



# animatica

*The Animated Multiverse*

A Cross-Genre Cartoon Storytelling Game

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Published by  
Thought Police Interactive

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# Introduction

This is the alpha module for Animatica, a cartoon multiverse storytelling game. It is a draft manuscript. It may contain omissions, spelling mistakes, and other errors.

All rules and text are subject to revision.

Animatica is a sprawling multiverse made of up individual 'verses (animated worlds). It is populated by Animates, animated characters of all varieties.

The stories can be focused on a single world and type of story or jump across the many worlds of Animatica.

The default play style of Animatica is absurdist and tongue-in-cheek, travelling across the multiverse. However, it is also adaptable to more serious stories and genre emulation.

## Requirements

Animatica requires six-sided dice for the action rules and paper & pencils or electronic devices to record character sheets and notes.

Animatica also requires 1 or more "narrators" and 1 or more participants (or "players").

The narrators provide the sandbox setting, describing various places and events, as well as handling the portrayal of NPCs (all the characters not portrayed by the players).

The players take on the roles of Animates, living animations in an animated multiverse.

## Rule Zero

*Have Fun!*

This is not Rule #1. It comes before Rule #1. It is the meta-rule underlying all other rules. Storytelling and roleplaying games are entertainment.

The entire point of getting together to play a game and tell some stories is to have fun.

## Corollary Zero

*Don't Be A Dick!*

This is a natural conclusion from Rule Zero. Don't be cruel to people with traumas or discomforts. Don't let inane story details or rules nitpicks get in the way.

Don't be That Guy™.

Come together to enjoy yourselves. Create some new stories. Be kind.

## Rule One

Every production should use, discard, revise, or add on rules as they see fit. Use whatever combination of book rules and house rules make the most sense for your story.

The rules are just there to guide the narrative and provide a general sense of structure.

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# Character Creation

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## **Pick Name, Genre, and Medium**

What is your character's name?

What genre of family or 'verse do they originate from?

What Medium of Animate are they?

---

## **Assign Traits**

Start with 1 each in Brains, Charm, Luck and Vigor.

Distribute 8 additional points between them.

Each trait maxes out at 5 in character creation.

---

## **Choose a Paradigm and Tricks**

Pick Art, Science, or Stupidity.

Assign 6 points to Tricks in the chosen Paradigm.

Each Trick maxes out at 4 in character creation.

---

## **Pick a Quality**

Pick one Quality, an animated ability not covered by other traits.

---

## **Choose Quirks**

Pick two Quirks: One personality and one downfall quirk.

---

## **Make Up Backstory**

Make up a little backstory for your character.

It doesn't need to be complex, just a short summary to help define who they are.

Where are they from? Do they have a family? What's their life been like?

---

## Basic System

**R**oll a number of six-sided dice equal to the trait being used. Dice showing 5 or 6 count as wins. All actions are handled this way.

### Bonus & Penalties

Bonuses add dice.

A +3 bonus adds three dice.

Penalties subtract dice.

A -1 penalty subtracts one die.

Mundane, and everyday actions get a +2 bonus.

### Chance Die

If the dice total is zero or less than zero, you can take a "No" failure OR roll a single chance die.

If the result is a 5 or 6, get a 2-win success. If the result is a 2, suffer a 1-fail spectacular failure. If the result is a 1, suffer a 2-fail spectacular failure.

### Wins

*Does the action succeed?*

0 – No; a simple failure

1 – Yes, but; succeed but incompletely or at a cost

2 – Yes; a simple success

3+ – Yes, and; succeed and do so better or with more benefit than expected

### Sliding Scale

Characters can slide the results up 1 on the scale in exchange for taking a Hit **or** suffering a -2 penalty on their next action. Even a 0-win basic failure can become a 1-win "yes, but" success.

If the character is in a conflict, their opponent can match the cost to negate the result bonus.

The sliding scale may **not** be used to negate or soften spectacular failures.

### Spectacular Failure

If a roll yields no wins and some 1s are showing, the result is a spectacular failure.

Not only does the action fail, it goes spectacularly wrong. Count each 1 as a fail for the scale and determine how extremely the action backfires.

*How bad is the fail?*

1 – A minor but embarrassing flub that will be the butt of jokes, but only for a little while

2 – A truly complete, backfiring failure that will become the talk of town for quite a while, maybe even coloring the character's rep

3+ – A catastrophic mistake that will enter legend and be told by your grandchildren's grandchildren

### Hits and KO

Hits are blows taken. A scathing insult will deal a Hit as easily as an uppercut.

By default, player characters can take three Hits in a scene before being KO'd. Once KO'd, the character is down and out for the scene.

The character returns at the end of the scene or beginning of the next. Animates never die. They only go down for a little while.

However, they can be captured, drawn upon, or otherwise handled and affected while KO'd.

# Character Bits

## Genres

**G**enres are various types of animation. The genre helps define the background, point of view, and overall style of a character.

Players should pick a genre specific enough to provide some clear direction, but broad enough to allow a lot of room in the story.

Classic silly and Saturday morning action are very popular genres. Both are classic types of cartoons, each over the top in the own ways.

Late night craziness is a great choice for zany and absurd characters of any Medium. Classic movie or classic TV are great for certain types of fantasy or wholesome characters.

Go ahead and explore all sorts of inspiration. As long as they include puppets and/or animated characters, a niche or subgenre is fair play.

