



have-a-go heroes

**The role-playing game of Marvel City's
not-no-super superheroes
by Simon Washbourne**

What is have-a-go heroes?

This role-playing game is heavily inspired by the Mystery Men movie. You may notice this as you read.

have-a-go heroes is a humorous role-playing game of ordinary people, who despite (or because of) their ordinary lives have taken it upon themselves to don the mask of the caped crusader and fight crime for the sakes of other people just like themselves.

In a typical role-playing game, one person takes a role that differs to that of the other players. In have-a-go-heroes she is called The Boss. It is her job to come up with the scenes and then present the scenes to the other players. She plays the roles of the bad guys in the scenes, describing what they are doing and so on. The Boss doesn't get to roll any dice.

The players, in the guise of their have-a-go heroes get to describe their character's actions and use their not-so-super superpowers in interesting and humorous ways. They get to roll dice to see whether their not-so-super powers actually work as they expect, or not.

The players also have home-lives. It is up to the players themselves to deal with their characters home life issues between scenes. This is described by the players and The Boss responds to what the players are up to and how they go about it.

The players also get the job of discussing, in character, how the scene they have just finished relates to the next scene, how they will accomplish it, how they are going to get there and other stuff like that. Usually they make their plans in the coffee shop.

This game was written, re-written, designed and finished within a 24 hour period. The 24 hours ended on Thursday 22 July at 8pm. Some of the inspiration for the idea of scenes, came from an old Baron Munchausen game I devised years ago that I called "To Tell a Tall Story". I lost the notes for that game ages ago.

Other design inspiration came from reading the games and ideas of many of the folks who hang out at The Forge. Do pay the site a visit some time especially if you want help designing your own rpg's.

Simon Washbourne 22 July, 2004.

Overview

This game is played in five separate (though most likely related) scenes in which the have-a-go-heroes get to use their not-so-super superpowers. The have-a-go-heroes start in the middle of the Opening scene, which should be a fight or some other action scene, not knowing initially how they came to be there, but nevertheless need to play the scene through to its conclusion.

Afterwards, the have-a-go-heroes move into downtime. This is between scenes role-playing, in the guise on their characters' real-life identities. It is a time to reflect on what has happened, do some 'team-building', recover and retrospectively discuss why they were in the Opening scene and plan their way into the next scene, linking the next scene to the action from the first scene in some way. Oh, and all characters have home-life issues that they must try to resolve, either with the help of the other characters or by themselves.

After the Opening scene is played out, the Boss gives the players brief information about the next three scenes. They will not necessarily be played out in the order the Boss describes them in and do not necessarily have to make any sense to the Boss – the players have to come up with the reasons why all the scenes fit together as they do.

After the third of these middle scenes has been resolved, the Boss gives information to the players about the final scene. It is here where the villain of the piece will be discovered or if already known, where his hideout is found or where the team finally get to grips with him. It usually is a villain behind the scenes, say a crime lord or gone-bad police chief or mad scientist. The point is that this is the finale or climax of the whole thing and is a 'do or die' scene for the have-a-go-heroes.

The Boss creates the scenes. She doesn't necessarily need to go into too much detail. She does need to work out where each scene will take place and who or what it involves. The rest can be filled in as play develops.

Between each scene the players have the opportunity to play their normal, non-superhero characters. This is a chance to recover from the previous scene, plan their way into the next scene, contact friends and get equipment and resolve their issues or achieve their goals.

Step 1: What the players need to do

The players need to create their have-a-go-heroes. Luckily this is very simple.

First of all they need a home-life name and a super-name.

Write them on the character sheet.

The have-a-go hero name should be a reflection of their not-so-super superpower. Whilst they have only one not-so-super superpower, they can use it in many weird and ingenious ways that they can think of.

Their not-so-super superpower is either not actually very super or doesn't work terribly well if it is a 'real' superpower, like being able to turn invisible. It could for example, work only in certain circumstances. It is likely to come from the characters real-life job or a sport he plays or something like that. He may not even be that good at his job/sport or whatever – it doesn't matter. What does matter is his willingness to stand up for decency, the common man and the American way. Or something else.

