

BIG EYES, SMALL MOUTH

BESM

FAST PLAY RULES

An Introduction to the Tri-Stat System

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WELCOME TO BIG EYES, SMALL MOUTH

Big Eyes, Small Mouth, or *BESM*, is GUARDIANS OF ORDER's flagship publication — the multi-genre Japanese anime and *manga* role-playing game. First nominated for the 1998 Origins Award, which recognizes excellence in role-playing game design, *BESM* has recently been expanded and updated to a 288-page, full-colour SECOND EDITION. In a single volume, *BESM* provides you with the tools you need to create dynamic characters, settings, and adventures that are limited only by the boundaries of your imagination. Whether you want to play a young girl with magical powers, a ruggedly handsome mecha pilot ace, or an ancient elemental force that feeds on human fears, *BESM* puts the power of creation in your hands.

This booklet gives you a general overview of what you can expect to find in *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*, as well as a comprehensive summary of *BESM*'s Tri-Stat System game mechanics. After creating some characters and exploring how the game is played, you may find that *BESM* is the role-playing system you've been waiting for. *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* (Product #02-101; ISBN 1-894525-09-4) is available at fine comic shops and gaming/hobby stores everywhere.

WHAT IS ANIME?

“Anime” is the accepted term for animation from Japan. It has garnered much more respect in its native country than North American cartoons have in Canada and the United States. One reason for the popularity of anime is its engaging story arcs and diverse subject matter, ranging from fantasy and science fiction to romantic comedy and horror. While North American cartoons tend to be written for younger audiences (with a few exceptions), anime includes many shows aimed explicitly at teenagers or older viewers, and this in turn permits more sophisticated story lines and a wider array of genres. The most popular anime genres and sub-genres include: mecha action, magical girl, hero team, martial arts, sports, exotic girlfriend, interdimensional exiles, supernatural action, samurai/ninja action, swords and sorcery, weird conspiracy, and pet monster.

The first anime series produced in Japan was *Tetsuwan Atom* (1963), created by Osamu Tezuka and his animation studio, Mushi Productions. Later, this series became popular in the West as *Astro Boy*. From the 1980’s through the 1990’s, anime has improved in both sophistication and quality, with series like *Space Battleship Yamato* (1975, space opera), *Urusei Yatsura* (1981, alien girlfriend comedy), *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979, military drama), *Macross* (1983, science fiction soap opera), *Sailor Moon* (1992, magical girl drama) and *Ranma 1/2* (1994, martial arts comedy) exemplifying particular genres.

The end of the 1990s and the start of the new millennium is seeing an explosion in anime, with TV series being translated and released on video within months of their appearance in Japan, and anime returning to mainstream American television. Over the last few years, shows such as *Sailor Moon*, *Dragonball Z*, *Gundam Wing*, *Tenchi Muyo!*, *Card Captor Sakura*, *Digimon*, *Monster Rancher*, *Escaflowne*, and *Pokemon* have begun broadcasting on television. It’s a good time to be an anime fan!

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A role-playing game (RPG) is the “mature” version of the games we used to play as children: “House,” “Cops and Robbers,” and “Superheroes.” At its core, role-playing is a game of “Let’s Pretend,” with a few additional rules. You and your friends create characters that you each wish to play (appropriately called Player Characters, or PCs), and try to view the unfolding events of the game through the eyes of your imaginary persona. Your character’s outlook on life is separate and distinct from yours, though at times they may be similar. In *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*, you create and assume the role of an anime character suitable to the time period and setting of the adventure. The game rules help you assign some strengths and weaknesses to your character using numbers to indicate relative ability. Before the game begins, you also need to address the remaining elements of your character’s personality — background, family, knowledge, hobbies, and interests.

RPGs are not table-top board games. The games take place in your imagination, occasionally assisted by visual aids such as pictures, figures, maps and other props. Role-playing can also be likened to improvisational theatre where you and your friends must respond to each other’s actions, but must do so from your characters’ perspective (called playing “in character”). These character-character interactions are the primary focus of the entire game, capturing the heart of the role-playing experience.

