

The Land of Karn

Fantasy Role-Playing Game

Basic Version

Combat Rules

Combat is an important part of any fantasy adventure game, but should not become the game itself. This is especially true of this system and the Land of Karn world in general. It is not designed for “Hack & Slash” play, but for larger adventures and stories that can combine deeper character development (through playing a role) with the elements of the stories (such as combat, exploration, mystery, and more). For this reason I wanted to create a combat system that would lend itself well to the rules and the game style I was going for. I didn’t want the old drawn out combat style of slowly whittling each other down in hit points until one dies.

The first time through this section the combat rules may seem to be a little complex (or even unfair), but it only takes time to get used to the flow and understand the way it works. It actually has a nice balance to it, and is designed to echo the uneven nature of violence in the world. Death is usually fast when true combat takes place, taking very few successful strikes to end it. Most time is spent trying to avoid damage, rather than just inflicting it. Getting the upper hand is the most important part of the process. This means the better-trained combatant will almost always win over the untrained. This is also true here, but even the untrained have a chance to get that lucky shot or escape unharmed (no matter how slim it is).

Creating a working combat system means taking another step away from reality, since you can’t do real-time combat of fictional characters in a pen and paper RPG. The game breaks these moments of conflict into short periods of time (known as Melee Rounds) and plans them out between the players involved in the combat. Time is often frozen while multiple actions and thoughts are planned out in what would take a split second of real time. This means that a few minutes of combat in the world can take upwards of an

hour of game time, but most combats are over much faster than that because of the dangers and deadliness of most combats.

Since combat is quick, gritty, dangerous, and deadly for the characters in the world, it is usually a good idea to try and make sure you have the upper hand before willingly getting yourself into a combat situation. Most of the time it is good idea to try and talk or trick or sneak your way out of or around the situation, rather than crossing swords. Be aware that every combat (even the most seemingly easy prey) can be your last, so it’s not something to usually jump into lightly. But there are times when you have no other choice or you are willing to take the risk. That’s what this section is about.

Short Combat Description

This section has all the basics you need to follow the steps of the combat system. This section is designed to be used as a reference during the game to help remember the needed steps. The full descriptions of the actions are explained in the sections that follow this one.

Combat Melee Quick Chart

This is a quick reference chart of the standard parts of each combat melee round. This is simply designed to be a visual reminder of what needs to be done.

1. Initiative
2. Winner chooses attack(s)
3. Defender chooses defense/counterattack(s)
4. Winner may choose defense (if needed)
5. Roll and compare
6. Roll and apply damage (if any)
7. Start Over (if necessary)

Short Melee Part Descriptions

For those who need a little more of a reminder than just the quick list I have created this short section. Each of the 7 steps of a melee round is given a brief description here. These are not the full descriptions of how they are done or used, just something to use as a reminder while playing or checking the basic rules for some other reason.

1. Initiative

All participants of the combat roll D20 and adds any Initiative bonuses or modifiers. Any character may choose to abstain from this roll to automatically lose, counting the initiative roll as an infinite negative.

2. Winner Chooses Attack(s)

Depending on how many of their actions the character wants to attempt they may choose one or more attack type. They may also choose to use actions for skills or other things. Actions can not be used as defenses at this time since there is nothing yet announced to defend against.

3. Defender Chooses Defense/Counterattack(s)

Depending on how many actions the character wants to attempt they may choose one or more defense and/or counterattack (if they have the counterstrike skill) type. They may only choose one defense per attack the opponents chose to use against them. They may also choose to use actions for skills or other things (as the GM allows).

4. Winner May Choose Defense

Depending on how many actions the character wants to use they may choose one defenses type for each counterattack the opponents chose against them. They may also cancel any attacks or actions they have already chosen in step 2 to use them as defenses instead. These are considered to be fakes and the opponent's defense to these attacks still stand and any actions they used are still used. No attacks can be used in this step and the Winner of the initiative can never counterattack.

5. Roll and Compare

Each side rolls their attacks and defenses in action order (pairing off countering events and comparing them). The order they are technically rolled depends on the actions being taken, but the attacks are usually rolled first. Most attacks and defenses are rolled on a D20. Other actions taken are rolled as normal.

6. Roll and apply damage (if any)

If any of the attacks have been successful they will most likely cause damage. Roll up and account for all damage (making sure it is coming from the correct places). This can be done in conjunction with step 5 (factoring in damage after each successful action), but does not officially fall there.

7. Start Over

Go back to step one and start over, unless one side has lost or successfully fled. If both sides have agreed to cease hostilities, it can end here too.

Full Combat Descriptions

This section covers all the parts of combat and fully describes how they are used. The only things not listed and explained here are the combat skills themselves, which are in the next major section. This section does not claim to cover every possible action or event that can happen during combat, since players will always suggest something that was not considered ahead of time. In any case that is not covered by the rules the GM should work out something reasonable on the fly.

Full Combat Melee Description

Unlike the previous section, this section completely describes and explains all the parts of a full combat melee round. Each step is listed (just as in the last section) and then fully described and explained. Also, several of the options that are later explained fully are mentioned here, where they would fall and have an effect.

What Is a Melee

A melee round is a special measure of time used for combat and some other actions in the game. The reason we use a melee is because no other easy standard measure of time (like a second or minute) really work well. In the Land of Karn a melee is roughly about 10 seconds (giving you around 6 per minute). Melees are not an exact number and are used as a guideline, so they may change from a little under or over 10 seconds from round to round.

The main reason for the use of a melee is to make the difference between the well trained and the untrained more obvious and workable in the system. Combat trained characters think faster and can do more under the pressure of combat situations than untrained characters (so they get more actions per melee to represent

this difference). These actions usually fall between 1 (for basic non-combat characters) and 3 (for highly trained combat characters). It is rarely possible to get more than 3 actions, but there are cases where it can happen (usually temporarily).

