

The Notepad Narrative Framework

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Playing the Narrative

The Notepad Narrative Framework (N2F) is a Tabletop Roleplaying System designed to be a fiction-forward method of telling stories at the table for a group of players. Each of the Players will take the role of an Avatar, allowing them to interact with the world and act out their desires. Each Avatar is a unique individual with their own story to be told and problems to solve. One Player will play the Arbiter. The Arbiter's job is to both judge and mediate conflicts with the Avatar's and the game world. In other systems they may be referred to as a Dungeon Master or Game Master, but here they act as mostly a judge for the actions of the Avatars and the situations they find themselves in.

The Core Resolution Mechanic revolves around a Dice Pool of D6's, or six-sided dice. There are three instances when the Arbiter will call for a Test. A Test refers to a situation when the dice are needed to determine an outcome, or assist in determining the outcome.

Snap Tests are the moment-to-moment instances where the Avatars need to determine something quickly. Planning Tests have the Avatars roll the results before entering the Encounter. Finally, Opportunity Tests allow the Avatars to change their approach, rolling their dice for additional bonuses due to the change in situation.

A number of D6's are rolled equal to the Avatar's Approach and Training. During Snap Tests, the Avatar will score Successes if they roll a 6 on the die, only a single Success is needed to pass. Planning Tests have the Avatar roll their dice and keep a number of successes from 4 to 6, allowing them to use these successes while in the Encounter. Opportunity Tests allow the Avatar to either take a different set of Approach and Training, or reroll their failed Planning Dice in an Encounter.

Momentum & Hindrance

During the session, an instance of play, the Avatars may find themselves in advantageous or disadvantageous situations. When this occurs, they will take a number of bonus or penalty die to their Tests.

The Avatar gains Momentum when correct equipment, beneficial situations, or clever planning is used. They will add a D6 to their Test. Hindrances include adversarial situations, poor planning, or outright difficulty of the moment. These will remove a number of D6's from the Avatar's Test.

Scenes & Episodes

The Notepad Narrative Framework is built around the concept of Scenes and Episodes. Each Episode is a Session, composed of multiple Scenes of different types.

Avatar Creation

Creating an Avatar is based on the Setting detailed by the Arbiter and their Playbook. The Playbook indicates the necessary beats and overall guidance related to the Setting and the situation that the Avatars find themselves in.

Each of the Avatars will then have their Role, Approaches, Training, Quirks, and Metrics.

Roles

An Avatar’s Role indicates their station and situation in the Setting Playbook. Any Avatar may select any Role, but their starting abilities will be similar.

Each Role is assigned a pre-selected series of Trainings which grant them their abilities. Each Role has a total of five (5) Training already assigned. They are however allowed to distribute three (3) additional points to any of their Trainings they wish, up to a maximum value of five (5). They will also have one to two pieces of equipment tied to their Role, associated with either an Approach or Training. These items will be explained further in the Equipment section.

Each Avatar may only select one role, below are three example Roles. In a full Playbook, there will be 6 to 10 separate Roles to enjoy.

Attuned Warrior	Wandering Scholar	Chosen Hero
A warrior attuned to the land and the planet, allowing them to navigate its fauna and protect it from outsiders. Natural leaders and fighters.	A scholar in the countryside looking for answers to a question they cannot understand. Able to fight with their quick wit and sharp intellect.	A being of light chosen to lead others from darkness. Embodiment of righteousness and virtues, they are untouchable by the wiles of evil.
Empathy 1 Learning 0 Physicality 3 Utilize 1	Empathy 1 Learning 2 Physicality 0 Utilize 2	Empathy 2 Learning 1 Physicality 1 Utilize 1
Ancestral Spear (Physicality) Warrior Mantle (Drama)	Various Notes (Learning) Guidebook (Logic)	Hero’s Crown (Empathy) Heroic Blade (Anger)

Each of these can be used interchangeably, or they can be used for their own Setting Playbook. These are the springboards on which a Player will modify and choose their Avatar’s ethos. Creating a Role is assigning the points to the four Trainings and then granting the appropriate number of Items.

