

RULES BASICS

This rules system is called **LODE** (Lots Of Dice, Eh?). The core of the system is pretty simple, and it's located here to help you understand the *Character Creation* section that follows. More specific rules come later.

When a character tries to do something there are two ways of deciding what happens. The GM may state that they succeed or fail automatically, if the task is well within their abilities or completely beyond them. This is fast and should be used where appropriate, especially when dramatic tension isn't important. The other way to decide what happens is to roll some dice and use the results to determine how effective you were.

Rolling dice

You resolve an action by rolling a variable number (called a "pool") of six-sided dice ("d6" in RPG-speak). An impressive roll could involve 10 dice or even more. Fortunately you don't need to add up the results - all you have to do is count successes. If a die comes up 4, 5 or 6 it's a success, and if it comes up 1, 2 or 3 it's a failure. The more dice you get to roll, the greater the chance of producing lots of successes. The more successes you get, the better you accomplish whatever the task was. If there are no successes, you failed.

Any dice that come up with 6's "explode": roll them again for a chance at an extra success to add to the total. If you get another 6 you get another re-roll - carry on as long as you get 6's, but make sure you're giving the die a good shake first! This adds exciting unpredictability - even a small dice pool has a small chance of an astonishing success.

If all the dice come up as 1's, that's a fumble - you failed in a particularly bad or spectacular way, like dropping your sword or accidentally insulting the druid (the GM will decide what actually happens).

So, how many dice?

All character abilities in the game - natural talents ("attributes"), skills, etc - are defined as Advantages and Disadvantages compared to the baseline for an average, untrained person. An Advantage gives you one extra die to roll, and a Disadvantage takes one die away. A roll usually involves one attribute and one skill, plus any extra factors that may apply for special abilities or circumstances. The

GM has the final decision on whether an Advantage is applicable or not, and must make sure that Disadvantages are not "forgotten"!

The difficulty of a task is set by the GM as a number of **Base Dice** (BD). A completely ordinary, average, unskilled person would roll that number of dice. Advantages are added to this and Disadvantages subtracted to get the number of dice you actually roll. The Base Dice can be zero or even negative (e.g. BD -2). If you have no dice to roll you cannot succeed in that task - it's just out of your league. You only have a chance of success if your Advantages give you enough extra dice to get you into positive numbers.

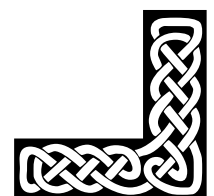
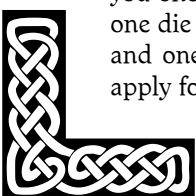
Example: the GM considers difficulty and sets the Base Dice at -2. An ordinary person would have no chance but your character can muster 5 Advantages, so you get to roll 3 dice. You get 6, 4 and 1 - that's 2 successes, and you re-roll the 6, getting a 5 which brings the total to 3 successes.

Setting difficulty

This is based on two questions. What sort of person could perform the task **OK**, i.e. unlikely to fail but not likely to achieve impressive success either? What kind of character has any chance of succeeding **at all**? These will allow you to pick an appropriate number of Base Dice - the table below gives key examples to help.

Talent refers to inborn abilities like strength, agility, intelligence or perceptiveness (measured as "attributes"). Skill refers to learned abilities like swordfighting or working in metal: the normal progression is Basic, Professional, Expert, Master. (These will be explained shortly.)

| Ability level | Base Dice |
|--|-----------|
| OK for untrained, average person | 3 |
| OK with any skill or talent | 2 |
| OK for a professional or someone with great talent | 1 |
| OK for an expert, or a great talent with some training; possible with any skill or talent | 0 |
| OK for a master or highly talented professional; possible for a professional or great talent | -1 |
| OK for a talented master; possible for an expert or a great talent with some training | -2 |





- OK for a master with great talent; -3
possible for a master or a professional with great talent
- Possible for a talented master -4
- Possible for a master with great talent - normal human limit -5

Most rolls use the following base dice, so if you're having trouble setting a difficulty start here.

- BD 2 reflects an everyday but not routine task - anyone can try, and those with some talent or training can do it pretty well;
- BD 0 requires professional ability - an average person simply can't do it, and even those who are qualified find it a challenge;
- BD -2 requires unusual ability, and an average person wouldn't even think of trying - e.g. parrying arrows with a sword.

Interpreting successes

- 1 Marginal - barely succeeded, sloppy performance, only achieve part of your goal
- 2 Adequate - OK, but nothing to write home about
- 3 Solid - can't fault it
- 4 Impressive - congratulations are in order
- 5 Exceptional - people sit up and take notice - you're obviously a cut above the average
- 6+ Astonishing - tell your friends they can close their mouths now

With really large number of successes there's a chance of doing something almost magically impressive (explained in *The Web*). The number you need varies by time and place, so just make sure the GM knows when you get over 5.

Opposed rolls

If you're competing directly against another character's ability rather than the difficulty of a task both make a roll, usually at BD 2, and the one that gets more successes wins; the difference tells you how decisive the result is. Both sides should have equal opportunity, so if one gets an attribute and a skill the other should too (whether or not they actually have levels to use). You might have to be a bit creative, e.g. if one uses Persuasion + Presence to talk the other out of attacking, use Intimidation + Presence to stay aggressive.