Timing Within A Melee

The way a melee is organized and resolved is not the way the actions happened within the world. In a melee the actions are resolved by doing all of the winning characters attacks and other actions first with any of the defenders defenses connected to them. After all of the winners attacks and actions have been finished the defender then gets to resolve any counterattacks or other actions they have. This is the easiest way to handle actions when playing the game, but is not the order they take place in the imaginary world of the characters.

In the world, the characters actions are all taking place at roughly the same time within the melee. Due to this, all actions in a melee get to resolve unless something makes the action impossible or illegal. Events that can make an action impossible or illegal to complete are things like a successful dodge, dropping or otherwise losing a weapon, being entangled, loss of an arm, and much more.

For example: Chip Calhoon is striking at Salemath three times in one melee with his sword, but on the first strike he fumbles and drops his sword. He can not take his other two actions now since they were supposed to be sword strikes. So he is befuddled for his last two actions, trying to rethink what he is going to do next and collect his wits for the next melee.

Taking damage (even enough to kill a character) during a melee does not necessarily make their actions impossible or illegal, since their actions technically took place at about the same time as the ones that did the damage to them. Even if all the damage needed to kill the character was dealt with the first action, they still get to complete their actions. Think of it as the damage not registering until moments later. Only in extreme cases of overkill (where far more than the damage needed to kill them is dealt in the first blow) will this cause the killed person to lose some of their actions (but not their first one).

1. Initiative

Initiative is a way of determining who was able to act the fastest and be the aggressor in a particular pairing of a melee round. It is a measure of how fast someone reacts to the situation (using both speed and awareness) and who can act first. Determining initiative is (hands down) the most important part of the combat

system in the Land of Karn. Acting first lets you not only get the jump on them, but puts them in the defensive position where they can usually only react for this segment of time.

Determining initiative is done by having all those involved in the combat pairing roll a D20 and adding any initiative bonuses or modifiers they have effecting them. The highest total initiative roll becomes the winner (or attacker) and the rest become the defenders reacting to it. A natural roll of 20 (no matter the modifiers) is considered infinity (which can only be tied by another natural roll of 20). Before making this roll any characters may choose to forfeit initiative and not roll at all (treating it as if they rolled a total of an infinite negative). If all parties involved choose to forfeit the initiative nothing happens and none of them react during the melee. Basically, they just stand there and stare at each other, waiting for the opponent to act first. This can be a good time to trash talk or present dramatic information.

For example: Chip Calhoon is highly trained warrior with an initiative bonus of +6, while Salemath is a mage and only has a natural initiative bonus of +2. They both roll. Chip rolls a 9, for a total of 15, while Salemath rolls a 14, for a total of 16. In this case the lesser trained character still wins the initiative.

If the two highest opposing totals tie they are both jockeying for the advantage. In the case of a tie like this the character with the highest ALT wins the tie. If they are still tied those who are tied roll again (still figuring in any initiative bonuses or modifiers) to see who wins and keep doing so until there is a clear winner. If there are more than two in the combat pairing, only those who rolled the tie for lead get to roll again this way.

For example: Chip (+6) and Salemath (+2) are at it again. They both roll. Chip rolls a 11, for a total of 17, while Salemath rolls a 15, for a total of 17. They tied at 17 and jockey for position. Chip happens to have the higher ALT, so he wins the initiative after this moment of positioning.

2. Winner Chooses Attack(s)

The winner of the initiative in each pairing uses this step to choose what they are going to do during the combat melee. They can choose to attack, perform skills, run away, or any combination of actions they choose. Some actions are more useful than others during a combat situation, but what is done is still left up to the players. The only limitations on what can be done are the number of melee actions they have to use and the amount of time other actions would take (since a melee is around 10 seconds).

Depending on how many actions the character has and wants to attempt (including any split actions), they may do one or more of the following things with each of them: Choose an attack, attempt a skill use (if it can be performed as an action), attempt to flee, or simply not use it. They may also attempt any legal combination of them too, but remember, some things require more than one melee action to perform.

Using an action to attempt an attack is easy. The character simply chooses what kind of attack they want to try (as long as they have the ability to attempt it) and announce it. Everything from punches, kicks, and other hand to hand attacks to swords, axes, and other weapon attacks are all included here. Ranged weapons and attacks are not usually used in melee combat (see later for how to use them) but sometimes they are possible.

For example: Chip Calhoon has three actions and chooses to use them to punch twice and kick once. He can do them any order he chooses. So he chooses to try and punch, kick, and then punch again.

Characters can also attempt to perform a skill (if the GM says that the particular skill can be performed during combat). The GM will tell the player how long the skill will take and how many actions are needed to try it. If the character still chooses to attempt it they may, but with some negatives. Since it is a rushed and hectic situation during combat, all skill attempts (other than combat skills, which are designed and trained in to be used during combat) are at 1/2 the characters normal skill level and may suffer other modifiers if the GM decides it.

The winner of the initiative may also opt to save some of their actions and not use them. This is done to save them for defense against any possible counterstrikes the defender may take. When this is done at this stage those defenses are at +5 (even if the action is split to do multiple defenses), but can not be used for a standard dodge. These saved actions can be split without reducing this bonus.

For Example: Salemath chooses to attempt to pick the lock of the door he is backed up against during combat, in hope of escaping next melee. The GM tells his player that it will take a full melee action to make one attempt at picking this particular lock. So he chooses to attempt to pick it once and save his other action for defense if he needs it. His Pick Locks skill level is 60%, but he has to make the attempt at 30% since this is a combat situation. His saved action will give him +5 to any defense he uses for it.

Fleeing Combat

Lastly, the winner of the initiative has the option of using their initiative win to attempt to flee. This is

generally a big fake out, as if you are going to attack and then taking off in a fleeing attempt before they can react. Doing this requires the use of all the actions they have and can not be used in combination with any other attacks or skills. No roll is needed on the winner's part, but the defender may instantly make an ALT check -10% for each full action the winner has, to see if they can react before they can run. Choosing not to make the ALT check means it automatically fails.

