

Solum Expanded Edition

1. Introduction:

This expanded edition of the Solum rpg system adds a few more options to Solum while keeping it's elegant resolution system. The goal was to create a Solum version that is suited for a quick one-shot game as well as mid to long term campaign play.

Credits go to Matt Jackson for creating and sharing Solum with the community.

2. Creating your character(s):

Characters are defined by three main attributes: **Body, Mind and Charm**. They are further defined by one or more cliches, by their gear and their hitpoints.

Body represents your character's physical capabilities including toughness, endurance, stamina, hand-eye-coordination, balance, reflexes, ranged and melee combat prowess as well as riding mounts and operating simple vehicles like cars, motorcycles or small boats. If a task is mainly related to a physical activity it is resolved with the Body attribute.

Mind represents your character's mental and intellectual capabilities including perception, memory, puzzle solving, situational awareness, willpower, multi-tasking

ability, orientation and general knowledge and education as well as the ability to operate complex vehicles like helicopters, airplanes, starships, large yachts and similar vehicles that require extensive knowledge and multi-tasking to operate effectively. Also the ability to pick locks, use computers and hack into networks as well as fixing things. If a task mainly requires knowledge, education or intelligence it is resolved with the Mind attribute.

Charm describes your character's persuasiveness, aura, presence and likeability as well as leadership and is used for tasks that focus on social interaction and communication like bluffing, intimidating, asking for favors, gathering information, requisition supplies or aid and similar activities. If a task mainly involves other people it is resolved with the Charm attribute.

Your attributes can have values from 1 to 3 at character creation and can be raised to a maximum of 4 during play through advancement (see advancement section below).

When creating a character you can freely assign the values 3, 2 and 1 to the three attributes.

Your character's cliches are descriptors or short sentences that help paint a better picture of your character and include a broad (not strictly defined) subset of skills that can aid a character when attempting a task.

During character creation you start with one cliché and also roll 2d6: For every even number you roll you can add one additional cliché to your character.

If a cliché is actually useful for a given task depends on the situation and the task and is determined by the player but it should be within reason. For example if I have a cliché called "Lucky Smuggler" there is no apparent reason that it helps me when hacking a computer system.

If a cliché is helpful to complete a task you can add one die to your dice pool (see task resolution below). However, you can only benefit from one cliché at a time, even if more than one would be applicable.

Example cliches:

Luck Independent Gambler, Man of the Streets, Well known Gunslinger, Cyberwizard, etc.

Hitpoints represent your character's ability to shrug off pain and injury, avoid lethal

blows and deadly bullets, turn hits into near misses and take punishment and move on. They are an abstract measure of a character's survivability, some form of "plot armor". Losing hitpoints does not necessarily mean that the character was hit and has been seriously injured but instead managed to turn the deadly blow into a near miss, taking only a minor bruise or scratch etc. What it means exactly depends on the situation and type of attack and is dictated by cinematic requirement. For example: In a modern gunfight it would not be cinematic if the hero was actually hit by three bullets in the chest but still fights on because he has hitpoints left, so instead it could mean that he barely dodged but suffered a flesh wound at the shoulder.

Your starting hitpoints are the sum of your Body and Mind attributes.

So if you have Body 2 and Mind 1 you would start with 3 hitpoints for example.

Gear is equipment, weapons and armor that your character starts with. Your starting gear is limited and should fit your cliches. You start out with one light weapon, maybe light armor (roll 1d6, if you roll an even number you have light armor) and

some basic adventuring gear as well as a little amount of money. The use of gear is described further in the gear and combat sections of this document.

3. Task Resolution

If you attempt a task that is difficult, complex or has a chance of failure you roll a check to see if you succeed.

There are two types of checks: The first type is an unopposed check against a static difficulty. The second type is an opposed check directly against an opponent which is resolved by rolling dice for both sides and comparing the result.

In order to make a check you build a dice pool (of six sided dice) which consists a number of dice equal to the value of the relevant attribute and a possible die that is added because you have an applicable cliché.

