

Pony Tales

A ROLE-PLAYING GAME FOR AGES TWELVE & OLDER

WRITTEN BY DAVE BRYANT

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“ONCE UPON A TIME, IN THE MAGICAL LAND OF EQUESTRIA . . .”
With these words, the world was introduced to *My Little Pony Friendship Is Magic*. This half-hour television program became a surprise hit in its first season, not only with the young girls for whom it was intended but with people of all ages and many cultures—thanks to its creators’ determination to present well-written stories, vivid characters, and a fascinating setting.

Those qualities have made this storybook kingdom and the good-hearted ponies who live there a wonderful place to visit, even if only in one’s imagination. *Pony Tales* is a vehicle for that imagination, providing rules to guide any group of friends with a bunch of dice and maybe some maps in spending a few hours around a table exploring Equestria for adventure and entertainment.

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*For informational essays about world-building,
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<http://catspaw-dtp-services.deviantart.com/gallery/31686580>

~ *Playing the Game* ~

THE FIRST ROLE-PLAYING GAME appeared in the late 1970s, after a designer of miniatures wargames discovered his friends were more willing to play if he included fantasy elements, like magic and mythical creatures, and individual heroes with special abilities and personalities. Through the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds of role-playing games, or RPGs, were published on all kinds of subjects—science fiction and space opera, pulp adventure and modern-day super-spies, cowboys, superheroes, and just about anything else that would be fun and exciting for a group of friends to pretend to be for an afternoon.

There aren't as many RPGs nowadays, partly because, like many other things, it was sort of a fad, and after a while a lot of people drifted off to do other things, including play computer and video games. RPGs haven't gone away completely, though, because it's still fun for people to get together and play the old-fashioned way, with a book of rules, a bunch of dice, maybe a few maps, and some time to sit around a table and visit an imaginary world for adventure and entertainment.

A Group of Friends

Any role-playing game needs one person to “run the show”. Other games may call this person the “game-master”, “referee”, “umpire”, or some similar name. In *Pony Tales*, this person is called the *narrator*. The narrator controls the world, kind of like a movie or television director—figuring out what happens after players' ponies do things, playing the parts of other ponies or creatures, and generally keeping the game's story going.

The other people in the group are *players*. Each player controls a character, playing that character's part like an actor. Sometimes, if a player is caught up in the excitement, she might get up and act out what her character is doing or saying, but usually it's enough for a player just to describe her character's words and actions. In *Pony Tales*, each player's character is a brightly-colored magical pony who lives in the land of Equestria.

About the Rules

Pony Tales is based *very* loosely on an open-source set of rules called *Open D6*. However, it's stripped down to the bare essentials, and is intended to be as simple as possible. One reason is to keep the game's story moving quickly, without bogging down in little details. The other is so the game can be played easily by anyone old enough to understand the rules.

That's also why the rules are written very simply, without a lot of technical terms and fancy words. Besides, the simple language also seems to fit the fairy-tale feeling of the magical land and the stories that happen there. This may help the narrator and players get into the right frame of mind for playing the game.

What Kind of Game?

Before starting, the narrator and players should talk about what kind of game they want to play. There's a lot of room for everyone to be creative, but one question does need to be answered: Will the game be literal or figurative?

- A *literal game* takes the show's episodes at face value—no matter how silly, illogical, or inconsistent they get. The idea is simply to have fun and lots of laughs, paying attention only to what's happening at the moment, just like the show. This doesn't mean the narrator and players can't be serious, but they shouldn't go overboard about it, or it won't feel like the show does.
- A *figurative game* treats the show's episodes as if they were stories told by, or to, someone's kid sister or brother—mostly right, but with details mixed up, simplified, or exaggerated. It's up to the narrator and players to decide how the details are different. Having fun and laughs still is important, but the narrator and players might be more adventurous and serious. Keep in mind, though, that getting very dark will make the game feel completely different from the show.

Whatever the narrator and players decide, the most important thing is to have fun. Some narrators might think of themselves as being against the players, making things hard for them, but a lot of players don't like that, and it doesn't fit the tone of the show. The narrator should *cooperate* with the players, and vice versa, in telling the story—that's why she's called a “narrator” and why the rules talk a lot about the “story”.

How Do the Ponies Know Each Other?

If the players are willing, they can create their ponies in such a way that it makes sense they know each other. If the players want to create ponies that are very different from each other, it might be harder to explain how the group of ponies has gotten together. In that case, the narrator can work with the players to come up with ways of doing it. Here are a couple of suggestions; the narrator may use one or both of them, or figure out something else.

- The first story can be all about how the ponies are thrown together, much like the first episodes of the show. It could be that things just happen, or there could be some problem that causes one or more of the ponies to look for others who have useful talents or personalities to help solve it.
- The narrator can tell the players that each pony must be friends with (or a relative of) at least two other ponies before the game begins. The players then talk about which ponies know each other, how, and why. That can help give ideas to players who haven't decided what their ponies are like. ★

~ Creating a Pony ~

BEFORE THE GAME STARTS, every player has to create a pony that she will play, just like an actor plays a character. What's different is that there's no script to follow—instead, players decide what their ponies will do during the game as things happen. To help everyone play fair and have fun, there are rules for deciding what a particular pony is good at doing and for figuring out when a pony succeeds at doing something. The rules are as simple as possible, so they don't get in the way of the story—but not too simple, so they don't leave the players and narrator puzzled about how to handle something unexpected.

A player may start out with a mental picture of the pony, and create the pony to match that picture, or may create a pony first, then decide what she looks and acts like—either way works fine. Follow these steps to create a pony, filling out a *Pony Form* to keep track of the pony's information. For Aptitudes and Talents, fill in bubbles to match the number of dice each Aptitude or Talent has.