If the ALT check is successful, they noticed the attempt to flee and can react to it (choosing actions as normal). These reactions come in the same form as defensive actions but even characters who don't have the counterstrike skill can counterattack. If they choose to use all their actions to attack or do something other than follow, the fleeing person will be out of melee range by the end of the melee round, but may still have been hit as usual. If the defender uses one of their full actions to follow, then the fleeing was completely unsuccessful and the next melee round follows as usual.

If the ALT check failed (or the defender failed to follow even though they succeeded) the fleeing is successful. This does not mean the character automatically got away, it just means they successfully got out of the current melee combat situation. To truly get away from the opponent they will have to run away or use other skills and abilities at this point, because nothing says the opponent can't catch back up to them and attack again. Usually characters will simply try and run away (attempting to outrun their opponent) using speed ratings and AGI checks. Unfortunately, you have to flee melee combat before you can run away.

For Example: Chip Calhoon and Salemath are fighting and Chip won the initiative. He chooses to attempt to flee and Salemath instantly makes an ALT check at -30% (since Chip has 3 actions). He makes the ALT check anyway and notices the attempt to flee. Instead of following Salemath chooses to use his two actions to counterstrike, hoping to seriously damage Chip before he can escape. After his attacks are over, Chip will be out of melee range just as if he had successfully fled the combat (but may be hurting).

3. Defender Chooses Defense/Counterattack(s)

This step is the defenders only chance to act during a melee (since they lost the initiative). Characters with little or no combat training are pretty much stuck just trying to defend themselves, while trained character may actually get to strike back using the counterstrike skill. This is where the major differences between the combat trained and the "civilians" is most notice-

able.

Depending on how many actions the defending character has and wants to attempt (including any split actions), they may do one or more of the following things with each of them: Dodge (which uses all actions), choose a defense against one of the attacks against them, attempt a skill use, use a counterattack (if they have the counterstrike skill), or simply not use it. They may also attempt any legal combination of them too, but remember, some things require more than one melee action to perform.

Characters can attempt to defend against any attacks being performed against them by using one defense action per attack against them. There are a few exceptions to this (like dodge), but they are usually explained along with their skill. The defender can choose any legal defenses against the kinds of attacks being used against them. What is legal is explained in the skill description of those attacks and defenses or left up to the GM based on the situation.

The Dodge defense is the most common special one, and needs some special explanation. If the defender chooses the Dodge defense no other actions can be taken at all. The normal dodge not only uses all the actions of the defender, but also defends against all attacks against them (even from multiple attackers). See the skill description later in this section for more details. This is the most common defense used in the game (especially by unskilled combatants).

Counterattacking can only be done if the defender is trained in the Counterstrike skill. If the defender has this skill they may choose any attack they want to perform (just as if they won the initiative), but they still have to deal with any attacks used against them (even if that just means taking it). It is possible to simply let your opponent hit you without defending yourself and use all your actions to counterattack, but this is not advised unless you have a lot of hit points, good armor, and possibly even some magical defenses. Normally counterattacks are used in conjunction with a number of defenses, allowing them to stave off the majority (or even all) of the attacks against them while still getting a blow or two in their opponent.

For example: Salemath is the winner of the initiative and chose to punch and then to kick Chip. As a defense Chip chose to use two of his actions to try and block the punch and then block the kick. This leaves him with one action left he can counterattack with since he has the counterstrike skill. So he decides to punch Salemath back.

If they choose to use these actions for skills it is the same as if they won the initiative, but they still have

to have the counterstrike skill (since they would be on a defensive panic without the training). Fleeing is not possible as long as you are on the defensive, but can be done if the attacker chose not to take any attacks as their actions. This does not mean they have to do nothing, it just means they have to do no attacks.

4. Winner May Choose Defense

This step is not always used, but if the defender had the counterstrike skill and made any counterattacks this is the winners chance to defend against them. No actions other than defenses may be used at this time. No attacks, counterstrikes, other skills, or anything else may be done here and there are no exceptions. Ever.

Depending on how many actions the character has and wants to attempt (including any split actions), they may choose to defend against one of the attacks against them for each action they have. They may choose legal defenses against the kinds of attacks being used against them, according to what it says can be done in the skill description of those attacks. These are used the same as the defenses used by the defender in step 3, only in reaction to any counterattacks. Saved actions from step 2 will get those +5 bonuses at this point.

Most of the time the winner will already have all their actions used up and decided upon before they get to this point. This is not a problem since they can choose to cancel or alter any already chosen actions they selected in step 2 and use them as defenses instead. This cancels the replaced action completely. Canceled attacks are treated as fakes by the attacker, so any actions the defender used to defend against them are still used up in defending against the fake (as if they fell for it).

For example: Salemath was the attacker and chose to punch and then kick Chip. Chip was the defender and chose to use two of his actions to block them while counterstriking with a punch. Salemath then chooses to cancel the kick and block the punch instead, but the Chip falls for the fake kick and attempts to block it, using his action still.

If the Dodge defense is chosen here, no other defensive actions may be taken at all and most of the other actions they took in step 2 are canceled. The first action of the winner (not counting all parts of a split action as one) will still be performed as normal, but all other actions they have decided on will be canceled. Other than this, the dodge is performed exactly the same as above. They get one strike in as they dodge away from the counterattack, since they won the ini-

tiative.

Altering an action can be done by splitting the action (using the split action rules). Half of the split action remains as the original action and the other half becomes a defense of some kind. This can even split an already split half action (creating two quarter actions), but can not split a quarter action (as nothing can). All normal penalties for splitting actions still apply to both halves.

For example: Using the same example above Salemath could have chosen to alter the kick and block the punch with the other half of the split action. However, both his kick and block would suffer the effects of having been half actions.

