

Fantasy Starter Set

Content used

- **The d20 Ruleset** — a single flat die, with the Gradient rolled apart from it
- **Basic Combat** — the optional combat module

THERE IS AN ADVENTURE FOR THIS SET

The Diminutive Tower is a written adventure built on the set below. A tower in the fen that is eleven feet across on the outside and not eleven feet across on the inside, an expert who is a gold wyrmling the length of your arm, and forty years of unfinished projects still running. Getting in is easy. The floors do not stay where they were put. It runs at any level between 1 and 5, but made for levels 1, 3, and 5.

Read the adventure [The five pregens](#)

This is an example, not a product.

It is a high fantasy game built on the d20 Ruleset, written to show what that Ruleset produces when a designer stops hedging and commits to it. A table can pick it up and run it, though it has not been made exhaustive, balanced to the last decimal, or pushed anywhere near its extremes. There are gaps a finished game would close, and places where a table will have to rule something on the spot.

What it is good for is showing the d20 doing the one thing the other two Rulesets refuse to do. It hands you a **package**. You say two nouns, what you are and what you trained as, and you receive a kit. The Sci-Fi set assembles a specialist out of parts and tells you to live with the gaps. The Wasteland set gives you a Role and no Levels at all. This one gives you a Folk and a Calling, and both of them are on your sheet doing arithmetic.

All of that is an answer to the flattest die in the engine. Any roll on a **1d20** can land anywhere, and competence never banks the result, so the package exists to put a floor under the character. When the die refuses to cooperate, what you are is still true.

It is the ability-heavy one. Almost everything a character does that the ordinary rules do not cover is an ability with a **Demand**, and almost every ability worth reaching for costs $\frac{1}{4}$ Energy every single time you use it. There are no spell slots here and no prepared list, and you know everything you have learned. What a session keeps asking is not what you can do but what you can still afford to do.

It runs from Level 1 to Level 5, which is enough to watch growth work without pretending to be a full campaign.

Liberties have been taken. Three of them are departures from the base rules rather than choices within them, and each is listed below with the reason. Two depart from the d20 Ruleset and one from Basic Combat. Everything else is the d20 as written.

Read it as a demonstration. Take it apart, disagree with it, and build the version you would rather play.

LOOKING FOR A DIFFERENT STARTER SET?

Each Starter Set demonstrates a different Ruleset. This one is the d20.

Wasteland — "the d18" Sci-Fi — "the d100"

The three sets are not three settings sharing a rulebook. Each one takes the Ruleset it is built on and leans into the thing that Ruleset is good at, so they play differently before a single word of setting is read.

	Ruleset	Leans on	Plays like
Fantasy — this set	d20	A flat die and a Gradient rolled apart from it	Wide swing. Any roll can turn a scene, so your kit is what holds
Sci-Fi	d100	Targets written as true percentages	Exact and tactical. You can see the odds before you commit
Wasteland	d18	A Resolution die that changes size with your condition	Attritional. Most of the game is not a fight

What This Set Changes

Where this set departs from the base rules. Three rules behave differently here: two of them against the d20 Ruleset, one against Basic Combat. The **Base rule** column says which. Everything not listed is the base rules unaltered.

#	Change	Base rule	Why
1	+ HP draws its constants from your Folk and your Calling , on one formula that reads the same at every Level	A fixed 5 + ♦ Vigor Rank at Level 1, then a fixed +2 + half the sum of ♦ Vigor and △ Resolve Ranks per Level	The fixed constants give a Level 1 pool of three to nine points. A longsword takes all of it. Fantasy runs on recognizable weapon dice, and those need a pool near twenty. Sourcing the constants from the two identity layers fixes the scale and makes both layers worth reading
2	Maximum ♣ Energy rises at every odd Level after the first	3, then +1 at each even Level	Levels 2 and 4 grant a General Ability instead. The two then alternate, and no Level passes without adding something

#	Change	Base rule	Why
3	Damage is the weapon's die plus your Level	Basic Combat: the weapon's die and nothing else	Weapon dice do not grow, and the module says so itself: at Level 1 a 1d6 is half a pool, and by Level 5 it barely registers. Level grows at the same rate the pools do, so a Level 5 fight keeps the shape of a Level 1 fight. An Attribute Rank would start too hot and then fall behind

Applying a rule somewhere new is not changing it. Naming the identity pieces, pitching ability Demands above what a character's Capacity will ever reach, using the Resource approach rather than Loadout, setting a creation spread, giving items Actions that carry their own Demand, having an ability's own attack roll 1d20 + Level against a Defense, gating a weapon's Signature Ability on training, and the Skill, gear, Folk and Calling lists are all things the base Ruleset either leaves open or already permits. None of them are departures, and none belong in the table above.

Frontiers Fantasy

Everything from here is the game itself. It assumes no other document: every rule it uses is written out below, in full, in the order you need it.

What You'll Find

Part	Covers
1 — The Rules	Resolution, the three modes, Attributes, the four pools, 4 Energy, Skills, abilities, combat, and gear. The whole engine
2 — Building a Character	The three identity layers, the Attribute spread, and a nine-step walkthrough
3 — Folk & Backgrounds	Five Folk and eight Backgrounds
4 — Callings	Five Callings, their Core Kits and Capstones, and every ability in the set
5 — Weapons, Armor & Items	The gear list: weapons, armor, enhanced gear, and what training buys
6 — Advancement	Marks, Levels, and the capstone
7 — Running the Game	Setting difficulty, handing out circumstance, building a fight, and adversaries

How Much Is Here

Enough for **Levels 1 through 5**, which is four Party Pursuit resolutions and around **twelve sessions** at the suggested pacing.

That pacing is a suggestion rather than a rule, and it is the thing most likely to differ at your table. Levels come from the Party Pursuit, so a crew that resolves theirs quickly climbs quickly. Marks come from Individual Pursuits, so a table that leans on personal goals hands them out faster than one that does not.

The number that actually runs out is **⚡ Capacity**. It equals your Level and it stops at 5, while abilities in this set run to Demand 8. A Level 5 character has grown into everything at Demand 5 and below, and the three rungs above that will cost them for as long as they live. Past Level 5 the set stops having answers, because the top of the ability list has nowhere left to go.

Write a sixth Level, extend the Demand band, and keep going.

This set assumes a party of **four**. Three will work but leaves a hole in the crew, and five works if you are willing to pad the fights out.

What a Character Looks Like

Four Attributes, read the way the d20 always reads them: a **Score** for when nobody is rolling, a **Rank** for when somebody is.

A **Folk**: what you are. It sets a chunk of your **+** HP and grants three things that are always true. A **Background**: what you did before this. It grants Skills, and a piece of leverage that exists in the world whether or not you use it. A **Calling**: what you trained as. It holds a **Core Kit**, one small system belonging to it alone, and it grants an ability at every Level and decides how fast your **+** HP grows.

Then **⚡ Energy**, which is the number the whole game runs against. Everything you own and everything you know has a **Demand**. Anything at or below your Capacity is free forever. Everything above it costs, every time, and the best things you own are always above it.

Two nouns and a pool make up the whole character.

1 — The Rules

The Resolution System

The Resolution System answers any question the fiction cannot settle on its own. When the outcome is uncertain and the result matters, you resolve it here. When it is not uncertain, or the result does not matter, nobody rolls anything.

The Two Dice

A resolution uses two dice, and they are rolled **separately**.

Die	What it is	Its job
Resolution Die	1d20	Decides whether it worked

Die	What it is	Its job
Gradient Die	1d10	Decides how it landed

The Resolution Die is always rolled. The Gradient Die is rolled alongside it whenever the texture of the result would change the fiction, and left in the tray when it would not.

Roll 1d20 , add the relevant Attribute Rank, and meet or beat the target.

Every face of a 1d20 is equally likely. There is no middle for competence to sit in, so a Rank is a thumb on the scale rather than the whole story, and an underdog always has a real chance. This set has no natural-20 or natural-1 rules; a 20 is read as twenty and nothing more.

The Gradient

The Gradient Die is a separate 1d10 , and it never touches the verdict.

1d10	Reads as
1	Major Negative
2 – 3	Minor Negative
4 – 7	Standard
8 – 9	Minor Positive
10	Major Positive

- **Standard** results land exactly as the success or failure implies.
- **Minor** deviations add a wrinkle in that direction: a cost, a delay, an opening, a slight edge.
- **Major** deviations are turning points: a breakthrough, a breakdown, a consequence that changes the scene.

Because it rolls apart from the Resolution Die, **the two never correlate**. A hard-won success is exactly as likely to land cleanly as a lucky one. Whether the thing worked and how well it went are two independent questions in this Ruleset, which is not true in either of the others.

The Gradient never reverses the verdict. A Major Positive on a failure does not make it a success, only a failure that produced something. A Major Negative on a success does not make it a failure, only a success that bit.

Targets

A **Difficulty Threshold** is the number to meet or beat. The GM sets it and does not have to announce it.

DT	What it is	Rank +0	Rank +3	Rank +3, with a Skill
5	Trivial for anyone who knows the work	80%	95%	100%
10	Ordinary difficulty	55%	70%	91%
15	Hard, or done under pressure	30%	45%	70%

DT	What it is	Rank +0	Rank +3	Rank +3, with a Skill
20	Risky even for a specialist	5%	20%	36%
25	Not happening without leverage	0%	0%	0%

A flat die spreads evenly, so the ladder punishes at a steady rate rather than falling off a cliff. **DT 25 cannot be reached on a bare roll at any Rank a character starts with**, with or without a Skill: creation caps a Score at 14, which puts the ceiling at 24. The lifetime cap of 18 lifts that to 28, so a Level 5 character who spent every Attribute Mark on one Score clears a DT 25 one time in five and nobody else clears it at all. For everyone else it takes an ability, an item, or something they brought with them.

Contests

When two parties are directly opposed and both are acting, **both roll**, and the higher Modified Result wins. A Contest is always rolled and never taken as a Score.

Only the **winner** rolls the Gradient Die, and only if the degree matters.

The two sides may not be using the same Attribute, a grapple pits ♦ Vigor against ☆ Deft, so on a tie the GM decides which approach had the edge. Other options: compare the two Ranks, give ties to the defender, or roll off.

Favor and Disfavor

Circumstance is expressed as **Favor** and **Disfavor** rather than as numbers. Good footing, a helpful hand, poor light, a bad angle: all Favor or Disfavor. Numeric modifiers exist only where a rule defines one, such as armor adding to a Defense.

- **Favor:** roll one extra die of that kind and keep the **highest**.
- **Disfavor:** roll one extra die of that kind and keep the **lowest**.

You always keep as many dice as the roll normally uses. A 1d20 with Favor rolls two and keeps the higher. A 2d6 damage roll with Favor rolls three and keeps the best two.

Each side stacks to **3**. Cap each at 3 first, then cancel one against one, so the two never apply together.

Favor is placed on a specific die, and placed before that die is rolled. The player chooses where their Favor goes; whatever is causing Disfavor names its die, and if nothing names one it lands on the Resolution Die. Favor is never added to a die already on the table.

Favor on	What it does
The Resolution Die	Improves the odds the thing works, and nothing else
The Gradient Die	Pushes the result toward a Major, without touching whether it worked
Damage or effect dice	An extra die of that kind, keeping the usual number

Because the two dice are independent here, the choice is unusually clean: Favor buys **either** success **or** impact, never a blend of both. Neither of the other two Rulesets can offer that decision.

What Favor is worth here

Against DT 10 at Rank +0, Favor on the Resolution Die raises your odds of success from 55% to ~80%: a value equivalent of about **+5**, a quarter of the die. Use that as the conversion rate when pricing anything.

It collapses at the extremes. Against DT 20 at Rank +0 it takes you from 5% to ~10%, a value equivalent of about +1. Favor rescues a hard roll and does almost nothing for an impossible one.

Taking Your Score

A character may decline to roll and **take their Score**: the Attribute's standing value, compared straight to the Threshold. Anything at or below it simply works.

A taken Score is always **Standard**, so the certainty costs you any chance of landing better than expected.

If **Disfavor** applies, the check must be rolled. Circumstance against you always goes to the dice. Favor does not force a roll: a character with Favor may still take their Score, and if the degree matters they roll the Gradient Die on its own with the Favor on it.

Rolling is a blind gamble whenever a DT has not been announced, and on a die this flat that gamble runs in both directions at once.

A Resolution, Worked

A character is going up a rain-slick wall while guards close in below.

1. **Intent.** "I climb to the balcony before they reach me."
2. **Attribute.** Climbing under pressure is ♦ Vigor. Hers is 13, a Rank of **+3**.
3. **Skill.** She has Athletics, a Body Skill, which grants Favor. She puts it on the **Resolution Die**, because she cares about getting up there more than about how it looks.
4. **Target.** A rough wall in the rain: **DT 15**.
5. **Roll.** Two d20 for the Favor: 9 and 14, keeping **14**. Plus Rank **+3** is **17**. Against DT 15 the climb **works**.
6. **Gradient.** The result matters, so she rolls the 1d10 separately and gets a **2: Minor Negative**. She gets onto the balcony, and a boot scrapes a tile loose that clatters into the street. The guards look up.

Unassisted that climb was a 45% proposition, and with the Skill it was 70%. The Gradient knew nothing about either number, which is how a tile comes loose on a good roll.

A Scene, End to End

Three of the party are in the undercroft of a chapterhouse looking for a ledger. The GM has decided the place is disused but not empty, the light is what they brought with them, and somebody has been down here more recently than the dust suggests.

Wren has ● Acuity 14, a Rank of **+4**, and the Investigation Skill. **Bryn** has ♦ Vigor 14, a Rank of **+4**, and Athletics. **Osk** has △ Resolve 14, a Rank of **+4**, and Insight.

"Can I tell anyone has been down here?"

Bootprints in the dust are plain to anyone holding a lantern. **No roll.** The GM describes two sets going in and one coming back.

"I want to find the ledger."

The shelving is intact and nothing is pressing them. Wren is trained on exactly this and has all the time she wants, so the GM calls **DT 10**, ordinary difficulty. Investigation applies, so she takes **Favor** and puts it on the Resolution Die, because she wants the book more than she wants a flourish.

Two **d20** : 6 and 12, keeping **12**. Plus Rank **+4** is **16**, over 10. **Success.** The degree matters, so she rolls the **1d10** separately: a **5**, **Standard**. The ledger is where a ledger should be, and it is exactly a ledger.

"Is anything missing from it?"

Same shelf, same character, but the question has changed. Finding a book somebody filed is ordinary; noticing a page somebody removed is not. The GM calls **DT 15**. Same Skill, same Favor.

Two **d20** : 3 and 8, keeping **8**, plus **+4** is **12**, under 15. **Failure.** The Gradient comes up **9: Minor Positive**. She cannot tell whether anything is gone, and while she is holding it up to the lantern she notices the binding has been re-sewn. She has not answered her question, and she has a better one.

"I force the inner door."

It is swollen rather than locked. ♦ Vigor, **DT 10**, and Athletics applies: **Favor** on the Resolution Die.

Two **d20** : 17 and 4, keeping **17**, plus **+4** is **21**. **Success**, comfortably. Bryn declines the Gradient, because a door either opens or it does not and nobody needs texture on it. The GM agrees and the door opens.

"I'd rather find out what he wants than draw on him."

There is a man on the other side who has been waiting a while. Osk tries. Reading someone who has had time to prepare is hard, so the GM calls **DT 15**. Insight applies: **Favor**.

Two **d20** : 11 and 2, keeping **11**, plus **+4** is **15**. It **meets** the DT, so it **works**. The Gradient reads **1: Major Negative**. Osk reads him correctly, the man is frightened rather than dangerous, and he is here for the same ledger, and says so out loud, in front of him, which is the one thing that could have made a frightened man run. He runs.

What the example is showing

Four rolls across three characters, with the difficulty moving from 10 to 15 on the same bookshelf because the question changed rather than the shelf. One roll was declined outright, one was skipped entirely, and the worst outcome in the scene came attached to a success. Nobody rolled to see whether they could read their own lantern.

