

# ***When Sky and Sea Were Not Named***



**The floating islands of Tel-Kanan are falling.**

The forces that held them aloft have failed.

Most of the realm has already drifted beneath the clouds—slowly but surely plunging into the bottomless depths of the Skysea.

The Fall is only the beginning of Tel-Kanan's troubles. The powerful foreign empire that rules the realm has collapsed. Refugees, mercenaries, and criminals crowd Tel-Kanan's surviving cities. Order gives way to chaos.

And worse—monsters are everywhere. From beneath the clouds, undead rise from the ruins of lost kingdoms. From beyond the realm's boundaries, dragon-mounted raiders rally for invasion.

The Skysea needs heroes.

**Who will answer the call?**

# Introduction

*When Sky and Sea Were Not Named* (WSSWNN) is a fantasy role-playing game inspired by the historical [Bronze Age Collapse](#). It's best played with a group of three to six people. The *game master* (GM) narrates the story and sets up challenges for the rest of the group. The other players take on the roles of specific *player-characters* (PCs): heroes who set forth upon doomed floating islands, rescue people from their fate, and rebuild civilization.

## *Playing RPGs Safely and Respectfully*

Playing a table-top roleplaying game is a social activity. For a primer on how to help ensure everyone at the table (or online) is comfortable and having fun, see Kienna Shaw's [TTRPG Safety Toolkit](#).



## *Welcome to the Skysea*

This game takes place in the distant future on the planet Jupiter—although characters wouldn't recognize that name. They call their world *the Skysea*.

Countless eons ago, the Skysea shifted its orbit around the sun to descend upon and absorb Earth. The remains of our *Shattered Planet* still drift among the Skysea's clouds and windcurrents as floating islands, serving as terra firma for the scant human survivors and their descendants.

Only the wisest scholars have any inkling of the true history of their world(s). Earth's technology is long lost—or absorbed into the Skysea's magic.

## *The Falling Realm of Tel-Kanan*

**Tel-Kanan** is the game's central setting: a vast cyclone in the Skysea. A combination of fluid mechanics, magnetism, and magic has long held the realm's floating islands aloft. For eons, these forces held true—until now. Islands everywhere are drifting out of their once-stable orbits, sinking, tilting sideways, or otherwise circling the cyclone's drain down and down into the bottomless depths.

The floating islands are generally small and hold a single village or town. Most Kananites live their whole lives on a single island, use bronze tools, and offer prayers and sacrifices to Lord Adod, the realm's ruling storm god. But the realm is diverse, and many Kananites are traders and adventurers. Travel from island to island is possible with magical hot-air balloons and airships called *skyremes*.

## *The Empire of Mazr*

While Lord Adod and his priests rule Tel-Kanan in theory, in practice, the realm is a vassal state to the foreign empire of **Mazr**. Imperial factotums, panjandrum, and plenipotentiaries flanked by guards in gleaming armor

are common sights in large Kananite towns, and instantly recognizable: Mazrians have human bodies with the heads of animals.

With its fleet of skyremes and advanced magical technology, Mazr has long controlled transport between Tel-Kanan's islands and dominated its people. Until recently, that is. The empire of Mazr has collapsed—a fate that the people of Tel-Kanan are only just becoming aware of.

## **Chaos Beyond**

Beyond Tel-Kanan's outer boundaries swirls the *Realm of Chaos*. Where Tel-Kanan's cyclone windcurrents are steady and predictable, the Chaos is an ever-shifting nightmare world, ruled by the dragon god Yom.

Countless species of monsters live in the Chaos and occasionally sweep into Tel-Kanan. More recently, a mysterious people called the **Zordin** have emerged from the Chaos realm, striking like a bolt from the blue. Mounted on dragons and wielding strange artifacts, the Zordin overwhelmed the Empire of Mazr. Now Tel-Kanan is next in their sights.

## **Death Below**

The Skysea has no surface, no bottom. When you fall, you simply fall forever. The light fades, the air gradually condenses into liquid, and the great pressure crushes your body to a pulp—if you don't suffocate first.

But the realm beneath Tel-Kanan is not empty. Kananites know it well as the Realm of Death. Mot, whose vast maw swallows all, is the god of the world below.

Drifting in the depths of Mot's dark realm are the ruins of the **Shinarians**, a lost kingdom of magi who long ago transferred their souls into clay bodies. Some of those bodies still stand as moss-covered statues in the hinterlands of Kananite islands—long thought to be lifeless, but actually just dormant.

## **The Mystery of Rephaim**

A substance called *Rephaim* courses through the Skysea. Commoners believe Rephaim is simply the souls of the dead. Scholars recognize Rephaim as a sort of fluid, undifferentiated and invisible, composed of *intention*. This fluid flows, collects in whorls and eddies, and can be guided and used in magic spells.

The gods and goddesses themselves are said to be made of pure Rephaim. Strange artifacts from the time before the Shattered Planet seem to accumulate Rephaim as well.

## **The Shape of Adventure**

A game of *When Sky and Sea Were Not Named* might be limited to a single island that players explore in a few hours. Or it can be a sprawling adventure spread out over months of play, with heroes steadily gaining more powerful abilities and technology.

For longer adventures, the players ultimately guide the flow of the narrative. But the shape of that flow, over time, might take the following basic form:

1. **Rescue.** The heroes save a town from invading monsters and stabilize its island's orbit so it can be used as a base.
2. **Rebuild.** The heroes explore other nearby islands, gather survivors, and employ their expertise to rebuild their base town.
3. **Defend.** The forces threatening Tel-Kanan mount an attack on the heroes' town and must be repelled.
4. **Attack.** The heroes go on the offensive—using airships or by magically mobilizing their base island—and chase down the threat.



## Gameplay Basics

The floating islands of WSSWNN serve as self-contained units of gameplay. As the player-characters approach and explore an island, the GM describes the scene and offers the players choices: where to land their aircraft, which landmark to head toward first, what approach to take. The other players, taking on the roles of their characters, ask questions and decide what to do.

For non-GM players, the first step to playing WSSWNN is creating a character—a soon-to-be hero of the Skysea. This process is detailed in Chapter 1. Throughout this section, we'll look at how a GM interacts with three sample player-characters: Chom the Champion, Wandu the Warrior, and Matreyu the Mastermind. Their character sheets, included on the [template](#), show all their abilities and statistics referenced here.

**GM:** As your hot-air balloon drifts toward the island, you quickly see that your destination—Jeribo, a one-street town zigzagging up a hill—lies in ruins. The town's small skyharbor is intact, but smoke rises from the market buildings adjoining the dock.

**Matreyu:** Uh oh. Is there some other place on the island we can land?

**GM:** Most of the island is rocky and uneven. The only other option is a wooded area on the island's far side. You might be able to sort-of crash-land safely in the treetops.

**Chom:** Why not land in the harbor? Let us confront this evil directly!

**Wandu:** We're already too late to stop whatever happened. Landing in the woods will give us a chance to scout the situation.

**Matreyu:** I agree with Wandu. Woods seems the lesser of two evils.

Inevitably, the players' choices will lead them toward **challenges**—like surviving a balloon crash—and **conflicts** with other characters—like battling monsters who invaded the island.

## Actions and Dice

Characters take **actions** to overcome challenges and conflicts. When a character takes an action, their player rolls one die. The higher the roll, the better the character does. There are four types of actions: *Attack*, *Brace*, *Compel*, and *Maneuver*.

- **Attacks** use melee and ranged weapons, or fists and feet. They also include grabbing a foe to set up certain *Brace* actions.
- **Braces** are acts of strength and determination. In combat, braces include *holding* or *shoving* foes and *standing fast* to raise your guard.
- **Compels** are acts of will and intellect. They include *deceiving* and *persuading* other characters, and *bolstering* allies in combat.
- **Maneuvers** rely on fast thinking and agility. In combat, maneuvers include *evading*, *outflanking*, and *hiding* from foes.

WSSWNN requires six kinds of dice. Shorthand notes the number of sides each die has: d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and (rarely) the d20. Each character uses a particular-sized die for each type of action. For example, mighty Chom the Champion uses a d8 to attack and brace, a d6 to compel, and a d4 to maneuver. Agile Wandu the Wanderer, on the other hand, uses a d8 to Maneuver, a d6 to attack and compel, and a d4 to brace.

**GM:** As you vent the gasbag, the balloon descends, slowly but surely, toward the treetops. The pointy, uneven, definitely-not-weight supporting treetops. The three of you can each take one action before the balloon crashes.

**Matreyu:** I'm still piloting this thing, right? Maybe I can wedge the gondola safely against some sturdier-looking branches.

**Wandu:** I'm just gonna jump off before we crash and try to snag a tree branch on the way down to break my fall.

**Chom:** Fah! I fear no tree. Brace for impact!

**GM:** Okay, Matreyu and Wandu, roll your Maneuver dice. Chom, roll your Brace die.

## Success, Failure, and In-Between

Challenges are defined by two numbers: a **threat** and a **difficulty**. The difficulty is always higher than the threat. When a player takes action against a challenge, the GM compares their roll against these two numbers and determines which of three possible outcomes happens:

- ◆ **Success:** the action roll beats the challenge's difficulty. The character safely overcomes the challenge!
- ◆ **Partial:** the roll doesn't beat the difficulty, but *does* beat the threat. The character avoids serious harm, but suffers a complication.
- ⊗ **Failure:** The roll is lower than *both* the difficulty and threat. Woe! Something nasty befalls the character.

A typical (but dangerous) challenge, like surviving a balloon crash, is threat 2, difficulty 5. Thus, an action roll of 6 or higher is a ◆ **Success**. A roll between 3–5 is a ◆ **Partial**. A roll of 1 or 2 is a ⊗ **Failure**.

**Matreyu:** (*rolls Maneuver*). Not good. I got a **2**.

**Chom:** BRACE FOR IMPACT! (*rolls Brace*). That's a **4**.

**Wandu:** (*rolls Maneuver*) I got an **8** to jump into the forest!

**Matreyu:** So what happens now?

**GM:** Matreyu, you fail. Your trajectory is good, but you realize at the last moment that you're descending way too fast. When you hit the trees, you're ejected hard out of the gondola and fall to the forest floor. Take -1 Life, and the balloon is pretty much wrecked.

**Matreyu:** Ouch!

**GM:** Chom, you get a partial success. You don't go flying out of the gondola and you're not injured, but you do suffer -1 Stamina from the effort.

**Chom:** Thank my mighty thews!

**GM:** Wandu, you succeed. Your fast reflexes save the day. You land safely on the forest floor. Want to tell how?

**Wandu:** I grab a vine on the way down, pendulum myself across the canopy, and land on my feet after a double backflip.

Challenges are somewhat freeform, and the GM and other players can use the numerical results as scaffolding for their own narrations. Chapter 9 includes many example challenges the GM can use during play, or the GM can create their own challenges. Challenges can have different difficulties and threats, and different specific outcomes for each threshold range. The GM also determines which types of actions—typically Braces or Maneuvers—are applicable to the challenge at hand.

## Characters in Conflict

**Conflicts** occur between PCs and non-player-characters (NPCs). Actions in conflicts, like actions in challenges, can succeed, partially succeed, or fail. But conflict actions are more structured and specific. Whether a character *thrusts* a spear at a monster's underbelly, *shoves* a raider back on their feet, *outflanks* an armored imperial guard to get at their weak point, or *persuades* a frightened local to join the party, each action results in one of three specific outcomes. These actions and their outcomes are detailed in Chapter 2.

To determine which outcome happens for a given action, players compare the action roll to two numbers: the target character's relevant **attribute** and their relevant **defense**. All characters have four attributes and four defense stats. Each type of action is resisted by a specific attribute/defense pair.

Action	vs. Attribute	vs. Defense
Attack ( <i>Melee, Ranged, Grab</i> )	Agility	Guard
Brace ( <i>Hold, Shove, Stand fast</i> )	Strength	Stamina
Compel ( <i>Bolster, Deceive, Persuade</i> )	Will	Spirit
Maneuver ( <i>Evade, Hide, Outflank</i> )	Intellect	Awareness

If the action beats its target's corresponding defense, it ♦ *succeeds*. If it beats the target's attribute but not their defense, it ♦ *partially succeeds*. If it beats neither attribute nor defense, it ⊗ *fails*.

**GM:** Wandu, you can see the balloon tangled up in a treetop, but you've landed some distance away. And you quickly realize you're not alone in the forest. You hear a strange sound beyond the foliage—a kind of alien chittering—followed by a lower, burbly-sounding, monstrous voice. Then heavy, plodding footsteps—

**Wandu:** Hide! I want to hide.

**GM:** Where?

**Wandu:** I'll climb up a tree. Like a cat.

**GM:** Roll Maneuver.

*Hiding* is a maneuver action, and it's contested by a foe's Intellect (attribute) and Awareness (defense). In this case, Wandu is trying to hide from two hostile creatures: a hulking, fish-headed humanoid called a *kulu* (Intellect 0, Awareness 2), and a quick, spindly, shrimp-headed humanoid called a *girtablin* (Intellect 1, Awareness 4).

**Wandu:** (*rolls Maneuver*) That's a 6 to hide.

**GM:** That's a success. Neither creature sees you as you scurry up the tree. But you see both of them—a hulking, club-wielding fish monster, and a spindly, spear-wielding shrimp monster. The little one is leading the big one toward the commotion from the crash. As the monsters pass right under your tree, they clearly spot the balloon wreckage.

