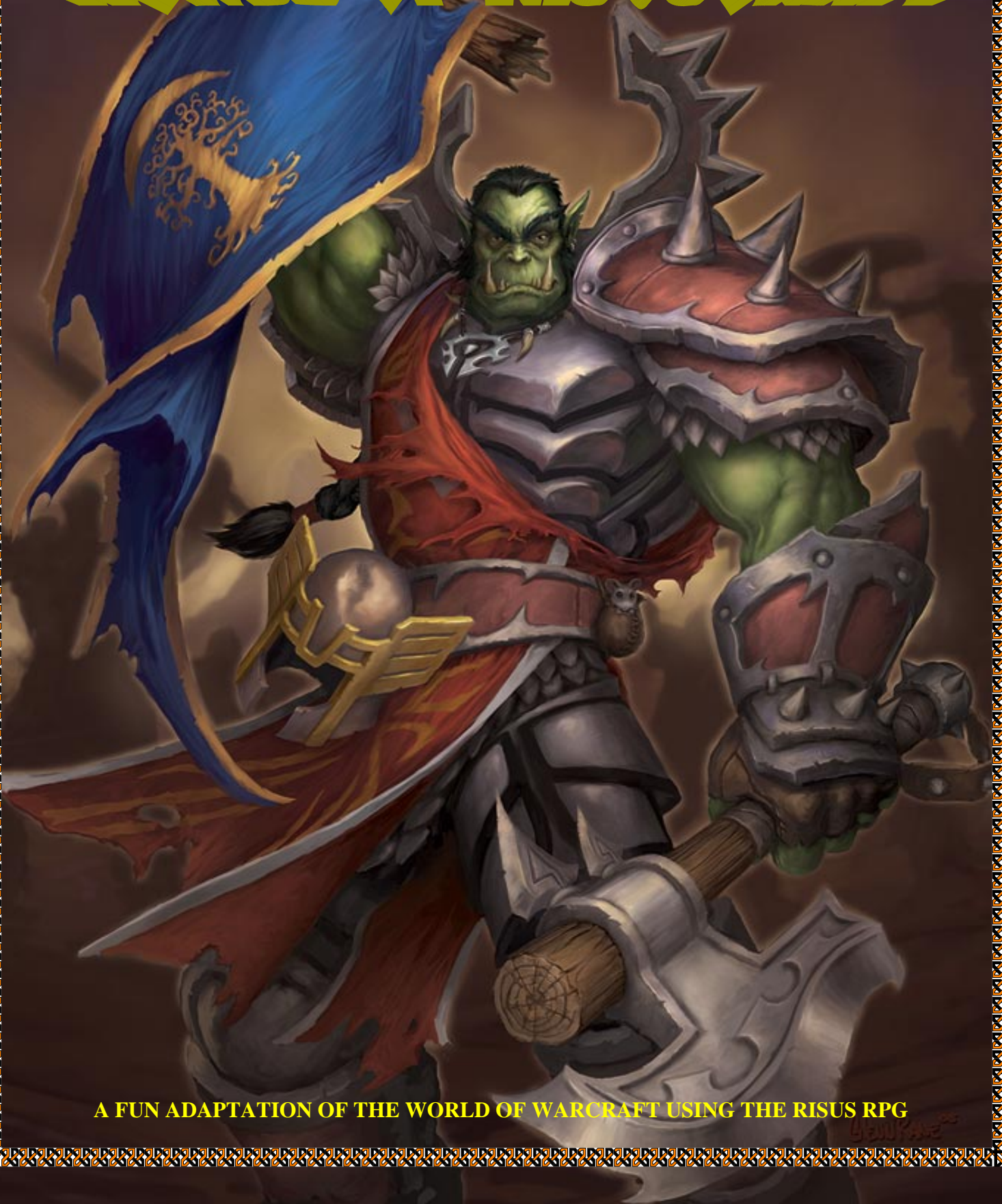


WORLD OF RISUSCRAFT



A FUN ADAPTATION OF THE WORLD OF WARCRAFT USING THE RISUS RPG

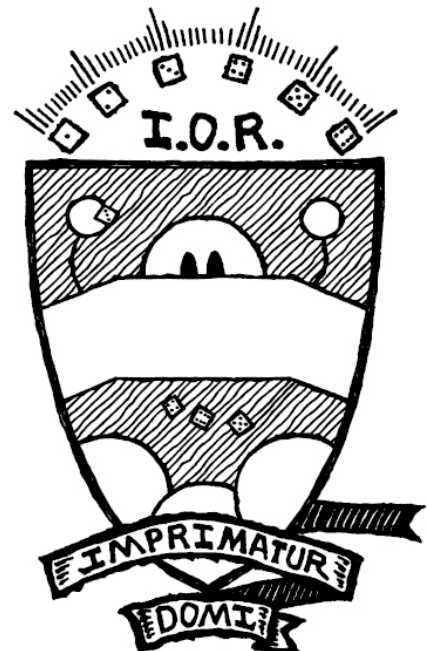
Game

World of Risuscraft

Risus The Anything RPG⁽¹⁾ adaptation of World of Warcraft
by S. John Ross and Carl Hewett

Risus is a complete Role Playing Game (RPG) designed to provide an "RPG Lite" for those nights when the brain is too tired for exacting detail. Risus is especially valuable to GMs assembling a quick convention game, or any late-night beer-and-pretzels outing. While it is essentially a Universal Comedy System, it works just as well for serious play (if you insist!). Best of all, a Risus character takes about 20 seconds to create!

World of Risuscraft is an adaptation of the World of Warcraft⁽²⁾ for the Risus system. It is very lite and uses a couple extras found around the web which will be credited at the end of this document.



CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Inspiration for the nature of this game comes largely from the sadly out-of-print classic, **Ghostbusters**, from West End Games, sparked against an idea (Clichés) from **DC Heroes**. The final shape and form of the game was inspired by **Over the Edge**, from Atlas Games. Other RPGs (most notably **GURPS**, **FUDGE** and **Tunnels and Trolls**), have also provided valuable inspiration. Many friends, fellow gamers, total strangers on the street, and others have provided useful commentary as the game has developed, including Dan "Moose" Jasman, Frank J. Perricone, Jason Puckett, David Pulver, Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch, and the gamers on the Risus internet mailing list.

CHARACTER CREATION!⁽³⁾

Characters are defined by Clichés (generally just four of them). Clichés are a shorthand which describe what a character knows how to do. The "character classes" of the Neolithic Period of RPGs were Clichés: Fighter and Magic-User, Space Marine and Star Merchant. Clichés can also be things such as Biker, Spy, Computer Nerd, Supermodel, or William Shatner (formerly an actor - now just a Cliché). Which Clichés are permitted are up to the GM. In WoR the clichés cover these four things: personal description, your race, your occupation, and the region you come from. Your final cliché will be in the general format of: [Name], the [description] [race] [occupation] of [region]. This format is not set in stone, but fits the genre. The four types of clichés are described below:

Description: this is an adjective that will describe the character's chief reputation. It can be words like "mighty", "fearless", "fearsome", "cowardly", "apathetic", "pious", "devout", "mystic", or "flatulent". Or just about any other fantasy appropriate adjective you can think of.

Race: this is the fantasy race of the character: Blood Elves, Draenei, Dwarves, Gnomes, Humans, Night Elves, Orcs, Tauren, Trolls, Undead, or whatever. If you have played World of Warcraft, then feel free to port over whatever race would be appropriate and even a couple that would not be appropriate. [(Hint, hint)]

Occupation: the job of the character. Includes professions (Alchemist, Archeologist, Blacksmith, Cook, Enchanter, Engineer, Fisherman, Healer, Herbalist, Inscribe, Jeweler, Leatherworker, Miner, Skinner, Tailor, or others if it fits and the GM allows), or classes (Druid, Hunter, Mage, Paladin, Priest, Rogue, Shaman, Warlock, Warrior, or others if it fits and the GM allows).

Region: this can be a country/city/town/village, a type of terrain your character comes out of, or a general region... "The Crossroads", "The Streets of Ogrimar", "The Cathedral in Stormwind", "Ironforge", "Echo Isles", and so on.

With those four clichés in mind, pick one of each category for your character. Your character might be the *Well-traveled blood-elf hunter from the Ghostlands* or maybe an *Irritating gnome mage from Stormwind* or maybe a *Confused goblin merchant from Undermine-city* or even a *Drunken orc beggar from the streets of Ogrimar*.

Clichés are defined in terms of Dice (by which we mean the ordinary six-sided kind you can scavenge from your old **Yahtzee** set). This is the number of dice that you roll whenever your skill as a Warrior, Rogue, or William Shatner (for instance) is challenged. See "Game System," below. Three dice is professional. Six dice is mastery. One die is a putz.

When designing your character, you have 10 dice with which to define his Clichés (a Normal Schmoe would be built on anywhere from 3 to 5 dice). A straightforward WoR Warrior character might look like this:

Thordred, the fearless dwarven warrior from Dun Morogh

Description: Short and stout, thick full beard. Likes to drink and fight and drink and chase dwarven women and fight and kill ogres and raid. Knows every place to drink in Dun Morogh.

Clichés: Fearless (4), Dwarven (2), Warrior (3), from Dun Morogh (1)

A character may have more than four starting Clichés, but more than 10 different Clichés would be odd, considering the number of dice you get. Maybe you have two jobs (hunter(2)/herbalist(2)), or there might be two good adjectives that describe you (The agile(1) and intelligent(3)), or you could even hale from two different regions (that has family in both Shadow Glen(2) and the Mists Edge(2)). Race, mind you, does not need to be split up. If you are a half-orc half-elf, then just say that. Characters don't begin their career with more than 4 dice in anything, but just because you're creating a character today doesn't mean that he's beginning his career! The GM will tell you if he's requiring "beginners" for the game. It's not our business.

List Of Sample Clichés And What They Are Good For...

Blood Elves: Looking good, Enchanting Affinity, Arcane Torrent, and Magic Resistance

Draenei: Blue Skin, Horns, Funny bending legs, Gemcutter, Natural Healer, Shadow Magic Resistance

Dwarf: Being short and bearded, Poison Resistant, Shooting Guns, Frost Magic Resistance, Find Treasure

Gnome: Being even shorter, Squeaky voice, Escape Artist, Being Intelligent, Arcane Resistance, Engineering Specialization

Human: Perception, Diplomacy, Sword Wielder, Mace Wielder

Night Elf: Being blue, Having large ears, Fade into Shadow, Elusiveness, Quickness, Nature Magic Resistance

Orc: Being Green, being gruff, Blood Fury, Hardiness, Axe Wielder

Tauren: Being big, Having a cow head, War Stomp, Endurance, Flower Enthusiast, Nature Magic Resistance

Troll: Being tall, Being blue, Having tusks, Berserking, Regeneration, Beast Slaying, Weapon Thrower, Bow Wielder

Undead: Being dead yet still moving about, Will of the Forsaken, Cannibalize, Underwater Breathing, Shadow Magic Resistance

Druid: A nature-oriented class. Druids can shape-shift into several forms; such as a bear, a cat, and a seal. *Druids must choose either Balance, Feral or Restoration spells. Druids get their forms (one per die starting at two) in the following order; Bear, Seal, Cat, Dire Bear, and Crow*

Hunter: A combination of a marksman/archer and animal specialist, the hunter specializes in damage dealt by means of a bow, crossbow, or gun with the help of an animal pet. The hunter also employs a series of traps for damaging or disabling enemies.

