between them.

Creating a Trap

A trap needs to be able to threaten a team of heroes on its own. This, however, does not mean that traps have to be complex and they can be created in two simple steps. Create a concept and decide on a rank.

Concept: A concept can be as wacky, magical, or grounded as you want. It could be an enchanted rope left by Baron Mordo that tries to hang the heroes as they walk past or a landmine placed inside a building by The Punisher. Trap concepts usually need to have two things though, a trigger and a bypass. The trigger for the ropes is the heroes coming too close and the landmines trigger is someone stepping on it. A bypass is either the method that the villain uses to pass the trap unharmed or a method of disarming it. Either way a bypass can usually be done by performing a relevant check, such as using logic to come up with a countercharm for the ropes or agility to disarm the landmine. Additionally, you can decide that simply damaging the trap is a method of disarming it. Most traps will have 60hp and no focus, though magical traps or particularly strong ones may be different. Whatever your concept it should be both interesting and easy for the players to imagine.

Rank: Traps can be given a rank just like a regular character, but rather than having a full sheet it only has one aspect. Attack or TN and Effect. If you decide that your trap will attack the heroes, simply calculate it using the same methods for hitting and damage you would for a normal character using the numbers presented in the table below. If you want to give the trap a specific type of damage, give it that damage type, such as ice for a freeze ray. Alternatively, you can set a Target Number for the trap and pick from the list of powers to determine what effect happens on a failure. For example, Dr Doom installs a trap in the castle's corridor which releases unstable pym particles into a room resizing everyone in the area as the shrink 2 power and they cannot willingly change back to their normal size unless they already have the grow power. Use the table below to help determine an adequate TN. A trap is likely to be as damaging as a single character of matching rank.

Rank	Attack and Damage Modifier	Target Number
1	+2	12
2	+5	13
3	+8	14
4	+12	15
5	+16	16
6	+21	17

Examples.

Using these methods we'll create two different versions of a rank 3 freeze ray.

The attacking freeze ray would attack agility defence, have a +8 modifier and will deal ice damage, meaning it paralyses its target on a fantastic success. For example, when it attacks Ant-Man it rolls a d616+8 against Ant-Man's agility defence of 14. On a success it deals a (dMx3)+8 ice damage, or double that plus paralysing Ant-Man on a fantastic success.

Alternatively, the TN freeze ray would have a TN of 14 and, on a failure, replicates the effects of the elemental burst power. This means it deals a (dMx3)+8 damage ice damage, or double that plus paralysing Ant-Man on a fantastic success.
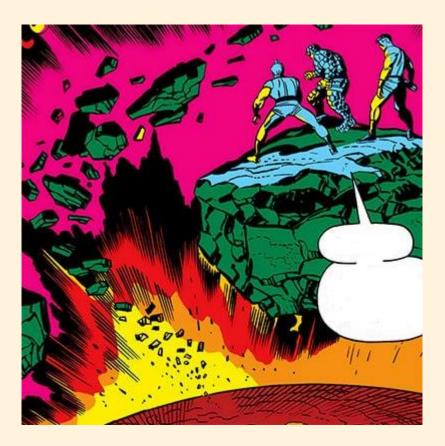

Creating a Danger

Unlike traps, dangers should be more passive, though that does not mean they actively change. A well made danger should change the landscape of a combat and offer both heroes and villains interesting tactical options. Examples of easy to implement dangers are the constant traffic of a busy road or a flow of lava running through the battlefield. For dangers like this, simply deal a dMx character's rank whenever they are exposed to it. For example, when Hulk pushes Abomination into traffic the villain would take a (dMx5) damage because Abomination is rank 5.