To help answer the question “What are the limitations on my character’s abilities and talents?”, RPGs employ rules systems to help settle character conflicts and resolve character actions. A system mechanic usually outlines the use of a random generator (for example, dice for random numbers) to add

an unpredictable element to the game. A typical role-playing scenario requires a handful of players and one person to run the game, known as the Game Master (GM) or referee. As a player, you tell the GM what your character would like to do throughout the course of the adventure scenario and the GM describes the results of the action. Sometimes the action works, sometimes it doesn't. When the GM works closely with each and every player, the game adventure remains exciting and fun for all.

As a player, you control your character's actions in the game. He or she can be likened to one of the major characters in an anime movie, working through the unexpected twists and turns of the plot with the help of other major characters. Your character's actions can greatly affect the outcome of the adventure, but you must keep in mind that every action has a consequence that could return to haunt your character in a future game session.

As a GM, your contribution to the game will be much greater than that from any one player. You must establish the genre, setting, conflicts, and plot of the adventure as well as all the non-player characters (NPCs) your group of players will meet during the game. NPCs are similar to the background characters in a movie — few are given quality screen time with the major characters unless they are good buddies, or central to the plot. Additionally, you must be able to project your imagination to the players by describing in vivid detail the world in which they live. Should you assume the role of GM, you must possess creativity, good judgement and the ability to improvise in unexpected situations. It takes extra time and effort, but the reward of a well-played adventure can be almost euphoric.

THE TRI-STAT SYSTEM

The character creation and conflict resolution game mechanics used in *BESM* is called the Tri-Stat System. This introduction to anime role-playing also serves as a manual of game conventions for this game system: characters' base abilities are governed by three Stat values; character points are spent to gain special powers; players roll two six-sided dice to determine an action's success or failure; dice rolls are modified up or down to reflect an action's difficulty; rolling low is better than rolling high.

The Tri-Stat System premiered in August 1997 with the first printing of *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*. Since then, the game system has become GUARDIANS OF ORDER's master rules base for all of our licensed role-playing games and resource books as well: *Sailor Moon*; *Tenchi Muyo!*; *Dominion Tank Police*; *Demon City Shinjuku*; and *Ghost Dog*. Future licensed anime RPG releases such as *El Hazard* will also use Tri-Stat. Finally, GUARDIANS OF ORDER has plans for future Tri-Stat Compatible products that feature modified versions of the core game system, including *Hong Kong Action Theatre! SECOND EDITION*, *Heaven & Earth SECOND EDITION*, and *Tékumel*.

The advantage of using the Tri-Stat System for a wide variety of games is cross-genre compatibility. For example, a character that you created using *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* could be transplanted from your game into an adventure in the *Sailor Moon RPG* universe. Similarly, a *Tenchi Muyo! RPG* character could be used in an *El Hazard RPG* story plot, and vice versa. As you can see, all books that use the Tri-Stat System function as game supplements for all others in the Tri-Stat game network!

Big Eyes, Small Mouth is the core product that ties all of the other anime RPGs together.

PLAYING **BIG EYES, SMALL MOUTH**

BESM is a multi-genre anime game that can accommodate nearly any setting or time period. The rules are simple to use and thus do not afford a high level of detail. The fast resolution and combat system were designed to capture the fast-moving nature of anime action. This element is one of the central strengths of the game, making *BESM* ideal for either the novice or experienced role-player. Nevertheless, the role-playing interactions between the GM and the players, as well as between the players themselves, are the primary focus of *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* and, to this end, the game's rule mechanics are straightforward. *BESM* offers a wide array of options, not complexity.



CHARACTER CREATION

The design of your new anime character should involve a thoughtful collaboration between you and the Game Master. Your objective is to create a character who is fun to play, has plenty of reason to adventure, and who fits into the GM's campaign. In *BESM*, you can choose to spend as little as ten minutes designing a character or upwards of an hour. The difference lies in the amount of detail and individuality given to your character. At no time during an RPG campaign do you have more control over the destiny of your character than during the creation process. If you have any questions about game mechanics or specific character abilities, talk to the GM before you begin character creation.

CHARACTER CREATION FLOWCHART



STEP 1: GM DISCUSSION

Talk to the GM about the nature of the upcoming game, so you can better understand your potential role.



STEP 2: CHARACTER OUTLINE

Use the game boundaries established through your talk with the GM to sketch a rough character outline.



STEP 3: ASSIGN STATS

Use Character Points to give your character Body, Mind, and Soul Stats. Make sure each Stat is not lower than 1 nor higher than 12.