Mage: The wizard of World of Riuscraft, the mage employs spells of the "arcane", fire, and frost elements. Mages can also conjure food and water to replenish group members, and teleport themselves and others to most major cities. *Must choose either Arcane, Fire or Frost spells to cast.*

Paladin: A heavily-armored holy warrior. *Paladins may choose from Holy, Protection or Retribution spells. Are able to cast Blessings and bestow Judgments.*

Priest: A lightly-armored class that can protect and heal allies (with "Holy" spells) or bring harm to enemies (with "Shadow" spells). *Must choose either Holy, Discipline or Shadow spells.*

Rogue: A shadowy assassin that can "stealth" to avoid being seen by enemies (providing near-invisibility). The rogue also provides traditional thief skills like lock-picking, picking pockets, and poison use.

Shaman: The totem-wielding shaman can specialize to become effective healers, or damage dealers using either melee weapons or spells. *Shaman cast Elemental, Enhancement or Restoration magic. Shaman get their totems (one per die starting at two) in the following order; Earth, Fire, Water and Air.*

Warlock: Essentially a sinister combination of the mage and the hunter, the warlock deals magical damage like a mage but also has demonic "pets" (called minions) like hunters. *Warlocks must choose either Affliction, Demonology or Destruction spells to cast. Warlocks get their minions (one per die starting with the first die) Imp, Voidwalker, Succubus, Felhunter, Infernal, and Doomguard.*

Warrior: A heavily-armored class, the warrior is a general melee fighter who can use any non-magical weapon in the game.

Alchemy: The alchemist mixes herbs to generate potions with a variety of effects. A player can create healing, invisibility, elemental resistance, and mana potions; oils to coat weapons; and much more.

Blacksmithing: Blacksmiths take bars of metal from miners and work them into finely crafted arms and armor. There are many unique weapons and other armaments that cannot be found on any of the vendors or monsters in the game, but can only be created by blacksmiths.

Cooking: From beer-basted boar ribs to giant clam scorcho, there is no recipe too obscure or odd to avoid notice by the chefs of Azeroth. Food is used in the game to heal players out of combat so that they can return to the fighting as quickly as possible.

Enchanting: Enchanters use their magical formulae to grant both temporary and permanent augmentation to weapons, armor, and other equipment.

Engineering: Engineering is used to assemble metal and stones into parts needed to make explosives, guns, scopes, bullets, mechanical dragons, aquatic helmets, and more. More than any other Profession, engineering products require several steps to be completed.

First Aid: Want to save people's lives? Want to cure poison and heal grave wounds? Become a Physician! This skill allows you to create various bandages that can be used to help yourself and other players. Physicians create bandages and apply them to other players that are wounded. You must have the first aid skill to apply a bandage to another player.

Fishing: Armed with their best fishing rods, fishermen explore the world of Azeroth looking for new and interesting places to cast their lines. In addition to the varied fish population, all manner of aquatic treasure awaits the fisherman with the skill and patience to reel it in.

Herbalism: Herb gathering is used to collect plants found throughout the world, with more powerful herbs requiring a higher skill level to find. Each type of herb has specific uses and places where it is found. For instance, grave moss must be sought in cemeteries, whereas wintersbite grows in snowy areas.

Inscription: The Inscription profession allows its practitioners, called "scribes," to enhance the spells and abilities of players' characters, such as enhancing a rogue's Backstab ability to deal more damage to stunned targets, or allowing a priest's Circle of Healing to heal one more target.

Jewelcrafting: Jewelcrafters learn the art of creating beautiful jewelry and trinkets from metals and rare gems. By processing the raw ore mined from the various deposits and mineral veins, jewelcrafters can extract gems from the ore which they can then use for their craft. Although miners sometimes find gems while gathering ore, jewelcrafters mostly rely on their prospecting skills to get more of the precious stones.

Leatherworking: This skill allows players to work various leathers and pelts into leather armors as well as patches integral to the creation of higher-level, metallic armors and enhanced weapons.

Mining: Mining is used to extract ores, stones, and gems from mineral nodes found throughout the world. Generally, more of these nodes can be found in the dangerous underground than on the surface. In addition to gathering the raw materials, it's up to the miners to smelt the ores taken from the ground into metal bars. These are the raw materials that artisans such as Blacksmiths and Engineers will transform into deadly weapons and wondrous objects.

Skinning: Skinning allows players to gather leather and hides by skinning animals. Leather and hides are used for leatherworking. Leather is also used for some blacksmithing, engineering, and tailoring recipes.

Tailoring: Tailoring allows players to cut and weave various pieces of cloth into armor, bags, shirts, and other cloth items.

These are solid examples to get you started in WoR - but players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, Note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad. If the game is *about* sorcerers (for example), then "sorcerer" becomes too all-encompassing for the game, and Clichés like *necromancer*, *mentalist*, *fire-wizard* and *wise woman* are more the order of the day. The GM may also require you to take a certain type of cliché if, for example, he is running a game that features Naga or Goblins as the main PCs.

THE GAME SYSTEM

Whenever anybody wants to do something, and nobody is actively trying to stop him, AND the GM doesn't think that success would be automatic, the player rolls dice. If the total rolled beats (equals or exceeds) the Target Number the GM sets, success! If not, failure!

Objective Target Numbers:

3-5: A cinch. A snap. A challenge for a Schmuck. Routine for a pro.

6-10: A challenge for a Professional.

11-15: An Heroic challenge. For really inventive or tricky stunts.

16-20: A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.

21-30: You've GOT to be Kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.

31+ I'm gonna need help of some sort!

