

Violence

Resolving a fistfight, a duel, or a battle of wills between two sorcerers relies on the same resolution mechanics used for the rest of the game.

The difference between moment-to-moment play and fights is how who gets to act, and when are handled. Throughout the rest of the game, who speaks and acts when is generally less important. It's an easy back and forth between everyone at the table.

When injury and death are on the line, it's harder to maintain a well-balanced conversation. There's a chance that players who speak louder or more often might get more of the spotlight, and a greater hand in shaping the outcome of the bloodshed.

To prevent this, fights are broken down into **Exchanges**: turns where every Wanderer and each NPC gets a **Moment** to act: enough time for one important action, and an opportunity to **React** to another's action.

Who Acts When?

When a fight breaks out the GM should ask themselves:

- Which side has the better position?
- Which side has greater numbers?
- Which side has the more formidable weapons or skill?

Whichever side has the most of these elements in their favor begins the exchange. Ties are broken in favor of Wanderers. If only Wanderers are involved, the GM chooses the side with the most to lose. In the extremely unlikely event that the two sides are evenly matched and equally well prepared with equal stakes in the outcome of the fight, the GM can flip a coin to determine which side acts first.

The side who begins the fight chooses one of their numbers to take their **Moment** first. Once they've taken their moment to act, they can choose another character involved in the fight to take their moment next, whether it be an ally or an enemy. This continues until everyone involved in the fight has had a chance to act.

The Exchange

In each exchange, every character present in the conflict and able to act gets:

- **One Action:** An opportunity for you to achieve your goals. It's your Moment to act when another character gives you that opportunity after having taken their

own Moment to act.

At the beginning of an Exchange, the side in control of the conflict will choose someone on their side to take an action first.

- **One Reaction** At any point during an Exchange, if you haven't used your Reaction, you can take an action in response to someone's moment or reaction. When you do, you and anyone else involved wager the dice for your actions in secret and then reveal them to see whose action takes place first.

Moments

During combat time is split up into discrete **moments** that cover the amount of time it takes for a character or group of unnamed NPCs to take a single action that requires a roll.

In addition to this, when it's a character's moment to act they can:

- Move anywhere that's not blocked by an obstacle or time sensitive. *"I step behind the bar" isn't an action. "I run away before the bomb goes off" is.*
- Speak a few words to communicate. If in the midst of pitched battle, only nearby folk will hear them.
- Do necessary tasks that don't require a roll. *Sheathing your cavalry sabre doesn't take an action, nor does taking a drink of rum to take the edge off a grisly wound.*

Moments and Reactions

When you act during your moment, anyone with a Reaction remaining can declare that they're Reacting to what you're doing, taking an action of their own.

More than one person can React to your action at a time, provided they have an opportunity to do what they intend to do.

Reacting

Characters who haven't acted yet aren't stalks of wheat waiting to be cut down. In each exchange, you and every other character involved in the fight have the opportunity to make a single **Reaction**. A Reaction is an opportunity to respond to another character's Action or Reaction.

Just as with a moment, this provides enough time to do something significant and risky that requires a roll. A reaction also needs to be something which could reasonably happen simultaneously or before the other person's action. If there's any doubt as to

whether or not something is a valid Reaction, the GM will make a judgment call based on the situation.

When you take your Reaction **you and the character(s) you're reacting to wager the dice for your action in secret**. Your Reaction and your opponent's action take place in order of the number of dice you wagered. If there's a tie, go down this list until you find a criterion which breaks the tie:

- The side with Uncanny Speed
- The side with the Upper Hand
- The side with the highest Attribute
- The Wanderer
- The Wanderer with the lowest Debt
- GM's choice

Reaction Chains

When you React to someone's action, anyone with a Reaction remaining can also React to you. This is handled exactly as above, except that everyone reacting wagers in secret together, and the results of their actions are resolved in order of the number of dice they wagered, with ties being broken as described above.

Maneuvers

Fighting isn't just flashing blades and the retort of muskets. Characters who have great skill in battle, who strike their opponent's where they're weak, or who get lucky and take advantage of an opponent's slip up can perform a **Maneuver**, a cheap shot or tactical flourish which shifts the tide of battle in the character's favor without directly causing harm.

Examples: *Kicking ash in a wolf's eyes, sweeping a ruffian's legs out from under them, disarming someone in a duel, cutting the ties that hold someone's breastplate up, shooting through the nose hanging around your friend's neck, shattering a wooden shield with your axe, pushing a throng of angry townsfolk back with the haft of your spear.*

Maneuvers don't require a roll to perform in and of themselves. If the rules state that a character gets an opportunity to perform one, and the maneuver is possible in the fiction, then it's assumed that they succeed.