5. Roll and Compare

After all actions of all the characters and NPC's involved in the combat pairing are chosen and locked into place, the rolling starts. Once this phase begins none of the actions can be changed other than canceling them if they become impossible to continue. Each pairing is rolled separately from each other (in fact, the entire set of melee parts can be done separately for each pairing) and should be done in the proper action order.

Each side of each pairing rolls their attacks and defenses one action and counter action at a time, starting with the winners first action. The rolls are then compared to each other (according to how the action is used) and usually the higher roll total (after bonuses and other modifiers) wins the action. Ties always go to the defender unless some other rule specifically says otherwise. Exactly how each combat skill and action works is explained and described in the Combat Skills section later in this section.

For example: Salemath rolls his strike roll for his punch and gets a 15 (a roll of 13 with a +2 strike bonus). Chip rolls his block and gets a 17 (also a roll of 13, but with a +4 block bonus). The strike is blocked and they move on to the next action.

The exact order actions are acted out in depends on what is going on (since most defenses are done in response to something and some actions take more than one action to perform), but the basics are the same. If there are any questions, the GM has final say. In general the order is as follows:

1. The Winner's first full action is performed (doing each split action in order) and the defender's responses to them. If there is more than one person on the winning side of the pairing, they go one at a time (in initiative order) and perform their actions.
2. The Defender's first full action of counterattacks

(if any) and the winner's responses to them. If there is more than one person on the defending side of the pairing, they go one at a time (in initiative order) and perform their actions.

3. The Winner's second full action (if there is one).
 4. The Defender's second full action (if there is one).
- etc.

Once all actions are rolled and accounted for in one pairing, the GM moves on to the next pairing (if there is one) and does the same for them (even though these actions are all technically taking place at the same time in the game world). It is just easier to handle them this way, than to try and have multiple people rolling and comparing outcomes all at the same time. Each pairing is handles separately for ease of use over reality.

6. Roll and apply damage (if any)

If any of the attacks were successful (or other actions that will result in damage were taken), it is now time to roll and figure out the damage totals. If no damage was dealt in any form you can skip this step completely.

Damage can get kind of sticky and complicated when you start dealing with armors, natural defenses, and other effects, but most of it just takes a few plays to get the hang of it all. All of that is all explained later in this section and/or in other sections. Basically it all comes down to figuring out where all of the damage goes. The usual order of things is any magical protective field takes damage first, armor takes damage second, a person's natural armor or stone skin reduces the total next, and finally the person takes any remaining damage. The exact use of worn and natural armor protection in combat when damage is being taken is fully explained later.

Also, since all actions in a melee are technically happening at the same time (even though they are organized into an order by these steps) both the winner of the initiative and the defender get to let their actions finish before the melee is over. This means that even if the defender takes enough damage from the attacker to kill them in the melee, the actions they took during the melee still happen before they die. Due to this, it is completely possible (although rare) for two characters to kill each other in the same melee round.

7. Start Over (if necessary)

This is simply the end of the melee round. After all characters have used or passed all of their actions

(and there are still some alive on all sides that want to continue fighting), the combat goes back to step one to start a new melee. If one side has won the battle, all but one side has fled the battle, or all remaining sides agree to stop fighting, the combat ends.

This is also the time that combat pairings can change around. If a number of people are in close enough range to each other (and something happens to change the way people would pair off) they can shift who they are facing and involved with in the next melee. This is most common when you have multiple pairings happening and one of them ends in a victory. The winner there may turn and join one of the other pairing to help out.

In no situation can the last person on either side switch pairings as long as their opponent still wants to fight. It can happen (usually in these cases) that two pairings can combine into one, but this is rather rare. The final say for any of these changes come down to the GM.

Combat Pairings

When a group of characters are attacked by another group of characters they usually pair off into smaller battle pairings instead of being a free for all of everyone attacking everyone at once. That would simply be impractical and is more likely to have people hitting their own members or otherwise being hurt by completely unexpected blows. Although these pairings are all part of the same battle and are happening at the same time, they are treated as if they are smaller single battles to make things easier on everyone involved.

The exact pairings are decided by the GM and the players, based first on which group has the better overall initiative bonuses and who they wish to take on, but also on how many people are in each group, if one side had the element of surprise, and any other factors that may have effected the situation. Most of these pairings will be one on one (at least you hope they are), but there are occasions where they will be lopsided and multiple people will gang up on a single person or smaller group.

Multiple Attackers Or Defenders

Pairing off two sides when there are more people on one side than the other will cause there to be at least one case of multiple attackers and/or defenders. This can also happen when certain characters choose to gang up on another character. When this happens, all

characters in a particular pairing roll for initiative as normal (factoring in their bonuses and modifiers as usual). Whoever wins the initiative out of the group gets to go first, but so does everyone else on their side of the pairing.

The side that has fewer members is also at a disadvantage when it comes to defending. Most defenses can normally only be used against one attack from one person at a time. Some defenses (like Dodge) can be done against multiple people at -1 for each separate attacker being defended against after the first one. Which ones can be used against multiple attackers are usually explained in the skills descriptions, but the GM can make a call if reason to ask comes up.

Normally a character can only focus on one opponent at a time, but they can choose to take actions against multiple people in the same pairing in the same melee. These can be both attacks and defenses, but there is a downside to it. Any time you take actions against more than one opponent in a single melee your rolls are all at -1 for each opponent you are directly involved with. Opponents in the same pairing you ignore (even if they are attacking you) do not count towards this.

For example: Three Orcs are attacking Chip and each is striking against him. He decides to defend against two of them and ignore the third. Each of his defenses will be at -2.

Splitting Actions

Every character able to act in a combat melee has at least one full action they can take (and rarely more than three). These actions are called full actions but are not the only kind of actions a character can take. Any full action can be split into two half actions or four quarter actions, or even one half and two quarter actions. There are never any actions that can be split beyond quarter actions.

