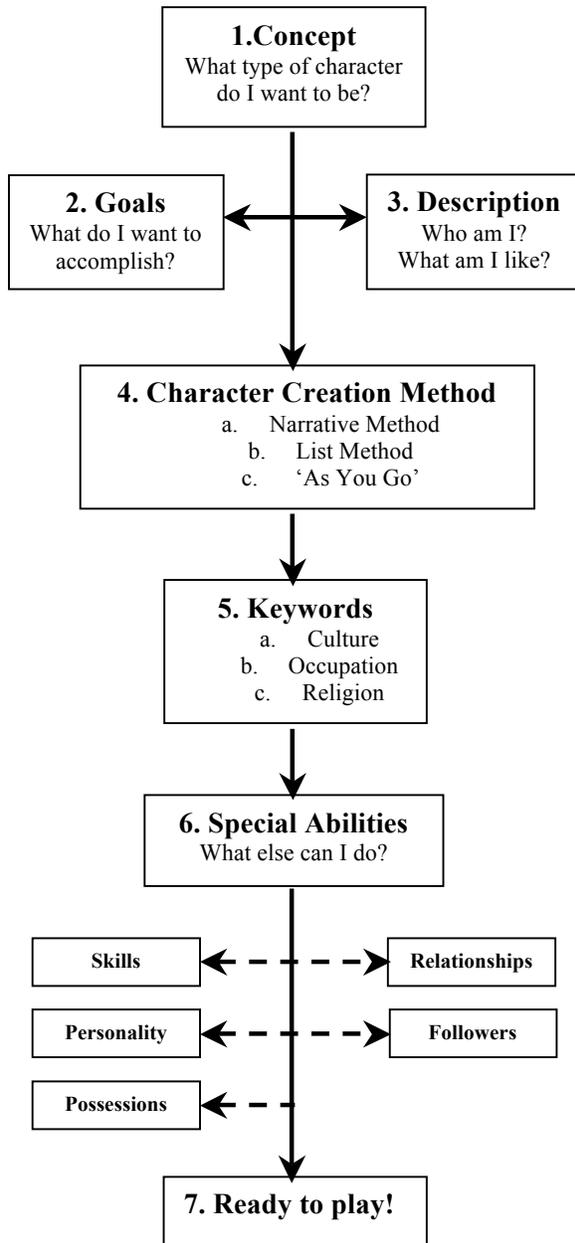


DARK AGES GAME AIDS

Character Creation Synopsis



- 1. Begin with a concept of your character**
Start with a basic conception of your character: who do you want to play?
- 2. Select your character's goals**
Everybody has goals: they may be modest or grand, immediately achievable or long-term.
- 3. Describe your character**
Write down your character's name, appearance, age and any distinguishing marks. Most of this information will not be used as abilities.
- 4. Select a Character Creation Method**
 - Narrative Method*: Write a 100-word narrative describing your character. This gives you the most control, but requires more work.
 - List Method*: List your keywords and abilities. This is an easy way to make a complete character, but tells you little about the character.
 - 'As You Go'*: Start with a keyword and one ability, then add 'as you go'. Good for a quick start or if you have no clear concept yet.
- 5. Select your character's keywords**
 - Culture*: Your character's parent culture determines the occupations and religions available to him.
 - Occupation*: Choose an occupation that includes the abilities you want your character to have.
 - Religion*: Choose a religion that supports the virtues and flaws you want your character to follow.
- 6. What else can your character do?**

Skills: Special abilities that make your character stand out from the crowd. It might be a skill unique to the character or a more general skill with an unusually high rating.

Personality: Individualizes and helps others conceptualize your character.

Possessions: Special or magical items merit their own ability ratings.

Relationships: True power comes only through influencing groups of people.

Followers: Retainers are cheap, and have few capabilities and little personality. Sidekicks are more flexible and can grow with your character.
- 7. You're ready to play!**

Character Improvement

You spend **hero points** to improve your character's skills, relationships, equipment – any permanent change. There is no limit to the number of abilities that can be added or improved at any one time.

Improvements to a character should make sense in the context of the story. If an improvement is not related to a recent game session, or to the character's established goals and back-story, you pay double the hero point cost.

