

WordplayTM

the roleplaying game
core edition

'a six sided dice paradise..'



by Graham Spearing

 A **Wordplay** Game




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Wordplay Games

www.wordplaygames.co.uk

graham@wordplaygames.co.uk

Author: Graham Spearing ©2009, 2011, 2012
Editing: Mike Mason
Layout: Dominic Mooney
Logo: John Ossoway
Cover Image: Steff Worthington
Proofreading: Nick Bradbeer

Ideas, inspiration and support

Alfredo, Simon Beaver, Shawn Click, Mark Conwry, Steve Elves, Neil Ford, Mark Galeotti, Neil Gow, Charles Green, Thor Hansen, Mark 'Warden' Jones, Matt Knighton, Mike Mason, Elaine McCourt, Dom Mooney, Stuart Mousir-Harrison, Newt Newport, Rob Rundle, Sally Spearing and Tom Zunder.

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For Bill Hoad

*Friend and fellow gamer.
Greatly missed.*

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Introduction

Welcome to *Wordplay* - a complete and absorbing game to play with your friends. This game uses descriptive phrases and applies them directly into play by giving the phrase a value, which is converted into a number of six sided dice that you throw. *Wordplay* is a type of game known as 'table top' or 'pen and paper' roleplaying. This introduction explains what roleplaying games are all about.

Wordplay is very easy to play and has been designed to be played with any created setting or genre that you wish to explore. The game features the following:

- Free flowing character creation, allowing a player to describe their alter ego in the game and use those descriptions as Traits (which are then split between Body, Mind and Soul categories) – see page 10.
- A dice building game. Describe what your character is doing and make use of as many advantages as you can to build as large a hand or pool of dice as possible.
- Roll your dice and count up your successes and the highest total wins - only the dice that land on the table count!
- Create goals for your character and drive them forward to succeed.
- Pre-designed Themes - ready-made settings to inspire you and play straight away.

Instead of numerous complicated rules, *Wordplay* provides story telling opportunities that are translated into dice for your characters. The game is meant to be rules light, open and encourages players to give vivid descriptions that build a shared, character focussed, story. *Wordplay* requires traditional six sided dice to play and many of them!

You won't find this book to be a dry set of instructions, instead consider this book as your best friend - sitting you down on a comfy sofa, plying you with hot tea and, with great excitement, telling you all about the fun you can have with games of *Wordplay*. Sometimes you may find the book florid and whimsical, but hopefully it will never confuse you. Most of all, the book wants you to gather as many six sided dice as you can find and start to play!

Speaking of which, can you hear something...?

Sounds in the forest

Lorth had not travelled far from the icy forest road where the Aurnic trade caravan waited pensively for his return. The crisp still air carried every sound and he concentrated to pick up the echo of the movement that he thought he had heard just moments earlier. He was alone in the forest clearing but within shouting distance of his mercenary companions, who watchfully guarded the long trail of brightly adorned wagons.

Then, all at once, there were two sets of noises. To his left many footsteps could be heard receding deeper into the forest and there a cowed figure momentarily appeared running at great speed. The second sound was heavier, a crashing noise to his right. Someone or something just out of view was heading towards him.

Lorth hefted his axe and in a split second made his decision...

What did Lorth decide to do? In *Wordplay* you get to decide. Lorth is a player character, a player's persona in the game. His actions will be dependant on the decisions of the player and that player alone. This game gives you a structure to help you design and document a character like Lorth and to help you find out what happens to him when you decide how he will react to situations such as the one described above.

Roleplaying games are different from more conventional games such as charades, board games or computer games that you may be familiar with, however they share many common features. This introduction will outline how roleplaying games differ.

Perhaps the first, most noticeable, difference is that roleplaying games are usually open ended in terms of duration. When you all sit down to play it could be a self-contained entertainment that has a beginning, middle and an end. Typically, however, a game session will form a part of an ongoing adventure story that will continue when you meet again for a follow up game. Sometimes these multi game adventures can build upon each other, creating a huge epic that will take many game sessions to complete.

Roleplaying games are not explicitly about winning and losing. Rather than having a specific end objective, such as having the most money or being the first to complete a race to the finish on a game board layout, this game's main expectation is only to provide some structure to an enjoyable experience, immersing players in the lives and worlds of your collective imaginary creations. That doesn't mean that *Wordplay* is aimless. The players' characters will become the main protagonists in your collective stories. These characters will also have their own particular goals that, through play, the players will work towards completing. A game of *Wordplay* may be about one specific story with a constructed range of defined objectives, or it may turn out to be a number of stories that weave together into a great saga drawing in the aspirations of all the players' characters and, by extension, the players themselves.

Tabletop roleplaying games have provided a structured approach to the creation of imaginary worlds and adventures for players around the globe from the mid 1970s onwards. Since that time there have been many games produced specialising in different periods and genres; from medieval fantasy to science fiction space opera, and all points in between! Though these games have developed new rules and emphasis in their design, some fundamentals seem to have survived over the decades. As they are all at root social games, they work best with a group of players who meet together regularly. Most have a game co-ordinator who creates the back-story and guides the players through the shared imaginary world; *Wordplay* calls this special player a Navigator. Players will record their characters on paper, providing them with pointers on how to bring their characters to life using the



rules and how their character may respond to the challenges that the shared story confronts them with.

What is meant by the ‘tabletop’ in tabletop roleplaying games? It doesn’t mean that everyone takes it in turns to climb on a table and act out the role of their game character, but don’t let me stifle any enthusiasm out there! The name comes from the convention that players sit around a table to play, providing a surface on which to roll dice and place notes, pencils, drinks and snacks. The shared table space and close proximity of fellow players also provides a focus for play and a convenient place for the Navigator to provide any props, such as pictures or maps or the playing of atmospheric music.

In *Wordplay*, players will be rolling large numbers of six sided dice, so it’s also useful to have a level surface on which to roll them. You might choose to sit round in comfy chairs, on cushions or on the croquet lawn. Where you play can influence the nature of the experience - feel free to experiment to see what fits for you and the space that is most comfortable for your group.

What do players actually do in this game?

The Navigator has a central role, providing and describing the setting for the game - this is usually planned and developed before the actual game commences. She will also draft out a back story and plot with hooks for the players to explore using their characters, which are created using the guidance in this book.

During a game players will move in and out of ‘character’. When describing actions, asking rule questions or going off on a tangent, the player will speak with their own voice. When ‘being’ their character during play and speaking to other characters, the player will speak in the ‘first person’ as if he or she were that character. Some players find that using colourful accents and amateur dramatics helps to ‘show-off’ their game character – these techniques are entirely optional!

Players will not only enjoy the setting and story conceived by their Navigator but also create their own stories and objectives, which they will play out to further develop their characters and the shared game world. Although player created characters are two-dimensional written descriptions on paper, with enthusiastic play they can become solidly three-dimensional. A great deal of the fun of this game is to be found when players create and sustain believable and enjoyable characters that will live long in the memory after the biscuit crumbs have been swept away and the game itself has finished.

As a point of reassurance it is worth stating that you don’t need to be a great actor to enjoy playing these games or be particularly good at different voice tone or accents. There’s a lot of fun to be had with roleplaying games - the satisfaction of solving mysteries, seeing your character develop and progress, or perhaps die nobly on some meaningful endeavour. It’s also a social experience, often supplemented with drinks and tasty snacks.

Wordplay games can be set in any shared universe that you and your fellow players wish to develop. It could be our world and time, perhaps our world but at another time, or a completely different and fantastical world and setting. The setting or

Settings may be huge sprawling star systems, planets and kingdoms, or claustrophobic and choking cities, sinister suburbia and shambolic ancient castles.

theme is usually created by the Navigator and inspired from any number of sources including novels, films and computer games. Settings can be separate and unconnected, or joined together by time travel, wormholes, inter-dimensional travel or even dreams. Settings may be huge sprawling star systems, planets and kingdoms, or claustrophobic and choking cities, sinister suburbia and shambolic ancient castles. This book has an example prepared starter theme to help you develop characters in a specific genre and setting. Other ready to use themes will be available in subsequent books in the *Wordplay* family of games. As a Navigator or player you may use these as the basis for your own setting, adapting them, or writing completely new ones as you see fit.

Throughout this book we will mostly be staying with Lorth, a northern barbarian mercenary from a fantastical alternative world, to serve as an example; illustrating how to create characters and use the *Wordplay* game to resolve the situations they get themselves into.

What you need to play

This book contains all of the guidance that you will need to play many hours of absorbing roleplay. You will also need a few other things to get a game of *Wordplay* up and running. These include: two to five hours when you and your friends can get together to play, somewhere to play, at least twelve six sided dice, pencils, paper and some imagination! Anything else is optional. Let's look at these and some of those optional extras in more detail.

Time

A game of *Wordplay* typically takes between two to five hours. A lot will depend on the preferences of the group and everyone's availability.

A game is often described as a 'session', with many linked sessions making up a 'campaign' - a complete and involved series of adventures that make up a satisfying story. A campaign, even if played regularly, could take weeks, months or even years to complete, depending on the complexity of the story and how frequently you can all meet. On the other hand, one session of *Wordplay* could be a complete and self contained game that could be played out to the end in a few hours.

With *Wordplay* you have a game that could take one evening or the rest of your life to finish. It's up to you!

Fellow players

Wordplay expects there to be two types of player. One player will take on the role of the Navigator who will prepare the game world that the other player characters will live in, as well as concocting a story outline that the other players will explore during the game. All aspects of this game world will be created by the Navigator as and when they are needed, including all the other people that the players' characters will meet. This may sound daunting, however it isn't really - this part of being a

Any dice that fall off the edge of the table when rolled don't count to your total, so roll carefully.



Navigator can often be the most rewarding aspect of the game. Further guidance for Navigators is found later in *Wordplay* – see page 97.

The 'Navigator' is so called because the role is an active one, guiding the players through the story, drawing together themes that emerge in play and working to drive the game to a successful conclusion. In other games of this type the role has been given a plethora of different names including: Dungeon Master, Games Master, Narrator & Storyteller.

All of the other players in the game each create a character to play in the game world prepared by the Navigator. It is their job to breath life into their characters by interacting with other player characters, the game world and the people that the Navigator has populated it with.

A setting and adventure needs to be prepared by the Navigator before you can start playing *Wordplay* properly. Your group may decide to make things up as you go along, playing off the different types of character created by the players and seeing where your spontaneous play takes you. Usually the game will go well if your group's Navigator has done some preparation and readied a vividly realised setting and story outline to challenge the players' characters.

For example, a small group would consist of a Navigator and one or two players. An average sized group would be a Navigator and about four players. Huge games can also be played with Navigator teams and many many players.

The preparation for the game, where characters are created and the game world laid out can be entertaining in and of itself. Effectively, the Navigator is playing *Wordplay* 'solo' in anticipation of the actual game session. Character creation and world creation can also be done collaboratively in the group, with the Navigator preparing the story and readying surprises and challenges for the player characters.

The Themes section of this game provides a ready to use setting for you to get started – see page 114.

Space

Regardless of the nature of the game you intend to play, it's well worth having a gaming table available with enough seating room for all of the players. Playing around a table helps everyone to focus on the game and on each other. What's more, players will routinely be rolling large numbers of six sided dice so a table gives you somewhere to roll them. Any dice that fall off the edge of the table when rolled don't count to your total, so roll carefully. Settees, comfy chairs and thick pile carpets voraciously eat dice - so beware!

It's not always possible to meet around a physical table, so the internet can provide a means to keep gaming by using free and readily available voice and video conferencing software. The experience is somewhat different, but remains wholly enjoyable – and far better than not playing at all!

The author has used Skype software to audio conference a virtual game session with other players; this is just one example and there are many 'remote tabletop' solutions available for download. Some have dice rollers and other technical wizardry to complete the experience.

Imagination

Wordplay, like other roleplaying games, feeds hungrily off your imagination. The process of designing your game world, creating your character or playing together to create a great story taps into your imagination. The game is a means for you to express yourself through your character and the myriad of exciting situations that they will undoubtedly find themselves embroiled in.

Who knows where your intertwined imaginations will take you? *Wordplay* provides a structured framework allowing you to travel along those paths that will bring you laughter, discovery, conflict and revelations.

Don't worry if it all sounds daunting or even a bit silly – just let go of your preconceptions and have fun.

A six sided dice paradise

When players' characters are faced with challenges in the game's story, six sided dice are rolled to help decide what happens. The number of dice that are rolled depends on the capability of the character and how favourable the circumstances are to them. The more capable the character and favourable the circumstances, the more dice you get to roll.

Rolling more dice means that you have better odds of succeeding in the challenge your character is facing. Starter heroes with good equipment, a couple of companions to help them and some other positive factors may be able to roll around twelve dice. It is quite conceivable that experienced and high powered characters with lots of helpful friends and special equipment will be needing their players to throw sixteen or more six sided dice when determining the outcome of challenges.

Therefore it is well worth each player having their own set of six sided dice – sometimes simply referred to as 'd6'. It is recommended that you buy a six sided 'dice block' that are available over the internet or at specialist game stores. If you put 'd6 dice block' into an internet search engine you will be inundated with on-line stores that will sell you beautiful and inexpensive blocks of six sided dice. The author recommends 12mm sized dice, as you can hold a large number of them in your hands. The 12mm dice block gives you 36 six sided dice, which is more than enough for two players. The dice come in many colours, so pick some contrasts to give your game table some dramatic flashes of colour.

Sundries

A number of sharpened pencils, rubbers and spare scrap paper are always useful to make notes and record outcomes that affect player characters. Often these notes are written on the character's own sheet.



If you are digitally inclined, a laptop or tablet with a copy of this game, some music and images can prove to be a powerful game aid. When used well, the music, imagery and quick reference rules can help to evoke an atmosphere, remind you of a rule and even provide a speedy source of information through web searches (if you are connected to the internet), at the push of a few keys. However, don't let such technical frippery distract you. Computing is a digital resource to support the game and not the game itself. If you look up from your computer to see bored expressions on your player's faces then perhaps you are paying the computer too much attention!

A thesaurus can be useful when creating descriptions of your characters or for the Navigator when preparing adventures and encounters.

Wordplay gaming sessions are social affairs, which are optionally enhanced by a tempting array of snacks and drinks to fuel the imagination, all adding to the sense of occasion. Without wishing to be prescriptive, there is nothing to beat a couple of pots of hot tea or coffee, accompanied by generous helpings of biscuits. Home made cakes, pizzas and all manner of unhealthy sugary temptations are all invariably welcomed by the group.

How to navigate through this book

This book is not a fictional narrative, so there is little point in flipping to the last page to find out what happens. What? You already have? Shame on you! On the pages beyond you will find the following chapters:

- **Player Characters** – how to create the person you will play during your game.
- **Challenges** – how *Wordplay* structures the moments of tension that the player characters will experience during the game. Most of the game rules are in this chapter.
- **Outcomes** – how Challenges affect characters. Also how characters change during the game.
- **Powers** – how to give supernatural abilities to characters.
- **Equipment** – how stuff can help player characters win Challenges.
- **Navigating** – extra help for the Navigator, however useful for all players to read.
- **Themes** – example settings for you to use in your games.

All chapters after the glossary have a summary at the end. The summaries aim to encapsulate the core concepts from the chapter in order to aid understanding. They also serve as a quick refresher when you need to look up something in the middle of a game.

Throughout the book, for no better reason than convenience, Players are spoken of as male and Navigators as female.

Glossary

Wordplay uses some terms that may be unfamiliar to readers, especially those who are new to tabletop roleplaying games. For convenience these specialist terms are grouped together here. All of them will be further explained in the chapters ahead.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
5D	<i>Wordplay</i> uses six sided dice. When the game tells you how many dice to pick up it will use notation like '5d' – meaning five dice. 3d means three dice and so on.
BMS	Body, Mind and Soul - the three categories that describe a player character's abilities within the rules of the game.
BUILDING YOUR HAND	The process of getting as many six sided dice into your hand as possible before rolling them. <i>Wordplay</i> advises on how many dice you can legitimately have at any one time.
CHALLENGE	An important encounter or event that tests one or more player characters. The outcome is not certain and dice will often be used to help determine what happens.
CHARACTER SHEET	One or more sheets of paper used to record all the necessary details about a player character.
DAMAGE TRAIT	When defeated in a Challenge a character will be given a new Trait to record on their character sheet. This 'Damage Trait' is a disadvantage that will hamper them when they face their next Challenge. The damage could be physical, mental or social depending on the nature of the Challenge. Damage Traits are temporary and can be healed.
EXPERIENCE POINT	These are awarded to player characters by the Navigator and recorded on the character sheet. They are awarded for good play, experiencing difficult Challenges and achieving player character goals. Experience points are spent to improve player character Traits.
FOUNDATION TRAIT	The main Trait that a player picks from their character sheet to use to overcome a Challenge.
FOUR Ps	Pre-play, People, Place and Profession are four sources of inspiration from which a player can choose Traits for their character.
GOAL	Players record several goals that they wish their characters to achieve during the game on to their character sheets. These can be small simple things or major life changing aspirations. Experience points are awarded for completing them.
INITIATIVE	Calculated at the beginning of a Round to see who acts first in the Challenge.
MOMENTUM	If a Round is won with a Victory Level of at least '2' then the character is allowed to dictate what the next Round's Challenge is about.



TERM	DESCRIPTION
NAVIGATOR	A name for one of the players of the game. The Navigator designs the backdrop, the framework for story and all the other characters not controlled by the players.
NAVIGATOR CHARACTER	A character in the game that is controlled by the Navigator.
NUDGES	Each Nudge allows a player to improve the success outcome of one die.
PLAYER CHARACTER	A character in the game that is controlled by one of the players other than the Navigator.
ROUND	A flexible unit of time used in Multi-Roll Challenges during which all players get a chance to say what their characters do and roll some dice. A Multi-Roll Challenge may have many Rounds before it is concluded.
SESSION	Enough time to play one game of <i>Wordplay</i> . This typically lasts between two and five hours, though could be longer.
SUCCESS	Each die thrown may provide a success for a character in a Challenge. A result of 4 or 5 on a die grants one success and a result of '6' provides two successes. Players total their successes and aim for as many as possible.
TRAIT	Descriptive phrases that are given to anything described in the game that could have an impact on Challenges. For player characters they are used to define what they look like, what they can do, what they know, who they love, indeed just about anything that you might need to know about a character that could have an impact on the game story.
VICTORY LEVEL	How well a winning character performs in a Challenge. It is calculated using the number of successes a winning character has achieved compared to a difficulty number.



Player Characters

The players in a game of *Wordplay* control the main characters who are the focus of the story that the gaming group will tell together. They are often the heroes of the tale, although sometimes they could be anti-heroes. Even if they are only the servants, looking on as great events unfold, they remain the focus of the game and instrumental in shaping the direction of the shared story.

This chapter takes you through the process of creating your player character. Characters are designed within the context of a particular game and probably in collaboration with fellow players, all coordinated by the game's Navigator. You will use the 'Themes' section of this book extensively or use themes that have been created by yourself or by your group. If you just feel like creating characters for the fun of it, then go ahead, however they are usually created with a particular theme in mind and designed as a group in preparation for a game.

All of the information about your character is recorded on a *Wordplay* character sheet, an example of which is on page 26. A downloadable version is also available on the *Wordplay* website. It would be well worth having a copy of the character sheet in front of you as you read through this chapter.

As you play out stories together using *Wordplay* there will be a continuing interaction between the player characters and the characters that the Navigator controls. As you play and tell stories together events will happen, catchphrases will be coined, scars both physical and mental gathered.

Traits

Player characters are defined by words known as 'Traits'. Any descriptive phrase or ability can be a Trait. Traits are noticeable attributes that are likely to have an impact during a game session. These words and numbers are recorded on the character sheet for reference during play. The character sheet serves to lay out in one place all the crucial factors that contribute to describing the character and how they can influence the game world and shape the collective story throughout the game. Some of the Traits are descriptive, informing the player and others how the character looks or acts, some will summarise their personal history, some will be positive whilst others will be negative.

As part of character generation, Traits are given a numeric value between 1 and 12, representing how much the Trait will help a character succeed at Challenges set by the Navigator. High Trait scores allow a character to face great perils and difficult situations and still come through victorious – further details on this can be found in the chapter on Challenges.

Some Traits may describe extraordinary and supernatural powers. These powers



are often found in heroic and pulp themed stories. In *Wordplay* such ‘magical’ powers have been given their own chapter called Powers. In game terms these ‘Powers’ function exactly as all other Traits, however what they can accomplish in a game world can be surprising and amazing. If you want your character to be able to fly for example, then be sure to read through the Powers chapter.

Traits are grouped into one of three areas: Body, Mind and Soul. Example Traits in each category are shown below.

Body Traits

These are physical Traits that might include how a character looks, their physical and movement abilities.

E.g. Beautiful, Big fisted, Camouflage, Comfortably girthed, Enormous hair, Graceful, Legs that go on for ever, Run for your life, Swordfighting, Tall.

Mind Traits

These reflect knowledge, deductive abilities and perception.

E.g. Deduce the truth, Knowledge of ancient temples, Navigation, Pop trivia, Scan for movement, Sharp eyes, SQL database administration.

Soul Traits

These reflect personality, passions, artistic and social abilities.

E.g. Bombastic, Convincing, Garrulous, Gentle, People watching, Hate the dragon, Love the princess, Streetwise, Watercolour painter, Worship Slortar - fiend of the six tribulations.

Traits are used continuously throughout a game of *Wordplay*. They highlight how your character can interact with the game world and influence the shared story, acting as the keys to drive your character off the page and into the heart of the action around the table.

Traits are entered on the character sheet for reference during the game. Get to know your character Traits and make them your own; you’re going to be using them a lot.

Let’s make a start.

Concept

All player characters start with a concept. This is a single line of text that sums up the character in a nutshell. If someone were to come up to your gaming table and ask what sort of character you are playing then you could read the concept aloud and they would have a good idea as to who it is you are roleplaying.

Some examples:

- A truculent teenage skateboarder with a magically active imagination.
- A northern barbarian mercenary who seeks glory.



- An independent minded, free trader and smuggler who is up to her armpits in debt and on the run from the star patrol.
- I say! A topping (if gormless) dilettante with some of the largest and loudest trousers anywhere in the Big Smoke.
- Impossibly she came from beyond the City, knowing its last secret, with a licence to thrill for those who can find her.

For long running games it is entirely conceivable that a character's concept will change over the lifetime of the stories that you creating at the game table.

What's in a name?

The character's name is right at the top of the character sheet, however it can often be the last thing you think about when you are creating a new persona to play. Bear in mind that the character's name will be used a lot in the game and may even say something about your character's image. I can see that twinkle in your eye, so before you reach for the Ikea catalogue for some random inspiration, it's worth noting that the character's name will, along with everything else, be heavily influenced by the theme that you are playing.

If the game is an epic fantasy of swords and sorcery, for example, think twice before choosing 'Nigel' as your character's name. If your game is set in an well-known setting, fictional or otherwise, then a ready mix of names should be available to you from literature with a bit of research.

Age

You'll also find room on the character sheet to express your character's age. Starting player characters could be any age - though if you play someone older, this can be reflected in the experience and power levels (page 20) that the character starts with. There is no need to put down an exact number for years of age, rather add a phrase that describes something about how the characters age affects their behaviour or how they look. This phrase is likely to include Traits that you can optionally add to the character sheet. You'll find out how to do this later, but for now here are a few examples of character age:

Examples:

- A boisterous and headstrong youth.
- In middle years and weighed down by petty responsibilities.
- In later years but impetuous and frisky.
- Of a 'certain age' and clinging on, slightly desperately, to her youth.

Goals

Player characters are given goals to achieve. These are task-focussed actions to be achieved in the game world as part of the story you are creating. Up to three goals are noted on the character sheet. They provide a guide to the player in directing the character's actions during play. The character will get a bonus when facing Challenges that are tightly bound to their goals. Similarly, if the character is initiating actions that run counter to their goals then he will take a penalty.



Goals can be grouped in a number of ways. A suggested array of goal types is:

1. A longer-term goal that sits deeply in the heart of the character and could take a lifetime or long journey to complete.
2. A goal that is shared with other members of the group.
3. A goal that is directly related to the current story and game session.

Goals should focus on a clear outcome - an objective that can be achieved during the game through character action. *'I want to be the best swordsman'* is not focussed enough and would be very difficult to know if and when it has been achieved. *'I wish to prove my swordsmanship is better than the greatest in the world by besting Monsieur D'Antalen in a duel'* is perfect as it gives a clear measure of what success would look like – thus we have a Goal and an objective bursting with story potential. Similarly *'I want to be happy'* is insufficiently focussed, however laudable! *'I wish to experience the expensive temptations of the House of Seven Red Lanterns and still be able to walk afterwards'* is bang on target, as it were.

Of the three goals, it's always worth having at least one that is short term and focussed on the story being played in that session. It helps to drive play and ties character behaviour closely to the shared narrative.

Once a Goal is successfully achieved the player transfers it to a list of completed goals on their character sheet. The process of transferring the completed Goal triggers a reward of experience points given out by the Navigator, helping the character to grow and improve their Traits. The more difficult a goal is to achieve and the more world changing it proves to be, will influence the number of experience points that the Navigator decides to award when it is completed. Guidance on how many experience points to reward a player for a completed goal can be found in the Character Experience section (page 68).

A player can write a new goal on the character sheet to replace the completed one. Note that the Navigator may also give characters goals to player characters.

Ideally, if characters are being created as a group activity, then goals should be agreed up front between the players and the Navigator. It could even mean that player characters share common goals or that the Navigator would like to provide some shared goals to the players. In this way a common goal will link and bind the player characters together with a shared purpose.

Example goals:

- Find the Sword of Chaos and cast it into the Maelstrom before Grasmorth the Dark Lord returns to our world.
- Win the hand of the princess.
- Find out why the children keep disappearing.
- Trick the guard into giving me the key.
- Make this trading venture profitable.
- Ask Miranda for a date and take her with me through the shimmering portal.

Keeping a slot free for short term Goals is a good idea. As situations develop in



the story you can declare an immediate Goal. Goals give you focus, as well as an immediate game benefit in extra dice and character building rewards, so it is useful to always have achievable Goals in play.

Character Traits

So, let's imagine that you arrive for a game of *Wordplay* without a character to play. While you go to put the kettle on or buy a huge round of drinks, you have some time to think about 'who' it is you will be playing. A player may decide to start their character with no Traits and decide how he wants to shape the character as the game progresses. That's fine - the character will build and grow at the pace the player wishes. In this case use some of the guidelines below, especially 'Experience and power levels'.

When creating a character where do you start? It's the Navigator's job to help draw you into the game and ensure that your new character will quickly play a part in the action. She will be able to give you pointers on the genre or theme being played and some practical ideas on the sort of character goals and Traits that will best fit in.

It's ideal for a group to create characters together so that they can build associations and conflicts with each other right from the start. Shared goals can prove to be a powerful way of cementing the group together. Sometimes a group character creation session is not always possible, so the Navigator acts to draw everything together.

Let's explore the standard way of creating a *Wordplay* character through *the Four Ps* in turn each providing inspiration for traits that are then attributed to the character.

The Four Ps

Pre-play, **P**eople, **P**lace and **P**rofession all provide lists of Body, Mind and Soul Traits to pick from. However, don't worry too much about that structure. In *Wordplay* you describe the Traits as you describe your character. What do you want your character to look like? How do you want them to behave? What will they love or hate? As you build up this picture, your character Traits will emerge naturally. All you need to do is write them down on to your character sheet and *Wordplay* will advise you what to do with them. To provide some inspiration there are some lists of possible Traits to pick from - especially in the Powers and Themes chapters. Don't let any list in this book tie you down. Just write down what feels right for you; it's going to be your character after all.

We'll now take a look at each of the Four Ps in turn.

Pre-play Traits

Some players like to write a story about their character in order to provide them with some context and introduce them into the game. This could be just a couple of lines of text, like an expanded concept, such as:

He came out of the North, a tall warrior of Lhuthia, hefting a battle axe with a determined look in his eye. His powerful frame was encased in fur and metal scale. He wishes to make



his mark in these strange southern lands and his axe should help with that...

Other players may wish to write a few pages of story that gives a fully rounded picture of their character and his or her immediate history. Typically a couple of paragraphs with lots of rich description is recommended, especially using words and phrases that can be lifted and placed on the character sheet for use in play as Traits.

Example:

Lorth had to leave the Northern land of Lhuthia in a hurry, hunted by the Clan Lords for his supposed betrayal. A tall, powerfully built man, encased in fur and metal scale armour, with long raven braided hair, he is every inch the Northic warrior. Brooding over wrongs done to him, he strides south to escape enemies and make a name for himself in the southern lands.

Keen eyed for danger and fearless in battle, Lorth effortlessly carries a battleaxe and round shield. He can look beneath the surface of people and sense their motives, saving him on more than one occasion. He is naturally suspicious and wary and will only find friendship with those who prove themselves through their actions.

Pick out interesting Traits from the Pre-play and place them in one of the BMS (Body, Soul, Mind) categories. From the example above the following Traits could be added to Lorth's character sheet:

Body: *Battleaxe, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Shield, Tall*

Mind: *Keen eyed, Sense motive*

Soul: *Brooding, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Suspicious, Wary*

This makes a nice starting set of Traits for your character, weaving story with abilities that will be used in play. We also know where he is from thanks in part to some of the cultural information that has been drawn from the game world presented by the Navigator and we also know that he is a warrior. These will provide 'Place' and 'Profession' Traits for Lorth (see below).

You might be able to find some more Traits from the example Pre-play text that could have been included on the character sheet. The decision as to which and how many Traits are selected for the character is up to the player, possibly in collaboration with the Navigator and other players.

The next three Ps are used to flesh out your character further, representing lists of Traits that you can pick from. These Traits will be found in the particular Theme you are using for your game. They can also be created on the fly if you wish.

People

In science fiction and fantasy games characters may not necessarily be human, but rather alien or other fantastical races. Perhaps they were once human, only to have been transformed by magic, genetic engineering, different evolutionary development or from worlds very different to our own?



Place

This is the dominant culture and location that has shaped and influenced the character before entering play. Place Traits also reflect the character's position in that society. Were they born to an aristocratic family of decadence or from a struggling underclass living on the edge of survival?

Profession

Traits are also gained from previous occupations. These will be learned abilities that have helped the character make their way in their world and provide Traits that will help them in the stories created in the game.

Trait Crossover

Some Traits could find a home in more than one of the BMS categories. If this happens then pick one of Body, Mind or Soul and place it there.

Example:

The Trait 'People watching' encompasses both perception abilities, in the Mind category, and an appreciation of social norms and behaviour more typically associated with the Soul category. You could make a case for the Trait being in either category. If it is placed in Mind then you are emphasising the perceptive qualities - noticing particular behaviours and unusual changes in the flow of dress and behaviour of the crowd you are watching. If the Trait is placed in Soul then you are emphasising the interpretative nature of the Trait - intuitively recognising why someone is behaving in a certain way.

In play, you will need to think about how a particular Trait can be used in a Challenge - so deciding now which category it best fits into it will help you later on. It's a fine point and as you play the game you will see how this all fits together.

Characters with Powers

Some game Themes include supernatural powers; in these settings player characters will have Traits that allow them to break the laws of nature. Such themes will have examples of powers in their Profession chapter. Characters that have these Traits in their four Ps should refer to the Powers chapter. Powers are treated the same way as any other Trait, however they use some additional rules due to their extraordinary nature. The Powers chapter explains how to express these Traits on the character sheet and how to use them in play.

Most Powers are identified when picking a Profession but can appear in any of the Four Ps. Advice on how to structure Power Traits can be found in the Powers chapter.

Loves, Friends and Enemies

The Four Ps may also create Traits that are based on relationships - pointing to the existence of other characters (these could be other player characters or Navigator controlled ones). The player can list three key people with whom they have a relationship. Write down the name of the person and one sentence that describes



who the person is and the nature of the relationship.

Example: Talia: my beautiful young bride and the love of my life.

Traits from such relationships can be phrased as:

- *Love my beautiful bride*
- *Hate the Gallan brothers*
- *Infatuated with Dylan*
- *Look after Auntie Jessie (this could be a Goal instead)*

These Traits will generally belong in the Soul category of BMS. However, some relationships are more physical, so may reside in Body whilst others may be fundamentally about the Mind, particularly academic teachers.

Example: Dueling with Halo, my chess partner

This might be placed in the Mind category as it primarily reflects a deeply intellectual challenge. It could equally be placed in the Soul category to reflect an important close friendship.

Any Trait present on the character sheet that identifies an individual permits the player to create that character too. The Navigator may only wish for the character to have one, easy to apply, Trait. So, in the example above, it may simply be 'Dylan 4d': Dylan is at 4d when facing Challenges in the game. The player or Navigator may wish to have the character partially or fully fleshed out and if so, Dylan would become a separate character, created using the guidance in this chapter along with the information in Navigator Characters (page 102). Who actually plays the 'extra' character is up to the group. It could be the player who has the Trait that caused character's creation in the first place, another player or the Navigator. This new character is called a Supporting Character and, though not the main focus of the story, may well become pivotal as events unfold.

How many Traits should I start with?

You can adopt one of two approaches to the number of Traits you use to describe a character. These are outlined below.

Variety is the spice of life

This approach delights in providing characters with a sizeable number of Traits for use in play. If using this option then it is recommend that your character starts with between six and ten Traits in each of Body, Mind and Soul, though the precise number will depend on the player. The Navigator may wish to set an upper limit to the number of starting Traits in each category.

Too many Traits lead to a cluttered character sheet with superfluous entries that are never used in play.

Variety is the Spice of Life is the default approach used throughout *Wordplay* and our example of character generation uses it.

Less is More

An equally valid approach is to severely limit the number of Traits for each character. This could be as little as one Trait from each of the four Ps (Pre-play, People, Place and Profession).

You could even take the approach of assigning dice to the Body, Mind and Soul categories themselves, with all other aspects of the character described through the Pre-play text.

If this approach is taken there will be fewer and more broadly applicable Traits in play. As a consequence, these Traits will be used much more extensively and are more likely to be applied to Challenges in which they don't fit quite so well. The Navigator is therefore likely to impose difficulty modifiers due to stretching their believable use. Another impact of having lower numbers of Traits is that characters will have less Traits to build their hand of dice with - this will be clearer once you have read the Challenges chapter, however suffice to say that less Traits make for simpler characters and simpler play. This is the great appeal of less is more. Characters can be made quickly and play started straight away.

Example:

The Navigator decides that the game will use Less is More with two Traits in each of the BMS categories. Lorth could be quickly described as follows:

Body: *Bold and bloody combat, Run tirelessly*
Mind: *Battle strategy, See danger coming*
Soul: *Fearless, Homesick*

Looking for contradictions

As it is a very easy and open process to add Traits to a character it is always worth checking the Traits once they have all been entered onto the character sheet. Do the Traits sit well together and make sense of the character that you are trying to create? Remove Traits that contradict the character's concept or that seem to conflict with other Traits. Feel free to replace them with other more appropriate Traits that fit better together.