Fluke Die

A roll of a single die is sometimes referred to as a Fluke Die because the result is determined more by luck than skill and there's a significant chance of things going horribly wrong. The GM can use this to judge the effects of sheer chance.

Pool Points

You'll have a pool of Destiny points, awarded for doing good stuff in play like defeating foes, solving puzzles and acting heroically. You can spend one to roll all your dice again, wiping the slate clean and hoping for a better result. You'll also have a limited supply of Energy points for boosting rolls involving physical or mental power.

Blessing and Curse

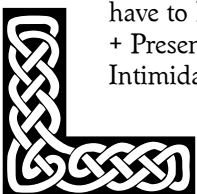
These reflect metaphysical forces that alter your luck for a task - think of them as lift or drag on rolls. It might be the result of magic, using an object with legendary properties, or a peculiarity of the local environment. The GM will often tell you to apply them without explaining where they come from. Your character probably won't realise anything unusual is happening, unless it's a big effect or it happens over an extended period.

They are measured in levels, each of which flips one die from a failure to a success or vice versa. Levels of Curse and Blessing cancel each other out, so just apply the difference to rolls. For example, 3 Blessings and 2 Curses means you effectively have 1 level of Blessing.

Apply them before you re-roll any 6's. Rather than turning dice to show particular numbers, it's easier to group them on the table and move dice between groups. Dice with 1's and 6's on the original roll are immune to Blessings and Curses. Any levels you can't apply have no effect.

Blessing - for each level, convert one die that's an ordinary failure (2 or 3) to an ordinary success (4 or 5). If you have levels left, each turns one ordinary success into a 6 so it explodes.

Curse - for each level you must convert one die that's an ordinary success (4 or 5) to an ordinary failure (2 or 3). Any remaining levels turn ordinary failures into 1's - if all the dice become 1's you fumble the roll! (If you have any 6's don't bother with the 1's because you can't fumble.)





Halfmagic

If the number of successes on a roll for a mundane skill equals or exceeds the Web rating, something extraordinary happens. This is called Halfmagic for game purposes, because it's somewhere between mundane occurrences and the reliable results of spells. Some say that this is actually truer magic than that covered by spells, because it grows out of a person's being and pulls the world to shape.

Effects are at the GM's discretion, though players should be encouraged to suggest them. They should be used to heighten the drama and wonder of the story, but also to achieve the character's goals - in fact, the character's intent plays a large part in what actually happens. This could be striking someone with a thrown spear through a stone that's in the way, playing a jig which calls up a swirling wind, pronouncing a curse which brings someone out in boils, leaping to the top of a tree or crafting something with an unusual property. Basically, they are instances where an ordinary skill achieves a supernatural result.

As the standard target is 9 successes, you can see that Halfmagic will not be common and will happen much more often to characters who excel in an ability. On the other hand, because the dice explode even those with little skill have a small chance. When the Web reduces to 6 Halfmagic results are more common and conflicts between skilled opponents often take on legendary aspects.

More on effects

Judging these can be quite tricky and subjective. At one end of the scale they should at least be interesting and useful, like shattering an opponent's weapon. Halfmagic can overcome pretty much any mundane obstacle, but objects and people with special properties of their own are more resistant. At the other end of the scale effects shouldn't be like flashy, whiz-bang magic or indicate godlike levels of power. Reducing a mountain to rubble would be too much, but a boulder is fair game. They should be extensions of the scale that make sense according to mythic logic. The notable deeds of heroes in the old tales are the best source of inspiration.

Sometimes the level of Halfmagic is a useful guide to the magnitude of the effect. This is the number of points by which it reaches the Web threshold - so for instance at Web 9 a roll that

gets 11 successes has 3 levels of Halfmagic. Don't get too hung up on this, because the important question is whether it's Halfmagic or not, but the GM should certainly allow more spectacular effects from a really high result.

Special cases

Magic doesn't follow the same rules - after all, it's already magical! Lots of successes will mean a powerful spell anyway, but if the successes hit the Web rating the GM should consider adding extra special effects: spirits visible around the caster, a glowing knotwork design appearing, strange winds from nowhere, and the like. Something about the spell should really impress onlookers.

Knowledge-type skills can be tricky. Halfmagic results are really about visible, active things. It's harder to know things in a semi-magical way. This usually looks like a kind of second sight or tapping into racial memory, realising or understanding things you normally couldn't. The GM might not wish to give out knowledge that short-circuits an interesting plot, but might take the opportunity to give information that starts a new one.

Deliberate attempts at Halfmagic

A player can ask for their character to try something that would normally be impossible - legendary, heroic stuff, but not extreme physical or logical impossibilities. (The GM has the difficult job of setting limits on the scale of the action.) This is an all-or-nothing thing which burns Destiny. Make the appropriate roll at BD 2. If you get a Halfmagic result it succeeds; otherwise you fail, gain no benefits and probably look silly. You can spend as many Destiny Points for re-rolls as you wish, but you must spend at least one even if the roll works first time. This is really a tactic for characters with impressive abilities.

Giving up Halfmagic

If a player gets a Halfmagic result on a roll but doesn't actually want to apply it (it might spoil the flow of play, slow things down or be inappropriate in the current situation) they can take the successes as an ordinary result and gain a Destiny point - only the first in a scene can be kept, others must be given to other players to help their characters shine.