Adding New Abilities

New abilities begin with a rating of 13, unless it can be justified as part of an existing keyword, in which case its rating is equal to the keyword rating +1 (for the hero point spent).

Improving Abilities

You can spend hero points to improve your character's abilities. This represents training, practice, greater commitment to community or temple, deeper intimacy and so on. Improving an ability by more than +1 at a time costs more hero points.

Cementing Experiences

If your character wins some advantage and you wish to ensure that the benefit continues, you must spend hero points to cement it and write it on your character sheet. If the benefit gained is a standard one (such as a sidekick) the normal hero point cost applies. If the ability is not standard (such as a magical artifact) the cost to cement is 1 hero point.

| Character Improvement Costs | |
|---|----------|
| Improvement | HP Cost |
| Cement a benefit gained during play (if no other HP cost applies) | 1 |
| Gain a new ability at 13 | 1 |
| Gain a retainer (gain a separate <i>Relationship to [Follower]</i> at 13) | 1 |
| Gain a sidekick (gain a separate <i>Relationship to [Sidekick]</i> at 13) | 3 |
| Gain a supporting character (gain a separate <i>Relationship to [Supporting Character]</i> at 13) | 1 |
| Join a religion without establishing a relationship with it | no cost |
| Gain a relationship with a religious group | 3 |
| Gain a relationship with any other community at 13 | 1 |
| Change a retainer to a sidekick (gain three significant abilities at 13 each for free) | 2 |
| Change a supporting character's role | 0 – 1 |
| Replace a retainer or supporting character | no cost |
| Replace a sidekick with one of equivalent experience | 1 |
| Improve an ability by +1 | 1 |
| Improve a relationship with a retainer or supporting character by +1 | 1 |
| Improve a relationship with a religion or other community by +1 | 1 |
| Improve a keyword by +1 | N/A |
| Improve a sidekick ability rating by +1 | normal |
| Character Improvement Cost Multipliers | |
| Any improvement unrelated to play, goals or back-story | cost x2 |
| Improve any ability by +2 at one time | cost x3 |
| Improve any ability by +3 at one time | cost x6 |
| Improve any ability by +4 at one time | cost x10 |

Sample Resistances

Climbing

Shallow slope: Automatic success
 Very steep slope: 14 to 20
 City wall: 10M to 10M2
 Ice-slick steep cliff: 10M2 to 10M3

Cold and Heat

Very hot summer's day/cold winter's night: 14 to 20
 Heat of a torch: 1M to 5M
 Campfire: 1M to 10M2
 Bonfire: 5M2 to 5M4
 Deep winter in Pictland: 5M3
 Molten iron: 10M6

Commanding Followers

Do their job: Automatic success
 Do something unusual: 17
 Do something completely outside their job: 5M
 Do their job if community objects: 5M
 Do something to which the follower strongly objects: 20M
 Do their job if community forbids them: 20M
 Do their job if community condemns action: 5M3

Crafting

Simple tools: 14 to 20
 Large or intricate objects or structures: 1M to 20M
 Complex or extensive projects: 1M2 or more

Fighting

British town watchman: 13
 British colonus: 14
 German weaponthane: 17 to 18M
 Roman soldier (typical): 17 to 18M
 German champion: 10M to 10M2
 Byzantine elite troops: 10M to 10M2
 Famous hero (Beowulf, Cei): 10M3

Finding Your Way

Find your way in a familiar region: Automatic success
 Follow an animal's tracks: 14
 Follow verbal directions in a familiar region: 14
 Follow a map in a foreign land: 17 to 5M
 Retrace your steps in a foreign land: 20 to 5M
 Follow an animal's tracks on a windy day: 1M to 5M
 Follow verbal directions in a foreign place: 10M
 Follow an animal's tracks in the rain or over bare stone: 20M

Jumping Horizontally

Leap over a small obstacle: Automatic success
 Leap 6' with a short run: 14 to 17
 Leap 6' from a standstill: 1M to 5M
 Leap 15' crevice with short run: 10M2