**Wandu:** Are these creatures scouting?

**GM:** Sure seems that way. The little one chitters excitedly and pokes the big fish monster with its spear. After a moment, the big one takes a conch shell from its belt, raises it to its mouth—

**Wandu:** Can I get the drop on the big one?

**GM:** Yes, they have no idea you're up there.

**Wandu:** Two versus one. But I don't want this thing to warn its buddies....

## Life and Death

In WSSWNN, bloodthirsty monsters are real and pose an imminent threat to the survivors of Tel-Kanan. While violence may not be the best solution to a problem, combat is a big part of the game. Heroes should always be prepared to defend themselves and their allies!

Characters can take several actions during combat. The most basic is a *melee attack*: the character tries to strike a foe with their favored weapon (or fist). Like most conflict actions, a melee attack can result in three outcomes:

- ♦ **Success:** Hit! The attack roll beats the foe's Guard, inflicting damage to the foe's Life equal to the difference (minus their Armor). The foe is staggered and loses 1 Guard.
- ♦ **Partial:** Blocked! The attack beats the foe's Agility, but not their Guard. The foe parries or otherwise shrugs off the blow, but suffers -1 Guard from the effort.
- ⊗ **Failure:** Miss! The foe dodges—or they can expend 1 Guard and make a free counterattack.

Only successful attacks—*hits* that overcome the target's Guard—inflict lethal damage, reducing the target's Life. But a partially successful *blocked* attack chips away at the foe's Guard, making the next attack more likely to inflict lethal damage. When a character loses all their Life, they fall unconscious and are dying.

There are other ways to overcome a foe's Guard, too. Attacking from hiding, for example, surprises foes and grants *maneuver advantage* on an attack.

**Wandu:** I'm going to draw my dagger, jump down onto the big fish monster's back, and try to stab it good.

**GM:** Backstabbing, eh? You're fully hidden, so you have maneuver advantage. Roll your Maneuver and Attack dice and use the higher result.

**Wandu:** (rolls) That's a 2 and a 6.

**GM:** A 6 hits! The fish monster doesn't have its club up to parry, since it's trying to blow the conch horn, so its Guard is only 3 ... 6 minus 3 Guard equals 3 damage.

**Wandu:** Do I kill it?

**GM:** (marks -3 Life and -1 Guard for the kulu) No, but you stabbed it real good. It drops the conch horn. But now it grabs its big club and raises it. And its little shrimp comrade quickly points its spear at you. Meanwhile, Matreyu and Chom, you both hear a burbly scream from two spans away. What do you do?

## Keep It Moving!

Whether characters are exploring ruins, negotiating with mercenaries, or fighting monsters, **WSSWNN is designed to play fast**. Dice rolls are quick to resolve, with little math. There's no complicated initiative rules or grid-based movement. The system is designed to help the GM keep the action spotlight moving rapidly from player to player—so everyone has their chance to shine.

## About This Book

The first part of this book is for the non-GM players. It covers creating a character (Chapter 1); playing the game (Chapter 2); and abilities characters gain as they progress (Chapters 3–7).

The second part is for the Game Master, covering: the lore and structure of the Skysea (Chapter 8); adventure hooks and sample challenges (Chapter 9); and Foes and friends (Chapter 10).

## Thank you, Playtesters!

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# 1. Creating a Character



A trader-turned-smuggler-turned-rebel, on the run from the hated empire. An imperial peripatetic with the head of a cat, seeking wisdom about the empire's subjects. An old, moss-covered statue, long a fixture of the small town it stands in, suddenly awoken to life with no memories except how to battle with spear and shield. A silent, shipwrecked stranger with W-shaped pupils and swirling skin pigments, who wields an artifact from the ancient earth that looks for all the world like a pool noodle.

This chapter walks you through the character creation process. Along the way, record your choices on your **character sheet**. Your character can be any kind of hero you like—brave, clever, goofy, foreboding, a mighty warrior, a fragile scholar, a simulacrum of your favorite fictional character. But they must be capable of rising to the occasion. Remember: the world is ending—just as your character's adventure begins!

Once you have a concept in mind, follow these steps:



1. **Choose an origin**, which determines your character's physiological traits, their background knowledge, and how the people of Tel-Kanan might treat them.
2. **Choose a calling**, a heroic archetype encompassing a style of play.
3. **Choose ideals**, which help you roleplay your character and provide opportunities for powerful *invocations*.
4. **Choose stats**, determining how strong, willful, smart, and agile your character is, and stats based on these attributes.
5. **Choose equipment**, including armor, weapons, and magical items derived from your calling.
6. **Choose lore**, the body of knowledge accumulated from your character's origin, informing their backstory.

Finally, put the finishing touches on your character sheet. You can draw a picture of your character's face in the upper-left (or find a picture on the internet). You can form a backstory for your character—what they did before the Fall, and what they do now.

But don't feel pressure to have it all figured out at the start. It's useful to leave blanks in your character's life that you can fill in later. You're sure to learn more about your character as you roleplay their adventure!

### Abilities, Techniques, and Actions

As you create your character, take note of any **abilities** granted by their origin or calling on your character sheet. Abilities are preceded by a ☆ star icon. **Techniques**, preceded by a ◆ diamond icon, are similar to abilities, but are external to your character, granted by their equipment.

Many abilities and techniques empower your character's basic actions. In other cases, they serve as new actions your character can take. See **Chapter 2: Playing the Game** for more details on how actions work. The *Action Cheat Sheet* page on your character sheet template also describes the basic actions for quick reference.

## Quick Start

This section presents a streamlined checklist for each step of character creation. Each option here is more fully explained in the following sections.

### 1. Choose Origin

Note any abilities that come with your origin.

- Kanan:** humans, natives of the game setting.
- Mazr:** animal-headed imperials. Choose 1 ability and animal:
  - ☆ *Keen Senses:* +1 Awareness (cat, jackal, falcon, oryx)
  - ☆ *Jaws:* you can bite-grab foes (hippo, rat, snake)
- Shinar:** living clay statues from a lost kingdom.
  - ☆ *Vessel:* you can exchange your Stamina and Spirit
- Zordin:** shapeshifters from the Chaos. Choose 1 ability:
  - ☆ *Protective Coloration:* more easily *hide*
  - ☆ *Suction Skin:* more easily *hold* foes
  - ☆ *Sideways Sight:* you can see certain kinds of magic

### 2. Choose 1 or 2 Ideals

You can invoke your ideals to gain advantage on actions.

Ideal	You're driven to:		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Fellowship</i>	Help others.	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Freedom</i>	Live without constraint.
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Glory</i>	Be remembered.	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Honor</i>	Uphold a code of conduct.
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Justice</i>	Right wrongs.	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Order</i>	Make the world stable.
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Power</i>	Be on top.	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Truth</i>	Uncover knowledge.



### 3. Choose a Calling

Note your calling's starting ability.

- Champion:** You can strike a ✨ *Mighty Blow*.
- Wanderer:** You can evade attacks like a ✨ *Leaf on the Wind*
- Mastermind.** You're always ✨ *One Step Ahead* of your foes.
- Sorcerer.** You can manipulate gravity with ✨ *Dark Magic*.
- Messenger.** You can ✨ *Call Wind* to your service.
- Arbiter.** You can ✨ *Gaze* into a character's soul.

### 4. Choose Attributes

Assign **4 points** to the four attributes below, not including the +2 granted by your calling. No attribute can be higher than **3\***.

- \_\_\_ **Agility:** Wanderers start with 2.
- \_\_\_ **Strength** Champions start with 2
- \_\_\_ **Will:** Messengers and Arbiters start with 2.
- \_\_\_ **Intellect:** Masterminds and Sorcerers start with 2.

\* If you're a **Shinarian**, you can start with a Strength of 4, but your **Agility is 0**. (Shinarian Wanderers start with Intellect 2 instead of Agility 2.)

### 5. Choose Equipment

Your choices of armor, weapons, and magic items depend on your prior choice of calling, and your Strength. Note any techniques for your equipment.

**A. Choose Armor.** Note that Shinarians begin with 2 Armor.

- Light Cuirass** (+1 Armor): Champion, Wanderer, Mastermind
- Heavy Cuirass** (+2 Armor, -1 Stamina): Champion, Mastermind. Requires Strength ✨.
- No armor: Sorcerer, Messenger, Arbiter.

Calling	Starting Equipment
Champion	3 arms; light or heavy cuirass
Wanderer	2 arms (no shields), light cuirass, 1 artifact
Mastermind	2 arms, light or heavy cuirass, 1 Kotharian implement
Sorcerer	Dagger, 1 talisman
Messenger	Club, Sling, or Staff; 1 astra
Arbiter	Staff or Mace; 1 phylactery

**B. Choose Arms:** Note the specific options available to your calling in the table above.

No Strength Requirement:

- Dagger:** Close. ✨ *Stab* foes through gaps in their armor.
- Sling:** Ranged, comes with bullet pouch.
- Staff:** Blunted, 2H, +2 Guard.

Requires Strength ✨

- Bow & Arrow:** Ranged, comes with quiver. ✨ *Aim* before shooting.
- Shield, Light:** No attack. +3 Guard.
- Shortsword:** Close, +1 Guard. Attack quickly with ✨ *Thrust*.
- Sicklesword:** +1 Guard. Disarm a foe with ✨ *Blade hook*.
- Spear:** 2H, +2 Guard. Attack quickly with ✨ *Thrust*.

Requires Strength ✨ ✨

- Club:** Massive, 2H, +1 Guard.
- Mace:** Massive, 2H, +1 Guard. Stagger a foe with ✨ *Whirling Smash*.
- Shield, Heavy:** Blunted. +3 Guard. Provides a ✨ *Stalwart* defense.
- Spear:** 1H, +2 Guard. Attack quickly with ✨ *Thrust*.

**C. Choose one magic item** based on your calling (unless you're a Champion, in which case you're out of luck here).

#### *Wanderer Artifacts*

- Ancient Cylinder:** 2H, +1 Guard. Stagger a foe with ♦ *Whirling Smash*.
- Ancient Stick:** Ranged. Magically ♦ *Fetch* a distant item.

#### *Kotharian Implements (Masterminds and Mazrians choose 1; Mazrian Masterminds choose 2)*

- Finding Faience:** Access encyclopedic knowledge.
- Kotharian Spear:** Blast a foe with a ♦ *Blue Spear* of light.
- Lightning Shells:** Revive a fallen ally.
- Speaking Earrings:** Communicate over distance.

#### *Messenger Astras*

- ♦ **Air Astra:** steal a foe's breath.
- ♦ **Flame Astra:** lash foes with a whip of fire.
- ♦ **Thunder Astra:** imbue your strike with concussive force.

#### *Sorcerer Talismans*

- ♦ **Iron Orb:** increase gravity in a wide area.
- ♦ **Blue Cloak:** turn invisible.
- ♦ **Mageblade:** control a flying dagger.

#### *Arbiter Phylacteries*

- ♦ **Scepter of Commandment:** magically command a character.
- ♦ **Scepter of the Evil Eye:** +1 Awareness, *Gaze* as a free action.
- ♦ **Scepter of Osmosis:** absorb a foe's Spirit.

## 6. Choose Lore

You know a number of lore types equal to your Intellect +1, or +2 if you're a Kananite. Masterminds know an additional lore type. The lore available to you depends on your origin.

There are too many lore types to list succinctly here. See the "Choose Lore" section below for a full list by origin.

## Calculate Defenses

Remember to include any bonuses from your origin and calling.

- \_\_\_ **Guard:** Agility + Strength + Arms' single highest Guard value
- \_\_\_ **Stamina:** Strength + Will (-1 if wearing a heavy cuirass)
- \_\_\_ **Spirit:** Will + Intellect
- \_\_\_ **Awareness:** Intellect + Agility (+1 for Mazrians with *Keen Sense* and for *Arbiters with the Scepter of the Evil Eye*)

## Calculate Action Dice

Round down to the nearest polyhedral.

- \_\_\_ **Attack:** 4 + Agility + Strength
- \_\_\_ **Brace:** 4 + Strength + Will
- \_\_\_ **Compel:** 4 + Will + Intellect
- \_\_\_ **Maneuver:** 4 + Intellect + Agility

# 1. Choose an Origin

The four origins in Tel-Kanan all descended from human beings on Earth. But only the Kananites look like “normal” humans. Over eons in the swirling miasma of the Skysea, the other origins have evolved fantastical traits. These traits grant a combination of special abilities and limitations.

Origin	Description
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Kanan</b>	Cosmopolitan city-states built on floating islands; the main setting of this game. Kananites look like ordinary humans.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mazr</b>	Magically-advanced empire; de facto rulers of Tel-Kanan. Mazrians have human bodies with the heads of animals.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Shinar</b>	An ancient kingdom, long ago swallowed by Mot. Shinarians are living clay statues, long dormant but recently awakened.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Zordin</b>	Mysterious tribes from the Chaos. The Zordin look human, but have W-shaped pupils and strange skin textures.

Along with physiological traits, each origin grants a unique selection of background knowledge in the form of lore. The available lore for each origin is listed in the “Choose Your Lore” section later in this chapter.

For more information on the four origins and the ✨ abilities you can learn through them, see **Chapter 3: Origin**.

## The Realm of Tel-Kanan

Tel-Kanan is the setting for this game. It’s an archipelago of dozens of floating shards of the Shattered Planet, and its inhabitants—Kananites—are as diverse as any human culture. The realm is home to humble farmers and proud artisans, wealthy traders and skulking thieves, corrupt governors and violent insurgents, devout priests of Lord Adod and freethinkers who mock the god privately or openly.

Kananites view their status as vassal-state of the Mazrian empire in diverse ways, ranging from optimistic acceptance to open rebellion. Most Kananites are preoccupied with the fall of their home islands, and few are yet aware that the Empire that rules them has itself collapsed.

### *Kananite Traits*

You have human eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth—nothing special here. But because you’re native to the setting of the game, you get an extra lore, and you have more types of lore to choose from.