The narrator can use the same steps to create ponies who are important to the story for any reason. These ponies don't need to have the same limits as players' ponies, though, especially if they're older and more experienced. (How many dice do the princesses have? As many as they need.) Also, the narrator can create a school-age foal by putting one die on each Aptitude in step 2 and on each Talent in step 3, and by putting a limit of three dice on each Aptitude and Talent in step 4.

Step 1: What Kind of Pony?

First, decide whether the pony will be an *earth pony*, a *pegasus pony*, or a *unicorn pony*. Earth ponies have a connection to the land and to living things, and are good at inventing and making things. Pegasus ponies can fly, command the winds and weather, and walk on clouds. Unicorn ponies can levitate things and cast spells.

Second, decide whether the pony will be a *mare* (female) or a *stallion* (male). A young mare is a *filly*, and a young stallion is a *colt*; any pony-child is a *foal*.

Step 2: Pony Aptitudes

Aptitudes describe how a pony is put together. The more dice there are in an Aptitude, the more powerful that Aptitude is. Every pony starts with at least one die in each of the six Aptitudes, and there'll be a chance to add more dice later.

Muscle describes how strong a pony is. A low Muscle Aptitude makes a pony small and delicate. A high Muscle Aptitude makes a pony big and brawny. An earth-pony stallion starts with three dice of Muscle; any other pony starts with two dice of Muscle.

Hardiness describes how tough and healthy a pony is. A low Hardiness Aptitude means a pony catches the sniffles easily and gets tired quickly. A high Hardiness Aptitude makes a pony sturdy and fit. An earth-pony stallion starts with three dice of Hardiness; any other pony starts with two dice of Hardiness.

Speed describes how fast a pony is. A low Speed Aptitude makes a pony sluggish and plodding. A high Speed Aptitude makes a pony quick and peppery.

- An earth pony mare starts with two dice of Speed.
- An earth pony stallion starts with one die of Speed.
- A pegasus pony starts with two dice of Speed.
- A unicorn pony starts with one die of Speed.

Agility describes how nimble a pony is. A low Agility Aptitude makes a pony clumsy and awkward. A high Agility Aptitude makes a pony deft and graceful.

- An earth pony mare starts with two dice of Speed.
- An earth pony stallion starts with one die of Agility.
- A pegasus pony starts with two dice of Agility.
- A unicorn pony starts with one die of Agility.

Smarts describes how good a pony is at thinking and at figuring out problems. A low Smarts Aptitude makes a pony slow and simple. A high Smarts Aptitude makes a pony bright and clever. Every pony starts with one die of Smarts.

Learning describes how well a pony is educated. A low Learning Aptitude means a pony hasn't gone to school very much. A high Learning Aptitude means a pony has a lot of schooling, maybe even a diploma or a degree. Every pony starts with one die of Learning.

Step 3: Pony Talents

All ponies are good at different skills or abilities, and every kind of pony has two types of *Talents*. The more dice a pony has in a Talent, the better the pony is at that Talent. Each Talent starts with one die, but don't worry—there'll be chances to add more dice!

Earth Talents have to do with the land or living things. Here are a few examples: Farming, Husbandry (raising and taking care of animals), Medicine, Surveying, Tracking, and Woodcraft (surviving in a wild forest). A player can make up a new Talent, as long as the narrator agrees that it is a good Earth Talent. The player should be able to name the new Talent with one word or, at most, two or three words, but it's okay to follow that with a short sentence describing it so other players and the narrator have a clear idea what it means.

Fire Talents have to do with the creative or mechanical arts. Here are a few examples: Baking, Blacksmithing, Carpentry, Fashion, Masonry (building brick or stone structures), Party Planning, and Musical Performance. A player can make up a new Talent, as long as the narrator agrees that it is a good Fire Talent. The player should be able to name the new Talent with one word or, at most, two or three words, but it's okay to follow that with a short sentence describing it so other players and the narrator have a clear idea what it means. ♣

The **Air Talent** gives a pegasus pony the ability to fly and to control the winds. It also allows a flying pony to carry or pull through the air something large and heavy, as long as the pony is touching it and is strong enough. Unicorn ponies and earth ponies don't have the Air Talent.

The **Water Talent** gives a pegasus pony the ability to walk on and control clouds, and to control rain, snow, sleet, and hail. Unicorn ponies and earth ponies don't have the Water Talent.

The **Levitation Talent** allows a unicorn pony to pick up objects magically and to carry or manipulate them in mid-air without touching them. If the pony is talented enough, she even can lift other ponies—but not herself, or another pony trying to lift her with levitation. (That would be cheating.) Pegasus ponies and earth ponies don't have the Levitation Talent, but all ponies can lift things with their hooves, carry things on their backs, and use things with their lips.

Spell Talents can be almost anything within reason. Here are a few examples: Gemology (finding, identifying, and cutting precious and semiprecious gemstones), Illusion, Divine Truth (the ability to tell if a pony is being truthful), and Teleportation (moving instantly from place to place). A player can make up a new Talent, as long as the narrator agrees that it is a good Spell Talent and isn't so powerful that it upsets the game. The player should be able to name the new Talent with one word or, at most, two or three words, but it's okay to follow that with a short sentence describing it so other players and the narrator have a clear idea what it means. Pegasus ponies and earth ponies don't have Spell Talents.

Primary Talents are the Talents chosen for a pony in this step. Someone who's played a lot of role-playing games can think of a Talent as a whole set of related "skills" or a "profession". The narrator should keep in mind that a very broad Earth, Fire, or Spell Talent probably should be fairly shallow, while a narrowly defined Talent should be pretty deep. For example, a pony with Flower Gardening would know a *lot* about flowers, but not much about other crops, while a pony with Farming would have *some* knowledge of all crops, including flowers.

- An earth pony's Primary Talents are one Earth Talent and one Fire Talent; add one extra die to one of these Talents.
- A pegasus pony's Primary Talents are the Air Talent and the Water Talent; add one extra die to one of these Talents.
- A unicorn pony's Primary Talents are the Levitation Talent and one Spell Talent; add two extra dice to one of these Talents and add one extra die to the other Talent.