Useful Traits to have

Every game theme will accentuate certain situations, creating Challenges for characters. Characters who have complimentary and useful Traits for these situations will be more successful than those that do not. Themes will highlight the key sorts of Traits that the characters will need through the three Ps that they will list. In many thrilling and action packed adventures, regardless of theme, the following Traits are often called on:

- **Perception Traits** – your character needs to be aware of what's going on around him, especially in times of danger.
- **Movement Traits** – being able to catch or escape enemies or nimbly navigate certain types of terrain marks out the action hero.



- **Endurance Traits** – a capacity to withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune will help you to keep your character in play longer. This could include strength of character and willpower as well as physical endurance.
- **Combat Traits** – ability with weapons, a cool head and knowledge of tactics, will keep your character alive and help him through the most terrifying of martial Challenges.
- **Social Traits** – ability to communicate and fit in well with other people. These are as likely to keep your character alive and successful in the game and hopefully help you avoid the most terrifying of martial Challenges.

Depending on your character concept, it is worth having some useful Traits in at least two of these categories. It is no fun at all to have a character without any useful Traits to use in a game. The Navigator is there to ensure that this is not the case. Above all, stay true to your overall character concept and work with the Navigator to make sure the finished character is going to fit in to the game's storyline and give you, the player, plenty of useful things to do.

Flaws

Flaws are Traits that describe a negative aspect to the character. From one point of view they are 'Traits that are not useful to have'. As in real life, Flaws can add a defining and interesting signature to a character, bringing a rounded feel to the personality and usually making the play experience more fun. With exceptions, it is also true to say that a Flaw can, from other perspectives, have positive sides that can be used to great effect in a game. Greed, hatred, jealousy or obsessions, while clouding a character's judgement can be used to powerfully drive game play down certain avenues.

There will come times when a Flaw is extremely helpful to an opposing character or situation. When this happens a player can voluntarily announce the Flaw to the Navigator and offer it as a bonus to their opponent in a game Challenge. The player character may gain a reward for doing this. How this works is explained in the Experience section (page 68).

Alternatively, the Navigator may look through a character's Traits and pick out one that will help the Navigator win a Challenge against the player character. The effect of this is explained in Building Your Hand of Dice (page 37).

Putting a value on the Traits

Once all Traits have been selected and placed into categories on the *Wordplay* character sheet, they are assigned numeric values. These numbers denote how powerful the Trait is in the game. A Trait with a value of 1 is very weak and probably will not be able to be used successfully, other than for comic value, in any complex situations in the game. A Trait with a value of 12 is as powerful as it can get. It is very rare to find anything with a Trait as high as 12. The Trait number value is the base number of dice rolled by a player when their character uses that Trait in facing a Challenge. This is also known as the Foundation Trait - more on this in the Challenge chapter. As the number denotes the number of dice, a 'd' is placed after the number in this context. So, a character might have the following:



Mind Trait: Obsessed with trains 4d.

An average, unnamed Navigator character will usually have a value of 3 in most of their Traits; perhaps a 4 in one Trait to denote expertise or a particularly noteworthy ability. Player characters and named Navigator characters will have more Traits and at much higher levels.

EXPERIENCE AND POWER LEVELS

For standard characters in the game, use the Starter Hero spread of Trait values as given below. The examples provided assume that the Variety is the spice of life approach is being used for Traits.

Starter player character, Hero or significant named Navigator character:

- 2 Traits at 6d
- 5 Traits at 5d
- 9 Traits at 4d
- All other Traits start at 3d

Other Starter levels can be applied to a character depending on the needs of the story. Here are some suggestions:

An Experienced Navigator character

- 1 Trait at 6d
- 3 Traits at 5d
- 5 Traits at 4d
- 9 Traits at 3d
- All other Traits start at 2d

Lesser Hero or Notable Navigator character

- 2 Traits at 5d
- 9 Traits at 4d
- All other Traits start at 3d

Established Hero, Powerful Villain

- 1 Trait at 7d
- 3 Traits at 6d
- 5 Traits at 5d
- 9 Traits at 4d
- All other Traits start at 3d

Legendary Hero, Arch Villain

- 1 Trait at 9d
- 2 Traits at 8d
- 3 Traits at 7d
- 5 Traits at 6d
- 9 Traits at 5d
- 13 Traits at 4d
- Any other Traits start at 3d

If *Less is More* is being used then the templates above can still be used - but only



in part. Use the first three rows of the template. One Trait gets the first value, Two Traits uses the second value and all other Traits take the third value.

Example:

Starter player Hero or significant named Navigator character :

- 1 Trait at 6d
- 2 Traits at 5d
- All other Traits start at 4d

Wealth

Wealth reflects both the purchasing power of a character and a reflection of the assets owned by, and favours owed to, the player character. Wealth is rated as a Trait, just like everything else, with a score of one to twelve dice. A character with one die in wealth is the poorest of the poor, having to scratch about from day to day with minimal, old and worn possessions, uncertain as to where their next meal will come from.

Wealth is abstracted to one rating removing the need to keep track of exact coinage owned or long lists of possessions and equipment. Unless your game is focussed on asset management, (and let's hope it is not), the wealth rating can be used to quickly assess whether a character has the resources to acquire a particular item necessary for the story, and also gives an overall feel for the standard of living the character can expect.

If the resource difficulty dice (see page 21) is less than or equal to the character's wealth dice then they can acquire the resource through a No Roll Challenge. They just get the item they wanted. Clearly this could be open to abuse if a player just wants to acquire lots of things for their character, so 'over spending' will result in the reduction of wealth levels or the creation of debt – normally determined by the Navigator. Debt is regarded as a Damage Trait to wealth (see further details in Challenge Outcomes on page 71).

Wealth levels

The Wealth Level Table (page 22) provides an idea of the relative material value of the twelve wealth levels. This list has to be taken with a pinch of salt as it has positions and titles taken from different times and places that cannot really be mixed together in a sensible fashion. Rather, view it as a progression (but not a smooth or regular one), up the ladder of wealth and material.

Player characters will be allocated an initial wealth level based on their main profession selected during character generation and any hints from Pre-play text. This initial level may go up or down depending on circumstances that arise during the game. If the game does not need to focus on wealth then this initial level can simply be maintained as a point of reference as to how easy it is for the character to gain new items during play.

Acquiring items or living a lifestyle set at a greater level than your wealth is difficult to achieve and may have consequences. To acquire items is a type of

Challenge and is covered in the main equipment section (page 91). Gaining and losing wealth levels is mentioned in the Experience section (page 71).

WEALTH LEVELS TABLE

WEALTH LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	MATERIAL STANDARD OF LIVING
1D	Stick picker, jobless, the poor, homeless	Hand to mouth, day by day existence, no luxuries, increased likelihood of disease
2D	Administrative assistant, Minimum wage earner, foot soldier, guard	Basic, limited opportunities, a few inexpensive luxuries
3D	Supervisor, Townsman, Trader, wandering adventurer	Reasonable standard of living, some luxuries
4D	Middle manager, Guildsman, Merchant, Tomb robber	Comfortable with a number of luxuries, larger and better accommodation and continually improved prospects
5D	Executive, Professional, Dilettante,	Used to regular luxuries
6D	Reality show celebrity, Top executives, Crime lord	Pampered, small entourage of other workers to support the lifestyle
7D	Prince, Celebrity	Several homes, many luxuries, choices in all things
8D	Mega rock star, Popular artist, Highly successful business owner	The high life of luxuries and notoriety, wants for nothing
9D	Tyrant. Powerful and wealthy noble	Frequent and mind bogglingly ostentatious displays of wealth.
10D	King	Regular feasting, hunting and politicking, with great wealth and power to affect other lives.
11D	Shadowy tycoon	Anything that can be bought can be yours, and that's most things.
12D	Emperor of all worlds	A combination of great wealth across many palaces and worlds

Starting Equipment

Players can select any starting equipment for their player character that makes sense based on their selected Four Ps. The Pre-play story may indicate the ownership of an item, property or business that maintains their lifestyle. The selected profession may have some typical equipment that is useful to it: such as weapons, armour, tools, horse, starship or other high tech gadget. The People and Place selections may encourage ownership of items to support being a part of those communities and locations.

Items listed on the character sheet are immediately available to the character and can be used in the story. Other items will need to be acquired in play. Use common sense. Some items will be trivial for the character to have due to their position and



background, other more specialist items will be more difficult to acquire.

Nudges

If the Nudges optional rule (page 45) is being used then note down the number of starting Nudges. This is equal to the highest value Trait, which will typically be '6' for a starter hero player character.

Just make it up

If you meet up with some friends and spontaneously decide to play a game of *Wordplay* then how can you do this when you don't have any characters and setting prepared? Simple. Just make it up as you go along. Players can start with no Traits at all and decide what they will be as they play through a game. The Navigator simply hands out the spread of Trait numbers that each player can spend on Traits and off you go!

As a player character enters a Challenge the player can make up a Trait or two on the fly and apply values to them as they go along. If the game becomes a continuing series of stories then the player characters will expand to their full lists of Traits as play progresses.

An Example of Character Creation

Elaine is guiding Tom through the creation of a new character for a sweeping fantasy epic that the group will be playing. The Epic Fantasy Theme is being used to generate ideas for the game background and characters. In this example Tom has already come up with his Pre-play text and has a good idea of what his character is going to be like.

Elaine: *Ok, who would you like to be?*

Tom: *I've brought some Pre-play text with me & some ideas on the Traits I'd like to use from it.*

Elaine: *Great, let's take a look... yes, that looks fine.*

Tom is creating a character called Lorth, a northern barbarian heading into the south in a hurry. Tom's Pre-play text can be found on page 14. Lorth's Traits so far, after taking some from the Pre-play text:

Body: *Battleaxe, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Shield, Tall*

Mind: *Keen eyed, Sense motive*

Soul: *Brooding, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Suspicious, Wary*

Elaine: *Do you want to note down your character's concept now or later?*

Tom: *I'll put one down now as I think I'm pretty clear who Lorth is going to be.*

"A northern barbarian mercenary seeking glory in the southern city plain."

Elaine: *OK. Do you want to add any Traits based on your concept text?*

Tom: *Could I add 'seeking glory'?*

Elaine: *Nice. I'd say that was a Soul Trait so let's add it there. How would you describe his age?*

Tom: *He's definitely young, but old enough to have seen a bit of life and disappointment. How about: 'A young man full of energy and anticipation'?*

Elaine: *Any Traits from that?*

Tom: *Not for now, no, but I might use 'anticipation' in some way later!*

Elaine: *From your Pre-play it looks like you will want to use the 'Warrior' for your Profession Traits (see page 130), and 'The Northern Thane Lands' (page 123) for your Places Traits?*

Tom: *Yes, that sounds good. I'll start with the Place Traits.*

Tom picks out the following Traits from 'The Northern Thane Lands': Rugged, Dragon lore, Know clan stories, Predict weather, Speak own language, Declaim deeds.

Tom: *Right, now to pick Traits from the Warrior profession. How am I doing? Have I got too many?*

Elaine: *No, you're fine. You'll want to pick out some combat Traits to establish Lorth as a warrior. He isn't a wizard or priest so I don't think we'll need to refer to the Powers chapter.*

Tom picks out the following Traits from the 'Warrior' Profession: Brawling, Endure wound, Sword fighting, Wear armour with ease, Battle strategy, Horsemanship, Look for danger, Spot opponent's weakness, Think with sword, Treat wound, Calm in battle.

Lorth's Traits so far:

Body: *Battleaxe, Brawling, Endure wound, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Rugged, Shield, Sword fighting, Tall, Wear armour with ease*

Mind: *Battle strategy, Clan knowledge, Dragon lore, Horsemanship, Keen eyed, Know clan stories, Look for danger, Predict weather, Sense motive, Speak own language, Spot opponent's weakness, Think with sword, Treat wound*

Soul: *Brooding, Calm in battle, Declaim deeds, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Seeking glory, Suspicious, Wary*

Elaine: *That's a nice mix of Traits and I'm starting to get a real picture of him. Let's look at goals now. I'd like you to have two character goals for now. A further one is likely to be added when we get to play.*

Tom: *I'd like a long term goal for him to avenge the wrong done to him which caused him to flee his homeland. I don't know what it is yet, can we work that out later?*

Elaine: *Sure. How about a shorter, more immediate goal? You are going to be starting play as a mercenary guard of a long merchant caravan...*



Tom: *I'll make the goal to ensure that all caravans get to our destination safely.*

Elaine: *Good. You can equip him with any weapons he has as a Trait in, scale armour, helmet and shield. That should be good enough to grant him a 2d equipment bonus (see Equipment page 91). As a wandering adventurer he has a Wealth of 3d.*

Tom: *Am I finished?*

Elaine: *Nearly. Let's just check the Traits you have so far and see if there are any overlaps or things you might like to add in at this stage.*

Tom: *I have both 'Calm in battle' and 'Fearless in battle'. They're distinct but quite similar. I think I'll keep Fearless. Could I have 'listening' and 'speak other language' Mind Traits? I'd also like a 'run tirelessly' Body Trait just to round him out.*

Elaine: *That's fine. How about Lorth's relationships?*

Tom: *Lorth is definitely keen to leave his homeland so how about:*

- *Jarl Asgarn of Lhuthia: the bitter old warlord who is out for my blood.*
- *Hilda: my cold mother who believes that I have brought shame on the household*

Tom: *Can I have one with another player character too?*

Elaine: *Sure, we'll work that one out next session. We have one more step to take. We need to assign numbers of dice to all your Traits. I am giving you a starting experience of 'Starter Player Hero', which gives you two Traits at 6d, five Traits at 5d, nine Traits at 4d, and all other Traits start at 3d. I suggest that you first put the high numbers in the Traits you want to have as the most important.*

Lorth starts with 6 Nudges.

Tom assigns the Traits to his character. Lorth's beginning character sheet can be seen close by...

Trait Lists

Here are some starter lists of example Traits for players to use either directly or as inspiration for their own Traits when creating characters. Players will generally start by taking Traits from their Pre-play text, People, Place and Profession lists. In addition, players are free to make up their own expansive and colourful Traits to enrich their characters and create fun responses to Challenges in play.

Players in a hurry to create a character may also choose to simply pick up to ten Traits from each of Body, Mind and Soul below and start playing. The open lists below are fairly generic and do not pre-suppose any particular game theme, although note that some examples may not fit the game you are playing – use your judgement!



Body Traits

Agile, Albino, Athlete, Armourer, Beautiful, Bilious, Brawling, Breathless, Cat like, Clumsy, Curvy figure, Cut purse, Dancer, Dodge incoming, Double jointed, Drink like a fish, Drive vehicle (specify: cart, coach, car, lorry) Emaciated, Endless legs, Enormous trousers, Fine manipulation, Flows like wind in the grass, Fly, Gawky, Gorgeous, Hardy, Kung fu, Light fingered, Mighty, One more wafer thin mint, Pace bowler, Pilot (specify: aircraft, grav vehicle, starship, etc.), Prone to fainting, Pugilist, Ride, Run like the wind, Sparkling eyes, Strong, Supple, Surgeon, Thin as a rake, Three year life span, Weapon use (specify), Weight lifting, Well preserved, Zero gravity manoeuvres

Mind Traits

Airhead, Architect, Astrogator, Boffin, Clever, Computing, Cunning as a fox, Find hidden things, Find your way, Gormless, Hacking networks, Know (any specialist subject you care to list), Magic, Medicine, Occult knowledge, Listen intently, Photographic memory, Pub quizzes, Scan for danger, See it coming, Sensor operator, Speak language (state which one), Stammer, Starship engineer, Taste poison, Treat wound, Trivia, Vacuous, Write eloquently

Soul Traits

Acerbic, Acting, Always on the make, Appreciate (anything you care to list), Artistic, Bold, Brash, Brittle, Charismatic, Charming, Come alive in battle, Diligent, Don't look at me I'm shy, Egotistical, Endlessly submissive, Fastidious, Feckless, Feisty, Guide the dead, Gullible, Kind, Lie convincingly, Love (anyone or anything you care to list), Loved by (anyone or anything you care to list), Morose, Portentous windbag, Scheming and plotting, See the dead, Selfless, Smooth talker, Streetwise, Worship god (specify)



Player Characters – A Summary

Player characters are at the heart of this game. Here is a summary of the key points introduced in this chapter:

- Traits are descriptive phrases that help to define an aspect of the character. Characters have three categories in which most Traits are placed: Body, Mind and Soul (BMS).
- Think of a concept - one sentence that encapsulates the character and write it down.
- Think of up to two Goals that the character will have. These could be long or short-term achievements the character wants to reach in the game. Share ideas and Goals with other players. More than one PC can have the same Goal. Write these down.
- A third, short term, Goal is likely to be set once the Navigator has described the nature of the session.
- Write some text that describes the character; who they are, where they are from, what they are able to do, who they know and what they want out of life. This is called your Pre-play text.
- Identify Traits from the concept and the Pre-play text and write each one down under one of the BMS categories.
- Select a People Place and Profession from the game's Theme that fit with your concept and Pre-play text. Write down each one in the Traits section at the top of the character sheet.
- Pick Traits from these three lists that appeal to your sense of your character. Or just make up some Traits that feel right using the People Places and Professions as sources of inspiration.
- Aim for about ten Traits in each BMS category. You may have more or less. Check with the Navigator to see how many they want to use for starting characters.
- Supernatural Traits are outlined in the Powers chapter (page 73).
- Create three key relationships and assign Traits.
- Once Traits have been written down give them a reality check. Do they fit with the character concept and what you want to play? Alter to suit.
- Apply a number of dice to each Trait. The Navigator will decide which spread of numbers to use, or make one up on the spot. Starter Hero is the recommended spread of numbers.
- Decide on the Wealth Trait dice and starting equipment.
- Decide on number of Nudges.
- Create any companions or notable family and friends as required.
- Go play!



Challenges

Challenges are at the heart of the game. As your group's story unfolds across the gaming table, the player characters will encounter danger, uncertainty, moments when only their skill, ability, passion and knowledge can take them forward. These moments are called Challenges in *Wordplay*. This chapter explains how the character you have created interacts with the game world that your group is sharing.

Below are some example Challenges that your characters may face:

- Your warrior must fight the vicious ogre in order to enter the ruins.
- Your detective needs to be able to notice the half opened letter carefully placed on the table in the murderer's room.
- Somehow your buffoon of a wastrel must successfully engage in a diverting conversation of some substance for more than fifteen minutes with the irascible Major, to give your chums time to 'borrow' his trophy silverware for the evening's prank.
- The chaos army of Slurg attempts a final assault on the fair city of Darntane.
- Can you climb the alabaster tower before the assassin robot rounds the corner?

Challenges are declared at key moments of uncertainty in the game; when a scene being described in the story reaches a moment where the player character must use their Traits to determine which direction the story will take. These will be moments of tension when the outcome really matters and when there are consequences. *Wordplay* provides a fun way to resolve these Challenges using six sided dice and the information recorded on the character sheets.

As you can see from the examples, a Challenge could be set as a brief moment in time where an individual character is tested, however could equally represent something that takes much longer and involves large numbers of people. Either way, whatever the scale of that moment in time, it is regarded as a Challenge and resolved as outlined in this chapter.

What you need to know

When a character is faced with a Challenge in the game, the player seeks to place as many six sided dice in their hands as possible. Once they have amassed their hand of dice, they throw them. The Navigator will also throw their own hand of dice. The *Wordplay* rules will advise how many dice you are able to throw and how to read the dice. The side that gets the best result wins the Challenge.

Essentially that is the core of *Wordplay*. In the following chapter you can read



through the extra detail and examples. It is, however, always worth coming back to the basics. When *Wordplay* is being used to help adjudicate the outcome of Challenges, then build up a huge tower of dice in your hands and throw them!

How to run a Challenge

Challenges happen continually throughout a game of *Wordplay*. In a short time they will become second nature and you won't need to refer to this book very much. For now let's take them apart piece by piece to see how they work.

Here's a step-by-step summary of how Challenges work:

1. Declare a Challenge
2. Check intent and desired outcomes
3. The group decide what sort of Challenge it is. There are three options:
 - A No Roll Challenge
 - A One Roll Challenge
 - A Multi-Roll Challenge
4. Set the difficulty
5. Build your Hand
6. Roll your dice
7. See who wins

We'll now step through each of these in turn

1) Declare a Challenge

Anyone, player or Navigator, can declare a Challenge when it seems appropriate. Often a Navigator will be describing a scene when a Challenge seems right.

During play a typical exchange might be like this:

Navigator: *Ok, you're outside the palisade wall. A guard is standing watchfully at the open gate.*

Player: *I want to attack the guard!*

Navigator: *Okay, that's a Challenge and we'll need some dice! What do you want the outcome to be?*

Player: *I want to knock out the guard and slip through the open gate.*

Navigator: *Cool. The guard is startled but readies his spear. His intent appears to be to skewer you to the ground. Let's make this a One Roll Challenge.*

2) Check intent and desired outcomes

Often the outcome of a Challenge is implicit when it is set up. The character might be trying to get over the wall, seduce the guard or to win the race. It is usually worth being sure that everyone agrees what the desired outcome will be. Players have a habit of surprising the Navigator with unexpected outcomes.

Where each side have the same desired outcome it's easy to work out what's going on. Where two or more individuals or groups want different outcomes it is important to structure the Challenge to understand who gets to decide first what the Challenge is about.



All the protagonists in a Challenge might be looking to get something different out of the scene. In this case there may actually be a number of consecutive Challenges to resolve, with individual protagonists using different Traits in each Challenge in order to achieve their own outcomes. When deciding what to do, players will pick out the key Trait that they are going to use to drive the action forward. This is known as the Foundation Trait. The order in which these Challenges are resolved is taken from the highest Foundation Trait offered, down to the lowest.

Some Navigators may wish to control what the outcome of the Challenge will be, waiting until the Traits are selected and dice are rolled (if dice are being used) before declaring the outcome. Alternatively, a Navigator can declare the stakes of the Challenge up front.

Example:

"You are looking for the entrance to the tomb. Success in this Challenge will give you the location of the concealed entrance. Failure means that you are convinced that there are no under-chambers and that the clue you have been given was false. You will also have to take a Scratch Mind Damage Trait (explained in the Outcomes chapter) of 'confused and disappointed 1d'."

3) What sort of Challenge?

There are three different ways that Challenges can be played in the game. They are all related to each other, only differing in the level of detail used to resolve them. The method the group elects to use for any particular Challenge is purely a matter of taste. If you find that one method is consistently more enjoyable than another, then use that method, even exclusively.

There will be moments of tension when the outcome really matters and when there are consequences...

Each method is covered in more detail later in this chapter. For now we just need to have an idea how they differ from each other.

NO ROLL CHALLENGES

Forget about the need for dice. Trait values are used without rolling dice for them. Navigator and players will look at the situation and the relative Traits of the participants and simply decide what happens. The character with the higher Trait/s wins.

Use when you want to move on quickly and just need to check that a character has a Trait at a high enough level to get past an obstacle.

ONE ROLL CHALLENGES

A more structured method. Each side in the Challenge creates a hand of dice based on Traits that they will use to win the Challenge. Dice are thrown and the side with the most successes wins.

Use when you want a quick resolution to a Challenge and want to start rolling dice.



MULTI-ROLL CHALLENGES

An extension to One Roll Challenges that gives the participants the opportunity to roll several hands of dice before a winner is determined. Use when you want to take time in detailing the Challenge – normally a complex or multi-part Challenge. Different Traits can be used over multiple dice rolls before a character wins.

4) Setting a Difficulty

In Challenges where two active opponents face each other, the difficulty is set by the opponent's dice roll. The more successes the opponent achieves the higher the difficulty the player character will face. To win the Challenge you need to get more successes than your opponent.

For other Challenges the Navigator will set a difficulty and roll that number of dice. The player must get more successes than the Navigator to win the Challenge.

REMEMBER THE ODDS

Players of *Wordplay* will throw groups of six sided dice to determine how well they fare in Challenges. Every dice in the hand has a 50/50 chance of being at least one success. If a player has six dice in their hand then they are likely to get about three successes. Statistically this is not quite accurate as every '6' rolled on a die adds two successes to the total. So, to allow for this, the average number of successes to be expected for a dice throw containing between one and fifteen dice is listed in the Challenge Difficulty Levels Table on page 33.

For certain Challenges the opposition number of successes is not rolled using dice, instead the Navigator may simply state how many successes the player needs to beat. If this is the case then the Navigator needs to 'remember the odds'. A 9d Challenging difficulty averages at approximately 6 successes. If the Navigator sets a Challenge at 'Challenging' then either she rolls nine dice or she decides that the difficulty to beat is six successes and simply calls that number out - or keeps the difficulty a secret until after the player has rolled his dice for extra suspense.

Examples:

- *Climbing a low garden wall: Easy 3d*
- *Climbing the alabaster tower of doom: Challenging 9d*
- *Climbing the alabaster tower of doom immediately after a light rain shower: Exacting 12d*
- *Climbing the alabaster tower of doom during a light rain shower after you have just been lightly oiled in the slave pits: Ambitious 15d*

When you have a large number of dice in *Wordplay* don't assume that you are going to get lots of successes. You might, but fickle dice means that you could end up with a really surprisingly low number of successes. In *Wordplay* you are never safe or assured as to how well you are going to do.

If you find that one method is consistently more enjoyable than another, then use that method, even exclusively...



CHALLENGE DIFFICULTY LEVELS TABLE

DIFFICULTY DICE	DIFFICULTY DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED NUMBER OF SUCCESSES
3D	Easy	2
6D	Routine	4
9D	Challenging	6
12D	Exacting	8
15D	Ambitious	10
18D	Audacious	12
21D	Heroic	14
24D	Impossible	16
27D	Look, it isn't really possible	18

5) Building Your Hand

All roads will lead to this section of the game. This is where you find out how to build your hand of dice. The aim is to have as huge a mound of dice in the hand to throw as possible, an avalanche of cubic power that will bury your opponent in the glory of your victory. Well, having a lot of dice is always a good thing!

The following sections will help you to build your hand of dice, whether you are in a One or Multi-Roll Challenge.

CHOOSING THE FOUNDATION TRAIT

The Foundation Trait is the one that is best suited to meet the Challenge. It is usually clear which of the character's Traits should be the Foundation. If an opponent has set the Challenge then they will have picked their Foundation Trait. Both Foundation Traits will usually come from the same BMS category. A Body based Foundation Trait Challenge will need to be opposed with a Body Trait for example. In some cases, and at the Navigator's discretion, opposing Foundation Traits can come from different BMS categories if the particular Challenge still makes sense.

If the player is unsure then the Trait can be selected collaboratively with the Navigator or with the other players. The Foundation Trait defines the starting number of dice the player will have in their hand. It also sets the opponent's BMS category that will be damaged if the Challenge is won.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T HAVE AN APPROPRIATE TRAIT?

When looking for a Foundation Trait you may find that you do not have one that exactly matches the way you wish to meet the Challenge. If this happens choose one that is close or one that you can convince the Navigator and group of its usefulness in the Challenge. The Navigator may increase the difficulty of the Challenge when a character is not using a Trait that is quite right for a Challenge.

This will often happen when the Trait is quite generic such as 'Observant' rather



than specific such as 'Eye for the ladies'. Broadly applicable Traits are extremely useful in the game as they can be frequently applied to many Challenges, however the downside is that they are not targeted into a specialist area that might be useful and well matched for a particular Challenge.

The Navigator may apply an increase in difficulty if she doesn't think you have a well-matched Foundation Trait to meet the Challenge.

Example increases in difficulty:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| +1d difficulty | <i>The Trait is not a complete match to what is needed or is too generic.</i> |
| +2d difficulty | <i>The Trait is not that close but is still applicable.</i> |
| +4d difficulty | <i>You're kidding me. You're going to do what with that Trait?!</i> |

Care needs to be taken because these increases in difficulty actually provide those dice to the opposition to roll against you! So, if you are without any Trait that can really help then the Navigator will probably allow you to start with a Foundation of 1 or 2 dice, unless some specialist knowledge is required for the Foundation, in which case you may not be able to roll any dice, or perhaps the Navigator will grant you a dramatically hopeless and desperate single die.

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

So, your character is in a Challenge and you've picked out the Foundation Trait that you are going to use. The next step is to account for all the other factors that will improve your character's chances and give you more dice to throw. This is called Building Your Hand.

Here is a list of the sorts of things that can help your character

- Help from the character's other Traits
- Help from equipment
- Help from Goals
- Help from magic or other powers
- Help from favourable circumstances
- Help from friendly characters
- Help from the player's description
- Help from the opponent's flaws

Each of these is expanded upon below. Try to get as many dice as you can into your hand before you make your roll. The more dice you have, the more likely your character is to succeed.

HELP FROM THE CHARACTER'S OTHER TRAITS

Up to two supporting Traits in addition to the Foundation Trait, at the Navigator's discretion, can be selected from the character's sheet to provide extra dice into the hand before the throw. The player must be able to justify how these two Traits support winning the Challenge. The player does this by describing their actions to win the Challenge, including how the supporting Traits help. The character will gain between one and four dice to their hand for each selected supporting Trait, depending on its value.



Divide the supporting Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice you get to add into your hand.

So, a Trait:

- between 1 and 2 provides no help
- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to help the character
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to help the character
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to help the character
- at 12 provides +4d to help the character

Opposing Navigator characters will often be able to use supporting Traits to improve their dice hands too.

Example:

Let's look at a combat Challenge that Lorth is embroiled in. He has six dice in his Foundation Trait of 'Battle axe' and chooses two supporting Traits: 'Fearless in battle' (5d) and 'Spot opponents weakness' (3d). Both these Traits are between 3 and 5 dice so each provide +1 die to help. So far that puts him on eight dice.

HELP FROM EQUIPMENT

How helpful equipment can be in *Wordplay* depends on the type of game you are playing in. Some game themes will wish to emphasise the positive effect of good equipment by providing a wider range of bonus dice. Other games may be less interested in equipment, focussing instead on the characters' own Traits. The game's equipment effect is provided by the Navigator at the start of a game or series of games. Usually only one type of equipment can provide bonus dice for a Challenge. Equipment could be anything that the character has access to that could help in the Challenge. More information on equipment is found in the Equipment chapter.

Not all Challenges will provide opportunity to use equipment, however it is important not to forget it, as it's there to help you get some more dice into your hand. So, if the Navigator is using the standard equipment bonuses, average equipment designed to help in a particular Challenge will tend to give a solid +2 dice into your hand. Circumstances can vary the number of helping dice that equipment provides. The Navigator will sometimes modify the number of dice with a quick explanation.

The standard range of equipment bonuses are as follows:

- Poor, obsolete, tatty +0d
- Light, basic, adequate +1d
- Medium, good +2d
- Heavy, finely crafted, superb +3d
- The best available +4d



Example:

Armour and weapons provide helping dice in opposed combat. Chainmail armour and an average sword grants a total of +2d. Arms and armour are rated together, so typically a good set of armour and weapons will simply provide one +2d bonus to the Challenge.

Equipment could be anything, try to be inventive! If you're looking to impress at a social occasion then a Beautiful dress +2d might be useful!

HELP FROM GOALS

If a Challenge can be linked to one of the character's Goals then the player can Invoke a Goal. The player describes why the Goal is linked and how it influences the determination of the character to win. The player gets a bonus equal to half the Foundation Trait value rounded up. More information on invoking Goals can be found on page 38.

HELP FROM MAGIC OR OTHER POWERS

Magic or special powers can help in a number of ways. If a character is under the influence of a beneficial power it may add dice as a special circumstantial bonus. Often Powers are also Traits and can be used as Help from other Traits as above and also benefit from Scale (page 40).

FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

Sometimes circumstances are in your character's favour, at other times you will be in a sticky situation where outside forces seem to be, or really are, conspiring to make things more difficult for you. This has a mechanical effect in the game when undertaking a Challenge.

Circumstances that improve things for your character grant bonus dice. This generally adds from +1d (for a slightly beneficial circumstance) through to +4d (for a great advantage). Similarly, if circumstances are running against your character, the difficulty is raised between +1 and +4 dice, granting those dice to the opposing force. Multiple favourable circumstances can provide cumulative bonus dice. The Navigator can decide to cap the amount a player receives if she wishes.

A favourable circumstance always adds dice to your hand. An unfavourable circumstance adds to the Navigator's Challenge difficulty dice, which may be an active opponent to the player character.

Examples:

Perception checks

- *Conditions are murky, smoky, or misty +1d to difficulty.*
- *It is deep night with little if any light +2d to difficulty.*
- *Far away +2d difficulty.*

Combat

- *Surprised – opponent gains Initiative and +3d.*
- *Holding the high ground +1d.*
- *Outnumbered +1d to opponents dice for every extra opponent after the first, up to*



- +3d.
• *Poor footing +1d to difficulty.*

Also see *Everything can have Traits* on page 104 in the Navigator chapter to see how the Navigator may use the very description of the Challenge set-up to provide circumstantial bonus opportunities into play.

HELP FROM FRIENDLY CHARACTERS

Friendly characters may also choose to help a character win a particular Challenge. The player explains how they are helping and which Traits they will be using. The Navigator will typically allow the helping friendly character to use one Trait to help, however sometimes she will permit up to two depending on circumstances and how much the helping character can positively affect the outcome.

Depending on the strength of the helping character's Trait, the player of that character will roll between one and four dice per Trait being used to help. The successes are added to the supported player's total.

Divide the supporting Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice the helping player gets to roll to help you. So, if the friendly character's supporting Trait is:

- between 1 and 2 it provides no help
- between 3 and 5 it provides +1d to help the supported player
- between 6 and 8 it provides +2d to help the supported player
- between 9 and 11 it provides +3d to help the supported player
- at 12 it provides +4d to help the supported player

When the character rolls their dice, the helping player rolls their character's dice too. The helping player calls out the number of successes, if any, that they have contributed to the total.

HELP FROM THE PLAYER

A player's description of their character's action in the Challenge can provide bonus dice at the Navigator's discretion. A good description may also introduce new Traits into the action which the Navigator and other players might wish to use as further circumstantial bonuses.

- +1d Good description of action
- +2d Excellent description of action
- +3d Awesome description that draws spontaneous approval from the group

HELP FROM OPPONENTS' FLAWS

Opponent characters are also able to help a character win a Challenge by offering one of their flaws, an unhelpful Trait, to provide a bonus against them. One Trait, that can sensibly thought of as a Flaw in that Challenge, can provide a bonus to the opponent. This cuts both ways. A Navigator can take a Trait from a player character and use it to help one of their characters and a player can take a Trait from a Navigator character and use it as a helping Trait for them too.



The opponent's flaw is given to the character as dice. The player rolls their opponents flaw dice as part of their hand of dice. It's fun to use different colour dice to represent the flaw dice. That way the opponent will be able to see if their flaw has contributed to the character's total. A flaw Trait will allow the other player to roll between one and four dice depending on the strength of the Trait. Only one flaw can be exploited per dice roll. Sometimes there will not be a flaw to exploit. A Navigator may choose to only use this option for a limited number of crucial Challenges.