A character can perform a maneuver against a foe when:

- They succeed on a **Brawling** roll against a foe and have the Upper Hand.
- They succeed on a **Brawling** roll against a foe and have **Feats of Arms**
- They would inflict damage with **Brawling** but choose to perform a maneuver instead (this is a good strategy when you're dealing with a foe whose armor you can't crack).
- Their foe suffers a Minor or Major Cost while **Brawling**. When they do so, they name the sort of opening they grant you, and your maneuver must follow from that.
- You have **Marksmanship**, succeed on a roll to **Take Your Shot** and choose to perform a maneuver rather than inflicting a wound.
- You have **Born in the Saddle** and you're **Brawling** against someone who's not mounted or who doesn't have **Born in the Saddle**.

Sidebar: Be Sure To Set The Scene

When violence is done whether it's a cavalry charge or a desperate man holding his victim under water it's important for everyone to have a clear sense of place. First describe the area in general terms, you don't need to give exact distances between landmarks but describe the most obvious and interesting features of the terrain, and give everyone a rough sense of the scale involved.

Example: *The tavern is crowded and dark, with ill-tuned harpsichord music pounded out in the corner by a grinning wretch. Barrels of ale line the walls, and the center of the room is dominated by a long rectangular table tightly packed with seats. Most of them are occupied, until the moment you enter guns drawn. Jagged Jaw and her gang, clustered near the front, dive underneath the table, and the patrons surrounding them scatter like insects, crowding the paths around the long table. The tavern keeper and the serving folk cower behind the bar. The blunderbuss on the wall must be just for show, even if the hunting trophies aren't.*

People tend not to pick up on lots of tiny exacting details, so focus not on numbers or exact distances and more on impressions, important features, and tone.

Unnamed NPCs and Groups

Named NPCs, characters that players have taken an interest in or who have a central role to play in the issues of the town follow the same rules as Wanderers do.

NPCs who don't have established names and personalities and who haven't been meaningfully interacted with in the story, behave a bit differently in combat. Such characters don't act individually, but rather get bundled into groups of similar characters like a bandit's gang or an angry mob seeking to hang a witch.

Group Attributes and Actions

Groups of unnamed NPCs have stats that represent their capabilities as a group, not as individuals.

Example: *A band of brigands, armed and dangerous might have Steel 3, while a bunch of starving refugees from a warzone might have Steel 1.*

Groups of NPCs act, react, and roll as if they were a single character, with the exception that they can attempt actions that individual characters would struggle with, like shooting off a volley of musket shots and filling the air with lead. When they do so, their actions are applied against anyone who could reasonably be affected by them.

Wounding Groups

When you wound a group of NPCs, the GM chooses who amongst them gets wounded unless you have a Strength or Skill that suggests otherwise, or the Upper Hand.

If you use a weapon capable of harming multiple foes at a time, you can split the severity of a wound you would deal amongst them. If you use a weapon like a blackpowder grenade or a firebomb, it inflicts a wound to the entire group.

Taking Losses and Breaking

A group of Unnamed NPC's attributes are based on it's full strength. As they take losses, their strength will ebb. Subtract 1 from a group of unnamed NPCs attributes for each of the following that occurs:

- Their leader is dead.
- Enough of them have died that they're now outnumbered by their foes (if they were already outnumbered, this happens when one of them dies)
- There's only a fraction of them left.

If any of a group's attributes would be reduced to 0, they **break**, fleeing or surrendering depending on the circumstances and the GM's judgment.

Wounds and Death

Scraps and brawls are not bloodless affairs, or without risk. Any time you draw steel or raise your fists in anger you accept that you might bleed, break, or die if you underestimate your foe or make a mistake in the heat of battle.

The injuries you sustain from a foe's attempts to harm you, or that you sustain in dealing with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune are recorded in the **Wounds** section of your character sheet.

Tracking Wounds

Every Wound has three parts: a **Severity** rated from 1 to 10, a **Description** of how you were wounded, and a Location that describes where you're hurt.

The wound's **Severity** is determined by the wagered dice of the thing that hurt you. Generally, attacks and dangers inflict a wound of a severity equal to the dice that they wagered +1, minus any armor or defense you're able to put in the way.

A Wound's description is up to you, the person getting wounded within the requirements listed below:

Severity 1-2 Wounds: Minor, Cosmetic, Painful but not Dangerous. **When you take one describe how you show your pain.**

Severity 3-4 Wounds: Shred flesh and crack bone. **When you take one, describe how you show your pain and describe the trouble the wound will cause you when it's healed (stiffness, pains, shitting blood every now and again)**

Severity 5+ Wounds: Are grotesque and deadly. **When you take such a wound, describe what it takes from you (an eye, a hand, an arm, your good looks, your balance, your marbles).**

The location of a wound you suffer is normally your decision as you describe how you left yourself open to attack. There are a few circumstances that might change this:

- A character who wounds you by succeeding on a roll to **Take Their Shot** determines where you were hit randomly. If they have **Marksmanship** instead they choose where they shoot you.
- A character who **Brawls** with you can choose where they manage to strike if they have the Upper Hand in the combat.
- Many hazards will inflict a wound to a location based on the circumstances, to a random part of your body, or to multiple parts of your body depending on the individual rule. See **Suffering** on page XX for more information on this.