Step 4: Not Just Any Pony!

Add a few more things to make the pony special and different from other ponies.

First, choose one more Earth or Fire Talent for the pony, even if the pony is a unicorn or a pegasus. This is the pony's *Secondary Talent*, and it starts with one die.

Second, add a total of eight more dice to the pony's Aptitudes and a total of three more dice to the pony's Talents. The pony's player may add these extra dice any way she wants, as long as she doesn't add more dice to any one Aptitude or Talent than is allowed.

- An Aptitude may have no more than five dice.
- A Primary Talent may have no more than five dice.
- A Secondary Talent may have no more than three dice.

Important: Aptitudes won't change after this unless something really major and significant happens to the pony, but later in the game the pony may get chances to improve her Talents or even learn new Talents.

Third, decide on the pony's personal Weakness. No pony is perfect, after all! Here are a few examples: Brash, Fastidious (very concerned with keeping clean), Introverted (not very sociable), Random, Stubborn, and Timid. A player can make up a new Weakness, as long as the narrator agrees it's appropriate. The player should be able to name the Weakness with one word or, at most, two or three words, but it's okay to follow that with a short sentence describing it so other players and the narrator have a clear idea what it means.

A player needs to keep her pony's personal weakness in mind when role-playing. It's possible for a pony to overcome her weakness temporarily, but she has to have a good reason to try and the narrator may ask for a Smarts or Learning roll.

Step 5: Finishing Touches

Last but not least, describe what the pony looks and acts like and make a list of things the pony owns. Use an extra page if it's needed.

First, write down how the pony looks. Is the pony big or small, thin or heavy? What colors are the pony's coat, mane, and tail? What color and shape are the pony's eyes? What is the pony's cutie mark, and what does it have to do with the pony's Talents or personality?

Second, name the pony and describe anything else about the pony that seems important. Here are some suggestions: What does the pony's voice sound like? What kind of personality does the pony have? Where does the pony come from? What was the pony's life like before the game?

Third, list the pony's important possessions. The pony may have up to eight. A *major possession* is something big and expensive like a farm, a business, or a house, and counts as four. A *medium possession* is something like a carriage, a wagon, or a book collection, and counts as two. A *minor possession* is something like a set of tools or cookware, a musical instrument, a paint set and easel, or camping gear. A player can make up a possession, as long as the narrator agrees that it's appropriate. Every pony also owns a pair of saddlebags to carry things. ★

ALL PONIES ARE MAGICAL INSIDE. That “inside” or *intrinsic* magic is why pegasus ponies can fly, even with such little wings, and control the weather, and why earth ponies have a special connection to the land and are so inventive. Only unicorn ponies can use magic at a distance, though—levitating things and casting spells. How does that “outside” or *external* magic work?

The show doesn’t say much about it! This allows the narrator and players some freedom to make up their own ways to handle it, but trying to figure out how the magic is *supposed* to work is much harder. To give the narrator and players ideas, here are some guesses based on watching the show and, once in a while, reading about something that one of the people making the show has said. If better information comes along, it might be added to a later version of the rules.

Of course, there are good reasons why the show keeps mum. One is that doing so helps the writers avoid writing themselves into corners. Another is that the ponies don’t need to talk about it. *They* know how they’re doing it, and they don’t have to describe it any more than they have to describe how walking works. The only time it matters much is when a unicorn is trying to cast an unusually hard spell or one she hasn’t used before. That’s when learning new spells, from a teacher or from books, becomes important.

Ponies don’t show anything special when their intrinsic magic is working, but when a unicorn pony is using levitation or spells, a sparkling glow shows up around her horn and anything the magic is used on. For a small spell, the glow is mostly white, maybe with a little blue, but the more powerful the spell is, the more it will look like the color of the unicorn’s coat. A *very* powerful spell also may radiate a bright white flash.

The Science of Magic

The show makes it clear that pony magic is like a science. It’s predictable and consistent. Ponies can study it and conduct experiments with it and on it to discover more about how it works and why it works that way. A pony who’s studied magic theory can apply it to improve the practice of magic the same way an engineer can apply science to improve technology.

Casting spells seems to be like using any other way of doing things. Doing it right takes concentration and effort, doing a lot of it can be tiring, and some unicorn ponies are stronger or better at it than others. It comes from inside and doesn’t need anything else (for example, wands, gestures, chanting, or diagrams) that players might have seen or read about in other fantasy stories.

Every unicorn is good at some particular Spell Talent and can cast spells having to do with that kind of magic. The better a unicorn is at her Spell Talent, the easier it is for her to cast a spell that’s covered by her Talent, and the bigger and more powerful the spells are that she can cast. If a spell isn’t covered by her Talent, she can’t cast it.

A spell may be just a series of instructions—like a recipe or a set of dance steps or a list of tools and actions for putting something together—that tells a unicorn how to gather and apply magical energy in a way that will perform a certain task. A unicorn can teach or learn a new spell as easily as any pony can teach or learn a new skill; a book of spells probably is a lot like a cookbook or a handyman’s manual, and a good one would include helpful background information.

Playing Fair

A player may be tempted to make her unicorn pony’s Spell Talent be magic itself. It isn’t a good idea, though. First of all, the show makes a big deal about how special that Spell Talent is; there seems to be only *one* unicorn pony who has it. Everyone knows who that unicorn is, and she isn’t the player’s unicorn. Besides, it wouldn’t be fair to the other players, especially to players of other unicorn ponies. The show’s writers don’t have to worry about things like this, since they can write episodes to come out the way they want, but the narrator and the players do.