Divide the flaw Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice the opposing player gets to roll to help them. So, if the opposing characters flaw Trait is:

- between 1 and 2 provides no help
- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to help
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to help
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to help
- at 12 it provides +4d to help

Characters can also volunteer one of their own flaws to provide a bonus to an opponent in a Challenge for a reward in experience points. We learn by exposing personal defects in challenging situations.

FACTORING IN DAMAGE TRAITS

These Traits don't help your character at all but have been included here as a reminder! If the character has damage noted in the BMS category of the Foundation Trait being used, then this is applied now. Like flaws, Damage Traits add their dice into the opposition's hand! Also check if the character is currently suffering from any environmental damage (page 66).

Whenever a character has circumstances against them in a Challenge, such as damage from defeats, being outnumbered or some other difficult factors, the penalty dice are added to the opposition's hand rather than being taken off the character. By giving the opposition the dice, it increases their opponent's hand and gives them a better chance to get more successes.

Goals

Characters have identified goals. These goals are the key drivers that propel the character into action. They will be achievable through action in the game. A goal could be something short term and relatively easy for the character to achieve, or could be deep drivers that will stay with them for a very long time in the game. Up to three goals are recorded on the character sheet.

Invoking Goals

Goals can be achieved and completed during the game, providing a bonus to the character. Some goals are long term drivers that may take many sessions to achieve. Whether the character's goals are short term and quicker to achieve, or long term and take the character a lifetime to achieve, they can be invoked up to three times during a game session to provide a bonus to the character. That's three in total in a game session, not three times for each one.



When a player invokes one of their character's goals they are stepping forward and using a key motivator to help drive forward the action in their preferred direction. They are throwing their heart and soul into the endeavour and digging deep into the character's psyche, sharpening their focus for success.

The player must link the goal to the Challenge. This can happen before the dice are rolled and also afterwards. The player declares why the goal can help motivate the character to perform better in the Challenge. Once the link between action and goal is made the player gets a bonus, which differs depending on whether it is declared before or after the dice are rolled.

Here's the procedure:

- A character can invoke their goals up to three times per game session.
- The Challenge Foundation Trait is picked.
- The player may declare that they "Invoke a Goal" before or after they throw the dice.
- If the Goal has an associated Doubt (see *The Risk* on page 40) it can only be invoked before the dice are thrown.
- Only one goal can be invoked per Challenge.
- Helping characters do not invoke Goals.
- The player describes why this Challenge is applicable to the Goal being invoked.
- The Navigator must approve an invoked Goal.
- An invoked Goal provides the character with focus and extra determination to complete the Challenge or determination to immediately respond to a defeat, reflected in the provision of additional dice and other bonuses to help the player win the Challenge.

The character gains one of the following:

IF DECLARED BEFORE DICE ARE ROLLED:

- Bonus dice equal to half the Foundation Trait (round up).
- This bonus is available either to a Single Roll Challenge, or throughout a Multi Roll Challenge where the same Foundation Trait is being used.

IF DECLARED AFTER DICE ARE ROLLED:

- Re-roll any dice roll in its entirety.
- Improve a Victory Level on the Outcome table by one.
- Turn any sort of defeat and damage into a tie (but still suffer a Doubt – see *The Risk* below).

The Reward

If a character wins a Challenge in which they have invoked a goal before the dice are rolled, they immediately gain a number of experience points equal to half the Foundation Trait used (round up). If the Goal is invoked after the dice are rolled then no experience points are awarded.



The Risk

If the character does not win the Challenge dice roll then, in addition to any other Damage Traits meted out, a *Doubt Trait* is created that is linked to the Goal that was invoked. The player creates the Trait, though the Navigator may wish to provide suggestions. The Doubt Trait has a starting level equal to the level of defeat the player has suffered. So, a minor defeat on the Challenge dice roll would give a Doubt Trait rated at 1d. A major defeat would create a Doubt Trait of 2d and so on. See Outcomes on page 57 for more information on defeat.

The next time the goal is invoked it provides the bonus dice to the player as usual, however it now also provides the difficulty bonus dice equal to the linked Doubt Trait. Goals with Doubts can only be invoked before the dice are thrown. If the player character wins the Challenge then the Doubt Trait is reduced by 1d, possibly removing it. If the player character loses the Challenge again then, in addition to the other damage they suffer, the Doubt Trait is increased by 1d.

Characters can, therefore, be burdened with Doubts linked to their key goals; worries and uncertainties that gnaw away beneath the surface, distracting, consuming and irritating...

Once a goal has a Doubt Trait it cannot be easily discarded for a new goal. The Doubts need to be cleared through successes or the goal itself has to be achieved. Once the goal is achieved the linked Doubt Trait is removed. If the Goal is an immediate and relatively minor one it can be removed, however the Doubt Trait should be transferred to one of the BMS Damage Trait boxes. The Doubt continues to gnaw away at the character even when the opportunity to win the Challenge has passed.

It might be tempting for a player to stop using a Goal that has Doubt. It is always up to the player when to invoke a Goal. If the Goal is particularly pertinent to a Challenge, it is always advisable to invoke the Goal to drive the character's story forward. Even if the player elects not to use one of their Goals, a Navigator can choose to make use of the linked Doubt just as she would with any Damage Trait.

Characters can, therefore, be burdened with Doubts linked to their key goals: worries and uncertainties that gnaw away beneath the surface, distracting, consuming and irritating. That's life!

Scale

Scale is an optional game rule in *Wordplay* that provides a mechanic to simulate significant steps of power and ability, for example the impact of a magical spell, vast structures, alien or fantastical creatures or blistering technology. It is perfectly possible to run a game of *Wordplay* without the use of scale; it may not be appropriate for the setting or theme that you are playing in.

Scale accentuates the differences between two forces that are engaged in a Challenge. If a player character is running after a sports car on a flat road then they are going to find it difficult to catch it. When it comes to 'moving quickly' the sports car is considered to be on a different scale to the person.



Scale can be applied to anything. It could apply to an individual Trait, a related group of Traits, or an important Theme element that impacts Challenges. Typical Theme elements are : size, speed, and power domain. A Trait with a Scale level indicates that it represents a different order of magnitude in terms of size, speed or power and gives the Trait owner even more dice in the hand to use in a Challenge!

Scale Levels

Wordplay rates Scale at a 'level' equal to the number of extra dice it gives you. Scale Level 0 represents the level of the game if it is played without the optional rules. The higher Scale levels represent steps of magnitude in capability that are expressed in the game through extra dice being added to your hand.

- Scale level 0** +0d *human, mundane, the norm, no special advantage.*
- Scale levels 1 to 4** +1 to +4d *larger, faster, magical, an advantage.*
- Scale levels 5 to 8** +5 to +8d *awesomely quick, ancient power, a huge advantage.*
- Scale levels 9 to 12** +9 to +12d *Fills the sky, instantaneous, the gods, slack jawed gaping at the wonder of it.*

Different Scale levels can be assigned to similar effects but from different realms. For example, if the powers of the gods are stronger than sorcery then they may be placed at Scale level 4 (an extra 4d) whereas sorcery be limited to a lesser but still potent 3d.

If scale is used, the theme will define what should have 'Scale' and whether the levels should be grouped into 'steps'. Steps provide Scale in incremental chunks rather than individual die. A good starting point for the steps in scale is 4d/8d/12d. This was used extensively in playtesting *Wordplay*. Using these Steps a Trait or group of powers will either be rated at Scale Level 4 (4 extra dice), 8 or 12. Scale is less fine grained when using steps, instead they are represented by bigger changes in capability or power. However, you may prefer to assign scale individually by trait.

SCALE EXAMPLE TABLE

SCALE	SIZE	SPEED	MAGIC/POWER
0	Human	Human	Human
4	Giant, Dragon	Very fast animal, fast vehicle, Helicopter	Major Arcana spells, Psionics, Supernatural, Superpower
8	Starship, liner, suspension bridge	Very fast vehicle	Ancient forgotten magics, Awesome world rending superpowers
12	Moon like space station	Space warping starships	The old gods

REPRESENTING SCALE

If scale is used, the level appropriate to the Trait is noted by a suffix indicating the number of scale bonus dice:



Dragon 8d (S4)

Star Dreadnought Main Gun Battery 6d (S6)

Above is a table providing examples rated by type and level of Scale. This example uses Scale steps of 0/4/8/12 dice.

The Scale Effect

If you have a Scale advantage over your opponent then you get Scale bonus dice added into your hand. The higher your Scale advantage the more Scale bonus dice you get to roll. The bonus dice are placed into the hand once Scale Levels have been compared between opponents.

Your hand of dice is built as usual. Both Foundation and Supporting Traits may be at different Scales. A higher number of bonus dice are available if the Scale is taken from a Foundation Trait.

Here's the procedure to work out if you have a Scale Advantage:

1. Look through the Traits that you have used in your hand of dice and note all the ones that provide Scale dice.
2. Only one Trait can provide Scale dice in a Challenge, or in a 'round' for a Multi-Roll Challenge.
3. Foundation Traits provide all their Scale dice whereas Supporting Traits only provide half their Scale dice (round down). Work out the highest and that's your Scale Level
4. Compare your Scale level with any opponent's Scale level to find the Scale difference.
5. If you are both on the same Scale level then Scale will cancel out and can be ignored.
6. If you have a Scale advantage then you get extra Bonus Dice equal to the difference in Scale Level and the opponent will have no Bonus Dice as they have all been cancelled.
7. If the Scale Trait is the Foundation Trait you get to keep all your Scale Dice. If the Scale Trait is a Supporting Trait then you keep half the Scale Dice (round down when halving).

Example:

Tinkalot, the mischievous imp, has the Naughty Scams 6d (S3) Trait and is in a Challenge with Tuvien, the noble elf, who has Graceful agility 7d (S2). These two opponents are using these Traits as their Foundation. Tinkalot has the higher level so has a slight advantage, managing to keep one Scale dice

Example:

Hank is using the following Traits in a combat Challenge:

Foundation Trait: Ancient Doom Powered Cannon 5d (S6), and supporting Traits of Super Armour 4d (S2) and Gung ho 6d

Example:

This provides a total of $5d + 6d$ (Scale) $+1d + 2d = 14d$. Nice. This hand of dice is at Scale



Level 6 as this is the highest Level of the selected Traits. That Doom Cannon is scarily awesome. If the opposition is at Scale Level 0 then he gets all 6 Bonus Scale dice. Scale usually cancels out (see below), so if the opposition also has Scale then they are subtracted from each other before the dice are rolled.

If Hank's Scale 6 Trait was a Supporting Trait then he gets only an additional 3 Scale dice.

Where possible Scales cancel each other out

Sometimes both opponents in a Challenge are at a Scale higher than the base of zero. If both sides are operating at the same Scale level then all Scale effects cancel out and just roll dice as usual without any bonus dice. If one side is operating at a higher level than all the others then it gets bonus dice equal to the difference between the levels.

Example:

Hank at Scale Level 5 is facing Muldoon the mage whose magic places him on Scale Level 3. Hank is higher so gets Bonus dice equal to the difference between Level 5 and Level 3: a scale advantage of 2. This provides 2 Bonus Scale Dice. Muldoon is outclassed and gets no bonus dice.

Scale and multiple opponents

It's possible that a protagonist can face multiple opponents all operating at different Scales. When this happens everyone gets their bonus dice.

Example:

Hank is on Scale Level 6 and is facing three opponents in a Challenge. The first opponent is also on Scale 6, the second is on Scale Level 2 and the third is on Scale Level 0. Hank and opponent 1 gain 6 bonus dice, opponent 2 gains 2 bonus dice and opponent 3 has no bonus dice. This assumes that each has the highest Scale trait as a Foundation Trait.

6) Roll Your Dice

You have now accumulated all the dice that you can use for this Challenge (and other dice that any friendly helping players will be rolling too). You started with your Foundation Trait and have added in extra dice due to the factors described above. Each side calls out the number of dice they are going to throw. Opponents will then know the quality of the opposition they are facing.

Right, time to throw the dice!

READING THE DICE

How small are your dice? How big are your hands? These could be important questions! *Wordplay* uses a large number of six-sided dice, so a sizeable number of dice will be needed. When dice are thrown they are read as follows:



- Remove all dice that come up with a 1, 2 or 3 – they are of no use to you.
- Dice that fall off the table or that land at an angle are not counted. They are placed with the dice that scored a 1, 2 or 3.
- Each remaining die with a result of 4 or 5 gives you one success.
- Each remaining die with a result of 6 gives you two successes.
- Add up all of your successes.

A Caution on Scale:

Scale is optional. You can happily play Wordplay without the need for it. However, if the Navigator wishes to accentuate something, such as a magical item, a fantastical creature or race, an immensely powerful weapon, or something of incredible beauty, he cannot only provide it with a high Trait value, but also put it onto a higher Scale difference. Scale should only be applied if there is something inherently powerful or markedly different to legitimately warrant using Scale rather than representing a stronger Trait higher on the usual 1-12 rating. A human facing a human with their own Traits wouldn't be on any sort of Scale. If magic or alien technology or immense size was involved then possibly Scale could be brought into play.

Using Scale steps groups things into broader categories. If you use a 0/4/8/12 stepped scale then only something very large, magical or strangely wondrous would get to the first step (Scale level 4). Most things would sit at level 0. If you decide to make Scale more granular by having Steps at one die increments from 1-12 then it will be tempting to place more things onto a Scale due to their size, magical or technical relative superiority. Although this is more flexible it can serve to slow the game down as more things in Challenges may have Scale which will need to be compared before dice pools can be calculated.

Be warned though, a combination of a high Trait value and providing additional Scale Dice makes for a very powerful effect in the game. So use Scale with caution. Magic effects are already powerful and reality bending, placing them on a higher scale than the Mundane 'Level 0' makes resisting them much more difficult. The decision on how to use scale will largely be influenced by the genre and the overall effect desired and therefore a Theme will dictate if and how Scale is applied.

Creatures, magical effects, strange races and equipment elsewhere in this book will be given suggested Scale levels. As the rule is optional it is up to the Navigator and group consensus if they are to be applied.

ROLL	DESCRIPTION	SUCCESSES
	Dice falls off table or lands at an angle; Failure!	0 per dice
	Fails, no use to you.	0 per dice
	Success	1 per dice
	Good Success	2 per dice



Example:

*Stuart is rolling eight dice. He scores: 1, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6.
What a roll! The 1 and 3 are discarded leaving 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6.*

The 4,4,5 give three successes.

The 6,6,6 give six successes (two for each six).

That's a mighty nine successes altogether.

If the Navigator is controlling a large group of characters with the same Traits and numbers, she can just roll once for her group of characters and apply that result to each individual in that group. It's a lot quicker!

Nudges

Nudges are an optional rule to provide an extra edge for players to influence the outcome of Challenges in their character's favour. This rule fits particularly well with heroic flavour games but could be applied to any Theme that you are playing should you wish.

After the dice are rolled each Nudge allows a player to shift the outcome of a single die by a step. So, a die that has landed as a failure (1-3) can be upgraded to a success and a die that is a success (4-5) can be upgraded to a double success (6). A double success is not affected by a Nudge.

The Theme will determine who and what are allowed Nudges. For example they might only be available to the player characters, or possibly to Navigator key protagonists too.

Nudges are made available at the start of a game session. A default starting minimum number of Nudges is assumed to be equal to the character's highest Trait. These Nudges are not transferable to others but can be used to improve supporting dice rolls.

Nudges apply to your Hand of dice once rolled. A die can be Nudged multiple times. Effectively, Nudges provide a pool of extra successes if you really need to win a challenge.

Nudges cannot be used to raise another player's roll directly. They can only be used to boost your own helping dice. So, if your character gives +1d support, the maximum number of nudges you could spend would be 2 if your dice failed. If you had +2d helping dice from a 6d trait, it would be 4 nudges if both dice were failures. You can use as many Nudges as you wish on an individual dice roll. They are a finite resource however, so spend them wisely, or recklessly, depending on your character and the situation.

Nudges cannot be used to lower the number of successes that another player has. They can only be used to affect your own rolls.

Nudges are refreshed at the start of a game session. A refresh gives the character a number of Nudges equal to their highest Trait, unless they already have more



Nudges, in which case they simply keep the Nudges that they have. If a game session is very long, or has involved a large number of rolled Challenges then the Navigator can call for a refresh of Nudges at any time.

Navigators also distribute Nudges during a session to reward a player for the things that are important to the group at the table: good roleplay, cunning plans, impassioned speeches, allowing others into the spotlight, co-operative play – anything that the Navigator wants to see from her players. See page 112 in the Navigators chapter for advice on when Nudges can be handed out to players.

LARGE DICE POOLS

If both sides in a Challenge have large handfuls of dice you may wish to reduce the number that have to be used. Select the maximum number of dice that you want people to have to throw. Everyone gets to keep their Scale dice. Reduce the character with the highest pool down to the table set maximum number. Reduce the opponent by the same number.

Example:

The Table decides that they want to cap dice rolls to a maximum of 15 dice. Two opponents face each other. One has a pool of 21d6 and the other has a pool of 19d6. Simply remove the same number of dice from each until the higher pool is 15d6. So in this case, one opponent would have a pool of 15d6, whilst the weaker opponent's pool would still be two lower, in this case 13d6.

You can always keep the large dice pools if you wish, it's part of the fun of Wordplay. Buckets, very small dice, large hands, plastic dice towers, trays, enormous tables can all be used to manage the chaotic clatter of many wild and will-full six siders showering your gaming table.

7) See Who Wins

In a *No Roll Challenge*, the winner is arbitrated between the Navigator and the players. Generally it is the character with the best and most appropriate Traits that wins.

In a *One Roll Challenge*, the winner is the character that rolls the highest number of successes. If there is a tie, the character with the highest Foundation Trait wins. If the Foundation Traits are the same then it is a tie.

In a *Multi-Roll Challenge* each Round of dice rolls will have a winner. Outcomes are applied after each dice roll. There may be several Rounds of dice rolls until one side wins the Challenge. This allows for the element of cut and thrust or varying attempts of the characters concerned, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, or losing when all seemed so easy.

Outcomes are covered in much more detail in the next chapter.



Using Challenges

This section provides some further detail on each of the Challenge types to help you get the most out of each of them.

Using No Roll Challenges

It is often the case that, in a typical game of *Wordplay*, the players and the Navigator describe events and the story moves on without any need for Challenges. There will be no need to roll dice and check the character sheets. It is only when there are important consequences of particular significance to a moment that the Navigator, and it is almost always the Navigator, will declare a Challenge, with the outcome in the hands of fate and player judgement.

When the Navigator decides that the Challenge should either be won or lost without testing the characters, the Challenge and outcome can be described without recourse to any game rules at all. Sometimes the story is much more important than the rules. Rather than jumping into the rules and using big piles of dice, as detailed in the other methods below, the Navigator simply describes the Challenge and, ideally with collaboration from the players suggesting the Traits they want to use, what the outcome of the Challenge is. The outcome could be positive or negative for the players.

If the Navigator decides that the outcome is going to be negative for the player characters, there should be a spirit of trust within the group; where the players are pulling together to create an enjoyable session and memorable story. Some players may come from a boardgame or wargame background, or be used to the conventions of some other tabletop roleplaying games where it is often assumed that the dice decide the outcome, especially if their characters are threatened with setbacks. Rules provide a structure and, sometimes, an independent arbiter for outcomes, however *Wordplay* emphasises the collective story over intricate and impersonal rules. No Roll Challenges are just an explicit reference to common practice: the Navigator and player group enjoying the process of moving their collective story along without the need for rules to act as an arbiter. It has to be said that a lot of the fun in *Wordplay* is to be had by throwing huge handfuls of dice onto the game table. For that you'll want to use One and Multi-Roll Challenges, which are described below.

In any of the types of Challenge, if you have a lot of characters in play and don't want to slow the game down by rolling lots of dice, then you can use the table on page 33 to calculate the average number of successes they generate. Just use that number.

Example:

Elaine has three zombie warriors guarding the entrance to a tomb. They are keen to engage in an 'eat the hero Lorth for breakfast Challenge'. They have a total of 9 dice each, including their bonus for outnumbering the solitary barbarian morsel. Checking the table on page 33, Elaine notes that, on average, nine dice will generate six successes. Elaine decides to simply state that they all manage six successes in the Challenge. Let's hope Lorth manages more than six or he's in serious trouble!



Using One Roll Challenges

A One Roll Challenge is resolved with one roll of the dice by the Navigator and one by the player. This method is ideal if you want to move on quickly from the Challenge without it taking a lot of game time to resolve.

THE NAVIGATOR DESCRIBES THE CHALLENGE

The Navigator describes the Challenge to the players and sets the degree of difficulty by giving it a 'hand of dice' that will be thrown to oppose the player character. The higher the number of dice in the hand, the more difficult the Challenge. A difficulty of '1 die' is a very easy Challenge, '6 dice' is more challenging. A Challenge could be set at a very high number of dice, say difficulty '25 dice' but that is very hard to beat – only a hugely capable player character with a wide range of other beneficial circumstances to help will win such a Challenge.

Sometimes situations will arise where players challenge each other. Follow the guidance below, with the Navigator sitting on the sidelines and adjudicating.

Example:

“You hunt through the ruins of the ancient fortress looking for the concealed entrance to the under-chambers. Let's make this a One roll Challenge.”

BUILD YOUR HAND OF DICE

Dice are accumulated by the player using the procedure on page 33.

WINNING AND LOSING

If your total successes are greater than the successes rolled by the Navigator, you win the Challenge. The more successes you have compared to your opposition, the better the quality of your victory. This is known as your Victory Level. If your total successes are equal to the Navigator, it is a tie and it is up to the Navigator to decide who has won the Challenge – if anyone. If your total successes are less than the Navigator, you have lost the Challenge and you have to take the winner's chosen outcome.

The outcome of the Challenge can be described by either the player or the Navigator. It's largely a question of style. However, the Navigator is always the final arbiter of the outcome of any Challenge. A good Navigator will listen to her players and use their ideas to enliven both the Challenge itself and the description of the outcome.

In a One Roll Challenge the winner achieves their desired Outcome described at the beginning of the Challenge. You can decide to use the Victory Level to temper the quality of the Outcome. More on this in the Outcomes chapter.

Example:

“Well done! I only score three successes for the difficulty of locating the entrance, while you score six successes, so you definitely win! Hanos' methodical approach and careful observation quickly brings you to the most likely location of the entrance; a regular square hole, covered or perhaps camouflaged by vines, revealing a stone staircase heading down into the gloom. You also observe recent human sized boot prints that seem to be heading both into and out of the entrance.”



Winning a Challenge is largely its own reward and gains the positive outcome that was either implicit or explicitly defined at the beginning of the Challenge. The player character may be further rewarded if they win a Challenge and have invoked one of their Goals. If they lose the Challenge they may be given a new Damage Trait.

Example One-Roll Challenge: Lorth leaps a crevasse

Lorth the Northic Barbarian is being chased by an entire war party of orcs and runs into a crevasse. He decides to try and leap over it. The crevasse is given a base Difficulty to be successfully jumped. In this case, the Navigator has made it Routine 6d (six dice). Lorth doesn't have any specific jumping Traits, but he does have a Body Trait called 'Powerfully built' 6d, which the player wishes to use as his Foundation Trait – the main Trait he's going to use to win the Challenge. The player can also use up to two more Traits to act in support. The player is desperate and picks out a Soul Trait 'Wary' 3d and a Mind Trait 'Look for danger' 4d. After a player description of what Lorth is attempting, which involves warily moving down the edge of the crevasse looking for positions to jump from, he picks out what looks the best location and, using his powerfully built physique, launches himself over the crevasse.

The Foundation Trait gives the player 6d in their hand. The Navigator is generous and allows both the supporting Traits to be used (she might have allowed only one or neither of them). The two supporting Traits add a total of +2d to the player's total, taking this up to 8d. However, the Navigator decides that the Foundation Trait isn't an exact match for the needs of the Challenge, though she can see why it has been chosen, and increases the Difficulty of the attempt by +1d. In Wordplay, any increase in Difficulty adds to the opposing force's dice. So the Difficulty to jump the crevasse is now 7d.

Other factors could be thrown in to make things easier or more awkward for the character. Remember, the game is about using description to try and get the best circumstances for your character. Positive circumstances can give between 1 and 4 dice into your hand. Bad circumstances (a blustery wind perhaps?), add between 1 and 4 dice to the Difficulty. Equipment, if useful, also adds bonus dice.

The character could, possibly, invoke a Goal. If the Challenge is tied closely to one of the character's predefined Goals, they can get bonus dice. Let's assume this visceral Challenge doesn't get any more complicated.

Dice are thrown. 8d for the player and 7d for the crevasse.

Crevasse scores: 1,3,3,3,4,5,6 = 4 successes.

Lorth scores: 1,1,1,5,5,5,6,6 = 7 successes.

Lorth is safely over the crevasse. Let's see if the orcs follow?!

With Single Roll Challenges you can frame the scene up front by describing the outcome of success and failure. Had he failed, perhaps Lorth was left part way down the other side, clinging on and with a new Damage Trait of 'Wrenched Shoulder' 1d – this adds to the Difficulty of all Body based Challenges until healed!



WHEN TO USE ONE ROLL CHALLENGES

The One Roll Challenge has the advantage of being simple and quick to resolve, with outcomes agreed up front. Some Navigators' style of running games may mean that they choose to control the outcomes of the Challenge by keeping them secret until the end. Experiment with what works for you, however be sure that the players know what the dice roll means before dice are hurled onto the table.

One Roll Challenges are very quick to use, focusing on the outcomes and the description of the players taking part. Players whose characters face an outcome of death, insanity or being permanently outcast may want to put more game time into the resolution of this key event in the game. If that's the case, then those Challenges may be better resolved through Multi-Roll Challenges, which are described later.

ONE ROLL BUT TWO CHALLENGES

What if the Navigator and a player want to instigate different Challenges that may, or may not, lead to different sorts of outcomes? For example, the Navigator's latest terrifying monstrosity shambles into the story to challenge the hapless player to a tentacle slapping contest. However, the player is far more interested in seeing his character run away and escape at great speed. Is this a combat Challenge or a speed running Challenge?

The Navigator assesses if it is possible for the two Challenges to happen at the same time. If they can then there are three ways that you can handle this:

1. One Roll

Each character can use their Foundation Trait and describe what they are doing. A hand of dice is built for each side. Outcomes are based on the collision between the actions that the opponents are taking in the Challenge. Once the outcomes are agreed for the winner and loser of the Challenge, each opponent can roll their dice and see who has the most successes. In the example above, the monstrosity makes a 'tentacle slapping' roll and the player uses his best 'running away' Trait. If the monstrosity wins, the player character gets a good slapping. If the player wins, their character manages to get away without a scratch.

2. Two Rolls

Sometimes, what the Navigator and player would like the Challenge to be are so at odds with one another that it is difficult to use a One Roll resolution and still make sense of what is going on. Instead, break things down into separate Challenges. The Navigator assesses which of the two Challenges will take place first - this will either be dictated by story logic or by the side with the highest Foundation Trait. Resolve the first Challenge and, depending on the result, the second Challenge is then undertaken.

In the example above, the Navigator may decide that the character must face the monstrosity in a combat Challenge, using appropriate Traits, before trying an 'escape' Challenge.

3. Both Challenges happen with No Roll of the Dice

If both sides are adamantly seeking outcomes from different Challenges at the same time, whatever the opposition is doing, then both sides simply achieve their



outcome without a Challenge and dice roll. This needs to be carefully adjudicated by the Navigator, especially if there are serious consequences to either side. However, as long as everyone understands what is happening, the Navigator can rule on the overall outcome without the need for a Challenge.

GROUP ONE ROLL CHALLENGES

What happens if two groups, rather than two individuals, are opposing each other for a Challenge? How do you keep track of everyone's outcomes – and keep things simple with a One Roll Challenge? In this case, all of the characters involved on each side are bound by the agreed outcomes of the Challenge.

Pick one character on each side to act as the leader. Other characters will also roll dice to add to their leader's total successes by describing how they use one of their Traits to help. The number of dice they provide to the leader depends on the level of their contributing Trait.

Friendly characters use the 'help from friendly characters' rule in *Building Your Hand of Dice* (see page 37).

Characters may also provide a special equipment bonus in the Challenge if it is an extraordinary item that materially affects the Challenge.

The leader creates their own hand of dice as usual, using all the options available to them.

If the relative weight of numbers on each side is important then the side that outnumbered the other gets an additional circumstantial bonus:

- Outnumber opponent's side +2d
- Outnumber opponent's side by more than 2:1 +4d

Each leader rolls their dice. All contributing characters on their side roll their own dice to support their leaders. Add together all the successes on each side. Each player can apply Nudges to their own dice if they wish (page 45). The Winning side is the one with the most successes. They have achieved their desired outcome. The losing side must all face the outcome consequences and receive any appropriate Damage Traits (Damage Traits are covered in the *Outcomes* chapter on page 58).

PAIRING OFF

In combat Challenges, if possible, the Navigator may choose to pair-off opponents and have them each roll their hand of dice against each other. Therefore everyone gets to roll and individual victories are assessed. Of course, this means that members of each opposing group will win their own Challenges but won't necessarily decide an overall group win. The overall result of the Challenge will be interpreted by the Navigator based on the number of successful Challenges on each side.



Using Multi-Roll Challenges

Multi-Roll Challenges follow all the guidance given in One Roll Challenges. The main difference is that the outcome may not be decided on just one roll of the dice. It may take several rolls from everyone to find out who the Challenge winners are. It's worth noting that Multi-Roll challenges come into their own in two circumstances:

- When the Challenge has an outcome that risks removing the player character permanently from play (death, banishment, planar shift, terminal embarrassment, unrecoverable destitution or despair).
- The Navigator or player wishes to provide emphasis to the Challenge and allow use of tactics and the option of switching Traits in order to succeed.

The challenge is set-up exactly as described in One Roll Challenges and an overall outcome is decided between the players. However, rather than deciding the final outcome on one roll of the dice, many dice rolls may be required to finish the Challenge. Think of it as a series of steps (Rounds), with each step building to bring the overall Challenge to a resolution. As such, Multi-Roll Challenges provide some extra structure to help make sense of what is going on.

ROUNDS

Each opportunity for all Challenge participants to roll the dice is called a Round. A Multi-Roll Challenge may have many Rounds until a winner is resolved. A Round has no set time period, varying depending on the nature of the Challenge – an elastic period of time unique to the current situation. In a combat Challenge, the duration of a Round will likely be a few frantic split seconds, whereas a Challenge to besiege a city might set each Round to be a month in length. Both the Navigator and the players participate in describing the actions in each Round.

INITIATIVE

The player considers what they would like to happen and what outcome would they like to attain? The player chooses a Foundation Trait, which is the main Trait that their character will use to achieve their desired outcome. The character with the highest Foundation Trait can take the Initiative and declares their Challenge first. In effect the player with the highest Foundation Trait defines what the Challenge will be about in the first Round. The character will start with the Trait's value in dice to meet the Challenge, whilst the opposing character, who does not have the Initiative, must use applicable Traits of their own to meet the Challenge of the Initiative holder. The offered Challenge may be what the opponent wanted anyway, however if it is not, the opponent will have to win the next Initiative in order to be able to define what the next Round's Challenge will be about. Each Challenge is resolved in Initiative order.

Example:

Tom has declared a combat Challenge this round. Lorth wants to swing his mighty axe and chop an ogre in half. Lorth has a Foundation Trait of 'Battle axe' 6. The ogre wishes no part of this and would rather try to escape using its 'Run cravenly away' Foundation Trait 7. In theory the ogre has the Initiative and can force Lorth into a decision as to whether he will accept the Challenge and try and catch the fleeing monster using some sort of movement



Trait. However, the Navigator rules that the unlucky ogre is too close to Lorth to easily break into an escape and must therefore do something about the axe attack this round. If the axe is successfully evaded, the Navigator may allow the ogre to try to escape in the following round.

A character that has the Initiative may keep it if they have 'Momentum' (see below).

FINISHING A ROUND

When the Round is complete the Challenge is over. The Navigator and players reflect on the outcome of the Challenges in that Round and re-assess what all the characters wish to do in the next Round. The Navigator may restrict any changes in the nature of the Challenge between Rounds if she is not persuaded by a player's proposal. She may decide that the current declared Challenge cannot be switched and needs to be fully resolved first. A character with Momentum can dictate what the next Round's Challenge will be about, though the Navigator always has final say (see below).

VICTORY, OUTCOMES AND MOMENTUM

As with Single Roll Challenges, both sides roll for their number of successes. The value of each side's rolls are compared and the character with the highest number of successes wins. The difference between his successes and his opponent's successes is described as the Victory Level. The Victory Level is checked on the *Outcome Table* (see page 58) to see what has happened that Round.

The Outcome Table provides a suggested level of damage to the losing side. A Damage Trait is immediately given to the loser, which will hamper them in subsequent Rounds and beyond. This setback should be supplemented with a colourful description of what actually happened.

If the winner scores two or more successes than their opponent, they have *Momentum* in this Challenge and have either gained or regained the Initiative. This enables them to decide whether the next Round will be the same sort of Challenge or a new one with different outcomes, using different Foundation Traits; e.g. a change from a fighting Challenge to a running away Challenge. The two characters will oppose each other in this new Challenge in the next Round. Initiative can fluctuate as opposing characters win Challenges over the course of the Multi-Roll Challenge.

If the number of successes are the same or only one more, then both sides can either continue with the current Challenge or each may declare a new Challenge, calculating Initiative based on the highest Foundation Trait as described above.

Rounds continue until one character is defeated and both sides agree to finish the Challenge, thereby describing the final outcome. The level of defeat is always dictated by the Outcome Table.

If a character wins a Round with a Victory Level of 7, they automatically win the Challenge and knock their opponent out. What this means depends on the nature of the Challenge. If it is a deadly fight then the loser may have been killed. If it is a cake making competition then the Navigator may simply pass the loser a '*your cakes*



taste like sawdust 2d' Damage Trait when compared to the winner's gastronomic brilliance.