Jumping Vertically

Jump up onto a short stool: Automatic success
 Jump up your height: 10M2

Jump down safely from a small tree: 20 to 20M
 Fall from a small tree without injury: 10M to 10M2
 Jump down safely from a city wall: 5M2 to 10M3
 Fall off city wall without injury: 15M2 to 20M4
 Jump down safely from a tower: 5M3 to 10M4
 Leap to top of 10' tree: 10M3
 Fall off fortress tower without injury: 15M3 to 20M4
 Leap to top of a city wall: 10M5

Lifting

Your ordinary gear: Automatic success
 Another person: 14
 Unresisting animal: creature's *Large* rating.
 Human-sized marble statue: 10M3
 Chariot with horse and riders: 10M4

Requesting Community Support

Ordinary support: Automatic success
 Moderate support from immediate family: 17
 Extraordinary support from family: 7M to 8M
 Extraordinary support from clan: 15M to 18M
 Total support from family: 4M2 to 6M2
 Total support from tribe: 10M3 to 20M3

Romance

Seduce a willing partner: Automatic success
 Seduce a potential partner: 20 to 10M2
 Come across as a lovable rogue: 1M
 Seduce someone married or in love: 5M to 20M2

Social conflict

Spread rumours: 14 to 20
 Spread malicious rumours: 17 to 5M
 Passionately sway a friendly crowd: 17 to 20M
 Deny malicious rumours: 20 to 10M
 Discredit opponent's argument: 1M to 20M
 Win over a neutral crowd: 1M to 15M
 Win over a hostile crowd: 15M to 10M2

Swimming

Short distance in calm water: Automatic success
 Moving water: 14 to 20
 Raging water: 10M to 10M2
 Resist the tide: 10M to 20M2
 Escape from the Maelstrom: 10M6 to 10M10

Wealth and Standard of Living

| Standard of Living | Wealth | Examples |
|--------------------|--------|--------------------------------|
| Minimal | 6 | Menials, slaves, beggars. |
| Common | 13 | Farmers, soldiers, clergymen. |
| Prosperous | 5M | Master crafters, minor nobles. |
| Rich | 15M | Nobles, important clergy. |
| Very Rich | 10M2 | Kings, dukes, bishops. |



Rules Synopsis

Ability Rating and Target Number

Every ability has an **ability rating**, a number from 1 to 20. The higher the number, the better the ability or more extreme the trait.

Target Number

The total of the ability rating plus or minus all modifiers is the **target number**. The target number shows how capable the character is for the current contest.

Augmentation

You can use one ability to augment another. You can try for a **variable augment** by rolling a contest. Alternatively, you can apply an **automatic augment** (a bonus of one-tenth the rating of the augmenting ability).

Masteries

Abilities with high ratings will have one or more **masteries**, shown by a capital **M**; multiple masteries are shown by a number following the M. A level of mastery represents 20 points in that ability. If you have an ability of 20 and raise it one point, it becomes 1M, not 21.

Die Rolls: Success and Failure

To determine how well your character uses an ability, roll a 20-sided die (d20). Compare the roll with the target number: low rolls are better than high.

Bumping

After rolling dice, a contestant with one or more masteries gains one **bump up** for each such mastery until the result becomes a critical, when the remaining masteries are applied to the opponent as a **bump down** (reducing his result).

Contests: Victory and Defeat

In all contests, the degrees of success or failure of the opposed die rolls are compared to find the final victory and defeat levels. Simple and extended contests determine this in different ways, but the effect is the same. Victory and defeat always have the same level: if your character wins a marginal victory his opponent suffers a marginal defeat.

Simple Contest

1. State your goal and the ability being used.
2. Figure the target number.
3. The narrator selects the resistance.
4. Roll a die to determine the degree of success or failure, then apply bumps. The narrator does the same.
5. Determine the level of victory or defeat.
6. Determine contest consequences.

