

Fate Solo

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Fate Solo is a Solo Engine so when playing Fate you don't have to 'break out' of the system to use a Solo Engine.

There are three main area of rules of Fate Solo:

1. Fate Solo Oracle
2. Character Rules
3. Surprise Factor

Fate Solo Oracle (v 3.2)

	Odds				
	Terrible	Poor	Even	Good	Great
-4	No --	No --	No -	No -	No
-3	No --	No -	No -	No	No +
-2	No -	No -	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --
-1	No	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -
0	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes
1	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes	Yes
2	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes	Yes +	Yes +
3	Yes -	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++
4	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++	Yes ++

The Oracle is used when asking yes/no questions within the game. Along the top are the odds. This shows the likelihood of something being true or false.

Some results have 2 options. The first non-blank dice forces the result in that direction. If you roll 4 blanks you get to choose what result you want.

If there is no scene advantage / disadvantage when you roll a -, --, +, or ++ ask a further question to discover what the modifier is about.

If there is no obvious question use a randomiser to discover what the modifier means.

Tips for Use

Use a randomiser to help frame questions. This allows you to ask questions that can take your game in new directions.

Characters in Fate Solo (v1)

Using the core ideas of characters from Fate Core the lone hero needs to be larger-than-life. With that in mind the power level of the hero using Fate System Toolkit is Pulp Adventure.

Skills

5 Average (+1)

4 Fair (+2)

3 Good (+3)

2 Great (+4)

1 Superb (+5)

Skill Cap at Superb

Other

Refresh: 4

Free Stunts: 5

Stress Boxes: 4

Aspects: 7 (See below)

Aspects (v2)

This is another place where I depart from Fate Core. I have included 7 aspects not only because that fits nicely with the Pulp Adventure Level but also with the ideas I had for creating aspects in a solo game. It also makes the character more rounded in what they can do.

There are two ways to start. Either with the High Concept (as usual) or with the Trouble.

The second aspect is either the Trouble or the High Concept.

The Trouble aspect is like the standard Trouble aspect (especially the Personal Struggles). The difference is that the whole character should be built around the contradiction between the Trouble and High Concept aspects.

The third aspect is a Goal. By that I mean something the character wants to happen that can be seen as yes they have done it or no they have not. This Goal (along with the Trouble aspect) should drive the action for the adventure. If the Goal is achieved a new Goal aspect should be created. The Goal Aspect can be as simple as 'Stop X from Happening'. It could also be more complicated though it needs to be concrete, have a yes/no to it being fulfilled, and have a short(ish) goal deadline.

The fourth and fifth aspects are Linking aspects. These aspects link the character to:

-) the world,
-) another person (an NPC) within the world, or
-) the character's backstory.

The 6th and 7th aspects can be left blank and filled in during play. If, however, you can think of some good aspects in character creation fill them in. They can also be any of the above with the exception of High Concept. However if a second Goal is picked it can have a longer goal deadline, or a less-solid fulfillment criteria.

Surprise Factor (v1.2)

A Surprise Factor Roll (SF + 4dF) is triggered every time a – or + is rolled on the Fate Solo Oracle. If — or ++ are rolled roll twice. If the roll beats a Surprise Threshold then that level of surprise occurs.

Surprise Threshold:

- 3: Minor Surprise - Some minor things are not as they appear
- 5: Moderate Surprise - The Scene takes a new direction
- 6: Major Surprise - The Adventure takes a new direction. It's also possible that the world that the PC is aware of changes.

The Surprise Factor starts at Mediocre (0). Each scene with a Surprise Factor Roll but no surprise increases the Surprise Factor, for the next scene, by 1 (Mediocre (0), Average (1), Fair (2), Good (3), Great (4)).

Once a surprise occurs the Surprise Factors falls to Mediocre straight away and for the scene afterwards.

Surprises

A surprise is when new information is revealed or old information is changed.

The surprise should be related to the question asked: if it's possible to do so. Even if the surprise isn't related to the question a positive answer means the surprise should be positive and a negative answer means the surprise is bad.

There are 3 levels of surprises and Surprise Thresholds.

1. A minor surprise is when a new / interesting thing occurs. It doesn't change much but makes things different in a way you didn't expect. Your best friend has got back with his ex.
2. A moderate surprise is when the scene takes a different direction from the way you had thought it would occur. The PC wants to get past the guard watching a door. But the guard 'changes' sides and joins up with the PC because their missions are the same.
3. A major surprise is when everything changes.