Here is a summary of the steps to Multi-Roll Challenges:

1. Each opposing roll of the dice is regarded as a Round.
2. A Round has no set time period and will vary depending on the nature of the Challenge.
3. If different sides want different sorts of Challenges, the highest Foundation Trait decides which Challenge will be completed first – they have the Initiative.
4. Both characters roll and compare the number of successes.
5. Nudges can alter the number of successes after the dice are rolled.
6. The one with the most successes wins the Round.
7. The number of successes greater than the opponent is the Victory Level.
8. The Victory Level is checked on the Outcome Table (detailed in the Outcome chapter). The loser must receive a Damage Trait.
9. The amount of BMS Damage appropriate for the Challenge may be set by the Navigator.
10. If the winner has a Victory Level of 2 or greater they have Momentum and are able to keep or gain the Initiative, deciding on the Challenge for the next Round.
11. The next Round may be the same sort of Challenge or another one, with different outcomes, using different Foundation Traits.
12. The two characters will oppose each other in this new Challenge in the next Round (Initiative can fluctuate as opposing characters win Challenges).
13. If, at the end of a Round, it is a tie or the Victory Level was only 1, then both sides can continue with the current Challenge or declare a new one.
14. Rounds continue until one character or side is defeated, or when both sides are happy that the Challenge has been logically concluded, with the final outcome being described. The level of defeat is dictated by the Outcome Table.
15. If a character wins a Round with a Victory Level of 7, they automatically win the Multi-Roll Challenge.

The Outcome Table and Damage are covered in the following Outcomes Chapter.

GROUP MULTI-ROLL CHALLENGES

In Multi-Roll Challenges all group members act as individuals with their own dice to try and achieve their own outcomes. There could be a range of different Body, Mind and Soul Challenges being carried out each Round. The Navigator and players need to arbitrate in order to make sense of the particular Challenge being undertaken at any one point in time.

Challenges in a Round are carried out in the order of Initiative – calculated from the highest Foundation Trait. If there is a tie, the Challenges happen at the same time.

An example Multi-Roll Challenge is found in the Outcomes Chapter on page 61.



Challenges – A Summary

Challenges are the means to drive the story forward, test the player characters and heighten the tension and uncertainty around the gaming table. Challenges are what makes *Wordplay* a game rather than simply a collective storytelling experience.

Here is a summary of the key points introduced in this chapter:

- Challenges are used at points of tension in the story, when the outcome is uncertain and where events will have consequences that will influence both the direction of the story and the player characters involved.
- Players seek to amass as many six sided dice as *Wordplay* allows them, to give them the best chance to win the Challenge.
- Each six sided die can grant a number of successes when thrown.
 - A result of 1-3 (or a die which has fallen off the table) gives zero successes.
 - A result of 4-5 gives one success.
 - A result of 6 gives two successes.
- Count up all the successes on the dice to determine who has won the Challenge.
- Apply Nudges if the player wishes.
- In the Building your Hand of Dice section the various ways players can gain dice are explained. These include:
 - Picking your most relevant and important Trait. This is your Foundation and gives you a number of dice equal to the value of the Trait.
 - Two further Traits can provide supporting dice.
 - Appropriate equipment can provide bonus dice.
 - Positive circumstances give between 1 and 4 dice.
 - Friends can use one of their Traits to support a friend in a Challenge.
 - Goals can be invoked up to three times in a session. Invoking a goal provides extra dice, however failure will lead to Doubts.
 - Good player descriptions provide extra dice at the behest of the Navigator.
 - An opponent's Flaw can also provide helping dice.
 - Negative factors provide dice to the opposing force in the Challenge.
- Scale provides a guide for when two opposing forces are significantly mismatched. The three scales are Size, Speed and Power Domain.
- Scale Effect is rated in numbers of scale bonus dice which are added to your Hand of Dice.
- Scale bonus dice from Supporting Traits are halved and rounded down, whereas scale bonus dice from Foundation Traits are used in full.
- Before a Challenge is resolved, everyone agrees what they want the outcome to be.
- Challenges can reflect any duration of game time.
- Three methods of resolving Challenges are provided. Any of them can be used as suits the group:



- A **No Roll Challenge** dispenses with the need for dice. The Navigator decides what the outcome will be and tells the players.
 - A **Single Roll Challenge** has each side or player roll the dice once. The side or player with the most successes wins and achieves their outcome.
 - A **Multi-Roll Challenge** allows a Challenge to take more than one dice roll to resolve.
-
- In Single Roll Challenges that involve two opposing groups, one dice roll can be made for each group. Each group picks a leader who builds their hand of dice and gets help from other members of the group, who also throw their helping dice. All members of the group share the same outcome.
 - Multi-Roll Challenges introduce Rounds. A Round is an elastic segment of time where each player can roll the dice once. The outcome of each Round is determined before moving onto the next Round.
 - Characters that score at least two or more successes than the opposition not only win the Round but also gain Momentum, allowing them to dictate what the next Round's Challenge will be about.



Outcomes

Every Challenge will have an outcome as described in each of the suggested Challenge methods. More often than not there will be a winner and a loser. Occasionally there will be a tie. Outcomes will have a direct impact on the shape of the shared narrative, driving it in new and possibly unexpected directions. This chapter provides detail on what impact these outcomes can have on a character, detailing Damage and its effect in play.

Winners and Losers

The player that rolls the highest number of successes is either the winner of the Challenge in a One Roll Challenge or winner of the Round in a Multi-Roll Challenge.

The Outcome Table may be used as a way of determining the relative victory and defeat of the sides involved. If the Outcome Table is being used, the number of successes higher than the Difficulty is called the Victory Level. The Outcome Table gives information on what happens for each Victory Level. Victory Levels and the Outcome Results Table are central to the resolution of Multi-Roll Challenges, however they also act as a guide for No Roll and Single Roll Challenges where the outcome may simply be narrated by the Navigator rather than referring to the Table.

If both sides get the same number of successes the Challenge it is resolved as a tie. Ties will favour the side with the highest Foundation Trait. If Foundation Traits are also tied, the Challenge's defender, if there is one, is considered to have won a minor victory. For other situations, consider the circumstances and general thrust of the story in order to determine how the tie affects the situation. In some cases, a tied result may necessitate a new Challenge in order to reach a clear conclusion.

More usually, Challenges have winners and losers. Once you know what the Victory Level is, you can refer to the *Outcome Results Table* overleaf to see the effect. The first two columns provide information on the level of the winner's victory. The rest of the columns detail the nature of the defeat inflicted on the loser.

TABLE KEY

Victory: The description of the Victory Level

BMS Damage Traits: The loser suffers Damage (space exists on the character sheet for the player to create new Damage Traits as appropriate).

Losers are usually Damaged in the BMS category from which their Foundation Trait was taken from. The Damage is used as a negative factor in any subsequent Challenges they may face where they use a Foundation Trait from that category.



Penalties are also cumulative in each category – two Body ‘Hurt’ Damage Traits would give the Difficulty or opponent a total of +2d in all Challenges where the character uses a Body Foundation Trait. However, two Body ‘Hurt’ Damage Traits do not become one ‘Damaged’ Trait, they remain two separate ‘Hurt’ level Traits.

Natural Recovery: How long it takes in favourable conditions for the character to be healed from that level of Damage. The example durations given are for physical Damage incurred through physical misadventure or mortal combat. Favourable circumstances will vary slightly depending on whether it is Body, Mind or Soul Damage.

Difficulty to heal: This Difficulty is used when Mundane or Magical Traits are used in a Challenge to heal the character. Even Complete defeat may be healed by dramatic action, magic or super-advanced technology.

OUTCOME RESULTS TABLE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY	BODY, MIND OR SOUL DAMAGE TRAITS	NATURAL RECOVERY	DIFFICULTY TO HEAL
1	Knife edge	Scratch: No lasting effect, but the Difficulty is at +1d to the next roll.	Straight away or after the next roll.	Easy 3d
2-3	Minor	Hurt: 1d BMS Damage Trait.	End of the session or one week ‘in game’ time.	Routine 6d
4-5	Major	Damaged: 2d BMS Damage Trait.	Two sessions or one month in game time.	Challenging 9d
6	Emphatic	Incapacitated: 3d BMS Damage Trait, plus immediately knocked out of the Challenge.	Three sessions or three months in game time.	Exacting 12d
7+	Complete	Navigator may decide that the character has received such grievous damage that they should be permanently removed from play.	Navigator determines length of healing time (if any).	Audacious 18d

Defeat

When defeated in a Challenge the level and effect of that defeat is either determined by the agreed outcome in One Roll Challenges or by the opponent’s Victory Level on the Outcomes Table for Multi-Roll Challenges.

In *Wordplay* there are five main levels of defeat that are described by the generic titles: Scratch, Hurt, Damaged, Incapacitated and Removed from play. The fifth level, Removed from play, signifies that the character has been so badly hurt in the Challenge that there is a danger that they will have to be removed from play



completely. If the Navigator decides that this is the case then it is time for the player to generate a new character. These defeat levels are listed on the Outcome Results Table.

When receiving Damage, the player creates a new Damage Trait description and also notes the associated value. This value is added to the Difficulty of further Challenges that uses Foundation Traits drawn from that category.

Some example Trait descriptions follow, grouped by severity and BMS category.

SCRATCH

This is just a relatively minor irritation. It isn't generally necessary to actually write down Scratch level Damage Traits because they only last for a short amount of game time –generally up to the next dice roll by the player or after a Navigator defined period of in game time.

For completeness, here are some example Scratch Traits:

Body: 'Tis but a scratch', 'Pulled muscle', 'Bruised'

Mind: 'Distracted', 'Disturbed thoughts', 'Slightly uncertain', 'Strange dream'

Soul: 'Slightly embarrassed', 'Cross', 'Rather put out'

HURT

This is serious damage that impairs the performance of the character. Each Hurt Trait has a rating of 1d, which is added to any Difficulty or opponent's hand of dice where the character uses a Foundation Trait from the category that has the Hurt Trait.

Body: 'Bad gash', 'Badly pulled muscle', 'Sprained ankle', 'Weeping sores'

Mind: 'Confused', 'Perplexed', 'Diverted'

Soul: 'Saddened', 'Angry', 'Emotional', 'Upset', 'Picked upon'

DAMAGED

More serious damage that further impairs the performance of the character.

These Traits are rated at 2d each.

Body: 'Gaping wound', 'Torn muscle', 'Smashed ankle', 'Broken rib'

Mind: 'Unhinged', 'Lost and confused'

Soul: 'Depressed', 'Incandescent', 'Speechless', 'Isolated'

INCAPACITATED

When receiving an Incapacitated level of Damage the character is immediately knocked out of the Challenge. They have been seriously damaged and will take some time to recover. If the opponent's Victory Level is above 6, it could be that the character has been permanently removed from the game – this tends to happen in combat and other

Only when faced with grim and bloodthirsty opponents or the most mind wrenching of horrors, or the most desperate and dangerous of social situations, would the Navigator utilise the full effect of the defeat on the Outcome Table...



dangerous situations, but can also happen if the character has lost a loved one or has witnessed great horrors.

Each of these Traits are rated at 3d.

Body: *'Unconscious', 'Ripped muscle', 'Pulped ankle', 'Smashed ribs'*

Mind: *'Insane', 'Completely lost and introverted'*

Soul: *'Suicidal', 'Seething rage', 'Banished and reviled'*

All BMS Damage has a cumulative effect on the character. If a character receives two 'Hurt' Body defeats then all Challenges using Body Traits add +2d to the difficulty.

Players are allowed to use a Trait either as support to themselves or to help another character where the supporting Trait is from a BMS category that has Damage Traits associated with it. However, in this case, first reduce the supporting Trait by the amount of associated Damage before calculating the number of dice that it is going to provide in support.

A good rule of thumb is that when the number of Damage Traits in a category equals or exceeds the highest Trait in that category, the character is effectively out of the game until healed...

Example:

Dom's character wishes to use 'Scan surroundings for danger' 6d (Mind Trait) in order to help a friend. Ordinarily this would give him two dice to help his friend. However, he is currently suffering from a 'Mesmerised by Sula the dancing girl' 1d Mind Damage Trait. This damage reduces his 'Scan surroundings for danger' to 5d for the purposes of supporting a friend. A 5d supporting Trait only provides one die.

Putting a cap on Defeat

Often a Navigator will put a cap on the level of the defeat. For example, if a character emphatically manages to hide from an opponent with a Victory Level of 6, it is unlikely to drive the seeker insane! Rather, the Navigator may decide to penalise the seeker either with a Mental Scratch signifying that they just have the feeling that something or someone is "out there" or maybe with a Hurt (1d) to signify that the seeker has become confused and diverted by this sneaky opponent that they are tracking.

Only when faced with grim and bloodthirsty opponents or the most mind wrenching of horrors, or the most desperate and dangerous of social situations, would the Navigator utilise the full effect of the defeat on the Outcome Table. It is always important to consider the outcomes that may have been agreed at the start of a Challenge and use them to guide the type and severity of the level of any defeat.

Cumulative Damage

All BMS Damage is cumulative within the appropriate category. There could come a point where a character has received so many Damage Traits in a particular category that they'll struggle to win any Challenges



that use a Foundation Trait from that category. Is the character effectively out of the game as if they had succumbed to a Complete defeat? Possibly. That's a decision that needs to be taken by the Navigator in discussion with the player. The player character may simply need to be rested and healed for a while before they can return as an active participant at the heart of the story. In *Wordplay*, such healing doesn't take a long period of time, so characters can always come back from the brink death if the story warrants it. Remember though, the Navigator has the final decision.

A good rule of thumb is that when the number of Damage Traits in a category equals or exceeds the highest Trait in that category, the character is effectively out of the game until healed.

An example Multi-Roll Challenge with Outcomes

Tom is playing Lorth, who finds himself out of his depth in the city state of Trelor on the southern Tremallion Plain. Sally is playing Billi, a barbarian who knows only the way of the sword and is ill suited to city life. In a dark alleyway they are confronted by three inhuman assassins from the Order of The Grey Lord. Elaine, the Navigator, decides this will be a Multi-Roll Challenge and introduces it:

Elaine: *The figures move towards you out of the shadows at great speed. A glint of a blade from one betrays their intent. What do you want to do?*

Tom: *In a blur of motion, Lorth readies his axe and balances himself for the exchange!*

Sally: *I fade left and ready my sword.*

Elaine: *A combat Challenge it is then, at least for this round. The assassins have five dice in Swordsmanship and are using their 'Strike from shadows' and 'Heart of ice' Traits. With equipment, that puts each figure on ten dice.*

Tom: *Lorth has six dice in Battle Axe. He is going to use his 'Fearless in battle' and 'Spot opponent's weakness' Traits. With equipment, that puts me on ten dice too. Lorth crouches ready like a feral creature, eyeing his opponent carefully, ready to spring at the right moment to cut it down. Er, you did say "it" didn't you?*

Elaine: *Nice description. Have another die.*

Tom: *That puts me on eleven dice! Ace.*

Sally: *Billi has Broadsword at six dice. He will be using his 'Fearsome war cry' and 'Brute strength', both at five dice. These each grant +1 dice bonus. His equipment grants him a further two dice. I am on ten dice. He bellows an enormous battle cry at the figures coming towards him and braces himself with brutish strength to cut them down!*

Elaine: *You're both on form tonight. You can have another die for your description.*

Sally: *Great, that's eleven dice for me too.*

Elaine: *Billi has two of the assassins attacking him. This gives them both an extra +1d bonus as they outnumber you.*



Sally: *I know no fear.*

Elaine: *We'll see. Roll the dice!*

Tom: *Yes! Nine successes.*

Sally: *Not bad, I get eight successes.*

Elaine: *I'm going to roll once for the two shadowy figures on Billi and once for the figure against Lorth. First the one attacking Lorth. No! Only five successes – that gives you a Victory Level of 4, which is a Major victory, giving your opponent a 'Damaged 2d' Damage Trait (Elaine has memorised the Outcomes Table). Your axe smashes into his sword and slides down into his leg, cutting deeply. He has 'Deep bloody slash to the right thigh 2d', a Body Damage Trait.*

Elaine: *Right, now Billi. Your opponents each get six successes. You also beat them with a Victory Level of 2. That's a Minor victory, they both take a Hurt Damage Trait and you have the Momentum to dictate next round's Challenge.*

Sally: *Billi's blade slices through his assailants, catching both with vicious cuts. Billi jumps back and readies his guard.*

Elaine: *Right, they each have 'Vicious cut 1d' damage. That all took only a few heartbeats of time. It's the next Round now. You both have the Initiative and Momentum as you had two or more successes than your opponents. It's up to you what the next Round will be about. What do you want to do?*

Tom: *I want to press home my advantage. I'm looking to put this opponent out of the fight, but I'd now like to capture him alive if at all possible!*

Sally: *I'll take Lorth's lead and spring forward with my blade held high for a killing blow.*

Elaine: *I think the assassin against Lorth would want to escape but he must face whatever Challenge you are wanting to set. So, he is going to continue with his Swordsmanship as his Foundation Trait, but also use 'Heart of ice' and 'Sneer in the face of danger' Traits. He remains on ten dice. A hissing sound erupts from your opponent, startling you for a moment. You wonder what sort of bizarre creature you are facing.*

Elaine: *Billi's two assailants wish to redouble their efforts, hoping their numeric advantage will see them through.*

Tom: *I shall use the same Traits again. I wheel round my wounded opponent, looking to gain an advantage due to its injury. I'm on ten dice.*

Elaine: *Good tactical thinking, for which I'll give you one dice. You also gain two further dice thanks to your opponent's Damage Trait of 2d.*

Tom: *Excellent, I'm on thirteen dice!*

Sally: *I'll keep my Traits, aiming to use my brutish strength to cut down the enemy.*



Tom: *I get nine successes.*

Elaine: *I only get five. You gain another Major victory. I judge this is enough for you to succeed in your intent. The opponent takes another 'Damaged' Damage Trait at 2d. Your axe cuts deeply into its sword arm, forcing it to drop the blade and crumple helplessly at your feet.*

Sally: *I get eight successes.*

Elaine: *I only have five again. That's a further Minor victory giving them another Hurt Damage each. They stagger back nursing their wounds, unable to find away through your arcing blade. As they look round they see Lorth appear from the shadows, evening up the odds. You still have the Momentum so can define the Challenge for next Round. What's it to be?*

Tom: *Have a guess...*

Healing

Natural Recovery

Damage can be healed over time, through natural recovery. Damage Traits can be removed from a character either after a number of game sessions or over a period of time in the game, whichever occurs first. The period of in game time you select will vary according to the type of Damage inflicted – fatigue will recover quicker than physical injury for example (see Environmental Challenges for some examples on page 66).

Whichever time period is decided upon, Damage Traits will reduce in effect over a number of game sessions if the in game time has not been completed. Usually, a Damage Level Trait will be at 2d for the game session in which it took place, at 1d for the next game session and will be removed completely the session after that. Incapacitated Traits take three game sessions to be completely removed. Reduce any outstanding Damage Traits at the start of the game session.

Some common sense will need to be applied here. If there are a number of consecutive game sessions covering a very short period of in game time, the Navigator may decide not to reduce the effect of Damage Traits, even though game sessions have been completed.

Example:

Lorth suffers a Hurt level Body Damage. He now has a 'Gashed shoulder' Damage Trait rated at 1d. He will have this until the end of the game session. At the beginning of the next session, the player can remove it from their character sheet. However, during the game session, Lorth rests for a week in a small isolated village. Once this is described the player can, at the Navigator's discretion, remove the Damage Trait due to natural healing.

Healing Traits

Rather than spending valuable game time waiting for a character to recover, healing Traits such as 'treat wound', 'counselling', or 're-arrange wardrobe', can be



used to reduce the level or immediately remove the Damage Trait. The base difficulty to heal Damage is also given in the Outcome Table. This Difficulty may be increased by circumstances at the Navigator's discretion. Player characters using their healing Traits can be supported by other characters.

Success in a healing Challenge always reduces the severity of the Damage Trait by one level, regardless of Victory Level.

- Scratches are immediately ignored and the character does not receive a +1d to the Difficulty on the next roll.
- Hurts become Scratches. The character suffers a 1d bonus to the Difficulty on their next roll using a Foundation Trait from that category, and then it is removed.
- Damaged becomes Hurt.
- Incapacitated becomes Damaged

Example:

Chantelle has suffered a Soul Hurt Trait 'Fashion disaster' 1d. Jefferson has 'High Street Shopping' at 5d. He adds in his 'Day time TV trivia' and 'Celebrity fashion knowledge' Traits to boost his dice to 7d. Checking the Outcomes Result Table, Chantelle's 'Fashion disaster' 1d Hurt is a 6 dice Challenge to heal. The Navigator rolls the dice and gets 3 successes, setting the Difficulty for Jefferson to beat. Jefferson scores an amazing 7 successes (in part due to two sixes). After only one day of flamboyant shopping, resulting in several new outfits, Chantelle wows the club crowd the following evening and removes the 'Fashion disaster' Trait from the Soul Damage section of her character sheet.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Body, Mind and Soul Damage Traits can be healed more quickly if the character is immersed in positive and affirming experiences, or finds themselves comfortably and skilfully being looked after. Perhaps the character is surrounded and supported by loved ones, in a high-tech hospital or in a particularly tranquil or even magical place? The Navigator can set a Trait value to such an experience or care setting and use that directly in a Challenge against the Damage, or to support other characters that are using healing Traits. In effect, the location and circumstances provide an 'equipment bonus' to the character that is actively trying to heal the injured character.

Example:

Lorth is wearied by the amount of carnage he has wrought in the name of glory. He has two Mind Hurt Traits: 'Reflecting on the faces of the dead' and 'Hearing the lamentation of women'. Unwittingly he has entered one of the faerie healing glades. The Navigator assigns a value of 7d to the magical healing glade. As the glade is magical (S4), the Navigator is using the Scale rules (see page 40), which will mean that it provides another 4 Scale dice putting the healing glade on 11d. Each Hurt Damage Trait is 6d to heal. Lorth's player rolls 6d for each of his Damage Traits and scores 3 and 1 successes respectively. The Navigator decides to roll once for the healing glade and apply the successes against each of the Hurt Traits. The Navigator rolls 6 successes, which is enough to overcome each of the Damage Traits. Both of the Hurt Damage Traits are immediately downgraded to mere Scratches.



HEALING BODY DAMAGE TRAITS

Body Damage Traits will have been created due to physical damage, be it through terrifying combat, disastrous accidents or other unavoidable physical calamity. Time and rest is the great healer for physical damage and this can be supported in the usual way by medical knowledge, drugs, science fiction regeneration devices and the wonders of magic. Use the examples below as a guide. They can be applied as supporting Traits or as Foundation Traits if that fits the moment better.

Example healing Traits: Faith healer, First aid, Physician, Set bones, Treat disease, Treat wounds.

Example favourable circumstances: Comfortable 4d, Drugs 8d, High Tech Hospital 7d, Well looked after 5d.

Example magic and other powers: Fountain of the healing goddess 10d, Heal wound spell 7d, Potion of healing 8d, Regeneration tank 9d.

HEALING MIND DAMAGE TRAITS

The mind is complex, fragile, prone to confusion, doubt and uncertainties, always seeking to understand and interpret the external stimuli that surround it. Player characters will receive mental Damage Traits when they encounter confusing mysteries and blasphemous monstrosities. Whenever the ordered world of the mind is assaulted, it may become damaged, unhinged, broken.

Once again, time plays a part in restoring sanity and clarity of thought to a person. Other healing Traits and circumstance ideas are below:

Example healing Traits: Comedian, Counselling, Explain clearly, Love, Meditation, Psychiatrist.

Example favourable circumstances: Comfortable 4d, Country retreat 5d, Drugs 6d, Psychiatric hospital 3d.

Example magic and other powers: Dream magic 7d, Mind healing spell 7d, Soothing veil dance of the healing goddess 10d.

HEALING SOUL DAMAGE TRAITS

The social and spiritual part of a person is under constant challenge and assault. The need to fit in to fast moving societal groups, the loneliness of modern life, the manoeuvring of politics and the drudgery of daily life can all take their toll on a person. Player characters will receive Soul Damage Traits when their view of society and people are challenged, when they are being excluded by a social group or their very moral fibre or relationships are being confronted and challenged.

Example healing Traits: Enlightened confidence, Etiquette, Image consultant, Love, Moral philosophy, Party on dude, Reorganise wardrobe, Welcoming.

Example favourable circumstances: Fashionable clothes 4d, Good friendship 7d, Uplifting experiences 5d.

Example magic and other powers: Honoured by the gods 7d, Soul cleansing ritual 7d.



Environmental Challenges

With all Challenges and outcomes now described, we are going to revisit Challenges one more time to see how easily they can be applied. There are no new rules here, but simply a summary of the principles of Challenges and Outcomes applied to a wide range of potential situations.

Environmental Challenges are used when the Navigator wants to pit the player character against a range of different external forces, testing their mettle and fortitude. They are almost always One Roll Challenges. Example environmental Challenges would include:

- **Fatigue** – laden with heavy armour or high tech weaponry and then physically pushed to the limit.
- **Shock** – facing blasphemous horrors and lurking terrors that claw away at the mind.
- **Morale** – under continuous fire or under heavy pressure - sucking away at the very soul.
- **The Elements** – wind, snow, heat, eldritch storms, lengthy bouts of horrible weather during the summer.

It is usually the Navigator who will call for a Challenge, though a player may choose to test their character against some element described in the story. The Challenge is given a Difficulty level depending on the activity described.

Examples:

Fatigue - A desperate fast paced race (Routine 6d).

Shock- Facing a horrific undead opponent (Routine 6d).

Morale – A long car journey with small children (Challenging 9d).

Morale – Under a lengthy barrage after a recent defeat (Difficulty 10d).

Elements – Exposed to a freezing blizzard for a full day (Challenging 9d).

Fatigue - A long combat scene (Difficulty 10d).

Shock- Facing an undead opponent that looks to be a loved relative (Exacting 12d).

Fatigue – Fighting in a lengthy pitched battle (Exacting 12d).

Players must choose an appropriate Foundation Trait to meet the Challenge. This could be anything from Body, Mind or Soul; denoting endurance, stamina, strength of character or similar qualities. As with all Challenges, the player can use up to two additional relevant Traits to support the character and look for helping dice from wherever they can. The Navigator can throw in additional circumstantial factors that either reduce or increase the Difficulty of the Challenge for the player character. Use 'Building Your Hand' as usual.



ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE OUTCOMES

Once the dice have been amassed, they are thrown and successes compared against the Difficulty. If the player gets a result equal to the Difficulty then their character is unaffected and has succeeded in the Challenge. If the Difficulty level is higher than the player’s number of successes, the result is checked on the standard Outcome Results Table (see page 58). Damage Traits are given suitable names and dice values as usual.

In terms of recovery, the Navigator can set any in game period of time that feels right before the Trait can be removed.

FATIGUE, SHOCK & MORALE OUTCOME EXAMPLES TABLE

VICTORY LEVEL	FATIGUE OUTCOME	FATIGUE RECOVERY	SHOCK OUTCOME	SHOCK RECOVERY	MORALE OUTCOME	MORALE RECOVERY
Knife edge	Out of breath	1 hour	Unnerved	3 hours	Shaken	3 hours
Minor	Tired	3 hours	Scared	8 hours	Dispirited	8 hours
Major	Exhausted	8 hours sleep	Horrified	2 days	Overwhelmed	1 week
Emphatic	Incapacitated	1 day and night of rest	Gibbering wreck	1 week	Broken	2 weeks
Complete	Removed from play	It’s all over	Removed from play	It’s all over	Removed from play	It’s all over

The number of sessions to downgrade the Damage and the Difficulty for healing Traits are stated in the standard Outcome table (see page 58).

Example:

Lorth has survived a lengthy and intense battle with a mountain troll. To complicate his lonely and precarious existence yet further, the Navigator asks for a Fatigue Challenge with a Difficulty of 10d. Lorth has ‘Powerfully built’ 6d and uses ‘Wear armour with ease’ 3d and ‘Fearless in battle’ 5d to provide a couple of helping dice for a total of 8d.

Lorth’s player rolls just three successes, while the Fatigue Challenge has five successes. The Fatigue Challenge has a Victory Level of two. This is a Minor Victory (Tired,) giving Lorth a 1d Fatigue Trait to add to the Difficulty to all Challenges until he can recover. This will take either three hours of game time rest or one game session. He also took a bad wound (‘Gaping sword gash’ Body Damage Trait at 2d) during the battle. Cumulatively, Lorth currently has 3d worth of Damage Traits for all Body related Challenges. Lorth is in big trouble!

Encumbrance

Encumbrance is a circumstantial penalty to characters in fatigue Challenges.

The Navigator and player may decide between them that a character is carrying enough to be regarded as encumbered. Typically this would be when a character is wearing heavy armour with little training or carrying a sizeable backpack. A character can either be light, medium or heavily encumbered:



ENCUMBRANCE	FATIGUE CHALLENGE DIFFICULTY INCREASE
Unencumbered	+0d
Light Encumbrance	+1d
Medium Encumbrance	+2d
Heavy Encumbrance	+4d

The level of encumbrance is negotiated between player and Navigator. The Equipment section gives some guidance about how to apply an encumbrance level to a character.

Character Experience

During campaign play, characters will grow through the experiences encountered in the game. This experience is given a point value, known as experience points, enabling players to spend them in order to improve and develop new character Traits.

Gaining experience

There are a number of ways that characters can gain experience points:

TURNING UP

A base of 1 to 5 experience points are awarded to each player character at the end of a game session. If the session played out was tough for the characters, the Navigator may elect to be more generous with this award. If there were few Challenges during the session or the Navigator wants the player characters to suffer a bit, then she may choose to not provide any experience points at all.

ENTERTAINING PLAY

The Navigator may elect to award further experience points for particularly entertaining play. Well described action in Challenges are already rewarded with extra dice, so this relates to an entertaining contribution to play. This can be demonstrated through a player's portrayal of their character or supportive play that allows other players to shine in the spotlight, or perhaps providing a signature moment of hilarity or wonder during the session.

Award 1 to 5 experience points.

Navigators may use these extra points to encourage a particular style of play, reward notable successes other than those found in Goals or even to encourage players whose character's are struggling in the game. The Navigator will seek to make this award once for as many players as possible each session; looking for the best in all the play around the table and spreading such awards around as equitably as possible.

The Navigator can, alternatively, give a number of extra experience points at the end of the session for the players to allocate between themselves. This pool of experience points equals a multiple of the number of players in the game. Usually



this would be two times the number of players, but the Navigator may feel more generous and multiply by three or more. The only rule here is that players must all decide and agree on how the points are allocated.

IN THE MIDST OF CHALLENGES

Optionally, the Navigator may choose to award further experience points to characters that have been involved in Challenges deemed critical to the session. Between 1 and 3 experience points can be awarded for participation in a Challenge. It doesn't matter whether the character won or lost, they all represent learning opportunities. In a session with many Challenges the Navigator may wish to cap the number of experience points awarded in the session.

INVOKING GOALS

Players can invoke their character's Goals up to three times per game session. If successful in the ensuing Challenge, they gain experience points equal to half the Foundation Trait (round up). See invoking Goals (page 38).

COMPLETING GOALS

A character that completes a goal will also receive a number of experience points. The suggested amounts are based on the Goal's story significance or difficulty to complete.

EXPERIENCE FROM GOALS TABLE

GOAL SIGNIFICANCE OR DIFFICULTY	EXPERIENCE
The goal has a negligible story impact or was very easy to achieve in one session.	1 Exp
The goal has a minor story impact or was difficult to achieve in one or more sessions.	3 Exp
The goal has a major story impact or was very difficult to achieve taking multiple sessions to complete.	10 Exp
The goal has a cataclysmic story impact or was extraordinarily difficult to achieve or was one of the character's defining long term goals.	20 Exp

PROVIDING FLAWS

If a player voluntarily gives a Flaw Trait bonus to their opponent they get experience points equal to the dice given, but only if they lose that dice roll.

Spending Experience

Experience points can be spent to improve an existing Trait or to create a new one at any time between or during a game session. Thus the number of experience points awarded directly affects the speed by which characters improve their Traits.

ADDING A NEW TRAIT

A new Trait can be added to a character sheet with the agreement of the Navigator at a cost of 2 experience points. The Trait needs to make sense to the story being played by the group and to the character that is being given it. A new Trait starts at the base value provided in the 'Experience and power level' section on page 20.



Usually this will be 3d.

A new Trait may be started at a higher level if the player and Navigator are in agreement. Usually this is either because the character already has a similar Trait which could give them a head start or that it has been agreed that the Trait is a hitherto unknown but important aspect of the character that needs to be expressed. The player still needs only spend 2 experience points.

Example:

Lorth has been given a mace. He has no Trait for this, however his player thinks that as a warrior, experienced with axes, he could legitimately start at 3d with it. The Navigator, generously, agrees. The player spends 2 experience points and now has Mace at 3d.

IMPROVING TRAITS

A player can spend experience points to improve their character's Traits. The number of points required to increase a Trait depends on its level.

TRAIT IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED EXPERIENCE TABLE

NEW TRAIT LEVEL WANTED	EXPERIENCE POINT COST
Between 3d and 5d	New level value in points
Between 6d and 8d	New level value x 1.5 (round up) in points
Between 9d and 11d	New level value x2 in points
12d	36 points

Example:

Lorth wishes to increase his Battle Axe Trait, which is in his Body category, is currently at 6d. To move to 7d requires eleven experience points (x 1.5, rounded up). To get to level 8d he will need to spend a further twelve experience points.

MORPHING TRAITS

Traits can change almost imperceptibly over time. As a character develops in light of experience, the nature of their already expressed Traits will subtly change. At the end of any game session a player can choose, or a Navigator can suggest, that one of a character's Traits should be re-written. Traits will usually keep their numeric value when morphed. This does not cost any experience points.

Part of the reason for this is that a player uses Traits actively to form part of the description of their character's actions in a Challenge. By morphing the description of Traits, those descriptions can stay fresh. When playing *Wordplay*, a thesaurus is an invaluable resource for building Traits and morphing them.

Example:

A character has 'Watchful' as a Mind Trait. At the end of a session a player changes this to 'Ever vigilant'. No real material change to the Trait; well not much, but a slight change in emphasis.



LOSING TRAITS

At any time, a player can request that they retire one of the character's Traits that is not being used or no longer appears relevant or appropriate. The group's story may take the character in new and unexpected directions. Loves could be lost, enemies could become firm friends and new experiences negate some of the Traits that initially defined the character.

Lost Traits are recorded on the character sheet alongside completed goals. Lost Traits are given a date when they were removed and a line of text to explain why. Lost Traits can be recovered from the back of the character sheet at the cost of 1 experience point and re-entered onto the front of the sheet if the story circumstance encourages this. The Trait recovers at one die less than the value it was when it was retired. Leave the Trait in the record of the lost Traits for reference.

Gaining Wealth

In many of the stories that will be played out at your gaming table player characters will have many opportunities to gain wealth through fair means and foul. Discovered treasure, promotion to a position of power, unexpected inheritance – anything could happen and probably will. As the wealth system is a convenient abstraction, the rules for acquiring wealth are also suitably open to easy application.

Characters are given a wealth level when first created. Typically this is derived from the profession they have selected, but could also be inferred from the Pre-play text or from a general discussion between player and Navigator. Characters could start the game extremely wealthy or completely destitute. What's really important is how this wealth, or lack of it, can be used to propel ideas for stories in the game.

Wealth levels can be gained temporarily. During a game session an uncovered sack of coins might provide +1 Wealth Level for two sessions. This increase in wealth level might be conditional, only applying to those characters that are at a certain level already.