Depending on the Setting Playbook, these Trainings may change. For example, the Attuned Warrior is part of the *New Gaia Requiem* Playbook. As a native of the planet, they may have the Training of: Attunement, Lore, Spirit, and Warrior. The above is the “default.”

Approaches

An Approach is the method of which the Avatar will enforce their will onto others and the world. Each Approach can be applied to any Training of the Avatar. These change the nature of the Training and allow the Avatar to perform a variety of tasks with a single roll.

For example, [Anger + Physicality] can mean the Avatar is attacking a target, just as much as it can mean kicking down doors to find their rival. However, [Anger + Empathy] can be the subtle art of intimidation applied to a target or attempting to gaslight the target into believing something.

When creating an Avatar, they have ten (10) points to distribute among their four Approaches. Each molds the Avatar into a different state of being, coloring their personality and outlook on the world. Each of these can go to a maximum of five (5).

Anger

The Avatar is driven by emotions and impulse. They react to the situation quickly and decisively, often in the most direct manner possible. They can use their focus to manipulate and overpower others.

Drama

The Avatar is a thespian and philosopher, thinking with expression to demonstrate their reality to the world. They react not with action, but with a grandiose display of action, playing the long game of impressing the crowd.

Grace

The Avatar is careful, stepping into situations slowly and steadily, assessing every option until the perfect moment. Appearing and disappearing when needed, they get the job done by applying the right amount of force.

Logic

The Avatar views the situation with cold calculation, finding the ideal path through the tangle of information. Relying more on them self to solve the problem the fastest, most efficient, way possible.



Training

Where Approaches are the how, Training is the what. The standard Training a Avatar has is broken down into four categories: Empathy, Learning, Physicality, and Utilize.

Empathy

The Avatar's innate ability to deal with others as well as their natural charm.

Learning

The Avatar's skill at discovering information and uncovering secrets.

Physicality

The Avatar's understanding of interacting with objects and the environment.

Utilize

The Avatars' physical strength as well as their endurance.

If the Setting Playbook demands separate Training for the Avatars, make sure to clarify what is, and is not, applicable in situations. The *Spirit* Training, for example, covers the Avatar's innate connection to the spiritual world as well as their connection to others around them. It is part mystic and part empathetic.

Quirks

Each Avatar is a unique individual with their own virtues and vices that they must embody every day. To represent the unique individuality of the Avatars, Quirks are present. Each Quirk is an aspect of the Avatar that highlights strengths and weaknesses they have.

During Avatar Creation, each of the Avatars will write in one Quirk to represent their Avatar. Any time the Quirk comes up, they will add Momentum to the Test. However, they may select additional Quirks, if they take Detriments. Detriments are "Negative Quirks" that act against the Avatar and make their life more complicated. Up to two Detriments may be taken for two additional Quirks. Whenever a Detriment is relevant, the Avatar has a Hindrance to the Test.

Quirks	Detriments
Famous	Bad Leg
Friend of Outcasts	Cannot Swim
Gaiabird Rider	Claustrophobic
Honored Warrior	Evil Eyes
Impeccable Aim	Functional Mute
Keen Eyesight	Hideous
Nature Friend	Misandrist

Metrics

Things go wrong, and when things go completely sideways, the Avatars begin to suffer. Metrics represent the Avatar's ability to remain functional and able to continue the mission. The Avatar will increase their Metrics when they fail Encounters and Snap Tests, representing their gradual injury, madness, or social death.

An Avatar can willingly increase their Metrics by two steps and receive Momentum to any Test of their choice. Should a Metric be filled, the Avatar is considered Compromised. While in this state, any increase to that Metric will remove them from play. Depending on the Setting Playbook, there will be three to four separate Metrics with six steps for each of them. The most common of these is [HEALTH] which indicates the physical health of the Avatar.

HEALTH					
Unharmed					Mortal Harm

Depending on the Setting Playbook, the Metrics may indicate a variety of situations the Avatar will find themselves in. Using the examples provided, each of these examples provides both problems and situations for the Avatar.