Flow of Play

Play runs in three **modes**, each defined by how fast time moves.

Mode	Time	What you can use
Encounter	Seconds	♦ Actions, metered by ♦ Action Points, plus ⇒ Movement and turn order
Exploration	Minutes	♦ Actions and * Activities, neither of them metered
Endeavor	Hours or days	* Activities only

♦ Actions and * Activities

- An ♦ **Action** is quick enough to happen inside an Encounter Round. Swinging a blade, speaking a word of power, vaulting a railing.
- An * **Activity** takes longer than a single Round. Searching a library, resting, crafting, traveling.
 - * Activities cannot be performed during an Encounter.

♦ Actions can happen in any mode. They are only metered, paid for with ♦ Action Points, inside an Encounter. Outside one, a character simply does the thing.

* Activities are available in Exploration and Endeavor and never inside an Encounter, because they take longer than a Round.

Encounter

Seconds matter. A fight, a chase, a collapsing bridge.

An Encounter runs in repeating **Rounds**. In each Round every participant takes one **Turn** in ► Initiative order. A Round is roughly 10 seconds. There is no limit to how many there are.

When play shifts into an Encounter, everyone determines ► Initiative and a fresh Round begins. Nobody starts with ♦ Action Points or ⇒ Movement already spent.

TURNS

At the **start** of a Turn, ♦ Action Points and ⇒ Movement refresh to maximum, and effects expiring "at the start of your Turn" resolve.

At the **end** of a Turn, unspent ⇒ Movement is lost, unspent ♦ Action Points remain available for Reactions until your next Turn, and effects expiring "at the end of your Turn" resolve.

► INITIATIVE

Each participant chooses one method at the start of an Encounter, and it holds for the whole Encounter.

- **Flat.** Take a standing value of 10 + ☆ Deft Rank.
- **Rolled.** Roll 1d20 + ☆ Deft Rank.

Highest acts first. Ties break on the higher ☆ Deft Rank, then a roll-off. Once set, the order holds unless an effect changes it; a change takes effect at the start of the next Round and never reorders Turns already taken.

The two methods trade certainty against range, and on a 1d20 that trade is wider than it looks. Rolling averages slightly higher and can land anywhere. Take the flat value when your position matters more than your odds.

♦ ACTION POINTS

Each participant begins their Turn with **3 ♦AP**. An ♦ Action costs **1 ♦AP** unless it says otherwise.

Declare an ♦ Action, pay its full cost, and resolve it completely before declaring another. You cannot begin an ♦ Action you cannot pay for, and partial payment is not allowed.

◇ FREE ACTIONS

A ♦ **Free Action** costs no ♦AP. Each individual one may be used **once per Turn**, and no more than **3** in a Turn.

◇ **Interact** is the single ◇ Free Action covering all item handling: drawing, Stowing, Equipping, picking up, handing off. Because all handling shares one ◇ Free Action, you may Interact **once per Turn**, whichever item is involved. Drawing a blade and stowing a shield in the same Turn is two Interacts, and therefore not possible.

REACTIONS

A **Reaction** is used outside your own Turn in response to a trigger, and is paid from your current ♦AP pool, the same pool you spend on your Turn.

Because unspent ♦AP persists through the Round, every Turn carries a choice: **spend freely now, or hold points back to react**. A participant with no ♦AP available cannot react.

⇒ MOVEMENT

On your Turn you may move up to your ⇒ **Movement** in □ **Units**, equal to 5 + ☆ Deft Rank, never less than 1. It refreshes at the start of the Turn, any unspent is lost at its end, and it may be split freely before, between, and after ♦ Actions.

One □ **Unit** is 5 feet, or one square or hex on a map. □ Units measure movement, ranges, and areas alike. Movement forced by an external effect costs nothing and happens immediately.

Exploration

The ordinary business of play between crises: moving through the world, dealing with the people in it, working out what to do next. It is the default mode and the majority of a session.

Exploration runs on **choices**. The GM describes a situation, the players decide what their characters do, the fiction updates, and it repeats. Most decisions resolve through description alone. A roll enters only when the outcome is uncertain and the result matters.

There is no ♦AP tracking, no turn order, and no ⇒ Movement budget.

INTERACTION

Talking with people: negotiating, gathering rumors, buying, reading a room. Most of it is pure roleplay and needs no dice.

There is no social Attribute. A social action uses whichever Attribute fits the **approach**: ♦ Vigor to lean on someone physically, ☆ Deft or ● Acuity to charm or misdirect, △ Resolve to persuade through conviction. Training is applied on top as Favor from a Voice Skill, so a naturally frightening character and a trained diplomat can reach the same goal by different routes.

One roll usually settles a social beat. Save repeated checks for a situation that has meaningfully shifted.

INVESTIGATION

Searching a place, examining an object, piecing clues together. A character notices anything at or below their ● Acuity **Score** without rolling for it, so nobody rolls to see the floor. Finding what is deliberately hidden takes an active check.

TRAVERSAL

Moving through a space that is not a fight. Outside an Encounter there is no ⇒ Movement budget; characters go where they choose and a check happens only at a real obstacle.

Approach	How it works
On a grid	Position and distance tracked in □ Units, with no ♦ AP or ⇒ Movement limit outside an Encounter
In narrative	The GM tracks position loosely, and calls a roll only at an obstacle

Endeavor

An Endeavor commits a long stretch of time, hours or days, to a single pursuit, handled as one compressed span. The GM narrates it, pausing for a beat of roleplay or a single roll when something is worth zooming in on.

Endeavors run almost entirely on ✱ Activities. No ♦ Actions are spent and no economy is tracked. The character is committing time.

REST AND RECOVERY

The most common Endeavor, and the only one with fixed rules.

Rest is a commitment. A character who is resting is doing nothing else: not traveling, not standing watch, not working a Project, not keeping half an eye on the road. They have stopped, somewhere free of pressure, and the hours are passing. A party that wants the whole crew to recover has to commit the whole crew, or split the difference and accept that whoever is on watch gets nothing out of it. The hours are the price, and they are paid together.

For each uninterrupted **hour**:

- Regain **1 ⚡ Energy**.

For each **3 uninterrupted hours**:

- Regain **half of maximum + HP**. This stacks at rolling intervals, so 3 hours restores half and 6 hours restores all of it.
- Remove **one ☉ Wound or one ☹ Fatigue**. Not both in the same interval.

If rest is broken by danger or significant exertion, only the current unfinished interval's progress is lost. Anything already recovered stays, and the count toward the next interval restarts from zero.

⚡ Energy is the slow one here. A full pool takes as many hours as it holds, so a character who emptied themselves at noon is not whole again by dusk, and the shape of an adventuring day follows from that.

DOWNTIME

Time spent on a pursuit rather than recovery. Rough scopes, all of them tunable:

Pursuit	What it is	Example scope
Training	Improve a capability	About a week of focused effort per step
Project	Craft, build, or repair something	A simple piece in a day; a complex one over weeks
Trade	Run a business or work a job	Earns coin across the span
Study	Research a question	The answer emerges with the time invested

Anything that permanently changes a character's sheet runs through Advancement.

TRAVEL

Measure a journey in **days on foot**, then apply the conveyance's pace. What a day covers is the table's to pin down; roughly 20 to 30 miles is a common answer.

Conveyance	Pace
On foot	Baseline
Mount	About 2×
Cart or wagon	About 1.5×, and it hauls
Something stranger	Whatever the setting says

One event per leg is a reasonable default. A dangerous road warrants more, a safe one fewer.

What Everyone Can Do

A short list of Actions belonging to every character from Level 1. None of them are abilities, none are bought, and none cost ⚡ Energy.

	Cost	What it does
Attack	♦	Strike with an Equipped weapon. The weapon's card says what it rolls and what it deals
Opportunity Attack	♦ Reaction	A single attack against a target that has given you an opening
Stabilize	♦♦	Touch a downed ally. They rise at 1 ♦ HP
◇ Interact	Free	All item handling. Once per Turn
Move	—	Up to your ⇒ Movement, split freely around your Actions

Opportunity Attack is a Reaction, paid from ♦AP you did not spend on your own Turn, and it fires when something hands you an opening. The commonest opening is a **Critical Miss**: swing at somebody and roll badly enough, and they get to answer.

Everything else a character can do comes from an ability, and abilities have to be bought.

Attributes & Derivatives

Four Attributes, read exactly as the base Ruleset reads them.

Icon	Attribute	Capacity
❖	Vigor	Bodily power and endurance: strength, stamina, toughness
☆	Deft	Bodily precision and speed: coordination, agility, reflexes
●	Acuity	Mental sharpness and reach: perception, reasoning, memory
△	Resolve	Mental fortitude and steadiness: willpower, composure, conviction

❖ **Vigor** is the body's power and durability. Drives: ♦ HP, ⊗ maximum Wounds, □ Physical Defense. In play: forcing, hauling, enduring, and any blow that lands with weight behind it.

☆ **Deft** is the body's precision and tempo. Drives: □ Physical Defense, ⇒ Movement, ► Initiative. In play: aiming, dodging, stealth, fine work, acting first.

● **Acuity** is the mind turned outward. Drives: □ Mental Defense, extra Skills. In play: noticing, investigating, recalling, seeing a lie coming.

△ **Resolve** is the mind turned inward. Drives: ⊖ maximum Fatigue, □ Mental Defense. In play: resisting fear and coercion, holding focus, outlasting strain.

TELLING THEM APART

	Power & Endurance	Precision & Reaction
Physical	❖ Vigor	☆ Deft
Mental	△ Resolve	● Acuity

Breaking a door is ♦ Vigor. Picking its lock is ☆ Deft. Spotting the lie is ● Acuity. Refusing to break under the interrogation is △ Resolve.

Score and Rank

Every Attribute has a **Score**, which defaults to 10 and is used directly whenever nobody is rolling, and a **Rank**, which is the Score minus 10 and is added to the die whenever somebody is. A Score of 13 is a Rank of +3; a Score of 8 is a Rank of −2.

The relationship is linear in both directions, and the value you compare against a Threshold when you do not roll is simply the **Score itself**.

Scores run **8 to 14** at creation and **8 to 18** thereafter, so Ranks live between −2 and +8 for the whole of this set.

Ranks can be negative

A Score below 10 gives a negative Rank, and it subtracts everywhere Rank is used. A few derived values are floored so they cannot break.

Derivatives

Value	This set
+ Maximum HP	5, plus Folk base + Calling value + step for every Level, where the step is half the sum of ♦ Vigor and △ Resolve Ranks, rounded up, minimum 1
⊗ Maximum Wounds	3, +1 per 2 points of ♦ Vigor Rank, cap 5, minimum 1
⊖ Maximum Fatigue	3, +1 per 2 points of △ Resolve Rank, cap 5, minimum 1
⇒ Movement	5 + ☆ Deft Rank, minimum 1, in □ Units
► Initiative	Flat 10 + ☆ Deft Rank, or rolled 1d20 + ☆ Deft Rank
□ Physical Defense	10 + half the sum of ♦ Vigor and ☆ Deft Ranks, round up, minimum 1
□ Mental Defense	10 + half the sum of ● Acuity and △ Resolve Ranks, round up, minimum 1
Skills	From your Background, ±1 per 2 points of ● Acuity Rank, minimum 1
⚡ Maximum Energy	3, +1 at Levels 3 and 5
⚡ Capacity	Equal to your Level
Slots	10

Rounding is always **up**, including for negatives: a pair summing to −3 halves to −1, not −2.

Vitality, Exertion & Death

Four tracks, mending at different speeds, measuring different kinds of harm.

+ HP

Build it in three steps rather than reading it off one line.

1. **Start with the body.** Halve the sum of your ♠ Vigor and △ Resolve Ranks, rounding up, minimum 1. ♠ Vigor is what takes the hit and △ Resolve is what keeps you standing, so the pair is read together. Call this your **step**.
2. **Level 1 is 5, plus your Folk base, plus your Calling value, plus that step.**
3. **Every Level after adds all three again** — Folk, Calling, and step.

Folk	Base	Calling	Value
Stoutfolk	5	Guardian	6
Beastfolk	4	Fighter	6
Commonfolk	3	Wilder	5
Otherfolk	3	Devout	5
Highfolk	2	Mage	4

A Commonfolk Wilder at ♠+2 △±0 has a step of **1**, so they gain **9** a Level:

	Working	+ Max HP
Level 1	5 + 3 Folk + 5 Calling + 1 step	14
Level 2	+ 3 + 5 + 1	23
Level 3	+ 3 + 5 + 1	32
Level 4	+ 3 + 5 + 1	41
Level 5	+ 3 + 5 + 1	50

Nothing accumulates on the sheet, because the three steps are the definition. Raising an Attribute later changes the whole column at once, with no history to recompute.

A worked corner	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Stoutfolk Guardian, ♠+4 △−2	17	29	41	53	65
Commonfolk Fighter, ♠+2 △±0	15	25	35	45	55
Highfolk Mage, ♠−2 △+2	12	19	26	33	40

Level 1 is thin

A twelve-point pool belongs to somebody who took ♦−2, the lightest Folk, and the lightest Calling. Nobody arrives there by accident, and everything else about that character is very good. Early fantasy is dangerous, and this set does not pretend otherwise.

The **minimum of 1** on the step is what keeps it honest. A character at ♦−2 and △+2 sums to zero and halves to zero; without the floor they would gain nothing from the body at any Level.

Pools grow faster than a weapon die does, which is deliberate. Adversary output is not fixed either, it climbs with Tier, in dice as well as in the flat term, and the two ladders are tuned against each other in Adversaries.

DAMAGE KEEPS PACE

Weapon damage is the weapon's die plus your Level. A sword is 1d6 , and a Level 3 character swinging it deals 1d6+3 .

Weapon	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
1d4	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
1d6	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
1d8	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
1d10	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
1d12	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

The flat term is **Level** rather than an Attribute Rank. A fixed Attribute term starts too hot and then falls behind the growing pool: a +4 from ♦ Vigor is 33% of a typical Level 1 pool and 17% of a Level 5 one. Level grows at the same rate the pools do, so the ratio never moves. It also keeps ♦ Vigor from paying three times over, since it already feeds accuracy, □ Physical Defense, and + HP.

The die is what separates one weapon from another, while the Level is what keeps all of them relevant as the numbers climb.

⊗ Wounds

Real injury: what lands once there is nothing left to absorb it. Every ⊗ Wound a character is carrying lowers **both Defenses by 1 per point held**, read at the current number and never accumulating across them.

⊗ Wounds held	Penalty to □ and □
1	−1
2	−2
3	−3
4	−4
5	−5

Because ☉ Wounds arrive at the moment a character goes down, the penalty is usually felt in the **next** fight rather than the one that caused it. You carry your injuries forward until they are treated.

A ☉ Wound past the maximum is **death**, with no timer to run down and nothing to roll against.

☹ Fatigue

Depletion. Every point applies **–1 to every resolution a character makes, passive or active**, read at the current number of points. It lowers rolled results and standing Scores alike, so a tired character cannot dodge it by declining to roll.

A character at maximum ☹ Fatigue is upright and heavily impaired. The point that would push them past maximum drops them unconscious.

The two tracks are asymmetric on purpose

☉ **Wounds are felt later, and by your enemies.** They make you easier to hit, next fight.

☹ **Fatigue is felt now, and by you.** It makes you worse at everything you attempt, immediately, and every character feels it regardless of build.

Overspending ⚡ Energy forces a choice between them, point by point, and that choice takes a genuine read of the situation.

⚡ Energy

This is the number the whole set is built on.

Everything usable carries a **Demand**: the level of power it operates at. Every character has a **Capacity**: the level they sustain without strain. In this set **Capacity is simply your Level**, and it stops at 5.

⚡ **Energy cost = Demand – Capacity, minimum 0.**

- At or below your Capacity, a thing is **native**. Using it costs nothing, forever.
- Above your Capacity, it costs the difference, **every time**.

Abilities in this set run to **Demand 8** while Capacity stops at 5, so the best things you can learn will always cost you something.