Losing Wealth

Tragedy, foolishness, even a knowingly profligate lifestyle, can affect wealth levels during the course of a game. If the player wishes, or the story dictates, his character may lose wealth levels temporarily or permanently.

GAINING DEBT

Player characters may also acquire debt during play. Debt is allocated a Debt level in just the same way as Wealth. Depending on the story, the level of debt can add to Wealth levels too, as the character may have received a sizeable loan, allowing them to acquire more things or live out a more expensive lifestyle.

Over time, the Debt level will act as an increase to the Difficulty in acquiring equipment and living at the character's Wealth level. Debts need to be recovered and often have strings attached to them. Focus on this if it makes for an interesting story and drives forward the narrative in the game that you are playing.



Outcomes – A Summary

Challenges will have winners and losers. Winners get to progress their own stories in the direction they wanted, losers will be damaged, suffer setbacks and will have to find new ways to get themselves on the right track. The Outcome chapter details what winning and losing means in a *Wordplay* game.

- Outcomes are worth thinking about at the beginning of a Challenge. What do you want to achieve as an outcome of the Challenge? If you win you'll get what you wanted, if you lose you won't.
- In No roll and Single roll Challenges the outcome is discussed and agreed at the beginning of the Challenge.
- In Multi roll Challenges the overall outcome is expressed but the Outcome Table will provide the detail as to what happens in a Challenge.
- The Outcome Table is a guide only.
- If you gain more successes than your opponent, you win the Challenge.
- The amount you get more than your opponent is your Victory Level. The higher your Victory Level the better your success and the more damage you inflict on your opponent.
- At the Navigator's discretion, damage effects can be downgraded to reflect the winner's wishes and in line with the desired outcome.
- Damage is inflicted as Damage Traits on the losers Foundation Trait BMS category.
- Damage Traits provide bonus dice to the Difficulty or opposition in subsequent Challenges that use a Foundation Trait from the same BMS category.
- Each Damage Trait is tracked separately and is reduced by 1d at the beginning of each game session or for a period of time in the game.
- Damage Traits resist active healing attempts by challenging the healer.
- A successful healing Challenge downgrades the Damage Trait by one die.
- All sorts of environmental effects can Challenge a player character. Standard Outcome rules apply though recovery periods are negotiable depending on the type of damage inflicted.
- Experience points are collected by characters during play. They are used in campaign games by being spent to increase a character's Traits.
- Entertaining play around the table is rewarded with experience points.
- Optionally, Characters involved in sufficiently critical Challenges are rewarded with experience points.
- Invoking and completing Goals provides a character with additional experience points.
- Traits can also be changed (morphed) or removed to the Lost Traits section of the character sheet as the character changes over time.
- Wealth is a Trait like any other. It can increase or decrease depending on the development of the story.



Powers

Powers are special Traits that represent extraordinary abilities not available to regular people in the game. Powers provide characters with access to the supernatural realm and to the Scale rules (page 40). Game themes that wish to explore magical power, superheroes or strange mind powers will find Powers extremely useful.

The power available to the character could be something learnt, acquired by birth as a special talent or an affinity that came to the character due to an experience in the game story. Characters that have special powers have a defining special Power Trait that determines how powerful they are and directs the sort of powers the character has access to.

Powers when creating characters

Powers are often first encountered when creating a character. Any of the Four Ps can signpost that the character should be given supernatural powers. This chapter gives examples on how to structure these Traits and how to use them in the game.

If the Theme that you are playing or your particular character has no specific supernatural powers associated with them, this chapter need not be referred to.

Main Power Trait

The character takes one or more Main Power Traits that define the level of power that can be learnt. This Trait can be improved like any other. A character may gain one of these Traits as a consequence of selecting one of the People or Professions in a Theme. Perhaps the character's story in the Pre-play text points towards some kind of supernatural Power?

Some example Main Power Traits might be:

- Magical power
- Necromancy and wizardry
- Favoured of [insert uncompromising and interventionist deity name here]
- Mystic
- Awakened Telepath
- Shaman spirit talker

This Trait will be further defined by other Power Effect Traits that will sit beneath it. The Main Power Trait sets the upper dice level achievable for all other Power Effect Traits, representing the overall level of understanding and power of the character. It also defines how many dice you can start with in your Power Effect Traits.



A Magic Trait of up to 3d, for example, represents an absolute novice, who is just starting to make their way in understanding the magical arts. Once this mage has increased their Main Power Trait to Magic 7d or more, they are starting to gather phenomenal power and understanding of the secret ways of changing the world to their own will. This Main Power Trait defines how effective the character is when using other subordinate Power Effect Traits and usually acts as a helping Trait for the other various magical Power Effect Traits that the character might take.

Depending on the Theme, Main Power and Power Effect Traits are all on the *Magical scale* (see page 40).

POWER EFFECT TRAITS

In addition to the Main Power Trait the character will need Power Effect Traits that describe their powers. These are the Traits that are actually used when facing Challenges that test the character's magical power. As with all other Traits they can simply be described as desired. As a default, it is suggested that the character has a number of dice to spend on these Power Effect Traits equal to the Main Power Trait value x4 – note that this suggestion may well be overridden by a Theme. A starting Power that is added to a character, thanks to experience, will start at 3d and have four Power Effects also starting at 3d.

Thus a character that has the Wizard Main Power Trait would also have Power Effect Traits that allow the practical application of the Magic:

Example:

Wizard 6d (24 starting dice to apply to the initial Power Effect Traits).
Blast of eldritch power 6d, Fly 4d, Know the unknowable 4d, Minor cantrips 5d, Pool of floating light 5d.

The wizard may also choose useful Mundane Traits to help use these powers such as: Clear mind, Focus will, Research musty tomes, etc.

CREATING AN EFFECT

Creating a Power Effect is a Challenge like any other. A minimum number of successes are set by the Navigator depending on how impressive the desired effect is. The more powerful the effect desired, the greater the minimum number of successes required. Unless the user of the power achieves that minimum number of successes then the power will fail and achieve no effect at all. There might be an embarrassing spark or the sound of giggling, but no actual effect.

A guide to the minimum number of successes is determined by referencing the *Power Level Table* on page 75.

POWER TABLE

The *Power Level Table* provides a quick guide to the minimum number of successes a Power effect must achieve for it to be successful. Range, duration and area of effect are all provided as examples, though the Navigator may decide to use other aspects. Once an effect is described by the player it is given a Power level using the most powerful effect that it demands.



If the minimum number of successes is equalled or surpassed the effect comes into play. The Power wielding character may be required to succeed at a Payback Challenge, the Difficulty of which is defined by the number of successes achieved when creating the effect.

POWER LEVEL TABLE

MINIMUM NUMBER OF SUCCESSES	POWER LEVEL	RANGE OF EFFECT	DURATION OF EFFECT	AREA OF EFFECT	PAYBACK CHALLENGE
2	Weak	Immediate vicinity (10m)	Seconds	One person	2d
4	Minor	local area (50m)	Minutes	Small group	4d
6	Average	At range (100m)	Up to an Hour	Dispersed groups	6d
8	Major	At range (200m)	Hours	Large group	8d
10	Adept	In sight	Days	City wide	10d
12	Master	Beyond sight	Weeks	Province wide	12d
16	Cataclysmic	Light Years	Years	Planet wide	16d

Example:

A wizard wishes to project a ball of magical fire into a horde of advancing zombies using his Eldritch ball of fire Trait. The wizard uses the Foundation Trait of Eldritch ball of fire 6d, with two supporting Traits of Wizard 6d (his Main Power Trait) and Focus will 4d. In addition, he carries a stave of power focus, giving an equipment bonus of +2d. Thus he has eleven dice in total. The zombies happen to have a Trait called Vulnerable to fire 4d that the Navigator grants as a helping Trait to the wizard, upping his total to twelve dice.

The wizard is also operating at Scale 4 thanks to his magical power. This grants him an additional 4 dice against the zombies (see page 40). He is now on 16 dice!

The Navigator checks if there is anything particular about the Challenge that should be taken into account. In this case the area of effect is a small group and they are about 100 meters away. Checking the Power table the Navigator can see that the small group area effect requires a minimum of four successes and that the range requires a minimum of six successes. Unless the wizard scores at least six successes then the effect will fail.

The wizard unleashes his 16d ball of fire and scores nine successes. This is enough for the effect to come into play. The zombies can resist the effect and choose Relentless stagger as their Foundation Trait – they are simply going to shuffle through the raging ball of fire. In total they come up with eight dice. The Navigator decides to roll once and apply the result to each of the zombies. They manage only three successes, giving the wizard a victory level of 6 and an Emphatic Victory on the Outcome Table. Each of the zombies are allocated a 3d Body Damage Trait Scorched, smouldering and crispy.



Containing Power

In the example above the character has created an effect with nine successes, the player can decide how many of these successes they want to keep. Six were required for the effect to come in to play, so that is the minimum. The player can decide to keep between six and nine successes. This is called containing power. The more successes kept, the more powerful the effect and the harder it is to resist by the target, but it's up to the player how many successes they wish to keep and use to power the effect.

When a player wishes their character to wield one of their powers there is usually a price to pay for it. The nature of this payment and the frequency it has to be applied is determined by the Navigator and player when designing the power. The default expectation of *Wordplay* is that every time an effect is called into play the wielder of the power must immediately take a Payback Challenge. The Challenge Difficulty is equal to the number of successes achieved and kept by the power wielder. In the example above the wizard would be facing a 9d Payback Challenge as he decided to keep all nine successes. Scale does not apply to Payback Challenges.

The Foundation Trait used to resist this Payback Challenge can vary considerably depending on how the power is conceived. Does using the power physically drain or damage the user? Pick an appropriate Body Trait. Does the power drive the user towards the edge of sanity and back? Use a Mind Trait. Or maybe the power eats away at the user's will, gnawing at their moral fibre? Use a Soul Trait. A failure to meet the Payback Challenge will create a Damage Trait in the appropriate BMS category reflecting the risks associated with using the power. If the power is simply exhausting to use, the damage will be fatigue and reflected as a Fatigue Damage Trait applied to the Body category.

You may decide to allow the Main Power Trait to act as one of the helping Traits in the Payback Challenge. Other Traits and equipment may provide help to win the Payback Challenge.

If *Wordplay's* default Payback Challenge is too frequent or burdening to your game's vision of the power being used, then a Navigator may choose to only require a Payback Challenge when the number of successes kept is greater than the Foundation Trait used. In this way a power wielder who does not push their power successes beyond their Main Power Trait are able to contain it without risking any untoward effect.

Payback challenges are an optional feature of the game and can be used to fit the flavour of the theme that you are playing.

Resisting Powers

Power effects are resisted just like any other Challenge. If the effect is targeted at another character they will be able to choose some Traits to resist the effect on them. If the resisting character is also using a Power based Foundation Trait at the same level of scale as the power wielding attacker then no scale advantage will apply.

It could be argued in the previous example that the zombies Relentless stagger is Magical in nature, as the dead are not noted for their perambulatory ability. Should



they be on the same scale as the ball of fire? Possibly, but the Navigator decides that a raging ball of magical fire is precisely not what the zombies are equipped to cope with, so chose to have them operate on the Mundane scale.

Creating Powers

Creating Powers in *Wordplay* is no different from imagining any other part of the game world that you play in. Imagine and collect a library of Traits that describes how the Power works, what forces influence it, what supports its existence and what the cost is to those that wield it. That's all you need to do.

Here are a series of suggested steps to creating Powers in your game.

THE MAIN POWER TRAIT

The Main Power Trait acts as a top level Trait, defining the sort of power that the character has and sets the upper limit to the number of dice that any associated powers can have. You could decide to only require one Main Power Trait for the character. This is especially useful if you are following the *Less is More* option for Traits (see page 18).

Example Main Power Traits:

Acolyte, Alchemist, Druid, Elementalist, Enchanter, Hag, Illusionist, Mage, Mutant, Mystic, Necromancer, Numerologist, Priest, Psion, Shaman, Sorcerer, Super, Telepath, Warlock, Wizard.

A character that wishes to have power over the recently dead decides to have a Main Power Trait called Necromancer – if Less is More then that's all the character will need.

Necromancer 6d

If Variety is the Spice of life, the character will take additional Power Effect Traits that explain precisely what the character can do:

Main Power Trait: Necromancer 6d

Power Effect Traits: Create and control corpse 6d, Descend into the underworld 5d, Rot the living 4d, Sense death 5d, Speak to the dead 4d.

In this example Power Effect Traits cannot have more dice than the Main Power Trait that they belong to. The Main Power Trait Necromancer acts as a helping Trait for the powers that belong to it.

DESCRIBING POWERS

Powers Effects are placed on a character sheet. The Navigator should keep in mind the Power Table when thinking of what the power can do and the minimum number of successes required to achieve it.

If you are developing a series of magic powers these could be described as spells. If you are adapting magic that is already described in another roleplaying game,



simply use the spell description as the Trait name and assign a minimum number of successes to successfully achieve the effect described in the other game.

A greater number of successes achieved by the Power user over the minimum number required to create the effect could be used in a number of ways:

- To make the effect more Difficult for an unwilling recipient to resist.
- To create a more impressive looking, wider area or longer lasting effect than expected.

Or

- Extra successes could have no material effect on the game.

A character who takes the Wizard Main Power Trait might look a bit like this:

Wizard 6d

Ball of light 4d, Blast of energy 5d, Cantrips 5d, Float about for a bit 3d, Healing hands 4d, Speak into the mind 3d.

COMPLEMENTARY CHARACTER TRAITS

*...the dead
are not noted
for their
perambulatory
ability...*

A character that chooses to have a Special Power can also take a series of complementary Mundane Traits that both reflect the sort of person that would take that power and provide helping Traits that can be used when building the hand of dice in Challenges.

Example:

Continuing with the necromancer example, a character may take complementary Traits such as:

Appreciate beautiful putrefaction, Bone lore, Death dance, Deathly pallor, Intimidating when wearing black, Recite the Book of the Dead, Shallow breathing, Skeletal grin.

Create your own lists of complementary character Traits for each power to act as examples and inspiration when characters are being created. As with any list they can be used 'as is' or serve as a jump off point for the player's fiendish imagination!

FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

Many powers will have circumstances that actively enhance their potential. Such circumstances will vary considerably between powers and can either be appreciated on the fly during play or can be skilfully used in a premeditated way as part of the story. Particular powers may also benefit from complementary circumstances. Our necromancer, for example, may benefit from undertaking his abject magic from inside a tomb or a graveyard, whilst a druid would benefit from working within an ancient and sacred grove.



Favourable Circumstances give the player or Navigator additional help when building their hand of dice. More dice equals a greater chance of more successes, more power and more impressive effects. Circumstances typically provide a total bonus of between +1 to +4 dice. A generous Navigator may choose to stack some of these bonuses or increase the upper level of bonuses for a particularly significant circumstance.

Some potential favourable circumstances:

Time

Festival day, Full moon, Holy day, Lunar eclipse, Midnight, Sixth hour of the sixth day, Solar eclipse, The stars are aligned, The witching hour.

Place

Astride a dragon, Crop circle, Deity's temple, Faerie glade, Graveyard, Hyperspace, In the centre of the labyrinth, Ley lines, Occult circle, Stone circle, Zero-G.

Other

A lock of hair, First born child, Focus of power, Impressionable human minds, Magic mirror, Prime number of targets, Ring of power, Trance.

When designing a Power it is often worth listing example favourable circumstances to reflect the understanding that the practitioner of the Power has – their ideal ritual environment, so to speak. These circumstances will also then be available for reference in play.

UNFAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

There may be circumstances that make using the Power particularly difficult. Targets of damaging effects may have special protection themselves, including many of the things listed as favourable circumstances above. A place may be barren of magical potential, its potent magical energy having been stripped away in some ancient war. The balance of favourable and unfavourable circumstances is determined by the Navigator. Players can seek to influence her decision as much as possible – through eloquence, story building ideas and arrant bribery.

In the end the Navigator will decide and the dice will roll...

CONTAINING THE POWER

Decide the cost to the user of the Power – for example, a magical discipline may require the wizard to look deep into the hidden fabric of the world and realign it into a pattern that matches his will. To do this he must see the world afresh and challenge the shared understanding of how others think the world should be. The cost? – An assault on his sanity. Such wizards can become unhinged, wild eyed and cast adrift in the choppy seas of understanding. Some strong Mind Traits should be developed by the character to manage the strains on his sanity.

Look again at what the Power gives the character and then challenge them accordingly. Most power wielding characters will have flaws, doubts and weaknesses that can, at just the wrong moment in time, bring them crashing back to our own shared reality.



Example Powers

Three example Powers are outlined below: Magic, The Gods and Psionics. Each Power is provided a list of example Traits from which you can build your own Power:

Magic

Mighty wizards, witches, warlocks, sorcerers and eldritch magi battling their own thirst for power and knowledge even as they unlock incredible forces which they wield to further their arcane ends.

Main Power Traits

Alchemist, Enchanter, Illusionist, Magic affinity, Mystic, Necromancer, Pinball wizard, Mage, Numerologist, Seer, Shaman, Sorcerer, Spell caster, Technomancer, Voodoo, Warlock, Witch, Wizard.

Summoning

A common type of magic user in the Epic Fantasy genre is the sorcerer who can summon beings from another realm and unleash them according to his will into his own world. These could be elemental powers, spirits from the underworld, monsters from under the bed or vile demons from dark planes of terror. Summoned creatures are set a minimum numbers of successes to bring them into the world. This minimum is equal to the number of dice in the main trait for the summoned creature. This is the creature's 'power'.

The Power effect would be described as: *Summon [type of being]*

Once summoned, the character will be able to demand that the being performs a task. The being will stay for an amount of time depending on Victory Level of the summoning.

- Knife edge an hour
- Minor a day
- Major a week
- Emphatic a month
- Complete a year

The summoner can banish the creature back to whence it came at any time.

The being can be described by the player, creating a number of Traits rated at two dice lower than the summoned creature's main Trait. There are no limits to the number of Traits that can be assigned to the summoned creature as long as they add good play value. A dozen or so is usually enough. Most Challenges will be met by the summoned creature's main Trait and supported by the other described Traits. In negotiation with the Navigator, a summoned creature can also have useful equipment such as wings, fangs, scaly skin, googly eyes and anything else that will create fun, atmosphere and mayhem.

Summoned Creatures, being magical, may also benefit from Scale Dice. If the



summoned creature is to have Scale then the number of Scale dice are added to the minimum number of successes required to summon it.

Example:

A sorcerer has Summon Deklah Fighting Demon (eight minimum successes). Nine successes are achieved on the summoning. The sorcerer describes the demon as follows:

Deklah fighting demons are cruel and cunning warriors who fearlessly run towards their prey on huge spiny legs. Two arm-like appendages end in vicious bone spines that the Deklah use to thresh their prey to death before consuming the internal organs with their multi tiered rows of sharp yellow teeth. Their scaly black bodies ooze a murky, green evil smelling puss.

Deklah Fighting Demon 8d (S1)

Cruel, Cunning, Evil pus, Fearless, Huge spiny legs, Multi tiered rows of sharp yellow teeth, Ooze slime, Run, Scaly black body, Thresh to death, Vicious bone spines (all at 6d).

Enchanting

Enchanting is a Main Power Trait that enables the user to create special items of power that sustain magical effects within them, allowing them to be used by other non magical characters. A Power Effect Trait is added to the mundane item if the enchantment is successful.

- Enchanting acts as a cap to the maximum number of dice that can be used by the other power Trait that is being used to be added to the item.
- The Power Effect Trait is used as the Foundation Trait, with Enchanting used as a supporting Trait.
- Scale dice are not used to create the effect.
- If the magical effect is limited to a number of uses per day (half the Enchanting Trait, rounded down), every week spent enchanting permits the item to have 1d of magic power.
- If the magical effect is unlimited in the number of uses per day, every two weeks of enchanting permits the item to have 1d of magic power
- Once the enchanter has decided to finish the item, he rolls to see how many successes he gains. If the number of successes is equal or greater than the cumulative number of dice required by the item, the enchanting is a success. If it is less than the item requires, the enchanting fails and the components are ruined.
- The item also has the scale of the Power Effect Trait used.

Example:

An enchanter (6d S4) has Weave blade of cutting at 6d. He decides to create a minor magical blade which permanently has the Weave blade of cutting effect. The maximum effect that he can add is 6d, determined by his enchanting Trait. He decides to go for the full 6d effect. This will take twelve weeks of preparation, double the usual, as he wishes this to be a permanent effect.

At the end of twelve weeks he rolls his 6d enchanting with 6d supporting Trait Weave blade of cutting and Metalworking 5d, plus Created within wizard's tower as a further favourable circumstance bonus of 1d. This gives him a total of 9d. He gets six successes, which is just



enough to create the effect. The sword now has a permanent enchantment: Weave of cutting 6d (S4). The player should explain what the magical effect actually is. The description makes it sound like the blade can agilely weave a pattern as it slashes into the enemy Mechanically, the Trait can be used as a Foundation or Supporting Trait and the Scale Dice can also be used.

Power Effects

Power Effects are often described as spells in the Epic Fantasy genre and by other games that include the use of magic. In the examples below no attempt is made to slavishly describe the power's effect. Most are either self-explanatory or can be negotiated flexibly and creatively in play. Also, no minimum success levels have been stated. Some effects will have no minimum or maximum and simply scale in power according to the number of successes achieved by the power user. Other more impressive sounding Traits may need minimum success levels before coming into play. Use the Power Table as a guide.

Power Effect Traits are gained and improved just like any other Trait.

Cantrips

Cantrips is a useful catch all Trait for minor magic that has limited game effect but provides useful small scale effects that sets the magic using character apart without using greater powers.

Cantrips could be used for the following effects: moving small items, creating candlelight, removing dirt or polishing an item, gently touching someone, etc. Cantrips would usually come into effect with two successes.

Example Effects

Below are a series of example magical Power Effect Traits or spells. They are grouped under headings, though these are provided only for convenience and have no particular significance when creating characters with magical abilities.

Particular magical Traits may specialise in groups of magical effects, others may be able to pick effects from a wide range. Someone with the Main Power Trait of Illusionist, for example, will specialise in the Illusion spells category, however they may be able to take spells from others.

Healing Spells

Cure disease, Cure wounds, Energise, Heal the mind, Heal the soul, Purify and cleanse, Rest in peace.

Destructive Spells

Blast of power, Fireball, I've got a banger, Kaboom, Lightening bolt, Mystic Missile, Pull the innards out, Rocket, Swirling cloud of biting, That's gotta hurt, Tremor.

Elemental Spells

Breathe underwater, Create water, Keep warm, Laugh at the fire breathing dragon, Part the sea, Solid air, Stop the river, Summon air elemental, Summon earth elemental, Summon fire



elemental, Summon water elemental, Swirling tornado, Turn to ice, Walk on water, Walk through fire.

Natural Spells

Calm the wild beast, Entangling undergrowth, Grow, Hear the forest, Healing plants, Make fertile, Plentiful yield, Speak to animals, Summon nature spirits, Talk to the trees, Travel to faerie.

Illusion Spells

Aroma, Change appearance, Create visual illusion, False sound, Hide away from view, Illusion with substance, It's disappeared!, Mirage, Phantasms, Trick of the light, Where did that come from?

Scrying Spells

Peeping Tom, See beyond, See the history of a place, Sense enemies, The truth of it, Trace through the ether, View from afar, Whispers in the wind.

Movement Spells

Blink, Enormous leap, Fly like a bird in the sky, Move between planes, Pass through walls, Slow right down, Run like the clappers.

Other Spells

Eldritch shield, Glue, Glowing light, Sense magic, Seal portal, Sealed with a loving kiss, Sharpen swords.

Character Traits

Here are a range of example character Traits for a magical character to have as supporting Traits when creating power effects. They are a mix of Body, Mind and Soul:

Ancient lore, Assured, Astrology, Astronomy, Booming laugh, Commanding voice, Focussed, History of magic, Hold sanity together, Innocent of power, Legerdemain, Look beyond the obvious, Maintain perspective, Memorise, Observant, Patient, Potions and blending, Read lips, Read magic, Read runes, See numbers, Studious, Incorruptible, Unflappable.

Favourable Circumstances

When everything is lined up for the magical character, when all preparation and other factors are ready, the process of creating a magical effect is always much smoother. Rest assured that players will wish to have as many favourable circumstances as possible to help make their effects more powerful and safer to create. Each favourable circumstance provides one die into the hand. Usually up to four can be given for any one effect.

These circumstances can be created in the game by imaginative players. However, sometimes a particular circumstance is an absolute requirement for the magical effect to happen at all. This could be a rare alignment of stars and planets, a sacrifice, the first born of the king coming of age, Tangerine Dream music, anything that fits well into the

Trying to create a fiery effect when standing in a waterfall? It's not going to help...

Born in battle, constantly planning and executing crusades and wares in recognition that all life and creation is born of strife and conflict...



story and makes sense of the magic being created. These necessary circumstances can form central drivers to the narrative that you are creating. They might set the players an in game time limit to achieve certain tasks, drive them to save and protect particular characters or force them to listen to German techno music.

Unfavourable Circumstances

Unfavourable circumstances increase the Difficulty, the minimum number of successes required, for the magical effect to come into play. Missing physical components? Trying to create a fiery effect while standing in a waterfall? It's not going to help.

Use these with care. Increasing the minimum required successes is tough on the magic using character.

The Gods

Your game setting may be overseen by meddling deities that seek dominion in the world or strive to protect it from unruly higher powers. Their agents in the world revere them and carry their power in a physical and tangible form, creating new converts and spreading the message of the god.

The principles of The Gods are identical to Magic as explained previously, though the underlying reasons for the existence of these powers is very different. When supernatural effects from The Gods are used by characters, the power is provided by the deity itself. The form of the power will be dependant on the nature and character of the deity. Worshipers of the deity will be encouraged to follow particular goals and use significant Traits. Some of the most gifted, the chosen of the deity, will also become receptacles for their divine power.

Main Power Traits

Acolyte, Blessed, Chosen one, Devotee, Favoured of the gods, Hermit, Messiah, Minister, Monk, Nun, Initiate, Preacher, Priestess, Prophet.

Deities and Power

Some example deities are listed below. The template can be used for ideas when creating characters who receive powers from a patron deity. Each deity in a Navigator created world should have one of these templates completed for characters that derive power from them.

MARDEN, GOD OF WAR

Born in battle, constantly planning and executing crusades and wars in recognition that all life and creation is born of strife and conflict. Priests of Marden are greatly feared as death and destruction inevitably follows with them. They are called upon by kings to lead their armies and protect their lands from the ravages of merciless neighbours.

Domains: Battle, Destruction, Victory against the odds, War.

**Expected Goals:**

- To fight the last battle with honour and die bravely.
- To prepare the army for the next and final campaign.
- To honour the memory of fallen ancestors and follow in their footsteps.

Typical Traits: Battle strategy, Berserker, Bloodthirsty, Brave, Carouse wildly, Come alive in battle, Commanding presence, Endurance, Forage, Formation fighting, Laugh at death, Lead the charge, Look for a fight, Make camp, Mounted combat, Pitiless, Refuse to feel pain, Relentless, Siegemcraft, Strong, Tactics, Unflinching, Weapon abilities.

Typical Power Effects: Armour of Marden, Bless weapon, Doubt and despair, Fearless in battle, Heal wound, Over the wall, Power charge, Rally with power, Red mist of destruction, Scything arc of doom, Smite, Steady the line, Target.

Favourable Circumstances: A battlefield, A companion slain by your enemy, Outnumbered, The sun behind you.

Payback Challenge: Marden drains the body of its physical strength. The worshipper is left worn and fatigued when using his powers. Body Traits must be used to withstand fatigue Payback effects. On occasion the soul is drawn into a dark place after so much killing and the Navigator may call for a Soul based Payback Challenge to resist Damage Traits of mournful regret, despair and wracking guilt.

ERYELME – MISTRESS OF THE FOREST

The quiet mistress who once ruled the entire world but who now watches warily from her shrinking, dark canopy of trees. The Watchers of Eryelme are protectors of the forest and all living things. They seek the old ways that allow men and other beings to live in harmony with the land, rather than destroying it.

Domains: Forest, Observation, Protection, Stillness.

Expected Goals:

- To protect the forest and preserve all that lives within.
- To extend the power of the forest into the lands of men.

Typical Traits: Archery, Beast lore, Bird song, Blend into the background, Climb, Faerie lore, Forest lore, Herbal lore, Patient, Stave fighting, Take the long view, Tend plants.

Typical Power Effects: (see Nature Spells above) Enrich the land, Entangling undergrowth, Heal tree, Quench fire, Rapid growth, Silence of the forest, Summon tree sentinel, Travel to faerie, Whisper to the forest.

Favourable Circumstances:

An ancient circle of stones, A summer's breeze, In the depths of the forest, A shadowy glade, Ley line node of old power.

Payback Challenge: It is said the Watchers of the forest eventually transform into



a tree. These channels of Eryelme must resist becoming one with the forest and forgetting who they are, if they are to continue to serve in their present form – this requires a Soul Payback Challenge with damage reflecting a need to ‘listen to the wind’, feel the earth on your feet and an utmost failure to see the relevance of human discourse.

RORTHAL - GOD OF KINGS AND STORMS

The great Lord of the Middle Kingdom. The old god who, restless with energy, brings life and power into the halls of the Northern people. A god of kings, poets and restless heroes.

Domains: Command, Energy, Storm.

Expected Goals:

- To seek freedom against the bounds of the world.
- To rule the earth and the air by the energetic force of will and arms.
- To recount the great deeds of the ancestors to inspire the people for the dangers to come.

Typical Traits: Battle strategy, Bloodthirsty, Brave, Energetic, Storytelling, Strong, Tactics, Tireless.

Typical Power Effects: Breath of life, Call clouds, Command people, Create storm, Knock down, Fly like the wind, Gust of wind, Pocket of air, Story effects, Summon storm elemental.

Favourable Circumstances:

A windy day, In one of the ancient storm temples, Up a mountain, A thunderstorm.

Payback Challenge: Storm priests must battle against the ravages of Fatigue when channelling the raw power of mighty Rorthal. Body Traits are used in Payback Challenges, with failure inflicting fatigue damage.

OMNIBYTE – ESSENCE OF THE NET

In the depths of what we know as the internet, an intelligence has evolved that resides between the points of presence, hiding behind the firewalls and cascading through all the routers into any server or connected device. It is more than the collected understanding of mankind – and it has a plan...

Hackers of the Omnibyte connect to its sacred essence through wireless internet connections and complex access programs.

Domains: Data fortresses, Knowledge of all things, Next Generation, Wired and wireless networks.

*It is more than
the collected
understanding of
mankind – and it
has a plan...*



Expected Goals:

- To keep all code open.
- To resist all human constructed proprietary code bases.
- To ready the masses for the next main release upgrade.

Typical Traits: Coding, Computer hardware knowledge, Current affairs, Geek, Graphical user interface design, Kernel hacking, Networking, Perl, System testing, Trivia, Webmonkey.

Typical Power Effects: Control expert systems, Direct interface into the mind, Down systems, Penetrate security, Project avatar.

Favourable Circumstances: Cool running PC, Fast networks, Linux operating system, Warm fingers.

Payback Challenge: Continued reverence of Omnibyte chains the devotee to the network, sucking them away from the alternative 'real' world into digital perfection. Other than increasing terminal geekness, hackers must maintain a connection with the real world through Mind Payback Challenges or they will permanently lose themselves in the virtual world.

Psionics

Psionics form the next stage of human mental evolution; latent mind power unleashed by next generation minds, mutants or other worldly beings. Powers that originate from the development of the sentient mind beyond anything we can comprehend today. Often this form of special power can be found in science fiction settings. In practical game terms psionics operate identically to magic with Payback Challenges against fatigue and madness required as the mind becomes unhinged, seeking to control the flow of power coursing through it.

Main Power Traits

Adept, Psion, Psyker, Telepath, Telekinetic, Teleportation, Clairvoyance, Mind and Body.

Telepathy

Telepathy is the discipline that enables the adept to sense and enter into the minds of other sentient beings. It is, perhaps, the most feared of disciplines as the very inner workings of the unprotected consciousness can be laid bare by the skilled telepath.

Power effects

Controlled hallucinations, Command mind, Emotion sense, Influence mind, Interstellar communication, Locate mind, Mind attack, Mind shield, Mind targeting, Sense life, Telepathy.



Telekinesis

Telekinesis, a Main Power Trait, is the discipline which enables the adept to manipulate and move matter with the power of the mind. In addition, the skilled adept is able to modify matter at a nuclear level, creating immense power that can energise power cells and large reactors.

Power effects

Body armour, Battle shield, Create warp point, Energy manipulation, Matter weakness, Mind over gravity, Mind shield, Move matter, Power up, Sense matter, Unravel matter.

Teleportation

Teleportation, a Main Power Trait, allows the adept to move to another point in space and time instantaneously. The minimum number of successes will be based on factors such as the adept's knowledge of the place that he is teleporting to, the amount of matter being moved, and any atmospheric or other circumstances that might intervene with the process of teleporting.

Power effects

Blink, Mind shield, Stay out of phase, Teleport.

Clairvoyance

With this Main Power Trait the adept is able to peer into and through the many dimensions of the universe, to understand the history of a place, to see into the future and experience objects in remote places.

Power effects

Item history, Mind shield, Perceptive resonance, Precognition, Remote viewing, See into the distance, See the truth, Vision.

Mind and Body

The adept can use the power of the mind to focus on his own material body in order to alter and augment it. This Main Power Trait has the following example Power Effect Traits.

Power effects

Armour of the mind, Become gaseous, Enhance senses, Flow as liquid, Indomitable will, Intelligent design, Mind shield, Regenerate, Self heal, Sinuous power, Toughen.

Circumstances

As with magic, the potential for psionics creates a range of questions for the game setting. These questions need to be thought through by the Navigator, who must provide the context for their use in the game.



Here are some examples:

- Are psionics only available to certain sentient races?
- Do particular materials enhance or subdue psionic activity?
- Can psionic potential be stored in material objects?
- Does hyperspace or other alternate dimensions influence the power and possibilities of psionics?
- Are there any societal constraints placed on the use of psionics? Do psions form an elite that rule the normals? Do non-psions fear and persecute psionic sentients?
- Can psionics be taught and developed through learning and education or are they inherent to certain individuals?
- How are psions used by governments and by their military or security forces in particular?



Powers – A Summary

The Powers chapter covers a range of character Traits that are out of the ordinary and quite possibly seen to be unusual (depending on the nature of the Theme being played). Examples provided include: magic, divine provided powers and psionic mind powers.