STEP 4: CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

Any remaining Character Points may be used to acquire Attributes, which are rated in Levels from 1 to 6.



STEP 5: CHARACTER DEFECTS

Assigning Defects to your character penalizes him or her in some way, but provides Bonus Points to raise Stats or acquire additional Attributes.



STEP 6: DERIVED VALUES

After you have modified your character's Stats through Attributes and Defects, you can calculate his or her two derived values: Combat Value and Health Points.

STEP 1: GM DISCUSSION

You and the other players should discuss the nature of the upcoming game with the GM. Before any characters are created, the GM should outline such details as genre, setting, campaign duration, story boundaries, and expected time commitment. As a player, you should listen closely to the GM's descriptions since it will impact directly on the character you wish to create.

STEP 2: CHARACTER OUTLINE

A character outline is a broad concept that provides you with a frame on which to build your character. It is not fully detailed; there is no need for you to concern yourself with the character's specific powers or background history at this stage. Use the game boundaries established in your discussion with the GM as the starting point for your character and build your outline on that foundation. Discuss your character ideas with the GM to ensure your character will work with those of the other players and with the overall themes and focus of the campaign. Consider the following questions before moving to the next step:

- Is the character human? Partly human? A different species? A supernatural being?
- What are the character's strengths and weaknesses?
- How do you view the character's personality? What is the character's name?

STEP 3: ASSIGN STATS

Stats (or Statistics) are numerical assignments that reflect your character's base capabilities. Higher Stat values indicate an advanced level of accomplishment or achievement. *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* uses three Stats to represent your character's abilities (hence, the name Tri-Stat System): Body, Mind, and Soul.

BODY STAT

This Stat measures the physical aspects of your character. This includes overall health, strength, endurance, quickness, rate of healing, manual dexterity, and ability to withstand trauma. A character with a high Body is in good physical shape.

MIND STAT

The Mind Stat represents a character's mental abilities. High values indicate intelligent, witty, and quick-learning characters.

SOUL STAT

The Soul Stat represents willpower, determination, and spirit and can sometimes represent psychic power, empathy, and unity with nature. A high rating in the Soul Stat helps a character focus his or her personal energies or life force to go beyond his or her normal limits, and power special abilities.

STAT RATINGS

Each Stat is rated on a scale of 1 to 12, with a value of 4 indicating the adult human average. Ratings under 4 indicate decreasing competence, while ratings over 4 designate increasing superiority (see the table on page 9). Thus, a person of average build, high intelligence, and above average determination might have Body 4, Mind 7, Soul 5.



Your character has a total of 35 Character Points to acquire both Stats and useful talents/powers called Attributes (Step 4, below). You must decide how many Character Points you will spend on Stats and then divide this total among your character's Body, Mind, and Soul. At least 1 and no more than 12 Character Points must be assigned to each Stat, giving each a value between 1 and 12. Otherwise, it is up to you to decide how many Character Points you will use for Stats and what each Stat's value will be. To create a balanced character, it is recommended that you allocate anywhere from 12 to 20 Character Points to Stats and to save the remaining points for Attributes.

STAT VALUE DESCRIPTIONS

Stat Value	Description
0	Completely and utterly useless.
1	Inept.
2	Significantly below adult human average.
3	Below adult human average.
4	Adult human average.
5	Above adult human average.
6	Significantly above human average.
7	Highly capable.
8	Extremely capable.
9	Best in the land.
10	World-class ability.
11	Legendary ability.
12	Best in the universe. Unequaled.

STEP 4: CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

Your character's basic abilities are represented by the three Stats, but his or her more specific acquired or innate talents and abilities are known as Character Attributes. Any Character Points remaining after you have purchased Stats are available to acquire Attributes. It is during this step that you will spend the most time customizing your character.

Each Attribute is rated with a Level from 1 (least powerful) to 6 (most powerful). Acquiring an Attribute or increasing it in Level requires the expenditure of one or more Character Points, depending on the Attribute's Character Point cost per Level. Although the *BESM* rulebook describes each Level of the different Attributes in greater detail than we can provide here, the power progression to higher Levels follows the pattern below:

LEVEL 1	The Attribute has little character or game effect.
LEVEL 2	The Attribute has a moderate character or game effect.
LEVEL 3	The Attribute has a large character or game effect.
LEVEL 4	The Attribute has a major character or game effect.
LEVEL 5	The Attribute has an extreme effect on the character or game.
LEVEL 6	The Attribute has a primal effect on the character or game.