Write the not-so-super superpower down on your character sheet. You can also write down how your character came by his not-so-super superpower if you wish, or you can save this for later, during play between scenes.

Your character must also have a goal or issue to be achieved or resolved during play, between scenes. This is to do with home-life life issues, not super issues. These home-life issues are the sort of mundane issues everyone has, such as debts, relationships, personal problems, the car, kids, job or whatever. It must be something that can be solved during the session, between scenes. It is a chance for real role-play.

Write this down. Also write a number after it, between 1 and 3. This is how difficult the issue will be to resolve. If your character resolves it his Personal Rating (PR) is improved by the issue rating.

All have-a-go-heroes have an initial Personal Rating (PR) of 0 at the start. This may increase. This represents the limit on the number of extra dice they can roll during the final scene, using dice from the team Dice Pool (DP).

That's it. Character creation is complete. I told you it was simple.

Step 2: What The Boss needs to do

The Boss works out the location and rough synopsis/idea of the five scenes involved in the session – the Opening scene, middle three scenes and the Finale. For each scene, the Boss gives a Scene Points (SP) rating. SP are to determine how tough the scene will be for the have-a-go heroes to complete. The Boss has 20 SP for the final scene. She has a further 20 SP to split amongst the other scenes. She could give a SP of 5 to each scene, or split them any way she pleases, with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 to any one scene.

The Opening scene should not be tougher than any of the other scenes.

The SP represents how difficult it will be for the have-a-go-heroes to resolve the scenes. Each SP represents something that must be overcome. The SP might be further broken down within the scene. So in a 5 SP scene, there might, for example be 5 thugs, each of SP 1. Or there could be 3 thugs of SP 1 and a leader thug of SP 2.

SP does not have to represent enemies to be defeated. It could difficulties to overcome from the scene itself, like represent getting answers out of people or tricky situations like diffusing a bomb, stopping a runaway train or rescuing people from a rhinoceros that escaped from the zoo.

The Boss does not have to make the scenes make sense or lead from one to the next. It is up to the players to make sense of it between the scenes and move seamlessly from one scene to the next.

The have-a-go-heroes get to choose the order in which they approach the scenes. In between scenes they get to recover from previous scenes, make sense of what is going on and discuss/plan their way to the next scene. They also have their own problems/goals to overcome or achieve.

For completing scenes, have-a-go-heroes will gain dice to add to their team Dice Pool (DP). For accomplishing goals or solving problems they can gain also points. These points are saved, to be used in the final scene, to make sure their not-so-super superpowers do not fail them in the hour of need, i.e. in the Final scene.

Step 3: Resolving Scenes

During scenes, players play their have-a-go-heroes identities.

Each scene has a SP, which may be broken down into points. The have-a-go heroes describe their actions once the scene has been presented by The Boss. Actions will generally be attempts to overcome the problem represented by the SP. So, if the thugs are coming to beat up the have-a-go-heroes, they might fight back using their not-so-super superpowers.

Rolling dice

The only dice used are d6. Each player needs only one dice in the Opening and Middle Scenes. In the Final scene it depends on how many they have in their team DP.

Each have-a-go-hero gets to roll 1 dice, when what they choose to do is directly intended to defeat the SP or part of the SP of the scene, using their not-so-super superpowers.

Rolling a 6

If the dice comes up a 6, the not-so-super superpower actually works. If the SP is 6 or lower, the SP is resolved and the player can add those SP to the to the teams total pool of TP.

If the SP is higher than 6, then it is reduced by 1 and that point is added to the team's DP.

Rolling a number higher than the SP, but not a 6

If the number exceeds the SP, but is not a 6, then the not-so-super superpower failed, but nevertheless somehow the have-a-go-hero succeeded. The SP is reduced by 1 (or if 1, it is resolved) and that little sub-scene is over until all other characters have completed their own actions.

Rolling a number equal to the SP or lower

If the dice comes up equal to or below the SP, then the have-a-go hero failed. He gets to describe his failure as wittily

as possible and the character is probably out of action or otherwise inconvenienced as a result. He can have no further effect on the scene.

Modifiers

Amusing use of not-so-super superpowers

If the player comes up with an extremely funny way to use his not-so-super superpower or describes the action with real style and panache, then the Boss can award a +1 bonus to the dice roll for that player.