However, more complex dangers can present themselves. Simply damaging a character doesn't get across the threat of falling into the negative zone's sun. In extreme cases like these you may need to create a three step process of the danger getting worse the longer a character is exposed to it. So if Mr Fantastic is pushed off of a rock while fighting Annihilus

he is allowed an agility check (using the same TN used for the traps above) each round for three rounds to stabilise himself and catch on some debris before dying. Alternatively, he could gain the prone and then paralysed conditions for each round he fails his check if you do not want the danger to be deadly.
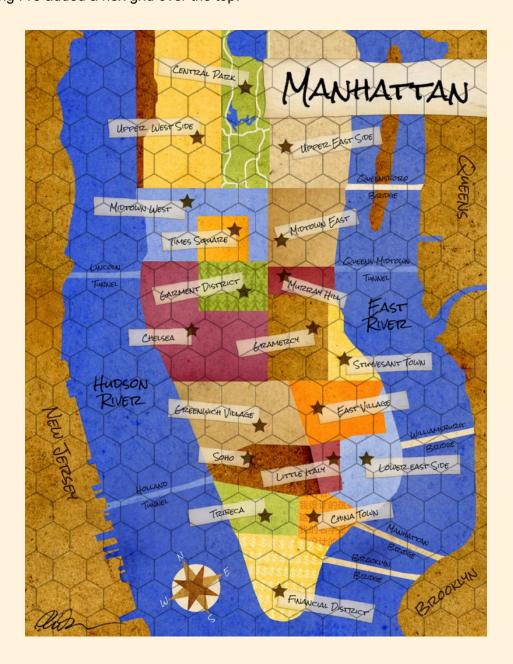

Using these tools you can quickly create hazards for your heroes both on the fly and during your preparation. Let me know about your best ideas and how you'd implement them into your game.

On Patrol (Random Encounters)

One of the classic superhero activities is to go "on patrol." Whether it's Spider-Man swinging through the city when he hears gunfire or Cyclopes being attacked by an anti-mutant mob as he rushes to help Professor X, heroes are constantly running into trouble. So lets simulate this idea in our games.

To start we'll create a map for our hero to patrol across. For this example I'll use a map of lower Manhattan. To help make it easier to measure time and travel while the hero is patrolling I've added a hex grid over the top.

Each hex on this map represents half a mile, or about 10 minutes of patrolling. For every 30 minutes of patrolling we should check to see if an event occurs. Roll 1d6 and on a 6 there is an event.

Now, we have to figure out a method of randomising events so let's make a table. Remember we want to have an assortment of crimes and NPC encounters on this table. To achieve this we'll start by creating a goal and a location type table.

1d6	Goal	Location
1	Destroy. An NPC is trying to destroy something. Example: They could be an assassin trying to kill someone, an enraged superhuman demolishing a building, or a jealous teenager trying to break up a relationship.	Vehicle. Occurs in a car, truck, train, or other form of transportation. It can be moving or still.
2	Investigate. An NPC is searching an area for something. Example: They could be a cop searching a crime scene, a criminal digging up buried loot, or a journalist trying to get pictures of the heroes.	Bodega. Occurs inside or out the front of a small store. Any fighting in the store causes random food to explode over the heroes.
3	Impress. An NPC is trying to impress someone. They might be a group of kids trying to make the best graffiti, a student protecting their date from a mugger, or a gangster trying to intimidate his rival.	Apartment. Occurs inside of an apartment building. If on the roof the fall down may prove dangerous, if indoors the cramped spaces give melee attacks trouble.
4	Escort. An NPC is taking something somewhere. They could be kidnappers taking a hostage, a group of guards protecting a VIP, or a thief stealing a car.	Bank. Occurs inside a place full of money such as a bank or an ATM. Because of this it is likely filled with citizens that the heroes have to keep safe.
5	Avoid. An NPC is evading something. They could be crooks running from the cops, a kid hiding from some kidnappers, or a ninja stalking the heroes.	Road. Occurs along a road or in an alleyway. It likely contains a main causeway and a plethora of ambush spots.

6	Create. An NPC is trying to create something. This could be a villain building a new super weapon, a construction crew erecting a building, or alien ambassadors coming to negotiate peace.	Mystical Site. Occurs in a location where our world has become connected to another. This strange and unusual world may cause gravity to reverse, soldiers from the future to invade our world, or molten lava to spill into the streets of New York.