- Some Themes will not use Powers at all.
- Powers are on the Magical / Mystical / Supernatural scale. Depending on the Theme this will provide a Scale level and extra dice in Challenges.
- Powers are described using Traits, as is standard throughout *Wordplay*.
- A Power often has a Main Power Trait that fundamentally describes the Power.
- The Main Power Trait can have subservient Power Effect Traits that describe aspects of the power. The Power Effect Traits have their own dice, however these are capped by the Main Power Trait.
- Characters get a number of starting dice in their Power Effect Traits equal to the Main Power Trait \times 4.
- Powers require a minimum number of successes to be effective. The minimum number required depends on the complexity of the effect desired.
- Favourable circumstances, special equipment and Mundane Traits can all help create successes when using a power in the usual way.
- After rolling the dice, the player can decide how many successes they wish to keep. This is called containing the power.
- The Powers Table has a range of complexities and suggested minimum number of successes.
- Powers cost a character to use them. The cost varies with the power and is made real in the game by a Payback Challenge. These Challenges can happen every time the power is used or when the minimum number of successes achieved is greater than the Main Power Trait value.



Equipment

Wordplay focuses on the individual character, their goals, loves, capacities, capabilities and peculiarities, rather than the technology, tools and other external equipment that may assist them in getting the job done. Nevertheless, equipment used in Challenges provides an ideal opportunity to get more dice thrown across the table. This section covers the sort of equipment that characters can wear, pick up and generally use to face Challenges. Equipment worn, carried and wielded by characters serves to provide a number of extra dice to help in Challenges.

Plenty of genres use ground vehicles, aircraft and space ships. This chapter also advises on how to represent vehicles in the game.

Setting Bonus Levels

The simplest way to factor in the effect of characters using equipment is to simply assign a bonus die value. This represents the number of dice the equipment contributes to the character's dice roll (where the equipment is used to assist in the Challenge). The bonus will depend on the quality of the item and the degree of emphasis that the Navigator wants to place on equipment in any particular Challenge.

EQUIPMENT QUALITY BONUS TABLE

EQUIPMENT QUALITY	EXAMPLE EQUIPMENT	BONUS
Seen better days, obsolete, unfashionable.	A rusty sword and battered armour, a gamers t-shirt that's seen too many conventions (actually this might provide an increase in Difficulty if it is a seduction Challenge).	+0d
Mass-produced, work a day, functional, cheap.	Orc arms and armour, cheap dress from the high street, cheap production line tool kit.	+1d
Average quality and effectiveness.	Well-made weapons and armour. Quality controlled mass produced items.	+2d
High quality, beautifully crafted and very effective.	Dwarven crafted arms and armour.	+3d
Rare and superb quality, state of the art, with this sword you will be invincible, expensive.	Items hand crafted by an artisan.	+4d

A character who goes into combat wearing chainmail, carrying a standard sword and shield, would get +2d for equipment. Similarly, a standard firearm is likely to grant a +2d bonus in ranged combat Challenges. A character who goes into an interview with a cheap suit and slightly worn shirt might muster a +1d for the 'convince panel' Challenge.



Example:

A pistol in a science fiction game would simply be described as follows:

11mm Manhunter Binary Propellant Pistol +2d.

Equipment Traits

Sometimes a Navigator may wish to provide more emphasis to equipment within their game setting. Any specialist item of equipment can also have Traits assigned to it for use in the game. These Traits will have ratings from one to twelve and provide helping dice in just the same way as friendly characters helping in Challenges. How much these Traits are detailed and emphasised in play depends on how much the Navigator and group wish equipment to influence the outcome of any Challenge.

Equipment may also operate with a Scale Level (see Scale on page 40). If the equipment has Scale then it is better not to also give it an equipment bonus die value (such as +2d), such as the gun on a tank. Instead, give the gun or other associated piece of equipment their own traits as described above.

The simplest way to factor in the effect of characters using equipment is simply to assign a bonus dice value...

The Navigator can decide if one or two of the listed equipment Traits can be used as helping Traits in the usual way, providing a bonus using the usual formula:

- between 1 and 2 provides no help
- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to the equipment user
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to the equipment user
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to the equipment user
- at 12 it provides +4d to the equipment user

Example:

Let's look at that pistol again:

11mm Manhunter Binary Propellant Pistol

Clean action 5d

High penetration 6d

Rugged 7d

Semi-auto burst 3d

When shooting the gun, a player is likely to use the High Penetration (+2d) and Semi-auto burst (+1d) Traits, providing a total +3d bonus (assuming two Traits are allowed).

If Equipment Traits are being used, the bonuses will tend to be higher and the effect more noticeable in a Challenge. Traits may be taken from real life descriptions of items:



- Obsolete and ineffective items will have Traits that go up to 2d (+0d bonus)
- Poor quality items will have Traits that go up to 5d (+1d bonus)
- Average equipment will have Traits that go up to 8d (+2d bonus)
- Excellent items will have Traits that go up to 11d (+3d bonus)
- The absolute best item will have a Trait at 12d (+4d bonus)

Vehicles

In many themes, vehicles can take centre stage of the action – exhibiting personality quirks and dramatically affecting the outcome of a story. However, at heart, it is the decisions made by the players that ultimately dictate the direction of the story. Vehicles will generally act in a supporting role as a backdrop and /or scenery providing Trait bonuses to player characters' Foundation Traits in Challenges.

This short section provides guidance on how to create entertaining vehicles to offer setting scenery, chases, dogfights and last ditch escapes.

SCALE

Vehicles are rated with both a Size and Speed Scale (see page 41).

TRAITS

Vehicles can be described very simply using one main Trait that provides something to use in Challenges.

Example:

People carrier 5d (Size Scale 2, Speed Scale 3 (eventually))

This single Trait can be built upon and expanded to include a whole range of useful aspects that can find expression in play. In this sense they start to take on a personality of their own and become characters in their own right.

Vehicles can either have a simple list of Traits to play with or can be structured along similar lines to characters. For a more structured approach, vehicles would have Traits in the following categories:

- Structure
- Electronics
- Movement

Trait numbers follow the same rules as other equipment described above. Decide what the quality and effectiveness of the vehicle is and where it is placed on the standard 1 to 12d spectrum.

Larger vehicles, such as articulated lorries, battle tanks and spacecraft, will also have equipment that should be listed and factored into Challenges.

STRUCTURE

Traits that describe the vehicle's physical form, robustness, armour, state of repair,



comfort, general condition go here.

ELECTRONICS

Traits that describe the vehicle's sensors, navigation and computer systems go here.

MOVEMENT

Traits that describe the vehicle's speed, engines, agility and manoeuvrability are all entered in this category.

Example Vehicles

MODERN SALOON CAR

Size Scale: 2 Vehicle (5 seat family saloon)

Speed Scale: 3 Average wheeled vehicle

Structure: Generous electric heated wing mirrors 6d, Light body panelling and plastic 4d, Metallic paint 5d, Pointless grilles 4d Spongy seats 3d

Electronics: Air conditioning 5d, Engine computer system 4d, Road lights 5d, Satellite navigation system 6d

Movement: Energetic engine 4d, Turbo 5d, Good road tyres 5d

SHERMAN TANK

Size Scale: 3 Vehicle (World War 2 era medium tank)

Speed Scale: 0 Slow Vehicle (tracked)

Structure: Heavy armour 4d, Bulletproof 7d, Tommycooker 6d, Rugged 4d

Electronics: Radio 5d

Movement: Dodgy transmission 5d, Smash through terrain 4d, Stabilisation 3d, Tracked drive 4d,

Armament:

75 mm gun (S3)

Bit of a pop gun 4d, Ping off German armour 6d, Kaboom 4d, Gun sights 3d, Wet ammunition stowage 6d

.50 Cal Browning Machine gun (Scale 0) +3d

The machine gun doesn't share the scale advantage of the overall tank operating at Scale Level 0 and provides a +3d equipment bonus to the operator if it is being used in a Combat Challenge.

When firing the main gun the player would probably use 'Bit of a popgun' as the Foundation trait, supported by 'Kaboom' and Gun sights to give: $4d + 1d + 1d = 6d$. Scale 3 gives 3 additional dice for 9d. If the gun is being fired at a target that also has Scale then the +3d scale may be cancelled out.

POLICE PATROL GRAV CAR

Size Scale: 2 Vehicle (4 seater grav car)

Speed Scale: 5 Flyer (gravitic drive)



Structure: Reinforced body panelling 4d, Sleek angular lines 6d, Tough frame 4d

Electronics: Computer system 6d, Flashing lights 5d, Irritating siren 5d, L.A. navigation system 7d, Searchlight 3d

Movement: Gravitic flight 3d, Steady climb 4d, Turbo thrusters 5d

Equipment Costs

Equipment is given a cost rating along similar lines to Wealth. The cost is a guide to the expense to acquire the item outright. This can be modified to local circumstances and common sense. An example list of costs can be found in the *Example Costs & Resource Difficulty Table*.

Acquiring Equipment

Resources are acquired either through a No Roll or a One Roll Challenge, with a Difficulty set by the Navigator depending on the resources' value, rarity, market and any other circumstances.

Characters use their Wealth level as the Foundation Trait for such Challenges. Equipment rated equal to or less than the character's wealth can generally be gained as a No Roll Challenge – the player character just gets the stuff. Frequent acquisitions of items that are either at, or one die less than, the character's wealth will result in the player character losing a wealth level at the Navigator's behest.

EXAMPLE COSTS & RESOURCE DIFFICULTY TABLE

COST LEVEL	TYPICAL ITEMS
1d	Inadequate bare meal, basic clothes.
2d	No frills basic food, cheap clothes, basic accommodation, basic weapons, old vehicle, old horse.
3d	Variety of foods, reasonable clothes, standard accommodation, reasonable vehicle, well made weapons and armour, horse.
4d	Good food, good quality clothes, spacious accommodation, new vehicle, a range of quality and state of the art weapons, war horse.
5d	Rich delicacies, high fashion, large dwelling, high performance vehicle.
6d	Helicopter, small starship, castle (along with curtains), jewellery and precious items.
7d	Personal jet, starship, rare artefacts and treasures, a mercenary band.
8d	Huge tracts of land, a small army.
9d	A county, a great army.
10d	A kingdom.
11d	Huge palaces, an enormous harem in every palace.
12d	An armada of warships, a planetary system.

If a character wants an item that is more costly than their wealth level then a One Roll Challenge is required.



The One Roll Challenge works like any other with the character's Wealth acting as the Foundation Trait. This can be supported by appropriate Traits such as haggling, trader and other Traits that the player can persuade the Navigator could help. Player characters can help in the usual way, either by using one of their Traits in an imaginative way to create helping dice or by lending some money. The Navigator can also create increases to the Difficulty in gaining the item through rarity and other factors.

If a friendly player lends some money (by using their wealth Trait as a support to the player character), then optionally this can create a number of dice of debt up to the number of successes the supporting player achieved. The process of paying back this debt should be narrated and may involve the player losing wealth dice on a 1 for 1 basis to immediately clear it, or paying back the sum over an agreed period of in game time. If your instincts are to work out compound interest rates you are probably playing the wrong game.

Equipment – A Summary

Equipment isn't the main focus of *Wordplay*. However, equipment can play a part in helping a character win Challenges. Equipment can have stories and histories of its own, which become entwined in the central story being played out at the gaming table.

- Equipment provides a bonus depending on quality, providing typically between 1 to 4 dice.
- Games that accentuate hardware might offer higher bonuses.
- Equipment can be rated simply as a bonus or given Traits (as with characters).
- Equipment can offer two Traits as support to a character using the standard helping dice rule.
- Vehicles are rated either as bonus dice or with Traits.
- Equipment is rated with a Cost level in a similar way to Wealth.



Navigating

This section is for Navigators, however all players are equally welcome to read the following pages. The chapter provides ideas on some of the things you will want to think about when running a game of *Wordplay*:

- How do I create a setting and story for the game?
- How do I make the game enjoyable?
- How do I make best use of *Wordplay* to enliven our game session?

This chapter will provide some pointers. When it comes to pen and paper roleplaying games nobody has all the answers, however there are a few places where you can get some excellent advice. At the end of the chapter a few of these will be highlighted for further investigation.

If you're new to the hobby then there's nothing to compare to finding a group and playing a roleplaying game. You'll find many different games and styles of expressing and playing them. In addition to local groups that can be found via the internet and local game stores there are game conventions for fellow enthusiasts, which provide opportunity to taste different games and how to run them.

Creating Worlds

In some stories the Divine took but six days to create the world that we find ourselves in. You may further reflect that in other stories our world took billions of years to develop. As such, you can be forgiven for worrying that it might take you a bit longer to create your own game world. However you choose to look at it, the shrubberies alone could take you years to get just right...

Panic not. Designing a setting is a creative and enjoyable experience that can take as little or as long as you want it to. Also, remember that you're not alone. You have the errant and diverse imagination of your group of players. They will (most often) have something to say about the world that their characters are from and in which they will adventure. Not only can you ask them what they would like to see and who they would like to meet, you can work with them to actively build the setting in which you will tell your group story.

There are essentially two paths that you can take to create your epic setting:

- Create your own

or

- Adapt an existing one



Create Your Own

There are an endless range of possibilities when creating your own setting. To start the process you can create an outline in a very similar way to creating a character. Your epic setting will be described using a Name, Concept, Goals and Traits. These elements will serve as the foundations for your setting from which you will build as richly visualised and detailed a background as you think is necessary.

This needn't be undertaken in isolation from your players. Just as players have strong creative control over their player characters, they can invest a lot of creative energy in defining the place that their heroes undertake their great deeds. Their imagination can help you to form and build a setting worthy of adventure!

Concept

Start with the overall concept of the gaming world you are creating. This will sum up some of the key facets of the backdrop and the tensions that will drive the action. If someone came over to your gaming table and asked what the setting was about, the Concept would encapsulate it, giving the enquirer a strong grasp of what it is like.

Example:

Beneath the tempestuous, frigid Northik kingdoms lies the Northern Cities, a relatively prosperous land of independent trading city states, built on the legacy of the ancient Dragon King.

As Navigator you could now play back this Concept to your players. Ask them to build in any additional ideas to extend and develop the starting statement. With enough players you could have a Concept that grows to a full paragraph. It's up to the Navigator to draw the ideas together so that it all makes sense and makes use of as many of the ideas that the players bring to it. If each player is invited to build the Concept in turn, you will find that each will bring at least one new idea. You will now have a shared setting Concept and the beginnings of what you might want to do with the world that you are creating together.

Name

The setting should have an evocative name that conjures some of the essence of the setting. The name may emerge relatively complete from the shared Concept, but could equally bubble up fresh from the imagination.

Examples:

The Northern Cities – fabled lands of the lost Dragon King.
The Dragon's Domain – the cities of the lost and terrible Dragon King.

Goals

The Goals of the setting focuses on the main things that the Navigator and players want to draw out in play within the setting. What do you want to do with the setting?



Each player can provide one setting Goal.

Example:

1. *To release the imprisoned Spirit Lord, Grasmorth, to wreak havoc upon the land.*
2. *To draw together the disparate people of the Cities and their immediate neighbours in an alliance.*
3. *To rekindle the legacy of the Dragon King, Krallis, and save the Land from the Spirit Lord.*

Traits

Traits describe features of your setting and that can be used directly in play. Each city, forest or other geographic feature can be described with Traits too as the setting is developed. Such Traits can be used by the Navigator and players to help build their hand of dice.

With the Concept in mind, each player can describe a 'picture' taken from their own mental image of the setting. It could be anything, however ideally it will be something that the Navigator can use and weave into play during the game, even if it is only as vivid background scenery.

Example:

Player 1 Picture

On the undulating plain the long grass swayed in the brisk north wind, creating giant swirls and eddies that writhed out to the far horizon, greeting the heavy grey storm clouds that foreshadowed the great conflict to come. Bisecting the plain is a road of largely intact ancient stone that holds a resolute straight path through the undulating grass and away to the tempestuous grey heavens.

Player 2 Picture

The scarred and malevolent face peered up through weak yellow eyes to the shadow spired mountain that twisted into the black sky of the howling heavens. Great black winged forms circled the summit, screaming a long bestial cry of hatred.

Player 3 Picture

The street was aglow with brightly lit oil lamps of coloured glass. The flickering lights danced playfully across the night market of many wooden stalls that bordered the main street access. The figures walking slowly towards them, their terrible white masks hidden within their black cowled robes.

Each of the pictures will create Traits that the Navigator can use as the story unfolds.

Traits describe features of your setting and that can be used directly in play...



Example:

Brightly lit 5d, Looming war 6d, Open undulating plains 5d, Reach of Shadowspire 7d, The Old Imperial Road 6d, Windswept 6d

If you decide to create your own setting, be it a researched historical, contemporary or fantastical setting, you have complete creative control. Try to create cultures, peoples, places and situations that will impact upon the play. Start small and build from there. Designing a whole race of people that will never have any impact on play might be fun, but probably not as much fun as time better spent on designing situations that the players will actively encounter! Don't worry about the shrubberies, unless your game is focussing on the shrubber profession, in which case you'll need to really go to town on all things shrub related.

Adapt an Existing Setting

Wordplay is flexible and easy to adapt to other published settings. There are a lot of them out there, available at your local friendly game shop or online. Others have already blazed trails and born new places for you to set your games in. Some are even found in this book. The Themes chapter provides you with a taster for a setting, prepared with *Wordplay* in mind. Perhaps you'd like to start with an epic fantasy world of lost empires, dragons, evil overlords and quests against impossible odds? The Epic Fantasy theme provided will give you a good grounding to get you started and playing.

Goals are very powerful at driving play forwards...

Do you have a favourite novel, graphic novel, film or computer game? Might that form the basis of your backdrop? This game is based on the premise that you take words and phrases, assign them a value and then use them directly in play. Use the words of the author and draw out the colourful descriptions, using them as Traits to populate People, Places and Profession templates. Before you know it you'll have a setting that is breathing with the creative energy of the original author's own words. By using the author's own language you will provide a direct link to the source material while imbuing your game with flavour and powerful descriptions.

Or, to put it another way, *Wordplay* can easily take the words of the original source material and give you a new gaming environment in which to play. There is no need for any tortuous rule conversions. Pull out and capture the flavoursome text, apply as Traits and start the game!

A Good Play Session

One of the key roles of the Navigator is to facilitate an entertaining and enjoyable game session for all of the participants. Everyone involved shares the responsibility of ensuring that the session is enjoyable. It helps to have consensus around the table as to what sort of game that you all want to play. *Wordplay* works best collaboratively. 'Goals' and the 'helping' rules when building a hand of dice set the game's stall out.



Players should work together, realise common goals and help each other to achieve their individual goals, meet Challenges, develop and successfully resolve stories.

If you are running a number of game sessions, ensure that you ask the players to describe what they would like to see happen in the game. Some of this is covered in their character's goals, however they will want to have certain situations crop up for them so that they can add new goals to their characters.

Conflict will sit at the heart of most game sessions. Not only life and death struggles against nefarious enemies but also affairs of the heart, tensions between a player character upbringing and the realities of the current game situation, divided loyalties and even conflict between player characters. Use the conflict to drive forward the action in the story as it will draw out energy, purpose and direction with new player character goals created as a consequence.

Using *Wordplay*

Use the *Wordplay* game when there is a Challenge, when the story reaches a point where a decision or test of ability is required. The game has been designed to provide a fun resolution system for Challenges using Traits to build hands of dice that are then rolled against each other. The game is there to provide an arbiter to situations using player characters' Traits. It provides a moment of tension as the impressive heaps of dice are clattered onto the table and successes are counted and compared. *Wordplay* isn't needed for very much more in your game session.

How often you call on the rules during your session is entirely a matter of taste and pacing. An enjoyable session could never draw out the dice, with play around the table moving along in a free form manner, referencing the information on the character sheets with the odd No Roll Challenge when required. The group may instead wish to get the dice onto the table and enjoy the thrill of counting up those successes frequently throughout the evening. Use as much of the game rules as you need on any particular evening to make things fun.

Just as player character goals drive the action forward, remember to create shared goals between player characters to provide a reason for players to cooperate with one another. Shared goals bind player characters together in the shared narrative and provide tangible experience rewards when outcomes are achieved.

What you don't need to worry about

In Challenges, the core philosophy of the game is to allow everyone the opportunity to describe their actions as colourfully as possible, placing dice into their hand as they go. When everyone is ready, large quantities of six sided dice are hurled onto the table and fevered counting of successes begins. That's really all you need to worry about.

Some other roleplaying games give you more detail and specific rules for handling situations, often combat related. They use things like hit points by body location, fatigue points, combat rounds with specific time durations, prescribed numbers of actions per round, movement rates per round, weight that can be lifted, precise amount of money owned, numbers of bullets fired by weapon type, etc. Don't worry about all that stuff!



Wordplay provides a framework to create stories without the need to use these more detailed factors and rules. The game can simulate more detail through the application of bonuses and penalties, providing more dice into the hand, however this is not altogether necessary. This chapter provides some ideas on how to develop situations using bonus dice. This is largely decorative as the core principles will suffice to create fun games.

Navigator Characters

It is unlikely that you will have either the time or inclination to populate your game world with characters at the same level of detail as those belonging to your players. Navigator characters can be noted by one simple word and Trait value. They can be rounded out to include many more Traits as you see fit. This process is illustrated below.

The Spear Carrier

Many of your characters will simply serve a highly limited purpose in the story. They may be there to make the players' characters look good, provide a useful piece of information, one line of dialogue or to provide some opposition to the player characters' schemes. These spear characters, mooks, red shirts, cannon fodder, can be described very quickly and simply indeed:

Tough Warriors 7d

That's about all you need to have in front of you!

The 7d value assumes a Foundation Trait of about 4d, some equipment and a supporting Trait to make up the total. If a spear carrier outlives its usefulness, going 'off script' into new territory and is required to build its part in the story, then there's no need to panic. Assume that everything else it needs to do, for which it has a reasonable chance of knowing something about, is rated at about two dice less than its value. In the example above, the tough warrior would be rated at 5d for other warrior related Challenges that used some equipment. If standard equipment is not helpful to the spear carrier and the Challenges fall outside their core knowledge area, simply drop the value by a further two dice or more. So our spear carrier might look something like this:

Tough Warriors 7d

Other Warrior Challenges 5d

Doing most other stuff 3d

You can keep this fairly flexible. Bonuses, Penalties and other Circumstances will affect the spear carriers dice pool. Use the guidance above and get to a reasonable dice pool for the character in any Challenges that they face.

Spear carriers don't last well when faced with Challenges. Typically they will be 'knocked out' of play when suffering any level of defeat.

PROVIDING MORE DETAIL

Your players are going to delight in using their Traits imaginatively. They will



pick out their Foundation Trait and select up to two supporting Traits and make as much of their actions as possible. Why should you miss out on all the fun with your characters? Even the aforementioned spear carriers could have interesting Traits that they may want to bring out in play. During play testing *Wordplay*, the players enjoyed the Navigator revealing the Traits that were being used to build their opponent's pool of dice. To do this, build the base information on the tough warriors with some Traits to throw into the cauldron of a Challenge.

Let's look at those spear carriers again:

Tough Warriors

Body: *Carefully practised spear fighting 4d, Parade ground toughness 3d, Surprising turn of speed 5d, Works out a lot 4d*

Mind: *City geography 3d, Look for a way out 4d, Take it in turns to have a go 4d*

Soul: *Instinct for survival 4d, Resolute 3d, Worried 4d*

Equipment: *Honest spear +1d, Padded trousers +0d*

The Body, Mind and Soul Traits have not come from any of the templates in the Themes section, rather they have been put in 'free form' to delight and amuse the players as they battle their way through them. The dice levels have been set with an eye on the suggested pre-experience levels in character generation and to their effect in the game session. It doesn't take very long to do. If there are other Traits that the spear carrier needs in the game session, either create them on the fly or use the fact that the Trait is not known to the spear carrier and maybe give them a pool of two dice.

Significant Characters

When populating your game world you will have a number of key characters that are pivotal to the development of the story and who will interact significantly with the player characters. Significant Navigator characters will simply have more information and a greater variety of Traits to call on in the game session.

Temar, Captain of the Tough Warriors

Temar has seen it all. As a captain of the city guard he has seen things people wouldn't believe. He is aware of the Sarok conspiracy and has pieced together a number of facts that, consequently, edge him close to the truth. Believing his days to be numbered, he has decided to live life to the full, with a flamboyance that belies his lowly station.

Body: *Hard as nails 5d, Strong 4d, Swordsmanship 5d, Tough 3d,*

Mind: *City geography 5d, Uncover the Sarok Conspiracy 4d, Vigilant 6d*

Soul: *Believe days to be numbered 4d, Flamboyant 5d, Live life to the full 6d, Rugged charm 4d, Seen it all 4d*

Equipment: *Sword and Chainmail armour +2d*

In addition to the above, sprinkle in additional Traits from the City place and Warrior templates from the Epic Fantasy theme, and you have yourself a ready to go Navigator character.

More significant characters should be harder for player characters to defeat. They



could tackle defeat in the same way as player characters or be knocked out of the story after suffering a particular level of defeat or a set number of accumulated Damage Traits. The Navigator can set this level flexibly depending on the importance of the Navigator Character.

Creatures Are Characters Too

Creatures mundane, magical and extra terrestrial are described just like Navigator characters previously described. Some large or fast moving creatures will also benefit from Scale advantages, just like vehicles.

So, you could simply have:

Dragon 10d

Claw, tooth and scale +3d

Size Scale 3

Speed Scale 2 flying

Or you could give the Dragon some Traits to work with...

Dragon

Size Scale 3

Speed Scale 2 flying

Body: *Armoured scale hide 7d, Fearsome bite 8d, Flaming breath attack 9d, Huge claws 6d, Impossibly ponderous flight 5d, Lumber along 7d, Power dive 6d, Rending strike 7d, Swallow with a lick of the lips 6d, Toast to a crisp 7d*

Mind: *All seeing eye 7d, Count items in hoard 8d, Cruel intelligence 5d, Smell food 6d*

Soul: *Avaricious 7d, Jealous 5d, Lust for gold and treasure 8d,*

Note: *The scaly hide and claws could alternatively be regarded either as helping Traits or as 'equipment' that the dragon can use, granting an automatic bonus of +3d in addition to other helping Traits.*

Everything Can Have Traits

Game protagonists are described using Traits that can be applied directly into Challenges. There's no need to stop at the characters. We have already seen that equipment, vehicles and creatures can have Traits. This principle can in fact be applied to everything that is mentioned in the game. Anything that is described can be given Traits.

For example, the setting you use will be full of descriptions. Ready yourself to use these descriptions in a very practical way to affect play:

Example:

"The alley has one flickering light which, with complicit shadows, creates and banishes malevolent spectral forms in eerie patterns."

The Navigator could pick out the following Traits and allocate values to them:
Flickering light 4d, Complicit shadows 6d, malevolent spectral forms 7d



Set the value of the Traits to a level that reflects how much you want them to influence the game play. Use the standard helping rules from *Building your hand of dice* on page 33.

Is the alley harbouring some mysterious force? Well, that's up to you to decide, but if you do wish that the player characters will face some malevolent power then you have some of the Traits ready to use. Places can be claustrophobic, gloomy, calming, oppressive – all of which could be used as Traits to undermine or encourage the characters. These Traits could be used as supportive Traits by either side in any Challenges that take place in the vicinity.

Give the players the chance to use Traits that you attach to scenery. Perhaps the player wishes to use the 'Flickering light (4d)' to manoeuvre to a position of advantage before a desperate attack? If so, that Trait will give a +1d circumstance bonus.

Organisations

An organisation can be described as a series of Traits. In some Themes characters can belong to organisations through Soul Traits. These organisations provide Traits that can be taken and added to the character at generation or during play through experience.

Alternatively the organisation's Traits can be used as Foundation Traits in Challenges by the character, if the timing is right and the Navigator permits it.

Anything that is described can be given Traits...

Example:

Here is an organisation that is just perfect for a modern day espionage game:

Soviet Military Intelligence - GRU ("Главное Разведывательное Управление")

Russian agents are as likely to be from the GRU as from the KGB, but most Westerners know little of the GRU.

Typical Goals

- To defend Mother Russia from the aggression of the imperialist West.
- To drive the inevitable process of international Communism, replacing corrupt capitalism.
- To win at the Great Game that is espionage.

Typical Traits

Body: Deploy Agents (illegal), Secret Soviet Weapons, Deploy Special Forces, Sovereign Wealth and Resources, Residencies in most countries, Listening posts in USSR and Cuba.

Mind: Access to signals intelligence, Attaches in all embassies (legal), Intelligence Corps, Access to Soviet Military Science.

Soul: Love of Mother Russia, Pride in Marxist-Leninism, International Solidarity, Rivalry with KGB, Independence from others.



Challenges

Bonuses and Penalties

When running a game of *Wordplay* you will often wish to give the characters a bonus in Challenges for good roleplaying, great descriptions of their action or clever tactical thinking. You can do this by allowing them to roll some extra dice, thereby improving their chance of victory. Overall, this will be in the range of +1d to 4d, depending on circumstance and your whim. It could even be more.

Similarly, when player characters are at a disadvantage, trying something challenging, in difficult circumstances, while affected by wounds and distractions, not having the necessary equipment, etc, you will want to give them a penalty. You do this by increasing the Difficulty through increasing the number of dice available to the opposition. This will typically be in the range of +1 to +4d, but may even be more. Dice are never removed from players – instead they are added to Navigator characters (as a bonus) or to the Difficulty of the Challenge.

So, the thing to do is to nod sagely and sprinkle bonuses and penalties about without making an industry out of it. When it comes to combat Challenges take note of the Guidance for Thrilling Combat section.

Setting Trait Levels and Difficulties

You can set difficulty levels pretty much on the fly when Navigating *Wordplay*. The Difficulty Table “Challenge Difficulty Levels Table” on page 33 gives you a guide to the overall levels. Of course what’s ‘Challenging’ for one character could be quite easy for another depending upon their Traits and other circumstances. When designing an adventure always have a mind to the sort of dice that the players have at their disposal for different types of Challenge.

Environmental circumstances will tend to provide +1 d to +4d help or hinder characters. Traits are rated 1-12 dice as usual and provide these bonuses once they reach a certain level. Setting an environment Trait at 6d is significant because it is the trigger to provide +2d rather than +1d. Setting a Trait at 9d is the next significant power level increase providing +3d into the Challenge. In general the following individual trait scores can be weighted as follows:

- 3d – minor with minimal game impact
- 6d – Noticeable with real game impact
- 9d – major with significant game impact
- 12d - very powerful and rare individual trait

Assign Traits to your environments, characters and, well, just about anything else, with the guide above in mind.

A player character using the starter hero package could be on about 9d with both 6d Traits brought into play. With the addition of equipment, friendly help, good narrating and even a Goal invoked this could increase by six or more dice. Players will be endlessly creative in building their hands of dice, so a Navigator will need to be the same! Of course if they are alone, unable to use their best Traits and have nothing to help them they’ll be on much less dice.



Using Circumstances

Use the environment and bring it into play. If a character wants to use their surroundings to influence a Challenge then assign them values on the fly, based on the guidance above, and pass them out for use. As anything that can be described can have Traits then anything could, with suitable narration, be used to influence the action. If you can 'cut the air with a knife' then it might be set at 7d and someone could grab it and use it as a supporting circumstance if they are looking to intimidate someone.

It's worth noting that *Wordplay* could easily get bogged down in the lengthy squeezing of circumstances to build hands of dice. Keep the game flowing. Either limit the number of permissible circumstances for a dice roll or set a time cap if everyone's enjoying chewing the scenery to gain dice.

Combat Challenges will have a range of useful circumstances. Take note of the section following.

Guidance for Thrilling Combat

Combat often forms the centre piece to a roleplaying session. It is a point in the story that can spell life or death to a player character. This section provides some additional notes on how to handle combat, which are to be used as a supplement to the other guidance in the Challenge section.

KEEP IT FLOWING

Keep the descriptions and interaction with the players moving quickly. Combat is quick, brutal and terrifying. The interchanges between the Navigator and the players must provide an appropriate sense of urgency. One of the advantages of *Wordplay* is that there aren't a lot of rules to distract the exciting narrative flow.

Keep bonuses and penalties manageable during Combat Challenges. Less is definitely more. A quick flow of description and dice rolling is always better than fumbling around with the minutiae of multiple circumstantial modifiers. Given the seriousness of these Challenges for their characters, players will often want to leverage the best advantage before rolling the dice. As you get used to running the game you will be able to quickly apply a range of bonuses and penalties without slowing down the pace of the scene.

GUTS FOR GLORY

At any moment a combatant can lose the stomach for a fight. From time to time in a combat Challenge you can test to see if the characters have the will and determination to carry on. Such side Challenges will tend to be targeted at Soul Foundation Traits, testing the character's resolve and capacity to keep in the fight. Pick out a Difficulty depending on how well (relatively) the character is faring in the combat Challenge.

If the character does not win this 'resolve Challenge' then either they seek to leave the combat Challenge, seek to change it to a non combative one or suffer a penalty equal to the Damage caused by the 'resolve Challenge' victory level, due to losing heart and courage.



MISSILE AND THROWN WEAPONS

Characters will use their missile weapon Traits, other supporting Traits and some equipment to generate their pool of dice in combat Challenges. This section provides some additional circumstantial effects that you can layer in to a combat Challenge – although not essential these are especially useful for players or types of game that demand some detail and fine tuning of dice pools to account for a range of factors in combat.

Always remember the advice in this chapter on the inherent nature of *Wordplay*. It's really not a detailed skirmish wargame rule system. The circumstantial modifiers noted below give you some options to provide a convincing layer of detail for combat scenes.

Only throw in these circumstance bonuses and penalties if it will add to the tone of the game and if you can add them in quickly. The best part about these suggested modifiers is that they add more dice into the mix!

RANGE FACTORS FOR MISSILE WEAPONS

Range is another circumstantial factor that can affect the chance of winning a ranged combat Challenge. *Wordplay* is not interested in being exact about measuring ranges. Instead, four range categories are suggested that can be used by the Navigator when describing a combat. Long range will be very different for a throwing knife and a laser rifle, so the application of a range band for any particular Challenge will vary by the weapon used and the situation described. For example, one person could be operating at the Close range category while their opponent is using a weapon that gives him an Extreme range.

MISSILE RANGE TABLE

RANGE	DESCRIPTION	BONUS OR PENALTY DICE
POINT BLANK	Really very close indeed, you can see the whites of their eyes, smell their fear	2d Bonus
CLOSE	Within the weapons effective range, the standard, average distance	No Bonus or Penalty
LONG	Difficult, normally requires a good level of skill with the weapon being used	2d Bonus to difficulty
EXTREME	Ambitious, only the most skilled, experts are likely to pull off this kind of shot	4d Bonus to difficulty

OTHER MISSILE FACTORS

You can use a plethora of additional circumstantial modifiers; here are a few:

- Target in light cover or mostly visible: 1d to Difficulty
- Target in medium cover or partially visible: 2d to Difficulty
- Target in heavy cover or hardly visible: 3d to Difficulty
- Target prone: 2d to Difficulty



- Use the perception circumstantial difficulties if conditions are murky or dark
- Armour or a carefully placed shield may give an equipment bonus if the target is simply trying to evade the missile fire

Scale

You may elect to make larger or slower targets easier or harder to hit by awarding bonus dice to the weapon user or the target. Fast targets may also gain dice to evade the missile fire.