When an action is split it creates a larger number of actions a character can take in a melee, but there is a penalty for doing this (unless the action specifically says it doesn't). When making a Half Action you cut the roll in half (rounding down) and a Quarter Action cuts the roll to one quarter of the normal roll (rounding down). These changes affect only the roll and not any bonuses or modifiers on the roll (since they are added after the roll is made and not before it). This is designed to give highly trained combat characters a real edge in combat, as they should have.

For example: Salemath has 2 actions and may take one action at full, one at 1/2, and two at 1/4, for a total of 2 full actions. He may also take 8 actions at 1/4, for a total of 2. Or any other

combination.

Now lets say he has +5 to strike and he makes a punch using a half action. He rolls a 15, but that is cut in half to 7.5 (rounded to 7). He then adds his strike bonus, for a strike total of 12.

Even when splitting actions all rolls are still treated as normal before the halving or quartering takes place. This simply means that fumbles (natural 1 for combat or 1-5 for skills), misses (natural 2 for combat), and criticals (natural 20 for combat or 96-100 for skills) caused by unmodified rolls still take place. Also, when some skills are attempted during combat the GM decides how long and how many actions they take, so no splitting can be done by the player to make them faster. If in question, ask the GM.

Strike Rolls And Defenses

Rolls to strike with an attack are fairly basic to deal with, but (as with skills) they have different levels of their success and failure. These levels are listed in the following list, with where to look for more information. This does not take armor, clothing, or natural defenses into account, just if the strike successfully hits or not.

Some of these are based off the roll itself (before any modifications) and others are based off the modified roll totals (after modifiers and bonuses are added in). When they are unmodified rolls that count, do not even bother figuring out the modified totals, as they do not count.

A modified roll under 1 = Fumble (see fumble section).

An unmodified roll of 1 = Natural Fumble (see fumble section). This is also considered to be negative infinity when a number total is needed.

An unmodified roll of 2 = a simple miss, no damage or fumble.

A modified roll under 6 but above 0 = a simple miss, no damage or fumble.

A modified roll over 5 = a hit, does normal damage.

An unmodified roll of 20 = Natural Critical (see critical section). This is also considered to be infinity when a number total is needed. This roll, on a strike or defense, also gives the character one bonus Combat Skill Point (CSP).

A modified roll over 24 = Critical (see critical section).

Basic Defenses

When a strike roll is successful it doesn't mean the attack is automatically successful. There is still a chance for the defenders roll to protect against it. To be successful a defense roll needs to be equal to or above the strike roll. Ties always go to the Defender.

What the defense does when rolled successfully and whether or not any damage is taken anywhere depends on the type of defense being used and what it is being used against. For descriptions of how each defense acts, see the combat skill descriptions later in this section.

Armor And Clothing

Even when a strike roll is successful, some or all of the damage may be absorbed by the armor the character is wearing. If the modified strike roll is less than or equal to the total COV rating of the character's armor (or if a covered area was struck directly with a called shot) it has taken the strike and will take damage first. The armor will reduce the amount of damage the character takes from the attack, but won't always prevent all of it.

When armor is struck first, the damage is reduced by the protection rating amount for the type of damage the attack does. The rest of the damage still goes on to hit the character. If the armor's protection rating is higher than the total damage from the strike it removes all the damage and the character takes none of it.

No matter what damage does and doesn't go through to the character, the armor will still take damage from these attacks as well (which lowers its hit points). Listed right after the normal protection rating (inside the parenthesis) is a damage rating for the armor. This second number is the maximum amount of damage the armor (or clothing item) can take from that type of attack. The armor takes damage from the attack up to this number (no matter what it protects against or how much does or doesn't get through it).

For example: Salemath is wearing a suit of armor that has a Chop protection and damage rating of 1 (4). He is struck by a small axe for 3 points of chop damage, but it was from a strike roll under his COV rating. His armor protects against only 1 point of damage, allowing the other 2 points of damage to get through. The armor also takes the full 3 points of damage since it is under the damage rating.

When these damage ratings are lower than the protection rating the armor still protects up to the full protection rating, but it only takes damage equal to the

damage rating. This is the maximum damage the armor can take from a single attack of that type no matter what it protects against. The difference between the two is completely ignored and does damage to nothing, but anything over the protection rating still gets through to the wearer.

For example: Chip is wearing armor with a Cut ratings of 6 (3) when he is struck by a Cut attack. The attack does 5 points of damage and was under his COV rating. His armor protects against all 5 points of the damage but only takes 3 points of damage itself.

All clothing types count as armor for combat coverage, but rarely reduce the damage by very much since they are not designed for that. Clothing tends to take a lot of damage from attacks (usually more than armor since it are not designed to take it). Although all clothing has armor information, these are ignored in the Basic Version of the game. To keep things simple for the free version, only sets of armor can be used for armor protection, clothing can still be worn and will still take damage if hit, but doesn't protect in any special way like armor.

Some characters and monsters also have a natural armor rating that reduces the amount of damage they take from certain attack types. These can be natural or acquired through skills like Stone Skin. These reductions are done to the damage amount the character takes after their armor took any off and before their hit points do.

For example: Chip is wearing a suit of armor that has a Crush protection and damage rating of 3 (1). He is struck by a hammer for 15 points of crush damage, but it was from a strike roll under his COV rating. His armor protects against 3 points of the damage, allowing 12 points of damage to get through. He also has a natural armor protection against 3 points of Crush damage, which reduces the total he takes to his hit points to 9.

Using Weapons

Although hand to hand combat can be extremely powerful and useful there are times when weapons are better or even needed. Using them requires knowledge and training to have any real effectiveness though. Weapons also vary widely in style, use, and even damage types.