Also, since you’re acclimated to the realm of Tel-Kanan, you use your Stamina more efficiently than other origins when you recover. See the “**Recovery and Progression**” section of Chapter 2 for more information on recovering.

### *Kananite Names*

Abi, Agenor, Aqat, Danel, Dido, Elisa, Hamilcar, Han, Hanno, Hannibal, Hasdrubal, Hiram, Ithobal, Jebedoah, Jezebal, Luli, Mago, Mattan, Moseph, Pygmalion, Shem, Sidon, Tabnit, Zimredda



# The Empire of Mazr

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Mazr is—was—a powerful magical empire located in the Low River, south of Tel-Kanan’s cyclone. Its envoys, soldiers, artisans, traders, and tax collectors are common sights in larger Kananite settlements. Mazrians speak their own language and are *extremely* easy to spot in a crowd.

## Mazrian Traits

**You have the head of an animal.** You’re an ordinary-looking human otherwise (usually darker-skinned than Kananites). Mazrians are born with human heads; they choose an animal that represents their nature on their sixth birthday and undergo an irreversible magical process to assume that animal’s head.

**Choose one of the following two abilities**—✦ *Keen Sense* or

✦ *Jaws*—along with a particular animal head to go with it.

### ✦ Keen Sense

MAZRIAN ABILITY

Gain 1 Awareness.

*Possible animals: cat, falcon, jackal, oryx.*

### ✦ Jaws

MAZRIAN ABILITY

You bite. Your *Grab* attack inflicts Life damage, up to your Strength +1.

(Most Mazrians view people who use this ability as uncouth at best.)

*Possible animals: capybara, crocodile, hippopotamus, snake.*

Your animal head has benefits, but comes with a big drawback: **many Kananites will try to capture or kill you** once they learn the powerful empire behind your back has collapsed.

## Mazrian Names

Ahmose, Ammeris, Bunefer, Djoser, Imhotep, Khafre, Menwi, Merneptah, Nakht, Necho, Osorkon, Papi, Ramesses, Sabu, Satiah, Senneferi, Shoshenq, Sinuhe, Tey, Tia, Wazad

# The Lost Kingdom of Shinar

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Shinar was an enormous island that once floated beyond the Chaos, east of Tel-Kanan, where the High and Low Rivers converged. It sunk deep into the Realm of Mot hundreds of years ago.

At its height, Shinar was the most powerful nation in the known Skysea, ruled by Amurah, the Clay King. Amurah’s *Code* forms a major magical tradition, containing the secrets of transferring souls into clay bodies. Legend has it that the Kananites descended from flesh-and-blood Shinarians who fled or were driven out of their land by the Clay King’s insane regime.

The only survivors of this troubled realm are moss-covered statues—newly awoken after lying dormant for hundreds of years.

## Shinarian Traits

**You’re made of clay.** Your “skin” has a yielding fleshlike texture, while your “bones” are hardened ceramic. Your face can be as blank or detailed as you like, but your mouth doesn’t move when you talk, and your eyes are hollow circles that glow pale violet. Unless you’re heavily cloaked, everyone in Tel-Kanan easily recognizes you as a Shinarian, and may fear or avoid you.

You don’t eat food, but you do need supplies in the form of fresh water, which flows through your body’s intricate internal canal system—and “bleeds” out if you’re sliced open. You also need to “breathe” air in order to think and speak.

**Time has eroded most of your memories.** You've been slumbering in your statue body for centuries. You remember little of your past life.

Additionally, note the following changes and limits to your stats:

- **Your Agility is 0.** You're slow and cumbersome.
- You can start with a higher Strength score than others origins (up to 4, rather than 3).
- You start with **2 Armor**.

Finally, you gain the following ability:

### ★ **Vessel**

SHINARIAN ABILITY

Your clay body's Stamina and Spirit are connected. At the start of your turn, you can freely shift points from one defense to the other (up to their maxima).

Following the Arbiter calling or studying the *Code of the Clay King* lore will grant you access to more abilities tied to your Vessel body.

## **Shinarian Names**

Ashur, Atrasis, Azu, Banipal, Bel, Dumuzi, Enkidu, Etana, Gibil, Gilgamesh, Igigi, Ilu, Istar, Kingu, Kishar, Lugal, Nebuchadnezzar, Ningal, Ninurta, Sargon, Sin, Zana, Zu

## **The Zordin, Out of Chaos**

The Zordin are a mysterious people who hail from beyond the western border of Tel-Kanan, where Lord Adod's cyclone devolves into the formless

Chaos. Zordin who find their way to Tel-Kanan may be infiltrators, exiles, or castaways from this deadly and unfathomable realm of monsters.

## **Zordin Traits**

**You have W-shaped pupils** and **slightly translucent skin, with patterns and textures that shift** when you're emotional. These features are obvious on close inspection but can be overlooked at a modest distance. Your pupils enable you to see the polarization of light, at the expense of some color vision. This trait can be developed into a useful ability (see below).

You also have **greenish-blue blood**, and you have a **distinct smell** that some (25%) Kananites and Mazrians find strangely attractive and most (75%) find mildly repulsive.

Finally, **choose one** of the three following abilities: ★ *Protective Coloration*, ★ *Sticky Skin*, or ★ *Sideways Sight*. Each ability reflects your mastery over one of your physical traits.

### ★ **Protective Coloration**

ZORDIN ABILITY

You compel your skin to shift colors and textures. When you *Hide*, you can roll your Compel die along with your Maneuver die and use the higher result. You can only use this ability if the following conditions are met:

- At least half of your skin is bare—wearing cuirass-style armor works, but not a more elaborate panoply armor.
- You aren't holding or carrying a large weapon or shield (that is, any item that must be stowed on your back).

### ★ **Sticky Skin**

ZORDIN ABILITY

Parts of your skin are tessellated with small, shallow suction cups. When you *Hold* a foe you've grabbed, roll your Compel die along with your Brace

die and use the higher result. This ability doesn't work if you wear gloves or use some other tool to grab a foe.

### ★ Sideways Sight

ZORDIN ABILITY

You've learned to sense the presence of Light Magic from the Kotharian sorcerer tradition. In particular, you can perceive the faint shimmering outline of Kotharian Cloaks, as well as any spell that duplicates its invisibility-producing effect. Sorcerers using such magic must *Hide* from you normally. (See "Choose a Calling" and Chapter 8: Magic" for more information about this type of magic.)

You can learn other abilities based on your Zordin physiology by studying the *Formless* lore. Such abilities include various forms of shapeshifting and enhanced perception.

Few Kananites have encountered the Zordin before. Fewer still know that Zordin raiders somehow succeeded in destroying the Mazrian empire. Mazrians, however, are now aware of this fact. Consequently, **most Mazrians will try to capture or kill any Zordin they encounter.**

### Zordin Names

Alfonso, Denya, Ekwesh, Lukka, Pelset, Teresh, Tjeker. Many Zordin take the name of whispered words or phrases they hear from the Chaos, which can take the form of random dictionary words or encyclopedia article titles.

## 2. Choose Your Ideals

Your ideals drive your character. They help define your character's personality, provide context for their actions, and help you—the player—roleplay social encounters. You can also *invoke* your character's ideals to empower their actions.

There are eight ideals, listed below. **Choose one or two** that exemplify your character more than the rest.

Ideal	You're driven to:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship	Help others.	<input type="checkbox"/> Freedom	Live without constraint.
<input type="checkbox"/> Glory	Be remembered.	<input type="checkbox"/> Honor	Uphold a code of conduct.
<input type="checkbox"/> Justice	Right wrongs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Order	Make the world stable.
<input type="checkbox"/> Power	Be on top.	<input type="checkbox"/> Truth	Uncover knowledge.

**Most characters have a pair of ideals**, with each providing context for the other. For example, you might be driven to explore the world and find lost artifacts far from the confines of civilization. This drive can be expressed by a combination of the ideals *Freedom* and *Truth*. You might pick the *Fellowship* ideal, expressing your devotion to protecting your hometown and friends, while the *Honor* ideal encapsulates the way you conduct yourself socially and in combat to achieve this goal.

On the other hand, you can choose a single ideal. Achilles, the legendary ancient Greek hero, would probably have one ideal: *Glory*. Such characters come off as single-minded and perhaps even obsessed.

For a complete list of all the ★ abilities you can learn through your ideals, see **Chapter 5: Ideals**.



## 3. Choose a Calling

If your character's *origin* reflects who they were before the Fall, their **calling** reflects who they'll become—and how they'll overcome the forces threatening Tel-Kanan. There are six callings in WSSWNN: *Champion*, *Wanderer*, *Mastermind*, *Messenger*, *Sorcerer*, and *Arbiter*. The latter three use unique forms of magic.

Each calling starts with two points in an attribute, along with a powerful starting ability. Your character can learn additional abilities through your calling as they progress.

Calling	Attribute	Starting Ability
□ Champion	Strength ♦♦	Strike a ☆ <i>Mighty Blow</i> .
□ Wanderer	Agility ♦♦	Evade attacks like a ☆ <i>Leaf on the Wind</i> .
□ Mastermind	Intellect ♦♦	Stay ☆ <i>One Step Ahead</i> of your foes.
□ Messenger	Will ♦♦	☆ <i>Call Wind</i> to your service.
□ Sorcerer	Intellect ♦♦	Manipulate gravity with ☆ <i>Dark Magic</i> .
□ Arbiter	Will ♦♦	☆ <i>Gaze</i> into a character's soul.

You'll have additional choices related to your calling in Step 5, "Choose Equipment." Your calling determines which arms, armor, and magical items your character can start with. Those items, in turn, grant additional techniques beyond your starting ability.

For a complete list of all the ☆ abilities you can learn through your calling, see **Chapter 4: Callings**.

## Champion

Charging into battle in gleaming bronze armor, invincible behind a heavy shield and long spear, weaving deftly between foes with sickleswords flashing, or smashing their way through enemy forces with a heavy mace—however armed and armored, Champions are bold heroes and masters of melee combat.

You begin with *Strength* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:

### ☆ **Mighty Blow**

CHAMPION ABILITY

Consume 1 Stamina before making a melee attack.

- Roll your Brace die along with your Attack die, and use the higher number as your attack result.
- Double the attack's damage to Guard and Life. (On a *hit*, double the Life damage *before* subtracting the foe's Armor.)

You must declare this ability before rolling the attack. It's wasted on a miss.

## Wanderer

Clambering up sheer cliffsides or descending into crumbling ruins, circling around foes or ambushing from the shadows—a Wanderer is a master of movement and terrain. When a Wanderer needs to fight, they fight indirectly, with instincts honed in the wild reaches of the Shattered Planet. Wanderers are also expert treasure hunters and start the game with an **artifact** from the ancient world.

You begin with *Agility* ♦♦, unless you're a Shinarian, in which case you begin with *Intellect* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:

### ★ Leaf on the Wind

WANDERER ABILITY

As long as you don't hold a shield or wear heavy armor, you can perform the *Evade* maneuver as a free action at any time, not just on your turn. You can even use this ability after an attack is rolled against you, potentially turning a hit into a block or miss. However, you can only *Evade* one attack at a time with this ability.

## Mastermind

Surveying dangers from on high, holding their allies in tight formation as they advance, shouting a precisely-timed command for maximal advantage, a Mastermind's clever leadership makes an adventuring party more than the sum of its parts. Masterminds start with a **Kotharian implement**, a magical gadget acquired or pilfered from the Empire.

You begin with *Intellect* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:

### ★ One Step Ahead

MASTERMIND ABILITY

Your foes can never be sure if they're winning or stumbling into some elaborate trap you've set. When a foe attacks you or one of your allies, you can **consume 1 Awareness** and force the foe to roll *their* maneuver die, along with their attack die. The foe must then use whichever roll is lower as their result.

If the foe's result fails to beat your Intellect, they miss—regardless of their target's Agility—and suffer -1 Guard as they stumble, literally, into your stratagem.

## Messenger

Messengers wield the magic of the Rephaim by “calling” its fluid motion to their command. This ability gives Messengers tremendous power over the wind itself. Messengers can glide through the air and blast foes with powerful gales.

Over time, messengers can learn to summon flame and lightning to their command as well. Several lore traditions in Tel-Kanan seek to understand and amplify the power that Messengers wield. These lore traditions are the *Covenant of the Lord* (priests of Adod), the *Path of Wind and Flame* (mystics from far-flung islands), and the *Wisdom of Adod* (freethinkers—the name is sarcastic). However, you don't need to know any lore to be a Messenger, nor do you need to be from the Kananite origin.

You begin with *Will* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:

### ★ Call Wind

MESSENGER ABILITY (BRACE)

Consume 1 Spirit and **roll Brace** to call the windcurrents of the Skysea to your command. You must come up with the phrase your character bellows to call the wind, which then swirls around you in a howling vortex.

- **Wind guard.** Add your roll + Will to your Guard. Keep any excess Guard over your maximum. You must consume 1 Guard at the start of each turn to maintain the wind. The wind dissipates if your Guard drops to zero, or if you dismiss it willingly.
- **Gale strike.** While the wind is called, ferocious gales follow the paths of your attacks. You can make a free *Shove* brace after any unarmed, club, sling, or staff attack that doesn't miss.
- **Ride the wind.** If you don't wear heavy armor and are not a Shinarian, you can leap 10 feet while the wind is called, and you don't take falling damage.

Calling the wind is not subtle. You can't *Hide* while the wind swirls around you, and you can't hear what nearby characters say unless they shout.

You can “refresh” your Guard while the wind is called by *Standing Fast* or by *Calling wind* a second time. However, you lose any excess Guard above your maximum before adding Guard from the new roll.