CORRUPTION					
Purity					Forsaken

BALANCE					
Harmony					Unstable

HEROISM					
Heroic					Villainous

The most important aspect of these Metrics is that they can both be compromised and invoked, forcing the Avatar to manage and repair these Metrics. Metrics will always reset to zero when the session ends, but mid-session can be reduced to zero if the Avatar spends a Casual Scene attempting to treat it. Health can be resting or receiving medical attention, while Metrics such as Corruption can be healed by meditation and Heroism by minor heroics performed by the Avatar.

Scenes

Every Episode is broken down into distinct Scenes, representing parts of the story that the Avatars will be taking part in. Each Scene can be represented by one of four different styles: Story, Casual, Encounter, and Link.

Casual Scenes

In every story there are moments when the Avatars are not being necessarily threatened, these are called Casual Scenes. In a Casual Scene the Avatars are attempting to gather information or find out the next step in the adventure. Different Avatars can be in different Casual Scenes all happening at once, allowing them to explore and interact with more of the world. An Avatar may forgo having a Casual Scene to reduce any of their Metrics to 0, representing downtime, medical attention, or personal work.

During a Casual Scene, Avatars do not roll a Planning Test, however should a Casual Scene escalate in danger, they will be able to roll an Opportunity Test instead.

The main goal of Casual Scenes is to further the story by allowing Avatars to find clues, uncover mysteries, recuperate, as well as converse with others. On average, there should only be one to three Casual Scenes per episode.

Link Scenes

Links are the little moments in between Scenes that allow the Avatars to determine their next course of Action. While never long, Link Scenes serve as an important point in allowing Avatars to determine the current events. If the Arbiter wishes, these can also be “Freeze Frames” allowing the Avatars to discuss the next course of Action while the world waits in anticipation.

Link Scenes should be used after major revelations or situations demanding it, the Avatars will determine their course of action and then proceed. Link Scenes are always followed up by Casual Scenes or Encounter Scenes.



Encounter Scenes

An Encounter Scenes is a situation in which the Avatars have prepared to go into and roll a Planning Test (or have an Opportunity Test beforehand). Encounters have the Avatars be threatened with their Metrics in some way, as well as having a distinct goal in mind. Encounter Scenes contain Actions that the Avatars may spend their Successes on to bypass immediately. The Avatars must spend a number of Successes equal to the difficulty of the Action. If an Avatar cannot succeed with their Successes, another Avatar can assist by spending their Successes. Avatars during this time may still perform Snap Tests to assist in problems not accounted for by the original Planning Roll.

Encounter Action Difficulty	
Simple	1 Success
Difficult	2 Successes
Complex	3 Successes
Hard	4 Successes
Masterful	5 Successes

Actions come in three varieties: Beats, Chances, and Extensions. A Beat is a guaranteed Action that the Avatars will be needed to succeed at to continue to the Scene. A Chance is a situation that the Avatar may spend their Successes on to find out more information, secure an advantage, or perform a decisive action to deal with a threat. Finally, Extension Actions take place over a long time, with each Avatar contributing their Successes to its overall completion of the goal.

When things go poorly, the Avatars begin to suffer, if an Avatar is unable to succeed to an Action with Planning Dice and is unable to fix the situation with a Snap Check, they will pay the difference by increasing their Metrics. Each Encounter has a set of Metrics being threatened, when the Avatar fails they will choose to distribute the failure among their chosen or threatened Metrics.

Story Scenes

Exposition allows the Arbiter to continue the narrative, even if the Avatars are unable to provide substantive input on the situation. During a Story Scene, the Arbiter takes center stage as they explain the current situation, set-up future scenes, act on behalf of threats or other antagonist forces, or allow other scenes to begin.

Story Scenes are reserved for the introduction, epilogue, and any "set-pieces" that occur in the story. These are usually dramatic and make sure everything is working as planned and setting up (or showing the knocked down) events occurring. An example of a scene would be the Arbiter explaining a fire erupting from a building, enabling an Encounter Scene where the Avatars rush in to save the day.

The Flow of an Encounter Scene: *Uncovering the Secret Weapon Cache*

The Avatars are tasked with interviewing and investigating a local Cyber Pagan Cult on the outskirts which have been accused of stealing weapon shipments. The Avatars decide on a two-pronged assault, two of the Avatars will approach diplomatically (Drama + Empathy, threatened Ego) to negotiate with the cultists, while the other two will engage in skullduggery by sneaking in through the back (Grace + Operating, threatened Meat).