Finally, we need a way of determining what type of adversaries will be at the event if we want it to have combat. The below table will allow us to determine the composition of the adversaries.

1d6	Main Adversary	Secondary Adversary
Boss	One NPC the team's rank +2	N/A
Captain and Lackeys	One NPC of the team's rank	One NPC of the team's rank -1.**
Duo	Two NPCs of the team's rank +1	N/A
Trio	Two NPCs of the team's rank	One NPC of the team's rank -1.**
Troop	One NPC of the team's rank	NPCs of the team's rank -2. There is 1 NPC for every 2 team members.**
Squad	Four NPCs of the team's rank -2.**	N/A

*Use the average rank of the heroes (rounding down) if they aren't the same rank.

**Use the Average Citizen statistics for any results that would be below 1

So let's put all these together.

Luke Cage, Iron Fist, Jessica Jones, and Daredevil are patrolling the city together. While travelling through China Town the narrator rolls to see if an event occurs and gets a 6, meaning one happens. The narrator then rolls 2d6. They get a 5 and a 1, which is Evade and Vehicle. The narrator decides they want this to be a chase between some thugs who just stole a truck and the police.

Since they expect combat to occur in this event they roll one more d6 to determine what types of thugs these will be. They get a 3, which means it is a duo of thugs 1 rank higher than the heroes. All the heroes are rank 3 except Daredevil who is rank 2 meaning their average rank is 2. This means the enemies are both rank 3. The narrator decides to use the statistics of Crossbones to represent both of the enemies.

As you can see, with these two tables in hand we can now quickly create random events for our heroes as they travel through the city. We can also cr

Quotes and Catchphrases (Enhancing NPCs)

When playing NPCs and Villains in a game it can be difficult for a narrator to come up with efficient methods of conveying their personality. Sometimes we can get away with simply using the characters moveset, but that won't always work and it requires the players to be paying close attention. So how would you ensure players, without prior knowledge of the characters, get the difference between Spider-Man (Miles Morales) and Spider-Punk (Hobbie Brown).

Quotes and Catchphrases.

Quotes and catchphrases are two wide terms which mean different things but both can be used together and easily implemented at the table or during prep to improve your NPCs.

A quote is a simple 1-2 sentence phrase that sums up a character and how they see the world. While we can use a quote as is, they also act as a guideline for us as we play the character.

For example a quote for Miles may be "Change always comes. What matters is how we face it." This reminds us that Miles is a character that doesn't dwell on the past and is always looking to do the right thing. Hobbie we could use "The whole point of being Spider-Man is your independence." This reminds us that he cares about one thing above everything else, being allowed to express himself without restriction.

A catchphrase is much simpler. It's a bark a character makes during a fight to quickly remind the players of their personality. A great example is The Thing saying "It's clobberin' time!" This reminds us of not only how he thinks, the way he speaks, but also builds tension since the players now have expectations for what will happen next. By making a pool of 1-3 catchphrases for important NPCs we can quickly build an entire session's worth of dialogue.

For Miles we could use the classic "Thwip!" when he uses his webs, "Can we make this quick?" when an enemy attack misses, and "I almost wore the same outfit, that would have been embarrassing." as a general quip. For Hobbie we could use "Nazi punks f*&k off!" when he attacks, "Get out of here poser." when an attack misses, and we shouldn't be afraid to double up if characters are related so he can "Thwip!" too.

With these quotes and catchphrases in hand we can not only convey our NPCs more effectively to the players but also ground their personality for us as we play them. A final benefit for using them is that you can combine them with the Monologuing rule from the Core Rulebook. Now we can give our villains additional Karma during combat in a manner that fits neatly with what our players expect.