If you're choosing something a little more obscure, describe it more broadly or plainly rather than using niche terms.

## Genre Impact

When considering the way your character's worldview, genre is a main guide. An Animate from a slapstick culture is going to see things very differently from one who comes from a family of anime action stars.

It also should inform their personalities to a degree. Use your genre as a guide for roleplaying.

A classic fantasy movie character may have a heavily affected sense of etiquette and mock-medieval opinions. A hardboiled detective from Saturday morning cartoons may behave like a caricature of a film noir hero.

Genre also affects the way a character's "animate actions", Tricks, and Qualities are called upon and function. An "old school zany" Ttoon is going to use their animated abilities very differently from a "late night adult humor" Clay. Use discretion.

## Media

There are five main Media of Animates within the worlds of Animatica: Clays, Puppets, Sketches, Ttoons, and Threeds.

Each Medium has its own benefits and drawbacks. Most Media also have unifying personality traits or other characteristics.

These are representative of the common types of character. In combination with genre, you should be able to emulate most types of animated and puppeteered characters.

If your group has additional ideas for subtypes of Media or a new Medium to include, the narrators and players may discuss it. We encourage innovation and creativity in character creation and worldbuilding. Go nuts!

## Clays

Clays are often but not only creatures of clay. They can be made from a wide variety of materials. The unifying characteristic of Clays is that they are all three-dimensional stop-motion creatures.

Clays range from devious shapeshifters to innocent explorers, but even the tricksters usually have a simple and friendly attitude.

Due to their construction, they tend to be a bit shorter on Brains than other Animates. Regardless, even their best and brightest tend to be a bit gullible and oblivious.

### *Benefit*

**Bounce:** Give up your fighting action to ignore hits from any blow, bouncing around or quickly reforming without injury.

### *Drawback*

**Naïve:** -2 on any attempts to detect traps, discern lies, spot ambushes, or otherwise identify or see through deceptions and illusions.

## Puppets

Though felt puppets are the most famous example, Puppets also including everything from marionettes to sock-puppets. They are live-action puppets of all types.

Puppets come with varied personalities but all come with a strong force of personality. They're usually quite energetic with hidden reserves allowing them to burst into action.

But they are also far from graceful, having the difficulties with coordinated movement you'd expect from a Puppet.

### *Benefit*

**Flurry:** Get an extra step's worth of actions at the end of any step, once per scene.

### *Drawback*

**Clumsy:** -2 on anything requiring coordination or fine motor control.

## Sketches

Sketches are flat paper and cut-out people and creatures. They range from literal sketches with notebook paper bodies to popup book characters of slightly sturdier cardboard.

Sketches tend to have self-obsessed attitudes, including more selfish and cowardly sorts and deep out-there or strange mashup concepts.

Their construction allows them to hide in plain sight, but it also leaves them often without much Vigor. Even the fittest Sketches find feats of strength difficult.

### *Benefit*

**Sidestep:** Become invisible and undetectable by turning sideways.

### *Drawback*

**Thin:** -2 on anything requiring strength or athletic ability.

## Threads

Threads are 3D and CGI animated characters. Their appearances range from highly polished to glitchy and crude.

Threads are considered the most "solid" of Animates, having mass in a way the others do not.

This works both for them and against them as their increased inertia interacts with the cartoon physics of Animatica. It also affects their personality, making them considerably more stubborn and direct than other Animates.

### *Benefit*

**Solid:** +3 bonus on pushing through obstacles and barriers, including opponents; -3 penalty against anyone/anything trying to move or stop you.

### *Drawback*

**Momentum:** -2 to attempts to change direction and -2 whenever an action is of a different kind than the last.

## Twoons

Twoons are 2D & 2.5D comics and cartoons from the classics to modern animations. They may be the most varied and internally divisive of the Media.

While other Animates share more personality traits, Twoons are deeply fractured along genre lines. Their only unity is in their genre devotion.

They're great at what they do, but quite inept at everyday activities.

### *Benefit*

**Extra:** Take one extra genre-specific Quality.

### *Drawback*

**Abnormal:** Take no bonus for mundane actions. 1s and 2s count for spectacular failure on mundane efforts and everyday activities.



## Core Traits

The core traits are what you will most commonly call upon and use. They are utilized for most dice rolls and actions in the game.

There are four core traits: Brains, Charm, Luck, and Vigor. They are largely what they sound like.

Each trait has examples of mundane and “animated” actions.

Mundane actions are bland or mundane activities, as well as simple and everyday efforts. Animated actions are the types of activities and events one would not encounter in the so-called real world but expect in animation.

They are intended as examples for illustration. *Players and narrators are encouraged to be imaginative and inventive.* Try new things. Find new solutions. Explore the possibilities!

To use the core traits, take its rating. Add or subtract any bonus or penalty. Roll that many six-sided dice.

Follow the results rules and scales in the basic system. All action rolls work this way.

Remember that characters get a +2 bonus for simple, mundane, and everyday actions, **except for Twoons**. Twoons do not receive this bonus.

### Brains

Brains covers intelligence and knowledge. Actions based on smarts and book learning of all sorts rely on Brains.

#### *Mundane Actions*

- Citing the geography or “scientific” rules of a `verse.
- Repairing and building contraptions
- Outsmarting a hunter

#### *Animated Actions*

- Setting cartoon-physics traps
- Creating mad scientist inventions
- Impossibly fast hacking

### Charm

Charm embodies charisma and social talents. Any attempts to be personable or engage in social actions rely on Charm.