THE POOL

Level	⚡ Maximum	⚡ Capacity	The Level also brings
1	3	1	Your Core Kit, and two General Abilities
2	3	2	One General Ability
3	4	3	A Calling improvement
4	4	4	One General Ability
5	5	5	Your Capstone

Every Level carries **+** HP and Capacity. Beyond that the two alternate: even Levels widen you, odd Levels deepen your Calling and the pool along with it.

WHAT A LEVEL OPENS UP

You may take abilities up to a Demand of **your Level plus 3**. That produces the same four rungs at every Level of play:

The rung	Costs	How often you can use it
Demand = Capacity or below	0	Unlimited
+1 above	1	Several times a day
+2 above	2	Twice, at most
+3 above	3	Once. Then it is gone until you rest

The top rung always costs 3 and always works out to once per day, at Level 1 and Level 5 alike, so the biggest thing you can do is a once-a-day from your first session onward and it never inflates.

This is what stands in for spell slots. You know all of your abilities at all times, and what you ration is **how hard you push**, since the cheap things you learned years ago stay free all day.

OVERSPEND

A character may spend more **4** Energy than they have. There is no ceiling on how far past 0 they reach, but the shortfall is paid immediately: **each point spent below 0 becomes 1 ⊗ Wound or 1 ⊖ Fatigue, chosen point by point as it is paid.**

An average character has 3 ⊗ Wounds and 3 ⊖ Fatigue, so six points past empty is death or collapse and two or three is a survivable gamble. The last spell of the day costing you an injury is a fair description of what this rule is for.

Held equipment drain can never push a character into Overspend; only abilities can do that.

Unconscious and Death

A character is put out of the fight in one of two ways:

- **Downed by harm.** **+** HP reaches 0. They take one ⊗ Wound and drop.
- **Collapsed by exhaustion.** ⊖ Fatigue would be pushed past maximum. They are held at maximum and drop.

Either way they cannot act, cannot move under their own power, and are left at the mercy of the scene.

A character downed by harm returns as soon as **any +** HP is restored. A character collapsed by exhaustion returns the moment their ⊖ Fatigue falls below maximum.

A character **dies** when a ⊗ Wound would be pushed past their maximum. There is no dying timer and no bleeding out.

STABILIZE

Anyone may **Stabilize** a downed character. It costs ♦♦, two thirds of a Turn, and no ♣ Energy, and it is not something anybody has to buy.

They come back at **1 + HP**. Their ⊗ Wound is unchanged, so they are upright, injured, and easy to drop again.

A party without a Devout still has a way to pick each other up. A Devout adds range, avoids giving up most of a Turn, and builds their Flock in the process.

Skills

A **Skill** is trained expertise, and it is binary: you have it or you do not. A character without a Skill may still attempt anything a trained character can, and simply does it without Favor. **Skills never gate an action.**

When a Skill applies, it grants Favor. The player chooses which die the Favor goes on and declares it before that die is rolled.

Only one Skill applies to a roll. Favor from other sources still stacks with it, to the usual maximum of 3.

Skills Are Not Tied to Attributes

Any Skill can apply to a roll of any Attribute. The Attribute is chosen from how the character is going about the thing. The Skill then grants Favor on whatever roll that turns out to be.

Some pairings are obvious and will come up most of the time. Athletics is usually ♦ Vigor. Acrobatics is usually ☆ Deft. Lore is usually ● Acuity. Do not mistake usually for always: the same training answers to different Attributes depending on the approach.

Nature, used to...	Attribute
Push through a day of hard country	♦ Vigor
Move through undergrowth without disturbing it	☆ Deft
Name the tracks and read how old they are	● Acuity
Sit out a storm without breaking	△ Resolve

Intimidation, used to...	Attribute
Loom, and let the size of you do the work	♦ Vigor
Name the thing they are actually afraid of	● Acuity
Say it once, quietly, and not blink	△ Resolve

This is the same rule the social guidance already runs on. A frightening person and a trained negotiator can reach the same result by different routes, because the Attribute carries the approach and the Skill carries the training.

The categories exist for a different job. They carry **no modifier of their own** and never decide which Attribute is rolled. They are handles, so that an ability, an item, or an effect can address a whole group at once rather than naming Skills one by one: Favor on all Voice rolls this scene, or ignore Disfavor on Body rolls while this is worn.

The Skills

Twenty-one, seven to a category. Your Background says which ones you may take at creation, and ● Acuity adjusts how many.

7Body

Athletics — climbing, jumping, hauling, holding on

Acrobatics — balance, tumbling, landing well

Stealth — not being where they are looking

Endurance — going without, and going on

Riding — horses, and whatever else will carry you

Craft — making and mending, at a bench or in the field

Sleight of Hand — palming, lifting, and fine work while watched

7Mind

Perception — catching what is there to be caught

Investigation — working out what happened here

Lore — history, heraldry, and what the world used to be

Arcana — the shape of magic, and who is doing it

Religion — powers, rites, and what they ask for

Nature — weather, beasts, growing things, wild ground

Healing — wounds, sickness, and telling somebody how bad it is

7Voice

Persuasion — being agreed with by people who need not agree

Deception — lying well enough that it holds

Intimidation — making the other option worse

Performance — holding a room on purpose

Insight — reading what somebody is not saying

Command — being obeyed by people who had a choice

Barter — knowing a price and holding one

A Skill applies when the character's approach relies on that training, not merely because it is topically related. When it is arguable, the usual answer is to allow it.

Abilities

An **ability** is a discrete, repeatable thing a character can do that the ordinary rules do not cover: a trained manoeuvre, a spell, a rite, a talent. In this set they come from your **Folk**, your **Calling**, and a shared **General** pool, and every one of them is written on the same card.

Reading an Ability

The badge on the left of a card is its **⚡ Demand**. The line beneath the name carries the **♦AP** cost and how the ability is used.

On the card	Means
♦ Action	Costs 1 ♦ Action Point
♦♦ Action	Costs 2 ♦ Action Points
♦ Reaction	Used outside your Turn when its Trigger is met, at the ♦AP shown
◇ Free Action	No ♦AP. Each may be used once per Turn, and only 3 per Turn in total
* Activity	Longer than a Round, so it cannot be used during an Encounter
Passive	Always on. Never activated
⚡ Demand n	Costs n minus your Level, minimum 0, every time it is used

A **Trigger**, set apart in its own box, means the ability waits for a condition rather than being declared freely.

WHEN AN ABILITY ATTACKS

Some abilities strike on their own account rather than through a weapon. **Those roll 1d20 + your Level** against whichever Defense the card names. An ability is a rehearsed, specific thing rather than an approach, so it does not read an Attribute the way an ordinary action does; the training is the whole of it, and your Level is how far that training has come.

An ability that simply says attack means a weapon attack, resolved the ordinary way: 1d20 + the Attribute Rank the approach calls for. The Fighter's **Multi-Attack** and the Guardian's **Retaliate** are weapon attacks. The Devout's **Judgement** and every Mage spell are not.

Pursuits & Advancement

A character advances on two clocks that do not feed each other. **One is theirs. One belongs to the whole party.**

	Whose	What it is	Earns
Individual Pursuit	One character's	What that person wants, written by the player rather than chosen from a list	1 Mark , to that character, about once a session
Party Pursuit	The whole party's	What the group is trying to do, agreed between everyone	1 Level , to everybody at once, about every third session

What They Buy

Marks buy the fundamentals: Attributes, resilience, ♣ Energy, and abilities from your Calling's pool. Levels buy + HP, ♣ Capacity, and whatever your Calling gives at that step.

Full rules in Advancement.

Combat

Combat uses the optional Basic Combat module. Everything in it runs on rules already established: an Encounter is a mode, an attack is an ♦ Action, and a weapon is an item carrying its own Actions.

How an Attack Resolves

1. **Declare** the attack and pay its ♦AP.
2. **Roll** 1d20 + the Attribute Rank the approach calls for, against a Defense. Harm to the body goes against □ **Physical Defense**; harm to the mind goes against □ **Mental Defense**.
3. **On a success**, roll the weapon's damage: **its die plus your Level**.
4. **Read the Gradient**, if it was rolled. It decides how the blow landed.
5. **Subtract** from + HP. At 0, the target takes a ⊗ Wound and is downed.

Critical Hits and Grazes

The Gradient Die decides degree, and in combat that has teeth. On the 1d20 the Gradient is a separate 1d10, and only its two extremes matter here.

Gradient	On a hit	On a miss
10	Critical Hit — double the damage	Graze — half damage, rounded down, and no riders
2 - 9	Hit	Miss
1	Graze — half damage, and no riders	Critical Miss

A **Critical Hit** doubles the damage total. Anything that triggers because of a Critical is not itself doubled.

A **Critical Miss** hands the target an opening: they may take an **Opportunity Attack** against you as a Reaction, if they have the ♦AP to pay for it. You swung badly enough that they get to answer.

These fire on roughly **one hit in ten**, rarer than either of the other two Rulesets manages, because the 1d20 Gradient is a flat ten-sided die whose extremes are single faces. It makes a Critical here an event in the fight rather than a bit of texture on top of it.

Position

Where people stand is expressed as **Favor and Disfavor**, not as numbers.

Situation	Effect
Partial cover	Disfavor on ranged attacks against the target
Full cover	The target cannot be hit by ranged attacks at all
Concealment — dark, fog, smoke, or a body in the way	Disfavor on attacks against the target
Flanking — two allies on opposite sides	Favor on both attackers' rolls
Outside a weapon's reach	Disfavor, or simply impossible

Cover and concealment stack in the fiction but not in the arithmetic. Favor and Disfavor cap at 3 either way and cancel one for one.

Reach

Distance is measured in □ Units, and one □ is five feet. Every weapon states the band it reaches.

Band	Reach	Typical
Melee	1 □	Blades, hafts, fists. Whatever is immediately around you
Reach	2 □	Spears, hafted weapons, anything you keep them off with
Short	5 □	Thrown weapons, hand crossbows, most spells
Medium	10 □	Bows, heavy crossbows
Long	20 □	Longbows, siege shots, the largest spells
Far	Beyond 20 □	Almost nothing reaches. Say so when something does

Short is the same as a typical ⇒ Movement, so a character who can see something at Short range can usually close on it in a Turn.

Long is a hundred feet. Very little in a fantasy setting throws further, and anything that does should feel remarkable when it appears.

Contests in a Fight

Grappling, disarming, shoving, overpowering: these are **Contests**, resolved as the Resolution System describes with both sides rolling and the higher result winning. A contested exchange is one ♦ Action however long it takes in the fiction.

The two sides need not use the same Attribute. A shove is ♦ Vigor against ☆ Deft as often as ♦ against ♦.

Equipment

Every item is in exactly one of four states.

State	What it means
Stowed	In the pack. Costs Slots, and cannot be used until Equipped
Equipped	Worn or in hand, ready to use. Costs no Slots. May hold 4 Demand for as long as it stays Equipped
Active	Doing its work right now: a lantern burning, a blade alight, a draught being drunk. May cost 4 Demand to bring into this state
Removed	Out of reach: dropped, disarmed, confiscated, left behind

Moving between states is the ✧ **Interact** Free Action, once per Turn inside an Encounter and no time at all outside one. Going **Active** is the same ✧ Interact unless an item's own card says otherwise, so lighting a lantern competes with drawing a blade for the one handling action a Turn allows. Donning or removing armor is an ✱ Activity and cannot be done inside an Encounter.

Slots

Every character has **10 Slots**, and only **Stowed** items use them. What is worn or in your hands is free, so Slots track the pack rather than the person.

Item	Typical Slots
Negligible items	0
Small item, tool, or dose	1
Weapon	1 – 3
Shield	1 – 3
Armor	1 – 5
Large or awkward gear	4+

Negligible items are not tracked. Rations, a coil of rope, a torch, a purse of coin. Ammunition is handled the same way: a quiver is a single item, individual arrows are never counted, and a quiver is **Consumed after an Encounter in which it saw heavy use.**

4 Demand on Gear

Every item has a Level, and an item's Level is its 4 Demand. A Level 3 blade is a Demand 3 blade. The two words describe the same number from two directions: the Level is what the item is, and the Demand is what it asks of whoever carries it. Items in this set run from Level 0 to Level 8, the same band abilities occupy, so an item can sit above any Capacity a character will ever reach.

Gear carries that Demand much as abilities do, with one difference: it is worn or wielded continuously, so its cost is **held rather than spent**.

While an item whose Demand exceeds your Capacity is Equipped, your ♣ Energy maximum is reduced by the difference.

Most gear costs nothing:

	Item Level, and so ♣ Demand	What that means
General items	0	Free to anyone, always
Ordinary weapons and armor	1	Free from character Level 1 onward
Enhanced gear	2 – 8	Holds drain until you grow into it, and the top of the range never comes free

So a longsword stays a longsword and costs you nothing for your whole career, while a burning longsword is something you have to decide you can afford.

An enhanced item's Demand is what it costs to **carry**. Any Action written on that item carries its own Demand separately, and that is what it costs to **use**. A flaming blade might be Demand 2 to bear and carry a Demand 5 Action to set it alight for an Encounter, free to swing, expensive to ignite.

THE FLOOR, AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE IT OFF

Your ♣ Energy maximum can never be reduced below **1**. Gear whose combined drain would take you under that cannot be Equipped at all until something else is set aside, or your Capacity rises to afford it.

Equipping something reduces your **maximum**, and your current pool clamps down to meet it. Unequipping returns the maximum immediately, but **not the points**. Those come back with rest at the usual rate.

That means stripping your armor to free up ♣ Energy for one big ability gains you nothing, since the room comes back but the spent points do not.

Items Carry Their Own Actions

Weapons carry their attacks, and items carry their uses, written in the same format as an ability and available only while the item is Equipped. A weapon's die and reach are its attack; its Signature Ability is everything else it can do.

Two blades of the same length can play completely differently, because each carries its own Actions rather than pointing at one shared rule.

Training

Weapons and armor fall into groups, and your Calling and Background say which ones you were trained in.

	Groups
Weapons	Slicing · Crushing · Piercing · Ranged · Arcane
Armor	Light · Medium · Heavy · Shield

Anyone may pick up anything and use it. What training buys is the **Signature Ability**, the one Action on a weapon's card that is more than an attack. Untrained you can swing the greatsword perfectly well, but you cannot Cleave with it. Armor works the same way: you get the Defense and none of the properties written beneath it.

The full treatment sits with the gear it applies to, in Training and What It Buys.

2 — Building a Character

A character comes down to three nouns and a spread of numbers, and the nouns come first because every number on the sheet is downstream of them.

The Identity Layers

Layer	The question it answers	What it gives you
Folk	What are you?	A + HP base and three Passives
Background	What did you do before this?	Skills, and one piece of Narrative Leverage
Calling	What did you train as?	+ HP per Level, trained groups, and a Core Kit

They are meant to be read together rather than stacked. A Stoutfolk Soldier Fighter and a Highfolk Scholar Fighter share a Core Kit and almost nothing else: different pools, different Skills, different leverage in the world, different reasons for being in the room.

Two of the three carry arithmetic. **Folk and Calling each contribute to **+** HP at every Level**, alongside half of **♦** Vigor and **△** Resolve together, so a sturdy Folk in a sturdy Calling compounds over a career. Background carries no arithmetic at all, which makes it the cheapest thing on the sheet to replace.

Attributes

Every Attribute starts at a **Score of 10**. Then:

- **Distribute +6** across them, in any split.
- **Take -2**, from one Attribute or split between two.
- Nothing may end below **8** or above **14**.

No Score ever rises above 18, which is the lifetime ceiling rather than the creation one. Marks may carry a 14 up to 18 across a career and no further, so four points of growth in a single Attribute is as far as this set goes.

That is a net of +4 spread over four Attributes, and the range is deliberately narrow. On a flat 1d20 a Rank of +4 is worth about a fifth of the die, which is a thumb on the scale rather than a guarantee. A character with 14 in something is very good at it and still fails one roll in three against real difficulty.

The **-2 is not optional**. Every character in this set is bad at something, and whichever thing you chose stays on the sheet as a piece of characterization.