You then roll all your dice and compare each die individually against the difficulty if it is an unopposed check or against the results of the opposing creature, if it is an opposed check.

If one of your dice rolls the difficulty or higher you pass the check if it is an unopposed check.

If your single highest die is higher than the opponent's single highest die you win the opposed check.

Difficulty Numbers for unopposed checks:

1: automatic

2: very easy

3: easy

4: average

5: tricky

6+: hard

Examples:

Nick the thief wants to climb the ivory tower of the snake cult in order to steal the diamond known as the "Eye of the Snake". Since the tower has a smooth surface the difficulty is set at 5. His Body attribute is 3 and he has the cliché "Acrobat Thief" which adds one die to the pool. The player picks up 4d6 and rolls. He gets a 5, 3, 2 and 2. Since at least one die rolled a 5 Nick passes the check and reaches the top of the tower.

Big Arm Bruno is in an arm wrestle contest against Skinny Norris. It is an opposed check, both participants have to roll their Body attribute. Big Arm Bruno's Body is 3, Skinny Norris' Body is 1. No cliché fits so Bruno rolls 3d6 and gets 3, 2, 2, not the best roll. Skinny Norris rolls 1d6 and gets a 4. Skinny Norris wins since he's got the highest single die result (remember, you

always compare individual dice, not dice totals). He grins, makes a mean thumb squeeze against a nerve pressure point and slams Bruno's arm onto the table.

The "Rule of 6":

There is one special rule regarding checks, whether unopposed or opposed, and that is the "Rule of 6": **Whenever one or more dice show a 6, you take one (and only one) of them and roll it again. The result of the second roll is added to the 6 for the final result. If the second roll is a 6 as well, it is added and the die is rolled again, until no more 6es are rolled. The resulting total is the final check result.** The "Rule of 6" is the only way to pass checks that have a difficulty higher than 6 (which is possible but rare) and it is also used to break ties if both participants in an opposed contest rolled a 6.

Example:

Ripperjack, the well known street doc, has to patch up a severely wounded street samurai who was almost cut in half by a katana. He only has basic medical supplies and a standard operating table. The difficulty is set at 10. Ripperjack has Mind 4 and a Street Doc cliché, so he gets to roll 5 dice. He rolls 6, 6, 5, 3, 2. So far so good, there is still hope for the street samurai. The player takes one of

the dice that rolled a 6 and rolls again, getting a 3. The 3 is added for a final result of 9. Too bad, it looked good at first, but the samurai lost too much blood and passes away under the capable hands of Ripperjack.

4. Combat, Combat Gear, Damage and Healing

If two or more hostile parties try to kill or hurt each other combat breaks out. Combat uses the rules for checks but with a little extra added to it.

Combat Rounds:

During combat, the in-game time is measured in small units of time called **rounds**. One round equals 5 seconds of time in the game world.

In a **round**, every participant gets a **turn**.

The order in which all the participants act is called the **initiative order**. The initiative order is determined once at the beginning of combat and stays the same each round until the combat is resolved. However, determining the initiative order is only necessary, if neither side is surprised. **If one side is caught unaware or ambushed, the ambushing party always has the initiative and acts before the ambushed party can act.**

During a turn, the acting creature can do two things: **It can move and it can perform one**

action. An action is mostly but not always an attack but it can also be used to open a door, change weapons, drink a potion, interact with the environment or even to make a second move. **In short, an action is used to perform any task that requires a little effort and concentration.**

The move is optional and movement is needed to close or increase the distance to an opponent. One move reduces or increases the range category to the target by one. For more details see the movement section.

Determining the Initiative Order:

To determine the initiative order, all participating heroes (only heroes, not NPC or monsters) make an unopposed Mind check against a difficulty of 4. Appropriate cliches can be used as per standard check rules.