Example One: The Dynamic Sorcery Attribute grants characters the ability to use the mystical forces of Nature to alter reality. Using the power progression template on page 9, Dynamic Sorcery Levels break down as follows:

- LEVEL 1** The character can cast short-duration spells of no real power (make noises, tie knots, make a gentle breeze, etc.)
- LEVEL 2** The character can cast medium-duration spells of no real power (light, protection from elements, etc.)
- LEVEL 3** The character can cast short-term spells of some power (lightning from fingers, X-ray vision, levitate, etc.)
- LEVEL 4** The character can cast medium-duration spells of some power (flight, wards of protection, limited invisibility, etc.)
- LEVEL 5** The character can cast spells of great power and of nearly any duration (summon spirits, create matter, teleportation, local weather control, etc.)
- LEVEL 6** The character can cast spells of immense power (summon very powerful spirits, regional weather control, etc.).

Example Two: The Organizational Ties Attribute represents a character's close relationship with a hierarchy of some sort that grants him or her access to wealth, respect, and privileges. Game effect progression over the 6 Attribute Levels of Organizational Ties is categorized as follows:

- LEVEL 1** The character is connected to the organization and can rely on it for occasional support and favours (and expect to be called on in return).
- LEVEL 2** The character has respected status in an organization such as a landed knight in the feudal system, a junior executive in a corporation, a city council member, or a Mafia "Wise Guy" in an organized crime family. The organization brings the character status and some wealth.
- LEVEL 3** The character has middle rank in an organization such as a corporate vice-president in charge of a department, a lesser feudal lord with a castle and lands, a Mafia "captain" who runs a neighbourhood, or a junior congressman or member of parliament.
- LEVEL 4** The character has senior rank in an organization, such as the senior vice-president of a large corporation, the boss of a crime family, or a U.S. senator.
- LEVEL 5** The character has controlling rank in an organization, such as the president of a megacorp, the boss of a large crime family, or a U.S. state governor.
- LEVEL 6** The character has rank that spans multiple organizations, such as the ruler of a nation, president of a global megacorp, or "boss of bosses" of many different crime families.

ATTRIBUTE SELECTION

The selection of Attributes is one of the most important steps during character creation. Through Attributes, you define your character's unique capabilities compared to other individuals. Think carefully about the balance between a few high-Level Attributes and a large number of low-Level Attributes.

If you find yourself needing more Character Points than you have been assigned to complete your concept, consider burdening your character with one or more Character Defects (Step 5). Each Defect can provide you with an additional Character Point or two, which can be used to acquire more Character Attributes or higher Stats.

ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTER POINT COSTS

Attribute	Character Point Cost
Animal Friendship	1 point/Level
Appearance	1 point/Level
Armour	1 point/Level
Art of Distraction	1 point/Level
Astral Projection	3 points/Level
Combat Mastery	2 points/Level
Damn Healthy!	1 point/Level
Dynamic Sorcery	4 points/Level
Elasticity	1 point/Level
Environmental Control	1 point/Level
Exorcism	1 point/Level
Extra Attacks	4 points/Level
Flight	4 points/Level
Flunkies	1 point/Level
Force Field	4 points/Level
Heightened Senses	1 point/Level
Invisibility	5 points/Level
Item of Power	2 points/Level
Jumping	1 point/Level
Massive Damage	2 points/Level
Mind Control	4 points/Level
Mind Shield	1 point/Level
Natural Weapons	1 point/Level
Organizational Ties	3 points/Level
Own a Big Mecha	4 points/Level
Psionics	4 points/Level
Regeneration	4 points/Level
Shape Change	2 points/Level
Sixth Sense	1 point/Level
Size Change	2 points/Level
Special Attack	4 points/Level
Special Defense	1 point/Level
Special Movement	1 point/Level
Speed	1 point/Level
Super Strength	3 points/Level
Telekinesis	2 points/Level
Telepathy	2 points/Level
Teleport	5 points/Level



STEP 5: CHARACTER DEFECTS

Defects are small disadvantages that your character must overcome throughout day-to-day life. Defects serve as an excellent and often comical role-playing opportunity. They only impede your character to a limited extent, however, and are not intended to totally negate his or her many abilities.