Spread or spike

Putting +4 into one Attribute and +2 into another makes a specialist with an obvious hole. Putting +2 into three makes someone competent everywhere and exceptional nowhere.

Either approach works, though the flat die rewards the spread slightly more than most systems would, because no amount of Rank makes a roll safe and no deficit makes one hopeless.

Creating a Character

1-3Who

1. Concept. One sentence describing a person rather than a build.

2. Folk. Choose one of five. Note the **+** HP base and the three Passives.

3. Background. Choose one of eight. Note the Skills it offers and its Narrative Leverage.

4-6Numbers

4. Calling. Choose one of five. Note its **+** HP value, its trained groups, and take its Core Kit.

5. Attributes. Start at 10 each, distribute +6, take -2, stay between 8 and 14.

6. Derivatives. Work out **+** HP, **⊗** Wounds, **⊖** Fatigue, **⇒** Movement, **➤** Initiative, both Defenses, Skill count, and **⚡** Energy.

7-9Kit

7. Skills. Take what your Background offers, adjusted by **●** Acuity.

8. Abilities and gear. Two General Abilities, then equip yourself. Watch the **⚡** Demand on anything enhanced.

9. Pursuit. Write one sentence saying what your character wants. Agree a Party Pursuit with the table.

Step 9 is the one people skip, and it is also the one that runs your advancement: without an Individual Pursuit there is nothing to earn Marks against.

Rather start playing?

The Pregen Chars are five Level 1 characters built by exactly these steps, one for every Calling.

3 — Folk & Backgrounds

The two identity layers you choose before your Calling.

Folk

Five, and they cover the design space rather than naming anybody's elves. Each entry says which familiar fantasy peoples it is built to hold, and every one of them is meant to be renamed to fit the setting it lands in.

Each Folk grants a **+ HP base** and **three Passives**.

Folk	+ HP base	Suggested leaning
Stoutfolk	5	❖ Vigor, △ Resolve
Beastfolk	4	❖ Vigor, ☆ Deft
Commonfolk	3	Anything
Otherfolk	3	● Acuity, △ Resolve
Highfolk	2	☆ Deft, ● Acuity

Three points separate the sturdiest from the lightest, and it is paid at **every Level**, so by Level 5 that gap has grown to fifteen points of **+ HP**. Folk sets a rate rather than handing out a starting bonus.

The five Folk

Commonfolk · + 3

Humans, half-bloods, and anyone whose people got everywhere by being willing to.

Passive **Adaptable.** You know one extra Skill.

Passive **Broad Training.** You know one extra weapon or armor group.

Passive **Stubborn.** +1 maximum ⊖ Fatigue.

Highfolk · + 2

Elves, fey-touched, the long-lived and the fine-boned.

Passive **Long Sight.** Favor on Perception at distance. Dim light is no obstacle to you.

Passive **Meditation.** You regain ⚡ Energy at **1 per half hour** of rest rather than 1 per hour.

Passive **Light Step.** ⇒ Movement +1.

Stoutfolk · + 5

Dwarves, halflings, and any people who measure worth in what they can carry and how long they can carry it.

Passive **Rooted.** You cannot be moved against your will by anything less than twice your size. Rough ground does not slow you.

Passive **Deep Lungs.** +1 maximum ⊗ Wounds.

Passive **Broad Back.** +2 Slots.

Beastfolk · + 4

Cat-folk, jackal-folk, ox-folk, bird-folk. Peoples who were never human and never wanted to be.

Passive **Instinct.** Choose one when you make the character. It does not change.

- **Keen Nose** — Favor on Perception by scent, and you know who has passed recently.
- **Keen Ear** — Favor on Initiative, and you cannot be surprised while awake.
- **Sure Foot** — Favor on Acrobatics, and no Disfavor for a fall under 4 □.
- **Thick Hide** — +1 □ Physical Defense.
- **Long Stride** — ⇒ Movement +2.

Passive **Natural Weapon.** Your unarmed strikes deal 1d6 + your Level.

Passive **Beast's Pace.** Rough ground does not slow you.

Otherfolk · + 3

Planetouched, changelings, and the ones with something else in the family line.

Passive **Bloodline.** Choose one when you make the character. It does not change.

- **Emberborn** — ordinary fire does you no harm, and you can light a flame with a touch.
- **Winterborn** — ordinary cold does you no harm, and still water freezes where you stand.
- **Duskborn** — you see in darkness to 5 ft, and shadows lie flat around you.
- **Stormborn** — a fall does you no harm, and your voice carries however loud the weather.
- **Dreamborn** — Favor on rolls against effects targeting ☐ Mental Defense.

Passive **Not Quite Right.** Anyone meeting you for the first time takes Disfavor on Insight against you.

Passive **Otherworldly.** You need half the sleep and half the food anyone else does.

Backgrounds

Eight. A Background is what you did before the story started.

Take **three** Skills from the five your Background offers, then adjust by ● Acuity.

The eight Backgrounds

Soldier

You stood in a line with other people and did as you were told, until you stopped.

Skills Athletics · Endurance · Perception · Intimidation · Command

Training One weapon group of your choosing

Leverage People who served will hear you out. Quartermasters, sergeants, veterans in a taproom: they will tell you what they know and lend what they can spare. They also know you left, and some of them think they know why.

Scholar

You spent years reading, and somebody paid for it.

Skills Lore · Arcana · Investigation · Religion · Insight

Training Arcane

Leverage Libraries, collections and lettered people open to you on the strength of a name you can drop. You dropped it before. Somebody there is still waiting on the work you promised.

Outlander

You grew up where the roads run out.

Skills Endurance · Nature · Athletics · Perception · Riding

Training Ranged

Leverage You know the tracks that are not on maps and the people who live along them: shelter, a meal, and a straight answer about what is ahead. They help because helping is how they all survive, and they will expect it back at the worst possible time.

Criminal

You made a living in the parts of a city that do not appear in the ledgers.

Skills Stealth · Sleight of Hand · Deception · Barter · Perception

Training Slicing

Leverage You know who buys what, who forges what, and which door is never really locked. They know your face. Somebody in that world is owed, and owed people talk.

Artisan

You are good with your hands and you have the guild mark to prove it.

Skills Craft · Barter · Insight · Perception · Athletics

Training Crushing

Leverage A guild will vouch for your work: workshops, tools, and a fair price where others get gouged. They take a share, and they expect you to turn up when the guild needs a name on something.

Pilgrim

You walked a long way for a reason you can still explain.

Skills Religion · Endurance · Persuasion · Insight · Healing

Training Crushing

Leverage Shrines and holy houses shelter you without asking, wherever the road goes. Pilgrims carry things: letters, news, small objects nobody explains. You will be asked, and refusing closes doors.

Noble

Your family has land, or had it, and everyone in the room knows which.

Skills Persuasion · Command · Lore · Deception · Performance

Training Slicing

Leverage Your name opens doors that money cannot, and people of standing will grant you an audience. It also announces you. Everyone who wanted a word with your family now knows exactly where you are.

Laborer

You worked, and the work was hard, and you are still here.

Skills Athletics · Endurance · Craft · Barter · Perception

Training Crushing

Leverage Working people help their own: somewhere to sleep, work for coin, and word of who is hiring and who does not pay. You are expected to put in a shift like anyone else, and to be seen doing it.

4 — Callings

Your Calling is what you trained as. It is the largest single thing on your sheet: it sets how fast your **+** HP grows, what you were trained to carry, and it hands you one small system that belongs to it alone.

There are five, and no two of them work the same way. That is deliberate. A Fighter and a Guardian are both armoured people with weapons, and if the only difference between them were which numbers were larger the set would have four Callings and a variant.

Reading a Calling

Every Calling carries the same six things in the same order.

On the card	What it is
+ HP	The Calling's contribution to what each Level adds
Trained	The weapon and armor groups you start with
Core Kit	The one system that belongs to this Calling. Established at Level 1
Improvement	What Level 3 does to the Core Kit
Capstone	The choice at Level 5
Abilities	A pool to draw from, bought with Marks

One grammar, five games

All five Callings advance the same way, so you learn the shape once.

	What happens
Level 1	The Core Kit is established. Whatever it is, you have all of it
Level 3	The Kit's number rises. Nothing new is added
Level 5	The Capstone : one part of the Kit is pushed past where the rest sits

A Core Kit never grows a second thing to keep track of. A Fighter has three Stances at Level 1 and three at Level 5. A Wilder holds Traits at Level 1 and Traits at Level 5. What changes is how far each one reaches.

This is the whole of advancement inside a Calling. There are no subclasses, nothing branches before Level 5, and the Capstone is the only choice in the set that forks.

Improvements and abilities are separate

Two different things arrive from two different places, and it is worth keeping them apart.

Calling improvements are automatic. They come from the Level, they are the same for everyone of that Calling, and there are three of them: the Core Kit at 1, the improvement at 3, the Capstone at 5.

Calling abilities are chosen, and they are bought with **Marks**, one per Level, at most. They come from a pool, and a career takes about five of the eight on offer. Three are always left behind.

So how deep you go into your Calling is a decision rather than a schedule. Spend your Marks on Attributes and ⊗ Wounds and you are a broad Fighter with a shallow kit. Spend them on the pool and you are a narrow one who does a small number of things very well. The Levels guarantee the spine either way.

The five at a glance

Each gets its own section below. They carry the same six things in the same order, and they play nothing alike.

	+ HP	Core Kit	Plays as
Fighter	6	the Stance	Offensive martial
Guardian	6	Cover	Defensive martial
Devout	5	the Flock	Support, and where the harm lands
Mage	4	the Domain	Ranged, fragile, resource-tense
Wilder	5	the Shape	Adaptive, and the party's utility

Fighter

The Fighter is the offensive martial Calling. Everything they do happens on their own Turn, and everything they gain costs them something else in the same breath. They put out the most weapon damage in the set.

Trained	
Weapons	Slicing · Crushing · Piercing
Armor	Light · Medium

The Core Kit

The Stance. Three postures. Switching is a ♦ Free Action, once per Turn, and during an Encounter a Fighter is **always in one of them**. There is no neutral stance and no way to stand outside the system.

Stance	Gives	Costs
Press	Damage modifier + F	Both Defenses – F
Guard	Both Defenses + F	Attack rolls – F
Point	Attack rolls + F	Damage modifier – F

Read the two columns against each other. Damage is granted by Press and charged by Point. Defenses are granted by Guard and charged by Press. Attack is granted by Point and charged by Guard. Each of the three is given exactly once and taken exactly once, so no stance is better than the others and none is free.

Press and Point are both aggressive and they do different things. Press raises what a hit is worth; Point raises how often one lands.

F is 2 at Level 1, 3 at Level 3, and 4 at Level 5.

Capstone

One Stance's **give** rises by 1 and its **cost** does not, so the chosen Stance runs at **F + 1** on the giving side. At Level 5 two Stances sit at +4/−4 and yours sits at +5/−4.

- **Unrelenting** — Press gives +5 and still costs 4. At Level 5 that is **1d6+10** on a sword, against a 75% chance of being hit back.
- **Unyielding** — Guard gives +5 and still costs 4. A Rank +3 attacker drops to 30%.
- **Unerring** — Point gives +5 and still costs 4. Your hit rate against an even target reaches 80%.

Fighter Abilities

Bought with Marks, one per Level. Eight on offer and a career takes about five.

These are not Stance modifiers. The Stance is its own system and scales on its own. These are things a Fighter learns to do.

Ability	⚡	Use
Parry	2	⚡ Reaction
Second Wind	3	⚡⚡ Action
Disarm	3	⚡ Action
Multi-Attack	4	⚡⚡ Action
Feint	5	⚡ Action
Opening	6	⚡⚡ Action
Execute	7	⚡⚡ Action
Decisive	8	⚡ Action

The Fighter pool

Parry · ⚡ 2 · ♦ Reaction

Trigger — an attack against you hits.

Halve the damage, rounding down.

Second Wind · ⚡ 3 · ♦♦ Action

Roll **2d10** and regain that much ♦ HP.

Disarm · ⚡ 3 · ♦ Action

Name how you are going for their weapon. A Contest, using whichever Attribute fits your approach against whichever fits their defense of it.

Win, and the weapon is knocked from their grip. It is **unusable** until they spend **1 ♦AP** recovering it.

Multi-Attack · ⚡ 4 · ♦♦ Action

Choose up to **three enemies** within your weapon's reach. Make **one attack roll** and compare it against each of their Defenses. Roll damage once and apply it to every one you hit.

Feint · ⚡ 5 · ♦ Action

All of your attacks have Favor until the start of your next Turn. This includes Reactions.

Opening · ⚡ 6 · ♦♦ Action

Attack one enemy. On a hit, every ally within **5** □ who can see it may spend **1 ♦AP** to make one attack against that same enemy, as a Reaction.

Execute · ⚡ 7 · ♦♦ Action

Attack one enemy at or below **half their maximum ♦ HP**. It is a **Critical Hit**.

If this reduces their ♦ HP to 0, move up to your ⇒ Movement toward another enemy. This does not spend ⇒ Movement.

Decisive · ♣ 8 · ✦ Action

Commit to the Stance you are in. Until the end of the Encounter it **gives double** and **costs nothing**.

You cannot change Stance for the rest of the fight.

Guardian

The Guardian is the defensive martial Calling. They trade damage for position, standing where the party needs them and turning their own body into an obstacle. They also arrive late, staying thin for the first two Levels before becoming hard to fight around by the fifth.

Trained	
Weapons	Crushing · Piercing
Armor	Light · Medium · Heavy · Shield

The Core Kit

Cover. You are something to hide behind.

Allies within **G** □ of you may treat themselves as having **Concealment** against **one attack each Round**: Disfavor on that attack roll. You choose which attack it applies to, declared as the attack is, and you may hold it for a later one.

You also gain **+G to both your Defenses**.

	G
Level 1	1
Level 3	2
Level 5	3

One per ally per Round is the whole limit. An enemy swinging three times at the same person gets Concealment on one of those swings, and the other two have to be answered with Interpose, a Reaction, or somebody else stepping in.

Capstone

- **Wider** — the Cover radius becomes **5** □. Your +G to Defenses is unchanged. Wherever the party stands, they are behind you.
- **Solid** — the Concealment becomes **2 Disfavor** instead of 1. A 55% attacker drops to 17%.
- **Immovable** — G counts as **5** for your own Defenses only, and you cannot be moved against your will.

Guardian Abilities

Bought with Marks, one per Level. Eight on offer and a career takes about five.

Ability	⚡	Use
Interpose	1	⚡ Reaction
Tend	2	⚡ Action
Distraction	2	⚡ Reaction
Taunt	3	⚡ Action
Retaliate	4	⚡⚡ Reaction
Shield Wall	6	⚡⚡ Action
Mental Ward	6	⚡⚡ Action
Last Stand	8	⚡⚡⚡ Action

The Guardian pool

Interpose • ⚡ 1 • ♦ Reaction

Trigger — an ally within 1 □ is hit.

Spend 1 ➡ **Movement** to step into the blow. You take the damage instead.

Tend • ⚡ 2 • ♦ Action

An ally within your reach regains + HP equal to **your Level + 2**.

Distraction • ⚡ 2 • ♦ Reaction

Trigger — an enemy you can see declares an attack.

They take 2 **Disfavor** on one die of that attack. You choose which: the Resolution Die to spoil the hit, or the Gradient Die to spoil the Critical.

Taunt • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

Roll 1d20 + your Level against one enemy's □ Mental Defense within 5 □.

On a success, they must move toward you on their next Turn and may attack nobody but you until the start of your Turn after that.

Retaliate • ⚡ 4 • ♦♦ Reaction

Trigger — an ally within your weapon's reach is hit.

Attack the attacker.

Shield Wall • ⚡ 6 • ♦♦ Action

Every ally within 5 □ gains +5 □ **Physical Defense** and ignores Disfavor on ♦ Vigor rolls, until the start of your next Turn.

Mental Ward • ⚡ 6 • ♦♦ Action

Every ally within 5 □ gains +5 □ **Mental Defense** and ignores Disfavor on △ Resolve rolls, until the start of your next Turn.