These are some ways that surprises can occur:

-] Bring something to life that was 'dead'.
-] Character doesn't know who they are.
-] Conflict has been solved. New deeper conflict to come.
-] Major character is killed in an important plot way.
-] New enemies / allies.
-] No idea what they had; something is inside when they thought it was external.
-] Plot speeds up.
-] Problem behind the problem is revealed.
-] Problem escalated.
-] Problem isn't solved. Things that seem like they've been solved aren't.
-] Pyrrhic victory / defeat. Win with a loss. Loose with a victory.
-] Reversal. A is now B. B is now A.
-] Scarier villain takes place of villain.
-] Secret plan. Either PC has planned all of this or the villain has.
-] Someone isn't who they appear.
-] Story within a story. Wheels within wheels.
-] Subplot is elevated to main plot.

Hacking Surprises

There are 7 ways to change how the Surprise Factor works:

1. Less surprises (1): increase all Thresholds by 1
2. Less surprises (2): a -- or ++ only counts as 1 roll.
3. Less surprises (3): as 2 but they add 1 to the Surprise Factor Roll.
4. Less game changers: Moderate and Major Surprise Thresholds increased by 1

5. Less major surprises: increase Major Surprise Threshold to 7
6. Everything changes: Surprise Factor doesn't reduce until end of the round.
7. More surprises: the Surprise Factor increases each scene even if a Surprise Factor Roll doesn't occur.

Bonus Rule: Compels

If you roll a – on the oracle, and it makes sense in the game, an aspect has been compelled. This can work with a surprise or when a surprise doesn't occur.

Appendix: Interview

The following interview will hopefully give you some more insights into Fate Solo.

Heya, Kenny, thanks for coming.

Heya, Kenny, it's great to be here.

Can you tell me a bit about your solo engine?

Fate Solo, yeah. Fate Solo is a small and streamline Solo Engine that uses Fate Dice to run a solo adventure.

What made you want to create a solo engine?

Why, umm, well I wanted to see if I could do one first and foremost. I also wanted it to be different from the other solo engines out there. So I thought I'd try and make one using a narrative system. My other idea was trying to make one that fit well with Savage Worlds.

It was a tie for a while but I decided that Fate would force me to be different.

Since you made your system, have you played more solo or social roleplaying?

I've only had a single social roleplaying experience in the last few years, and that was earlier this year. So I've mainly played solo.

Thanks for that so far, Kenny. I want to look at your solo roleplaying experiences. What rule systems do you tend to use when playing solo?

Most of my recent experiences have been with Fate, FAE, and also the D6xD6 System.

What do you like about these systems?

The mix between easiness, flexibility, depth, and narrativeness.

What rules systems do you feel work best with your solo engine?

That's a bit easy: Fate or FAE. Though Fudge might work too.

What is the philosophy behind your solo engine?

That when playing Fate you don't have to pick up non-Fate dice.

How does your philosophy behind your solo engine come out in the way you designed your solo engine?

All the rolls used in Fate Solo require 4dF.

How does Fate Solo work?

There are 3 modules to Fate Solo.

1. *Character Modifying*
2. *Oracle*
3. *Surprise*

Each of the 3 modules are optional, like the original Fate, so you can add, alter, or use them as they are.

Character modifying is a module to change the default character creation method to making a more rounded and powerful character.

The Oracle answers yes and no questions. It's the core of the solo engine.

The Surprise module adds surprises to the game. When I built this module I included methods to alter how often surprises occur.

Can please you give an example of Fate Solo in action?

Thustan is tracking some orcs back to their lair through a forest. He plans on doing a quick scout and then bring back a much larger force. Being an old, not bold, scout he's careful and wants to know if he can see any signs that the orcs he's following are leading him into a trap.

The odds are Even. A ○ (-, -, +, +) is rolled this results in a No ++. As he's in a forest and the orcs believe it's their safe haven they're getting louder and less careful watching their surroundings. As I rolled 2 + I roll twice on the Surprise Factor table getting a 2 and a 1 (with a Mediocre chance of a surprise). So no surprises are triggered.