Chapter 3 – Variant Rules

Templates (Super-Villains, Minions, and Goons)

In its current form, the creation rules for villains and heroes are identical. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, it handcuffs a narrator's ability to create new enemies since the narrator is now expected to run multiple characters just as complex as the player's hero characters. To alleviate this somewhat I've designed two traits for super-villains and minions, and three templates.

Super-villain – Trait

The supervillain trait is designed to counteract the crippling effects control abilities in the game have against big bads while trying to keep the powers useful for players to use.

Trait Name: Super-villain

Requirement: Villainous tag, NPCs only

Effect: A super-villain is prepared to take on an entire team of heroes by themselves. A super-villain gains a second turn each round at an initiative count of 10. At rank 5 they gain a third turn at an initiative of 0. Additionally, some conditions are less severe when applied to a super-villain. Instead of their usual effects Paralysis and Stunned cause the supervillain three troubles on all actions. At the start of each turn they can attempt a TN 18 Resilience check to end one condition currently applied to them.

Minion – Trait

The minion trait is designed to help create the fantasy of wading through faceless goons.

Trait Name: Minion

Requirement: Villainous tag, NPCs only

Effect: A minion cannot stand against the might of a hero. Instead of having health or focus, a minion is defeated whenever it takes any damage or is subject to any negative conditions. If a minion has a power which costs health or focus, they can use that power once per minute.

The three templates below are made so that they can scale to any rank. To set a template to a particular rank don't add additional powers or traits, simply replace any question marks **(?)** with the desired rank.

Some statistics have a base number such as 2+? which would equal 2 plus rank, or 5 for a rank 3 goon (2+3 = 5). While others written like this ?/ are divided in half, rounding up, so a rank 3 goon with an agility of ?/ has 2 agility (3 divided by 2 = 1.5, rounding up = 2).

Strong Goon – Template

M – 2+(?)	A – 1	R – 1+(?)	V – 1	E – (?)/	L – 0

Health – 30 x (?)	Focus – 30	Run 5	Health DR = (?)	Reach 2
Damage – dM x (2+(?)) + Melee				
Special Action – Throws an object and treats it as one size category larger than average per ?				
Special Passive – Can use Melee defence against Agility attacks.				

Fast Goon – Template

M – 1	A – 2+(?)	R – (?)/	V – 2	E – 0	L – 1
Health – 20 x (?)	Focus – 60	Run 7	Range 20		
Damage – dM x (1+(?)) + Agility					
Special Action – Throws a smoke grenade which then fills a 10 square wide cube. This smoke blocks all lines of sight beyond 2 squares.					
Special Passive – Characters they hit have trouble on all melee attacks for 1 round.					

Weird Goon – Template

M – 0	A – (?)/	R – 0	V – ?	E – 2+(?)	L – 1+(?)
Health – 10 x (?)	Focus – 30 x (?)	Run 5	Range 10		
Damage – dM x (?) + Ego					
Special Action – Cost: 15 focus Effect: Make a Logic attack against all opponents in a 3 square wide cube. For each success roll 1d6 and apply the corresponding condition for 1 round. On a fantastic success roll twice and apply both conditions. 1 – Ablaze, 2 – Bleeding, 3 – Blinded, 4 – Deafened, 5 – Prone, 6 – No Condition					
Special Passive – Can choose to target either their opponents Ego or Logic defence with attacks.					

Finally, we should be willing to edit these templates however we wish. Giving them specific powers or even applying the above traits are simple ways of doing that. No matter how you choose to do, it is best to consider these templates as starting points that you can expand upon where needed.

Progression (Merit Badge)

Most TTRPGs use a mixture of what I call the three L rewards: levels, loot, and lore. Levels are when a character gains a new ability or their numbers go up. Loot is new equipment they can use or currency they can use to gain access to something they want. And lore is a continuation of at least one player character's story.

We already have levels through the rank system, lore rewards are inherently present in every TTRPG, and finally, due to the nature of comic book superheroes, loot isn't present in the game.

All together, this means that we can reward our players 5 times with levels. And that's it as far as system rewards go.