#### *Mundane Actions*

- Winning someone over
- Fast-talking
- Singing a song

#### *Animated Actions*

- Hypnotize people
- Summon woodland critters
- Get pardons for serious crimes

### Luck

Luck is random odds and lucky breaks. Luck is used when throwing caution to the wind and relying on random chance.

#### *Mundane Actions*

- Gambling
- Dodging hazards
- Guessing a combination

#### *Animated Actions*

- Survive big falls without injury
- Synchronicity
- Randomly finding just what you need

### Vigor

Vigor covers strength and physical presence. Any kind of athletic action or feat of strength should rely on Vigor.

#### *Mundane Actions*

- Jumping across rooftops
- Hitting things
- Breaking down doors

#### *Animated Actions*

- Flipping a car
- Leaping tall buildings
- Fast digging or tunneling

## Paradigm

Paradigm represents the way a character perceives and interacts with the multiverse. It is insight into the rules of Animatica and how to exploit them.

Each character picks Art, Science, or Stupidity. This is not usually a conscious thought process. Paradigm is a subconscious filter and most Animates can't begin to explain it.

Narrators and players are encouraged to invent new Tricks. If you have a good idea for another Trick, talk it out with everyone.

To use Tricks, roll the number of dice equal to the Trick's rating, just as with any roll.

Unless noted otherwise, Tricks are assumed to last one scene or until dismissed.

### Art

Art sees the vast worlds of Animatica as a tableau of performance and expression.

It usually visibly expresses itself as a pen or paintbrush that the character uses to create the effect.

### *Draw*

Draw a new environmental or building feature. Doors, tunnels, unlock or open buttons, and more can be created.

### *Erase*

Erase an environmental or building feature. Doors, windows, stairs, and more can be temporarily erased from existence.

### *Disguise*

Draw on a disguise. The character can appear as any character, Medium, or type of character fitting their approximate size.

## Science

Science perceives the multiverse of Animatica as having a method in its madness, a universal pattern of orderly rules.

It is calling upon the inherent nature of existence in one way or another. The appearance varies by the specific Trick used.

### *Kludge*

Jury-rig repairs or piece together hodge-podge contraptions. It doesn't matter if assembled items truly make sense, as long as there's some theme or pseudo-logic to it all.

### *Law*

Call upon the laws of the area to instantly summon local police or call forth legal warning signs prohibiting a given action that everyone within eyesight must obey, even if the signs are untrue.

### *Order*

Instant order a product from The Company's catalogue for instant delivery. **All products from The Company only last for one use.**

When using the products, roll a chance die. On a 6, gain a +2 bonus for an action using the product.

On a 1, the item catastrophically fails. The action using the product auto-fails and all 1s rolled count for spectacular failure, even if roll has 5s and/or 6s.

## Stupidity

Stupidity is a misunderstood and underrated way of approaching the infinity of Animatica. It is the embrace of the maxim that ignorance is bliss.

Dumbness can be so willful as to warp the reality and story around it.

### *Deny*

Temporarily deny the existence of a person, event, or object, making it effectively non-existent for the character.

While the character cannot be affected by the target, they can neither perceive nor interact with it.

### *Reverse*

Through sheer dumbness, flip the script and turn the tides against opponents or reverse undesirable natural events.

Reverse an action or effect, or undo the damage of an event, whether through a direct action or a semi-plausible and crazy dumb butterfly effect.

### *Ignore*

Traps and environmental dangers prove ineffective against the character, who traipses through them oblivious to their threat.

While triggered traps and dodged hazards may be harmless to the dumb character, their companions are not likely to be so fortunate.

## Qualities

Qualities are special or magical animated abilities not covering by the other character traits. Both the core traits and Paradigms grant animated abilities.

Qualities must be unique. That is, they may not duplicate abilities provided by other traits. A character who has selected Stupidity as a Paradigm may not take Draw as a Quality, as it is already a Trick.

Flight and teleportation are common examples. Qualities can also be special items, such as purses with infinite space or glasses that show the most direct (not safest or most convenient) route to a destination.

Short distance and basic usage of Qualities is usually considered automatic. A character with flight can just fly around. The purse with infinite space will store any number or size of things and still only weigh a couple ounces.

More complicated and powerful uses of Qualities instead require a roll. For the purposes of rolling for results, Qualities are treated as though they have a rating of 3. That is, **three dice are rolled when using Qualities this way.**

The character with flight engaging in complicated maneuvers or trying to carry someone should make a roll. Someone reaching into their infinite purse to pull out a specific item they didn't store themselves should also roll.

Using the teleportation example, it would be an automatic use to teleport to another spot within line of sight. Teleporting with others or far away would require a roll.

Examples of more powerful Qualities always requiring a roll would be eye beams, spontaneous musical numbers, summoning imps, vacuum breath, and shapeshifting.

## Quirks

Quirks are flaws and bizarre habits. They come in three main varieties: personality, downfall, and scar. Starting characters begin with one personality and one downfall quirk.

Below are general descriptions of the quirk types. They include some examples for illustration. Narrators and players are encouraged to be inventive and collaborate to find quirks that best suit each character.

### Personality Quirks

Also called tics, personality quirks are strange wrinkles in the behavior and attitude of a character. Tics are not merely weird behaviors. They can be serious impediments and the cause of serious problems.