Subjective Target Numbers

3-5: A generous effect that contributes to the party cause, and actually provides some extra fun or opportunities for the other characters in the group.

6-10: The character would be contributing his fair share of impact on the scene; pulling his weight as part of the team.

11-15: A mildly selfish effect that steals the thunder of others in the group.

16-20: This would entirely upstage the other players, turning the other characters into bystanders for the rest of the scene.

21-25: This would upstage (or at least instantly rewrite) the whole scenario.

26-30: This not only hogs the spotlight, it shoplifts it and runs off with it tucked down the front of its pants.

31+ Forget upstaging the scenario. This would upstage and probably rewrite the entire campaign.

This can be subjective, and anybody can *try* anything: Crossing a chasm by swinging on a rope, vine or something similar would be child's play (automatic success!) for a Druid (turn into a bird and fly across), easy (Difficulty 5) for a Hunter, and challenging but definitely doable (Difficulty 10) for a Warrior, or Rogue. Even a Frail Mage Carrying a Large Spell-book could try it (Difficulty 15, but the spell-book is lost unless the roll beats a 30)!

Casting Magic

Building on the previous paragraph's statement, "anybody can *try* anything"; it applies doubly to anyone that has magical abilities. Sometimes, it's better to discard literal thinking entirely when establishing difficulty, and focus, instead, on the *dramatic impact* of what the PC is attempting. This approach is especially useful when judging very subjective tasks that have few useful anchors in real-world activity, like casting magic spells, or the unpredictable resources of the crackpot gadgeteer or mad alchemist. Consider how generous, or how selfish, the proposed outcome will be:

Types of Magic

- Druid:** **Balance** - Balance is the offensive spellcasting tree.
Feral - Feral concentrates on melee power through the druid's cat and bear forms.
Restoration - Restoration improves a druid's healing capabilities, add a few new healing spells, and the Tree of Life form.
- Mage:** **Arcane** - Arcane spells include single-target damage spells and utility with an emphasis on mystical effects.
Fire - Fire spells are primarily damage-dealing spells, including direct single-target damage and area of effect damage with an emphasis on fire effects.
Frost - Frost spells are primarily single-target and area of effect damage-dealing spells, but with more emphasis on chilling effects.
- Paladin:** **Holy** - Holy focuses on healing and caster-related buffs.
Protection - Protection focuses on defense, damage mitigation, damage return and one-handed weapons.
Retribution - Retribution focuses on damage output, two-handed weapons, holy damage, and damage avoidance.
- Priest:** **Holy** - Holy makes the priest an even better healer.
Discipline - Discipline is a blending of both Holy and Shadow but not as powerful as either individually.
Shadow - Shadow offers some great hindrance and damaging spells.
- Shaman:** **Elemental** - Elemental focuses on the shaman's offensive spell casting ability.
Enhancement - Enhancement greatly increases melee damage output.
Restoration - Restoration focuses on the shaman's healing capability.
- Warlock:** **Affliction** - Affliction talents are largely based on increasing the effectiveness of Slow Damage, Drains, and Curses.
Demonology - Demonology talents are largely based on improving the effectiveness of your minions, conjure spells, and bestowing other passive bonuses.
Destruction - Destruction talents are largely based on increasing the effect of a warlock's Direct Damage spells, making them (and their minions) cast faster, and ultimately deal more Burst Damage.

PROPER TOOLS

Every character is assumed to be equipped with the Tools of His Trade (at least the portable ones). Warriors are wearing armor and wielding good weapons. Priests and Paladins are assumed to have holy symbols of their faith. Rogues have a well made set of lock-picks and funny clothes.

If, through the course of an adventure, a character **LOSES** any of these vital totems, his Cliché operates on half the normal number of dice (or not at all, if the GM rules that the equipment was **REQUIRED**) until they are replaced.

A Warrior(5), for instance, can fight without his sword as a Warrior(3), but a Rogue can't pick locks without his lock-picks. If the Rogue manages to find another lock-picks to play with besides the set he's used to, he can operate at half-dice.

Some special tools (magic wands, magic swords, magic armor, and so on) may give bonus dice to your Clichés when used. Characters never begin the game with bonus-dice gear; they must be acquired in adventures.

THE COMBAT SYSTEM

"Combat" in this game is defined as any contest in which opponents jockey for position, utilize attacks, bring defenses to bear, and try to wear down their foes to achieve victory. Either literally or metaphorically! Some examples of combat include:

ARGUMENTS: People using whatever verbal weapons they have at hand to make their points. Truth is the first casualty.

HORSE-RACING: People on horses running around and around a dirty track, trying to get nowhere first.

DOGFIGHTS: People on flying mounts flying around and trying to knock each other out of the sky.

ASTRAL/PSYCHIC DUELS: Mystics/psionics looking bored or asleep, but trying to rip one another's egos apart in the Otherworld.

WIZARD'S DUELS: Sorcerers using strange magics and trying to outdo the other.

DUELING BANJOS: Banjo players using strange melodies and trying to outdo the other.

SEDUCTION ATTEMPTS: One (or more) characters trying to score with one (or more) other character(s) who is(are) trying to resist.

COURTROOM ANTICS: Prosecution vs. Defense. The goal is victory. Justice is incidental.

ACTUAL PHYSICAL COMBAT: People trying to injure or kill each other.

The GM decides when a combat has begun. At that point, go around the table in rounds, and let each combatant make an attack in turn. What constitutes an "attack" depends on the sort of combat, but it should ALWAYS be role-played (if dialogue is involved) or described in entertaining detail (if it's physical and/or dangerous and/or normally requires contraceptives).

Attacks require rolls against character Clichés. The GM must, at the outset of combat, determine what TYPE of Clichés are appropriate for the fight. In a physical fight, Clichés like Warrior, Paladin, Hunter, and Rogue are appropriate. Clichés like Cook and Herbalist are not (but may still be used; see next section).