Spells cast by most unicorns seem to be limited to about the same scale as personal efforts made by other ponies to do things. Spells can change things, or move things (or ponies) instantly across short distances, but they can’t create something complicated, like a machine, from nothing. They may be able to take things apart, but not to make things disappear completely. The narrator should keep an eye on how powerful spells are, so they don’t get out of hand and take over the story.

Magical Artifacts

There seem to be two kinds of enchanted objects. Some may be very simple things, possibly including tickets that levitate themselves and are attracted to the ponies who are supposed to have them. There also is a *very* small number of powerful items such as those used to defeat the villain at the end of the two-part opening story—the only “legendary” artifacts shown or mentioned in the first season.

The simplest way to explain this is to assume that enchanting things is expensive and hard to do. That means it wouldn’t be worth the time and effort for anything but the smallest and cheapest or the biggest and most powerful enchantments, especially if there’s a way to do the same things using technology or plain old work. It might be worthwhile to enchant small things like tickets as a way to tell when a pony’s trying to use a fake, or for some other really good reason. Major enchantments would be reserved for things important enough that time and cost don’t matter.

There’s a good storytelling reason, too. The show makes an effort to show that all kinds of ponies are important and needed. It’s already hard enough to show how earth ponies matter, because their magic isn’t flashy and obvious like pegasus or unicorn magic. If making enchanted objects were too easy, the talents of earth ponies wouldn’t be so valuable.

Because of all this, the narrator should go easy on magical items. If she uses any at all, it should be for something very special indeed. ★

~ Doing Things ~

SOONER OR LATER, A PONY will have to try doing something hard, or something another pony or creature doesn't want that pony to do. What happens then?

Anyone who played "let's pretend" as a kid knows it's easy just to start arguing, because there's no good way to decide fairly who's right. So, to keep the story moving and to make it easy for every pony to have a fair chance, here are rules for finding out whether a pony succeeds at doing something.

Step 1: How Hard Is the Task?

Any one thing a pony tries to do is called a *task*. Most tasks are pretty short and have clear goals. Some examples are jumping a fence, lifting a box, throwing an apple, or setting a table properly. Some tasks are harder than others; it's easy to walk on a paved road, but walking up a steep slope covered with rocks is a lot tougher.

The narrator measures how hard a task is by giving it a number, called a *difficulty*. The harder the task is, the greater the difficulty will be. The narrator shouldn't tell the player what the difficulty is, but she may give hints. For example, the narrator might say to the player, "That fence looks awfully tall. Jumping over it won't be easy! Are you sure you want to try that?"

If a player is really clever or is doing a very good job of role-playing her pony, the narrator may reward the player by reducing the difficulty a little. If the player tries to use a Talent that only barely covers the task, the narrator may increase the difficulty a little. If the difficulty depends on a measurement, like how heavy or far away something is, round up. For example, if one is added to the difficulty for each yard away something is, and an object is five and a half yards away, treat the distance as six yards; if the object is less than a yard away, treat it as one yard.

- A **routine** task has a difficulty of 0 (or less). The pony can do the task without thinking about it. The player doesn't need to roll any dice, and the narrator goes on with the story.
- A **trivial** task has a difficulty of 1 to 5. The pony can do the task without much thought or effort. Make a roll only if the task is very important to the story.
- An **easy** task has a difficulty of 6 to 10. The pony can do the task without much thought or effort unless she doesn't have a good Talent for it.
- A **middling** task has a difficulty of 11 to 15. The pony may have trouble with the task, and doing it right takes skill and effort.
- A **hard** task has a difficulty of 16 to 20. The pony should be well-trained in the kind of task being done, or she may not be able to handle it.
- A **very hard** task has a difficulty of 21 to 25. Only the best-trained pony has a good chance at doing the task.
- An **impossible** task has a difficulty of 26 or more. A pony who succeeds at a task this hard can tell her foals about it someday, and other ponies may tell the story for many years.

Sometimes other things are happening around the pony that might make the task easier or harder. The narrator can add to or subtract from the difficulty to take those other things into account.

- A **huge disadvantage** adds 16 or more to the difficulty. A good example is trying to repair a complicated machine without any proper tools.
- A **big disadvantage** adds 11 to 15 to the difficulty. A good example is trying to find another pony in complete darkness.
- A **fair disadvantage** adds 6 to 10 to the difficulty. A good example is trying to follow hoofprints in heavy rain or snow.
- A **small disadvantage** adds 1 to 5 to the difficulty. A good example is something annoying like trying to fix something small and complicated, like a pocket-watch, by candlelight.
- A **small advantage** subtracts 1 to 5 from the difficulty. A good example is something handy like a springy board the pony can use to jump farther.
- A **fair advantage** subtracts 6 to 10 from the difficulty. A good example is a rough-and-ready tool, such as making the end of a rope into a sling to help lift a pony stuck at the bottom of a cliff.
- A **big advantage** subtracts 11 to 15 from the difficulty. A good example is having tools for the job, such as a first-aid kit to help with a pony who's hurt.
- A **huge advantage** subtracts 16 or more from the difficulty. An example is having the best tools for the job, such as a clinic or a hospital to help a pony who's hurt.

Extra care: A pony can spend more time on a task to double-check her work, but she can't do anything else or get distracted, or she doesn't get the bonus.

- Add 1 die for spending twice as long on the task.
- Add 2 dice for spending 4 times as long on the task.
- Add 3 dice for spending 8 times as long on the task.

Rushing: A pony can spend less time on a task than it normally takes if she's in a hurry, but it'll make the task harder. Not every task can be rushed; if in doubt, the narrator may ask a player to explain how she thinks the task can be rushed.

- Add 5 to the difficulty for spending three-fourths as long on the task.
- Add 10 to the difficulty for spending half as long on the task.
- Add 20 to the difficulty for spending one-fourth as long on the task.