## Sorcerer

Sorcerers manipulate the Rephaim’s interactions with the fundamental forces of gravity, energy, and matter. A Sorcerer employs intricate hand gestures and physical strength, as well as a powerful force of will and a deep understanding of geometry. They might look like they’re weaving a cat’s cradle out of invisible thread, spinning an unseen top, or pressing down with all their strength against a hovering force field—as a deep *wohm-wohm-wohm* pulse of *Dark Magic* reverberates around their foes.

Over time, Sorcerers can master more advanced disciplines—the energetic forces of *Light Magic*, and the incomprehensible secrets of *Small Magic*. Many powers wielded by Sorcerers are expounded in *The Scrolls of the Kotharian*, a Mazrian text that also forms the basis of the empire’s magical technology. But you don’t need to be a Mazrian or have the *Scrolls* lore to be a Sorcerer.

You start with *Intellect* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:

### ✦ Dark Magic

SORCERER ABILITY

You’ve learned to control the force of gravity through intricate hand and finger gestures. As long as both of your hands are free, you gain maximum Guard equal to your Intellect.

In addition, you can use Dark Magic as an action. *Roll Maneuver* to gravitationally grasp a foe in the same span as you.

♦ **Success:** Make a free *Hold* or *Shove* brace against the foe.

♦ **Partial:** Make a free *Hold* or *Shove* brace with a -2 penalty.

⊗ **Failure:** The foe avoids your grasp.

On a success or partial, you can **consume 1 Awareness** to empower either the free *Hold* or *Shove* action:

- **Fate’s Grasp.** Add your Intellect to the free *Hold* brace. The hold inflicts an additional -1 Guard on a success. On a partial or success, attacks against the *held* foe add your Will along with your Strength.
- **Untether.** Add your Intellect to the free *Shove* brace. On a success, in addition to the effects of *Shove*, the foe drifts 10 feet (one vertical span) into the air, weightless. You can use this ability multiple times to send the foe higher (they maintain altitude on a partial *Shove*)—or simply let them fall.

If you partially or successfully *Hold* an airborne foe you’ve grasped with *Dark Magic*, they plummet to the ground, taking twice as much falling damage.

You can *untether* yourself or a cooperating ally. You don’t need to roll either the *Maneuver* or *Shove* brace to do so, but you must use your turn and consume 1 Awareness.

## Arbiter

Unlike Messengers and Sorcerers, who call forth the raw power of the Rephaim’s fluid motion and energetic interactions, Arbiters practice a more subtle magic. They channel the Rephaim into intricate circuits—like the legendary canals of the lost kingdom of Shinar channeled water—that in turn magnify its effects on souls, intentions, ideals, and reality.

Many Arbiters trace their calling back to the *Code of the Clay King*. This lore tradition records the laws and magical abilities of the Shinarian king Amurah. The term *Arbiter* comes from the title given to Amurah’s magisters who settled disputes in his name. You may follow the Arbiter calling independently of the *Code*, however, and you don’t need to be a Shinarian.

You start with *Will* ♦♦. Note your starting ability:



## ★ Gaze

ARBITER ABILITY (COMPEL)

Consume 1 Spirit and **roll Compel** to peer into another character's soul. You and your target must be able to see each other and occupy the same or adjacent spans. You can only use this ability on one character at a time.

- ◆ **Success:** You learn the target's ideals, along with their mental stats (Will, Intellect, Awareness, and Spirit). While you and the character occupy the same span or adjacent spans, your gaze spellbinds them, revealing their intentions plainly. Add your Will to your actions against them, and subtract your Will from their actions against you.
- ◆ **Partial:** You learn the target's ideals and mental stats, but you don't spellbind them as above or see their intentions.
- ⊗ **Failure:** The character rebuffs your gaze, and the Spirit you consumed for this ability is wasted.

You can consume 1 Awareness to use *Gaze* as a free action at any time—for example, as you're being attacked by a foe. You can use this technique even after the foe's attack is rolled—so that if your free *Gaze* is successful, a successful attack may wither into a block or miss.

## 4. Choose Your Stats

After choosing your origin, calling, and ideals, it's time to choose your character's attributes. Attributes determine your character's basic physical and mental traits, as well as your defense values and the sizes of your action dice. Your Strength determines what kind of arms and armor you can use, and your Intellect determines what kinds of lore you can learn.

### Attributes

Each attribute has a score ranging from 0 to 5 (– to ◆◆◆◆◆). A score of 1 is average for a human. When you make a new character:

- **You have 4 free points to allocate** between the four attributes, not counting the 2 points already gained from your calling. For example, a Champion starts with Strength 2, and has 4 additional points to allocate between Agility, Strength, Will, and Intellect.
- **The highest score you can assign is 3**, unless you're a Shinarian. You can attain higher scores as your character gains experience. (Shinarians can start with Strength as high as 4, but must also start with Agility 0.)

#### What Attribute Scores Mean

– Severely lacking	◆◆◆ Remarkable
◆ Average	◆◆◆◆ Extraordinary
◆◆ Good	◆◆◆◆◆ Superhuman

## Agility

**Agility (AGI)** is physical quickness and grace. It helps characters dodge attacks and reflexively avoid maneuvers. Abilities relying on precision and quick reflexes, like advanced weapon techniques and many Wanderer abilities, often require high Agility.

## Strength

**Strength (STR)** is physical power and constitution. Strong characters can wield heavy weapons and shields and easily overpower opponents. Abilities relying on brute force, like heavy weapon techniques and many Champion abilities, rely on Strength.

## Will

**Will (WIL)** is courage, discipline, and force of personality. Willful characters can avoid being compelled to act against their wishes and push themselves to struggle and survive. Will is also closely connected to your character's ideals.


## Intellect

**Intellect (INT)** is mental acuity and external awareness. It helps characters foil maneuvers and master social interactions. Intellect is especially important for your character's known lore, as it determines both the number and types of lore you can learn.

## Defenses

Your attributes form the building blocks of your defense stats. With the exception of Guard, each defense is simply the sum of two attributes.

Defense	Components		
Guard:	Agility + Strength + Arms	Spirit:	Will + Intellect
Stamina:	Strength + Will	Awareness:	Intellect + Agility*

\* Mazrians with the  *Keen Sense* ability add +1 to their Awareness.

The contribution to Guard from your arms and implements is detailed in the next section.

Remember that defenses—unlike attributes—aren't static. On your character sheet, each defense has a current value (big number) and a maximum value (small number). The current value ebbs and flows as your defenses are tested!

## Action Dice

**Action dice** are also derived from combinations of two attributes.

Action	Components		
Attack:	Agility + Strength + 4	Compel:	Will + Intellect + 4
Brace:	Strength + Will + 4	Maneuver:	Intellect + Agility + 4

Instead of a value, each action type corresponds to a polyhedral die—a d4, d6, d8, and so on. When determining your die sizes, round *down* to the nearest physical polyhedrals. Or consult the following table:

Sum	Die Size				
4-5:	d4	8-9:	d8	12-19:	d12
6-7:	d6	10-11:	d10	20+:	d20

Note that the highest die size your starting character can achieve is a d8. You can achieve bigger dice by learning new abilities and increasing your attributes.

## Life, Armor, Damage, and Death

**Starting characters have 4 Life points.** If an attack overcomes your Guard and hits, it inflicts *damage*, reducing your Life by an amount equal to:

$$\text{Attack result} - \text{Guard} - \text{Armor}$$

Some attacks, such as unarmed strikes and blows with blunt or shoddy weapons, can't inflict more than a few points of Life damage. Also, wearing armor—or having a Shinarian's natural armor—may reduce the damage from a successful attack to zero. (Armor and weapons are discussed more in the next section.)

If you do lose all your Life, you're unconscious, but you have a few chances to hang onto your soul. And even if your soul does pass on, who knows? Souls drift through the Skysea in surprising paths—and toward surprising destinations.

Losing and recovering Life—and avoiding death—are discussed in greater detail in **Chapter 2: Playing the Game**.

## 5. Choose Equipment

Weapons, armor, and other items form a vital part of your character's capabilities—and their style. This section guides you through your options.

Your choice of equipment is limited by two factors: your **calling** and your **Strength**. For example, Arbiters begin the game with either a staff or mace. That choice, in turn, depends on the Arbiter's Strength: a mace requires Strength 2, while a staff has no Strength requirement.

Calling	Starting Equipment
Champion	3 arms; light or heavy cuirass
Wanderer	2 arms (no shields), 1 artifact
Mastermind	2 arms, light or heavy cuirass, 1 Kotharian implement
Sorcerer	Dagger, 1 talisman
Messenger	Club, Sling, or Staff; 1 astra
Arbiter	Staff or Mace; light or heavy cuirass, 1 phylactery

Characters from all callings start with at least one **armament**—a weapon or shield. Some characters also start with **armor** in the form of a *cuirass*, which protects the torso. Other types of items are more specialized:

- **Artifacts** are unfathomably ancient items created before the Shattered Planet was shattered. Wanderers begin with one artifact.
- **Kotharian implements** are magical gadgets manufactured by the Mazrian Empire. They have a limited power supply. Masterminds and Mazrians begin with one implement. (A Mazrian Mastermind begins with two.)



- **Astras** are magical patterns carved into the wood of clubs and staves or braided into a sling's rope and cradle. Messengers begin with one astra embedded in their chosen weapon.
- **Talismans** are items that help Sorcerers intuitively grasp the geometry of magic. Sorcerers begin with one talisman.
- **Phylacteries** are items that contain a portion of an Arbiter's soul. Arbiters begin with one phylactery.

See **Chapter 6: Equipment** for a complete list of equipment and all the ☆ abilities and ♦ techniques you can learn from each item.

## Arms

Arms are weapons and shields. Each has a number of features to consider.

- **Strength** notes if the item can be wielded with 1 or 2 hands, and how much Strength it takes to do so.
- **Stow** notes where the item can be carried on your body.
- **Guard** is the item's bonus to your Guard defense. Only one such bonus can be applied to your Guard at a time.
- **Property** notes any special features or limitations the armament has that modify its attack. (These properties are defined below.)
- **Technique** notes any special actions or effects that characters automatically gain while wielding the armament.

Arms	Strength	Stow	Guard	Property	Technique
Bow	♦ (2H)	Back	0	Ranged	♦ Aim
<i>Arrow Quiver</i>		Belt			
Club	♦♦ (2H)	Back	+1	Massive	
Dagger	– (1H)	Leg	0	Close	♦ Stab
Mace	♦♦ (2H)	Back	+1	Massive	♦ Whirling Smash
Shield (Light)	♦ (1H)	Back	+3	(No attack)	
Shield (Heavy)	♦♦ (1H)	Back	+3	Blunted	♦ Stalwart
Shortsword	♦ (1H)	Belt	+1	Close	♦ Thrust
Sicklesword	♦ (1H)	Belt	+1		♦ Blade Hook
Sling	– (2H)	Leg	0	Ranged	
<i>Bullet Pouch</i>		Belt			
Spear	♦ (2H), ♦♦ (1H)	Back	+2		♦ Thrust
Staff	– (2H)	Back	+2	Blunted	

## Stowing Your Arms

In addition to the Strength requirements to wield weapons, you also need a place on your body to stow them. You have five “slots”:

- 1 slung on your **back**
- 1 sheathed on your **belt**
- 1 strapped to your **leg**
- 2 free slots

Each type of weapon lists the *smallest* slot that it can be stowed in. Anything can be stowed on your back. Swords, arrow quivers, and other arm-length items can be stowed on your belt. Only small items like daggers or slings can be strapped to your leg.

Note that ranged weapons require two “slots” for stowing—one for the weapon itself and another for its ammunition container.

## Guard Bonus

Your character can block and parry attacks with most melee weapons and shields, reflected by their Guard bonus. This bonus is added to your character’s Agility + Strength to determine their maximum Guard. **You only add one weapon’s Guard value** when determining your maximum Guard, and it must be an item you’re actively holding. For example, if you’re holding a heavy shield (Guard 3) and a shortsword (Guard 1), you only add +3 to your maximum Guard. You don’t add both bonuses.

## Attack Properties

A standard attack with a weapon can target any foe within the same span, with the following outcomes:

- ◆ **Success:** Hit! Inflict damage to the foe’s Life equal to the [attack roll – Guard – Armor], then inflict -1 Guard.
- ◆ **Partial:** Blocked! Inflict -1 Guard.
- ⊗ **Failure:** Miss! The foe dodges—or they can expend 1 Guard and make a free counterattack.

Arms with marked *properties* modify the above rules in certain ways:

- **Blunted** arms can only inflict a maximum of -1 Life—or -2 Life if your Strength is 3 or higher.
- **Close** arms can be used to attack while grappling a foe or being *held* by them.

- **Massive** arms inflict -2 Guard on a block or hit, not -1.
- **Ranged** arms don’t provoke counterattacks if they miss. However, they have a -1 penalty to their attack roll, plus an extra -1 for each additional span the projectile enters to reach its target. For example, shooting an arrow at a foe standing in an adjacent span results in a -2 penalty to the attack roll.

## Unarmed Attacks

An unarmed attack has both the **blunted** and **close** properties. If a foe is *holding* you and you don’t have a close weapon equipped, an unarmed attack may be your best option!

## Arms Techniques

If you have an armament equipped, you can automatically use its associated technique. Unlike *abilities*, which are innate to your character, techniques are built into the item your character wields.

### ◆ Aim

ARMS TECHNIQUE (MANEUVER)

**Roll Maneuver** to take careful aim at a foe with your **bow & arrow**.

- ◆ **Success:** Make a free bow attack, adding your Intellect to the roll.
- ◆ **Partial:** Make a free bow attack with a -2 penalty.
- ⊗ **Failure:** You hesitate and lose the shot.