All heroes that pass the check act before the hostile creatures act, all heroes that fail the check act after the hostile creatures. Participants act in order of their Mind stat from highest to lowest during their segment (that is before or after the opposition).

Example:

Nick the thief has Mind 2 and a cliche called "Quick-Witted Rogue", his companion, Osric the

Conqueror, has Mind 1 and the cliche "Seasoned Veteran of Many Battles". They are facing off against four orcs.

The initiative order is established: Nick rolls 3d6 (Mind + cliche): He gets 4, 3, 3, and passes the check. Osric rolls 2d6 and gets 3, 3. He fails the check. So the initiative order is Nick, the orcs, Osric.

If Osric had passed the check as well the order would be Nick (because he has Mind 2), Osric (Mind 1), the orcs.

Attacking and Defending:

There are two types of attacks: **Melee attacks and ranged attacks.**

Melee attacks are attacks against an opponent that you are engaged with. Melee attacks are made either with melee weapons, punches and kicks or improvised weapons like pistol grips, chairs etc.

In order to make a successful melee attack you have to win an opposed Body check against your opponent. If you win the check you hit the target and deal damage according to your weapon, which is subtracted from the target's hitpoints.

However, if you fail the opposed check, you take damage according to the weapon used by your

opponent, even though it is your turn and you are the attacker.

The same is true if it is your opponent's turn and he fails the opposed check. You can then deal damage to him.

In short: Melee combat is a risky business and a bloody mess where everybody can be hurt anytime, even if it is not his or her turn. It is a back and forth of blows, thrusts and parries where every mistake is exploited by the opposition.

Ranged attacks are attacks made with a ranged weapon like a bow, throwing knife, pistol or rifle. They are usually made against targets that are nearby or far away, however, they can be used in close combat as well but that is difficult, since the enemy will try to interfere and won't let you get a straight shot.

In order to make a successful ranged attack, you have to succeed at an unopposed check against a difficulty which is determined by the distance to the target.

Against targets that are engaged with you the difficulty is 6.

Against targets that are nearby the difficulty is 4.

Against targets that are far away the difficulty is 5.

If you succeed at the check you hit and deal damage according to your weapon.

If you fail the check, the shot misses.

Movement and Distance:

In this expanded version of Solum **distance is measured in three abstract categories.** The categories are:

Engaged: You are directly in front of an opponent or NPC or switch or door or whatever. You can attack with a melee weapon or interact with the object in front of you. Using a ranged weapon while engaged with a hostile creature is difficult, since the creature will do all it can to interfere, therefore using a ranged weapon while engaged with a hostile is a check against a difficulty of 6. You can choose to use a ranged weapon as an improvised melee weapon or attack with unarmed strikes (or switch to a melee weapon of course). In this case you make a melee attack with an opposed check (and take damage if you fail the check).

You can use your move to move away, increasing the distance by one category to nearby, if you

are not engaged with a hostile creature.

If you are engaged with a hostile creature and want to disengage and withdraw roll a d6: If you get an even number you disengage, withdraw and are now nearby. If you roll an odd number you fail and the opponent retains hold of you. You are still engaged and your move is lost.

Nearby: A feature or creature or NPC that is nearby is a few meters away, down an alley, across the room etc. The exact distance is not important. You can communicate with nearby characters without having to shout. Shooting somebody that is nearby requires a check against a difficulty of 4. **Nearby is the default distance at which combat starts. You can take a move to increase the distance to far away or move in and engage.**

Far Away: If a creature or feature is far away it is anywhere from tens of meters to hundreds of meters away. At the end of the road, on the horizon, at the opposite side of a stadium etc. You either have to shout to communicate or can only communicate by comlink or visual signs, depending on the context and the location and distance in the narrative.

Movement: During combat you can increase or decrease the distance to an opponent or feature by taking your move when it is your turn. One move increases or decreases the distance by one category. You can choose to make a second move as your action. Outside of combat movement is much more abstract and loose, you just move where you want to go.