The narrator may want to make notes of reasons she's added to or subtracted from difficulties, if she thinks she might need them again later. It also might be a good idea, when getting ready to tell a story or part of a story, to make a list of additions and subtractions that might be needed. (It's always smart to be prepared, so the narrator should make a habit of thinking things through first.) ▶

Contest: If another pony or creature is working against the pony—for example, in a tug-of-war or arm-wrestling—they have a *contest*. The referee doesn't use a difficulty number; instead, both ponies or creatures roll their dice and the greater number rolled wins the contest. Just as with a normal task, the narrator can add to or subtract from one side or both sides of the contest, and can use the result of the contest in storytelling.

Teamwork: Sometimes a task is too big for a single pony, but several ponies can team up to work on it. Some good examples are pulling a train, pushing a large rain cloud into place, or levitating a roof onto a house. In that case, the narrator can split up the task so each pony only has to do part of it. Each player can tell the narrator how much of the task her pony will try to handle, but players should be careful not to bite off more than they can chew!

Project: If a pony needs to do something long and complicated, it may not be a single task—instead, it's probably a *project* made up of a bunch of tasks. The narrator should break a project into a series of tasks for the pony to do. That way, even if the pony doesn't succeed at every task, she still might be able to finish the project. Also, the narrator can use the results as part of the storytelling, or let other ponies help out. Ponies might team up on some tasks, or different ponies might work on different tasks.

Step 2: What Talent Does the Pony Use?

See if the pony doing the task has a Talent that makes her good at that task. For instance, if the pony is trying to harvest apples from a tree, a good Talent to use would be Farming. If the pony doesn't have a good Talent to use for the task, but can try to do it anyway, skip this step and go on to the next step.

The narrator sometimes may decide a task just can't be done by a pony who doesn't have the right Talent. For example, unicorn and earth ponies can't fly because they don't have the Air Talent, and building a very complicated machine like a water wheel or a windmill takes a lot of special knowledge most ponies haven't learned. In such a case, the pony probably knows she can't do it even if she tries.

Any pony can use an **Earth Talent** or a **Fire Talent**, if the narrator agrees that it covers the task. Earth ponies usually have the most Earth and Fire Talents, so they are most likely to have the right Talent, but sometimes a pegasus or unicorn pony will have a good Talent for the job. Since Earth and Fire Talents can be so varied, it's hard to give examples, but players and the narrator should be creative, as long as they don't stretch things too far!

A pegasus pony can use the **Air Talent** to fly, to carry things through the air, and to control the winds. Unicorn and earth ponies don't have the Air Talent, so they can't fly or control winds directly, but they may have other Talents that could help. For example, a unicorn could use the right kind of Spell Talent to heat up the air in a hot-air balloon so it will float; an earth pony could use the right kind of Fire Talent to soar in a glider.

A pegasus pony can use the **Water Talent** to walk on or control clouds, pushing them around, making them rain, snow, or let out bolts of lightning. Unicorn and earth ponies don't have the Water Talent, so they can't touch or control clouds directly, but they may have other Talents that could help. For example, a unicorn could use the right kind of Spell Talent like an umbrella to stay dry, or an earth pony could use the right kind of Fire Talent to make a lightning rod and protect a building from being hit by lightning.

A unicorn pony can use a **Spell Talent**, if the narrator agrees that it covers the task. Pegasus and earth ponies don't have Spell Talents, but they may have other Talents that could help. Since Spell Talents can be so varied, it's hard to give examples, but players and the narrator should be creative, as long as they don't stretch things too far!

Step 3: Which Aptitude Does the Pony Use?

For just about any task a pony can do, she can use an Aptitude. If the pony has a Talent to use, add the Aptitude and Talent together; otherwise, the pony will have to make do with just the Aptitude. Usually it will be pretty obvious which Aptitude fits best, but if it isn't, the narrator may have to decide on which one to use.

Use **Muscle** when a pony needs to be strong. A few examples would be pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying, holding on to something (especially if it's moving), or bucking a tree to get fruit to fall.

Use **Hardiness** when a pony is trying not to get tired, hurt, or sick. A few examples would be galloping or flying for a long time, falling, breathing in smoke from a fire, or being around ponies or creatures who are ill with something the pony might catch.

Use **Speed** when a pony needs to be fast. A few examples would be doing something before another pony or creature can do it (or stop the pony from doing it), galloping or flying quickly, or doing a trick like pulling a tablecloth off without causing the dishes on the table to fall.

Use **Agility** when a pony is doing something tricky. A few examples would be avoiding things that are in the way while galloping or flying, balancing, stacking things that might fall over, or using tools or tableware.

Use **Smarts** when a pony is thinking. A few examples would be solving a puzzle, noticing something hidden or just not obvious, making a plan, or remembering something from a long time ago or that the pony only heard once.

Use **Learning** when a pony is using something taught in school. A few examples would be writing, science, math, history, or geography.

A unicorn pony using the **Levitation Talent** to lift, carry, or handle things as part of the task adds that instead of an Aptitude. Once in a while a unicorn pony may be able to use her **Spell Talent** instead of an Aptitude to help with an Earth or Fire Talent, depending on the task and the way the Spell Talent is used. ♦

Step 4: Roll!

The player whose pony is trying to do the task rolls the total number of dice in the Talent (if any) and Aptitude that the pony is using. Total the numbers that are rolled, and if it is equal to or greater than the difficulty, the pony succeeds at the task! Otherwise, the pony fails. The narrator can use the result in storytelling.

- If the die roll equals the difficulty, the pony barely succeeded. Maybe the task took longer than it should or the pony didn't get as much as she expected.
- If the die roll is greater than the difficulty by 1–4, the pony succeeded, but didn't do anything special.
- If the die roll is greater than the difficulty by 5–8, the pony did well and may get something extra out of it. Maybe the task went quickly or the pony got more than she expected.
- If the die roll is greater than the difficulty by 9–12, the pony did very well and should get something extra out of it. The task may have gone quickly and the pony got extra out of it.
- If the die roll is greater than the difficulty by 13–16, the pony did so well that other ponies watching would notice. The pony definitely should be rewarded by the narrator.
- If the die roll is greater than the difficulty by 17 or more, the pony did well enough that other ponies will talk about it. The pony should get a really good result for it.