Last Stand · ♣ 8 · ♦♦♦ Action

Every ally within 5 □ cannot be reduced below **1 + HP** until the start of your next Turn.

Devout

The Devout binds a party together and then decides where its injuries land. They move harm between people and between the three tracks that record it, so the party's health ends up wherever it will do the least damage, which makes them strongest in whichever fight is going worst.

Trained	
Weapons	Crushing · Ranged · Arcane
Armor	Light · Medium · Shield

The Core Kit

The Flock. At the start of an Encounter, name **D** other characters. They and you are your Flock.

Your Flock are bound to you and to one another. What lands on one of them lands on a rope you are holding, and while you have the strength for it you decide where along that rope the weight settles.

Devotion is how much the binding can bear. You begin each Encounter with **D**, gain **+1 whenever a Flock member takes damage**, and it caps at **5**. It empties when the Encounter ends.

	D
Level 1	1
Level 3	2
Level 5	3

Bear · ♦ Action or ♦ Reaction

What you move	Devotion	When
+ HP between Flock members, up to (2 × your Level) + 2	1	Any time
⊖ Fatigue onto yourself	2	As it would be applied
⊗ Wound onto yourself	2	As a Flock member reaches 0 + HP . They stand at 1 + HP instead

⊖ Fatigue and ⊗ Wounds can only be caught **as they arrive**. A ⊗ Wound is only ever catchable at the instant somebody goes down, so Bearing one is always the act of taking their injury in place of watching them fall.

Devotion fills when your people are hurt, and it tends to run out well before your ♦ Action Points do.

Capstone

- **A Vessel Made Larger** — Devotion caps at **8**, and you begin each Encounter with double what your Flock would give you.
- **Let It Return** — for 1 additional ♦AP, Bear ➕ HP onto **the attacker** instead of a Flock member.
- **As One Body** — at the start of an Encounter, choose one of **attack rolls, damage rolls, □ Physical Defense, □ Mental Defense, or ➡ Movement**. Every Flock member gains **+2** to it for the whole fight.

Devout Abilities

Bought with Marks, one per Level. Eight on offer and a career takes about five.

Ability	⚡	Use
Shepherd Them	2	♦ Action
Kneel a Moment	2	♦ Action
Be Eased	3	♦ Action
Judgement	3	♦ Action
Change Places	4	♦ Action
Steadfast	5	♦ Reaction
And Thine Be Blessed	6	♦ Action
Rise, and Walk	8	♦♦♦ Action

The Devout pool

Shepherd Them • ⚡ 2 • ♦ Action

A Flock member immediately moves up to their full ⇒ Movement. This does not spend their ⇒ Movement on their own Turn.

Kneel a Moment • ⚡ 2 • ♦ Action

Gain **2 Devotion**, to the usual maximum of 5.

Be Eased • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

A Flock member regains **1d6** + your Level in **+** HP.

You may spend any amount of **Devotion**. Each point spent adds another **1d6**.

Judgement • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

Roll **1d20** + your Level against one enemy's **□ Mental Defense** within 5 **□**. On a success, **1d6** + your Level damage.

You may spend any amount of **Devotion**. Each point spent adds another **1d8**.

Change Places • ⚡ 4 • ♦ Action

Two Flock members within **Medium** range of each other swap places.

Steadfast • ⚡ 5 • ♦ Reaction

Trigger — a Flock member takes damage, and you hold **4 or more Devotion**.

Reduce that damage by your current Devotion. The Devotion is not spent.

And Thine Be Blessed • ⚡ 6 • ♦ Action

Spend 1 Devotion for each Flock member you wish to bless. Each gains **Favor on one roll of their choosing**, before the start of your next Turn.

Rise, and Walk · 4 8 · ♦♦♦ Action

An unconscious Flock member returns at **half their maximum + HP**. Their ⊗ Wounds are unchanged.

This does not work on the dead.

Mage

The Mage is the ranged Calling and the most fragile thing at the table. They draw on a library of twenty-one spells and never have enough 4 Energy for the ones they want, so a fight becomes a run of decisions about what to spend, and their best work stays expensive for the whole career.

Every spell deals **arcane** damage by default, with no damage-type table or resistance chart behind it.

Trained	
Weapons	Arcane · Piercing
Armor	Light

The Core Kit

Core Kit, the Domain. Choose one at any rest, freely, at no cost. It colors everything you cast, so an arcane bolt becomes a bolt of flame or ice or lightning, and it grants a standing benefit that is with you until you choose otherwise.

Domain	Levels 1-2	Levels 3-4
Flame	+ 1d4 on every damage roll	+ 1d6
Ice	2 Disfavor on the target's next attack	And its ⇒ Movement is halved
Storm	+2 □ range, and 1 damage to any other enemy within 2 □ of the target	2 damage

They are meant to be equal rather than small, and a Mage always has exactly one of them running, so the Domain is really the Calling wearing one of three faces.

Being equal, they answer different questions. Flame is indifferent to what it is fighting, Ice wants one dangerous thing to lock down, and Storm wants a crowd, against a single enemy it does nothing at all.

Some spells carry a **Domain variant**, a line that changes what the spell does when cast under that Domain. Cheap spells usually carry one, and the most expensive ones speak in all three.

YOUR FIRST SPELLS

A Mage begins knowing three spells, chosen from anything at Demand 4 or below, and learns **one more at every Level after**. A Mark buys another.

Take at least one at **Demand 1**, since that is the spell you will still be casting for free at Level 5, and a Mage with nothing native has nothing to do on the Turn the pool runs dry.

The other two are where the real decision sits. At Level 1, Capacity 1, a Demand 2 spell costs 1 ⚡ Energy a cast, a Demand 3 costs 2, and a Demand 4 costs 3, which is the whole pool once a day. Spreading three spells across that band gives a Mage a free option, a repeatable one, and something held back for when it matters.

Capstone

A Mage Capstone belongs to a Domain. You may still swap freely at rest, so what it really means is that one of the three is yours in a way the other two are not.

Domain	Capstone
Flame	The die becomes 1d8, and anything struck takes −2 to both Defenses until the start of your next Turn
Ice	The 2 Disfavor stands, and it costs the target 1 ⚡AP
Storm	3 damage, and the arc arcs again from everything it reached

Flame's is the strongest, and deservedly so, being the only one that pays out on other people's sheets. Three allies swinging at a softened target gain about 6 extra damage a Round at Level 5. Since Flame attaches no conditions to its use, its Capstone ends up improving the whole party.

Storm's has the widest ceiling and the narrowest floor in the set. It does nothing whatsoever against a single enemy, and against four it deals 21 before the spell itself lands, at a point where a Minor adversary has 23 + HP.

The Spell Library

Twenty-one spells, because for a Mage the spells **are** the kit. You start with three, learn one at every Level after, and buy more with Marks, so a career sees about ten of them and leaves eleven on the page.

⚡ Demand	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Spells	4	4	4	3	2	2	1	1

Every spell is **arcane**, and your Domain shapes it as you cast. An Arcane Bolt is a firebolt in Flame, a shard in Ice, a snap of lightning in Storm.

Every spell reads all three Domains. Whichever one you are running decides what the spell actually does rather than merely what it is called, which is why a Flame Mage and an Ice Mage can cast from the same library and play nothing alike.

Each spell says which Defense it rolls against, and it is not always ☐ Physical. **Numb**, **Glamour** and **Dominate** go after ☐ **Mental Defense** instead, so a Mage carries an answer to the armoured thing as well as the fast one. As with every ability, a spell's attack is 1d20 + your Level.

Taken across the whole list, **Flame** spreads and keeps burning, **Ice** slows and holds and denies ground, while **Storm** reaches further and goes through whatever is in the way.

The spell library

Arcane Bolt • ⚡ 1 • ♦ Action

Roll against □ Physical Defense within Short range. On a success, 1d4 + your Level.

Flame — The target catches, and anything flammable it touches catches with it.

Ice — The target's ⇨ Movement is halved until the start of your next Turn.

Storm — The target's □ counts as 2 lower against this roll.

Sigil • ⚡ 1 • ♦ Action

Mark an object or a willing creature. While it holds you know its direction and rough distance within a mile, and whether it has moved. One at a time.

Flame — The Sigil smoulders. It can be seen in the dark at a hundred paces.

Ice — The Sigil is cold to the touch, and you know the temperature and weather where it lies.

Storm — The Sigil crackles, and you hear whatever is said within 1 □ of it.

Mending Hand • ⚡ 1 • ♦ Action

A creature you touch regains 1d4 + your Level in + HP.

Flame — It also ends any burning, bleeding, or ongoing damage.

Ice — It also removes 1 ⊖ **Fatigue**.

Storm — You may cast it at Short range instead of touch.

Weave Sight • ⚡ 1 • ♦ Action

Favor on Arcana until the end of the scene. While it holds you can tell whether a thing is enchanted, roughly what ⚡ Demand it carries, and what it is for.

Flame — You see heat: living things through walls, and where a fire has recently been.

Ice — You see what has been still. Anything undisturbed for a day shows its history.

Storm — You see currents: which way the air moves, and what is listening.

Numb · ♣ 2 · ♦ Action

Roll against ☐ **Mental Defense** within Short range. On a success, 1d4 + your Level and **1** ☹ **Fatigue**.

Flame — The ☹ Fatigue becomes 2.

Ice — The target may not take Reactions until the start of your next Turn.

Storm — It also strikes one other creature within 3 ☐ for the ☹ Fatigue alone.

Displace · ♣ 2 · ♦ Action

A creature within Medium range is moved **3** ☐ in any direction, including upward. Unwilling creatures may resist with a Contest.

Flame — Where it lands scorches. The first creature to enter that space takes 1d4 .

Ice — It lands prone, on ground gone slick.

Storm — The distance becomes 6 ☐.

Veil · ♣ 2 · ♦ Action

Until the start of your next Turn, an ally within Medium range and anyone within 1 ☐ of them have **Concealment**.

Flame — The veil is smoke. Anything ending its Turn inside takes **1** ☹ **Fatigue**.

Ice — The veil is rime. Anything entering it has its ⇨ Movement halved.

Storm — The veil covers 2 ☐ around them instead of 1.

Unseen Hand · ♣ 2 · ♦ Action

Handle an object at Medium range as though you held it. It has your ♦ Vigor and cannot attack. It persists until dismissed.

Flame — Anything it holds is warm enough to light tinder.

Ice — Anything it holds is frozen fast, and cannot be taken from it.

Storm — It reaches to Long range instead.

Arcane Lance • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

A line **5** □ long. Roll once against every □ Physical Defense in it. On a success, **1d6** + your Level.

Flame — The line keeps burning until the start of your next Turn. Anything entering takes **1d4**.

Ice — The ground it crossed is treacherous. Crossing costs double ⇒ Movement.

Storm — It does not stop at walls thinner than 1 □.

Snare • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

Roll against □ **Physical Defense** within Medium range. On a success, the creature is held fast and takes **1** ⊖ **Fatigue**. It cannot move until it wins a Contest against your ● **Acuity**, one attempt per Turn.

Flame — The snare burns. It takes **1d4** on each failed attempt.

Ice — The snare spreads to one other creature within 1 □.

Storm — The snare arcs. While held, it takes Disfavor on all rolls.

Siphon • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

Roll against □ Physical Defense within Short range. On a success, **1d6** + your Level, and you regain **half that** in + HP.

Flame — You regain the full amount instead of half.

Ice — The target's ⇒ Movement is halved until the start of your next Turn.

Storm — You may give the + HP to an ally within Medium range instead.

Threshold • ⚡ 3 • ♦ Action

Seal a gap up to **2** □ across. Nothing crosses without breaking through: an ♦ Action and a Contest. It holds an hour.

Flame — Breaking through costs **1d6**.

Ice — The gap may be up to 4 □ across.

Storm — You may see and speak through it as though it were not there.

Arcane Burst • ⚡ 4 • ♦ Action

Choose a point within Medium range. Roll once against every ☐ Physical Defense within **2** ☐. On a success, 1d6 + your Level.

Flame — Anything hit is knocked back 1 ☐.

Ice — The area becomes rough ground until the start of your next Turn.

Storm — One target you hit is deafened and takes Disfavor on its next roll.

Quicken • ⚡ 4 • ♦ Action

An ally within Medium range gains **1 ♦AP** on their next Turn.

Flame — Their next attack that Turn deals 1d6 extra.

Ice — They also ignore rough ground that Turn.

Storm — Their ⇒ Movement doubles that Turn.

Recall • ⚡ 4 • ♦♦ Action

You step to wherever your **Sigil** lies, however far, provided you are under the same sky. The Sigil is spent.

Flame — You arrive in a gout of flame. Anything within 1 ☐ takes 1d6 .

Ice — You may bring one willing creature you are touching.

Storm — You may instead pull the Sigilled object to you.

Chain • ⚡ 5 • ♦ Action

Roll against ☐ Physical Defense within Medium range. On a success, 1d8 + your Level. It leaps to up to **two more** creatures within 3 ☐ of the last, for half each. Never the same creature twice.

Flame — Every creature it touches catches.

Ice — Every creature it touches has its ⇒ Movement halved.

Storm — It leaps to **four** more instead of two.

Unmake • ⚡ 5 • ♦♦ Action

Roll against ☐ Physical Defense within Short range, ignoring any ☐ granted by armor. On a success, 2d6 + your Level.

Flame — Their armor is ruined and grants nothing until repaired.

Ice — They may not move on their next Turn.

Storm — It reaches to Long range.

Tempest • ⚡ 6 • ♦♦ Action

A storm fills 2 ☐ around a point in Medium range for **3 Rounds**. Any creature beginning its Turn inside takes 1d6 + your Level.

Flame — The area is rough ground, and anything leaving takes 1d6 again.

Ice — Creatures inside have their ⇒ Movement halved.

Storm — Creatures inside take Disfavor on all attack rolls.

Glamour • ⚡ 6 • ♦ Action

You appear as anything of roughly your size, or place a convincing illusion of a creature within Medium range. Roll once against the ☐ **Mental Defense** of every enemy that can see it. Any that fail cannot tell the difference and will attack the illusion. Any hit dispels it.

Flame — When it is dispelled, it bursts. Anything within 1 ☐ takes 1d6 .

Ice — It leaves a frozen double behind, which counts as Concealment for anyone beside it.

Storm — It speaks with a voice you have heard, at any distance you can see.

Dominate • ⚡ 7 • ♦♦ Action

Roll against ☐ **Mental Defense** within Medium range. On a success, the target immediately takes **one ♦ Action of your choosing**, paid from its own ♦AP. It may not harm itself.

Flame — It attacks the nearest creature you name.

Ice — It stands still instead, and the Action is lost.

Storm — It moves its full ⇒ Movement where you point, first.

Cataclysm · 4 8 · ♦♦♦ Action

Everything within **5** of a point in Medium range. Roll once against every Physical Defense. On a success, **3d6** + your Level.

Flame — The ground burns for the rest of the Encounter. Entering costs **1d6**.

Ice — Everything struck is held fast until it wins a Contest.

Storm — It strikes twice, rolling again separately for half.

Wilder

The Wilder is the adaptive Calling. Every other Calling walks into a fight already configured, and the Wilder reconfigures partway through, trading pieces of themselves for pieces of something else. Outside a fight they are the party's answer to an obstacle as often as to an enemy.

They are the only Calling whose **capabilities** change mid-Encounter. Flight, immovability, a natural weapon, a sense you did not have a moment ago: things that change what is possible.

Trained	
Weapons	None. Your shape is your weapon
Armor	Light

The Core Kit

Shifts. You know a number of animal **Shifts** and wear **one at a time**. Each carries a natural attack, a handful of things that are true while you wear it, and one **enhanced property** that waits until you have gone far enough.

	Cost
Shifting in	1 ♦AP and 1 4 Energy . Feral rises by that Shift's value
Shifting out	1 ♦AP

The 4 cost never falls away. Changing shape asks the same of a Level 5 Wilder as a Level 1 one.

Feral counts how far you have traveled from yourself. It falls by **1 per hour of rest** and carries between Encounters.