Obsession and narcissism are two of the most common quirks. A delusional worldview, heavily colored by genre, is also common.

Feral and alien behavior are also easily found among Animates. Many of the intelligent animals and beasts still have a very wild and aggressive nature with little understanding of nuance and etiquette.

Many Animates in general have a simply alien mind, seeing and feeling things in ways different from people and anthropomorphic characters.

Inappropriate emotional responses are another regularly encountered personality quirk. An action anime genre character may take everything far too seriously. In contrast, a late-night absurdity character could find everything funny, no matter what it is.

## Downfall Quirks

Also called flaws, downfall quirks are general failings and weaknesses of characters.

Allergies and aversions are classic examples, such as an inability to tolerate the sound of church bells or being burned by silver.

They can also take the form of limits and impairments. Bad eyesight, slow movement, and social obliviousness are common examples.

They can also be represented by external factors. What distinguishes downfall quirks from curses is the internal or inherent nature of them.

Rather than being imposed on the character, the quirks are part of their nature or story. Hunted and haunted are traditional external downfalls.

Status problems are a classical type of downfall as well. Examples include being hated by objects, a prank target for animals, or treated by The Law like an unlicensed pet.

### Scar Quirks

Also called curses, scar quirks are the some of the lasting negative results of adventures through the 'verses of Animatica.

They are most typically a literal curse laid down by a defeated villain. However, scar quirks can be any type of "scar" from their adventures.

Curses and other scars should be rare occurrences. The final hateful words of a Big Bad, an accidental dip into the "undrawn" gaps between 'verses, a very personal and hurtful loss; these are the type of rare events that may result in a scar quirk.

# Actions

**W**henever a character attempts to do anything, they are taking an action. For simple, straightforward actions and narrative scenes, things may simply happen as they are described and played out.

## System Recap

For other actions, the dice system is used. Roll a number of six-sided dice equal to the trait being used. Dice showing 5 or 6 count as wins.

Bonuses add dice. Penalties subtract dice. Mundane and everyday actions get a +2 bonus. Slide the results up 1 in exchange for a Hit or -2 penalty on your next action.

If the dice total is zero or less than zero, take a simple “No” failure OR roll a chance die.

If you get no wins on the roll and 1s showing, the result is a spectacular failure.

## Combat & Conflict

*There is no specific “combat system” in Animatica separate from general conflict resolution. The design is focused on the flow of the story.*

There are action sequence and conflict guidelines. Non-physical conflicts are resolved first.

Otherwise, a battle of wits and clash of swords are handled in the same basic way. A scathing tongue will deal a Hit as much as a fist.

Conflicts can turn on wits and ingenuity as much as, if not more than, physical attacks. Even outright combat can be resolved with persuasion or other non-combat options.

The system makes non-physical actions as viable as violent ones, if not more effective.

## Narrative Resolution

Sometimes scenes and actions may flow seamlessly without a need for formal resolution. There’s no need to force the rules in where they are not necessary.

Have a big roleplaying scene and the characters do well calming enemies, charming strangers, or so on? That’s what happens! Let the story unfold.

If a character or group of characters has more than sufficient skills and power to handle a given mission? Then let them handle it and just guide them through the narrative.

It is OK to let play it out and leave spending out of the way. Take joy in the unfolding story.

**Narrative resolution** is also often used between players. Characters can engage in any activities that do not require involved rules.

Go with the flow and leave the participants to explore the world and their characters.

## Steps

Steps represent pieces of story scenes. At the end of each step, the narrator should describe the dramatic flow & outcome of the scene.

Steps present whole series of actions, rather than a traditional blow-by-blow approach. To phrase it one way, Animatica tracks whole boxing rounds instead of individual punches. Put another, it tracks a full beat or segment of a scene rather than following each move.

Steps are one full coherent sequence of events in a scene. From one step to another, the balance of power and flow of the story can radically shift. They are the story focus for resolving conflicts and time-sensitive actions.

## Timing

Steps are not tied to specific segments of time. Timing follows the action and flow of the story.

Think of various battles in cartoons and anime. Some fights go on forever, while others happen fast. Let your story dictate the pacing.

The pacing of steps should follow the tempo of the scene and action. The rules help frame the action, rather than define it. Story takes center stage.

## Phases

Events usually occur in a predictable order: Talking, Doing, Fighting. Actions from earlier phases can be reserved for later phases. Talking actions can happen in the Doing phase, for example.

Characters usually receive 3 actions per step: one each of Talking, Doing, and Fighting.

### *Talking*

Resolved first. Hand signals, texting, or plain speech all count as talking actions. One short phrase to a couple of sentences. Communication powers and conflicts resolve in the Fighting phase.

### *Doing*

General actions and interactions with the environment come next. Opening doors and using control panels are examples of actions taken in this phase. Declared defenses and movement & maneuvers count as Doing actions.

Using Paradigm Tricks counts as Doing actions.

### *Fighting*

“Fighting” encompasses direct conflicts of all kinds and comes last. Everything from fistfights to battles of wit falls under this phase. Direct conflict always comes last, with the exception of tricks.

Fighting actions may be spent for a second Doing action. Using Qualities counts as Fighting actions.

## Declaring Actions

At the beginning of each phase **before fighting**, go around the table or room and resolve the actions.

There is no distinction between declaring the attempt and undertaking it. As soon as it is said, it is done. All actions occur simultaneously or interwoven.