### ◆ Blade Hook

ARMS TECHNIQUE (BRACE)

You can only use this technique as a free action after a foe blocks your **sicklesword** attack. Instead of inflicting Guard damage, **roll Brace**.

◆ **Success:** You hook your sword around the foe's weapon or shield and pull it out of their grasp.

◆ **Partial:** The foe suffers -1 Guard.

⊗ **Failure:** You suffer -1 Guard.

### ◆ Thrust

ARMS TECHNIQUE

When you attack with a **spear** or **shortsword** and miss, you don't provoke a counterattack and can reroll your attack. If you use a shortsword, the reroll has a -1 penalty.

### ◆ Stalwart

ARMS TECHNIQUE

When you block a ranged attack with a **heavy shield**, it inflicts 1 less Guard damage.

### ◆ Stab

ARMS TECHNIQUE

When you attack at close range with a **dagger** after *grappling* a foe or while in a hold, negate 1 point of damage reduction from your foe's Armor.

For example, if you grab a foe and roll a 6 on your dagger attack against their Guard 3, and your foe has Armor 2, treat their Armor as 1, so that your attack inflicts -2 Life.

### ◆ Whirling Smash

ARMS TECHNIQUE

You can choose to take a -1 penalty to your **mace** or **ancient cylinder** attack. If this -1 attack hits, your momentum enables you to follow through and make a second attack, also with a -1 penalty.

## Armor

Armor reduces damage from successful attacks. All armor is custom-made. Unlike weapons and shields, you can't just take armor off a corpse and wear it. Even if you wash it off to your liking, it won't fit you. Your choice of armor, therefore, is rather important.

Only two types of armor are available to starting characters: a light or heavy cuirass. (A *cuirass* is protection for the torso). Light armor is typically made from laminated linen or overlapping scales of hardened leather. Heavy armor is usually made of bronze scales or plates sewn onto a linen backing.

Armor Type	Strength Req.	Penalty	Armor Value
Light Cuirass	—	None	1
Heavy Cuirass	◆	-1 max Stamina	2

You can acquire new or better armor once your character finds a skilled artisan and an intact city for them to work in. See "Chapter 6: Equipment" for information on buying and crafting new armor.

## Wanderer Artifacts

Artifacts are items from the ancient world that have accumulated eons of Rephaim, giving them bizarre qualities. Wanderers begin with one of the two artifacts below. Either can be equipped and stowed like a weapon.

Artifact	Strength	Stow	Guard	Property	Technique
Ancient Cylinder	– (2H)	Back	1		◆ <i>Whirling Smash</i>
Ancient Stick	– (1H)	Belt	0	Ranged	◆ <i>Fetch</i>

**Artifacts don't inflict lethal damage.** Instead, foes are distracted and disturbed when struck with these items. On a block, an artifact inflicts -1 Guard damage. On a hit, it inflicts -2 Guard and -1 Awareness.

## Ancient Cylinder

This artifact is a 6-foot-long cylinder, as wide around as a strong arm, made of an unfathomably lightweight, squishy material. It's solid except for a thin hole running down its center, which sometimes glows with the pale violet light of Rephaim. When cut or otherwise damaged, light seeps out from the hollow shaft, and the material quickly repairs itself.

When struck by the ancient cylinder, a foe is seized by a harmless but intensely vivid and distracting vision of deformed children in a rectangular pond, laughing maniacally and attacking one another with similar weapons. This flashing vision inflicts -1 Guard on a block and -2 Guard and -1 Awareness on a hit.

See “Arms Techniques” above for a description of ◆ *Whirling Smash*.

## Ancient Stick

This forearm-length rigid stick of smooth, lightweight material has a small curved cup on the opposite end of the handle. In form, it's similar to an *atlatl*, a spear-throwing weapon once used before the advent of the bow and arrow. Rephaim has coalesced in and around the artifact, causing an inscrutable set of phenomena:

- A hazy ball of greenish energy, visible only to the Wanderer wielding the stick, is attached to the cup. Others can sense a strangely moist presence in the air when the blob is near them.
- When you swing the stick to “throw” the ball, a monstrous, four-legged form—like the ball, hazy and indistinct—flies past you, trailing your missile. It quickly retrieves the energy ball and returns it to the end of your artifact before vanishing. The creature is likewise invisible to others, but they can hear its panting and growling.

The energy ball itself is harmless, but if you throw it at a foe, the creature attacks that foe in the process of retrieving the blob, inflicting -1 Guard on a block and -2 Guard and -1 Awareness on a hit.

### ◆ Fetch

ARTIFACT TECHNIQUE

When you throw the **ancient stick's** energy ball at an inanimate item, you can command the creature to retrieve it along with the ball. The size of the object the creature can fetch is proportional to your Will. For example, if your Will is 3, the creature can fetch an object that a character with Strength 3 could carry.

## Kotharian Implements

Kotharian implements are magical gadgets produced by the (now-destroyed) Mazrian Empire. They're powered by resonant crystals with a limited energy supply. Before the Fall, these crystals could be recharged in Mazr, and their resonance with the Skysea was predictable. Now, chaos has thrown their resonance into turmoil, and recharging an implement's crystal is impossible without advanced knowledge of the *Scrolls of the Kotharian* and facilities to experiment



Masterminds and Mazrians each begin with one of the following implements. (A Mazrian Mastermind begins with two.)

Implement	Description
Finding Faience	Access encyclopedia knowledge.
Kotharian Spear	Shoot a deadly beam that explodes on impact.
Lightning Shells	Revive a fallen comrade.
Speaking Earrings	Communicate over a distance.

### Finding Faience

Gazing into the many facets of this glasslike stone reveals a wealth of general information about any subject compiled by the Empire's encyclopedists. The information appears mostly in the form of glowing glyphs, but also features helpful holographic images for the illiterate.

The faience runs out of energy after 3d4 game sessions.

### Kotharian Spear

This short, spindly bronze-and-glass spear is too fragile to use as a melee weapon. It can be used to cast the following magical effect:

#### ◆ Blue Spear

IMPLEMENT (ATTACK)

Consume 1 Stamina and **roll Attack**: a bright, pale-blue lance of light shoots from the tip of the spear in a perfectly straight line toward a foe. This ranged attack inflicts -2 Guard and standard lethal damage.

The blue spear also creates an **explosion** at the point of its impact. The explosion is a second, free attack that targets the foe and any characters adjacent to them. It inflicts -2 Guard and standard lethal damage. Roll 2d4 for the explosion attack.

If your blue spear attack roll had a negative result—by virtue of its range penalty or the target *Evading* it—apply that negative result to the explosion's 2d4 attack roll. For example, if your blue spear attack roll is -2, the explosion attack roll is 2d4 - 2.

If the blue spear misses a target who is *on high* relative to you, the explosion automatically misses as the spear shoots straight past the target up into the sky.

The Kotharian spear can be used 1d4 times before running out of energy.

### Lightning Shells

This pair of metallic seashells can be placed on either side of a dying or unconscious person's chest. When activated, they deliver a shock, and the person awakens with 1 Life and no Stamina.

The lightning shells can be used 1d4 times before running out of energy, and the implement does not work on Shinarians.

### Speaking Earrings

The gems in these earrings are attuned to each other. If you split the pair with another character, you can talk to each other over a distance. The earrings run out of energy after 3d4 game sessions.

## Messenger Astras

An **astra** refers to a pattern in the wood of a staff or club, or in the braiding of a sling, that channels the Rephaim in a specific way. The word *astra* also refers to the powerful magical technique that the pattern enables.

Messengers begin with one astra: **air**, **flame**, or **thunder**. Each astra can be incorporated into any Messenger weapon (club, sling, or staff) and grants a corresponding technique.

### ◆ **Air Astra**

ASTRA (BRACE)

Consume 1 Stamina and **roll Brace** to steal your foe's breath with the motion of your weapon. You must be in the same span as your foe.

◆ **Success:** You gain 2 Stamina (up to your maximum) and inflict -1 Stamina and -2 Guard on your foe.

◆ **Partial:** You inflict -1 Stamina on your foe.

⊗ **Failure:** No effect.

If the foe's Stamina is 0, they suffer -1 Life instead of -1 Stamina on a success or partial.

### ◆ **Flame Astra**

ASTRA (ATTACK)

Consume 1 Stamina and **roll Attack**: a long whip of flame flashes out from your weapon and arcs toward your foes. You can target a number of foes equal to your Will, and they must all be in the same span as you (though need not be within melee range).

The flame lash inflicts -1 Guard and standard lethal damage, and can't be counterattacked. If a foe blocks the lash with a shoddy wooden weapon or light shield, the item bursts into flames and is destroyed unless it's immediately submerged in water.

If you've *Called Wind*, roll your Brace die along with your Attack die and use the higher result.

### ◆ **Thunder Astra**

ASTRA (BRACE)

Before you strike a foe or an object with an attack, you can consume 1 Stamina and **roll Brace** after attacking to imbue your strike with concussive force. Hit, block, or miss, this brace action affects the target foe and any characters adjacent to them (including your allies, but not including you). If you've made a melee attack and missed, your brace roll preempts the foe's counterattack.

◆ **Success:** The foe(s) suffer -2 Guard and -1 Awareness, and the target foe can't counterattack.

◆ **Partial:** The foe(s) suffers -1 Awareness, and the target foe can't counterattack.

⊗ **Failure:** No effect.

If the foe's Awareness is 0, they suffer an additional -1 Guard. If the foe is Shinarian or a being made out of clay or stone, a success also inflicts -1 Life.

## Sorcerer Talismans

A **talisman** is an object a Sorcerer uses to channel specific magical effects. Sorcerers begin with one talisman: an **iron orb**, a **blue cloak**, or a **mageblade**. Each talisman grants a corresponding technique, reflecting one of the three traditions of Kotharian magic wielded by Sorcerers:

- The iron orb empowers *dark magic*, which governs the force of gravity.
- The blue cloak channels *light magic*, which governs radiant energy.
- The mageblade is an entry point to the most convoluted and inscrutable tradition of the three: *small magic*, which governs matter and energy at the most infinitesimal scale.

### ◆ **Iron Orb**

TALISMAN

You've attuned to the weight and density of this orb. You don't need to physically hold it; rather, you hold its form in your mind as a proxy for the unfathomably dense sphere at the center of the Skysea.

You can consume 1 Spirit to *Hold* a group of adjacent characters in your span. Roll your Compel die along with your Brace die and use the higher result.

You don't need to first grasp the characters with a Dark Magic maneuver before *Holding* them this way—no precision is needed.

---

### ◆ **Blue Cloak**

TALISMAN

Consume 1 Spirit at the start of your turn to cause your cloak to redirect light that strikes it, rendering you invisible. You must grasp and carefully angle the cloak to maintain the effect, which requires consuming 1 Awareness at the start of each additional turn, and ends if you use your hands for another purpose, like casting dark magic or blocking an attack. The effect also ends if you're hit.

While the cloak's magic is in effect, roll a d6 along with your Maneuver die to *Hide* and add the two dice together for your result. You don't need cover to *Hide* with the cloak.

---

### ◆ **Mageblade**

TALISMAN

Consume 1 Spirit at the start of your turn to harmonize your dagger's magnetic field with your own intentions. After your turn—and after each subsequent turn that you consume 1 Awareness—the dagger acts on your commands, as if it were an independent character. The dagger can hover, swoop, or fly in any direction you like, and it can attack foes in your span.

The dagger's Agility is 3, and its Attack die is a d6. It has no other defenses, attributes, or actions. If the dagger is struck with an attack that exceeds its Agility, it falls to the ground, inert. Likewise, if you fail to maintain your connection to the dagger by consuming Awareness each turn, it falls inert. (An inert mageblade must be reharmonized.)

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## Arbiter Phylacteries

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An Arbiter wields a **scepter**, a staff or mace that's been magically transformed into a *phylactery*—an item housing a portion of the Arbiter's soul. (The bodies of Shinarians, as vessels, are also a form of phylactery.) Arbiters choose one of the following scepter phylacteries. The ornamentation of the scepter determines which technique it grants:

### ◆ **Scepter of Commandment**

PHYLACTERY (COMPEL)

Consume 1 Stamina and *roll Compel* to command a character within your span. Your command must be a single sentence that begins with either "You shall" or "You shall not." If the character doesn't understand your language, make this roll with a -2 penalty.

- ◆ **Success:** The character follows your commandment for a number of its turns equal to your Will.
- ◆ **Partial:** As above, but the character can invoke their ideal freely to resist, without consuming Spirit (see below)
- ⊗ **Failure:** No effect.

If the character holds an ideal in opposition to your command, they can invoke that ideal on their turn to resist your commandment. For example, if you successfully command a character to attack one of her allies, she can consume 1 Spirit to invoke her Fellowship ideal to resist. Since your commandment is flagrantly opposed to this ideal, she would roll a d20. (As with all ideal invocations, the GM decides the size of the die.)

If the character's roll to resist is higher than your Spirit, your commandment fails.

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## ◆ Scepter of Osmosis

PHYLACTERY (COMPEL)

Consume 1 Stamina and **roll Compel** to absorb a character's Spirit. *The character must not share any of your ideals.* Your magic works by pulling Spirit from where it's concentrated in an ideal toward where it's lacking. If you use this technique on a character who shares one of your ideals, it fails.

◆ **Success:** You gain 1 Spirit, and your foe suffers -1 Spirit and -1 Awareness.

◆ **Partial:** Your foe suffers -1 Awareness.

⊗ **Failure:** You suffer -1 Spirit.

If a character's Spirit is 0 (yours or your foe's) and this technique reduces it further, the character instead suffers -2 Life.