Using melee weapons in combat is handled no differently than using simple punches and kicks. It is just a matter of rolling for different types of strikes and defenses using the weapon instead of punches and kicks. Training in the weapon is required, or your character suffers major penalties and restrictions. Ranged weapons are a different story since they are mainly used outside of melee combat.

Weapon Training

It is possible to use most weapons to some extent no matter how little or much you know about them. Simple weapons (like clubs and swords) can be used without training but penalties are suffered. More complex weapons (like crossbows and ball & chains) can also be used but with much higher penalties. Some specialized weapons can not be used. The exact nature of what can and can't be used, and exactly what penalties are suffered, is left up to the GM.

No Weapon Training

Without any training at all characters suffer the greatest penalties. They can only use weapons for simple attacks and only the most basics of defenses, like using a shield or staff to parry. No special skills or abilities can be used. All actions (depending on the complexity of the weapon and the action) suffer modifiers from -1 to -15.

For Example: Using a shield to parry a sword blow is common and easy to figure out so the GM would most likely only make them suffer a -2. Swinging a simple short sword would be around -5. Trying to attack with a pole arm may see modifiers of -10. And trying to parry with a ball & chain might be as bad as -15. But trying to load and use a Windlass Crossbow would be impossible without training.

Weapon Knowledge and Training

Characters that have Basic Weapon Knowledge (and possibly even Advanced Weapon Knowledge) can use many weapons without suffering these negative modifiers. These skills are not advanced knowledge of any particular weapons but simply general knowledge of how weapons work, allowing their use on a most basic level. Only basic attacks and defenses can be used still, only without the negative modifiers listed above. Specialized actions and abilities are still not possible.

Training in specific weapons "unlock" a deeper understanding and knowledge of the weapons. They can allow bonuses, special actions and abilities not otherwise available. This training has to be learned separately for each type of weapon, and possibly even different kinds of attacks. Once learned they can become extremely powerful and dangerous in combat.

Ranged Combat

Ranged weapons are not usually used the same way as melee weapons (since they are designed to be used from a distance). They are mostly used as first strike weapons to strike at an opponent from a distance be-

fore moving in for the full battle, or as a way to take out an opponent before risking being at close range.

There are cases where they can be used at close range but the use and accuracy of these attacks are usually limited. The negatives for such attacks are left up to the GM to figure (based on the type of weapon and the situation).

Ranged Weapons

Besides the obvious ones (like bows and slings), there are many other things that can be used as ranged weapons. Some are even designed to be thrown and have special training skills designed for them (like spears and knives). Other items can also be thrown as ranged weapons, but usually just not as well (like rocks or sticks).

Ranged Attacks

Ranged attacks are made pretty much the same as regular hand to hand attacks, only the chance of hitting is less. A modified strike roll of 10 or less (yet still above 0) is treated as a miss, but the rest of the basic strike rules for hand to hand remain the same.

Items that are not designed to be used as a ranged weapon (or even thrown) are always at least -5 to strike. Some weapons list a strike penalty when thrown. These are used instead of the usual -5 to strike (even though they are not designed to be thrown). Some items will have a greater negative as set by the GM or other rules. Items that are designed to be thrown (often called something like a Throwing Knife) have no negatives to strike.

How far the target is from the person can also effect how well they can strike. If the target is over half the range maximum for the strike away, the attack has a negative of between -1 and -5, depending on the distance. If they attempt to strike someone beyond the maximum range they have a -5 plus -1 per 10 feet past the range (or worse if deemed needed by the GM or rules).

Defending Against Ranged Attacks

Usually only a dodge can be used to defend against a ranged attack, but these dodges are normally at -5 or -10 against bows, crossbows, and slings. There will be times those rare times when parries and perhaps other defenses can be used against ranged attacks, but these will handled on the fly by the GM and should be very difficult.

The best defenses against ranged attacks are a good

shield, good cover, good distance from the attacker, and just plain luck. Good cover, like trees or walls, can make it much harder to hit, but these are basically just strike modifiers the GM has to assign.

Damage and Attack Types

In this section I will go into the different types of damage and attack types there are in general combat. Most attack types are simple, but some have special limitations other rules that go along with them.

Hand to Hand Damage Types

So far there are only four basic hand to hand attack and damage types. These are caused by various weapons, attacks, and other objects that can cause damage. Some can even cause multiples of them (perhaps even at the same time). They each cause different kinds of damage to their victims.

Cut (Cu)

Cut damage is caused by a slashing type maneuver with a bladed weapon or other bladed item. This mainly causes damage closer to the surface, but can open very large bleeding cuts and wounds in the skin and muscles. This is most common with knives and swords, especially smaller ones.

Chop (Ch)

Chop damage is caused by a hacking type maneuver with a bladed weapon or other bladed item. This causes deeper gashes that are not as long as cuts and can cause damage to bones and internal organs much easier and faster than a cutting strike. This is most common with axes and large swords.

Crush (Cr)

Crush damage is caused by a blunt strike from a hard weapon or other solid item. Fists, feet, and even falling on the ground count as Crush damage. Bladed edges can not cause Crush damage. This rarely causes open wounds, but can break bones, rupture organs, and cause other tissue damage from its force. This is most common with hand to hand attacks, maces, clubs, and staves.

Pierce (P)

Pierce damage is caused by a puncture strike from a thin pointed weapon or other pointed objects. This causes deep damage that can easily puncture internal organs and cause serious problems. Pierce strikes are far more dangerous and deadly than any other basic

type of damage. This is most common with arrows, daggers, and fencing swords.

Since pierce damage is more deadly than other normal types it has some special rules, but pierce strikes are also usually easier to defend against too. When someone is using a hand to hand weapon to do a pierce only attack their opponent has a +3 to any defense against it (like parry or dodge). Bow attacks and weapons that combine pierce with other types of damage (like flails) do not give these defense bonuses.