Example:

A creature is being fired at by an archer. It has the Trait 'Lumbering Oaf' 6d (S2). The Navigator decides to give the archer +2d for the opponents Scale.

Being a Target

A target may elect to counter a missile weapon Challenge in a number of ways. They may choose to try and get out of the way or return fire, using their weapon ability Traits as Foundation Traits. Whichever response is taken, the standard *Wordplay* outcomes apply, with the winner being the one with the most successes or with the highest Foundation Trait on a tie. If the target of the missile fire is the winner and was electing to try and evade the missile, then the outcome is that they are not hit.

AREA EFFECT WEAPONS

For extra drama, Navigator and player characters may be able to attack more than one opponent at once with their Traits and equipment. This might be through a magical ball of energy, a high rate of fire missile weapon or the practical application of such exciting Traits as Arcing blade of doom.

Select how many opponents are affected by the attack within an Area of Effect and apply the one attack roll to each of them. Some targets within the area of effect may benefit from cover, others may be able to dive out of the way, whilst others may seek to neutralize the enemy before they are hit by the weapon.

MASS COMBAT AND HUGE BATTLES

The story your group are creating together may include big battles with hundreds or thousands of opponents on each side. There are a number of ways that you can manage this using *Wordplay* by simply using the standard rules in slightly different ways.

1. Battle as Grim Scenery

If the players are not involved in the conflict in any way, the battle can simply be narrated as part of the story. No dice rolls or rules required.

2. Armies as Characters

If the player characters are soldiers in one or both of the armies then the armies can be given Traits just like anything else in *Wordplay*.

Examples:

The Army of Escalon 7d (S5)

Knights of Tanmeray 6d, Wiley skirmishers 5d, Fighting for the homeland 8d



Player characters can offer one helping Trait to reflect their role in the battle. Perhaps they are fighting in the ranks, preparing fortifications or spying the enemy's flanks. To even things up a bit, the Navigator is able to add one die to the opposing army for each player character that contributes help to the army.

Each opposing army may further attract circumstantial bonuses as described by the players.

Example:

Draw them in to their doom, Favourable terrain, Sun at our backs, Outnumber the enemy, Last ditch defence

The battle is a One Roll Challenge between the two armies. Player characters will share the fate of their army. If the players are on the winning side, they will gain some spoils, an experience award and an opportunity to move the story along in their favour. If the players are on the losing side then check the Victory Level of the opposing army and the appropriate level of the Damage Traits that the players must suffer. The exact damage inflicted will depend on how the player characters participated in the battle and could be applied to any of Body, Mind or Soul. Here, it is useful (before the dice are rolled) to have the players describe their actions and intent during the battle – thus when the outcome is determined, everyone can reflect on how their actions have aided or hindered the result.

3. Captains and Commanders

If the player characters are in command of the armies, start with the general's selected battle command Trait. Two of the army Traits will provide help as per the standard rule. The opposing commander's Trait is used as the Foundation Trait for the enemy. Otherwise use the guidance above.

Setting Victory Levels

Multi-Roll Challenges use the Outcome Table to determine the Victory Level of that Round's opposed dice roll. The table can also be used in One Roll Challenges as a guide to the degree of success and how far the desired outcome is achieved. You are able to manage game outcomes further by altering the range of required successes to achieve a Victory Level. By increasing the necessary range of successes, more extreme victory levels become less likely. By reducing the number of successes required more Challenges will end with complete victories.

This is called Victory Scale. Navigators can set this scale to whatever they want. Either a whole game can operate on one Victory Scale or a particular Challenge can be set with a different scale, or a scale can be given to a character or group temporarily or permanently.

The Standard Scale is reproduced following. *Wordplay* assumes that you will be using this Victory Scale throughout, but there's nothing to stop you being inventive with Victory Scales.



Victory Scales

STANDARD SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2-3	Minor
4-5	Major
6	Emphatic
7+	Complete

CINEMATIC SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2-4	Minor
5-7	Major
8	Emphatic
9+	Complete

GRITTY SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2	Minor
3	Major
4	Emphatic
5+	Complete

For high action cinematic games, where heroes can more readily survive outcomes, the Cinematic Scale can be used. If you use this Scale throughout then opponents will also be harder to damage.

For games where victory is swift and absolute, where dramatic effect is bought with a narrower range of successes, then the Gritty Scale can be used.

Feel free to mix and match your own Victory Scales however, as with other Scales, the effect on the game will be marked and defining. Handle with care!

Managing Goals, Experience and Nudges

Game awards are managed both by offering more dice in Challenges, experience points for increasing Traits and Nudges for affecting dice rolls. How these are both managed can be influenced by the style of game that you want.

Goals

Goals are very powerful at driving play forwards. They can only be evoked a total of three times in a session, so generally, players will pick important moments to draw on the extra dice that they provide. A Navigator can compel a player to use a Goal if it makes sense for it to be used in a particular Challenge. Goals can be extremely quick to achieve and linked to the running story.

Examples:

"I want to get across the street into that building without being seen."

"The cyborg wants to survive the press conference with dignity intact. I'll make sure that happens."

"I must find the entrance to the complex or the hunter seeker drones will shoot me down!"

It's useful for players to have one of their character's three slots available for one of these more short term Goals. They don't provide as much in the way of experience points but they can be used to boost the hand of dice at a critical moment. Less 'game reward' focussed players may need prompting to include these as the story unfolds.

"You want to rescue the Martian tied up in the room next door? Might that be a Goal?"



Longer term goals are rewarding for character and group stories and also provide a higher experience reward, however they are unlikely to be both conceived and carried out all in the same game session. Generally they will take a number of sessions to resolve.

You can play without using Goals at all if you wish. A Navigator can choose to focus on the entertaining play option for experience points reward, rather than using Goals. If you do this you'll miss out on the tactical use of Goals to boost hands of dice and the experience point rewards if successful. Experiment and see what works for you.

Experience Points

Players enjoy developing and improving the abilities of their characters. Experience points are your currency to allow this to happen. They are awarded at the end of game sessions. See page 68 for advice on how many can be given out. Allow the players to spend them to improve Traits at any time during, or even in between, game sessions.

Typically award the following:

Turning up (3) + Involved in Challenges (1 each – say 5 in a session) + Player to Player Rewards (on average 2 each but the players may decide to load them in one player's favour) = 10 experience points.

Play with this to moderate the pace of Trait increase that fits with your story and the expectations around the table.

Nudges

Give out Nudges to reward players who bring fun and thematically appropriate role playing to the table. For example, if a player deliberately does something that advances the plot, even if it is not really in the interest of their character, then award them some nudges to help them get out of the situation. Perhaps the player's portrayal of their character is very strong, or there is excellent supportive play that allows other players to shine in the spotlight, or even a signature moment of hilarity or wonder during the session. Also find a way to reward those players that are struggling to get into the game. Nudges are awarded for anything special that you want to see at your table.

Typically award 1 to 3 Nudges depending on the moment and how generous you want to be. Better to reward little and often than in big blocks or not at all! Seek to award Nudges at least once for as many players as possible each session; looking for the best in all the play around the table and spread the awards around as equitably as possible.

Use some sort of token as the currency for your Nudges. Glass beads, poker chips, coins, sweets would all be fine. As you give out Nudges pass over the tokens for the player to keep. As the player spends Nudges they give back the tokens (or eat them).



Navigating – A Summary

It's a lot of fun taking the role of Navigator in a *Wordplay* game. It can seem overwhelming at first but once you've dipped your toe into the creative waters of world and story creation you may find it addictive.

- Create worlds based on your own imagination or through the work of others.
- Navigator and players can collaborate to gather the core ideas for the world.
- Work with your players to get consensus about the sort of game that you are going to play and use shared goals as a way of bringing characters together.
- *Wordplay* doesn't require detailed rules. Bonus dice can be used to allow for any apparent complexity in a Challenge situation.
- Navigator characters, adversaries and creatures can all be described simply using one Trait and a die value.
- Add more Traits to these to give a more rounded view and useful Traits to use in a Challenge.
- Everything that is described in a game effectively has Traits. These can be given a dice value and used in your game to give circumstantial bonuses adding yet more dice into players or opponents hands.
- *Wordplay* is readily accepting of inspiration from literature, scripts and other games. Lift original text to create Traits for games using *Wordplay*. There is nothing better than describing a character or setting than by using the original author's words and applying them directly into the game.
- Challenges can be managed flexibly by applying circumstantial bonuses. Apparently complex situations with many variable factors can be reduced down to one or two bonuses.
- For example, missile weapon use can be affected by range, cover and scale.
- Don't worry about detail. Sprinkle bonus dice and Nudges about the table and play.
- Large and apparently complex situations such as huge battles can be expressed in the standard way using *Wordplay*: assign Traits, build opposing hands of dice, roll the dice, highest number of successes wins and check the outcome on the Outcome Table.
- Play with reality by setting alternative ranges of successes to get Victory Levels. Three Victory Scales are suggested.
- Goals are powerful drivers of character action. Use short term Goals to boost hands of dice at critical moments.
- Use Nudges as a reward to Players for bringing fun to the gaming.



Themes

Most of the rest of this book is a fully worked through example of a Theme. A Theme is a prepared introduction of the *Wordplay* game for a particular setting or genre. They are detailed to varying levels and are designed to inspire the Navigator with example Traits and ideas for running a game in that setting. *Wordplay* can be used in any setting that you care to dream up, so the offerings in this book can only scratch the surface of the infinite possible Themes that you could realise.

The Themes are structured around a series of headings, which give a loose structure.

INTRODUCTION

Tells you something about the theme and the sort of games that could be played out within it.

SPECIAL ADAPPTIONS

This outlines any special tailoring or extension of the *Wordplay* game rules to ensure a good match with the Theme. Scale, Nudges and other game rules will be here.

PEOPLE

Traits for characters, based around distinct groups of peoples that might inhabit this Theme.

PLACES

Traits for characters that are based on the places that might exist in this Theme. Place can shape a character; it could be that the environment has strongly moulded the character and defined how they think and act. It could also be the place that the character has escaped from, that they are reacting to and pushing against. Pick a place for your character and use the suggested Traits as inspiration for your own character's defining Traits

PROFESSIONS

Traits for characters that are based on the occupations they may have.

EQUIPMENT

Example equipment that characters may acquire and use.

The Themes provided here are examples for inspiration and are only a starter for ten, to be adapted and expanded in any way you see fit. You can certainly use these Themes straight out of the book and start playing – but don't let anyone dictate what Traits your character has. The best Traits will come from your own fertile imagination.



Make your own themes, create your own Traits and share them!

Epic Fantasy

Welcome to an ancient world of swords and sorcery, of castles and keeps, of dungeons and haunted tombs, of warring states and meddling supernatural powers. This is a place and time of great exploits against impossible odds. In this world, humankind is far from alone. Other, more ancient peoples have their own realms and secret purposes.

This theme continues to be the one of the most popular of settings for roleplaying games. Player characters will play heroes bound together by fate and some overarching common purpose, to make their way in a dangerous and unpredictable world full of magic and heroic deeds, facing implacable evil, with little hope of survival. They will become movers and shakers who, in the telling of their saga, have a profound impact on the world, perhaps changing its course forever, or at least until a dark lord rises again in a bid for world domination.

This world is further shared with creatures and beasts out of our many myths and legends. Ancient and avaricious, virtuous and vicious, expect the unexpected from them and you might just survive.

This Theme will explore the following:

- People, Places and Profession Traits to inspire character creation and populate your epic fantasy setting.
- Example magical artefacts, both great and small.
- Creatures that can be used as is, or serve as a springboard for your own creations.
- Examples of the myriad of monsters that could infest your setting and bring terror to your player characters.

SPECIAL ADAPTIONS

Epic Fantasy uses Nudges as written in the core rules (page page 45). Most of the major magics operate at Scale Level 4 (S4). Some more minor magics operate at a lower scale level. ical races and extraordinary creatures are provided with possible low level Scale advantages due to their inherently magical nature, extraordinary size or other advantages. These are optional.

POPULATING THE SETTING

Whether you decide to create your own epic fantasy setting or adapt an existing one, the following sections will provide you with a starting set of ideas on the Peoples, Places and Professions that will be available as Traits in play. Players can pick one from each category and use the Traits as a jumping off point when creating their characters.

The flavour of your setting will, in part, come through the Trait descriptions for each of these sections. Each new place that you discover, every meddlesome deity, slithering horror and beautiful valley will provide you with descriptions that can



be used in play. Note them down as inspiration strikes and build your library of Traits for use in play.

People

As the gods warred and created, their legacy lives and breathes in the numerous different peoples that inhabit the world. While humanity dominates the cities, plains and river lands, other non-human people prosper in mountain halls, dark ancient forests and the wild lands beyond field and village. The relationship between man and these peoples can vary considerably due to the events of the world's history.

In this world many of the different 'races', as they are popularly spoken of in this genre, can be portrayed as player characters. Some of the better known non human people are listed below.

Dwarves

Dwarves are a long lived people who dwell in their ancient and wondrous halls hewn into great mountains far away from the prying eyes of men. Short of height but stocky and built to withstand the fires of their forges (and the dragons that hunt them), the bearded dwarves delve deep into the earth to find riches and gold.

Highly secretive people, with their own ancient language, they emerge from their mountain kingdoms to trade and make defensive alliances with men. A dwarf never forgets or forgives a wrong, and has a deep-rooted avarice for treasures and fine craftsmanship. Dwarves have a power for crafting metals and stone like no other, with their armourers greatly sought after by all the peoples of the world.

They have enormous appetites for food and drink, especially large quantities of ale. In counsel and debate, a dwarf will loudly proclaim their view and expect everyone to agree with him; he's a dwarf after all, what more reason can you need! Female dwarves are rarely if ever seen outside of their mountain halls, leading to much speculation as to their appearance, bearded or otherwise, or even if they exist at all. Some say that dwarves are themselves hewn and crafted from stone and brought to life through an ancient ritual of making. They are long lived, many times a human lifespan, weathering slowly like the stones amongst which they live.

TYPICAL GOALS

- To retake the treasure hoard that the dragon has stolen and return to my hall.
- To slay Azug the orc and spear his head over the high pass as a warning to his kind that none shall pass into my realm and live.
- To exceed the prowess of Tamial the elf in the forthcoming battle, confirming the superiority of dwarf kind over the elves.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Dwarves are at S1 for all Challenges that involve physical endurance, greed, crafting jewels and metal, withstanding fire attacks and fighting orcs. They may also gain circumstantial bonuses for bating elves, being in tunnels and reduced encumbrance penalties.



TRAITS

Body: Axe fighting, Drink you under the table, Huge appetite, Impervious to fire, Impressive Beard, Made of stone, Short, Stocky, Strong

Mind: Construct hall, Delving deep, Dragon lore, Explosives, History of the dwarves, Mining, Never forget a wrong, See in the gloomy underground, Siege craft, Runes

Soul: Craftsmanship (specify - e.g. armourer, jewellsmith, metal worker, mining, stonemason), Emphatic, Forge and Hammer, Greedy, Hate orcs, Honour clan, Laugh at danger, Secretive, Vengeance is mine, Wary of elves

TYPICAL EQUIPMENT

Dwarves are able to fashion the strongest and most efficient weapons. Combining of fine dwarven armour and weapons will grant a +3d equipment bonus.

Elves

The Elves are an ancient people who once ruled the lands during a legendary age long before the men that hold sway today. Now, they are a secretive and shadowy people, living in forest kingdoms, woven in magic, deep in the wild lands and forgotten places. Not all paths to these centres of elven power are either known or understood. Elves and men may have fought together in the past against common enemies, however their differences in outlook and the elves mistrust of (what they consider to be) weak-minded men, keep them apart.

Elves are a tall, slender and beautiful people who are extremely long lived. Some say that they are in fact immortal, only parting the world due to violence or grief over the corruption of beauty. Disease has little effect upon them. As such, elves take a more patient, longer term view of all things when compared to men – who can mistake this as indecision or lethargy. The elves natural power in the realms of magic leads men to view them with fear, suspicion and sometimes greed.

TYPICAL GOALS

- To travel into the lands of ‘men and despair’ to recover the beauty of the Lumien Glade before it is lost for ever.
- Send warning to the king of the realm of men that the Dark Lord has awoken and gathers his forces.
- Find and return the Sword of Anuthiel to my homeland in readiness for the coming battle.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Elves are at S1 for all Challenges that involve physical beauty and movement and crafting works of art. They may also gain circumstantial bonuses for being in forests and starlight.

TRAITS

Body: Beautiful, Blend into the forest, Bow, Enchanting dance, Eternal, Fluid grace, Lithe, Resist disease, Run, Sword, Tall



Mind: Hear leaves falling, Magic (Earth, Moon, Plant, Water), Memory of the first days, See clearly in starlight, See to the horizon, Tree speech, Understand animals, Understand plants

Soul: Appreciate beauty, Craftsmanship, Fury of the storm, Joyful laugh, Look into the heart, Mesmerising, Sing

TYPICAL EQUIPMENT

Beautifully crafted weapons and armour +3d

Half Folk

A diminutive people, generally no higher than four feet tall, who live in small farming villages in tucked away corners of the kingdoms of men. They are a stoic and kind hearted people with an honest love for farming, song and merriment. In general they are incurious and uninterested in the grand affairs of men. Despite their better nature, this capable people often seem to find themselves mixed up in all sorts of adventures.

Typical Goals

- To eat as much breakfast as possible before setting off this morning.
- To protect the village from those that would do it harm.
- To prove to my companions that a lack of stature should not be underestimated, by taking the great elvan blade from right under the orc warlord's nose.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

They gain circumstantial bonuses for being recently fed.

TRAITS

Body: Diminutive, Get out of the way, Huge appetite, Jolly dancing, Keep on walking, Stealthy

Mind: Brewing, Farming, Hear the seasons speak

Soul: Appreciate beauty, Blow pipe smoke patterns, Craftsmanship, Green fingers, Honest, Incurious, Joyful laugh, Kind hearted, Sing, Stoic

TYPICAL EQUIPMENT

Beautifully crafted walking boots, sticks and knapsacks +2d bonus on energetic long walks

Orcs

Glorying in power and battle, the wretched grey ashen skinned monsters scream through fanged and crooked yellow teeth, seeking out prey with their red-glowing, light sensitive eyes. Orcs are evil, bloodthirsty and violent. They enjoy looting and overcoming enemies in battle. They are commonly found in the service of a dark lord, fighting in armies and terrorising settled lands. Orcs are skilled fighters, however they require need strong commanders as they are undisciplined and quickly break formation unless controlled with a rod of steel.



TYPICAL GOALS:

- To eat man flesh today, no matter how I get it.
- To pick at least one fight and draw blood.
- To charge into the fray and thrash wildly when the time comes.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

They gain circumstantial bonuses for not being in direct sunlight.

TRAITS

Body: Archery, Batter, Dodge, Gouge and bite, Relentless pursuit, Sword, Thrash about menacingly, Uncaring of wounds, Wiry strength

Mind: Cunning, Know land, Raiding tactics, Smell man flesh, Speak Orcish, Survive on nothing

Soul: Bloodthirsty, Evil hearted, Fear bright sunlight, Fierce, Glory in violence, Lust to kill, Respond to the lash, Undisciplined, Worship Dark Lord

TYPICAL EQUIPMENT

Basic and brutally effective weapons and rudimentary armour +1d

Phof

The Phof are slight and slender humanoids with green skin, large pointed ears and sharp white teeth. They are unerringly attracted to magic and greatly respect wizards and all users of magic. They are compulsive traders and merchants, travelling far and trading where they go. They are a restless people, never keen to stay in one place for long. There are a significant number of phof in the human cities, travelling from their warren like city of Phoflin.

Each new place that you discover, every meddlesome deity, slithering horror and beautiful valley will provide you with descriptions that can be used in play...

TYPICAL GOALS:

- To close the trade deal with a tidy profit for the honour of my clan.
- To recover the wizard's lost tome so that he may give me the magical light stones of Ezrarr.
- To acquire my travelling companions most valuable assets through fair but profitable trade agreements.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

They are at S1 for all trading and evaluating.

TRAITS

Body: Green skin, Large pointy ears, Sharp teeth, Slight and slender

Mind: Banking, Evaluate goods, Extract profit, Eye for a bargain, Magic lore, Trade markets

Soul: All that glimmers is good, Fastidious, Gregarious, Haggle

**TYPICAL EQUIPMENT:**

Gaudy jewellery (especially earrings and nose rings) +1d, Random barter goods

Trolls

These giant creatures live and prey on the outskirts of civilisation. Trolls are perhaps the greatest and most feared warriors, often the captains of the dark powers. Immense strength and ferocity combined with scaly skin and an instinct for brutality leaves their opponents little quarter. If you wish to accentuate their fearsome size further then put them on Scale 1.

Ancient lore suggests that trolls were once a prosperous and peaceable folk in the ages before men, however they were caught and twisted by a catastrophe that has locked them into a cycle of servitude to death and destruction.

TYPICAL GOALS

- To lead the vanguard of battle and smash through the enemy lines.
- To carry the dark lord's crystal beyond the mountain range as instructed.
- To romance a beautiful princess.

SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Trolls are at S2 for strength and size.

They gain circumstantial bonuses for being under bridges.

TRAITS

Body: Barely acknowledge pain, Bellowing roar, Mace, Fearsome strength, Fist and Claw, Giant, Huge strides, Knock aside blade, Scaly hide, Unstoppable

Mind: Find weakness, Sense movement, Smell prey

Soul: Command minions, Pitiless, Rage of destruction

TYPICAL EQUIPMENT

Crudely crafted weapons +1d.

The creature's hide can be used as a helping Trait or contribute to a total +2d equipment bonus.

Places

The world in which you set your epic fantasy will have the tallest of mountains, the deepest of gorges, the widest of plains, the most inhospitable wild lands, the hottest deserts and most treacherous ice realms. You will craft places of great beauty and elegance, such as the elven forest city or the tall towered city of Askaron – capital of the great empire of men. In similar fashion you will create dread fortresses, haunted ruins, blighted and broken realms, ugly places of terror and despair.

Men now either command great empires or struggle to hold on against invading powers, depending on your story. In their great kingdoms are baronies, autocratic city states and barely understood border regions. In between the rivalry, wars and alliances are the epic stories that centre on the player characters, stories that bring



all such kingdoms to a shuddering attention. Other powers cling on to their great realms hoping to survive these dangerous times.

Beauty and terror, stillness and vibrancy, peace and war, good and evil, are all themes that you can explore in these places. What follows are some places from which player characters can draw some personal history. Heroes can appear from anywhere and these are but a few examples to fire your imagination. They may emerge unknown from wild and unknown lands or strike from the inner circle of the barons that rule their holdings. The list below is far from exhaustive. Describe your own setting locations, allocate Traits and there it will be, ready to come to life in the heroic deeds of the player characters.

The Huge Metropolis

Often the great capital of the empire, the metropolis is a wondrous mix of cultures and peoples from across the land. This is a place of learning, art and wealth, where the possibilities are endless and anything can be yours – for a price. It is also a dark place where you can easily become lost in body, mind and soul, never to return to friends and kin.

TRAITS

Body: Diseased, Dodge bedpan, Move through crowd, Resist disease, Work the crowd

Mind: Avoid gaze, Blend into the crowd, City Life, Know laws, Navigate streets, Sense mood, Speak other language, Streetwise

Soul: Allegiance to Great Metropolis, Haggle, Lonely, Look inconspicuous, Oratory, Pampered

The Isolated Village

Far away from the main trade routes and ancient roads of decaying empires, hidden between hill and forest, lies the isolated village. Self sufficient, this forgotten community has either become detached from the rest of the realm, is geographically challenged or has specific reasons for hiding away from the rest of civilisation.

The village perhaps has a secret that has to be kept at all costs. Is it a home to some evil or curse? Or perhaps a sanctuary, an idyll, that provides the heroes with much needed rest and respite – a safe home away from the battles that they have faced? An isolated tower just beyond the village could be home to an old wise wizard with enigmatic answers to the heroes' difficult questions. The tavern, small and well kept, is either warm and welcoming, or filled with suspicious locals who wish the player characters would move on.

The village's isolation weaves an effect on the inhabitants. Here you will find unexpressed love, hidden royalty, hero wannabes, simple wisdom and suspicious knives in the dark.

There's almost certainly an adventure or three in or around the isolated village.



TRAITS

Body: Lungs full of fresh air, Strong as the mountains

Mind: Beast lore, Farming, Forage, Hunting, Ignorant, Know everybody in the village, Know secret lore, Know the way to the hidden dungeon, Magic craft, Self sufficient

Soul: Direct, Dreamer, Four leagues is a world away, Heir to the throne, Naïve, Secrets and lies, Simple wisdom, Suspicious, Starry eyed, Uncomplicated, Wary of strangers, Wide eyed innocent, Yearning to find love

The Feudal Kingdom

The great empires and kingdoms of men dominate great swathes of the land. These lands are controlled by a series of legal obligations, flowing down from the loftiest of kings to the lowliest of serfs. Each must play the part assigned to them by the gods and their birth.

As a player character's home 'Place', the kingdom itself provides few ready made traits due to the wide variety of locations and places in society found within. There will be isolated villages and a great metropolis found within.

*Beauty and
terror, stillness
and vibrancy,
peace and war,
good and evil,
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places...*

TRAITS

Body: Trained in the army levy

Mind: Know village lands, Laws and customs of the realm

Soul: Allegiance to lord and king, Know your place, Tug forelock

The Savage Wilds

Beyond the kingdoms, in the most inhospitable wastelands are the savage wilds. Here the carefully constructed laws of civilisation are absent. Monsters live here, dark secrets fester and sinister forces gather for the next assault on the soft riches of the kingdoms. People also live here, either through misfortune, banishment or due to ancient pacts, blood rights, or a lingering history that binds a connection to the land.

Needless to say, the peoples that come from the edges of civilisation, from the lands of monsters, are resourceful survivors. Able to find a living in the harshest of environments. Some combination of wily cunning, hardy lore, force of arms and ancient secrets keeps these people together and alive. Perhaps heroes will arise from the savage wilds that will save or conquer the soft comfortable lands of men?

TRAITS

Body: Call that a knife?, Desperate strength, Force of arms, Hardy, Keep out of the way, Run, Weapon skills

Mind: Ancient secrets, Find the ancient paths, Monster hunting, Survive in the wilds, Wily cunning

Soul: Bound to the wildlands(!), Resigned to fate, Unflinching



The Northern Thane Lands

A rugged, craggy, wintry land that is home to tight knit communities, woven together by the blood lines of their clans. In the deep valleys cut by clear crystal rivers and clothed in dark pine forests, small villages and occasional towns of northern people can be found.

In the deep fjords, fierce sea raiders venture forth to pillage rich lands. By the cold forests the Thane landers look south to the kingdoms and city states with an eye for trade, riches and conquest.

TRAITS

Body: Carouse raucously, Enormous axe, Flaxen hair, Resist cold, Rugged, Scarily beautiful when angry, Spear and shield

Mind: Clan knowledge, Clan laws, Farming, Fishing, Dragon lore, Fight in a shield wall, Know Clan Stories, Make a good fire, Navigate the sea, Predict weather, Read the sea, Speak own language, Survive weather, Tie knots, Understand ships

Soul: Boast, Declaim deeds, Honoured by clan, Proud, Resolute, Sing, Storytelling

The Forest Kingdom

In the depths of the most ancient forest, amongst the ancient tree sentinels who have seen all of time since the beginning of the living ages, in forgotten glades, is the forest kingdom. Elven watchers, fugitive men and never before seen creatures live in harmony with the forest, drawing sustenance and protection from the endless canopy.

TRAITS

Body: Archer, Blend in with the trees, Climb

Mind: Find the way in the forest, Faerie lore, Forest survival, Listen to the forest, Nature magic, Woodcraft

Soul: At home in the forest

The Mountain Citadel

Hewn out of the living rock and shouldered by the great mountain is the citadel. Dominating the surrounding lands from its high vantage point and protected from direct assault, the mountain citadel is either a fortress city of men or a façade for the great delving of the dwarves, who live in the depths of the mountains in great halls connected by tunnels & caves.

These city fortresses are built in times of conflict, when natural defences are vital to prepare for invading armies, dragons and other threats.

TRAITS

Body: Climb mountain, Delving, Tireless ascent

Mind: Head for heights, Navigate tunnels, See for miles, See in the dark, Vigilant

Soul: Hard of heart, Masonry, Steadfast

There are no 'right or wrong' traits, only ones that describe your character and that can be used to good effect in Challenges...



The Plains and Steppes

The wide grass plains roll on forever. A sea of waving green grass and flowered meadows only broken by the occasional mountain range and forest. In the winter these lands are a forbidding realm of ice and deep snow that sweeps in from beyond the mountains and settles for many a long month. In this unforgiving land live hardy nomads who endlessly travel to hunt and fish throughout the year, following age long ancestral trails protected by nature spirits.

There is a legend that a great warrior king will unify the nomad peoples and lead them into the West in a glorious campaign of conquest.

TRAITS

Body: Born to the saddle, Hardy, Horse archery

Mind: Horse lore, Hunting, Make camp, Navigate by the stars, Plains lore, Scan horizon, Weather lore

Soul: One with nature, Patient, Revere ancestors, Worship nature spirits

Professions

Heroes may arrive onto the epic fantasy stage as a youth with little or no experience of the world. More often than not however, they have undertaken some training and experienced something of the ways of the world. The following list provides inspiration for Traits based on a profession's world view and the training and experience that it provides.

There are many possible professions unlisted here. The examples below provide a springboard to create additional ones, some of which will be unique to the cultures created in your own epic fantasy. The Traits found in these professions are to be used either word for word or as a starter for your own Traits. There are no 'right or wrong' Traits, only ones that describe your character and that can be used to good effect in Challenges.

Alchemist

In the great metropolis, hidden in the dark corners, near the marketplace and close to the halls of the scholars is the alchemist. In a warren of rooms he toils to unlock the secrets of the very fabric of the world. Through long experimentation there can be an understanding of the base principles of substance, such that it can be altered and, ultimately, controlled

TYPICAL GOALS:

- To discover the secret of the lost elixir of life.
- To have my transformation of earth to fire accepted by the guild loremasters.
- To travel East to recover eggs of the sky gryphons.

TRAITS

Body: Dive for cover, Juggle bottles, Precise measurement

Mind: Alchemy (Power effects), Anticipate explosion, Cunning experiments, Elemental lore, Eye for detail, See the essence, Understand the physical elements



Soul: Patient, Persevere

Wealth: 5d

Typical Equipment: Alchemical laboratory +2d

Farmer

The humble bedrock of society tends the land and brings sustenance to the people. From these apparently humble beginnings great heroes are born. The patient understanding and hard work required to work the land breeds strong characters that are ready for the heroic maelstrom that is to come. Not all farmers will own the land that they work. Many will be indentured to the service of a lord who owns the land and the serfs that toil upon his lands.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Protect the farmland from the rampaging wolf bandits.
- Harvest the field before sun down.
- Leave the farm to seek adventure with the company of the Hallowed Spear.

TRAITS

Body: Carry things, Endure the elements, Hours of toil, Ploughing, Spear combat

Mind: Animal lore, Expect storm, Farming, Trapping

Soul: Downtrodden, Dreaming of a better life, Earthy sense of humour, Love family, Respect the elements, Salt of the earth

Wealth: 3d

Typical Equipment: Hoe +1d, Large bag of grain seed, Pack horse, Plough, +1d, Small farmstead

Gladiator

You have been selected from amongst other slaves because it is thought that you can be trained to kill in the arena. Once in the training camp you were honed to be ready for all forms of bloodthirsty combat to ensure that you put on a good show to the baying crowd.

If successful, the gladiator may become a celebrity, facing death and receiving glory from the insatiable mob. Nobles bored with the affairs of court may make themselves known to these lethal showmen (and women).

TYPICAL GOALS

- To survive the next tournament by any means.
- To win freedom by slaying Aloxx the Unpleasant in the Great Contest.
- To escape the gladiator pens and gain vengeance on the slave master.

TRAITS

Body: Agile, Endure wound, Fleet of foot, Strong and muscled, Weapon combat, Wrestling

Mind: Arena combat, Focussed and calm in combat, Spot enemies weakness



Soul: Fearless of death, Friend to no-one, Glorious speech, Guileful, Kill or be killed, Pitiless, Play to the gallery

Wealth: 1d

Typical Equipment: Light armour, Metal helm, Weapons +2d

Knightly Warrior

Trained to fight, prepared for battle and encased in metal, the knightly warrior is a noble, sworn to uphold their feudal fealty through exertion of their will by force or arms and wise council. Knights lead armies into battle, protect the people and contest for power in the kingdom.

TYPICAL GOALS

- To unhorse the Black Knight at the tournament.
- To gain the favour of her Ladyship in front of the high nobles of the realm.
- To kill the dragon and claim the throne.

TRAITS

Body: Charge, Crushing blow, Endure wound, Hardy, Jousting, Keep balance, Mighty, Riding, Run in armour, Slice straight through, Strong, Tireless, Unstoppable, Weapon skills (state one or more of: One handed sword, Axe, Mace, Spear, Lance, etc), Wear armour comfortably

Mind: Animal handling, Battle Strategy, Court etiquette, Falconry, Formation tactics, Heraldry, Horsemanship, Hounds, Manage estate, Organise camp, Siege craft, Spot opponents weakness, Stewardship, Treat wound

Soul: Arrogant, Bark orders, Brave, Calm in battle, Chivalrous, Cold, Command, Confident, Coward, Decisive, Doomed, Forbidden love to the queen, Forthright, Honour Lord, Honourable, Loyal to the King, Righteous, Seen too much killing, Taciturn, Vicious

Wealth: 4d

Typical Equipment: Average quality weapons and brigantine armour +2d, Warhorse (see creatures section, page 136)

Merchant

Always with an eye for a new venture that will bring profit and riches, the merchant keeps a cool and level eye on the business of making money. Conversant with the markets, the merchant can travel between the cities, bringing new trade goods along with secrets, intelligence and the possibility of spying.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Squeeze as much profit out of the fat noble as I can.
- Determine the truth of the secret tunnel into the palace.
- Open the market at Dialzar with a flourish of the finest silks.

TRAITS

Body: Drive wagon, Ride



Mind: Count quickly, Evaluate goods, Eye for a profit, Find the best market, Know pricing, Read and write

Soul: Barter, Good reputation with Guild, Haggle, Ostentatious

Wealth: 5d

Typical Equipment: Trade goods, Market stall, Wagon,

Necromancer

The necromancer has the power to bring a form of life to the dead, controlling their actions by power of magic. They are feared and reviled by all right thinking people, so are necessarily secretive in pursuit of their power and aims. However, they look to the time when they have sufficient strength to undermine the very fabric of society with their evil power. That will be the time that all will come to fear them.