Avoiding Harm

There are a few ways to keep yourself from harm in combat, or to reduce the severity of wounds you suffer:

- When you **Brawl** you subtract the number of dice you wager towards Defense from any Wounds you take that you could defend against until you Brawl again or until you completely let down your guard.
- If you're wearing armor that's effective against the sort of harm you're suffering choose one of the following that most closely follows how effective it is against that sort of attack:

Proof: Damn near impervious. Reduce the wound's rank to 1. They still hit you, but it's no doubt just a bruise. *Trying to cut through a metal breastplate with a sword. Punching someone wrapped up in layer after layer of warm furs.*

Effective: It could save your hide. Reduce the wounds rank by 2. *Being stabbed with a spear while wearing a mail corslet. A leather long coat in a fistfight.*

Useful: It's better than nothing. Reduce the wounds rank by 1. *A leather long coat in a knife fight. A breastplate against a pistol shot at close range.*

Useless: It provides no protection whatsoever. *A suit of plate armor against a rifle.*

- Use of the **Protection** aspect of **Banishing** can reduce the severity of wounds caused by specific hazards you've crafted your magic to protect against, reducing the severity of a wound you receive by 1+the number of dice you've wagered.
- Reacting to the thing about to harm you, by springing away or cutting them down can save you from suffering wounds if you manage to act before your opponent and succeed at your roll to do so.

Acting Despite Wounds

When you act despite a wound that would hinder you, you lose the Upper Hand even if you would have otherwise gained it. Then if it's Severity is greater than 1, increase it's severity by 1. If the wound you're acting despite was treated, it gets torn open or disturbed and becomes untreated.

If the Wound's Severity is higher than the Attribute you would use for the roll (before the increase), then first you must use your action to **Steel Yourself** against the pain. Failing to do so means that you can't act despite this wound. Your body may be willing, but your mind is not.

Wounds Get Worse

At the end of a scene where you have one or more untreated wounds, the GM will take up dice equal to the severity of the most significant untreated wound you have **of severity 3 or higher**, +1 for each additional untreated wound you have.

Upper Hand: If your untreated wounds have a combined severity of 10 or more, they have the Upper Hand. On a success, you'll collapse at the end of the scene until roused or treated.

Strengths: If you have **Wild Vitality** reduce the severity of each of your Wounds by 1 before rolling to see if they get worse.

Wagering Dice: The GM always wagers half of the wound's dice, rounded down. On a success, the rank of your most severe untreated wound will increase by +1 for each wagered die.

Success: The severity of your most significant untreated wound increases by 1, +1 for each wagered die.

Failure: Your wounds haven't gotten any worse.

Minor Opportunity

Your wound is beginning to heal. It counts as treated, and won't get worse if you don't aggravate it.

Major Opportunity

It's not as bad as you thought it was. The wound counts as treated, won't get worse if you don't aggravate it, and reduce the wound's severity by 1.

When the wound heals, name an unforeseen benefit of your injury. It might be that your scar makes you look distinguished or daring. Perhaps the chunk a monstrous foe took out of you tingles when creatures of its kind are near.

Death

Wanderers are a sturdy lot, but they are not immortal. A Wanderer, a named NPC, and most beasts or monsters die when either of these things are true:

- They take a Wound of Severity 10 or higher, or a wound progresses until it's severity 10 or higher. The wound is mortal.

- The total Severity of all your untreated wounds is 20 or higher. Your body can only take so much.

Unnamed NPCs and Death

NPCs without an established name or role in the story function differently. Being less important to the story, they perish more abruptly.

When an unnamed NPC has a wound with a greater Severity than their highest Attribute, they're out of the conflict. It's their attacker's choice whether they're dead, knocked unconscious, sprawled out on the ground in pain, if they run away in terror. Whatever the case, they're out of the conflict.

When a group of nameless NPCs fighting together as one is wounded, wound severity in excess of what's required to put one out of commission "rolls over" to another one. In this way, it's possible for one to stand against many.

That Which Is Dead Can Never Die

Spirit-ridden corpses, clockwork soldiers, and other such unfeeling foes suffer wounds just as living creatures do, but possess inhuman endurance and do not know pain. The following rules apply to such horrors:

- When they act despite a wound, it still loses them the upper hand, and the wound still gets worse but they need not Steel Themselves against the pain, they feel none. Despite this, even dead flesh or unfeeling stone will eventually fail once weakened.
- They may suffer Wounds with a severity of greater than 10, and only die when the wounds they take equal 20 or more.
- Fixing a damaged clockwork automaton or stitching together the wounds of a horror stitched together from dead flesh is **Laboring To Create** rather than **Doctoring**.

Dying

When a named NPC or Wanderer dies, the person portraying them will describe their last moments, last thoughts, and if it's possible their last words. Keep these short and to the point. Death is a constant companion for wanderers, but it is not a friendly relationship. Save the tearful speeches and the good whiskey for reminiscing about a fallen comrade after the Job is done and the rest of your hides are safe.