If the pony fails, the narrator likewise can use the result in storytelling and for other things. For instance, if a pony just misses succeeding, the narrator can let her try again, but with a harder difficulty—if the task is something she *can* try again. A pony who misses by a lot might have made things worse than before, or done something else that can't be fixed easily or at all. The narrator can use a table of failure results like the one for success, but in reverse, grading down to worse results for every four points by which a pony fails a roll.

Using the Rules

The narrator should be willing to use a lot of imagination thinking up what happens if a pony succeeds or fails. Fair play is important to make sure the players have fun and aren't too disappointed when their ponies can't seem to get something right. Humor's important because the game's based on a comedy show; some of the funniest moments in role-playing can come when a roll is failed spectacularly.

That said, the narrator doesn't have to stick to the rules when doing so seems unfair or dampens the fun. The purpose of the rules is just to give the narrator and players some tools for deciding things fairly. The real goal of the game is to tell a thrilling, or funny, or dramatic story, and if the moment seems right for something to happen in some particular way, the narrator is free to fudge things creatively. ★

THE NARRATOR AND PLAYERS shouldn't worry too much about picky details, because that can slow down the story. Still, sometimes it's important to know how big, or how fast, or how far away something is. What matters is for everyone to have a good enough idea about a measurement that they can keep playing.

How Big Is a Pony?

The height of a standing pony (or any creature that mostly goes around on all fours) is measured to the withers—the top of the back just behind the neck. That's because a pony's (or creature's) head can go up and down, so measuring to the top of the head doesn't work very well. Some ponies may be a little taller or shorter, but most should be fairly close to the heights listed. The narrator and players can use a pony's Muscle Aptitude as a guide when deciding how big or small that pony is.

- A young mare is around two and a half feet (75 centimeters) tall.
- A young stallion is around three feet (90 centimeters) tall.
- A very old pony may shrink some with age.
- A young foal, at the age she (or he) usually gets a cutie mark, is about a foot and a half to two feet (45 to 60 centimeters) tall.
- A baby is smaller than a school-age foal—less than a foot (30 centimeters) tall.
- The older princess is about five feet (a meter and a half) tall and the younger princess is about half that.

Ponies are surprisingly heavy for their size, because even small ponies have a lot of muscles. That muscle-power is why ponies can kick trees hard enough to make ripe fruit fall out of them (earth magic helps a little), pull carts or plows, and push snowplows. Some ponies may be a little lighter or heavier, but most should be fairly close to the weights listed.

- A young stallion is around 150 pounds (a little under 70 kilograms).
- A young mare is around 75 pounds (a little under 35 kilograms).
- A very old pony may be heavier if she's run to fat, or lighter if she's gotten skinny.
- A young foal, at the age he or she usually gets a cutie mark, isn't more than about 50 pounds (between 20 and 25 kilograms), and can be much smaller.
- A baby may be only a few pounds or kilograms, especially a newborn.
- The older princess may be between 400 and 600 pounds (180 to 270 kilograms) and the younger princess may be between 75 and 100 pounds (35 to 45 kilograms).

Originally, the show's creator wanted to use a lot of different models for the ponies, with different heights and weights. The show's art staff already was working pretty hard, though, so to save time and the staff's sanity, most ponies are based on just a few models, with different colors, cutie marks, manes, and tails. ▶

How Much Can a Pony Lift, Carry, and Pull?

When a pony picks up something, roll the pony's Muscle dice plus any Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate. The narrator can say it's a "trivial task" and skip die rolls if the pony isn't in a hurry or stressed, or if the difficulty equals, or is less than, the number of dice that would be rolled, rounding up. If the weight's between two values, round up to the next value. For example, a load of 50 pounds is between 40 pounds (difficulty 4) and 60 pounds (difficulty 5); round up to 60 pounds.

Roll every round a pony carries or pulls a load. If the roll succeeds, the pony keeps carrying it. If the roll fails by a little, the pony has to put it down and take a break for a round before lifting it again. If the roll fails by a lot, the pony drops it, or collapses on the ground, instead of putting it down. Trying to lift or push a load with only one hoof, two hooves, head, mouth, or a wing adds 5 to the difficulty.

- A **light** load is up to 20 pounds (9 kg); 2 pounds (0.9 kg) has a difficulty of 1, 10 pounds (4.5 kg) has a difficulty of 2, and 20 pounds (9 kg) has a difficulty of 3.
- A **medium** load is 40 to 200 pounds (18–91 kg); add 1 to the difficulty per 20 pounds (9 kg). The difficulty range for a medium load is 4 to 12.
- A **heavy** load is 240 to 400 pounds (109–181 kg); add 1 to the difficulty per 40 pounds (18 kg). The difficulty range for a heavy load is 13 to 17.
- A **very heavy** load is 500 to 2000 pounds or 1 ton (227–907 kg); add 1 to the difficulty per 100 pounds (45 kg). The difficulty range for a very heavy load is 18 to 33.
- An **extra-heavy** load is 1.1 to 2 tons (1.1–1.8 tonnes); add 1 to the difficulty per 0.1 ton (0.1 tonne). The difficulty range for an extra-heavy load is 34 to 43.
- A **super-heavy** load is 2.5 to 10 tons (2.3–9 tonnes); add 1 to the difficulty per 0.5 ton (0.5 tonne). The difficulty range for a super-heavy load is 44 to 59.
- A **gigantic** load is 15 to 100 tons (14–91 tonnes); add 1 to the difficulty per 5 tons (4.5 tonnes). The difficulty range for a gigantic load is 60 to 77.