An attack must be directed at a foe. Both parties in the attack (attacker and defender) roll against their chosen Cliché. Low roll loses. Specifically, the low roller loses one (or more) of his Cliché dice for the remainder of the fight - he's been weakened, worn down, or otherwise pushed closer to defeat. In future rounds, he'll be rolling lower numbers.

Winning Result	Die Loss
>0 to <=	0 Dice
>= to <2	1 Die
>2 to <3	2 Dice
>3 to <4	3 Dice
>4 to <5	4 Dice
etc...	etc...

Eventually, one side will be left standing, and another will be left without dice. At this point, the winners usually decide the fate of the losers. In a physical fight or magical duel, the losers might be killed (or mercifully spared). In Courtroom Antics, the loser gets sentenced by the judge, or fails to prosecute. In a Seduction, the loser gets either a cold shower or a warm evening, depending on who wins.

You needn't use the same Cliché every round. If a Tauren/Warrior wants to lop heads one round, and stomp them into the ground the next, that's groovy, too. However, anytime a character has a Cliché worn down to zero dice in combat, he has lost, even if he has other appropriate Clichés left to play with.

When The Cure Is Worse Than The Disease⁽⁴⁾

The number of dice lost in combat becomes a cliché of its own, a cliché which a healer, in true Risus fashion, can take on in healing combat. Let's say that Orm Goldenblade takes three dice worth of damage to his Paladin (4) cliché. Well, now Frater Angelico, Priest (4) can take on Grievous Wound (3).

Sure, he'll probably win, but at least he gets some action. Of course, there is that chance that he won't win, maybe get exhausted (lose some dice) or possibly receive divine intervention and have a breakthrough (all sixes). There is one caveat that I added for when a healer fails or is hurt. The dice lost while healing are regained when the scene ends, at a "healing" rate determined by the GM.

Editor's Note: Just as a quick reminder, dice lost in combat do not necessarily mean physical injury.

Dice lost in combat are regained when the combat ends, at a "healing" rate determined by the GM. If the combat was in vehicles (mounts, flying mounts, wooden sailing ships) then the vehicles themselves are likely damaged, too, and must be repaired.

INAPPROPRIATE CLICHÉS

As stated above, the GM determines what sort of Clichés are appropriate for any given combat. An INAPPROPRIATE Cliché is anything that's left . . . In a physical fight, Cook is inappropriate. In a Wizard's duel, Barbarian is inappropriate.

Inappropriate Clichés may be used to make attacks, **PROVIDED THE PLAYER ROLEPLAYS OR DESCRIBES IT IN A REALLY, REALLY, REALLY ENTERTAINING MANNER**. Furthermore, the "attack" must be plausible within the context of the combat, and the genre and tone that the GM has set for the game. This option is more valuable in silly games than in dead-serious ones.

All combat rules apply normally, with one exception: If an inappropriate Cliché wins a combat round versus an appropriate one, the "appropriate" player loses THREE dice, rather than one, from his Cliché! The "inappropriate" player takes no such risk, and loses only the normal one die if he loses the round.

Thus, a skilled cook is dangerous when cornered and attacked unfairly. Beware.

When in doubt, assume that the aggressor determines the type of combat. If a wizard attacks a warrior with magic, then it's a Wizard's duel! If the warrior attacks the mage with his sword, then it's Physical Combat! If the defender can come up with an entertaining use of his skills, then he'll have the edge. It pays in many genres to be the defender!

Note: If the wizard and warrior *both obviously want to fight*, then both are aggressors, and it's "Fantasy Combat," where both swords and sorcery have equal footing.

TEAMING UP

Two or more characters may decide to form a TEAM in combat. For the duration of the team (usually the entire combat), they fight as a single unit, and are attacked as a single foe. There are two kinds of teams: Player-Character teams and NPC teams ("Grunt Squads.")

Grunt-Squads: This is just special effects. When you want the heroes to be attacked by a horde of 700 rat-skeletons inside the lair of the Wicked Necromancer⁽⁵⁾, but don't feel like keeping track of 700 little skeletal sets of dice, just declare that they're a team, fighting as Skeletal Rat-Horde⁽⁷⁾. Mechanically, the Rat-Horde is the same as any other single foe - except it has more dice! Grunt-Squads can have any level of cliché the GM feels is appropriate. Grunt-Squads stick together as a team until they're defeated, at which point many survivors will scatter (though at least one will always remain to suffer whatever fate the victor decides).

Player-Character Teams: When PCs (or PCs and their NPC allies) form a team, the "Team Leader" is defined by the highest-ranking Cliché in the team (a title that must be designated if there is a tie). Everybody rolls dice, but the Team Leader's dice *all count*. Other Team Members contribute only their sixes (if the Funky Dice option is used, Team Members may contribute their single highest die-roll above six, or their sixes, their choice). Team members who roll nothing above five don't contribute anything to the Team Leader's total for that roll.

Clichés joined in a team need not be identical, but they all must be equally appropriate or inappropriate. This means five Warriors could band together in physical fight with no problem. It also means that a Cook, a Herbalist, and a Tailor could team up in a physical fight if they have a REALLY good description of how they'll use their skills in concert to take out the Warriors!

Whenever a team loses a round of combat, a single team-member's dice is reduced by one (or three!) as per the normal combat rules. Any team member may "step forward" and voluntarily take this personal "damage" to his dice. If this happens, the noble volunteer is reduced by *twice* the normal amount (either two dice or six!), and the *team leader* gets to roll *twice as many dice* on his next attack, a temporary boost as the team avenges their heroic comrade. If no volunteer steps forward, then each member must roll against the Cliché they're using as part of the team: Low-roll takes the (undoubled) hit, and there is no "vengeance" bonus.