By taking a Character Defect you can gain one or two Bonus Points (BP) to use when acquiring Stats or Character Attributes. After you have selected your character's Defects, return to Steps 3 and 4 to use your Bonus Points. Once again, space restrictions prevent us from detailing the impact of these Defects, but the disadvantages related to the two Levels can be summarized as follows:

- 1 BP** The Defect impacts the events of the game rarely or has a small effect on the character.
2 BP The Defect impacts the events of the game frequently or has a large effect on the character.

For example, the Skeleton in the Closet Defect indicates that a the character harbours a dark secret. The exposure of this secret could cause harm to the character in the form of public humiliation, loss of a job, arrest, injury, or even death. Using the guidelines above for 1 BP and 2 BPeffects, Skeleton in the Closet is defined as follows:

- 1 BP** The Skeleton is very difficult to discover, the consequences of discovery are not too severe, or the character's reputation will be impacted slightly. Example: a police officer that occasionally drinks alcohol while on duty.
2 BP The Skeleton is relatively easy to discover and/or the consequences of discovery are major and/or the character's reputation will be seriously impacted. Example: a police officer that accepts bribes from the city's major drug trade in return for favours.

DEFECT SELECTION

It is recommended that you assign no more than eight Defects to your character. In most cases, 2-5 Defects are appropriate, but you do not need to assign any.

CHARACTER DEFECTS

Attack Restriction	Not So Tough
Awkward	One Arm/No Arms
Bane	Owned by a Megacorp
Cannot Talk	Physically Unappealing
Cursed	Phobia
Easily Distracted	Recurring Nightmares
Inept Combat	Sensory Impairment
Involuntary Physical Change	Significant Other
Marked	Skeleton in the Closet
Nemesis	Special Requirement
Not So Fast	Vulnerability
Not So Strong	Wanted

STEP 6: DERIVED VALUES

In addition to Stats, Attributes, and Defects, your character also has two Derived Values that are based directly on the Body, Mind, and Soul Stats — Combat Value and Health Points.

COMBAT VALUE

This Value governs all facets of physical conflict including your character's abilities in attacking, defending, and delivering damage. A higher Combat Value reflects fighting spirit and an increased knowledge of all physical combat forms: armed, unarmed, martial arts and ranged weapons. Increased skill in combat can only be achieved through harmony of the Complete Self. Lack of self-unity through weakness of any facet of the character will restrict his or her ability in combat. Consequently, the Body, Mind, and Soul are all of equal importance to the combat master: Body Stat for a forceful attack and defense, Mind Stat for quick wit, knowledge of combat techniques and anticipation of an opponent's actions, and Soul Stat for the winning spirit and good fortune.

To calculate your character's Combat Value, add together all the Stat Values and divide by three, rounding down ($[\text{Body} + \text{Mind} + \text{Soul}] \div 3$).

HEALTH POINTS

This Value dictates the amount of physical damage your character's body can sustain before he or she dies. Damage points delivered in combat are subtracted from your character's current Health Point total. If the total ever falls below zero, your character is rendered unconscious and may die.

To calculate your character's Health Points, add together the Body and Soul Stats and multiply by 5 ($(\text{Body} + \text{Soul}) \times 5$).



RULES AND GAME MECHANICS

Anime-style role-playing can be fast and furious, but it should also involve emotional subtleties and plenty of time for character interaction. In a role-playing game, the majority of actions that your character performs will not require any particular rules. You simply say that your character “walks across a room,” “picks up an object,” “drives a vehicle,” “talks to someone,” etc., and if the GM agrees that it is possible, that is just what happens.

In the course of an adventure, circumstances may arise where more specific rules are helpful to determine what happens. This is usually the case when the outcome of an action or event is uncertain and the result is important to the story. If your character needs to fix a broken reactor pump to prevent a nuclear meltdown, can he or she do it in time? If a your character’s car drives off a cliff, can he or she jump clear in time, and if not, how serious will the injuries be? If two characters get into a fight, who will win?