During the fighting phase, everyone takes turns declaring their targets and action sequence. They are then resolved in an orderly fashion.

As with other phases, actions are presumed to occur simultaneously under most circumstances.

## Assist Actions

Characters may assist one another on tasks, as sensible and appropriate. Up to three other individuals may assist with a given task.

For specialized or complex efforts, helpers must have a relevant trait at 3 or higher.

Each assistant rolls the appropriate trait. A “yes but” or better give the main actor a +1 bonus. The main actor may gain up to a +3 bonus.

In addition, the end result may be modestly more effective or less flawed.

If assistants fail their rolls, they do not help and have no impact on the main roll. If an assistant rolls a spectacular failure, apply a penalty equal to the number of 1s rolled.

## Resolving Conflicts

Conflicts are resolved in order by situation.

If a conflict outcome can be resolved or described without Hits, they should not be inflicted. The outcome serves as the result, for good or ill, on its own. Hits should only be taken when a character suffers serious stress or injury.

## Fighting Order

As with the phases of steps, the fighting phase has its own order of events.

The order is based on story flow, rather than a realistic accounting.

### *Physical vs Non-Physical*

Non-physical conflicts are typically resolved first. Social, emotional, mental, and spiritual action sequences have the edge in timing.

Non-physical conflicts are resolved in the same mutual, defense, then unopposed order as physical conflicts. Hits and other outcomes of non-physical actions are inflicted before physical conflicts are resolved.

Physical conflicts are resolved last. A punch or gunfire will occur after all other all thinking, talking, moving, doing, and non-physical actions.

For the purposes of fighting phase order, actions that would otherwise count as physical actions but are undertaken by insubstantial or spiritual Animates count as physical actions.

### *Mutual*

Characters acting simultaneously taking offensive action against each other both attempt their declared actions.

They each make a roll for their aggressive action. For tied rolls, both attackers wholly succeed. Otherwise, the higher roll wins. Subtract the lower roll from the higher roll to get the win result.

Mutual conflict actions should be resolved first before other conflict actions.

### *Unopposed*

Resolved last. If an aggressor is unopposed and there is no declared defense, simply roll and follow the result scale.

Unopposed conflicts should be resolved last.

## Special Actions

Animatica uses a few different types of special defense actions. They may be thought of as exemptions to the standard flow. They offer additional options in conflicts.

### *Declared Defense*

A declared defense allows a player to roll one of their character's core traits. The defense result may be used against 3 enemies or attacks in that step of the scene. The defense applies against any aggression or attacks using the same trait.

### *Take Us Both Down*

Characters using a declared defense that negates an attack may choose to allow a "yes but" success with a cost result. In addition to the "yes but" costs, the attacker also suffers a serious negative outcome (such as "stunned silent" or "knocked flat").

If a declared defense reduces an assault to a success with a cost outcome, the addition negative result of Take Us Both Down applies.

### *Nope Out*

At any point in a scene before they have been targeted by aggressive actions, they may Nope Out and depart the scene immediately.

After being engaged in conflict, characters may still escape as a Doing action. However, they need a simple success or better on a Luck or Brains roll.

## Intense Actions

When high precision, area targeting, or a heavier impact outcome is required, a character may need to undertake an intense action. It is a costly act of exertion and focus.

In exchange for taking a Hit **and** a -2 penalty on the roll, the character can produce larger results or affect more targets.

A prominent example are targeted attacks inflicting more serious harms or multiple Hits, such as disabling a foe or disrupting security systems for an extended time. Affecting small groups instead of individuals is another.

# Support Cast

**T**he world is populated with non-player characters. These are the background characters or the support cast.

Most support cast members have little to no resistance to the main characters. They are ancillary to the story and have little impact.

## Pawns

Pawns are the common lowest level Animates able to impact player characters. They receive 2 to 4 points to distribute to core traits and possess no Paradigm or Quality. They can only take 1 Hit.

## Faces

Faces are the next step up. While still tertiary characters, they have started to evolve. They receive 3 to 5 points for core traits and a Paradigm of 2 or 3. They also can only take 1 Hit.

## Arms

Arms are low level characters that have fought their way up the ranks in one way or another. They receive 4 to 6 points for core traits and a Paradigm of 2 to 4. They can endure up to 2 Hits.

## Hands

Hands are typically local bosses and influencers. They receive 5 to 8 points for core traits and a Paradigm of 4 to 6 OR a Paradigm of 2 or 3 and a Quality. They can take 3 Hits like player characters.

## Minds

Minds are mayors, Big Bads, and other ranking or powerful Animates. They receive 8 to 16 points for core traits (which cap at 7), a Paradigm of 6 to 12 (Tricks capping at 6), and 1 to 3 Qualities. They also typically have at least a small gang, if not a small army, of lower level goons. They range from a 3 Hit to 12 Hit capacity.

## Support Cast Actions

Lower level background characters are generally no match for the main characters. Nevertheless, the supporting cast is not completely helpless.

Pawn and Faces can all take supporting cast actions. Arms, Hands, and Minds must act as individuals like regular characters.

### *Escape Scene*

Non-combatants may spend their doing actions to leave any scene with a viable escape route. This action sequence occurs at the end of the step, after all other efforts and interactions have been resolved.

Support cast successfully completing the attempt freely exit the scene without risk of further harm. They may be tracked down later but they are outside of the immediate action.