Disbanding: A team may voluntarily disband at any time between die-rolls. This reduces the Cliché each team-member was using in the team by one, instantly (not a permanent reduction - treat it just like "damage" taken from losing a round of combat). Disbanded team-members may freely form new teams, provided the disbanding "damage" doesn't take them out of the fight. Individuals may also "drop out" of a team, but this reduces them to zero dice immediately as they scamper for the rear. Their fates rest on the mercy of whoever wins the fight!

Lost Leader: If the team leader ever leaves the team for any reason (either by dropping out or by having his personal dice reduced to zero), every member of the team immediately takes one die of "damage" as if the team had disbanded (since, without a leader, they've done exactly that). They may immediately opt to reform as a new team (with a new leader) however, and if the old leader was removed by volunteering for personal damage, the new team leader gets the double-roll vengeance bonus to avenge his predecessor!

CONFLICTS THAT AREN'T COMBAT

Many conflicts that arise in the game cannot be defined as "combat;" they're over too quickly, defined by a single action. A classic pistol-duel isn't combat - the two duelists simply turn and fire, and then it's all over. Two characters diving to grab the same gun from the floor isn't combat. Two cooks preparing chili for a cook-off isn't combat; there's no "wearing down of the foe" and no jockeying for position.

Such "single-action conflicts" are settled with a single roll against appropriate Clichés (or inappropriate Clichés, with good role-playing). High roll wins.

WHEN SOMEBODY CAN'T PARTICIPATE

It will often occur that characters will find themselves involved in a Combat or quicker conflict where they simply have no applicable Clichés, even by stretching the imagination. Or maybe ONE character will have an appropriate Cliché, while the others feel left out. An example might be a beer-drinking contest at an annual Beerfest. One character was wise (or foolish) enough to take "Alcoholic(2)" as a Cliché. The other characters are paladins or priests, neither of which traditionally drink themselves into a stupor.

In situations like this, give everybody two free dice to play with, for the duration of the conflict. This INCLUDES characters who already HAVE appropriate Clichés. In the example above, the paladins and priests would get Drinking(2), while the Alcoholic would be temporarily increased to Alcoholic(4). The Alcoholic, naturally, still has the winning edge, but anyone can TRY to drink lots of beer. This "temporary promotion" applies only in opposed conflicts, not in challenges based on Target Numbers.

A WORD OR TWO ABOUT SCALE

No standard time or distance scale is provided for Risus; it really depends on what kind of action is happening. However, the GM should try to stay consistent within a single conflict. In a physical fight, each round represents a few seconds. In a long-term fight between a married couple, each round might represent an entire Day (Day one: Husband "accidentally" burns wife's favorite armor in the oven, Wife "accidentally" feeds poison to Husband's prize pig, and so on until there is a victor).

WEALTH⁽⁵⁾

Unless the GM says otherwise, characters are assumed to start with wealth appropriate to their Cliché levels. If the GM is tracking wealth to a fine level of detail then he or she will specify how much money the character has available. Otherwise, purchases can be made as a roll against a character's Cliché with a Target Number determined from the expense of the item and the amount of wealth the character's Clichés imply. Obviously, the character's current wealth can vary beyond what would be expected of their Clichés. In this case, a lack of funds can be handled as a temporary penalty to their Cliché (with respect to wealth) and an excess of wealth can be a temporary bonus or even a Resource Cliché in its own right.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each adventure, each player should roll against every Cliché that was used significantly during the game (using their current number of dice). If the dice land showing only even numbers, this indicates an increase by one die for that Cliché. Thus, advancement slows down as you go. No Cliché may go higher than Cliché(6), although if Pumping is allowed (see below), they can be pumped past (6).

Anytime you do something really, really, really spectacularly entertaining that wows the whole table (not just rolling all 6's), the GM may rule that you may roll instantly (in the middle of the game!) for possible improvement, in addition to the roll at the end of the adventure.

Adding New Clichés: There may come a time when a character has grown and matured enough to justify adding an entirely new Cliché to his character sheet. If the player and GM agree this is the case, and agree on what the new Cliché is, the player rolls for Character Advancement as usual, but any of the new dice earned may be put toward the new Cliché instead of the ones that earned them. This can also be applied to "in-game" improvements, if the situation warrants it!

ADVANCED OPTION I: HOOKS and TALES

Normally, a character is created using 10 dice. With this Advanced Option, players can bargain for extra beginning dice by giving their character a Hook and/or a Tale.

A Hook is some significant character flaw - an obsession, a weakness, a sworn vow, a permanently crippling injury - that the GM agrees is so juicy that he can use it to make the character's life more interesting (which usually means less pleasant). A character with a Hook gets an extra die to play with.

A Tale is a written "biography" of the character describing his life before the events of the game begin. The Tale needn't be long (two or three pages is usually just fine); it just needs to tell the reader where the character is coming from, what he likes and dislikes, how he became who he is, what his motives are. Some Tales are best written from the player's omniscient perspective; others are more fun if written as excerpts from the character's own diary. A character with a Tale provided before game play begins gets an extra die to play with.

ADVANCED OPTION II: PUMPING CLICHÉS

In an emergency, any character may pump his Clichés. If the Rogue(3) comes face to face with a Wyrmskin(6), it might be necessary.

When a Cliché is pumped, it receives a temporary boost in dice. This boost lasts for a single round of combat, or a single significant roll otherwise. However, after that round or roll is resolved, the character loses a number of dice equal to the number he gave himself in the pump. This is treated like "injury" to the Clichés sustained in combat, and must "heal" in the same fashion.