So how do we create rewards for our players?

MERIT BADGES!

A merit badge is a small reward given for meeting a goal in the story. An example of a merit badge from the game I stole the idea from (Camp Myth: The RPG by Third Eye Games) is:

Cyclopean Archery

Skills: Archery 4, Bullying 2, Drama 2

Challenge: Visit Hunter's Haven and finish in first, second, or third in the weekly Archery challenge. Be prepared to shoot all types of magical arrows at unlikely targets!

Reward: A custom bow, and a quiver filled with three magical arrows of your choice. In addition, gain a permanent +1 to Archery.

When I use merit badges I'll usually create them at the start of the story arc, physically print them out, and hand them to my players. The interest this generates for story events not only keeps players focused on their goals but also lets them know that there is a reward and why they might want it. But, as you can see not all the information is present in the challenge or even the rewards. What does the archery challenge entail? What do I want my bow to look

like? What are the options for the magic arrows? By keeping a level of mystery we can keep both the challenge malleable and the rewards specific to the player.

Additionally we can make the challenges player specific. For example, the challenge I give to Spider-Man's player is to find out who killed Uncle Ben and confront them or Daredevil's player is challenged with finding enough evidence to defeat Tombstone in a court of law.

But what rewards should we give with our merit badges?

This is a trickier question but one we can answer. Obviously we could give powers to a player, but over time that will significantly increase their abilities and, if it isn't done carefully, can change a character outside of the player's fantasy.

Instead, we can use a different character option from the book. Traits and tags. For example, when Spider-Man catches Uncle Ben's killer he could be given the choice of killing the murderer or not. If he spares the killer's life he gains the Iron Will trait. And if Daredevil is able to win his case against Tombstone he may gain the Enemy (Tombstone) tag and the Interrogation trait.

Here's an example of a merit badge you might give a player using the above Daredevil example.

Player: _____ | Character: Daredevil

Challenge. You must prove Tombstone ordered the kidnapping of Angelo Briggs and have him found guilty in a court of law.

Reward. You've gained a reputation that makes even the most hardened gangster sweat. Your ability to cross examine witnesses and interrogate thugs improves.

And finally we can actually use merit badges to award loot. This could once again come in the form of traits and tags, but it can give other benefits instead. For example, a challenge could be to free Iron Man from being held prisoner by the Mandarin. In return Iron Man creates a new costume that allows you to survive in the vacuum of space.

Or it can be more benign things that don't give your character a direct benefit such as a home, a vehicle, or even just a pet.

Merit badges can come in all shapes and sizes. With them we can continue to reward our players beyond simply levelling them up.

More Action (R1 System)

During their turn characters get very few actions. These are:

- Standard: Used to attack, use most powers, ect.
- Reaction: Used when a trigger occurs.
- Movement: Used to move a character or pickup and throw objects.

For a lot of players such limited options can feel really bad. For example, if I'm playing as Spider-Man and I go to attack Electro but miss. That's it. My turn is done. Nothin' was accomplished.

If you're looking for an alternative, we can instead use the R1 system.

The R1 system:

1. On their turn each character has a number of actions equal to their rank +1 and 1 reaction.
   Example: The rank 1 Hydra Agent has 2 actions and chooses to shoot his gun before moving into cover. His boss, the rank 3 Red Skull, has 4 actions and chooses to shoot his gun then enter an attack stance before moving into melee reach of his enemy and punches them.

2. All activities which require time or concentration to do, such as using a power or moving your basic speed, use an action. Each time a character repeats an action in a turn they gain one trouble on that action. This trouble stacks.
   Example: Wolverine uses her Vicious Attack power to attack the rank 1 Hydra Agent. Sadly the attack misses. Since she has actions remaining, she decides to use her Vicious Attack again even though she has trouble. This time the attack hits but the Hydra Agent is still standing. If she used Vicious Attack again she'd have 2x trouble, so instead she uses her Focused Fury power and rolls without any trouble.