Extended Contest

1. State goal and ability being used.
2. Calculate your starting **advantage point** total using your target number plus any additional sources of AP available.
3. The narrator selects the resistance and figures its starting AP.
4. Carry out one or more rounds:
 - a. State the character's attempted action, ability used, and the amount of AP bid.
 - b. The narrator selects the resistance
 - c. Roll a die to determine the degree of success or failure, then apply any bumps. The narrator does the same.
 - d. Compare result with the opponent's to determine AP gains and losses.
 - e. Opponent's turn.
 - f. Repeat as necessary.
5. Determine contest consequences.

| Simple Contest Results | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Opponent's Roll | | | | |
| Player's Roll | Critical | Success | Failure | Fumble |
| Critical | Low roll receives marginal victory, else tie. | Player receives minor victory. | Player receives major victory | Player receives complete victory. |
| Success | Player suffers minor defeat. | Low roll receives marginal victory, else tie. | Player receives minor victory. | Player receives major victory |
| Failure | Player suffers major defeat. | Player suffers minor defeat. | Low roll receives marginal victory, else tie. | Player receives minor victory. |
| Fumble | Player suffers complete defeat. | Player suffers major defeat. | Player suffers minor defeat. | Tie |

Extended Contest Results

Opponent's Roll

| Player's Roll | Critical | Success | Failure | Fumble |
|---------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Critical | High roll <i>transfers</i> 1/2x bid, else tie. | Opponent <i>transfers</i> 1x bid. | Opponent <i>transfers</i> 2x bid. | Opponent <i>transfers</i> 3x bid. |
| Success | Player <i>transfers</i> 1x bid. | High roll <i>loses</i> 1/2x bid, else tie. | Opponent <i>loses</i> 1x bid. | Opponent <i>loses</i> 2x bid. |
| Failure | Player <i>transfers</i> 2x bid. | Player <i>loses</i> 1x bid. | High roll <i>loses</i> 1/2x bid, else tie. | Opponent <i>loses</i> 1x bid. |
| Fumble | Player <i>transfers</i> 3x bid. | Player <i>loses</i> 2x bid. | Player <i>loses</i> 1x bid. | Tie |

Tie: Neither contestant loses AP.

1/2x, 1x, 2x, 3x: The AP bid is multiplied by this number before applying the results.

Loses: The bid is subtracted from the loser's AP total.

Transfers: The AP bid is subtracted from the loser's AP total and the same number is added to the victor's AP total. The victor cannot add more AP than the loser had, but the loser still loses the full amount (possibly going into negative AP).

Contest Consequences

When a character is defeated, the narrator may impose a penalty on any or all of his abilities, depending on the contest. This is a measure of how badly the character is affected, whether in mind, body or spirit. This penalty should be applied in situations relating to the character's defeat. Regardless of any penalties applied, however, remember that a defeated character is just that: defeated.

Final Action

If your character falls to 0 or fewer advantage points in a standard extended contest, he is defeated. In a group extended contest, however, he can still try a **final action** to stay in the contest if he has not been **completely defeated**. Your character may attempt only one final action in any contest.

The character must be free from the attention of the opposition. Use a relevant ability in a simple contest against the number of AP he is below 0. Even if you succeed, consequences from the original defeat still apply.

Followers and Defeat

A character's followers suffer one level greater defeat than does he. If your character suffers a marginal defeat, his followers suffer a minor defeat.

Healing

Resistance to healing comes from the loser's defeat level (in an extended contest, derived from the loser's final negative AP total). Resistance of disease, poison etc is the strength of the opposing force.

Aid

Suitable abilities may be able to remove penalties from characters who have suffered minor or marginal defeats (e.g. use *First Aid* to remove a -1 penalty from a hurt fighter); characters who have suffered major or complete defeat can only be prevented from getting worse (e.g. use *First Aid* to stop bleeding and stabilize the condition). Only one attempt can be made for each penalty.

Time

Without attention, the results of marginal defeats disappear at the rate of one (-1 penalty) a day. A minor defeat takes a week or so to get over. A major defeat will linger on for a long time, over at least one adventure; and may leave even more lingering small penalties. A completely defeated character does not recover with time.

Contest Consequences

| Simple Contest Defeat Level | Extended Contest Final AP Total | Penalty Assessed to Appropriate Abilities | Resistance to Healing |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Marginal | 0 to -10 AP | -1 | 14* |
| Minor | -11 to -20 AP | -10% of ability's rating | 17 |
| Major | -21 to -30 AP | -50% of ability's rating | 5M |
| Complete | -31 or fewer AP | No actions allowed | 20M |

* All -1 penalties may be removed with one roll. Optionally, a resistance of 6 +3 per additional penalty after the first (i.e. 9 for two penalties, 12 for three, 15 for four and so on.)