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## 6. Choose Lore

**Your unique collection of lore forms your backstory.** When you choose your lore, think about what kind of life your character led before the Fall. Which lore did they acquire by choice, and which types were forced upon them by circumstance?

Lore largely determines what your character can and can't do in narrative situations—mostly *outside* of combat and other action scenes that use dice rolls. For example, if your character knows lore about *Civilization*, they can navigate the intricacies of city life. If your character has the *Glyphs* lore, they can read and write in the writing system of Mazr. If they don't know *Glyphs*, they simply can't read the writing.

For certain challenges, you can *recall lore* if it's applicable to the situation, which provides a bonus die to the roll. See Chapter 2: "Using Ideals and Lore," for more information.

Your lore, and the lore of people you rescue from the Fall, will also help you rebuild a city, reestablishing workshops, libraries, skyharbors, and other essential parts of civilized life. **Note to playtesters: citybuilding mechanics TBD, but will be a major part of what makes lore useful!**

Lore is heavily dependent on the Intellect attribute. Each type of lore has a minimum Intellect score requirement: 0 (–) to 2 (◆◆). The lore available to each origin is listed in this section for reference.

For a complete list of lore, the ✨ abilities you can learn from each type, and how lore is used to rebuild cities, see **Chapter 7: Lore**.



## Kananite Lore

Choose a number of lore types equal to your Intellect +2, or +3 if you're a Mastermind.

No Intellect Req.	Intellect ◆	Intellect ◆◆
<input type="checkbox"/> Divinity	<input type="checkbox"/> Balloons	<input type="checkbox"/> History
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Covenant of the Lord</i> (requires Divinity)	<input type="checkbox"/> Civilization	<input type="checkbox"/> Navigation
<input type="checkbox"/> Soldierly	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafting	<input type="checkbox"/> The Spear
<input type="checkbox"/> Song & Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Language (Mazrian)	<input type="checkbox"/> The Sword
<input type="checkbox"/> Thievery	<input type="checkbox"/> Language (Shinarian)	<input type="checkbox"/> The Sling
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness	<input type="checkbox"/> Politics	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing (Forms)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Skyremes	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing (Glyphs)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing (Oxhouse)
		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Wisdom of Adod</i> (requires Oxhouse)

## Mazrian Lore

You speak the Mazrian language. Choose a number of additional lore types equal to your Intellect +1, or +2 if you're a Mastermind.

No Intellect Req.	Intellect ◆	Intellect ◆◆
<input type="checkbox"/> Divinity	<input type="checkbox"/> Balloons	<input type="checkbox"/> History
<input type="checkbox"/> Soldierly	<input type="checkbox"/> Civilization	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine
<input type="checkbox"/> Song & Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafting	<input type="checkbox"/> Navigation
<input type="checkbox"/> Thievery	<input type="checkbox"/> Politics	<input type="checkbox"/> The Bow
	<input type="checkbox"/> Skyremes	<input type="checkbox"/> The Sword
	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing (Glyphs)
		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Scrolls of the Kotharian</i> (requires Glyphs)

## Shinarian Lore

You speak the Shinarian language. Choose a number of additional lore types equal to your Intellect +1, or +2 if you're a Mastermind.

No Intellect Req.	Intellect ◆	Intellect ◆◆
<input type="checkbox"/> Divinity	<input type="checkbox"/> Civilization	<input type="checkbox"/> Astrology
<input type="checkbox"/> Soldierly	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafting	<input type="checkbox"/> History
<input type="checkbox"/> Song & Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Language (Chthonic)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydraulics
	<input type="checkbox"/> Politics	<input type="checkbox"/> The Spear
	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing (Forms)
		<input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Code of the Clay King</i> (requires Forms)

## Zordin Lore

You speak the Zordin language. Choose a number of additional lore types equal to your Intellect +1, or +2 if you're a Mastermind.

No Intellect Req.	Intellect ◆	Intellect ◆◆
<input type="checkbox"/> Monsters	<input type="checkbox"/> Crafting	<input type="checkbox"/> Ancient History
<input type="checkbox"/> Song & Dance	<input type="checkbox"/> Language (Antediluvian)	<input type="checkbox"/> Artifacts
<input type="checkbox"/> Wilderness	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydraulics
		<input type="checkbox"/> Navigation
		<input type="checkbox"/> The Bow

## 2. Playing the Game

This chapter covers the basic rules for challenges and conflicts. Whether you're playing as the GM or a character, you'll want to familiarize yourself with the concepts here.

- **Action Scenes:** how actions unfold in time and space.
- **Attacks and Damage:** rules for striking and harming foes.
- **Braces and Holds:** rules for up-close-and-personal actions.
- **Compels and Social Actions:** rules and guidelines governing interactions with NPCs.
- **Maneuvers and Terrain:** rules for moving around islands, hiding, choke points, and the advantages of high ground.
- **Using Ideals and Lore:** how players can *invoke* ideals and *recall* lore to empower their actions.
- **Recovery and Progression:** how characters regain their Life and defenses, and how they gain more powerful abilities with experience points (XP).

Chapters 3–7 cover all aspects of character progression in more detail.

### All About Actions

Actions are the core of WSSWNN's gameplay. An action is something risky or uncertain a character does, which is represented by a die roll.

Actions are broadly divided into four types: attacks, braces, compels, and maneuvers. Each character uses a particular die for each type of action.

Another way to categorize actions is by their context:

- **Conflict actions** pit characters against other characters.
- **Challenge actions** pit characters against their environment.

### Basic Conflict Actions

Any character, including NPCs, can take any of the actions listed here. Each basic conflict action is explained in more detail in the following sections.

Action	Description
<b>Attack</b>	<i>Success: beat Guard. Partial: beat Agility.</i>
<i>Melee</i>	Strike with a weapon or your hands and feet.
<i>Ranged</i>	Shoot or throw a projectile.
<i>Grab</i>	Grab a foe to set up a <i>Hold</i> or <i>Shove</i> brace.
<b>Brace</b>	<i>Success: beat Stamina. Partial: beat Strength.</i>
<i>Hold</i>	Immobilize and overpower a foe.
<i>Shove</i>	Push a foe off-balance and/or escape from their hold.
<i>Stand Fast</i>	Consume 1 Stamina to raise your Guard and <i>shove</i> attackers back.
<b>Compel</b>	<i>Success: beat Spirit. Partial: beat Will.</i>
<i>Bolster</i>	Help an ally <i>Stand Fast</i> .
<i>Deceive</i>	Lie to or otherwise bamboozle a character.
<i>Persuade</i>	Convince a nonhostile character to do something.
<b>Maneuver</b>	<i>Success: beat Awareness. Partial: beat Intellect.</i>
<i>Evade</i>	Consume 1 Awareness to focus on avoiding attacks.
<i>Hide</i>	Take cover and avoid detection.
<i>Outflank</i>	Circle around a foe's defenses for a more effective attack.

Other conflict actions are granted through abilities and techniques, such as the Arbiter's *Gaze* compel or the bow & arrow's *Aim* maneuver.

## Basic Challenge Actions

Challenge actions are more freeform than conflict actions. Instead of acting against another character with set attributes and defenses, challenge actions roll against a *threat* and a *difficulty*. A “default” challenge has **threat 2, difficulty 5**. The GM can adjust either of those numbers, depending on the challenge’s circumstances.

Chapter 9 includes sample challenges for the GM to use and adapt. However, players should familiarize themselves with four particular challenges: *Strike First*, *Run/Climb*, *Survive*, and *Return*.

Action	Success: beat Difficulty. Partial: beat Threat.
<i>Strike First</i>	Roll <b>Maneuver</b> to act before an enemy group.
<i>Run/Climb</i>	Roll <b>Brace</b> or <b>Maneuver</b> to move as fast or as deftly as you can.
<i>Survive</i>	Roll <b>Brace</b> when you lose all your Life to hold onto your soul.
<i>Return</i>	Roll <b>Compel</b> if you die to prevent your soul from drifting away.

## Action Rules

In general, actions follow these rules:

- **An action is always a die roll.** If a game rule says a character can do something but doesn’t specify that something is an *action*, it’s not.
- **Actions don’t meet, they beat.** For example, an attack roll of 3 against a foe with Agility 3, Guard 5 is a failure, since the attack needs to *beat* Agility 3 to partially succeed.
- **Success supersedes failure.** In the example above, if the foe’s Guard is reduced to 2, an attack roll of 3 would succeed, even though it fails to beat the foe’s Agility.

## Using Defenses

Each defense serves two purposes: a ward against a foe’s actions, and a resource you can consume to power your own actions and abilities. Some of the main uses are listed below.

Defense	Consume to:	Regain when you:
Guard	Reposition, counterattack	Forego action (+1)
Stamina	<i>Stand fast</i>	Rest 1 hour (+all)
Spirit	Invoke an ideal	Rest 1 hour (+all)
Awareness	Reposition, <i>Evade</i> , invoke Lore	Forego action (+1)

Many powerful abilities and techniques also consume a defense. For example, the Champion’s *Mighty Blow* ability consumes 1 Stamina.

Guard and Awareness are quick to recover. You regain 1 Guard or 1 Awareness if you forego an action. By extension, you regain all your Guard and Awareness if you catch your breath for a minute or so.

Stamina and Spirit are slower to recover. You regain all of both defenses only after resting in a safe place for about an hour.



# Action Scenes

If you're rolling action dice, that means your characters are in an intense situation where every second counts: an **action scene**. During an action scene, particularly during combat, it's important to understand how actions take effect in time (turns and rounds) and space (movement and spans).

## Actions and Turns

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During an action scene, each character acts on their **turn** and chooses one action to take—an attack, a brace, a compel, or a maneuver. A **round** passes when all the characters take their turns.

In many circumstances, characters are prompted to take specific actions outside of their turns, called **free actions**. These fast, reactive actions resolve in between turns.

### Turn Order

Action scenes shift back and forth between a “hero round” and a “foe round.” During the hero round, players’ characters can act in any order. During the foe round, the GM-controlled characters act in any order.

The exception to this rule is the first round of an action scene. When players enter combat or an otherwise tense situation where “who goes first” matters, follow this sequence:

1. The GM sets a single threshold number—typically the highest Vigilance of the enemy force.
2. The players all roll their Maneuver dice to *Strike First*.
3. *First round*: The players who beat the foes’ highest Awareness score can act, in any order.
4. *Foe round*: The foes all act, in any order.
5. *Hero round*: The players all act, in any order. (Rinse, repeat...)

### Free Actions

Free actions are triggered under specific circumstances. These circumstances are detailed in the action, ability, or technique that prompts the free action. **Unlike turn actions, a hero can take a free action during the “foe round,” and vice-versa.**

A common type of free action is a free attack after a successful *Outflank* maneuver. For example, if a character ♦ succeeds on *Outflanking* a foe, they can make a free melee attack against that foe. This free attack gets a powerful bonus (+ Agility) to its roll. If the *Outflank* is a ♦ partial, the flanker can make a free attack, but it's much less effective, rolling with a -2 penalty.

Along with maneuvers, other actions can also trigger follow-up free actions. The *Grab* attack, on a success, prompts a free *Hold* or *Shove* brace action. A spear- or shortsword-wielding character with the *Thrust* technique can make a second (free) attack if the first attack misses. And any melee attack that misses its foe gives the foe a chance to counterattack as a free action, at the expense of lowering their Guard.

### Resolving Free Actions

Combat between two skilled fighters can turn into a flurry of blows and counterblows in the form of free actions. There is no limit to the number of free actions that can occur between turns, so keep on rolling until no more free actions are triggered.

For example: imagine Wandu the Wanderer is attacked by a mighty imperial sentinel of Mazr. If the imperial's attack doesn't beat Wandu's Agility, she can spend 1 Guard to counterattack. If her counterattack, in turn, doesn't beat the imperial's Agility, the imperial can make a counterattack (also spending 1 Guard)—which, if it misses Wandu, can prompt a *second* counterattack by her, and so on. This exchange continues until one character doesn't miss, runs out of Guard to spend on counters, or simply chooses not to counterattack. Only at that point would the next character in the round take their turn.

## Foregoing Your Action

On your turn, you can choose not to act at all and **regain 1 Guard or 1 Awareness** (your choice).

Foregoing your action can be helpful when *repositioning* (see below), which lowers your Guard by 1. Repositioning *without* acting means you break even.

## Movement and Spans

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A **span** is an area about 10–20 yards or meters wide. It's the basic unit of movement and range in WSSWNN. During combat and other action scenes, you can freely move *within* a single span. Moving into an adjacent span is called **repositioning**.

### The Span and Range

With the exception of brace actions like *Shove* and *Hold* that require physical contact, actions are presumed to affect characters within the same span. For example, you can always *persuade*, *outflank*, or melee attack a character in the same span as you.

Ranged attacks and certain other actions can affect characters outside your span. The action's range is the total number of spans in play—your span, your target's span, and any spans in between. For example, if you target a foe in an adjacent span, the range is 2. Attacking a foe two spans away has a range of 3. The minimum range for a ranged action is 1—the same span as you.

Getting this number right is important, because it's also the penalty to the ranged attack roll. See “Attacks and Damage” for more information on ranged attacks.

## Repositioning

On your turn, you can **reposition** to an adjacent span before you act.

- Repositioning consumes 1 Guard or 1 Awareness (your choice).
- You can't reposition after you act—only before.

If you'd like to keep your Guard/Awareness up as you reposition, you can forego your action. Foregoing your action restores 1 Guard or 1 Awareness (your choice), which cancels out the Guard/Awareness you consume by repositioning.

If you want to run across more than one span on your turn—for example, to retreat from a powerful foe, or chase after a fleeing foe—make a *Run/Climb* challenge action. See the section below.