### *Strength in Numbers*

While they may be individually fragile and limited, background characters can be quite dangerous in a mob.

Pick a leader for the mob. That character makes the main rolls.

The other members of the mob add together the same trait as the main roll into a mob pool. For every three points added to the mob pool, the main roll gets a +1 bonus. The mob leader may gain up to a +5 bonus in this way.

The group absorbs Hits for the leader unless their assailant makes the additional effort of an intense action. Each Hit takes out one member of the mob. An exceptional success ("yes and" result) KO's three mob members.

Strength in Numbers may only be used by groups of four or more. If the mob is reduced to three or fewer members, the remainder must act as individuals.



# Worlds of Animatica

**A**nimatica is a sprawling multiverse of infinite worlds. Any type of animated world or character, created or even merely imagined, exists within countless 'verses of Animatica.

The residents are aware of their nature as animated creatures. Individuals may or may not be familiar with the fourth wall and/or concept of an audience. Most are aware of at least the vague differences between Media of Animates and a general concept of the types of worlds possible.

However, most have no sense of a multiverse or multiple worlds. They may be vaguely aware of other 'verses, but think of them as faraway lands or strange foreign nations (when at all).

Below are a few example 'verses for reference.

## Franklin

Franklin is a megacity encompassing every kind of possible neighborhood and metro outskirts. It also a strangely small town where everyone knows everyone to some degree.

It is a primary hub of Animatica. It's a strange mix-up place where events and characters of every genre and Medium co-exist.

It's also the home of the Big Station, a train depot with rails heading off to every possible 'verse of Animatica. But despite the name, it's a small nondescript train depot on the far outskirts of Franklin. Most residents aren't even aware it exists.

There's technically an airport. But the planes just land in other parts of Franklin or next to the Big Station for supposed international travel. Nobody gives it much thought. Last time someone questioned it, air control failed.

Franklin is the most common starting place and home 'verse for player characters. It allows for wildly mixed. It's an ideal home base as the hub of Animatica for characters who become aware of and travel the multiverse.

## Slapland

Slapland is a land of detailed drawings and painted sets filled with crazy characters and cartoon physics. It is, as they say, a silly place.

It is one of the more popular destinations for travelers. Frustrations can be vented with no consequences. The shows are legendary entertainment, though one never knows if they're in for a quality production or a hilarious clash.

Slapland isn't without its dangers. Some of the more hostile characters can become obsessive enduring enemies.

The lack of consistent geography and variable physics can also result in characters becoming lost in the cacophony of scenes.

## Punchtopia

Punchtopia is a vast series of cutouts and stage sets filled hand-puppets and marionettes. It is ruled by the erratic and violent Queen Judy.

The laws and etiquette are constantly changing based on some inscrutable schedule.

This is one of the most dangerous worlds an Animate can trend within. It is also one of the most important.

The wisest puppets in all of Animatica reside within the forests and towers of Punchtopia. Without their guidance, many journeys would not be possible. They are often the only ones who know the names and locations of obscure 'verses.

## Whatinthe

Whatinthe is where all rules cease to have meaning. No logical causality connects one event to another. Things randomly happen for no reason. Actions are unpredictable. It is a land of chaos and madness.

Whereas Slapland may work on absurdities and unrealistic rules, Whatinthe works on no discernable rules at all.

It certainly has its own patterns and purpose, as does any 'verse. But whatever that grand design may be, it is beyond the understanding of characters and seems only senseless.

Despite the non-sequiturs and insanity, Whatinthe is one of the safer 'verses if a character can hold their head together. It is impossible to cause harm or be harmed in this world. The challenge of the place is staying focused enough to think of an exit and not to lose one's mind.

## Actionia

Actionia is a land of constant warfare, crime, and fast-paced action.

It is primarily populated by Saturday morning champions and superhero films Twoons, but also has a substantial population of Threeds.

Despite seeming gritty in description, the general populace lives in relative safety and prosperity. That is because of the proliferation of paramilitary and superhero groups that police the world.

Despite the presence of supervillains and terrorist groups, the world goes through dramas but is never truly at risk.

Though people are generally helpful, foreign characters will have to be especially careful to follow the law. "Invaders" engaging in criminal acts are very quickly imprisoned or exiled by the powerful protectors of Actionia.

## Magination

Magination is itself one massive felt puppet, natively populated by puppets and clays. It is a world where anything one imagines with any clarity pops into existence, whether you mean it or not.

The natives have developed a talent for being easily distracted and not holding thoughts.

It allows them to live their lives without constantly creating new things. However, it can make holding conversations with them very confusing and frustrating for outsiders.

Most things created in Magination cannot be taken to other 'verses. However, sometimes a rare special "magined" item proves more durable and can travel with its creator to other worlds.

# Example Characters

## Clay

**Name:** Benberry Ball

**Genre:** After School Special

**Medium:** Clay

**Brains** 5, **Charm** 4, **Luck** 2, **Vigor** 1

**Paradigm:** Science

**Tricks:** Kludge 2, Law 4

**Quality:** Spontaneous Narration (like a spontaneous musical number, but an educational interlude)

**Quirks:** Must obey all local laws (personality); can't climb stairs, ladders, etc. (downfall)

**Bio:** Benberry Ball was the young genius host of Benberry Explains It All, an afterschool special educational series teaching civics and physics.

Benberry is stop-motion clay ball with a photorealistic human face and able to manifest tentacle-arms.