Feral	
2	Disfavor on anything needing speech or fine work
4	You cannot use weapons or armor
6	Your enhanced properties come online

Feral	
8	You cannot shift out
10	At the end of your Turn you attack the nearest creature. The GM chooses which

Feral 6 is where the Calling works, and reaching it takes about three shifts: three ♦AP and most of a Level 1 pool. Everything above it is the price of staying there.

You know two Shifts at Level 1 and one more at every Level after. A Mark buys another. Ten exist, and the Demand band your Level opens decides which: Demand 2 and 4 from Level 1, Demand 6 from Level 3, Demand 8 from Level 5.

A Shift's ♣ is its **Demand**, and here it gates access rather than setting a price. Shifting in costs a flat **1 ♣ Energy** whichever Shift you wear.

Capstone

- **Split Shift** — wear two Shifts at once. Their attacks, properties and lacks all apply.
- **Halved** — your enhanced properties come online at **Feral 3**.
- **Tear Free** — ♦ Action. Shed Feral in blocks of **3**. Each block costs 1 ⊖ Fatigue and restores 1d6 + your Level in + HP.

Wilder Shifts

Natural attacks are what you have instead of a weapon, so they run a tier above the ordinary ladder. Every Shift also has something it has not got.

Shift	♣ Demand	Feral	Attack
Cat	2	1	1d6 + Level
Serpent	2	1	1d6 + Level
Crow	2	1	1d6 + Level
Wolf	4	2	1d8 + Level
Bear	4	2	1d8 + Level
Stag	4	2	1d8 + Level
Hawk	6	2	1d10 + Level
Spider	6	2	1d10 + Level
Crocodile	8	3	1d12 + Level
Whale	8	3	1d12 + Level

The Wilder's Shifts

Cat • 4 2 • Feral 1

1d6 + your Level. +1 $\square$ **Physical Defense.**

See in darkness to 10 $\square$. Favor on Stealth and on Acrobatics. You take no Disfavor for any fall.

Your Slots are halved. You carry what a cat carries.

Enhanced — darkness does not obscure you at any distance, and your Stealth Favor holds even while you move your full $\Rightarrow$ Movement.

Serpent • 4 2 • Feral 1

1d6 + your Level, and the target takes 1 $\ominus$ **Fatigue.**

Fit through any gap a fist would pass. Favor on rolls against effects targeting $\square$ Mental Defense.

You have no hands, so you cannot use $\diamond$ Interact.

Enhanced — the $\ominus$ Fatigue becomes 2, and applies whether or not the attack lands.

Crow • 4 2 • Feral 1

1d6 + your Level.

Mimic any voice you have heard. Favor on Perception at distance, and on Initiative. Glide down from any height without harm.

Your Slots are halved and your $\square$ Physical Defense drops by 2. You are hollow-boned.

Enhanced — you may speak while shifted, at any Feral.

Wolf • 4 4 • Feral 2

1d8 + your Level. +1 $\square$ **Physical Defense.**

$\Rightarrow$ Movement +3. You sense every living thing within 20 $\square$ whether you can see it or not.

You have no hands, so you cannot use $\diamond$ Interact.

Enhanced — allies within 5 $\square$ gain Favor against anything you have bitten this Round.

Bear • 4 4 • Feral 2

1d8 + your Level. +3 $\square$ **Physical Defense**, and +3 + **Maximum HP** while worn.

Favor on $\diamond$ Vigor. Rough ground does not slow you.

Your $\Rightarrow$ Movement drops by 2.

Enhanced — you cannot be moved against your will.

Stag • 4 4 • Feral 2

1d8 + your Level.

Leap your full $\Rightarrow$ Movement in any direction. $\Rightarrow$ Movement +2. Favor on Initiative.

Your $\square$ Physical Defense drops by 2. You are built to run, not to stand.

Enhanced — nothing may make an Opportunity Attack against you.

Hawk • 4 6 • Feral 2

1d10 + your Level.

Fly your $\Rightarrow$ Movement. See clearly to 40 $\square$, with Favor on Perception. Attacks made against you from the ground take Disfavor.

You must move at least half your $\Rightarrow$ Movement each Turn or come down.

Enhanced — Dive. Move your full $\Rightarrow$ Movement in a straight line and attack at the end of it with Favor.

Spider • 4 6 • Feral 2

1d10 + your Level. +1 $\square$ **Physical Defense**.

Walk any surface, including ceilings. Once per Turn, web a target within Short range: their $\Rightarrow$ Movement is halved until the start of your next Turn.

Your $\Rightarrow$ Movement is halved on open ground. You are built for walls.

Enhanced — the web holds them fast instead. They may not move at all until they win a Contest against you.

Crocodile • 4 8 • Feral 3

1d12 + your Level, and the target takes **1** ☹ **Fatigue** from the crush. **+2** 📏 **Physical Defense**.

Anything you hit is knocked prone. Swim your ➡ Movement. Favor on ♦ Vigor Contests.

Your ➡ Movement is halved out of water.

Enhanced — your jaws strike every enemy within 1 📏, rolling separately against each.

Whale • 4 8 • Feral 3

1d12 + your Level. **+2** 📏 **Physical Defense**. You cannot be knocked prone.

You occupy 2 📏 and cannot be moved against your will. Rough ground does not slow you. You breathe water.

You cannot enter a space narrower than 2 📏.

Enhanced — anything you pass through takes 1d12 and is shoved aside.

General Abilities

The shared pool. Anyone may take from it whatever their Calling, and it is where playstyle is decided: you take **two at Level 1**, and one more at Levels 2 and 4.

All of them are Passives: always on, free to use, and never something to remember mid-Turn. They are meant to sit as the mundane layer of a character.

The 4 number is the ability's **Demand**, and on a Passive it gates when you may take it rather than what it costs. The usual rule applies, you may take anything up to a Demand of your Level plus 3, so the whole list is open from Level 1. Because a Passive is never activated, it holds no drain and costs nothing once learned.

Ability	4	Effect
Weapon Training	1	Gain one weapon group. May be taken more than once
Armor Training	1	Gain one armor group. May be taken more than once
Schooling	1	Gain two Skills
Deep Pockets	1	+4 Slots
Quick Off the Mark	1	+3 ➤ Initiative
Traveller	1	➡ Movement +1
Sure Grip	1	You cannot be disarmed

Ability	⚡	Effect
Fitted	2	While in Medium or Heavy armor, +1 ☐ Physical Defense
Unencumbered	2	While in Light armor or none, +1 ☐ Physical Defense and ⇒ Movement +1
Thick Skinned	2	+1 ☐ Mental Defense
Watchful	2	You cannot be surprised
Field Medic	2	Stabilize costs you ♦ rather than ♦♦, and returns them at your Level + 2 ➕ HP
Hard Sleeper	2	Each three hours of rest removes one ☹ Wound and one ☹ Fatigue
Long Arm	3	Your weapons reach one band further
Journeyman	3	Projects, Study and Training in downtime take half the time
Opportunist	3	Your Opportunity Attacks deal an extra weapon die
Steady Hand	4	Treat any Gradient Die reading 1 as though it read 4

5 — Weapons, Armor & Items

Everything a character carries. The states, Slots and ⚡ Demand these run on are in Equipment; this is the list itself.

General Items

Everything here is **Level 0**. It costs no ⚡ Energy and never will.

Item	Slots	
Rope, 20 ☐	1	Holds a person and their gear
Lantern and oil	1	Light to 5 ☐ for a night
Healer's kit	1	Favor on Healing. Ten uses
Thieves' tools	1	Required for locks worth the name
Grappling hook	1	With rope, a climb becomes a check rather than a problem
Crowbar	1	Favor on ♦ Vigor to force something
Spyglass	1	See at Long range as though at Short
Chalk and charcoal	0	Marks that last until weather takes them
Bedroll and blanket	1	Rest without Disfavor in poor conditions
Rations, tinder, waterskin	0	Negligible. Never counted

Weapons

Damage is the weapon's die plus your Level. A sword is 1d6 , so it deals 1d6+3 in the hands of a Level 3 character and 1d6+5 at Level 5.

The die is what separates one weapon from another, while the Level is what keeps all of them relevant, which is why a starting blade is still worth carrying at the end of the set.

Every weapon carries an attack and one **Signature Ability**, which is what training buys. Untrained, you get the attack and nothing else.

Weapon	Group	Die	Reach	Hands	Slots
Dagger	Piercing	1d4	Melee	1	1
Spear	Piercing	1d6	Reach	1	2
Longsword	Slicing	1d6	Melee	1	2
Greatsword	Slicing	1d10	Melee	2	3
Mace	Crushing	1d6	Melee	1	2
Warhammer	Crushing	1d8	Melee	2	3
Shortbow	Ranged	1d6	Medium	2	2
Crossbow	Ranged	1d8	Medium	2	3
Staff	Arcane	1d6	Melee	2	2
Wand	Arcane	1d4	Short	1	1

Weapons

Dagger • Piercing • 1d4 • Melee

One hand. 1 Slot. It can be hidden anywhere and drawn without an ♦ Interact.

Slip • ♦ Action, attack a creature that has not yet acted this Round with **Favor**.

Spear • Piercing • 1d6 • Reach

One hand, and works with a shield. 2 Slots.

Set • ♦ Action, plant the butt. Until the start of your next Turn, the first creature to move within 1 □ of you takes the spear's damage before it acts.

Longsword • Slicing • 1d6 • Melee

One hand, or two for 1d8 . 2 Slots.

Half-Sword • ♦ Action, grip the blade and drive the point. The attack ignores **2** of the target's □ Physical Defense.

Greatsword • Slicing • 1d10 • Melee

Two hands. 3 Slots.

Cleave • ♦♦ Action, attack. Any damage past what was needed to drop the target carries to another enemy within 1 □.

Mace • Crushing • 1d6 • Melee

One hand. 2 Slots.

Crack • ♦ Action, attack. On a hit, the target's □ Physical Defense drops by **2** until the start of your next Turn.

Warhammer • Crushing • 1d8 • Melee

Two hands. 3 Slots.

Stagger • ♦♦ Action, attack. On a hit, the target loses **1 ♦AP** from its next Turn.

Shortbow • Ranged • 1d6 • Medium

Two hands. 2 Slots. A quiver is a single item and its arrows are never counted.

Loose Twice • ♦♦ Action, two attacks against any targets in range, rolled separately.

Crossbow · Ranged · 1d8 · Medium

Two hands. 3 Slots. Reloading is part of the attack.

Punch Through · ♦ Action, attack, ignoring any □ Physical Defense granted by armor.

Staff · Arcane · 1d6 · Melee

Two hands. 2 Slots.

Channel · ♦ Action, the next spell you cast this Turn costs **1 ♣ less**, to a minimum of 0.

Wand · Arcane · 1d4 · Short

One hand. 1 Slot.

Focus · ♦ Action, take **Favor** on your next spell attack this Turn.

Armor

Armor adds to □ Physical Defense and costs Slots. Heavier armor carries properties beneath it, and those properties are what training buys: untrained, you get the Defense and nothing else.

Donning or removing armor is an ✱ Activity, so it cannot happen inside an Encounter.

Armor	Group	□	Slots	Property
Padded	Light	+1	1	Nothing. It is cloth, and it packs like cloth
Leather	Light	+2	2	Favor on Stealth
Studded Leather	Light	+2	2	Reduce each ⊗ Wound's Defense penalty by 1
Hide	Medium	+3	3	Rough ground does not slow you
Scale	Medium	+3	3	Disfavor on attacks against you from behind
Breastplate	Medium	+4	3	No Disfavor on Stealth from the weight
Chain	Heavy	+5	4	Slicing weapons deal 1 less to you
Plate	Heavy	+6	5	You cannot be knocked prone
Buckler	Shield	+1	1	One hand. Free to ♦ Interact around
Tower Shield	Shield	+2	3	One hand. Counts as full cover against Ranged attacks while you do not move

Medium armor gives Disfavor on Stealth. **Heavy** gives Disfavor on Stealth and reduces ⇒ Movement by 1.

What armor is worth

Against an even attacker, a middling character sits at 13 and is hit 55% of the time. Every point of armor is 5 points off that.

Armor	Total	They hit you
—	13	55%
+2	15	45%
+4	17	35%
+6	19	25%

Plate and a Tower Shield together put an even attacker at 15%, which is why Heavy belongs to the Guardian, costs half your Slots, and cannot be put on inside a fight.

Enhanced Gear

Ordinary weapons and armor sit at Level 1 and cost you nothing for a whole career. **Enhanced** gear runs Levels 2 to 8, and an item's Level is its Demand.

An item's Demand is what it costs to **carry**. Any Action written on that item carries its own Demand separately, and that is what it costs to **use**.

Item	Level	Holds	Its Action
Emberbrand	2	2	5
Farstrike Bow	3	3	4
Wardplate	4	4	6
Ring of the Unseen	5	5	6
Crown of Ninefold Command	7	7	8

Enhanced gear

Emberbrand · Level 2 · Longsword

A longsword with a seam of dull orange down the fuller. 1d6 + your Level, or 1d8 in two hands, and it keeps its **Half-Sword**.

Kindle · ♦ Action · ♣ 5, the blade catches for the rest of the Encounter. While alight it deals an extra 1d6, and anything flammable it touches catches too.

Farstrike Bow · Level 3 · Shortbow

1d6 + your Level at **Long** range rather than Medium, and it keeps **Loose Twice**.

Carry the Shot · ♦ Action · ♣ 4, one attack at any distance you can see, ignoring cover entirely.

Wardplate · Level 4 · Heavy armor

+6 □ Physical Defense, 5 Slots. You cannot be knocked prone.

Turn the Blow · ♦ Reaction · ♣ 6, a Critical Hit against you becomes an ordinary hit.

Ring of the Unseen · Level 5

1 Slot. While worn, Favor on Stealth.

Unseen · ♦ Action · ♣ 6, you have Concealment and cannot be targeted by anything that must see you, until you attack or until the start of your next Turn but one.

Crown of Ninefold Command · Level 7

1 Slot. While worn, Favor on Command, and anyone who has served under you takes Disfavor on rolls to refuse you.

Be Still · ♦♦ Action · ♣ 8, every enemy within 5 □ that fails against your □ Mental Defense may take no Actions on its next Turn, only movement.

Training and What It Buys

	Groups
Weapons	Slicing · Crushing · Piercing · Ranged · Arcane
Armor	Light · Medium · Heavy · Shield

Your Calling and Background say which you start with, and a General Ability adds more.

Anyone may use anything. Training does not gate the weapon. It gates the **Signature Ability**: untrained, you can swing the greatsword, and you cannot Cleave with it. Armor is the same, you get the Defense and none of the properties.

That keeps an untrained character functional rather than helpless, while leaving the more interesting half of every item behind something you had to earn.

6 — Advancement

The two Pursuits are introduced in Pursuits & Advancement. Here is everything they buy, and how to run them.

Marks

A **Mark** is one entry from this menu. Maximum three per Level, **each type at most once per Level**, spent when earned and never banked.

Mark	Effect
Attribute	+1 to two different Attribute Scores, neither rising above 18
Resilience	+1 maximum ⊗ Wounds or ⊖ Fatigue, to a cap of 5
Reserve	+1 maximum ↵ Energy
Calling	One ability from your Calling's pool. For a Mage that pool is the spell library; for a Wilder it is the Shift list

Marks buy fundamentals. The mundane mechanical improvements, a Skill, a weapon group, a set of armor training, live in the General Ability pool instead, so nothing on the sheet is purchasable two different ways.

Levels

A **Level** goes to everyone at once and grants:

On a Level	Effect
+ HP	Increases by your Calling's value
↵ Capacity	+1
Levels 2 and 4	One General Ability
Level 3	A Calling improvement, and +1 maximum ↵ Energy
Level 5	Your Capstone , and +1 maximum ↵ Energy

Levels give you the spine of the character, durability, reach, and the way your Calling deepens. Marks are where you choose how much further into it to go, and a Calling ability is one of the things they can buy.

There are no subclasses in this set and nothing branches before the end. A Calling runs as a single road, with the Capstone at Level 5 as the point where you say which direction you had been facing all along.