All four Agents roll their dice

- Agent Adams (3 Successes, 2 Fails) - Diplomatic Team
- Agent Bell (4 Successes, 3 Fails) - Diplomatic Team
- Agent Clara (2 Successes, 4 Fails) - Sneak Team
- Agent Deacon (3 Successes, 3 Fails) - Sneak Team

Clara and Deacon will need to spend a Success to simply navigate through the rough back area to sneak into the rear of the building. Adams and Bell debate with the cult leader. Adams spends two of his Successes in a Chance Action to inquire about the weapons, while at the same time, Clara makes a Snap Check to knock out a guard. After some time, the sneak team, with no successes left, successfully finds the captured shipments, messaging Adams and Bell about the situation.

Adams and Bell are forced to make a Beat Action to play off the leader's insinuation that they may be stalling. Adams fails, increasing his Ego by 1. The leader sussess out that things are not as they seem, only to discover that there is a KO'd guard. Adams and Bell decide it's time for a more direct approach, making an Opportunity Check (Anger + Physicality) to start bashing skulls and popping heads, while Clara and Deacon make the same Check to assist.

The fight against the Cult is an Extension Check at a difficulty of 15, threatening the Avatars Meat. Hopefully things go according to plan.



Equipment

The Setting Playbook will dictate who the Avatars are and the current situation they find themselves in. They may be warriors of the native aliens of the planet, elementalists on a quest of martial enlightenment, or even fantastical fantasy warriors fighting against the Dark Lord of Entropy. Each of these will not only dictate the feel of the adventure, but also the availability of equipment and supplies.

Avatars will have access to a series of Basic and Personal items.

Basic Items are essential pieces of gear that allow an Avatar to act or perform actions. A blade will be able to cut someone down, a phone will be able to call someone, or a hand scanner will be able to understand objects. These allow the Avatar to perform actions with the associated items. If the Basic Item is especially relevant, such as having a tool when repairing an object or having camouflage in a sneaking operation.

Personal Items are more tied to the Avatar or the purpose of their adventure. These can be named equipment, such as the sword Durandal or a Third-Generation Cybertronic Arm, or relevant equipment such as having a Guidebook or a Flowing Cloak. Each of these are tied to an Approach or Training, adding a Success whenever that Approach or Training is used in the Test. Multiple Personal Items may be appropriate to the Test, all adding their own Successes to the final Test result.

Depending on the Setting Playbook, the Avatars will have access to different collections of Basic Items. Using the three examples used above:

New Gaia Requiem	Amalor: The Windbreakers	Everhero
A Native Weapon Healing Balm	Elemental Crystal Loose Robes	A Simple Weapon Cloth or Leather Armor



Seasons

The Notepad Narrative Framework is designed around "The Episode," a single, or very few, sessions of gameplay telling a direct story about the Avatars and their situation. Should the Arbiter continue past a single Episode, they will begin to create a Season.

Seasons are multiple Episodes strung together with the intent of telling a larger narrative, involving more characters, situations, and drama. To compensate for the length of the Season, individual Avatars are able to develop their abilities. At the end of an Episode, the Avatar gains 10 Development to increase their prowess, however, Favor is reduced by the amount of Metrics the Agent has sustained (representing rest, recuperation, or repentance between Episodes). An Agent can never have negative Favor, but can have a net gain of 0.

If an Avatar becomes compromised during an Episode and is removed from play. At the end of the Episode, the Player will make a new Avatar. They have no Development and will not "carry over" items from their previous Avatar. If the Arbiter is directing an exceptionally long Season, then they may choose to grant "Free Development" up to the average of the Avatars, to balance out the new Avatar for the Players enjoyment.

Advancement	Development Cost
Change a Detriment to a Quirk	7
Create a New Personal Item	5
Gain a New Quirk	Number of Quirks & Detriments x 3
Increase Avatar Approach by 1	Approach Value x 3
Increase Avatar Training by 1	Training Value x 2
Replace a Lost Personal Item	3