Though he's quite book-smart and sure he knows it all, he lived a sheltered life as a child star and is naïve to ways of the world.

## Puppet

**Name:** Lambie Pie, Queen of All

**Genre:** Late Night Absurdity

**Medium:** Puppet

**Brains** 2, **Charm** 4, **Luck** 2, **Vigor** 4

**Paradigm:** Art

**Tricks:** Disguise 3, Draw 3

**Quality:** Clairvoyance/Remote Viewing

**Quirks:** Megalomaniac (personality); Bling-Bound (she will lose 1 level of a core trait for every bow or ring lost until it is returned)

**Bio:** Lambie Pie was, in her mind at least, a great queen of a vast Puppet kingdom populated by sentient stuffed animals and other "backyard theater" creatures. According to her, she just misplaced it somewhere.

Lambie Pie, Queen of All, is a small bean-filled lamb poppet with vigorous body language and an oddly expressive blank face.

While she is violent and often mean in her words, she is a loving companion to her friends in her own way.

## Sketch

**Name:** Crazy Connie

**Genre:** Indie/experimental noir-punk

**Medium:** Sketch

**Brains** 3, **Charm** 3, **Luck** 3, **Vigor** 3

**Paradigm:** Art

**Tricks:** Disguise 2, Erase 4

**Quality:** Kiss of Madness (blow a kiss at a target, they are lost in a delusion of Connie's choice for the rest of the scene)

**Quirks:** Erratic – Roll a die for any binary choice; low is one, high is the other (personality); Addiction – Connie suffers a -1 cumulative penalty for every scene she doesn't drink brandy from her flask (downfall)

**Bio:** Crazy Connie used to be a cop until the corruption in her force drove her out. Driven over the edge, she fell into the heart of madness and became a wildcard vigilante and madwoman for hire.

Connie is a messy, scribbled ink sketch on pad paper, looking a bit like a 70s action star.

While Crazy Connie is as wild as her name suggests, she is able to build stable relationships with effort and has a strong sense of loyalty.

## Twoon

**Name:** Jolly Ronnie

**Genre:** Modern daytime cartoon

**Medium:** Ttoon

**Brains** 1, **Charm** 1, **Luck** 5, **Vigor** 5

**Paradigm:** Stupidity

**Tricks:** Ignore 3, Reverse 3

**Quality:** Unshakeable – Once Ronnie has the trail of a target or something owned by them, he can track and find them wherever they go; Vacuum Breath – Ronnie can inhale deeply to draw in objects and lesser foes, swallowing them whole

**Quirks:** Oblivious – Details and instructions go right over Jolly Ronnie's head, as do social nuances; he's just oblivious (personality); Balloon Weakness – Ronnie takes Hits from balloons and cannot tolerate the sounds of them squeaking.

**Bio:** Jolly Ronnie was the leader of the Smiling Seven, a happiness-themed superhero team. After their defeat at the hands of Balloon Dog, Ronnie went into a self-imposed exile to redeem himself.

Jolly Ronnie is a very tall and very rotund man with bright orange hair and a somewhat creepy smile.

Ronnie seems constantly happy and is a font of positivity, but the cheer overlaps a deep depression and self-loathing he has neither the smarts nor social talents to understand or express.

# Threed

**Name:** Tasha

**Genre:** Saturday morning comedy-action

**Medium:** Threed

**Brains** 3, **Charm** 2, **Luck** 4, **Vigor** 3

**Paradigm:** Science

**Tricks:** Kludge 3, Order 3

**Quality:** Intangibility – Tasha can be tangible and intangible at will

**Quirks:** Foolhardy – Tasha does not respond to warnings and signs of danger (personality); Spectral Magnet – Tasha’s intangibility power causes her to radiate an aura that attracts nearby ghosts; usually only irritating but sometimes it becomes a real problem (downfall)

**Bio:** Tasha used to be a scientist working with the Mega Ultra Awesome Supremes until a fateful accident robbed her of her genius, but turned her into a special agent.

Tasha is an anthropomorphic lizard-woman and stands nearly three times the height of a normal character.

Tasha is a font of puns and witty comments, usually badly delivered, an expression of her struggle to hold onto the intelligence that remains. She yearns for acceptance and will reciprocate any loyalty she is offered.

# Play Modes

**A**nimatica can be played in a number of ways. It is presented with three suggested play modes as a guide.

## Episodic Mode

Episodic mode is a style of play focused on one-shot stories or a short series of independent stories. Think of shows where the normal reality resets to the default at the end of every episode. That is the essence of episodic mode.

You may wish to give characters a few more points for the core traits and/or Paradigm Tricks. Let players have a bit more oomph for single chapter stories.

For plotting, think of a typical episode of an animated show or a common short story. Pick a theme and a problem or obstacle for the characters to face.

## Story Arc Mode

Story arc mode is the general default. It is a mini-series or ongoing story. Events in previous chapters affect the current reality. Choices and actions have permanent consequences in the world.

You may wish to award characters with additional points for the core traits and Paradigm tricks over time, allowing for growth. You may also grant them more things, quick travel routes between homes in different 'verses, a semi-helpful companion, or similar bonuses.

Benefits should not be given every chapter, but instead awarded for especially funny or interesting big outcomes, solving major riddles and puzzles, successfully making major changes in the world, and completing significant plotlines.