Combat Gear (Weapons and Armor): Weapons and armor are considered combat gear and use the rules detailed in this section. Both types come in three categories:

light weapon or armor

medium weapon or armor

heavy weapon or armor

Weapons:

The weapon you use determines how much damage you deal on a successful hit.

Light weapons deal one point of damage. Light weapons are pistols, daggers, short swords, throwing knives, improvised weapons, unarmed strikes, light blades etc. All heroes start with a light weapon of choice.

Medium weapons deal two points of damage. Medium weapons are

rifles, swords, axes, crossbows, bows etc.

Heavy weapons deal three points of damage. Heavy weapons are machine guns, assault rifles, grenade launchers, two-handed melee weapons, heavy crossbows or composite bows etc.

In order to effectively wield a heavy weapon you need a Body score of at least 3. Otherwise the weapon deals only 2 damage and during a check you have to subtract one die when building your dice pool.

Armor:

Armor increases your survivability. **In game terms, armor adds hitpoints to your starting hitpoint value when you wear it in combat.** If you lose these hitpoints that doesn't mean your armor is damaged or broken and "armor hitpoints" are recovered just like hitpoints during a rest. You have to think of it all in an abstract form to measure how much punishment you can take.

Light armor adds one hitpoint to your starting value. Light armor is leather armor, padded clothes, a heavy leather jacket, a padded vest reinforced with polycarbonate fibers etc. After character creation roll 1d6. If you roll an even number you

start with light armor of your choice.

Medium armor adds two hitpoints to your starting value. Chainmail, a breastplate, a modern polycarbonate armor, scale mail, a flak jacket and similar armor counts as medium armor. Medium armor is expensive in the game world.

Heavy armor adds three hitpoints to your starting value. A suit of full plate, powered assault armor or similar types are considered heavy armor. Heavy armor is usually very expensive, might be restricted, can't be hidden and certainly draws attention.

You need a Body score of at least 2 to effectively wear medium armor and a score of at least 3 to effectively wear heavy armor. Otherwise you subtract one die from your dice pool when attempting any form of check because you just feel sweaty, can't breathe, everything itches and you are just not used to wearing armor that heavy. You get the idea.

Damage and Healing:

All damage you take is subtracted from your hitpoints. If your hitpoints reach zero you are knocked out, severely wounded, unconscious or otherwise incapacitated and at

the mercy of your opponents. You are effectively out and can't act anymore. Being incapacitated or knocked out etc. does not count as resting.

As long as you have at least one hitpoint left you are fully functional and you can regain hitpoints naturally by resting.

If you rest you recover hitpoints at a rate of one hitpoint per half hour of rest. That might seem like a fast rate but remember, hitpoint loss does not equal serious injury and this is a cinematic game. The heroes want to fight on, not rest for a week after every fight. Hitpoints provided by your armor are also recovered during a rest, they are treated just like normal hitpoints.

You can also heal through magical, medical or supernatural means as dictated by your setting.

5. (Non-Combat) Gear

Gear that is not a weapon or armor is handled by the following rules:

It either allows you to do something you otherwise couldn't do without the gear

OR

a piece of useful gear allows you to reroll one of your dice once when performing a task for which the piece of gear was intended.

However, no matter how many special pieces of gear a character has, you can only benefit from one piece of gear or one weapon or armor per check and only get to reroll one die once.

Example:

Nick the thief is trying to pick a complicated lock of a vault. The difficulty is set at 5 and he has to roll his Mind attribute of 2 and can add his cliché so he rolls 3 dice and gets 4, 4, 3. At the moment that is a failure. However, he has a set of mastercrafted thieves tools which allow him to reroll one die. He rerolls the 3 and gets a 4. Still not good enough but at least he has had the chance to improve his odds.

6. Character Advancement

For campaign play I suggest the following advancement rules:

After a hero has completed an entire story arc or adventure (not just a session) you can choose A or B:

A: Try to obtain an additional cliché: Make up a cliché that relates to what your hero did in the last adventure and roll 1d6.