## Basic Challenges

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This section presents rules for four common challenges that occur during action scenes. Remember, challenges have a default **threat 2** and **difficulty 5**—although the GM has broad leeway to adjust these numbers.

### Starting a Fight

When a situation turns to violence, “who goes first” is a matter of life or death. A special maneuver determines the answer to this question. (See the “Actions and Turns” section above for more information on turn order.)

#### **Strike First**

CHALLENGE MANEUVER

Players **Roll Maneuver** whenever combat is initiated. The roll determines which characters act before the opposing forces. The GM sets the



threshold based on the highest Awareness and Intellect of the opposing forces.

- ◆ **Success:** Take an action before the opposing forces.
  - ◆ **Partial:** You can act first but must consume 1 Guard or Awareness.
  - ⊗ **Failure:** Wait to act until after the opposing forces take their turns.
- 

Instead of using the standard threat 2, difficulty 5, the GM can set these thresholds based on the highest Intellect and Awareness of the enemy forces.

## Running and Climbing

Use this action to climb up a vertical span or move into a second span on your turn.

### Run/Climb

CHALLENGE BRACE OR MANEUVER

**Roll Brace** if you're just running or climbing as fast as you can; roll **Maneuver** if you're deftly surmounting environmental obstacles.

- ◆ **Success:** You advance to a new span or up to high ground.
- ◆ **Partial:** You can choose to advance, but at the cost of -1 Stamina (Brace) or -1 Awareness (Maneuver).
- ⊗ **Failure:** You fail to advance.

Instead of repositioning to a new span, you can also use this action to climb and attain high ground within your span.

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## Resisting Death

When you lose all of your Life, your Guard, Stamina, and Awareness drop to zero. On your next turn, you must take a special brace action: *Survive*.

### Survive

CHALLENGE BRACE

**Roll Brace** to hold onto your soul. You can consume 1 Spirit to add your Will to the Brace roll.

- ◆ **Success:** You stabilize.
  - ◆ **Partial:** Your soul clings to your body, but you must make this roll again on your next turn.
  - ⊗ **Failure:** Your soul detaches from your body.
- 

If your soul detaches from your body, on your next turn, you must take another special action, this one a compel: *Return*.

### Return

CHALLENGE COMPEL

**Roll Compel** to adjure your soul to rejoin your body. You can **consume 1 Spirit** to add your Will to the Compel roll.

- ◆ **Success:** Your soul returns to your body. On your next turn, roll *Survive*.
  - ◆ **Partial:** Your soul struggles against the current. You must make this roll again on your next turn.
  - ⊗ **Failure:** Your soul drifts away to join the undifferentiated flow of the Rephaim.
- 

**If your soul drifts away**, all is not lost. Mot, the god of Death, may take notice and offer you a deal: become one of his chosen and return to life.

See the “Recovery and Progression” section below for more details on regaining lost Life.

# Attacks and Damage

Attacks are opposed by the Guard defense and the Agility attribute. Most attacks inflict two kinds of **damage**: damage to Guard and, on a hit, damage to Life. The amount of Guard damage is set by the weapon. The amount of Life damage depends on the roll and the foe's Guard and Armor.

On a hit, a deadly weapon can inflict a fatal blow or a glancing flesh wound—depending on how much the roll beats the foe's Guard, and how good the foe's Armor is at absorbing the blow. Not all attacks inflict lethal damage, though. The *Grab* action doesn't inflict any damage—it simply lets you grab a foe to shove or hold them. Attacks with certain items, like Ancient Cylinder artifact, inflict damage to a foe's Awareness on a hit.

## Attack Actions

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An attack roll is a ♦ **Success** if it beats the foe's Guard. It's a ◆ **Partial** if it beats the foe's Agility. An attack is a ⊗ **Failure** if it doesn't beat either the foe's Guard or Agility. Characters can take three basic attack actions: *melee attack*, *ranged attack*, and *grab*.

A standard **melee** attack with a weapon can target any foe within the same span, with the following outcomes:

### **Melee Attack**

BASIC ATTACK

**Roll Attack** to strike a foe within your span.

♦ **Success**: Hit! Inflict damage to the foe's Life equal to [attack roll – foe's Guard], then inflict -1 Guard.

◆ **Partial**: Blocked! Inflict -1 Guard.

⊗ **Failure**: Miss! The foe dodges—or they can expend 1 Guard and make a free counterattack.

**Ranged** attacks have the advantage of not provoking counterattacks on a miss. However, they always roll with at least -1 penalty.

### Ranged Attack

BASIC ATTACK

**Roll Attack** to launch or throw a missile at a foe. Subtract the range—the number of spans in play between you and your foe—from the roll. The minimum range penalty is -1 for a foe within your span.

- ◆ **Success:** Hit! Inflict damage to the foe's Life equal to the [attack roll – Guard], then inflict -1 Guard.
- ◆ **Partial:** Blocked! Inflict -1 Guard.
- ⊗ **Failure:** Miss! The foe dodges, or—if the range reduces your roll to zero or below—you just plain miss.

A ranged or melee attack's *properties* modify the damage as follows:

Attack	Hit Damage	Guard Damage
Standard	[Roll – Guard] to Life	-1 Guard
Blunted	-1 Life, or -2 if your Strength is 3+	-1 Guard
Massive	[Roll – Guard] to Life	-2 Guard
Psychic	-1 Awareness, additional -1 Guard	-1 Guard

A **grab** is an attack that doesn't do any damage. Instead, its purpose is to close distance and make contact with a foe, so you can *Shove* or *Hold* them, or make a *close* attack with a weapon like a dagger. These subsequent actions may be more tactically advantageous than simply attacking the foe.

### Grab

BASIC ATTACK

**Roll Attack** to close distance and grab a foe within your span. You must have one free hand to use this action.

- ◆ **Success:** You grab your foe. Make a free *Hold* or *Shove* brace, or make a free attack at close range.
- ◆ **Partial:** Blocked! Make a free *Hold*, *Shove*, or close-range attack with a -2 penalty.
- ⊗ **Failure:** Miss! The foe dodges—or they can expend 1 Guard and make a free counterattack.

## Attack Rules

### Armor Absorbs Lethal Damage

It's harder to land a deadly blow against a foe wearing armor. When you calculate a successful blow's lethal damage, subtract the foe's Armor along with their Guard.

Armor doesn't absorb Guard damage or other types of damage, like that from the Awareness-sapping psychic attack of an Ancient Cylinder.

### Two-Weapon Fighting

If you hold a melee weapon in each hand and your Attack die is a d8 or higher, you can make two melee attack rolls in place of a single attack—one for each weapon—by “splitting” your attack die into two smaller dice. The sum of the two dice must equal your normal attack die.

For example, if your attack die is a d10 and you hold a spear and a heavy shield, you could shield bash with a d4 and then make a spear attack with a d6. You choose which weapon to use in what order, and how to allocate the dice to each weapon.

Two-weapon fighting has the following limitations:

- You only make the second attack if the first attack doesn't miss. The second attack is a free action separate from, and triggered by, a blocked or successful first attack.
- Any bonuses or penalties apply to each individual roll. For example, if you successfully Outflank a foe and split your attack, you only add your Agility to the first roll. If you split your d10 into a d4 and d6, *Thrust* with the d6, and miss, you reroll the d6 you used to *Thrust* with, not a d10.

## Throwing Weapons and Objects

You can throw any melee weapon at a foe. This attack is a typical ranged attack, with the following exceptions:

- The maximum range is 2. Your foe must be in the same span or an adjacent one.
- The weapon maintains its *blunted* or *massive* attack properties.
- You lose the weapon you throw, at least until you pick it up!

You can also throw rocks and other objects around you. These objects have the *blunted* property.

## Switching and Picking Up Arms

At the start of your turn, you can drop an armament you're holding and/or draw a stowed armament without penalty. If you switch between weapons this way, make sure to adjust your current and maximum Guard accordingly. For example, if you drop your heavy shield (+3 Guard) and draw your mace (+1 Guard), reduce your max and current Guard by 2.

You can also pick up a dropped or fallen armament within your span at the start of your turn—however, doing so consumes either 1 Guard or 1 Awareness (your choice).

# BRACES AND HOLDS

Braces are up-close-and-personal actions—pushing or pulling foes around, or, in the case of the *Stand Fast* brace, pulling yourself together.

A brace roll is a ♦ **Success** if it beats the foe's Stamina. It's a ♦ **Partial** if it beats the foe's Strength. A brace is a ⊗ **Failure** if it doesn't beat either the foe's Stamina or Strength.

Characters can take three basic brace actions: *Hold*, *Shove*, and *Stand Fast*. The first two actions generally require physical contact with a foe, established by the *Grab* attack action. Sorcerers can perform these actions at a distance with Dark Magic.

## Holding and Shoving

**Holding** a foe immobilizes them, puts them in a vulnerable state, and potentially inflicts harm. It also reduces their attack options to close-quarters weapons. **Shoving** a foe staggers them and, if they're holding *you*, lets you escape.

Even if your character isn't keen to engage in close-quarters fighting, they may not have a choice. Many monsters use holds!

### Hold

BASIC BRACE

**Roll Brace** to wrestle and overpower a foe you've *Grabbed* (or a foe who's *holding* you). You must have a free hand, and the foe must be your size or smaller.

♦ **Success:** You *hold* your foe until your next turn and inflict -1 Guard and -1 Life (ignoring Armor).

♦ **Partial:** You *hold* your foe until your next turn.

⊗ **Failure:** Your foe escapes your grasp, and you suffer -1 Guard.

While you're *holding* a foe:

- They can't counterattack, reposition, or maneuver.
- Attacks against the held foe gain a bonus equal to your Strength.

If you're physically holding a foe, they can *Hold*, *Shove*, or attack you, but their attacks must be *close*.

If you're holding a foe from a distance with Dark Magic, they can only *Shove* you to break free (unless they also know Dark Magic).

Your hold ends if you're *Shoved*, *Held*, or suffer lethal damage.

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## Shove

BASIC BRACE

**Roll Brace** to violently push a foe. You must first *Grab* the foe, be in a hold with them, or use an ability—such as *Stand Fast*—that prompts a free *Shove* roll.

- ◆ **Success:** You send your foe stumbling backward, inflicting -2 Guard. If you and your foe were in a hold, it ends.
  - ◆ **Partial:** You inflict -1 Guard on the foe. If you and your foe were in a hold, it ends.
  - ⊗ **Failure:** Instead of pushing, you're pushed back. You suffer -1 Guard.
- 

## Standing Fast

*Standing fast* is a special defensive action—it's not opposed by a foe. Rather, it represents your character's internal effort to summon their strength and determination.

## Stand Fast

BASIC BRACE

Consume 1 Stamina and **roll Brace** to gather your strength and determination.

- You gain Guard equal to your roll.
  - You can temporarily increase your Guard above your maximum. You lose any excess Guard at the start of your next turn.
  - Before your next turn, if you ◆ block a melee attack, you can make a free *Shove* brace against the attacker (no *Grab* needed).
  - If a foe ⊗ misses you with a melee attack before your next turn, you can counterattack without consuming 1 Guard (or *Shove* them as above).
-



# Compels and Social Conflict

You compel other characters—or yourself—to do or believe something that they're not ordinarily inclined to do or believe. Compels are the most freeform type of action. The Deceive and Persuade compels can be used to resolve any social interactions. This section also contains rules for structuring these interactions and the regard other characters have for heroes.

## Basic Compels

### Bolster

BASIC COMPEL

**Roll Compel** to bolster an ally who is *Standing fast* in the same round. The ally can use your Compel roll in place of their Brace roll if it's higher.

You can use this action after the ally makes their *Stand fast* roll, as long as you're both acting in the same round.

### Deceive

BASIC COMPEL

**Roll Compel** to convince one or more characters to believe something which you know is untrue.

- ◆ **Success:** The character believes you.
- ◆ **Partial:** The character is skeptical. You'll need to try again from another angle to convince them.
- ⊗ **Failure:** The character realizes you're lying to them, won't believe anything else you say about the matter, and loses regard for you.

The GM has leeway to inflict penalties on this roll if your deception is particularly flagrant.

### Persuade

BASIC COMPEL

**Roll Compel** to convince one or more *nonhostile* characters to take a course of action they're disinclined to take.

- ◆ **Success:** The character is convinced and does what you say.
- ◆ **Partial:** The character is intrigued, but skeptical. You can try again, but must take a different tack.
- ⊗ **Failure:** The character refuses and won't countenance your suggestion again.

You can't persuade a target to do something suicidal or totally against their nature. If a target you've persuaded loses regard for you, they are no longer compelled by this action. Also, make this roll with **-2 penalty** for each of the following criteria that apply:

- Your compel lacks a carrot or stick.
- Taking this action will place the character or their loved ones in significantly greater danger.
- The character is *wary*.

## Social Interaction and Regard

This section provides a few rules that give more structure to compel actions during social encounters.

## Regard

Regard is a simple measure of how other characters are inclined to treat you. There are three “notches” on the regard scale:

**Friendly** characters are trusting and hospitable. If you’ve taken a risk or made a sacrifice to help a character or their community, they’re likely to be friendly.

**Wary** characters are skeptical and guarded. Most people in the troubled realm of Tel-Kanan are wary by default.

**Hostile** characters regard you as their enemy and may immediately try to capture or kill you. Roaming monsters, Zordin raiders, and characters you’ve fought—or are fighting—are probably hostile.