These types of questions are resolved by the GM, guided by the game mechanics presented in this chapter. Your character’s Stats, Attributes, and Derived Values usually adjudicate the outcome. In many cases, dice rolls will be used to add additional uncertainty and drama to the action. The dice rolls represent elements beyond your character’s direct control or the uncertainty that results when opposing characters interact.

DICE AND DICE ROLLS

BESM game mechanics use two regular six-sided dice. By adding the two numbers shown on each die, values between 2 and 12 can be generated. There are two major types of dice rolls you will use during game play: a Stat check dice roll and an Attack/Defense combat dice roll. When you announce your character’s intended action, the GM must decide if a dice roll is necessary or if the task automatically succeeds (since it is very easy to accomplish). Should a roll be required, the GM will choose which type of dice roll is most appropriate.

STAT CHECKS

The majority of non-combat dice rolling in *BESM* falls under the domain of Stat checks. During a Stat check, the GM decides which Stat (Body, Mind, or Soul) would be most relevant to your character’s action. If two or three Stats are closely related to the action, an average Stat Value should be calculated instead, rounding up to the closest whole number.

A successful Stat check requires you to roll less than or equal to your character’s Stat Value or Stat Value average on two dice. The Stat check is unsuccessful if the dice roll generates a value greater than the target number. The greater the difference between the target number and the dice roll, the greater the degree of success or failure (see the table on page 15). Very low rolls (2 or 3) are extremely successful while very high rolls (11 or 12) can result in a disastrous failure.

For example, if your character wants to jump from the roof of one building to another, the GM may tell you to make a Body Stat check. Similarly, if your character tries to recall the details of a treasure map recently burned in a fire, the GM may require a Mind Stat check. In both cases, the degree of Success or failure will dictate the precise results of the actions.

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

Roll is greater than the target number by 8 or more	Critical Failure
Roll is 6 or 7 greater than the target number	Extreme Failure
Roll is 4 or 5 greater than the target number	Major Failure
Roll is 2 or 3 greater than the target number	Minor Failure
Roll is 1 greater than the target number	Marginal Failure
Roll is equal to or 1 less than the target number	Marginal Success
Roll is 2 or 3 less than the target number	Minor Success
Roll is 4 or 5 less than the target number	Major Success
Roll is 6 or 7 less than the target number	Extreme Success
Roll is less than the target number by 8 or more	Critical Success

The GM has the option of modifying the dice roll should the action your character is undertaking be particularly easy or difficult (see the Dice Roll Modifications table below) or if the character has Attributes or Defects that might modify the chance of success. A more difficult action gains a positive modifier to the dice roll since the goal is to roll under the Stat Value or Stat Value average, while an easier action gets a negative modifier. For example, if your character has the Animal Friendship Attribute at Level 4, he or she might receive a -3 Stat check dice roll bonus (“Nearly Trivial”) when trying to befriend vicious guard dog. Another character who also tries to befriend the guard dog, but lacks the Animal Friendship Attribute, might receive a +3 dice roll penalty (“Quite Difficult”).

DICE ROLL MODIFICATIONS

Dice Roll Modifier	Action Difficulty
-4	Trivial. Why roll dice?
-3	Nearly Trivial
-2	Extremely Easy
-1	Easy
0	Average Difficulty
+1	Slightly Difficult
+2	Difficult
+3	Quite Difficult
+4	Extremely Difficult
+5	Outrageously Difficult
+6	Practically Impossible

Regardless of the actual target number, an unmodified or “natural” roll of 2 always succeeds (considered to be at least a “marginal success”), and an unmodified roll of 12 always fails (considered to be at least a “marginal failure”). After all, sometimes even the most talented characters fail in their tasks, and sometimes even the most inept characters succeed. If two or more characters are working directly or indirectly against each other (such as two people pulling on a contested object), each character must make a Stat check dice roll. The character with the greatest degree of success (or least degree of failure) is considered to have the advantage over the other.

COMBAT DICE ROLLS

The combat dice roll is used to resolve any type of physical combat including armed, unarmed, martial arts, and ranged weapons attacks and defenses. It is very similar to a Stat check except the target number is now the character's Combat Value rather than a Stat. A successful combat action requires you to roll less than or equal to your character's Combat Value on two dice. The attack or defense is unsuccessful if the dice roll is greater than that target number. Unlike Stat checks, combat dice rolls do not usually involve degrees of success or failure. They either succeed or they fail.