3. Damage multipliers do not automatically increase with rank. Instead a character can expend additional actions when using a power to perform a charged action. For every action expended, their damage multiplier increases by +1 for that action.

Example: Iron Man wants to put all his effort into a single unibeam and shoots it at Ultron. His normal damage multiplied is x2 due to having the Accuracy 1 power. He wants to make it a charged action and puts all 5 of his actions into a single Elemental Blast. This increases the damage multiplier for the attack from x2 to x7.

4. The Lightning Actions power gives a character +1 action per turn.

Note. While using the R1 System damage from all characters will be increased by approximately 15% per rank (thus damage at rank 6 is almost doubled).

Reputation

As written, the reputation system in Marvel Multiverse is very stagnant.

During character creation each hero chooses their traits and tags. Then very few of these specific options, which almost no players will take, give a character a very small reputational note about a specific group. Beyond character creation, the core rules give no details on how a team of heroes may build a reputation for themselves, whether it is good or bad.

The archetypical example of a character with a dynamic reputation is Spider-Man (Peter Parker). Using the Ultimate Comics version as an example, in just the first 21 issues in the public eye he goes from unknown vigilante, to defender of his school, to suspected murderer, to eco-terrorist, and finally becomes a hero. This is made more complex because each villain he's faced has become an enemy and his relationship with fellow students has changed around.

So how can we emulate this in our games?

The easiest method of creating a reputation system is to steal a common system from video games I call a reputation table. These tables are used to represent each faction in a game, list prominent members listed, and then at the bottom the players reputation with each faction is. Let's make a quick version of this same table for Ultimate Spider-Man.

Faction	General Public	Kingpin's Gang	Hammer Industries
Prominent Members	Aunt May, Captain Stacy	Kingpin, Electro	Justin Hammer
Reputation	--	--	--

We now have the factions and their main members figured out, but we need a method of determining the actual reputation level they each have towards Spider-Man and what that means. The following table has 5 levels of reputation and what each means to the hero.

Reputation	Score	Result
Admired	81-100	The hero is considered the pinnacle of what a true superhero is by this faction and will generally go out of their way to help the hero.
Liked	56-80	The hero has gained the faction's favour and are generally friendly.
Ignored	46-55	The hero is either not really on the faction's radar or has a neutral standing.
Disliked	21-45	The hero has become an annoyance to this faction making them generally unfriendly.
Hunted	0-20	The hero is hated by this faction and they are willing to harm the hero even if it costs them.

Finally we create a simple way of gaining or lowering reputation. Start at the relevant point for each faction based on their tags, or at Ignored for any other.

 Next, whenever the hero interacts with a faction, decide if that interaction was a positive or negative one. Positive interactions increase reputation while negative interactions lower it.

 Finally determine if it is a Major, Moderate, or Minor interaction. Major interactions alter a faction's opinion by 10 points, moderate by 5, and minor by 1. A narrator might even deem extraordinary situations, such as sacrificing yourself to save a city, to be an extreme interaction which alters the opinion by 20 points.

Example Major: Hawkeye (Kate Bishop) kidnapped Madame Masque and assumed her identity while attending an underground auction. Since Madame Masque is the head of the Magia at this time, this is a major negative interaction. Hawkeye's reputation with the Magia lowers by 10.

Example Moderate: The Magia were conducting a weapons deal on the docks but were stopped by Hawkeye (Kate Bishop) showed up. Since she busted a money making operation for the Magia this is a moderate negative interaction. Hawkeye's reputation with the Magia lowers by 5.

Example Minor: A group of Magia thugs break into Hawkeye's (Kate Bishop) apartment. After she beats them up, this is considered a minor negative interaction with the Magia. Hawkeye's reputation with the Magia lowers by 1.

With this done we can now finish the reputation table for Spider-Man

Faction	General Public	Kingpin's Gang	Hammer Industries
Prominent Members	Aunt May, Captain Stacy	Kingpin, Electro	Justin Hammer
Reputation	82	5 (Hunted)	34 (Disliked)

We can then continue to extend this table out as needed. I suggest keeping the number of factions to 6 or fewer since that way players can more easily keep track of which factions there are.