The Progression, Illustrated

A Beastfolk Fighter who started at ♦12 ☆14, spent one Attribute Mark a Level on ☆ Deft and ♦ Vigor, and fights in **Press** with a two-handed longsword, against a same-Tier Average adversary:

Level	♦ / ☆	Attack	Their □	Plain	With a Skill	Damage	Share of their pool	+ HP	Own □
1	12 / 14	+4	13	60%	84%	1d8+3	15%	16	16
3	14 / 16	+6	14	65%	88%	1d8+6	15%	38	18
5	16 / 18	+8	15	70%	91%	1d8+9	14%	65	20

Level 1 is creation, with no Marks banked yet. By Level 5 the character has spent four Attribute Marks and sits at the Score cap of 18.

Look at the two columns that do not move. The hit rate climbs ten points across the whole set, and the share of an even target's pool that one landed blow takes stays flat at about 15%.

Everything gets bigger and nothing gets easier: adversary Defense and adversary pools climb alongside, and a Level 5 fight has the same shape as a Level 1 fight fought with larger numbers.

What actually changed is the + HP column, which quadrupled. **Growth in this set gets measured in what you can survive rather than in what you can beat.**

Where growth is really felt

The other half of advancement never appears on that table, because it is not a bonus at all. It is the same ability getting cheaper as your Capacity climbs to meet its Demand.

A **Demand 4** ability, the top of what a Level 1 character may even take:

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
⚡ cost each use	3	2	1	0	0
⚡ pool	3	3	4	4	5
Uses from a full pool	1	1	4	∞	∞

Nothing about the ability changed; the character grew into it. At Level 1 it is the whole day's reserve spent at once, and by Level 4 it is free forever, with something at Demand 7 taking its place as the thing that costs everything.

A Level buys something a Mark never can: **the band moves, and everything you already own moves with it.**

Pursuits

A **Pursuit** is a sentence saying what someone is trying to do. The player writes it rather than choosing from a list, and it is the only engine of advancement in this set.

Individual Pursuits are private goals and belong to one character. When one meaningfully advances, that player takes a Mark. Roughly once a session.

Party Pursuits are agreed between everyone at the table, including the GM. When one resolves, everybody Levels. Roughly every third session.

Writing One

A good one is **specific enough to finish**. There has to be a moment where you can point at it and say that it is done.

A good one also **puts the character somewhere**. A Pursuit that can be resolved by thinking about it produces no play. The GM should be able to read it and know roughly what the character will do next session.

I want to be a better man than my father	Harder to use. It is a verdict rather than a destination, and nothing in the world moves when the character acts on it
I want the sword my father sold, and I know the house it hangs in	Easier to use. It names a house, an object, and somebody who will mind losing it

Neither of those is a bad Pursuit and both can carry a character. The difference is only how much the GM has to build before either one does anything, and some tables would rather the GM build it.

What makes the second easier is that it names **somewhere**, or **somebody**, or **something a party could go and take**. Reachability is beside the point. What matters is that a session can be pointed at it.

Where to Start

If nothing comes, take your **Background** and your **Calling** and read them together. The gap between what you did before and what you trained as afterward is usually where the Pursuit is sitting.

Background and Calling	Might want
Soldier , now a Guardian	To find the rest of the line that broke, and learn which of them ran first
Scholar , now a Mage	To read the volume their name was struck out of, and put it back in
Criminal , now a Devout	To pay back every house they emptied, in order, without being recognized doing it
Outlander , now a Wilder	To find out what drove their people off the high ground, and whether it is still there
Noble , now a Fighter	To be owed a favor by the family that disinherited them, and to collect it in public
Pilgrim , now a Devout	To reach the shrine at the end of the road they started on, and find out whether anything is still there

Or ignore all of that and write what you actually want, provided it passes the test above.

Finishing One

When a Pursuit is done, reached, resolved, or given up on, **write another**. Abandoning one carries no penalty, and holding onto a dead one earns nothing.

A character between Pursuits still earns Marks from what the party is doing. They simply earn them more slowly, which is the fiction telling you to write the next one.

A Pursuit does not need to be achievable inside five Levels, and most of them will not be. What it needs is to be the kind of thing that a session can move a step closer to.

Pacing

The numbers above are defaults and the most likely thing to differ at your table.

	Default	If it feels slow	If it feels fast
Marks	1 per session	Award on meaningful progress, not completion	Require the Pursuit to actually resolve
Levels	1 per 3 sessions	Break the Party Pursuit into stages	Set a Pursuit with more between here and there

A Level 1 to 5 run is four Party Pursuit resolutions and about twelve sessions. Marks are capped at **three per Level and one of each type per Level**, so a fast Mark pace runs into a ceiling rather than running away.

The Capstone

At Level 5 you take your Calling's Capstone. It is the only branching choice a character makes, and it is made at the end rather than the beginning.

The inversion is deliberate. Most fantasy games ask you to specialize at Level 2, before you have played the character at all, where this set waits until Level 5 and asks once you know who they turned out to be.

7 — Running the Game

You Hold the Numbers

The d20 rolls over, so a player always sees their own total, while the number it is measured against stays hidden.

Player: "I go up the wall before the guards reach me." **You:** (rough stone, rain, and a clock — DT 15) **You:** "Roll it."

Three things stay behind the screen: the **DT**, an adversary's **Defense**, and how much **+** HP anything has left. Everything else is on the player's sheet already.

That matters more in this set than in the other two, because of **Taking Your Score**. A player who knows the DT is doing arithmetic rather than making a decision, where a player who does not know it is making a bet: certainty at their Score, or a flat die that can land anywhere. Announce the number and you have deleted the most characteristic choice in the Ruleset.

WHAT PLAYERS DO KNOW

- Their four Scores and Ranks, and both their Defenses.
- Whether a Skill applies, and which die the Favor is going on.
- Their **⚡** Energy, and what everything they own costs to use.
- That the die is flat, so a 20 is exactly as likely as a 3.

WHAT YOU DO NOT HAVE TO ANNOUNCE

You are never obliged to say what a DT is. If a player asks whether better footing would help, answer honestly, the point is that they weigh position, not that they guess at it. Telling them afterwards costs nothing. "That was a 15" is a fine thing to say once the dice have landed.

Adversary **+** HP is the other one worth holding back, and describing it works better anyway. A Roadman who is still up, and not enjoying it tells the party more than "seven left" does, and keeps the fiction carrying the fight.

The Odds Table

The one lookup worth having open during a fight. Attacker's **total modifier** down the side, target's **Defense** across the top, and the cell is the chance to hit.

The modifier is the Attribute Rank for a weapon attack, or the character's **Level** for an ability's own attack, plus whatever a Stance or an item is adding.

Mod	□ 10	□ 12	□ 13	□ 15	□ 16	□ 18
+0	55%	45%	40%	30%	25%	15%
+2	65%	55%	50%	40%	35%	25%
+4	75%	65%	60%	50%	45%	35%
+6	85%	75%	70%	60%	55%	45%
+8	95%	85%	80%	70%	65%	55%

Three adjustments, and they are the only ones:

- Every ⊖ **Fatigue** the attacker holds moves them one point up the left column.
- Every ⊗ **Wound** the target holds moves them one point left along the top.
- **Favor** near the middle of this table, at DT 10 and Rank +0, is a value equivalent of about **+5**: 55% becomes ~80%, two and a half rows. It collapses at the corners.

Read the columns and you can see why Dials warns against tuning a Defense: two points is ten percentage points, at every Level, for every attacker at once.

Setting Difficulty

Pick a **Difficulty Threshold** from the ladder and do not announce it. A player deciding whether to roll or take their Score is making a bet, and the bet is only interesting while the number is hidden.

The odds are published in Targets. Two of them are worth holding in mind:

- **DT 10 is an ordinary difficulty**, and an unskilled character clears it slightly more often than not.
- **DT 25 cannot be reached on a bare roll** at the Ranks a character starts with, with or without a Skill. If you set one, you are saying this needs something you brought — an ability, an item, or leverage from a Background. The single exception is a Level 5 specialist at the Score cap of 18, who clears it one time in five.

Set the DT from the task, never from the party. A locked door is as hard as it is whether the crew arrives fresh or on their last ⊖ Fatigue.

Handing Out Circumstance

Express circumstance as **Favor and Disfavor** rather than as numbers: good footing, a helping hand, poor light, a bad angle. Reach for a numeric modifier only where a rule defines one.

Against DT 10 at Rank +0, one Favor on the Resolution Die is a value equivalent of about **+5**, a quarter of the die. That is the conversion rate to price anything against.

It collapses at the extremes. Against DT 20 at Rank +0 it takes a character from 5% to ~10%. Favor rescues a hard roll and does very little for a hopeless one, so handing it out generously is safer than it looks.

When a Skill Applies

Say yes more often than you say no.

A Skill grants **Favor** on any roll it plausibly covers, one Skill to a roll. Twenty-one entries across three categories is a deliberately broad list, and a player reaching for Nature on anything with weather, beasts or wild ground in it is using it correctly.

The question is never is this an Athletics roll, because **Skills are not tied to Attributes here**. The Attribute comes from how the character is going about it; the Skill comes from whether they were trained for it. Those are two separate questions and you answer them in that order. Nature answers to ♦ Vigor when somebody is walking through hard country, to ● Acuity when they are reading tracks, and to △ Resolve when they are sitting out a storm.

Two habits worth keeping:

- **Rule before the dice, every time.** Whether a Skill applies is part of what the player is deciding, and it changes which die they put the Favor on.
- **Never let a Skill gate an action.** Anyone may attempt anything. A Skill makes them better at it, never permitted to try.

Reading the Gradient

On the d20 the Gradient is a **separate die**, which makes this set different from the other two: reading it costs somebody an extra roll. It is opt-in every single time, and you should treat it that way.

	On a success	On a failure
Major Positive	It buys something extra: ground, information, an opening	You fail and still gain something — footing, a warning, a better idea
Minor Positive	A small edge on top	A soft landing
Standard	It lands exactly as it reads	It fails and nothing else happens
Minor Negative	It works and costs: noise, time, a broken strap	It fails and the moment is a little worse
Major Negative	It works and bites	It fails and the situation turns

A Major lands one roll in ten each way, a Minor two in ten each way, and Standard four in ten. So reading the Gradient on every roll means inventing a turning point about every fifth one. Pick your moments.

In a fight, roll it on every attack. There the extremes have mechanical teeth rather than narrative ones, a 10 is a Critical Hit and a 1 is a Critical Miss that hands the target an Opportunity Attack, and those cannot be adjudicated after the fact. Outside a fight, roll it when it works, but is more interesting than it works, and leave it in the tray otherwise.

The Party Pursuit

The Party Pursuit is the only source of Levels, so it is the clock the whole campaign runs on. In this set it is also the clock on **⚡ Capacity**, which decides how much of a character's own ability list is free. A crew that resolves theirs quickly grows into their Demands quickly. It should be **large, shared, and slow**.

What makes a good one

Three ingredients. A Party Pursuit is worth having when it names all three.

Somewhere to be	A place the crew has to reach, hold, or get inside
Somebody who cares	A person or house that gains or loses by it, and who will act
Something that stops being possible	A reason it cannot simply be done later

Get rich has none of them. Get the relic out of Vault Hollow before the Ashguard finish digging, while the abbot who hid it is still alive to say which one is real has all three.

Handing it out

Do not write the Party Pursuit and present it. Ask the table what their characters would agree to do together, take whichever answer has the most hands behind it, and supply the third ingredient yourself. Players are good at naming a place and a person. They are rarely the ones who put a clock on it.

Resolve it as a **beat rather than a scene**. It has taken three sessions to get there, so let the arrival land, then hand out the Level at the table rather than at the end of the night.

When nobody can think of one

Give them a debt. Somebody in the party owes something to somebody who is now asking, the amount is more than they have, and the person asking has a deadline of their own. It supplies all three ingredients, it explains why these people are traveling together, and it can be paid off in about three sessions.

Tying it to Individual Pursuits

The most reliable way to make a session matter to everyone is to put **one character's Individual Pursuit on the road to the Party Pursuit**. The party is going to Vault Hollow anyway; the man who burned the archive happens to be there.

Do that with a different character each time. Across twelve sessions everyone gets three or four turns of the road bending toward them, and nobody has to ask for it.

Pricing Something That Is Not on a List

A player will want something the gear lists do not have. Two questions settle it in about four seconds.

- Who would have one? That sets the item's Level, and the Level is the 4 Demand.
- Which group is it? That decides who gets its Signature Ability.

Who would have one	Level, and so Demand	Looks like
Anybody, in any market	0	Rope, a lantern, tools, chalk. Free to carry, forever
Any soldier or tradesman	1	An ordinary blade, a bow, a mail shirt. Free from Level 1
A lord's armoury or a good workshop	2 - 3	Named steel, a warded cloak, a bow that carries
A temple, a tower, or a barrow	4 - 6	Things with histories, and previous owners
One of them exists	7 - 8	Never free, at any Level this set reaches

Price the **carrying** by who would own it. Price any **Action** written on it by what the Action does, separately, a blade can be cheap to bear and expensive to light.

If nothing among the five weapon groups and four armor groups fits, it has no group, and therefore no Signature Ability. **Do not invent a tenth group**. Nine is the whole ladder, and a new one would leave every existing character untrained in it.

Building a Fight

This set assumes **four characters**. Three works and leaves a hole; five works and the fights need padding.

A party of four at a realistic two to three attacks each, landing about half the time, deals roughly this much per Round:

Level	Party damage per Round
1	~25
2	~30
3	~36
4	~41
5	~47

Build adversary pools against that, depending on how long you want the thing to last:

Tier	Lasts	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Minor	Inside a Round	12	15	18	21	23
Average	Two Rounds	50	60	72	82	94
Elite	Four Rounds	99	121	143	165	187

Those are pools for something the whole party is focused on. Damage spread across several enemies takes proportionally longer, so a group of Minors is a different problem from one Elite of the same total + HP.

Dials

To make it harder	To make it easier
More adversaries	Fewer adversaries
Raise the Tier	Lower the Tier
Terrain that costs Movement or grants Disfavor	Terrain that grants Favor
Pressure the clock so the fight is not the only problem	Give an escape that does not cost the objective

Lowering an adversary's Defense does not work well. Both Defenses sit in a narrow band by construction, and moving one by 2 swings the hit rate by 10 points at every Level, which is a larger change than it looks and hits the whole party at once. Adjust + HP or numbers instead.

Never scale a DT to the party's condition. If a wall is DT 15, it is DT 15 for a fresh crew and an exhausted one. ⊖ Fatigue already makes the exhausted crew worse at climbing it. Doing the work twice makes attrition meaningless.

What an Adversary Carries

An adversary is a character with the parts nobody needs left off. It has + HP, two Defenses, a ⇒ Movement, a Tier, a damage die, and one or two Actions. It has no Level, no ♣ Energy, no Marks, no Skills and no Slots — **Tier does all of that work.** Anything on its card that should not happen every Round says so on the card.

It spends **3 +AP** a Turn like anyone else, and pays for Reactions out of what it did not spend. Its **Initiative** is a flat **10 + its Tier** unless its card says otherwise.

WHAT IT ROLLS TO HIT

An adversary attacks with **1d20 + its Tier + 2**, against whichever Defense the Action names.

Tier	Attacks at	vs an unarmoured 13	vs an armoured 18
1	+3	55%	30%
2	+4	60%	35%
3	+5	65%	40%
4	+6	70%	45%
5	+7	75%	50%

Tier 1 is the number Armor is already published against: an even attacker against a middling 13 lands 55% of the time, and every point of armor takes 5 off it. The **+2** is what keeps that figure roughly level as Tier and Level climb together, so armor is worth the same at the end of the set as at the start.

An adversary is removed at **0 + HP**. It takes no **Wound** and there is nothing to roll. It does carry **Fatigue** as a character does, to a maximum of 3, because half a dozen things in this set inflict it and they should all be worth using.