Easing back Thustan follows the orcs from a greater distance. In the distance Thustan can smell, and hear, the unmistakable sounds and smells of an orc encampment. Now we find out if there are any orc sentries. The odds are Good. Another ○ is rolled. This time it's a +, blank, blank, - so the result is a Yes- -. There are sentries but they're not paying much attention to the outside of the camp for a solitary sneaky scout. As 2 more modifiers were rolled 2 more Surprise Factor rolls are required. A 2 is rolled and as there is an Average chance of a surprise (as no surprise was triggered last scene) this comes out to a 3. Leading to a minor surprise. The chance of a surprise falls to Mediocre and a 1 is rolled so no surprise for the 2nd roll.

This minor surprise means that there are more than 1 orc band out at the moment, another one is going straight out, or the orcs Thustan were following were welcomed back with a party. Anything could happen to add colour to the world. If a major surprise occurred a monster could appear and massacre the entire orc encampment.

What are your top 3 tips for asking questions of solo engines?

1. *Context is everything. Following on from the Thustan example. He's in a forest and trailing a monster then don't ask about what's happening in a nearby village. If you're getting near a village and want to ask a question you can ask: Is there something happening in the nearby village? The 'something happening' should be related to the monster somehow.*
2. *Don't be afraid of asking clarifying questions. The fewer the questions asked the better but if you're unsure: clarify.*
3. *Ask the question as if you're asking a GM.*

Now what about interpreting the answers given by the solo engine. What are your top tips?

List your answers. This is where I differ from Zack and Tana¹. Don't go with your 1st answer make a list of 5 to 10 answers and pick from amongst them².

Context is everything. If you ask a question about the monster, from above, make sure the answer is about the monster. If something is happening in the village it's caused by the monster. You could find the body of a child, the remains of a hunting party, a dog's carcass, a wounded villager, or a bloodstained trail?

A concern, and problem of soloists is about the amount of questions you ask. Do you have any tips on when you're asking too many questions?

The problem is maybe that:

-) you're not asking the right question,*
-) you're trying to get the outcome you want, or*
-) you're not clear on something.*

Asking the right question is quite often the best way to stop asking so many questions.

Write 5 to 10 questions down about the situation your character finds themselves in.

Go through your list of questions and pick the question you most want answering to ask. You may then give yourself¹ further follow up, clarification, question.

A solo roleplayer had an experience whilst reading a Solo RPG Play Report about an interesting, yet strange, character becoming a GM PC. It worked in the play through they were reading but it made them worried about strange things happening in their game.

What they would like to know is how they can keep things focused upon their game and not go off in strange, and maybe stupid, directions? All of this whilst still maintaining surprises coming out of the solo engine.

As mentioned above focus upon context. Everything that happens within a game is focused upon the character's story. In a novel, film, or TV show there is nowt that occurs that doesn't relate to the story being told or the bigger series story.

In fact in my whole experience I can only think of¹ good series of books that add non-relevant information. This detail adds colour to the series and is limited to a paragraph every couple of books.

Breaking away from your solo engine for a moment. Yet keeping in spirit with the previous question; what tips do you have to make sure a solo adventure sticks to a story and doesn't just end up being little more than a string of encounters?

I keep talking about context and focus and this should be key. Everything that happens in the game is part of the PC's story. This means it's best to focus upon a single character and tell their story.

I also like an idea that Zack introduced to me: the Chekhov's List. Everything introduced that doesn't seem relevant is added to the list and your mission is to find ways to add the items from the list into your game as you go along.

¹ Creators of the Solo Engines CRGE and Mythic GME.

² See *Master Solo Engines* for more on Listing and for Advanced Listing Techniques.

You mentioned your view above but can you tell me why if groups in roleplaying are the norm why do some people tend to keep with groups in solo play and why do you think that's wrong?

Part of it is lazy thinking: well I always played in groups so I must play in groups now.

Part of it is the ruleset they use. I recommend people to stay away from rulesets that require groups to run.

Most of it is that you're telling a story. A story requires a single focused character. These are the characters that in a movie change the most, grow the most, or even falls the most.

Another advantage of running a single PC is that it speeds that game up.

This doesn't mean you can't have a companion, in fact it's best you do. The companion, or 3 if you must run a group of characters, is an NPC.

Moving even further afield now to talk about NPC interactions. How do you control faceless 'single use' NPCs? NPCs like merchants, town guards, pizza delivery, taxi drivers, and so on.

Introduce them, use them, move on. If they're interesting or useful then keep track of any details you gave them they could be promoted later to a more major NPC.

How about major, named, NPCs?