Chase Sequences

Whether it's Captain America pursuing Bucky while fending off Black Panther or the Hawkeyes getting caught in a car chase with the mob, chase scenes make an exciting set piece for our heroes to play through. While not as ubiquitous in superhero stories as they are in other action stories, chase sequences are an important part of action storytelling. They can be utilitarian by moving the heroes from one important location to another, a capstone to a scene's action, or even the inciting incident of the story.

Before designing a chase sequence you must decide what type of chase it will be. There are four archetypical chase types:

Catch: The heroes are chasing after an escaping target.

Countdown: The heroes have to get to a location before a certain amount of time passes.

Escape: The heroes have to get away from someone chasing them.

Race: Multiple parties, including the heroes, try to get to a location first.

Once you know what type of chase you're running you can now start building the sequence. A sequence is made out of the different obstacles the heroes will have to bypass during the chase.

Here's an example sequence: Star-Lord is in his ship chasing Dar-Benn's ship to catch her.

Obstacle 1. Dar-Benn flys through an astroid belt trying to lose Star-Lord.

Obstacle 2. She flies past a black hole, hoping to escape long enough to jump.

Obstacle 3. A space octopus attacks both ships and damaging Dar-Benn's.

Obstacle 4. Finally, the ship flies low near an alien city before crashing.

Now that you have a sequence you need to decide how the heroes can overcome each obstacle. First, decide on a target number for each obstacle, usually 10 + the hero's rank. Next make a list of three possible solutions to each obstacle and decide which one is hardest, which is easiest, and which is of average difficulty and assign them each a different Ability score. Hard solutions increase the TN by +2, while easy solutions lower the TN by -2. For example, for Star-Lord is rank 5 so his base TN for the obstacle is 15. To get through the astroid field he could try flying through trusting his own piloting skills (hard – TN 17 Agility check), calculate a route through the field and follow it (easy – TN 13 Vigilance check), or program the computer to jump to the other side of the field (average – TN 15 Logic check). **NOTE.** These three solutions are not, and should not be, the only ones players can use. They are only a rough guideline to help you at the table and quick options you can give your players if they seem lost.

With the sequence decided you must now decide what the requirements for ending the sequence is. There are two primary ways of doing this. The simplest is to have the heroes suffer health or focus damage whenever they fail a check, and have them continue to the next obstacle.

The second is to create a total number of successes that they need to reach before a certain number of failures finish the chase, with fantastic successes counting as two successes. For example, Star-Lord needs to get 3 successes before he gets 2 failures otherwise Dar-Benn escapes. He succeeds his check to navigate the astroid field but fails to control his ship in the black hole putting him behind again. He now has 1 success and 1 failure. When the space octopus attacks he fails his check, which means Dar-Benn escapes, he decides to spend a point of Karma to reroll a dice and gets a fantastic success instead. He now has 3 successes meaning he evades the octopus and catches Dar-Benn's ship.

During chases remember to keep things moving! Nothing makes an exciting chase tedious quicker than constant interuption or confusing rules.

Finally, when designing the ending to a chase sequence we need to answer two questions.

1. What happens if/when the players break the expected sequence of play?

For example, if one player's Daredevil is chasing Bullseye through a dense back alley. How does the sequence change when the other player's Nightcrawler teleports in front of him. The easy answer to this is, congratulate them. They used their powers in a useful way. But what if Bullseye was supposed to escape into the mutant trafficking warehouse our heroes are searching for? Creating an answer, even one as simple as Bullseye receiving a text message on his phone with a reminder of the address, is an important final step. Remember, it is almost always better to reward players for using their abilities in intelligent ways then force them into the exact sequence you created.