On a roll of 5 or higher you can add the cliché to your hero's clichés. If you roll below 5 you fail to obtain the cliché and can only try again at the next "advancement point" as dictated by the story.

B: Try to improve one of your attributes. Choose an attribute and roll the attribute die or dice. If you roll all evens you can increase the attribute by one point. No attribute can be raised above 4. If you fail to roll all evens your attribute stays as it is and you only get another chance at the next "advancement point" as dictated by the story.

7. Solo Play

To play solo or without a GM do the following:

Determine goals & the first scene:

Figure out why your character is there and where in the story they are. This is a short description of where our hero is and what's happening. Imagine a starting point for your adventure:

Are you stealing space station plans?

Are you plundering a tomb?

Begin asking questions:

To begin play, ask a question that has a Yes or No answer, it is important to keep it simple.

Are guards present?

Do I encounter a trap?

For each question, roll a d6 and consult the table below.

If the hero has an applicable cliché or an advantage, roll 2d6 and pick the best result.

If the character has a significant disadvantage or the odds are very slim, roll 2d6 and use the worst result for the question asked.

1- No, And 4-Yes, But

2- No 5-Yes

3- No, But 6-Yes, And

And & But Results:

And amplifies, while But mitigates.

No, And means things went really bad. No, But softens the blow a bit.

Yes, But is successful but with a drawback. Yes, And is all kinds of awesome.

To give you an idea about what might happen for the And or But

result you can use the following table or any form of random idea generator. Maybe the context of the scene itself already provides the answer:

- 1: Nothing significant happens
- 2: An obstacle, something to overcome
- 3: A unique feature or situation
- 4: A unique feature or situation
- 5: NPC (1-3 friendly, 4-5 neutral, 6 not friendly)
- 6: Monster (1 friendly, 2-3 neutral, 4-6 not friendly)

8. Optional Rules

Hitpoints and NPCs:

In order to give an NPC or monster a unique feel in combat, you can decouple the creature's hitpoints from its attributes, since the body score also determines combat capability. However, sometimes you need a monster that is not that good in combat but tough and enduring, sometimes you need a capable but frail opponent. Also, don't worry about an NPC's armor or weapon, just give him the hitpoints and damage values that are appropriate for the NPC. NPCs don't have to follow the same generation rules as player heroes.

Examples:

A very capable but lightly armored halfling assassin could have a combat dice pool of 4 (body + a relevant cliché) but only 2 hitpoints.

A hulking but slow and clumsy herbivore dinosaur could have a combat dice pool of only 1 or 2 dice but for example 8 hitpoints.

Alternative Combat Resolution:

This extended edition of Solum was created to provide a little more detail in combat, however, that is not what you might want. If you want you can ignore all the rules about initiative, movement and distance and melee and ranged attacks and just handle combat as a series of opposed Body checks. The loser takes damage according to the weapon used by the winner. I would suggest to use the "Rule of 6" though, in order to keep the draw rounds to a minimum.

Fast Static Combat:

Even though it is always great fun to throw a couple of six-sided dice around sometimes you might want to prefer an even faster resolution method to the method described above.

In this case, just assign the combat a static difficulty determined by how tough you think the opposition is and give the opposition some hitpoints.

Only the player rolls his combat dice pool. If a die shows the difficulty the hero wins the round and you subtract the damage from the opposition.

If the hero fails he is hit and takes damage as determined by the opposition's weapons.

In essence, combat becomes a series of unopposed checks with a damage counter.

Example in play:

As I dash into the alley I am suddenly cut off by enemy troopers approaching from both sides. Blaster bolts fill the air as a total of five troopers are shooting at me as I dive for cover and return fire...

Trooper squad: Difficulty 4, 5 hitpoints, deal 2 damage on a hit

Now only the player would roll his combat dice every round, trying to beat the difficulty of 4, until either the squad is defeated or the hero is defeated.