Origin	Friendly toward:	Hostile toward:
Kananite	Kananite friends and family	Mazrians ( <i>usually</i> )
Mazrian	Other Mazrians	Zordin
Shinarian	Anyone who helps them remember	–
Zordin	(if raiders) Other Zordin raiders	Mazrians

When you try to *Persuade* a target, their regard for you directly impacts how effective your action is. Attempting to persuade a hostile character, even a gullible one, is normally impossible. Getting caught in a lie will decrease a target’s regard for you.

**Shared ideals** can bump a hostile or wary character up a notch on the regard scale. If you *Persuade* a hostile character by speaking to an ideal you share with them, treat them as *wary*. Likewise, if you speak to a shared ideal with a *wary* character, treat them as *friendly*.

## Carrots and Sticks

A **carrot** is a material, tangible good that the target values. Carrots include money, supplies, and arms. Carrots do *not* include promises or appeals to high-minded ideals. Also, the target must value the carrot being offered. A rich merchant-prince won’t regard an offer of stale bread as a carrot, nor will a well-armed mercenary consider a pile of scavenged weapons as a carrot.

A **stick** is a threat or insinuation that things won’t go well if the target doesn’t do what you want. To invoke a stick, you need some sort of leverage over the target—for example, clearly superior numbers or arms, or a hostage. Invoking a stick to persuade a *friendly* target will invariably turn them *wary*. At the GM’s discretion, it may turn a wary target *hostile*.

If your carrot or stick are not real, roll the *Deceive* compel before you roll the *Persuade* compel.

# Maneuvers and Terrain

Maneuvers require freedom of movement and reflect a character's strategic acumen and mastery of terrain. A maneuver roll is a ♦ **Success** if it beats the foe's Awareness. It's a ◊ **Partial** if it beats the foe's Intellect. A maneuver is a ⊗ **Failure** if it doesn't beat either the foe's Awareness or Intellect.

Maneuvers are highly dependent on **terrain**. For example, *Hiding* requires *cover*. *Outflanking* a foe or is impossible they're occupying a *threshold*—but the threshold also prevents the foe from *Evading*.

## Basic Maneuvers

### Evade

BASIC MANEUVER

**Consume 1 Awareness** and *Roll Maneuver* to focus on avoiding attacks. If you're attacked before your next turn, subtract your result from the attack roll(s). Apply the difference to your defense.

You can't *Evade* while occupying a **threshold**.

### Hide

BASIC MANEUVER

*Roll Maneuver* to hide behind **cover** from any number of characters within sight or earshot.

- ♦ **Success:** You're *hidden* from the character(s) until after you act or reposition.
- ◊ **Partial:** The character(s) can't target you with ranged attacks until they reposition, or until you act or reposition.
- ⊗ **Failure:** You fail to hide. You remain exposed to the character(s)

While you're *hidden* from a character, they are *unaware* of you and subject to the following conditions:

- They don't know where you are and can't target you with actions.
- Your maneuvers against them automatically succeed.
- If you attack them, roll your Maneuver die along with your Attack die and use the higher result.
- If you're not already in combat, you can take one action against them *before* anyone rolls to *Strike First*.

Once you reposition or take action, you're no longer hidden. Unaware characters can also be alerted to your presence by other characters you've failed to hide from.

### Outflank

BASIC MANEUVER

*Roll Maneuver* to circle around a foe's defenses for a more effective attack.

- ♦ **Success:** Make a free melee attack against the foe, adding your Agility to the roll.
- ◊ **Partial:** Make a free melee attack with a -2 penalty.
- ⊗ **Failure:** You provoke a free melee attack from the foe.

## Terrain Features

The Shards of the Shattered Planet are as varied as the environments on the Earth from which they came, with added diversity from eons of accretions from the Skysea. In terms of gameplay mechanics, however, these varied terrains can be abstracted into three types of features: **cover**, **thresholds**, and **high ground**.

When taking advantage of terrain, keep these rules in mind:

- **Terrain features are relative.** You may have cover relative to foes in one direction, but foes on the other side of your position still have a clear shot at you. You can have the high ground relative to foes on the ground, but a flying foe is on high relative to you!
- **Terrain features can overlap.** A building, for example, can provide all three: cover from its walls, a threshold from its narrow doorway, and high ground from its rooftop. The GM has final say on which terrain features are available in a given span.
- **Cover and high ground (usually) require actions** to occupy. Cover requires the *Hide* action to gain its benefits. Attaining high ground within your span typically requires a *Run/Climb* challenge. However, a feature with stairs or a ladder may obviate the need for this challenge. And the lay of the land—or the deck of an airship—may provide high ground naturally.

## Cover

**Cover** includes walls, outcroppings, the interior of buildings, or any large, flat surface you could duck and hide behind. Cover enables you to use the *Hide* action and gain protection from ranged attacks originating from beyond it.

## Thresholds

A **threshold** is a choke point, such as a doorway, alley, or narrow pass—any space between walls that you and your allies could block with your bodies. By standing in a threshold, you can prevent foes from attacking an ally behind you (unless the foe goes through you first!).

Combatants in choke points cannot use the *Evade* or *Outflank* maneuvers—but they also can't be *Outflanked* by foes.

You don't need to use an action to occupy a threshold in your span.

## High Ground

**High ground** includes hills, rooftops, and outcroppings, or the deck of a skyreme sailing over a battle. When you're on high relative to a foe, you have the following advantages:

- When you make a ranged attack on a foe below you, roll your Maneuver die along with your Attack die and use the higher result.
- You can make a **jump attack** on a foe directly below you, a melee attack. On a hit, the foe absorbs all the falling damage. On a block, the foe suffers half the falling damage (rounded up). On a miss, however, *you* suffer all the falling damage. (See "Falling Damage" below.)

Holding high ground also enables certain advanced abilities, like the Messenger's *Pillar of Flame*.

## Verticality

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Vertical distances are measured in spans as well, but they're shorter in height than normal spans are in length. One vertical span is about the height of a one-story house—a distance you wouldn't want to fall from, but would likely survive.

## Falling Damage

Falling damage is simple to calculate: **falling one span inflicts -1 Guard and -1 Life**. This damage ignores armor.

- If you *jump attack* a foe and hit, the foe suffers all of the Guard and Life damage from your fall.

- If the *jump attack* is blocked, the foe suffers half this damage (rounded up), and you suffer the rest.

Depending on what type of terrain a character falls into, the GM may allow them to make a challenge roll to absorb some or all of the damage. For example, falling into a dense forest canopy might provide the opportunity for characters to grab onto branches and vines with a Maneuver action.

## Floating and Flying

For characters that can float or fly, verticality offers a number of advantages (along with one big disadvantage of the risk of falls):

- A flying character always has the *high ground* relative to foes on the ground.
- Flying or floating *up* counts as repositioning.
- Flying *down* (diving) is free movement and doesn't require repositioning. Only flying characters can do this, not floating ones.

Flying and hovering characters who occupy the lowest vertical span can make—and receive—melee attacks versus characters on the ground.

# Using Ideals and Lore

Your character starts with the ability to *invoke* their ideal(s) and *recall* the lore they've accumulated over their lives. Invoking an ideal is more powerful than recalling lore.

## Invoking Ideals

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**Invoking an ideal consumes 1 Spirit.** Your invocation must be tied to a particular action. You can invoke an ideal to help an ally perform an action, or to inspire your own action. You can invoke an ideal before or after its corresponding action is rolled.

To invoke an ideal:

1. Explain what your character says or does in the situation to inspire your or your ally's action, and consume 1 Spirit.
2. The GM awards you a bonus *ideal die*. The size of the die ranges from a d4 to a d20, based on how fitting and dramatic the GM thinks your invocation is.
3. Roll this ideal die alongside your or your ally's normal action die, and use the higher result for the action.

A powerful invocation can turn the tables, but it does carry risks. Regaining Spirit takes time, and losing it leaves you vulnerable to compelling foes.

## Recalling Lore

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**Recalling lore consumes 1 Awareness.** Compared to ideals, lore is more useful for acting against challenges than overcoming other characters in conflicts.

To recall lore:



1. Name the lore your character knows and explain how they use it to overcome the challenge.
2. The GM awards you a bonus *lore die*. The size of this die ranges from a d4 to a d10.
3. Roll this die along with the die you use to act on the challenge, and use the higher result.

Recalling lore can make the difference between a successful challenge and the smoking wreckage of a crashed airship or a mistakenly detonated Kotharian implement. However, you may miss the Awareness it consumes if you end up in combat or another tense scene right away.

### Assigning Bonus Dice

Invoking ideals and recalling lore both depend on the GM to make a judgment call. It's helpful to discuss and set player expectations for how this works. Some things to keep in mind:

- Avoid portraying a small bonus die as a “penalty” for bad roleplaying. Even a d4 bonus die is useful.
- The highest bonus dice—a d20 for ideals, and a d10 for lore—should be reserved for the ultimate, most dramatic moments in the adventure.
- Chapter 9 has examples and guidelines for the GM on this issue.

## Recovery and Progression

Eventually, action scenes end. Characters are left to catch their breath, lick their wounds, and perhaps even learn from their experiences.

### Recovery

Characters can regain their defenses and Life by **recovering**. There are three types of recoveries:

- **Catch Breath:** spend a few minutes recovering after an action scene. Regain Guard and Awareness.
- **Rest:** spend an hour recovering in a safe, sheltered place. Regain Stamina and Spirit, and regain Life (at the expense of Stamina).
- **Convalesce:** spend a few days recovering in a clean facility staffed with attendants, such as a temple or a well-appointed home. Restore all defenses and Life.

Recovery	Duration	Effect
Catch Breath	~1 minute	Regain Guard and Awareness.
Rest	~1 hour	Regain all defenses. Regain Life by reducing max Stamina.
Convalesce	Several days	Regain all Life, and all defenses restored to their maximum.

## Catch Breath

When you *catching your breath*, you regain all your Guard and Awareness. This type of recovery signifies the end, or at least a pause, in an action scene.

Characters already regain 1 Guard or 1 Awareness per turn if they don't move or act. When an action scene defuses enough so turns no longer matter, characters can simply regain all of these two defenses.

## Rest

*Rest* requires time: about an hour in a safe, sheltered place. During a rest, you regain all your Stamina and Spirit.

You can also regain Life during a rest—at the expense of your maximum Stamina. The amount of Life you regain, per point of Stamina, depends on your origin.

Origin	Life per max Stamina
Kanan	+3
Mazr, Shinar, Zordin	+2

This reduction to your maximum Stamina lasts until you convalesce (see below). Kananites have the advantage here, since they're conditioned to live in Tel-Kanan's climate. Certain origin and calling abilities enable your character to improve this recovery rate.

Characters can perform other activities during a rest, as defined by certain abilities. Unless an ability says otherwise, performing an activity is mutually exclusive with recovering Life.

## Convalescence

Convalescence takes place between adventures. To convalesce, you need to spend several days getting bed rest, medical attention from allies or attendants, and, of course, plenty of liquids.

Which is to say—you **can't convalesce in a cave or ruins on a monster-infested island**. Convalescence requires a long stretch of safety in a civilized place with other people, and those people can't be trying to kill you.

If you find a city still standing—or help repopulate one with refugees—temples to the goddess Sherah tend to be good places to convalesce. A wealthy home is another option. You might be able to convalesce on one of the Mazarkandian Empire's grand skyremes, provided it's staffed and appointed with proper materials. The GM has final say on whether or not a place qualifies for convalescing.

After you convalesce, you regain all your Life, and your defenses are restored to their normal maximums. You don't regain any lost Spirit, however.

### *Sleeping vs. Recovering*

Sleeping is not a form of recovery in and of itself. Characters who sleep might gain the benefits of a Rest. But sleeping for several hours doesn't yield a better recovery than resting for just one hour. Sleeping on the windy deck of a skyreme, or camped out in the wilderness, doesn't turn a Rest into a Convalescence.

While you don't need sleep to benefit from a rest, forgoing sleep is dangerous. See Chapter 9 for examples of sleep-related challenges..

## Progression and Experience

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After each session of play, the GM awards the party experience points (XP)—typically 5–10 per session. These points function as a currency that players can spend to acquire new abilities and increase attributes.

**All abilities “cost” 10 XP to learn.** Many abilities are tied to your calling. Your lore and ideals also enable you to learn certain abilities tied to them.

### Attributes from Abilities

**The only way to increase your attributes is to learn abilities** that make use of them. You can't spend XP directly on attributes. Instead, you must spend double XP to learn abilities that push you beyond your current attribute limits. For example, you can increase your Agility by learning advanced maneuvers.

All abilities have attribute point requirements. The last point is always a “soft” requirement. For example, the Champion's *Mighty Blow* ability requires 3 Strength. If you have 3 Strength, you can learn it for 10 XP. But you can learn it with 2 Strength if you spend 20 XP rather than the normal 10. Once you learn the ability this way, you gain a 3rd point of Strength.

You can't, however, learn *Mighty Blow* if you only have 1 Strength. You'd need to first learn another ability that requires Strength 2. You can only increase your attributes one point at a time.

To increase your Strength from 3 to 4, you'd need to find an ability that requires Strength 4 and spend 20 XP to learn it.

### Awarding XP

The GM awards XP at the end of each session. These guidelines ensure players gain new abilities at a steady cadence:

- Award 1 XP per action scene to each player. Remember that an

action scene isn't limited to combat. Action scenes include any tense situation where action dice are rolled, not just combat.

- Award an extra 1, 2, or 3 XP to each player if an action scene is particularly challenging or momentous — for example, a “boss fight,” or an incredible caper.
- Award 1 XP to the player who did the best job roleplaying. “Best” should not mean acting ability — rather, you should reward the player who did the best job embodying the ideals and flaws of their character, especially if those flaws made for less-than-optimal choices.
- Award 1 XP to the player who suffered the worst setback, defeat, or stroke of bad dice rolls.