2. What happens if/when the players fail?

For example, Spider-Man (Peter Parker) is racing against Venom to the hospital where Aunt May is staying. How does the sequence change when Spider-Man fails every check? The easy answer is to have the bad thing happen, in this case Venom eats Aunt May before Spider-Man arrives. Alternatively, nothing changes and everyone arrives at the same time as expected. Either of these options are rather boring. One immediately ends the tension, since the worst outcome has happened. In the other example, the chase has no meaning. Having their be a consequence for failure is important but it should increase the tension of a situation, never decrease it. In this example maybe Venom has infected some of the orderlies so now there is a second or third symbiote for present. This means that any threat

to civilians is increased and Aunt May has to be protected from an increased number of threats.

Teacher, CEO, or King (Leadership)

While some heroic teams are isolated from the general public, others, whether by choice or circumstance, become leaders of large groups and communities. How does a player fulfil their fantasy of being Professor X when he has been both the principal of a private school and part of the council which leads an entire nation. Black Panther is defined by his role as king of and Iron Man has a veritable army of lackeys that work for him.

Let's make a hero's school, company, or even kingdom.

Before beginning it is important that you discuss with any players what is they want to do with their leadership position. Some simply want to have a community their character can turn to and others will want to design an entire kingdom from flag to city layout. These players are the easiest to handle and, usually, you can handwave their allies in a way which doesn't involve additional rules. These players want the theoretical fantasy of being a leader and will usually be happy just by having you integrate what they've made into the game.

Other players will want to use their allies though and, in such cases, we'll need specific rules to stop them from sending waves of a thousand rank 1 soldiers to go attack Thanos while they sit back and do nothing. For such players here are four new powers:

Leader 1

The character has a small group of allies.

Power Set: Tactics

Prerequisites: Rank 2

Action: Permanent and Standard

Focus: 10

Effect: The character has a cadre of allies who follow their orders in battle without question. The cadre is comprised of 5 members and the character can order them to perform any mundane task an ordinary citizen could accomplish. They are not suicidal though and will not perform actions that are obviously deadly. If the character brings them into combat, the cadre cannot be damaged and are spread out enough that they do not occupy space on the battlefield. If the hero should fall unconscious or gain the shattered condition, they flee from the battle until the character rallies them back together as a free action.

As a standard action which costs 10 focus points, the character can order the cadre to attack a target. They can target anyone within 20 squares and line of sight. The character makes an Ego attack against the targets Vigilance defence. If the attack is a success, apply any Health Damage Reduction twice. If the attack is a fantastic success, the damage is doubled, and the target is bleeding.

Leader 2

The character has a modest group of allies.

Power Set: Tactics

Prerequisites: Leader 1, Rank 3

Action: Permanent and Standard

Focus: 10

Effect: The number of allies the character has in their cadre increase to 10 members and their cadre's attacks receive +1 damage multiplier. Additionally, they gain 100 followers. These followers never assist in combat and do not risk their lives to help the character but will assist them in mundane tasks.

Leader 3

The character has a large group of allies.

Power Set: Tactics

Prerequisites: Leader 2, Rank 4

Action: Permanent and Standard

Focus: 10

Effect: The number of allies the character has in their cadre increase to 15 members and their cadre's attacks receive +2 damage multiplier. Their followers increase to 1,000 members.

Leader 4

The character has a huge group of allies.

Power Set: Tactics

Prerequisites: Leader 3, Rank 5

Action: Permanent and Standard

Focus: 10

Effect: The number of allies the character has in their cadre increase to 20 members and their cadre's attacks receive +3 damage multiplier. Their followers increase to 10,000 or more members.

Now that a hero has their followers, what can they do? A simple rule of thumb is that followers can assist the hero, giving them an edge on certain checks or allow them to circumvent the need to do certain activities. For example, it shouldn't be hard for a beloved ruler like Black Panther to have something searched for within Wakanda or Ronin to have a lackey pilot his ship.

With these rules, your heroes should be able to recreate the fantasy of commanding troops into battle or having a personal crew for their spaceship.