Example: Rudolph the Rogue has come face to face with a Wyrmskin, who attacks him. Rudy doesn't have much of a chance against such a powerful foe, so he opts for a tricky tactic: Since the Wyrmskin is attacking physically, Rudolph decides his first-round response will use his skills as a Court Chef(3) - a decidedly inappropriate choice! He also opts to pump it by two dice up to five . . . He's REALLY putting his all into his cooking for this fight.

So, the first round happens. The Wyrmskin rolls six dice, and the Rogue (quickly whipping up a tempting Hot Lion Chops spiked with Rogue Anesthetic Poison and offering it to the Wyrmskin) rolls five dice.

If the Rogue loses, then he is instantly defeated. His Court Chef Cliché drops by two to Court Chef(1) just for the pump, plus another die for losing the round. The Wyrmskin decides to eat Rudolph instead of the Hot Lion Chops.

If the Rogue WINS, however, the Wyrmskin(6) is dropped to Monster(3), and his Court Chef(3) drops to Court Chef(1). In Rudolph's responding attack, he'll switch back to ordinary Rouge tactics - and be on equal footing with the sleepy Wyrmskin!

A risky maneuver, but worth it.

Pumped Clichés are legal in any situation except single-action conflicts.

ADVANCED OPTION III: DOUBLE-PUMPS

If this option is used, characters may be created with double-pump Clichés. These Clichés, when pumped, give you TWO dice in the pumped roll for every die you'll lose at the end of it. Thus, a Mage(5) could be a Mage(11) for a single combat round, at a cost of three dice. This option is appropriate for any Clichés based on supernatural powers, such as mages, warlocks, and shamans. They're also appropriate for any other Clichés the GM approves them for.

Double-pump Clichés cost twice as many starting dice to buy. Thus, the following would be a legal starting character:

Morikis the Flatulent Undead Mage from the Basement of Sepulcher

Description: Thin, spindly, mysterious, and gassy with a tired cat on his shoulder. Likes to poke around where Man Ought Not, turn people into sheep and the like. Likes graves.

Clichés: Flatulent (1), Undead (2), Mage [3], from the Basement of Sepulcher (1)

The hard [square brackets] indicate a double-pump Clichés. Since it costs double, Morikis is effectively a 10-dice character. (*Before asking about this see the last paragraph under Advanced Option VII.*)

ADVANCED OPTION IV: *FUNKY DICE*

With the Funky Dice option, we move beyond the standard six-sided cubical dice, and enter the world of the d8, d10, d12, d20 and (heavens preserve us) d30.

These dice allow WoR to represent, say, monsters or demigods, without resorting to large numbers of dice. Under this system, characters are given points to create their characters with, and each type of die costs points. Specifically:

d6: 6 points d8: 8 points d10: 10 points d12: 12 points d20: 20 points d30: 30 points

Normal characters are created with 60 points to spend. Monsters and godlings may be created with more (200 is a good number), if the GM wants a high-powered game. Double-pump dice cost double, of course, and 4 dice is still the limit for beginning PCs . . . but they can be 4 big dice. Points not spent when characters are created are lost. Six-sided dice are the smallest permitted, and thirty-sided dice are the largest (and also loopy).

When using this option, a character with Cliché(6) may still roll to improve! If the roll is successful, he drops to (5) dice, but of the NEXT HIGHER TYPE. So, your Hunter(6) becomes a Hunter(5d8).

If the GM is allowing Hooks and Tales, either one will increase available starting points by 10 percent (so, normal Risus characters will get six extra points each for a Hook or Tale).

When characters with different kinds of dice form a Team in combat, the Team Leader is still the one with the highest-ranking Cliché: Warrior(4) "ranks" higher than Warrior(3d10), for example.

Those are the only rule-changes. Dice are still dice - if a Warrior(3) wins a combat round against a Rogue(3d10), the Rogue loses a whole d10. Conversely, at the end of the game, the Rogue has the same odds of adding a d10 to his Clichés as the Warrior has of adding a d6 to his.

A sample monster, built on 200 points (4 were left over, and lost):

Balthrax, Heavily Armored Red Dragon Guardian of Searing Gorge

Description: Balthrax hangs out in Searing Gorge and defends his territory against the Kobold infestation of miners that have descended and are after the thorium ore that lies within.

Clichés: Heavily Armored [2d10], Red Dragon [2d20], Guardian (4d10), of Searing Gorge[3]

An expanded Target Number list for monsters and demigods, compared to feats of physical strength:

30: Throwing a motorcycle.

50: Throwing a zeppelin.

70: Throwing the Deep Run Tram.

85: Throwing Blackrock Mountain into the Maelstrom.

100: Moving Ogrimar to Stranglethorn Vale.

Note the nonlinearity! This isn't rocket science.

ADVANCED OPTION V: LUCKY SHOTS & QUESTING DICE⁽⁶⁾

With this option in play, players can spend their starting dice on something other than clichés. A single cliché die can, instead, buy three *lucky shots* or five *questing dice*.

Using a lucky shot boosts one of your clichés by one die for just a moment - long enough to make *one* important roll of the dice. Lucky shots "recharge" every game session, but can't be hoarded between them. So, if you spend two of your starting dice on lucky shots, you can make up to six of your die rolls "lucky" per game. Lucky shots can

represent random good luck, the favor of a deity, or just a streak of resourcefulness. Only one lucky shot can affect any given die roll. A character with lucky shots might look like this:

Drog Tearshorn, Desperate Orc Rogue From Razor Hill

Description: The devil-may-care rogue, Drog spends half his life battling slimy bug-eyed monsters in Searing Gorge, and the other half out-sliming them in seedy village singles bars.