The GM has the option of modifying the dice roll should the attack or defense be particularly easy or difficult (see Dice Roll Modification table on page 15). Remember that an easy attack or defense gains a negative modifier to the dice roll since the goal is to roll under the Combat Value. Regardless of the actual target number, an unmodified roll of 2 always succeeds and a roll of 12 always fails.

COMBAT

Conflict can occur in many forms: against other beings, against nature, or against one's own weaknesses. Physical conflict, or combat, is particularly prevalent in many anime shows and movies, and consequently can play an important role in *BESM*. Important is not the same as frequent, however. Combat should not become the primary focus of an adventure since it is most effective when used sparingly such as at the dramatic climax. When combat does occur, it should be an exciting experience for the players involved. Anime combat is fun to watch, and playing it should be exciting and dramatic. The simple combat engine of *BESM* provides the groundwork to make this possible.

COMBAT ROUNDS

Whenever your character attacks another character, combat begins. In *BESM*, the chaotic experience of battle is simplified by handling combat as a series of rounds, each representing a period just long enough for the average person to make a single attack, perform another brief action such as readying a weapon, diving madly for cover, bandaging a friend's injuries, or perform some other special action (such as invoking a magical power).

Each round of combat covers a short but fluid 1 to 10 seconds of time from the characters' perspectives, depending on their actions and the circumstances (the time scale is not usually relevant; if necessary, assume 15 rounds to a minute). Should the conflict not be resolved at the end of the first combat round, subsequent rounds will follow.

Each round consists of two parts: Initiative and Character Action. Character action is further subdivided in other activities as each character involved gets a chance to act or react.

INITIATIVE

Initiative determines who acts first in a fight and is checked at the beginning of each round. Each player involved rolls one die and adds the result to his or her character's Combat Value. The GM does the same for any NPCs engaged in the conflict. The character with the highest total has "gained initiative" and acts first, followed by others in descending order. Should two or more characters or NPCs have the same Initiative, their actions are simultaneous.



CHARACTER ACTION

Characters act in the sequence determined by the Initiative roll. When it is time for your character to act, he or she may attack one other character or take one non-combat action. In addition, your character can perform one defensive action at some other time during the round in a reflexive response to another character's attack.

ATTACK

A single attack against a single target can include one of the following combat forms: an unarmed assault, an attack with a melee weapon, the firing of a hand-held ranged weapon, an assault with a thrown object, or the offensive use of an Attribute such as Mind Control or Special Attack.

Before rolling the dice, you should clearly describe the method of attack, the weapon your character is using (if any), and the target. To succeed in the attack against an opponent, you must roll less than or equal to your character's Combat Value on two dice after adding the difficulty modifiers that the GM applies (if any). If the attack roll succeeds, the character is deemed to be on target, and the attack will hit unless the opponent is capable of deliberately defending against the attack (see Defend, below). If a Defense Roll fails or is not attempted at all, the target will suffer the damage associated with the attack.

NON-COMBAT ACTIONS

Rather than taking an offensive action during any combat round, a character may use a non-combat action on his or her Initiative. Such actions include untying a rescued captive, running, using analytic sensors, changing weapons, climbing into or out of a vehicle, withdrawing from combat, writing a note, changing clothes, etc. Speaking a few words during combat, running about while attacking, or making a dramatic speech does not constitute an action.

A non-combat action may succeed automatically, or the GM may require a Stat check (with or without modifiers) to determine whether it succeeds. Some non-combat actions may take a number of rounds to perform at the GM's option.

DEFEND

If your character is the target of a successful attack, he or she may attempt to defend against it by blocking, dodging, or running away. Defensive actions are not carried out according to Initiative order but are resolved immediately after the attack.

Your character can defend only once each round, regardless of how many people or creatures are attacking. Should your character choose not to attempt a defense (perhaps in anticipation of a more powerful attack still to come), the decision cannot be changed later in the round.

To successfully defend against an attack, you must roll less than or equal to your character's Combat Value on two dice after adding the difficulty modifiers that the GM applies (if any). If the defense roll is successful, the attack is blocked, dodged, or otherwise negated, and no damage is delivered to your character.