Followers

Retainers and sidekicks are followers (i.e. minor characters controlled by the player, not the narrator). A character must have relationships with his followers.

In a contest, a follower may:

- Use its ability directly instead of the character's.
- Augment any other character (least risky option).
- Provide its AP for the leader to use.

Followers will obey and perform the job for which they are hired: a bodyguard will fight to the death, a cook will prepare meals etc. If your character asks a follower to act beyond his duty, you may have to roll a contest using the character's relationship to the follower. The narrator judges the resistance based on the follower's reluctance.

Community Support

A community supports your character in mundane ways, and with some persuasion, may support his grander deeds in e.g. warfare.

Total Support: Community pledges itself completely to assisting the character, to the exclusion of all else. All that happens to the character, for good or ill, happens to it as well

Extraordinary Support: Community puts all available resources into supporting the character. It is not directly affected by the character's victory or defeat.

| Follower Reluctance | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Action | Resistance |
| Trivial and meaningless | 14 or automatic |
| Unusual but reasonable | 17 |
| Well outside normal expectations | 5M |
| Frightening, gruesome or sickening | 20M |

Moderate Support: Community supports the character cautiously or casually. Often the highest level possible if the character's action stands to benefit him alone.

Ordinary Support: Community does not actively support or resist the character's actions.

Objection: Community objects to the issue and/or the character, possibly with violence.

Forbiddance: Community expressly forbids the character from pursuing the issue.

Condemnation: Community condemns the character for even asking, and will actively oppose him (possibly with members showing up as opponents). The character is likely to be expelled from the community, as are any who support him.

Requesting Community Support

A character receives Ordinary Support from communities with which he has an established relationship. Greater levels require a contest: the level of support required sets the base resistance for the contest and determines the bonus the character gets if he succeeds. The character may face an easier resistance if he has aided the community (beyond what is expected) in the past, especially if his request might benefit the whole community.

| Community Support Bonus | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Size of Community | Resistance to/Bonus received from | | | | Penalty received from | | |
| | Total Support | Extraordinary Support | Moderate Support | Ordinary Support | Objection | Forbiddance | Condemnation |
| 2 | 1M2/+1 | 6M/+1 | 17/- | 14/- | - | -1 | -1 |
| 4 | 2M2/+2 | 6M/+1 | 17/- | 14/- | - | -1 | -2 |
| 8 | 4M2/+4 | 7M/+2 | 17/- | 14/- | - | -2 | -4 |
| 16 | 6M2/+6 | 8M/+3 | 18/+1 | 14/+1 | -1 | -3 | -6 |
| 32 | 8M2/+8 | 9M/+4 | 18/+1 | 14/+1 | -1 | -4 | -8 |
| 64 | 10M2/+10 | 10M/+5 | 18/+1 | 14/+1 | -1 | -5 | -10 |
| 125 | 13M2/+13 | 12M/+7 | 18/+1 | 14/+1 | -1 | -7 | -13 |
| 250 | 16M2/+16 | 13M/+8 | 19/+2 | 14/+1 | -2 | -8 | -16 |
| 500 | 20M2/+20 | 15M/+10 | 19/+2 | 14/+1 | -2 | -10 | -20 |
| 1000 | 5M3/+25 | 18M/+13 | 20/+3 | 14/+1 | -3 | -13 | -25 |
| 2000 | 10M3/+30 | 20M/+15 | 20/+3 | 14/+1 | -3 | -15 | -30 |
| 4000 | 15M3/+35 | 3M2/+18 | 1M/+4 | 14/+1 | -4 | -18 | -35 |
| 8000 | 20M3/+40 | 5M2/+20 | 1M/+4 | 14/+1 | -4 | -20 | -40 |
| 16 000 | 10M4/+50 | 10M2/+25 | 2M/+5 | 14/+1 | -5 | -25 | -50 |
| 32 000 | 20M4/+60 | 15M2/+30 | 3M/+6 | 14/+1 | -6 | -30 | -60 |
| | | | | | | | |
| each x2 | +10/+10 | +5/+5 | +1/+1 | 14/+1 | -1 | -5 | -10 |