Team effort

If two team members are tackling the same problem, they each roll one dice and get a +1 bonus on the dice. Only the highest total roll is used.

End of scene

The scene ends when the SP of the scene reaches 0 or when the have-a-go heroes are all out of action. In the latter case, the scene is unresolved and any remaining points given back to The Boss, who can use them to add to the SP total for the Final scene.



Step 4. Between scenes

In between scenes, players play the characters home-life identities.

During this time and before the start of the next scene, the characters can get together in the coffee shop or wherever to discuss what has happened, what they need to do next and how the last scene has relevance to the next scene they decide to try to resolve.

It is also the opportunity to try to resolve their home-life issues.

Resolving home-life issues works in much the same way as scenes. The player describes how his character is going to deal with the issue and rolls a dice.

Rolling a 6

If a 6 comes up, the issue is resolved completely, whatever the rating. The points transfer to the characters PR. The character has no more issues to worry about.

Rolling higher than the IR, but not a 6.

The home-life issue is partially resolved. Lower the IR by 1 and add this point to the PR of the character. He cannot have another attempt until after completion of the next scene.

Rolling equal to or lower than the IR

The character failed, and actually made matters worse. Increase the IR by 1. He can try again after the conclusion of the next scene.

Modifiers

Amusing/ingenious solution

If the player comes up with an amusing or otherwise ingenious way of dealing with his home-life issue, then the Boss can award a +1 bonus to his dice roll.

Team effort

If another character can help in any way, both players roll and add 1. Only the highest total is used.

Step 5: The Final Scene

This has a SP 20, plus any SP that are given back to The Boss from the failure of the have-a-go heroes to complete their earlier scenes.

The Villain can have an SP of up to 10.

The remainder of the scene is made up is made up of minions, booby traps or whatever is appropriate, with an individual maximum of 5 SP.

In this scene, have-a-go heroes get to delve into the DP of the team.

They can take dice from the DP up to the value of their PR.

Once the DP is gone, there are no further dice to add.

They had better hope the villain is either defeated or has his SP lowered a great deal by the time they have no DP left.

An example team

The Rage

Not-so-super superpower: You'd better not be near me when I get mad!

Home-life name: Carl Corey

Home-life issue: Wants to take out the girl from the coffee shop on a date (IR 3)



The Cricketer

Not-so-super-superpower: Has the cricket-bat of WG Grace, which he won on auction on ebay. Uses it to bash thugs and other things.

Home-life name: Nathan Small

Home-life issue: Had to borrow a huge amount to pay for the bat. Now has the debt collectors at the door (IR 2)

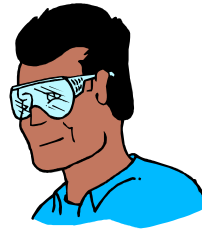


Billy-Bones

Not-so-super superpower: Can dislocate just about any bone in his body. Good for getting into tight spaces, escaping from bondage and so on.

Home-life name: William Smith

Home-life issue: His wife is about to leave him as he spends too little time in the house and too much time with his freaky friends (IR 2)



Lady Luck

Not-so-super superpower: Lady Luck is incredibly lucky. Sometimes.

Home-life name: Lucinda Reilly

Home-life issue: Her boyfriend is a drunken slob and won't leave her apartment despite her telling him too (IR 1)



Foghorn

Not-so-super-superpower: A really loud bellowing voice

Home-life name: Oliver Prentiss

Home-life issue: Lost his job at the Opera House, due to poor door receipts (IR 1)



Example of scene making

The Boss decides that the scenes will be as follows:

Opening scene (4SP)

In a warehouse near the docks, a bunch of thugs (1 SP for each thug)

Middle scene (5 SP)

A bomb left in a shopping mall (clearing the mall 2 SP, diffusing the bomb 3 SP)

Middle Scene (5 SP)

On an out-of-town wooden bridge over a raging torrent below. (1 SP for each character to find a way to the bank. If there are fewer than 5 have-a-go-heroes either reduce the SP for the scene (but add them elsewhere) or make it more difficult for one or more have-a-go-heroes, chosen by whatever unfair means you like. You are The Boss after all).