DAMAGE

The amount of damage your character delivers to a target reflects his or her understanding of advanced combat techniques as well as the power of a character's weapons and/or Attributes. The damage value's reliance on the attacker's Combat Value reflects the equal importance of the Body Stat (force of the blow and manual dexterity), Mind Stat (knowledge of a body's vulnerable areas), and Soul Stat (determination and luck) when inflicting injury upon an opponent.

The damage delivered by your character will depend on the attack form used:

- Unarmed Combat — Your character's Combat Value.
- Armed Combat (average weapon) — Your character's Combat Value, multiplied by 2.
- Armed Combat (powerful weapon) — Your character's Combat Value, multiplied by 3.
- Combat Using an Attribute — Your character's Combat Value, plus additional damage.

Average weapons include knives, clubs, pistols, and small swords. Powerful weapons include rifles, machine guns, large swords, and small explosives.

The damage inflicted is subtracted from the target's current Health Point total. Normally, if a character is reduced to zero or fewer Health Points, he or she is incapacitated and is often knocked out. A character who is reduced to -20 or fewer Health Points will die within an appropriately dramatic length of time unless immediate medical attention is available.

RECOVERING HEALTH POINTS

Health Points are restored at the rate of your character's Body Stat for each hour (or day, for more "realistic" campaigns) of rest. For example, if your character has a Body Stat of 10, he or she will rejuvenate 10 Health Points every hour while resting. The healing rate is doubled if the character is in the care of trained medical personnel but halved if he or she does not spend time to rest.



SAMPLE GAME IDEAS AND THEMES

JOURNEY TO THE EAST

Genre/Period: Martial Arts Action in Ancient China

The characters were monks or sisters in an esoteric monastery in China, students of the martial arts and Taoist philosophy. Unfortunately, the government has decided they were too sympathetic with rebel peasants and ordered its Imperial troops to destroy the monastery. The characters escaped, but the seven sacred scrolls holding the secrets of their Order were burned. To rebuild the temple, a copy of the scrolls must be found. According to legend, the only copies are held in a sister temple far away in the distant Land of the Rising Sun. The characters must journey across war-torn China, braving bandits and warlords, picking up allies, and using their martial arts skills and chi-powers to help people.



MAGICAL BUG HUNTER KEIKO !

Genre/Period: Magical Girl Action-Comedy-Romance in a Modern Fantasy Setting

The characters are teenagers who discover the mysterious magical Book of the Honey Kingdom. Reading its pages enables them to transform into magical girls and shrink down to tiny size. They can have adventures in the Honey Kingdom, a world of anthropomorphic insects under Tokyo, which is currently being menaced by the evil Hornet Lord and his Wasp Riders. In between, they go to high school, where they discover that some of the other students bear a strange resemblance to characters they meet in the Honey Kingdom. Could the enigmatic butterfly prince really have any connection with Akira, the brooding but handsome school kendo coach? And why does the school principle somehow remind them of the sinister Hornet Lord?

LEGENDS OF THE GALACTIC EMPIRE

Genre/Period: Mecha Action Space Opera in the Far Future

In the 30th Century, humanity has gone to the stars and carved out an interstellar empire linked by wormhole gates that allow instant interstellar travel. After early wars of expansion, the mature Empire has become a force for stability and peace. Its Star Legions protect the frontier against space pirates, barbarian space nomads, and the android infiltrators and robot warships of Cyber-Web, a rival empire of intelligent machines. However, the greatest threat to peace is from within: a secret faction within the palace sees the Emperor as decadent and soft and schemes to depose him, placing their own puppet on the throne. In these troubled times, the only force that will save the empire from chaos is the Imperial Bodyguard, an elite force of human and alien mecha pilots based in the royal capital but equipped with space fighters that can cross the galaxy when needed. Like a star-faring King's Musketeers, the Imperial Bodyguard may become embroiled in court intrigue, fight in open battle, or perform secret missions for the throne.

VOYAGERS OF THE NEW DAWN

Genre/Period: High Fantasy Action-Drama on a Fantasy World

Dark Faeries have stolen the Five Statues of Light and quelled the sun, plunging the world into eternal darkness. Now, vampires and demons roam, minions of the wicked Faerie Queen. The characters must sail off the edge of the world in their magical flying ship in quest of another star to bring back a new sun! Unfortunately, a squadron of ghost ships, captained by the Faerie Queen's seven sorcerer-lieutenants, is not far behind them.