Levitation: Use the total weight of all the objects a unicorn pony is levitating to find the difficulty. Roll each time the unicorn levitates more objects, starts manipulating an object, moves an object another yard (0.9 meter) farther away, or gently sets down an object. No roll is needed if the unicorn just drops things.

- Add 1 to the difficulty for each object the unicorn is levitating.
- Add 1 to the difficulty for each yard (0.9 meter) away from the unicorn that the farthest object is.

Pulling a load: Pulling a load on *skids* (ski-like boards) or wheels is easier than carrying it, so the weight of a pulled load is reduced before finding the difficulty. Include the weight of the cart, wagon, or *rolling stock* (railroad cars) the load's on.

- Divide a load's weight by 2 when dragging it on skids or a smooth, level surface, or if it is carried in carefully packed saddlebags that are worn properly.
- Divide a load's weight by 10 when pulling it on a primitive cart or wagon.
- Divide a load's weight by 20 when pulling it on a modern cart or wagon.
- Divide a load's weight by 100 when pulling it on a train.

How Far Can a Pony See?

In clear daylight, a pony can see as far as the narrator thinks is reasonable, accounting for things that are in the way and anything else that might matter. In bad weather or after sundown, it's much harder to see clearly over any distance. If a pony is trying to spot something, or if the narrator wants to check whether a pony notices something unusual, the player rolls her pony's Smarts dice, plus any Talent the narrator thinks applies to the task of spotting or noticing whatever it is.

- In **light rain**, a pony can see up to 160 yards (146 meters).
- In **heavy rain**, a pony can see up to 80 yards (73 meters).
- In **fog or clouds**, a pony can see up to 16 yards (15 meters).
- In **light snow**, a pony can see up to 120 yards (110 meters).
- In **heavy snow**, a pony can see up to 60 yards (55 meters).
- In a **blizzard**, a pony can see up to 30 yards (27 meters).

The distances listed above are for daylight. During twilight (dusk and dawn) or at night, it's harder to see and a pony can't see as far.

- At **dusk and dawn**, add 5 to the difficulty for spotting something and divide seeing distances by two. In clear weather, the distance is 80 yards (73 meters).
- At **night**, add 10 to the difficulty for spotting something and divide seeing distances by four. In clear weather, the distance is 40 yards (37 meters).

Using a light: A match or candle casts light in a circle. A flashlight (electric torch) casts light in a thirty-degree arc in front of the light. A lantern might do either one, depending on how it's designed; if it casts light in an arc instead of all around, double the distances listed for it. A pony can't see at all past the maximum "night" distances listed, because her eyes are adjusted to the light she's using. Flashlights were invented in the 1890s, so the narrator may or may not allow them.

- A **match** casts light equal to twilight for 1 yard (0.9 meter) and equal to night for 2 yards (1.8 meters). The flame lasts up to 4 rounds.
- A **candle** casts light equal to twilight for 1 yard (0.9 meter) and equal to night for 3 yards (2.7 meters). The flame lasts about 1 hour.
- A **lantern** casts light equal to day for 1 yard (0.9 meter), to twilight for 2 yards (1.8 meters), and to night for 5 yards (4.5 meters). The flame lasts about 6 hours.
- A **flashlight** casts light equal to day for 5 yards (4.5 meters), to twilight for 10 yards (9 meters), and to night for 30 yards (27 meters). The batteries last 6 hours.

Other senses: Use a pony's Smarts plus appropriate Talent dice to notice something. Usually this will be hearing, but once in a while it may be smell. Touch and taste probably won't come up except under special circumstances. Exactly which Talent to use for a roll will depend on what it is the pony may notice. ♣

How Fast Can a Pony Move?

Many games use maps marked with grids of hexagons (or “hexes”), scaled at a convenient size, to help players visualize what the area looks like, and to make it easier to keep track of where everything is and how characters or creatures are moving around. For *Pony Tales*, the best scale is 1 yard (0.9 meter) per hex. A stallion just fits, nose to tail, in one hex; the sun princess is big enough to need two hexes.

Miniature lead or pewter figures, often painted, are popular for marking where characters are on a map—but there aren’t any on the market for brightly-colored magical ponies. Cardboard stand-ups with drawn or printed artwork are one solution. Using molded pony toys is possible, if everyone’s willing to use big maps with big hexes. Otherwise, the narrator and players may have to use any playing pieces they can find, as long as the pieces can tell anyone looking at them which way they’re facing, so everyone knows what direction each pony’s going.

Movement is measured in *yards per round*; a round is five seconds long (as explained under “Rounds”). Every 5 yards (4.5 meters) per round is about 2 miles (3.3 kilometers) per hour. The narrator can decide walking or trotting is a trivial task that doesn’t need die rolls. A pony who does need to roll uses her Speed dice, plus a Talent if the narrator thinks the pony has a good one, and rolls every round.

If a roll fails by a little, the pony slows down by the most she normally can. If that makes her movement zero, she stops. If that would make her movement less than zero *or* the roll fails by a lot, she stumbles. A pony in the water may start to drown. A pony on the ground falls and may be hurt; she also slides half her movement distance along the ground before stopping. On a slick surface she may slide farther, but on a rough surface she may slide less. A pony can slide on purpose, but she still can get hurt doing that.