When pierce damage is caused from a single source (even with a bow) and gets through the armor at all (even by just one point) there is a chance for major injury. On these pierce attacks that do damage there is usually a 25% chance of causing critical damage, even if the strike roll was not a normal critical.

For example: An arrow strikes Chip, who is wearing armor, and it does 4 points of damage. The armor absorbs 2 points of the damage, leaving 2, and his natural protection absorbs another 1 point, leaving only 1 point of pierce damage that is done to him. There is still a 25% chance of that one point of damage being a critical strike.

When calculating the total damage from these criticals, only the damage that got through the armor and other protections can be doubled or otherwise affected by the critical strike. A death blow is still a death blow though, even if only one point of damage got through. It must have pierces the heart or brain in just the right place.

For example: If in the above example the strike was a critical and Internal Injuries (x3 damage) to the mid-body was rolled on the charts. Chip takes 3 points of damage and have possible stomach injuries to deal with, depending on the GMs decision.

Other Physical Damage Types

There are a few other types of physical damage that are included in these rules, but they need some special explanations and rules. These normally come into play through the elements, magic, and special attack types. More types are sure to be added in later additions to the game, but these are all that have been included here.

Burn (B)

Burn damage is usually caused by heat and fires of all kinds. Burns of varied degrees can be caused by this, although most wounds are cauterized so there is little or no bleeding or continued damage after the initial burn. Burn attacks can sometimes cause things to catch fire and continue to burn until put out, though. Serious burns can also cause long term problems and

even slow death due to extensive damage.

Electrical (E)

Electrical damage is caused by all sources of electricity, from magical to natural. Electrical damage is similar to burn damage, but the initial strike of damage can also cause other problems. Since the body itself runs on a series of tiny electrical impulses electrical damage can cause the body to jerk, freeze, short out for periods of time, or even cook from the inside out. There are no set rules for how electricity will affect the body, but the GM should take the size of the charge into consideration when anyone takes electrical damage.

Chemical (C)

Chemical damage can be caused by all sorts of elements, from acids to bases. The exact nature of chemical damage depends on the type of chemicals in use. If there are no descriptions in the game of the particular chemicals being used the GM should be able to come up with something useful. Chemicals are still grouped together under one damage heading simply for how most armor, clothing, and items react to them, although they may effect each type of material differently. In the end Chemical damage effects are always left up to the GM.

Modifiers

Combat situations are not always simple and easy things that go as planned, so there are a number of things cause modifiers to combat and other rolls. These can be from training (or lack of), skills, weapons, injury, and effects of drugs, the environment, and other things. Most of these are self explanatory (or explained in other sections), but nearly all of them require the GMs approval before they can be used.

Called Shots

Normally strikes are more wild and random as to where they hit, but it is possible to try and choose where the strike is going to hit. Unfortunately this can increase the difficulty of the strike and make it more likely to miss or fumble.

Making A Called Shot

Called shots can be as exact or general as the attacker wishes to make them, but the more specific the area they try to hit, the higher the negative to strike will be. The exact negative to strike they suffer when attempting is up to the GM, but I have supplied a list of examples of called shot penalties. These are not set in

stone rules so ask the GM what the current modifier is for the shot you want to take.

An Arm or Leg: -2

Kidney Punch: -6

General Groin Shot: -4

The Head: -5

An Eye: -10

The Artery on the Left Inner Thigh: -15

When a called shot is used only the armor coverage and protection of that part of the body is used. If the body part is totally covered in armor there is no way to avoid the armor (unless it's a critical strike), so the damage taken from the strike is reduced by the protection of the armor. If the armor only partially covers the area the GM must decide a relative COV rating based on 24 being total coverage of the area.

For example: If a called shot is taken against the left thigh of someone wearing leather pants, the pants totally cover the thigh and can't be avoided so all attacks are going to hit it first and have their damage reduced by it. But if the attack is against the head and they are wearing a hat that only covers about half the head the GM would give it a COV rating of around 12.

Knock Out/Stun Called Shots

These are called shots that are used to specifically try and knock out or stun an opponent. This is harder to do than even a normal called shot and the defender even has a chance to save against it.

A called shot using a Crush attack to the back or side of the head and neck is needed for most humanoids (although some races may be different), complete with the usual negatives to strike. The modified strike roll must be over 10 to be a successful KO/Stun attempt. Rolls under 10 but still above 5 act as a normal strike for damage and effect. Damage from successful strikes are only basic hand to hand or weapon damage without any of the character's usual damage bonuses. Armor or clothing that fully protects the back of the head and neck against the crush damage prevents a knock out/stun.

A Critical is an automatic knock out with no further rolls needed, otherwise the defender gets to make an END check against it. If the END check succeeded there is no further action, but a failed check means they have to roll on the following chart to see what happens. Rolling on the chart uses a D%.

Roll Effect: Description

1-60 Woozy: The target is simply woozy for 1D6 melee and suffers 1D4 SP damage. They are -2 on all combat actions and -20% on all

skills.

61-80 Stun: The target is stunned for 1D6 melee and suffers 1D6 SP damage. They get no initiative rolls, treated as rolls of 0, and are -4 to all combat actions for the duration.

81-90 Black Out: The target blacks out for the rest of the melee, canceling the rest of their actions, feel woozy for the next 1D6 melee, and suffers 2D6 SP damage. The effects are the same as woozy above. While blacked out they have no actions or defenses at all.

91-100 Knock Out: The victim is rendered unconscious for 1D4 minutes, and suffers 2D6 SP damage. After that time they need to make a RES check to wake up and can try again each minute.

Criticals And Fumbles

Just as with skills there is always the chance of any action being a critical success or failure (called a fumble). Normally these come up from natural rolls of 1 or 20, but there are other situations where they can come up. Any time a critical or fumble is done they can be rolled on the charts here or the GM can just decide what happens.

Fumble

When a character rolls a fumble the GM may just decide what happened in the specific situation the character is in or roll on this chart according to the type of attack that was fumbled. Following the chart is a list of more in depth explanations of each level of fumble and what effect it has.