Clichés: Desperate(2), Orc(3), Rogue (2), from Razor Hill (1)

Lucky Shots: [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Questing dice are lucky shots with a *focus*. They're less flexible, though, because questing dice are tied to a character's personal *quest* a mission that consumes his life, a love that defines him, a hatred that consumes him. Characters who aren't on some kind of clearly-definable crusade shouldn't be allowed to buy questing dice; they're not for something broad like "succeeding in the adventure;" they're for something *personal* like slaughtering the six-toed sloth that murdered your father, re-uniting with your one true love, saving the orphanage you grew up in, or proving, once and for all, that a Gnome can succeed in the NBA. This kind of personal quest is seldom the thrust of the evening's adventure; it's a personal subplot that may only occasionally dominate the storyline. Questing dice may be used to boost any die-roll to overcome any obstacles standing directly between the character and the character's "quest." They can't be applied to unrelated rolls.

Example: Drog Tearshorn's player decides that, instead of six generic lucky shots, he'd rather have *ten* questing dice. He defines Drog's quest as "the sweaty affections of a certain beautiful redhead," and immediately puts Drog on the trail. When brawling with a surly Forest Troll for the affections of a fire-haired beauty, Drog can apply his questing dice to any of his combat rolls ... but when brawling with a Gargantuan thunder lizard on Thunder Ridge, the questing dice don't apply. It's true that Drog's chances with that cute redhead would be threatened by having his brain bashed out, but unless the thunder lizards have the redhead *captive*, they aren't directly in the path of his quest.

If a questing character completes his quest, he may choose to take up another one (re-defining the purpose of his questing dice) or he can lay questing aside and relax, exchanging his questing dice for an equivalent (smaller) number of lucky shots, or for a single die in a *new* cliché associated with his post-quest lifestyle.

ADVANCED OPTION VI: SIDEKICKS AND SHIELD-MATES⁽⁶⁾

Characters already have whatever NPC "support staff" their clichés imply (if any). Normally, they're just Tools of the Trade.

This Advanced Option allows characters to pluck a friendly NPC out of the background and into the fore, to have a potent, loyal (even subservient) follower, ally, bodyguard or boon companion that travels along on adventures, risking life or limb to help him stay healthy and look good doing it.

Create a sidekick by peeling dice away during character creation, as for lucky shots. Each die spent on a sidekick creates a three-dice NPC . So, a 10-dice hero could, instead, be an 8-dice hero with a 6-dice ally. It's usually inappropriate for a sidekick to have any clichés *higher* than the Player Character's best cliché. A few quick examples of what you can get for a single die:

- A Thalassian Warhorse (3) as the property of a paladin.
- A Ferocious Jungle Cat (3) as a companion to a hunter.
- A Sassy Succubus (2) who's also a Shameless Flirt (1), for a warlock.
- A Band of Merry Shield-Brethren (3) fighting alongside a warrior.

A sidekick doesn't need to be a human being (anymore than a PC does) and it doesn't even need to be a single entity. The last example above is an allied *Grunt-Squad*, a noisy group of nameless guys with beards and braids and a lusty hankering for quaffing things and splitting things asunder. The GM (and other players) might choose to name them on a whim, but some can be killed, and others might be recruited, as the game goes on. In game terms, they maintain a static group identity.

Sidekicks are loyal to the end, and obedient provided they're not betrayed. Beyond that, they're NPCs to be used and abused by the GM as frequently as by the player who paid for them. Sidekicks don't usually improve their clichés or gain new ones.

ADVANCED OPTION VII: TRIPLE & QUADRUPLE-PUMPS

As if Double Pumps were not bad enough, I present you with "Phenomenal cosmic powers...itty-bitty living space." This option has the similar limitations as Double Pumps. (i.e. Triple Pump cliché cost 3 dice to buy 1 die and Quadruple Pump cliché cost 4 dice to buy 1 die.) These Clichés, when pumped, give you THREE or FOUR dice in the pumped roll for every die you'll lose at the end of it. Thus, a Mage(5) could be a Mage(14) or a Mage(17) for a single combat round, at a cost of three dice. This option is appropriate for any Clichés based on supernatural powers, such as mages, warlocks, and shamans. They're also appropriate for any other Clichés the GM approves them for.

Morikis the Flatulent Undead Mage from the Basement of Sepulcher

Description: Thin, spindly, mysterious, and gassy with a tired cat on his shoulder. Likes to poke around where Man Ought Not, turn people into sheep and the like. Likes graves.

Clichés: Flatulent (1), Undead (2), Mage {2}, from the Basement of Sepulcher (1)

The {flower brackets} indicate a triple-pump Cliché. Since it costs triple, Morikis is effectively a 10-dice character.

<Angle Brackets> indicate a quadruple-pump Cliché. Since it costs four times what normal clichés do, normal characters will only be able to start with Cliché<1> or Cliché<2> if they also take a Hook and a Tail.

If the GM considers any clichés to be too universally powerful, he may REQUIRE that it be purchased in this way, to insure some sort of balance. Overall, double, triple and quadruple-pump dice are less useful than ordinary dice at the beginning, but since they improve at the same rate as ordinary dice, they are a good "investment." Double, triple and quadruple-pump clichés must be purchased at character creation.

Links and Credits:

(1)

Email: sjohn@io.com

<http://www.cumberlandgames.com>

Risus is S. John Ross' trademark for his Anything RPG.

(2)

World of Warcraft

<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/index.xml>

(3)

Quietly Lifted and Tweaked from Doug Bolden

<http://www.wyrmis.com/rpgs/oblend.html>

(4)

Not So Quietly Stolen from Risusiverse

<http://risusiverse.wetpaint.com/page/When+The+Cure+Is+Worse+Than+The+Disease>

(5)

Borrowed from Risus Crunchy By Tim Ballew

Seems to be missing from the net.

(6)

Both of these are from the Risus Companion

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus-companion.htm>

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