Middle Scene (6 SP)

A group of five evil henchmen in a darkened alleyway in the worst part of town. (1 SP each for four of the henchmen and 2 SP for the leader)

Final Scene (20 SP)

This is at the villain's hideaway. The hideaway has 3 traps and alarms, the first 2 are worth 1 SP each and the last is worth 2.

He has 2 personal bodyguards worth 2 SP each and four other henchmen worth 1 point each.

The Villain, called Doktor Darrk has 8 SP.

Example of play

Scenes

The Boss describes this

You find yourselves in the middle of the warehouse, when you hear a shout of “Get the intruders” and 4 thugs charge at you brandishing nasty looking weapons.

Then the players get a chance to react, by stating their intent for their have-a-go heroes

Foghorn immediately shouts “I’ll bellow it’s the police, we have you surrounded. Drop your weapons and give yourselves up”. He decides to try to affect all of the thugs in one go using his ‘bellowing voice’ not-so-super superpower.

He rolls a dice. It comes up 3, which would have been enough for one or two thugs, but not all four. His not-so-super superpower fails him (yet again!) and the thugs laugh at him, beating him into insensibility. He will take no further part in the action.

The Rage decides to charge in to help his buddy. He decides to try to take down two of the thugs. He rolls a dice. It comes up 4. Since it is enough to beat 2 SP, somehow he is partially successful, even though his famed Rage did not kick in this time. He blunders into one of the thugs, knocking him out and reduces the SP by 1, adding 1 dice to the DP of the team.

At the same time, The Cricketer decides to wade in with his trusty cricket bat. Billy-Bones goes in as well, in support. They decide to deal with the remaining three thugs en-masse. The Cricketer rolls a 1 and adds 1 for 2. Billy-Bones fares little better with a 2 adding 1 for three total. The highest result is 3 and doesn’t beat the thugs remaining 3. Both have-a-go-heroes are swatted aside and out of action as the thugs bear down on Lady Luck.

She decides that somehow, luckily, a stack of crates that the Cricketer hit before going down will topple and fall onto the onrushing thugs. The Boss likes this and gives her a +1 to her dice roll. She wishes herself luck and rolls the dice. It comes up 6! (7 with the bonus, not that it was needed). The thugs are beaten and the have-a-go-heroes got through the Opening scene with a few cuts and bruises.

They managed to get 4 dice in their DP for the Final scene.

Between Scenes

The Boss now tells the players the outline of the three middle scenes that she has planned for them.

Now we cut to the coffee shop, where the players decide their characters will be. They discuss the goings on in the Warehouse, what the thugs were up to and where it leads into the next scene they choose to go to.

They decide that they managed to question one of the thugs, who told them that there is a bomb on the Mystery Bridge out down the old road, south of Marvel City. It is set to go off just as a certain train carrying tons of gold bullion is due to come by in the morning.

That's ok, just time for the character to go home, deal with some of their home-life issues and meet up on the bridge in the morning.

Carl Corey (The Rage) is already in the coffee shop, where the object of his desire works. He decides that now is as good a time as any, so he goes and asks her to the Opera, where his friend is the star of the show (he makes up the latter bit to impress her, ignoring the fact that he has lost his job).

The Boss decides she is not terribly impressed by the beaten-up looking Oliver Prentiss (Foghorn), and no bonus award is made. Lucinda Reilly (Lady Luck) pipes up that she went the other day and the show was very good. The Boss is still unmoved and so Carl rolls his dice. It comes up 5, enough to beat the IR of 3, but not a total success.

The Boss says that the girl weakens and tells Carl that her name is Cassie, and gives Carl her mobile number. The IR is now down to 2 and Carl now has a PR of 1. Carl is happy that he is getting somewhere and can give her a call, after the next scene.

The others go home and resolve or start to resolve their issues, or not. They have to get to the next scene in the morning, as agreed.

Once the three middles scenes have been played out, in any order the players wish, The Boss then briefly sets out the details of the final scene. She says:

The final scene will take place at the hideaway of the Villain Doktor Darrk, who has set traps around his lair and is well guarded.