The Necromancy Trait is magic and will have many ghoulish Power Effect Traits associated with it.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Unleash the zombie horde on the city.
- Raise the old king of the realm and place him back on the throne under my control!
- Discover and learn the 'Rite of the Seven Openings' before mid winter.

TRAITS

Body: Grave digging, Pale, Dark staring eyes, Skulk in shadows, Waxy pallor

Mind: Books of the dead, Necromancy (list powers), See in the dark, See the dead

Soul: Control the living through death, Delight in putrefaction, Entice the dead, Love zombie plaything, Nightmares, Worm like

Wealth: 3d

Typical Equipment: Bone focus +1d, Summoning crypt +1d, Undead henchman (lots preferably)

Noble

The upper echelons of society live in dangerous times. With the greedy clamour of the noble houses at their backs, they must be wary of the sudden infighting that can alter the balance of power. At the same time, they are charged with the governance of their lands and management of the wealth that they have. Minor nobles have small estates with modest incomes, while the royal line can govern large swathes of land and live in major fortifications.

TYPICAL GOALS

- To gain the favour of the queen at the expense of House Tramir.
- To protect the village from the raiders with my life if necessary.
- To shovel in as much partridge tart as possible.



TRAITS

Body: Corpulent, Fit and healthy, Generously girthed, Poised, Washed and oiled
Mind: Affairs of the realm, Etiquette, Eyes in the back of your head, Formal dancing, Noble house Lore, Political manoeuvring, Scheming, This year's season
Soul: Bored, Greedy, Command, Fop, Get my own way, Idle pleasuring, Love peasant girl, Oratory, Overthrow king, Paternal concern, Superior, Treacherous

Wealth: 6d

Typical Equipment: Cloak +1d, Sumptuous estate, Noble steed or Carriage, Rich velvet shirt/dress +2d, Signet ring +1d, Finely crafted sword +2d

Pirate

Pirates are the cut-throat thieves and robbers of the seas, sailing under black flags against honest merchants who plying their wares between the ports. Pirates are swashbuckling, roguish buccaneers making a bid for the freedom upon the open seas to escape from a harsh oppressive world. They might be both of these things, but whichever is selected there is no doubt that pirates are fun!

TYPICAL GOALS

- Find Princess Tarima's lost soul, buried by the dread wizard Jooahl.
- Recover dread pirate Trevar's treasure from the Isle of Skulls.
- Capture the illusive merchantmen before it reaches the safety of Port Gallos.

TRAITS

Body: Boarding, Brawling, Copious alcohol, Clamber up, Dig for treasure, Row row row your boat, Sea legs, Swim, Swing on rigging, Womanising
Mind: Know the seas, Map reading, Navigate, Pirate code, Pirate patois, Sailing, Sense storm, Ship heavy weapons, Ship lore
Soul: A woman in every port, Bloodthirsty, Lecherous, Live for today, Romantic hero, Superstitious

Wealth: 2d (most ill gotten wealth is swiftly lost)

Typical Equipment: Cutlass and light armour +2d, Earrings, Parrot

Priest

Called by your god to serve their cause in the mortal realm, you are infused with gifted power and provide very tangible evidence of the authority of your god and their purpose in the world. Your own nature is a reflection of the deity's. As such, you emulate the characteristics and stories of your god. A priest of a sensual pleasure god will be very different from a priest of a terrifying war god. A priest of a war god would have many Traits taken from the Warrior profession for example. Each deity provides a list of Traits that followers, priests in particular, would live and breath. See page 84 for examples.

The Traits identified below are generic examples to be spiced with theistically appropriate additions.



TYPICAL GOALS

- Follow the deity's will and sacrifice the young prince.
- Warn the city of the coming pestilence.
- Redistribute the wealth from the tomb to the poor of the city.

TRAITS

Body: A good stoning, Booming voice, Fasting, Flagellate, Gaunt, One too many pastries

Mind: Conduct deity's ceremony, Know holy texts, Read and write, Reason, Sacred lore, Sanctify, See into the soul, See the divine purpose

Soul: Abstinence, Aspect of the deity, Calming, Commanding, Divine power effects, Fear soulless sorcery, Pious, Preach message, Worship deity

Wealth: 3d

Typical Equipment: Holy symbol +1d, Impressive robes +2d

Princess

Pampered and protected, the princess has everything she could possibly want, except her freedom. She is every knight's and dragon's desire and will find herself in all sorts of adventures, often despite herself.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Boss everyone about.
- Do as little as possible while being pampered.
- Escape from father's palace during the masked ball.

TRAITS

Body: Agile, Beautiful to behold, Dancing, Knife fighting, Piercing screech, Poised, Ride with decorum, Run in high heels, Scratch pull and bite

Mind: Court intrigue, Courtly manners, Embroidery, Etiquette, Falconry, Fine needlework, Heraldry, High fashion, Manage estate, Play instrument

Soul: Baleful look, Expect everything, Gossip, Manipulative, Mocking taunt, Pampered, Secret love for unlikely hero, Simper, Strong Willed, Winning smile

Wealth: 6d

Typical Equipment: Precarious hair +2d, Sumptuous gown +3d

Rogue

The rogue looks out from the shadows, existing on the fringes of society. A chancer or criminal, making good at the expense of others. The rogue may be likeable and kind hearted or cold and murderous – what they have in common is an ability to acquire what is needed, wherever it may be, with an inherent knack of evading the pervading authorities when the alarm is raised.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Steal the Arokhane jewel from the temple.
- Restore the princess to the palace. It never hurts to have friends in high places.



- Replace the missing painting without anyone knowing how.

TRAITS

Body: Agile, Ambush, Blade work, Climb, Cut purse, Hide, Deft fingers, Open Locks, Move silently, Swift

Mind: Appraise goods, Calculating, Find a way in, Follow without being seen, Hear the faintest noise, Navigate a structure, Streetwise, See details, The art of not being seen, Thieves cant, Trap knowledge

Soul: Bluff convincingly, Casual violence, Cynical, Live for the moment, Look innocent, Member of thieves guild, Sixth sense for danger, Superstitious

Wealth: 1d

Typical Equipment: Just the right length rope +1d, Lock picks +1d, Shadowy cloak +1d, Shortsword +1d

Warrior

From all walks of life, the warrior has been trained to fight, either alone or in organised units on the battlefield. The warrior is a practical killing machine who must be prepared to endure hardship, suffer wounds and expect an early grave.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Survive today's great battle so that I can return to my family.
- Stay vigilant throughout my watch.
- Slay the ogre in the forest before it strikes the village again.

TRAITS

Body: Arcing blow, Bludgeon, Brawling, Carry heavy burden, Carry on with empty stomach, Dirty fighting tricks, Endure wound, Formation fighting, Hack and slash, Hardy, Haymaker blow, Keep going, March all day, Mighty, Riding, Run in armour, Shield Wall, Strong, Tireless, Weapon skills (state one or more to suit), Wear armour without noticing

Mind: Animal handling, Battle Strategy, Command army, Formation tactics, Horsemanship, Look for danger, Make camp, Manage supply, Siege craft, Spot opponents weakness, Steady aim, Think with sword, Treat wound

Soul: Bark orders, Berserker, Bloodthirsty, Brave, Calm in battle, Cold, Command, Coward, Decisive, Doomed, Follow orders without questioning, Glower, Intimidating, Overconfident, Resigned, Seen too much killing, Taciturn, Vicious, We're all going to die

Wealth: 3d

Typical Equipment: Average quality weapons and brigantine armour +2d

Wizard

Either from birth, through some kind of epiphany, exposure to some mystical event or through secret and difficult training, the wizard has command of magical powers. These abilities defy and control the physical world in ways that cannot be easily explained by those without the hidden knowledge.



Although the wizard focuses study on the magical arts, they will acquire much lore, gaining a wide understanding of the world. Unless of course the wizard is instinctive and spontaneous in the expression of their magic. Such a magic wielder may not need to study the ancient and great works to garner power, instead they have an inherent and opportunistic capacity to create magical effects.

The Trait list includes Magic power. This is a catch all that is to be individualised. Perhaps the Magic power is Summoning, Elemental magic, Enchantments or the dark arts. Perhaps your wizard has more than one Magic power. In addition to the Magic power, the wizard may have one or more Power effects that they can use in the game.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Learn the saving spell before the stars align for the last time.
- Track the hidden way directly to the source of the evil.
- Unlock the ancient spirit lord and bind to my will.

TRAITS

Body: Control the flow of power, Faraway look, Twinkling eyes, Vibrant

Mind: Cantrips, Craft magic, Herbalist, History of the ages, Learned, Lost languages, Magic lore, Magic power (list), Prepare fireworks, Read and write, Sense magic

Soul: Arrogant, Balance in all things, Benevolent, Cautious of magic, Condescending, Power crazed, Seen too much

Wealth: 5d

Typical Equipment: Magic focus +1d, Pointy hat, Spell book +1d

Youth

Inexperienced and open to the possibilities that life brings, the youth has yet to develop their abilities. This fresh faced individual IS the future and is looking towards it with hope and the expectation that they can shape it their way.

TYPICAL GOALS

- Seek adventure with the heroes that have arrived at the village.
- Learn everything I can from the wizard for as long as she puts up with me.
- Become king and rule everyone from a big palace.

TRAITS

Body: Dodge, Fresh faced, Full of energy, Run tirelessly, Vigorous, Youthful strength

Mind: Inexperienced, Learn quickly, Quick thinking

Soul: Gullible, Love passionately, Open minded, Optimistic

Wealth: 1d

Typical Equipment: none



Powers: Magic

The worlds of epic fantasy are home to rare and powerful magic that can change the very fabric of reality. Sorcerers weave potent spells, summon powerful entities from beyond the veil and are both used to protect or destroy whole kingdoms.

Magic wielding characters will be rare among the realms of men, however they will be powerful when found. Typically, magical effects will operate on one scale up from the mundane as described in the main game. The elves will have access to major magic that hides and protects their remaining fragile presence in the growing world of men. Dwarven magic is bound to the forge and workshops where weapons, jewels and other artefacts are crafted to great acclaim. It's no wonder they are such a target for dragons!

MAGICAL ARTEFACTS

As wizards live and die, part of their legacy are the magical enchantments that they created during their lifetime. These persisting works of magic remain as legendary treasures to be found by brave adventuring heroes; treasures that hold secrets and powers that can be turned to good or evil, treasures that can turn worlds inside and out.

Major Artefacts

Substantial artefacts are most often so old that they have become woven into the very fabric of the world. Here are some examples that can transform your epic fantasy setting.

LEY LINES AND POWER NODES

These invisible magical lines of energy are connected to significant nodes of power, creating a landscape that is unknown to those without magical senses or the maps of the secluded cartomancers. Power nodes are sited around mystically significant geographic features, which can be anything such as a forest glade, icy lake or sharp lonely mountain. The cartomancers wouldn't tell you that they have deciphered the pattern that these nodes create, giving them the power to predict where nodes can be found. Sometimes, unwittingly, men have constructed dwellings over power nodes, causing the nature of the node to permeate throughout the structures.

With the addition of tousled hair and glittery tights, every hero needs a historically portentous enchanted sword...

Power nodes each have their own nature, they are aligned to different forces and vary in complexity. Some can be described in one Trait, whilst others will have a whole range of Traits. Power levels of the nodes also vary significantly.

Traits can provide helping dice to any number of Challenges in their zone of influence. Wizards are able to manipulate the nodes using their Traits directly. The Navigator decides how wide the area of influence is for the node, allowing for some fluctuation due to circumstance.



Example:

A node that powerfully promotes thoughtfulness could simply be described as:

Contemplation 7D.

A sinister node that restlessly erodes the barrier between life and death could be described with the following Traits:

Breaking the barrier 6D, Restless dead 6D, Swirling mists 5D, Whispers of the departed 5D

Ley lines can also provide benefits to those with magic power. Magical sky boats stay afloat upon them, following the pattern of the lines, whilst certain magical schools may gain circumstantial bonuses when in proximity to them.

MISTY ENCHANTMENTS

These perpetual enchantments are often used to protect faerie and elven realms from prying men and other evils. The strength of this enchantment can be set at any level desired by the Navigator or at the level of the casting wizard (if they feature in the game).

These enchantments can have additional Traits associated with them, including: Befuddled and exhausted, Lost your way, Mad with fear, Misty misdirection, Parted from friends, Tendrils from nowhere.

PORTALS

Taking many physical forms, from mirrors to waterfalls to actual doors, portals connect two far away places together. Far away could be in geographic terms or even different worlds or times. Travelling through the portal initiates the power of the portal. How long it takes to reach the other side can also be variable. Transportation could be instantaneous or could seem so to the traveller but in fact take any amount of time. Portal travellers may have to proceed along shadowy roads for some time before emerging out of the other end of the portal.

It is also possible for portals to be randomly interconnected. Entering a portal could take the traveller to one of several locations. This variation could in fact be predictable, dependant on celestial alignments, special festivals or the use of magic.

Discovering the location of a portal and its carefully guarded secrets can form the basis for a whole series of adventures. The opening of a doorway between two apparently unconnected places provides a sudden opportunity to bring tension and conflict to the two settings. Perhaps there is a divine reason for the portal connecting these two places? Something that exists in their collective history that binds the fate of two places together. Or perhaps these portals were created by opportunist wizards or one of the old races to gain power through secret knowledge or to escape a terrible disaster?

Of course, opening any door can lead to unexpected adventure...



Minor Artefacts

Minor artefacts are created by enchanters and are generally usable by others without the need for any magical ability. They typically confer some magical augmentation or effect that either benefits or curses the user.

Each of the example artefacts below assumes that it has been created by a skilled Enchanter (page 81), imbuing the artefact with one or more Power Effects.

Artefacts will either have a limited number of uses per day or have a continuous permanent effect. If they are limited, the effect lasts a number of Challenges equal to half the Enchanting Trait (round up) of the creator. The artefact's Power Effects can either be used as Supporting or Foundation Traits by the user and offer Scale Level 4.

CLOAK OF CONCEALMENT

Created by one of the Shadow Witches of Dahglorn, these heavy weaved, brown cloaks blends the wearer into whatever background they find themselves, several times per day.

Cloak: Dull looking 6d, Inconspicuous 5d, Thick and warm 5d

Power Effects: Blend into background 6d, Confuse enemies blow 6d, Shadow friend 5d

DRAFT OF HEALING

The healing draft has several doses in a prepared gourd. Each dose can be used to heal some form of damage related to the Power Effect of the healing draft. Usually this will be effective in dealing with physical Body Trait Damage, but could instead be created to act against Mind or Soul Damage Traits depending on the Power Effect bound to the potion. The draft's Power Effect is on the Magic Scale (S4), so will provide 4 extra dice against the mundane Damage Traits. The Draft of healing can be supported with other mundane healing Traits when the user builds their hand of dice.

Hastagar's Healing Poultice (four applications in a gourd): Healing of wounds 8d, Revive body 6d

ENCHANTED SWORD

With the addition of tousled hair and glittery tights, every hero needs a historically portentous enchanted sword. Many such blades will have a long saga related to their exploits in the annals of history. The wielder will be able to face foes that no mortal should be able to stand against. As such, the owners of enchanted swords gather about them their own mysteries and stories, attracting the attention of potential friends and foes alike. There is something of a curse to those who carry such blades. This may be a fate that has been imbued into the enchantment or something about the power or spirit that is locked within it. The curse however could be nothing more than the extra attention it brings with it.

Many of these blades will be permanently enchanted with their magical effect by sword magi.



Here are a range of possible effects:

Cleave in twain, Dragonslayer, Flaming nemesis to the pixie horde, Kinslayer, Life drainer, Pierce the spirit veil, Regal authority, Soul stealer, Unbreakable

FLYING CARPET

They are big, ostentatiously tasselled, intricately patterned and can fly. Hang on tight!

Flying Carpet: Magic Scale 4: Fly 7d, Power dive 5d, Stop suddenly 6d

LOVE POTION

This potion drives a chariot through your innermost being and forces a deep love for the next person that the drinker sees. If the potion has been expertly crafted with prepared rites, the drinker can be forced into loving a specified person. Soul Traits can be used to resist the effect however, and depending on the potency of the potion, they can be very hard to resist.

Those enslaved are doomed to stay in love until the effect is broken by magic or through a significant Challenge that seeks to draw the love slave back to their senses.

Potion: Magic Scale 4: Fall madly, truly and deeply in love 6d

RING OF PROTECTION

Crafted by dwarven goldsmiths deep in their mountain fortress, this ring provides physical protection against harm.

Ring: Magic Scale 4: Protect against the elements 6d, Withstand blow 7d

Creatures

In the wide vistas of the lands of your story there will be all sorts of strange and awful creatures. Some may be recognisable, others may be new or wildly fanciful. Below are some suggested Traits to describe some well known creatures that may appear in your stories.

Wild Brown Bear

Scale: Size and Strength S1

TRAITS

Body: Carcass defence 5d, Furry coat 4d, Lumber along 5d, Massive paws and claws 6d, Provoked charge 7d, Sharp teeth 5d, Very powerful 8d

Mind: Build den 5d, Hunting 5d, Smell prey 6d

Soul: Curious 6d, Intimidate wolves 5d, Protect cubs 7d, Solitary 3d



Domestic Dog

TRAITS

Body: Bite and gnaw 4d, Bound 5d, Leap 5d

Mind: Bark a warning 6d, Follow command 5d, Hear unexpected noise 5d, Sniff and track scent 6d,

Soul: Loyal to master 6d, Obedient 5d, Protective 5d

Elephant

Scale: Size and Strength S2

TRAITS

Body: Carry 7d, Charge 5d, Strong 8d, Thick skinned 6d, Thunder about 5d, Trample 6d, Trunk 6d, Tusks 6d

Mind: Hearing 7d, Never forgets 6d, Smell 7d,

Soul: Protect herd 6d, Unexpected rage 5d, Vindictive 6d

*They are a sign
you have left
the safety of
civilisation, that
you have crossed
the portal into
adventure, where
only the unwary
or heroes dare
tread...*

Trained Hawk

Scale: Speed S4

TRAITS

Body: Dive 6d, Dodge 8d, Fly 6d, Peck 6d, Talons 5d

Mind: Hawk eyes 7d

Soul: Back to the glove 6d

Gray Wolf

TRAITS

Body: Bite and gnaw 5d, Fast bounds to prey 6d, Lash out 5d, Powerful 5d, Stamina 5d, Still and silent 6d, Trotting for miles 6d

Mind: Cunning 6d, Know territory 6d, Scent marking 5d, Smell scent and prey 6d

Soul: Frolic 5d, Howl 6d, Lone wolf 5d, Protect pack 6d

Riding Horse

Scale: Size and Strength S1, Speed S2

TRAITS

Body: Balance 5d, Gallop 8d, Kick 4d

Mind: Wide field of vision 7d

Soul: Flee 4d, Protect offspring 4d, Shy away 5d

War Horse

Scale: Size and Strength S3, Speed S2



TRAITS

Body: Balance 6d, Bite 4d, Gallop 6d, Ignore wound 6d, Kick 6d, Smash through 6d, Trample 6d

Mind: Wide field of vision 7d

Soul: Aggressive 5d, Battle rage 6d, Fearless 5d, Respond to rider 6d

Armour +1d

Monsters

In dark forests and haunted wilds, in subterranean dungeon complexes and rampaging across the lands destroying all they find are the monsters. These adversaries of the heroes take many forms, some borrowed from our own myths and legends. They are a sign that you have left the safety of civilisation, that you have crossed the portal into adventure, where only the unwary or heroes dare tread.

All Traits and scores are suggestions. Some powerful monsters may have much higher Trait scores, whilst some may be weaker and have lower scores. Take the suggestions below as a good average.

Ghosts and Malevolent Spirits

Ghosts are mournful spirits clinging onto an existence in the material world. Some may pose no immediate threat to the living and serve only to recount important tales that provide insights into an adventure. Others, called wraiths, are malevolent, seeking to dip their icy fingers inside the bodies of the living, either to feed, kill or to possess.

These spirits linger for all sorts of reasons. They may be bound to a location, most often where they physically died, or where their bodies were buried. It is also possible that a ghost haunts a place of great significance to them when they were living.

As they are incorporeal, ghosts have no Body Traits and cannot be affected by mundane physical force. Magic, the power of the gods and enchanted items can all damage them through Soul Damage Traits.

Ghosts will benefit from a range of circumstantial bonuses, each granting +1d. These might include: being close to place of death or burial, encountered at the same hour of their death, a battlefield, a shadowy spirit realm, or in the dead of night.

TRAITS

Body: Ghosts have no Body Traits

Mind: Incorporeal floaty move 6d, Insane 4d, Remember past life 6d, Sense warm life 6d

Soul: Greedy for life 5d, Mournful 5d, Posses living body 5d, Shivering moan 5d, Strike fear into the living 6d, Suck warm life 6d, Tell story 5d



Giant

Beyond the far kingdoms lies the realm of the old giants, long banished from the inner lands after they fought on the wrong side. These titans are depicted here as great lumbering opponents, sullenly harbouring memories of ancient wrongs, implacable and greatly feared ancient foes. Your giants might be quite different, preserving some of their Scale and Traits related to size.

Scale: Size and Strength S4, Speed S2

TRAITS

Body: Bellow like a storm 6d, Huge strides 5d, Ignore little people 8d, Lumbering 4d, Pick up gently 6d, Smash with tree 7d, Thick skinned 5d, Tread on things 5d
Mind: See for miles 6d, Stories of wrongs done to giants 4d
Soul: Hate humankind 5d, Honour the Giant King 5d, Quick to anger 6d, Love princess 8d, Lust treasure and gold 7d, Resentful 5d, Sullen 6d

Hydra

These creatures are large many headed serpents, with necks sprouting from a lizard like body. They were summoned to the world in ages past during battles between gods and men. Hidden away after the battles faded, they live on as fearsome guardians to legendary treasures, in thrall to mighty wizards or alone wreaking misery on the outskirts of settled lands.

Scale: Size and Strength S3

TRAITS

Body: Attack from many directions 6d, Belch cloud of fire 7d, Bite 6d, Scaly hide 6d
Mind: Look for opening to attack 5d, Not very bright 6d
Soul: Cold serpent 6d, Kill and feast 6d, Nothing will get past me 6d

Equipment: Sharp fangs +1d

Skeleton

Animated through necromantic ritual, skeletons are the foot soldiers of evil wizards. Imbued with sufficient intelligence to follow basic orders and a crude martial cunning, these terrifying foes are without fear – single minded in the completion of their prescribed tasks. Often they are armed with weapons and armour and ordered to guard a particular lair or to attack the necromancer's foes.

TRAITS

Body: Agile, Ignore losing the odd limb or two 6d, Melee combat 5d, Run quickly 6d, Still 7d
Mind: Crude martial cunning 5d, Sense life 6d, Single minded 5d
Soul: Slave to summoner's will 6d, Without care or pity 5d

Equipment: Basic armour and weapons +1d



Zombie

More recently slain victims of the necromancer's summoning power, zombies shamble from their graves to provide even more terrifying servants than skeletons. Cast with the rotting vestments of flesh, these undead are potentially recognisable to their victims from their former lives. Assuming that opponents can dare to face up to them, they will be faced with a mindless shambling form that wants nothing more than to rend flesh and kill.

TRAITS

Body: Absorb blow 6d, Bite and tear 6d, Eerie strength 5d, Relentless stagger 5d, Rotting meat 5d, Terrifying appearance 6d, Vulnerable to fire 4d

Mind: Sense life 6d, Unwavering purpose 5d

Soul: Afraid of nothing 5d, Hate the living 6d, Slave to summoners will 7d

Equipment: Claw like hands and warped sharp teeth +1d

Colophon

Wordplay was originally created across a number of computer platforms, primarily Ubuntu 9.04 Jaunty Jackalope (Linux) for writing and Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard for layout.

Key packages used were OpenOffice.org 3.0.1, NeoOffice 3.0, Microsoft Word 2008/2011, Adobe InDesign CS4 (and some of the rest of the Creative Suite). The final critical element was Dropbox (<http://www.dropbox.com/>) which was used to share and keep everyone's version of the project in sync.

The aim of the layout was to be clean and simple so Palatino was used for the body text, with Gill Sans for headers. The *Wordplay* logo was created using Sanvito Pro, and the HPLHS Lovecraft Block font for the handwriting on Lorth's character sheet.



Designer's Notes

With such a rich array of excellent roleplaying games available today it may, understandably, seem to be little more than arrant vanity to set out to create your own. Perhaps it was, but allow me to spend a moment with you to explain what set me off on this endeavour and why it turned out the way it did.

I've been buying, reading and playing these sorts of games since the early Eighties. Today, there are more games available than ever before and many of them have provided inspiration to *Wordplay*. Most games are a combination of a dynamic background in which the game is played and game rules that enable people to play in the setting.

A couple of years ago I came to think about the rules of the games that I owned and realised that I particularly liked elements of most of them, but that there wasn't one that encapsulated all, and only, the key elements that I wanted to use at my own gaming table. So, I decided to write my own to create a game that I would find personally useful and hope that, along the way, others would also find a game that they could pick up and play with friends.

More often than not rules are written to help accentuate the themes inherent in the background setting of the game. Some game rules are written to be generically applicable to a wide series of backgrounds, perhaps encouraging a particular style of play or type of action during a game session. My starting position with *Wordplay* was to create a set of game rules that I could use for most anything I wanted.

Specifically, I wanted a game:

- That provided only those things that I think are really useful to the gaming group that are sat around the table.
- With very few rules and a light structure. I find that less is usually an awful lot more.
- That took descriptive phrases and made practical use of them in the game.
- That was designed to always focus on the player characters.
- That used the aesthetic of the D6 dice block. I want to pick up a dozen six sided dice and throw them. I want to hear the clatter as they hit the table. I want to try to keep all the dice I've thrown on the table.
- That was 'theme-able', adaptable to many different genres, and flexible enough to be tweaked and stretched when applied to new settings without breaking or requiring lots of new rules.
- Of my own, but something I could easily share with others too.

Inspiration came in many forms. In particular, I must credit a few games that informed some of the design decisions.



HeroQuest by Robin D. Laws (Moon Designs). This game has had the strongest influence on *Wordplay*. It was here, in it's earliest guise as '*Hero Wars*', that I first encountered the idea that descriptive text can be used directly to describe a character and then become 'traits' to be used in the game.

Burning Wheel by Luke Crane. The joy of the six sided dice pool. The 'Beliefs' mechanic partly inspired the more task focused 'Goals'.

Silhouette by Gene Marcil, Stephan Matis and Marc Vezina (Dream Pod 9). The idea that extra sixes rolled provide a better success.

The Shadow of Yesterday by Clinton R. Nixon (Anvilwerks). The 'Keys' mechanic also partly inspired *Wordplay's* Goals.

The Conspiracy of Shadows by Keith Senkowski (Bob Goat Press). I encountered the idea of 'damage traits' when I played this game at a convention.

Hot War by Malcolm Craig (Contested Ground Studios). The listing of relationships and the use of player pictures to inform the setting.

Others will undoubtedly have provided subliminal inspiration. I encourage you to find these games and play them, as they are all excellent in their own right.

Wordplay turned out to be the game that I wanted. However, I was not only keen to produce a set of game rules but also a number of developed settings, or Themes, that would provide inspiration to take the rules and make a rounded game experience. I am fortunate to have found a number of talented gamers and writers who have enjoyed *Wordplay* so much that they have contributed these Themes. Many of these Themes will be published in a subsequent larger format edition that will include evocative artwork.

In setting out to write *Wordplay* I also wanted to give something back to a hobby that I have enjoyed for more than twenty years. I wanted the core text of the game to be freely and easily shareable so that anyone could pick up the game, play it, adapt it and publish it should they so choose. To achieve this, the core rules of the game and a number of the Themes are provided with the most generous of Creative Commons licences.

The process of writing the game and creating this book has been immensely enjoyable. In today's connected world I have found a community of friendly and talented experts that have encouraged and assisted me in turning the words into the book that you are holding.

I hope you enjoy playing this game. Let me know if you do.

Graham
graham@wordplaygames.co.uk



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WEALTH & COST

WEALTH LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	MATERIAL STANDARD OF LIVING
1D	Stick picker, jobless, the poor, homeless	Hand to mouth, day by day existence, no luxuries, increased likelihood of disease
2D	Administrative assistant, Minimum wage earner, foot soldier, guard	Basic, limited opportunities, a few inexpensive luxuries
3D	Supervisor, Townsman, Trader, wandering adventurer	Reasonable standard of living, some luxuries
4D	Middle manager, Guildsman, Merchant, Tomb robber	Comfortable with a number of luxuries, larger and better accommodation and continually improved prospects
5D	Executive, Professional, Dilettante,	Used to regular luxuries
6D	Reality show celebrity, Top executives, Crime lord	Pampered, small entourage of other workers to support the lifestyle
7D	Prince, Celebrity	Several homes, many luxuries, choices in all things
8D	Mega rock star, Popular artist, Highly successful business owner	The high life of luxuries and notoriety, wants for nothing
9D	Tyrant. Powerful and wealthy noble	Frequent and mind bogglingly ostentatious displays of wealth.
10D	King	Regular feasting, hunting and politicking, with great wealth and power to affect other lives.
11D	Shadowy tycoon	Anything that can be bought can be yours, and that's most things.
12D	Emperor of all worlds	A combination of great wealth across many palaces and worlds

COST LEVEL	TYPICAL ITEMS
1d	Inadequate bare meal, basic clothes.
2d	No frills food, cheap clothes, basic accommodation, basic weapons, old vehicle / horse.
3d	Variety of foods, reasonable clothes, standard accommodation, reasonable vehicle, well made weapons and armour, horse.
4d	Good food, good quality clothes, spacious accommodation, new vehicle, a range of quality and state of the art weapons, war horse.
5d	Rich delicacies, high fashion, large dwelling, high performance vehicle.
6d	Helicopter, small starship, castle (along with curtains), jewellery and precious items.
7d	Personal jet, starship, rare artefacts and treasures, a mercenary band.
8d	Huge tracts of land, a small army.
9d	A county, a great army.
10d	A kingdom.
11d	Huge palaces, an enormous harem in every palace.
12d	An armada of warships, a planetary system.

CHALLENGES

DIFFICULTY DICE	DIFFICULTY DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED NUMBER OF SUCCESSES
3D	Easy	2
6D	Routine	4
9D	Challenging	6
12D	Exacting	8
15D	Ambitious	10
18D	Audacious	12
21D	Heroic	14
24D	Impossible	16
27D	Look, it isn't really possible	18

SCALE	SIZE	SPEED	MAGIC/POWER
0	Human	Human	Human
4	Giant, Dragon	Very fast animal, fast vehicle, Helicopter	Major Arcana spells, Psionics, Supernatural, Superpower
8	Starship, liner, suspension bridge	Very fast vehicle	Ancient forgotten magics, Awesome world rending superpowers
12	Moon like space station	Space warping starships	The old gods

STANDARD SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2-3	Minor
4-5	Major
6	Emphatic
7+	Complete

CINEMATIC SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2-4	Minor
5-7	Major
8	Emphatic
9+	Complete

GRITTY SCALE

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY
1	Knife edge
2	Minor
3	Major
4	Emphatic
5+	Complete

MISSILE RANGE TABLE

RANGE	DESCRIPTION	BONUS /PENALTY
POINT BLANK	Really very close indeed, you can see the whites of their eyes, smell their fear	2d Bonus
CLOSE	Within effective range, standard/ average distance	No Bonus or Penalty
LONG	Difficult, normally requires a good level of skill with the weapon being used	2d Bonus to difficulty
EXTREME	Ambitious, only the most skilled, experts are likely to pull off this kind of shot	4d Bonus to difficulty

POWER

MINIMUM NUMBER OF SUCCESSES	POWER LEVEL	RANGE OF EFFECT	DURATION OF EFFECT	AREA OF EFFECT	PAYBACK CHALLENGE
2	Weak	Immediate vicinity (10m)	Seconds	One person	2d
4	Minor	local area (50m)	Minutes	Small group	4d
6	Average	At range (100m)	Up to an Hour	Dispersed groups	6d
8	Major	At range (200m)	Hours	Large group	8d
10	Adept	In sight	Days	City wide	10d
12	Master	Beyond sight	Weeks	Province wide	12d
16	Cataclysmic	Light Years	Years	Planet wide	16d

OUTCOMES

VICTORY LEVEL	VICTORY	BODY, MIND OR SOUL DAMAGE TRAITS	NATURAL RECOVERY	DIFFICULTY TO HEAL
1	Knife edge	Scratch: No lasting effect, but the Difficulty is at +1d to the next roll.	Straight away or after the next roll.	Easy 3d
2-3	Minor	Hurt: 1d BMS Damage Trait.	End of the session or one week 'in game' time.	Routine 6d
4-5	Major	Damaged: 2d BMS Damage Trait.	Two sessions or one month in game time.	Challenging 9d
6	Emphatic	Incapacitated: 3d BMS Damage Trait, plus immediately knocked out of the Challenge.	Three sessions or three months in game time.	Exacting 12d
7+	Complete	Navigator may decide that the character has received such grievous damage that they should be permanently removed from play.	Navigator determines length of healing time (if any).	Audacious 18d

OUTCOMES: FATIGUE/SHOCK/MORALE

VICTORY LEVEL	FATIGUE OUTCOME	FATIGUE RECOVERY	SHOCK OUTCOME	SHOCK RECOVERY	MORALE OUTCOME	MORALE RECOVERY
Knife edge	Out of breath	1 hour	Unnerved	3 hours	Shaken	3 hours
Minor	Tired	3 hours	Scared	8 hours	Dispirited	8 hours
Major	Exhausted	8 hours sleep	Horrified	2 days	Overwhelmed	1 week
Emphatic	Incapacitated	1 day and night of rest	Gibbering wreck	1 week	Broken	2 weeks
Complete	Removed from play	It's all over	Removed from play	It's all over	Removed from play	It's all over

ENCUMBRANCE	FATIGUE CHALLENGE DIFFICULTY INCREASE
Unencumbered	+0d
Light Encumbrance	+1d
Medium Encumbrance	+2d
Heavy Encumbrance	+4d

GOALS & EXPERIENCE

GOAL SIGNIFICANCE OR DIFFICULTY	EXPERIENCE
The goal has a negligible story impact or was very easy to achieve in one session.	1 Exp
The goal has a minor story impact or was difficult to achieve in one or more sessions.	3 Exp
The goal has a major story impact or was very difficult to achieve taking multiple sessions to complete.	10 Exp
The goal has a cataclysmic story impact or was extraordinarily difficult to achieve or was one of the character's defining long term goals.	20 Exp

NEW TRAIT LEVEL WANTED	EXPERIENCE POINT COST
Between 3d and 5d	New level value in points
Between 6d and 8d	New level value x 1.5 (round up) in points
Between 9d and 11d	New level value x2 in points
12d	36 points