DEFENSE BY TIER

+ HP climbs steeply with Tier and Defense barely moves. That is deliberate: the fight-building table above assumes the party lands **about half its attacks at every Level**, so if Defense climbed with the pools that assumption would break and every number in this section with it.

Tier	13 and 14
1 - 2	13
3 - 4	14
5	15

The two points across the range cover the attack Ranks a party picks up from Attribute Marks. Move either Defense **±2** to give an adversary a shape, a brute is easy to hit and easier to outthink, a skirmisher is the reverse, and no further. Past that you are back in the trap the Dials warns about.

ONE IN THREE SHOULD GO FOR 13

13 Mental Defense is a live axis in this set: the Devout, the Mage and half the Otherfolk are built around it, and a table that never meets it will conclude it is decoration. **About one adversary in three should attack 13 instead of 14.** Three of the ten below do.

AN ELITE FOUGHT ALONE ACTS TWICE

Four characters spend twelve ♦AP a Round. One adversary spending three is scenery, however much + HP it is holding.

An Elite with no support takes two Turns a Round: one at its ► Initiative, and one at that value minus 10, with a fresh 3 ♦AP each. Give it allies and it drops back to one.

This changes what the Elite outputs, never what it can absorb, so the four-Round figure in the table above still holds.

Ten adversaries

Roadman · Tier 1 · Minor

+ 12 · 13 · 12 · ⇒ 5 · 3 ♦AP

Cudgel · ♦, attack against 1 within 1 1. 1d4+1 .

Passive **Emboldened.** Favor while another Roadman is within 1 1 of the same target.

They want the cart, not the fight. Three of them is a first session; six is a problem.

Roadman Captain · Tier 1 · Average

+ 50 · 13 · 13 · ⇒ 5 · 3 ♦AP

Sabre · ♦, attack against 1 within 1 1. 1d6+1 .

Hold the Line · ♦, every Roadman within 5 1 takes **Favor** on its next attack.

Passive **Nobody Runs.** Roadmen within 5 1 of her take Favor on rolls against effects targeting 1 Mental Defense.

Drop her and the rest are a Minor problem. That is the lesson, and Tier 1 is where to teach it.

Barrow-Wight · Tier 2 · Minor

+ 15 · 12 · 15 · ⇒ 5 · 3 ♦AP

Grave-Touch · ♦, attack against 1 **Mental Defense** within 1 1. 1d6+2 and 1 ⊖ **Fatigue**.

Passive **Cold Ground.** Rough ground does not slow it. It does not breathe, tire, or need to see.

The first thing most parties meet that their armor does nothing about.

Fen Hag · Tier 2 · Average

+ 60 · 12 · 15 · ⇒ 5 · 3 ♦AP

Whisper · ♦, attack against 1 **Mental Defense** within Medium range. 1d6+2 , and the target takes **Disfavor** on its next roll.

Bog-Hold · ♦♦, one creature within Short range is held fast until it wins a Contest, one attempt per Turn.

Passive **She Was Never There.** Once an Encounter, as a ♦ Reaction, swap places with any creature within 5 1.

Hill Ogre · Tier 3 · Average

+ 72 · □ 12 · □ 12 · ⇒ 6 · 3 ♦ AP

Maul · ♦, attack against □ within 2 □. 1d8+3, and on a Critical Hit the target is knocked prone.

Sweep · ♦♦, attack every creature within 2 □, rolling separately against each. 1d8+3.

Passive **Slow to Notice.** Disfavor on anything it rolls to spot, and it may not take Reactions.

The brute shape: easy to hit, easy to fool, and it only has to connect twice.

Ford-Troll · Tier 3 · Elite

+ 143 · □ 13 · □ 12 · ⇒ 6, and it swims · 3 ♦ AP

Rend · ♦, attack against □ within 1 □. 1d8+3.

Drag Under · ♦♦ — Contest. On a win the target is pulled 3 □ toward the Troll and knocked prone.

Passive **Knits.** At the start of its Turn it regains **5 + HP**, unless it has taken fire damage since its last Turn.

A Flame Mage turns this fight into a different fight, and the party should be allowed to work that out.

Wyvern · Tier 4 · Average

+ 82 · □ 16 · □ 13 · ⇒ 12, flying · 3 ♦ AP

Sting · ♦, attack against □ within 1 □. 1d10+4 and **1 ⊖ Fatigue**.

Stoop · ♦♦, move up to its full ⇒ Movement in a straight line and attack at the end of it with **Favor**.

Passive **Never Still.** Nothing may make an Opportunity Attack against it.

The skirmisher shape: hard to hit, hard to pin, and it will not stand and trade.

The Hollow Choir · Tier 4 · Elite

+ 165 · □ 13 · □ 16 · ⇒ 5 · 3 ♦ AP

Unison · ♦, attack against □ **Mental Defense** within Long range. 1d10+4.

Antiphon · ♦♦, every creature within 5 □ that fails against its □ Mental Defense takes **1 ⊖ Fatigue** and may take no ♦ Free Actions on its next Turn.

Passive **Many Mouths.** Once it has been reduced below half its + HP, **Unison** strikes two targets instead of one.

Everything it does is against the pool the party armoured least. It is the boss that a Guardian's **Mental Ward** was written for.

Drake-Thrall · Tier 5 · Minor

+ 23 · 15 · 13 · ⇒ 6 · 3 ♦AP

Scale-Blade · ♦, attack against 1 within 1 1d12+5 .

Passive **Bound**. While its Drake lives it takes **Favor** on every roll. When the Drake falls it takes **Disfavor** instead, and does not stop.

Elder Drake · Tier 5 · Elite

+ 187 · 15 · 15 · ⇒ 8, or 16 flying · 3 ♦AP

Bite · ♦, attack against 1 within 2 1d12+5 .

Tail · ♦, attack against 1 within 2 1d12+5 , and the target is knocked prone.

Breath · ♦♦, a line 10 1 long. Roll once against every 1 Physical Defense in it. On a success, 3d6+5 . Usable again only after a full Round in which it was not used.

Passive **Dread**. Any creature beginning its Turn within 5 1 takes **Disfavor** on its first roll that Turn.

The end of the set. Fought alone it takes two Turns a Round, which is six ♦AP against the party's twelve, and it still only has to land the Breath twice.

When Someone Dies

This set kills characters, and a table should agree about that before the first session rather than after the first death.

Level 1 pools run from about 12 to 19. A Tier 1 adversary deals 1d4+1 . Most characters carry 3 ⊗ **Wounds**, and going down costs one of them. So a character can be dropped, picked up, dropped, picked up, dropped, and the third time is the end. There is no dying timer and nothing to roll: a ⊗ Wound past the maximum is death at the moment it lands.

⊖ Fatigue is the other road there, and it is the quieter one. A character who Overspends to land one last ability pays point by point, and every point they put on the ⊗ Wound track instead of the ⊖ Fatigue track is a step toward the same edge.

THE LEVERS, IF YOUR TABLE WANTS LESS OF IT

Each of these changes the tone. Pick deliberately.

- **Downed is not dead.** A downed character takes no further harm unless something attacks them while they are down. **Whether adversaries move on to the next target is the largest dial you hold**, and it costs nothing to turn.
- **Let them see it coming.** Say that the Ogre is turning toward the Mage. Being killed by a decision is a very different evening from being killed by a die.

- **Say the Overspend maths out loud.** A player reaching past empty is choosing between ⊗ Wounds and ⊖ Fatigue point by point. Make sure they know which of those two tracks kills before they choose, not after.
- **Start everyone at 4 ⊗ Wounds.** One extra life apiece, and it changes nothing else on the sheet.

TWO THINGS THAT ARE ALREADY ON YOUR SIDE

Stabilize is free and universal. It costs ♦♦ and no ♣ Energy, nobody has to buy it, and any character can reach a downed ally with it. A party without a Devout still has a way to pick each other up, which is deliberate, and worth pointing out at the table the first time somebody drops.

⊗ **Wounds are felt later.** The penalty arrives with the injury but is usually paid in the next fight, so a party that takes a beating and rests is not punished twice for it.

THE LEVER THAT DOES NOT WORK

Lowering an adversary's Defense. It makes a fight shorter without making it safer, because the party was never the side at risk of running out of + HP first. Adjust + HP or numbers instead.

A Fight, Start to Finish

Four characters at Level 1 against a Roadman Captain and three Roadmen, at a toll bridge with a burnable rail down one side.

The party. Every one of them is legal at creation: four Scores totalling 44, nothing below 8 or above 14.

	Folk & Calling	Scores	+	□	□	⇒	►
Bryn	Stoutfolk Guardian, Soldier	♦14 ☆10 ●8 △12	19	18	11	4	10
Rell	Beastfolk Fighter, Criminal	♦12 ☆14 ●10 △8	16	16	9	9	14
Wren	Highfolk Mage, Scholar	♦8 ☆10 ●14 △12	12	10	13	6	10
Osk	Commonfolk Devout, Pilgrim	♦12 ☆8 ●10 △14	16	13	12	3	8

Bryn is in Chain with a mace, which is where the □ 18 and the ⇒ 4 both come from. Rell has a longsword and leather, and Thick Hide from her Instinct. Wren has a wand, padded cloth, and a Level 1 Mage's three spells, **Arcane Bolt** at Demand 1, **Numb** at 2 and **Snare** at 3, running the **Flame** Domain. Osk has a mace and scale, with Rell named as his Flock.

The opposition. The Captain at **50 + HP**, □ 13, attacking at **+3** for 1d6+1. Three Roadmen at **12 + HP** each, □ 13, attacking at **+3** for 1d4+1. All Tier 1, so all on a flat ► 11.

Setting up

Everyone takes flat ► Initiative. Rell 14, the Captain and Roadmen 11, Bryn and Wren both 10, Osk 8. Bryn and Wren tie on ☆ Deft Rank as well, so they roll off and Wren takes it.

Order: **Rell, Captain, Roadmen, Wren, Bryn, Osk.**

Round 1 — Rell

She switches to **Press** as a ♦ Free Action: +2 damage, −2 to both Defenses, so her □ drops to 14 for the Round. A Fighter is always in a Stance, and Press is the one that says I intend to end this quickly.

Full ⇒ Movement to the nearest Roadman, then two attacks, holding her third ♦AP.

First: 1d20 + ☆ 4 against □ 13, so she needs a 9 — **60%**. She rolls 15. Hit. Gradient reads 4, Standard. Two-handed longsword is 1d8, plus Level 1, plus 2 for Press: she rolls 5 for **8**. The Roadman is at 4.

Second: rolls 6 for 10. Miss, Gradient 7, nothing comes of it.

Round 1 — the Captain

He goes for Rell, who has just made herself easy to hit. 1d20 +3 against her Pressed □ 14 needs an 11 — **50%**. He rolls 12 for 15. Hit, and the Gradient reads **10**: a Critical Hit. 1d6+1 comes up 4, doubled to **8**. Rell drops to 8 + HP. Osk's Devotion ticks to 2, because a Flock member took damage.

He swings again and rolls 3 for 6. Miss, and the Gradient reads **1**, a Critical Miss. That hands Rell an opening, and she has the ♦AP she held. Her Opportunity Attack rolls 14 for 18, hits, and deals 7. The Captain is at 43.

Round 1 — the Roadmen

Two close on Bryn, which is the mistake. Against □ 18 they need a 15 — **30%** each. Four swings between them, one lands, 1d4+1 for 4. Bryn is at 15.

The third runs at Wren instead and does not reach her.

Round 1 — Wren

One ♦AP on **Focus**, the wand's Signature Ability, which she has because a Scholar is trained in Arcane. That is Favor on her next spell attack this Turn.

One ♦AP on **Arcane Bolt**. Demand 1 against her Capacity of 1, so it is native and costs **no ♣ Energy**, this is the cheap thing she will still be casting for free at Level 5. An ability's own attack is 1d20 + her Level, so +1, which is a 45% shot on its own and **70%** with the Favor. She rolls 8 and 17, keeps 17, for 18. Hit.

1d4+1 for 3, plus Flame's 1d4 for 2: **5 damage**, and the wounded Roadman drops. The Gradient reads 3, a Minor Negative, the bolt goes wide of him on the way through and the bridge rail catches. That will matter in two Rounds.

Round 1 — Bryn

Cover is running at G 1, so an ally within 1 □ could take Concealment against one attack this Round. Nobody is close enough yet, which is the Guardian's whole problem at Level 1.

He moves his 4 and swings once: +4 against □ 13, needs 9, rolls 11 for 15. Hit, 1d6+1 for 5. A Roadman is at 7. He holds two ♦AP, because holding them is what a Guardian does.

Round 1 — Osk

Devotion is at 2. He spends one on **Bear**, moving + HP between Flock members up to $(2 \times \text{Level}) + 2$, which is 4 at Level 1. Four points go from him to Rell: Osk 12, Rell 12. Nothing was healed. The injury was moved to the person better able to carry it, which is the whole of what a Devout does.

Then one attack, +2 against 13, needs 11. He rolls 9. Miss.

Round 2 — where it turns

Rell drops the second Roadman and closes on the Captain. Bryn finally gets within 1 □ of Wren, so **Cover** comes online: the next attack against her takes Disfavor, which turns a 70% shot into a 49% one.

The Captain, now facing a Fighter in Press and a Guardian he cannot get past, spends his Turn backing toward the rail. The rail is on fire.

How it ended

Four Rounds. The party puts out roughly **22 damage a Round** at this Level, two attacks each at around 55%, for about five a hit, against 86 + HP of opposition, and 86 over 22 is just under four.

Nobody died. Rell finished at 12 after being Borne twice, Bryn took two hits all fight and barely noticed either, and Wren never spent a point of ♣ Energy, she had Numb and Snare available the whole time and never found a moment worth two thirds of her pool.

What the example is showing. Three of the four characters never cast anything, spent anything, or reached past themselves — Level 1 is mostly weapons and positioning, and that is intended. The one Critical Hit and the one Critical Miss both landed in the same exchange, which is the 1d10 Gradient doing what a flat die does. And the fight was decided less by damage than by Bryn standing in a doorway, which is what the □ 18 in that table is for.

Adversaries

An adversary has a **Tier**, and Tier does for an adversary what Level does for a character.

Adversary damage is its die plus its Tier, and the die climbs with the Tier.

Tier	Die	Damage	Facing a party of
1	1d4	1d4+1	Level 1
1	1d6	1d6+1	Level 1, and you want it dangerous
2	1d6	1d6+2	Level 2
3	1d8	1d8+3	Level 3
4	1d10	1d10+4	Level 4
5	1d12	1d12+5	Level 5

Both halves matter. Hold the die fixed and let only the flat term climb, and a same-Tier adversary decays from 30% of a typical pool to 15% across the range. Climb both and it holds:

Share of a typical pool, per landed hit	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
Die climbs with Tier	23%	22%	21%	21%	21%
Die held at 1d6	30%	22%	19%	17%	15%

(Tier 1 read with the standard 1d4 . Both rows use 1d6 from Tier 2 up.)

Character pools grow faster than a single weapon die, so an adversary whose output does not climb in both terms falls behind by Level 3 and the fight stops being a fight.

1d4 at Tier 1 is the standard opener and takes about 23% of a pool. 1d6 at the same Tier takes 30%, and it is the dial to reach for when a first-Level fight should frighten somebody.

Nothing goes above 1d12 , and something enormous might reach 3d12 . **The party always out-damages adversaries.** Pressure comes from numbers and from Tier, never from bigger dice.

Tier gaps bite hard in both directions

A Tier 3 adversary swinging 1d8+3 at a Level 1 party takes half of a typical pool per hit, while that party's own damage is still tuned to Tier 1 pools.

Fighting two Tiers above you is meant to be brutal, and fighting two Tiers below is meant to be a formality. Do not soften either. Signal the difference in the fiction and let the players decide.

Reference

Icons

Icon	Meaning
❖	Vigor
☆	Deft
●	Acuity
△	Resolve
+	HP
⊗	Wounds
⊖	Fatigue
⚡	Energy

Icon	Meaning
□	Physical Defense
□	Mental Defense
⇒	Movement
➤	Initiative
✦	Action / Action Point
◇	Free Action
✱	Activity
□	Unit