The players now get to plan their raid and wrap up any loose ends. They also have one last chance to improve their PR's, if they haven't already resolved all of the home-life issues.

For this example, we'll say that The Rage managed to 'get the girl', and so his PR is now 3 (the IR to get the girl started at 3).

Foghorn got his job back at the first try, which was only IR 1, so this converts to PR 1.

Lady Luck got rid of her pest of a boyfriend, with help from The Cricketer and so her PR is now 2.

Billy-Bones failed at the first attempt to persuade his wife to stay (he rolled a 1) and she left to live with her sister for a few days—the IR now went up to 3. He rang her after the next scene and failed miserably again, saying all the wrong things (rolled another 1). She told him never to call again! Not quitting, he sent her flowers and a letter, written with help from Lady Luck. This time, Billy miserably rolled another 1 against a new the IR of 4, but Lady Luck has no trouble rolling a 6 (again!). Billy's wife came back home and fell into her adoring husbands arms. He ends up with a PR 2 (the IR started at 2 and he won't get more than this, even though it went up to 4 later through his own failures).

Finally, the Cricketer only managed to succeed one time, he was busy helping someone else another time, so his issue is still there although his debt is a little reduced. The IR is now 1, and his own PR is also 1.

The team have managed to get a dice pool of 16 dice, failing to make much of an impression on one of their scenes. The 4 SP they failed to collect go back to The Boss to make the final scene worth 24 SP. She adds one more 2 point alarm/trap and two more 1 SP minions.

The characters are now back in the coffee shop. They decide that that they discovered the whereabouts of the hide-out after the last scene (diffusing the bomb in the Marvel City Mall), by tracing a lead on one of the bomb components to an electrical parts shop, and the owner was persuaded to give details of where it was delivered. Shaddup,

it's a simple game, ok?

Preparations made, the have-a-go heroes don their costumes for one last time.

First of all, the traps/alarms need to be dealt with.

Billy Bones has an idea and states that he will dislocate his bones so that he can circumvent the first 2 point trap and switch it off. The team like this so allocate 1 dice from the pool and he rolls two dice, a 1 and a 4. He takes the highest result, and the 4 beats the trap SP of 2, so he successfully gets the team past the first trap.

Next, The Cricketer decides to hit a 1 point trap with his trusty cricket bat. He decides not to use a pool dice, just his own usual dice. He just succeeds by rolling a 2 and therefore smashes it completely. The team move on into the hideout.

Lady Luck has a go, and states that one of the minions stupidly failed to set the next trap. She just elects to use her usual dice. It comes up 6 (as usual) and she turns out to be completely right.

The have-a-go heroes proceed in this way until traps are cleared. Any failure means the have-a-go hero is knocked out, trapped or otherwise out of action as in the earlier scenes.

However, in a change from the earlier scenes, in the Final scene, the team can elect to use their dice pool to get a character back into action again. They must use the same number of dice as the SP that caused the character to fail.

So if Foghorn is beaten up by a 2 SP bodyguard, the team must use 2 of the team's dice pool to bring him back round, before continuing on.

The Villain

Obviously at the start of any contest against the Villain, he will be difficult to beat, because his SP is greater than 6. So only a 6 will result in the not-so-super superpowers of the have-a-go heroes actually having an effect and reducing the Villain's SP by one.

Anything else fails. The team are better off helping each other beat the villain. That way, as long as someone gets a 6, they will knock the villain down a point and will not be out of action themselves (because only the highest dice roll counts).



Notes

I have just finished the game. There is no going back now, I am at the end of the 24 hour period. I hope the rules make sense. I suspect some of the points will need adjusting in some way, like the SP, DP and so on. However, this will come out in play-test. I hope to give this game a go next week and then develop it further.

The other thing I think from a quick re-read is that it may be quite easy to play with no Boss at all - i.e. GM-less. I may expand these rules later to cater to both types of play.

Please give my game a go. If you like it, by all means email me and let me know. Especially if you have a go at playing it.

Send emails to : simonwashbourne@yahoo.co.uk

have-a-go heroes
character sheet

have-a-go hero name:

not-so-super superpower:

home-life name:

home-life issue (IR):

personal rating (PR):

have-a-go heroes
character sheet

have-a-go hero name:

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