Make sure they have their own desire, dreams, goals. Make them the hero in their own story. Record their interactions with the PC if they're important and record any information that the PC knows or thinks they know about the NPC.

How do you get monsters and NPC to act as if another player is controlling their actions and decisions that will surprise you as a player and act like an intelligent AI?

Look at their desires and goals. In any given situation what would bring them closer to that goal and make them do that. Sometimes it'll be helping the PC. At other times it'll be hindering the PC. Just make sure you know why they're doing something.

This is one of those times when you have to be a bit meta in your gaming. You have to break out of the PC viewpoint and focus upon the NPC for a while. This is something that I've not seen any solo engine capable of doing.

Let's get back to your solo engine. This time I'll like to know more about the behind the scenes and design about your solo engine. What were your influences behind the making of your solo engine?

Mythic GME, CRGE, and Fate all influenced the design in one way or another.

When you use your solo engine do you use it as is or do you find you end up tweaking it a bit?

As I'm play testing it I do tend to use it as is but, and this is a big but, I look for ways I can tweak it. The Oracle Table has had many different variations. I'm still looking at the Character Creation and Surprise Module to see if I can tweak them and make them stronger.

In what ways do you tweak your solo engine?

I look at what happens during the previous games session and the notes I made. Then I think about ways I could solve the issues that came up. When I play the game again I keep my attention on how the new method works.

As an example my first Oracle Table had odds of -4 to +4 on it. During play I discovered that I didn't use all the options so I made it shorter and easier to use. Then I used names from Fate to label the oracle. Another way I modified the oracle was that I had it lopsided.

When I thought about using it I discovered that I spent more time trying to craft the question just so. In the end I decided to make it a simple mirror of each other.

If you were allowed to, or forced to, how would you modify your solo engine?

I would love to add a randomiser into the solo engine. So that everything needed can be done with just pure Fate dice.

What is the best way you've seen your solo engine changed?

The best way I've seen the solo engine change is a random event generator. It's an interesting way of adding random events into Fate Solo. He created this before I got around to creating my random event section. In fact he forced me to make mine.

What are some of the pitfalls and problems you ran into while developing your solo engine?

I think it was when I decided to be too granular and too detailed. Fate is a simple and quick game and I forgot about this when I created my first model.

What advice would you have for someone who is interested in making their own solo engine?

Go ahead and make it. Also playtest it in your own games. While doing that keep an eye open for what works well and poorly. Then make small changes until it works until you like. Don't forget to keep looking at other solo engines and rulesets as they may contain clues and hints to make your engine stronger.

What do you think is most, and least, important in making a solo engine?

The most important thing is an Oracle Table or something of the sort that answers Yes/No questions. The least important are the complicated rules that slow down a game but add very little to it. In Fate Solo this part is Misconception Track³. I've left it in but not found a way to make it simple and useful.

The idea behind the Track is important and in keeping with my ethos of internal character growth. But it's complicated and not all that useful as it stands now.

Do you have any plans you'd be willing to talk about for the future of your solo engine?

There is much promise that I can see in Fate Solo. I'd like to bring at least some of this promise out. Once done I'll release it as a cheap⁴ PDF with a Creative Commons licence.

Thanks for the interview.

Thanks for having, me Kenny.

Appendix 2: Further Information

This short work doesn't cover how best to use Solo Engines I have released *Master Solo Engines* which covers this ground. It also explains some of the details about Solo Engines I've used in the interview which might not make sense.

³ I've removed the Misconception Track from Fate Solo as I couldn't find a way to make it work.

⁴ While I talked about cheap here in the end I decided to release it for free.

Appendix 3: Fate Solo Oracle (for printing purposes)

Odds					
	Terrible	Poor	Even	Good	Great
-4	No --	No --	No -	No -	No
-3	No --	No -	No -	No	No +
-2	No -	No	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --
-1	No	No +	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -
0	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes
1	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes -	Yes
2	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes	Yes	Yes +
3	Yes -	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++
4	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++	Yes ++

Odds					
	Terrible	Poor	Even	Good	Great
-4	No --	No --	No -	No -	No
-3	No --	No -	No -	No	No +
-2	No -	No	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --
-1	No	No +	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -
0	No	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes
1	No +	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes -	Yes
2	No ++ / Yes --	Yes -	Yes	Yes	Yes +
3	Yes -	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++
4	Yes	Yes +	Yes +	Yes ++	Yes ++