Decide on your location and possible destinations. Write up some of the main local characters and stock characters to use as needed. Determine how the characters know each other and are bound together (neighborhood friends, schoolmates, adventure club members, or so on).

## Madness Mode

Madness mode is for when you want to have a no-holds-barred, over the top crazy good time. Nothing really matters and it's all insanity & chaos. Which can sometimes be a surprisingly good time! If you have players that really want to cut loose in an animated universe, this is the option you're looking for.

It is suggested that you give players a few extra core trait points, a couple extra points for Tricks, and one or two additional Qualities for their characters.

However, you should also saddle them with a few more Quirks as well. Chaos cuts both ways. Quirks incorporating madness and abnormality are highly encouraged.

Character should also have a capacity of five Hits instead of three. When things are so overpowered bizarre, characters will suffer more blows. Increase the capacity accordingly.

Decide on the general flavor and theme for the chaos. Pick a location and several problems or obstacles for the characters. Set some unusual and insane rules for physics, objects, and other characters encountered. Let the madness begin!

# Quick Rules Reference

## How Many Dice

**C**ore trait or Trick rating. Add any bonuses and subtract any penalties. Roll that many six-sided dice.

Simple and mundane actions get a +2 bonus. Twoons do not receive this bonus. When Qualities need a roll, roll 3 dice.

## Chance Die

If the dice total is zero or less than zero, take a “No” failure OR roll a single chance die. On 5 or 6, get a 2-win success. On a 2, suffer a 1-fail spectacular failure. On a 1, a 2-fail spectacular failure.

## Counting Dice

Dice showing 5 or 6 count as wins. No wins and 1s is a spectacular failure.

## Wins

- o – No; a simple failure
- 1 – Yes, but; succeed but incompletely or at a cost
- 2 – Yes; a simple success
- 3+ – Yes, and; succeed and do so better or with more benefit than expected

## Sliding Scale

Take a Hit **or** suffer a -2 penalty on the next action, adjust results up by 1. o-win basic failure can become a 1-win “yes, but” success. Opponents can match the cost to negate. May **not** be used to negate or soften spectacular failures.

## Spectacular Failures

If no wins and 1s are showing, the result is a spectacular failure. Count each 1 as a fail for the scale.

- 1 – A minor but embarrassing flub that will be the butt of jokes, but only for a little while
- 2 – A truly complete, backfiring failure that will become the talk of town for quite a while, maybe even coloring the character’s rep
- 3+ – A catastrophic mistake that will enter legend and be told by your grandchildren’s grandchildren

## Hits

Player characters can take 3 Hits before KO. When KO’d, the character returns at the end of the scene or beginning of the next.

## Event Order

Characters usually receive 3 actions per step: one each of Talking, Doing, and Fighting. They occur in the order: Talking, Doing, Fighting. Also: Non-physical actions before physical actions. Conflicts before unopposed actions.

## Special Actions

### Assist

Up to three others may help. Each assistant rolls their trait. Each assistant with a “Yes but” or better result gives the main actor a +1 bonus.

### Defense

Roll one of the core traits. The defense result may be used against 3 enemies or attacks in that step.

### Take Us Both Down

Allow a “yes but” success with a cost result. In addition to the “yes but” costs, the attacker also suffers a serious negative outcome (such as “stunned silent” or “knocked flat”).

### Nope Out

Before targeted by aggressive actions, Nope Out and depart the scene immediately. After being engaged in conflict, needs a simple success or better on a Luck or Brains roll.

### Intense Actions

Taking a Hit **and** a -2 penalty on the roll, produce larger results or affect more targets.

# Kids Rules Mod

**D**o you have younger kids that want to play? Kids or other players that aren't so great with the numbers? Just want a simpler form of play?

This is the rules mod for you.

## Core Traits

Instead of assigning numbers, pick one Strong trait and one Weak trait.

The other two are Normal traits.

## Paradigm

Instead of assigning numbers, pick one Strong Trick and one Weak Trick.

## Media

For bonuses, they make Weak traits into Normal ones and Normal traits into Strong ones.

For bonuses on Strong traits, the player may throw twice and take the better result.

For penalties, characters just can't attempt those actions with Weak traits or may only succeed at a cost with others.

## System

Instead of rolling dice, throw rock-paper-scissors. For any simple failure result, throw again. On a loss, take a spectacular failure.

Results are based on the strength of the trait. Treat Qualities like a Normal trait. Follow the scales below.

## Scale

### *Weak*

Win – Special: Throw a second time. On a win, simple success. On a tie or loss, succeed at a cost.

Tie – No; simple failure

Lose – Spectacular failure

### *Normal*

Win – Yes; simple success

Tie – Yes but; succeed at a cost

Lose – No; simple failure

### *Strong*

Win – Yes and; strong success

Tie – Yes; simple success

Lose – Special: Throw a second time. On a win or tie, succeed at a cost. On a loss, simple failure (with the standard check for spectacular failure).

## Quirks

Keep it simple. For personality quirks, just let players choose an obnoxious or straight silly bit. For downfall quirks, just help them pick something they can't do or something they want to get away from.

Help the players out by reminding them when their quirks come up. Be flexible and let them change their quirks as appropriate for the capacity and maturity level of the players.

## General Guidance

Don't worry about special actions and other fiddly bits. Stick to the main characteristics and (relatively) straightforward actions.

Above all else: ***It's a game. Be flexible. Have fun.***