Hand to hand (H to H) attacks are ones without weapons, usually using fists or feet, and the other are all using weapon strikes of some sort or other sources of damage. Swing attacks are generally used for Chop, Cut, and Crush attacks. Thrust attacks are mainly used for pierce attacks. Other attack types are ones using special weapons or strange items that don't fit into one of the other categories. There are exceptions to these and the exact attack type is up to the GM. Percentage is rolled in the column that fits the attack.

Fumble Severity	H to H	Swing	Thrust	Other
Bad Miss	01-30	01-20	01-30	01-30
All turned Around	31-50	21-50	31-40	31-40
Dropped Weapon	-	51-60	41-65	41-60
Flung Weapon	-	61-80	66-70	61-70
Overexerted Self	51-80	81-90	71-90	71-90
Hit Other	81-00	91-00	91-00	91-00

Bad Miss

This is simply a really bad miss, giving them a -1 on their next melee action (attack or defense) in this battle. This also does 1 SP damage to themselves.

All Turned Around

The character gets all turned around and mixed up. They suffer -1 on all rolls for the rest of this and the next melee round. This also does 2 SP damage to themselves.

Dropped Weapon

Weapon is now at your feet and usually takes 1D6 damage from the fall (depending on the surface it fell onto). It takes one full action to pick it back up and you can use any of your remaining actions this turn to pick it up if they were originally set to use that weapon. Otherwise, all actions this melee that would have used that weapon are canceled. This also does 1D6 SP damage to themselves.

Flung Weapon

Weapon is now, oh, off that a way a wee bit. The weapon usually takes 2D6 damage from the fling (depending on the surface where it lands). It would take at least one full melee to retrieve the weapon. All attacks that would have used the weapon this melee are canceled. This also does 2D4 SP damage to themselves.

Overexerted Self

Tried just a little too hard and didn't make contact, causing pain and soreness in that limb. The character is now -1 to all combat rolls, and -10% to all physical skills (that use that limb to any extent, even if it's just for balance). These effects last for the next 1D20 + 20 minutes. This also does 2D4 SP damage to themselves.

Hit Other

You swung or struck out wildly. Roll again to strike (without bonuses) one random person in the area (possibly even yourself) for full damage. This person is selected by taking everyone within range (including the attacker) and randomly choosing one of them using some fair method (I find dice to be fair and readily available). There is no defense that can be taken against this unexpected attack, but any full dodges already in effect this melee can be counted against it. This also does 1D6 SP damage to themselves if they hit a random opponent, 2D6 SP damage to themselves if they hit a bystander, or 3D6 SP damage to themselves if they hit an ally.

Critical

When a character rolls a critical the GM may just decide what happened in the specific situation the character is in or roll on these charts according to the type of attack that was used. Following the chart is a list of more in depth explanations of each level of critical and what effect it has. The location the critical hit is either up to the GM (based on the roll and attack type) or known for sure if it was a called shot.

If the GM chooses not to use this chart the most likely effect would simply be Double Damage. Otherwise the chart gives basic descriptors of how severe the damage is. Following the chart is a list of more in depth explanations of each level of damage and how much the damage roll is increased. This chart is also broken down according to the damage type of the critical strike used. Percentage is rolled in the column that fits the attack.

Damage Severity	Cu	Ch	Cr	P	Other
Surface Damage (+1/2)	01-25	01-15	01-20	01-10	01-20
Severe Surface Dam. (x2)	26-60	16-35	21-40	11-20	21-50
Deep Tissue Damage (x2)	61-80	36-80	41-70	21-75	51-80
Internal Injuries (x3)	81-95	81-90	71-90	76-95	81-95
Crippling Injuries (x3)	96-99	91-98	91-98	96-98	96-99
Death Blow (-1 HP or x4)	100+	99+	99+	99+	100+

Surface Damage

These are just cuts, abrasions, and other surface damage that hurt a lot and possibly bleed but causes no real permanent damage. This adds 1/2 of the damage total (x1.5) and will heal with minimal scarring and no permanent injuries. This also does 2 SP damage.

Severe Surface Damage

This is more than the simple scrapes and bruises, and often includes some bleeding. This will most likely cause some severe scarring, but no other permanent damage. This doubles the normal damage. This also does 1D6 SP damage.

Deep Tissue Damage

This is a deeper type of tissue damage, going down into the muscles and such. There is no long term effects of this, but can cause major pain and discomfort in the short run. Characters suffering this will be at -1 to all combat rolls, and -10% to all physical skills (that use the hit area in any fashion, even if it is just for balance). These effects will last 1 hour plus 1D6 x 10 minutes and the soreness will last for days or even weeks. This doubles the normal damage. This also does 2D6 SP damage.

Internal Injuries

This is far more damaging internal injuries and can cause permanent effects. The exact effects of these injuries depends on the area of the strike and the amount of damage (so they are left up to the GM). This can be anything from simple broken bones to major problems like punctured lungs. It can not include any permanently crippling effects. Healing Magic can often be used to get rid of the permanent effects. This triples the normal damage. This also does 3D6 SP damage.

Crippling Injuries

This is some kind of major damage to the body and leaves the character with some sort of permanent or long lasting crippling effects. The exact nature of the effects are left up to the GM since they depend on the location and severity of the damage. This can cause things like paralysis, blindness, or even the loss of limbs. Healing Magic can often be used to get rid of the permanent effects. This triples the normal damage. This also does 4D6 SP damage.

Death Blow

This is exactly what it sounds like. This kills the character, either instantly or within a few minutes at the most. The exact nature of what this means and what happened is up to the GM. It either leaves the character with a total of -1 HP, or even less if quadruple the normal damage would leave them there. If they somehow survive this death blow the character is also likely to suffer some serious injuries and long term problems, set by the GM.