- **Walk** 1 to 10 yards (9 meters) in a round with a difficulty of 0.
- **Trot** (jog) 11 to 20 yards (10–18 meters) with a difficulty of 5.
- **Canter** (run) 21 to 40 yards (19–37 meters) with a difficulty of 10.
- **Gallop** (sprint) 41 to 80 yards (37–73 meters) with a difficulty of 15; add 1 to the difficulty for every extra yard (0.9 meter) the pony tries to gallop.
- **Swim** up to 5 yards (4.5 meters) with a difficulty of 5; add 1 to the difficulty for every extra yard (0.9 meter) the pony tries to swim in a round.
- **Climb** up or down a cliff, a tree, a ladder, or anything else that’s steep up to 5 yards (4.5 meters) in a round with a difficulty of 5; add 5 to the difficulty for every extra yard (0.9 meter) the pony tries to climb up or down. A pony who has a Talent that includes climbing can climb 10 yards (9 meters) with a difficulty of 5.
- **Jump** 2 yards (1.8 meters) up or forward with a difficulty of 5; add 5 to the difficulty for every extra yard (0.9 meter) the pony tries to jump. A pony can gallop up to two rounds to get a running start for the jump. If the galloping rolls are successful, subtract 5 from the jump’s difficulty for galloping one round; subtract 10 from the jump’s difficulty for galloping two rounds.

In one round, a pony can **change speed** (speed up or slow down) by no more than 20 yards (18 meters) per round on the ground or 10 yards (9 meters) per round swimming. A pony trying to change speed by more than that adds 1 to the difficulty of her roll at the new speed for every extra yard (0.9 meter).

A walking pony can **turn** by 60° (one side of a hexagon) as much as she wants, any time she wants—even more than once in the same hex. A pony who’s trotting, cantering, galloping, or swimming builds up momentum; she can turn only a few times in a round and she can’t turn more than once in the same hex.

A pony who tries to make more turns adds 1 to the difficulty of the movement roll, *or* subtracts 1 yard from movement in the next round, for every extra turn she makes. A pony making a bunch of extra turns can add some of them to the difficulty and slow down for the rest—it’s up to the player or narrator controlling the pony.

If a cantering or galloping pony tries to make more than one turn in a row—that is, moving only one yard before making another turn—she has to add 5 to the difficulty of the movement roll for every turn after the first in a row. For example, if she tries to make 3 turns in a row, add 10 to the difficulty (5 for the second turn and 5 for the third turn). If the narrator’s willing to put up with the extra effort, she instead can apply the penalty for any turns that aren’t spaced out more or less evenly over the pony’s movement in the round.

- A **trotting** pony can turn up to 12 times.
- A **cantering** pony can turn up to 8 times.
- A **galloping** pony can turn up to 4 times.
- A **swimming** pony can turn up to 4 times.

Flying speed, like other movement, is measured in yards per round. Every 20 yards (18 meters) per round is about 8 miles (13 kilometers) per hour. If the narrator only has to deal with flyers and not any ponies or creatures on the ground, she may want to use a scale of 20 yards (18 meters) instead of 1 yard (0.9 meter) for map hexes, to keep flying movement from getting too big to handle.

The narrator can decide slow, steady flight is a trivial task that doesn’t need die rolls. A flyer who does need to roll uses Speed dice plus Air Talent, and rolls every round. If a flying or gliding roll fails by a little, change all of the flyer’s *maneuvers* to “slowing down”. If that makes her movement zero, she stops and hovers. If that would make her movement less than zero *or* the roll fails by a lot, she loses control.

- If she’s **flying low**, she crashes and may get hurt. Unless she’s going straight (or almost straight) down, she’ll slide half her flying distance along the ground before stopping. On a slick surface she may slide farther; on a rough surface she may slide less. A pony can slide on purpose, but she still can get hurt doing that.
- If she’s **flying high**, she falls, but in the next round she can start trying to regain control with a difficulty of 15, if she hasn’t hit the ground yet. In a literal game, she may fall straight down, but in a figurative game she’ll go *ballistic*, curving down like a cannonball from the direction she was going when she lost control. If she’s in formation, as part of a flying team, she may crash into a teammate!

Flying is made up of four basic *actions* (explained under “Rounds”). A flying pony or creature can’t take more than one of these actions in a round.

- **Take off** with a jump of up to 2 yards (1.8 meters). If the flyer wants an easier take-off she can make a galloping start to the jump.
- **Land** with a jump from the flyer’s height above the landing spot. Flying faster than a walk (relative to the landing spot) in the previous round adds 5 to the difficulty. Flying faster than a trot adds 10. Flying faster than a canter adds 15. Flying faster than a gallop adds 20. The flyer will move on the ground at the same speed and direction she was flying until she slows down, and she may have to roll for that.
- **Fly** up to 20 yards (18 meters) in a round with a difficulty of 1; add 1 to the difficulty for every extra 20 yards (18 meters).
- **Glide** instead of flying. It’s less tiring; reduce by one the *level of work* for the speed she’s going (explained under “Fatigue and Rest”). It’s harder, though; the flyer can’t hover and *must* move at least 40 yards (37 meters) in a round, with a difficulty of 5, and add 5 to the difficulty for every 20 yards (18 meters) more.

In one round, a flyer can make as many **maneuvers** as she has Speed and Air Talent dice. For example, a flyer with 2 Speed dice and 3 Air Talent dice can make a total of 5 maneuvers in a round. A flyer can make the same maneuver more than once or combine different maneuvers, and doesn’t have to use all her maneuvers. If a maneuver subtracts from a flyer’s movement the next round, she doesn’t get that speed back unless she uses a maneuver (or more than one maneuver) to speed up again. A flyer can change from right-side up to upside-down or *vice versa* any time she wants without using a maneuver, but she can’t glide while upside-down.

A flyer should go straight for a while before making a maneuver, because of momentum and to get ready for it. The narrator can add to the difficulty if the flyer tries to make more than one maneuver in a row, just like turning while galloping.

Basic maneuvers can be made while flying *or* gliding.

- **Speed up *or* slow down**, but not both in the same round, by 20 yards (18 meters). Add 1 (if flying) or 5 (if gliding) to the difficulty of the roll at the new speed. A flyer can’t speed up while gliding, but she can slow down.
- **Gain *or* lose altitude**, but not both in the same round, by 20 yards (18 meters). If the flyer’s gaining altitude, *subtract* 20 yards (18 meters) from her movement the next round. If the flyer’s losing altitude, *add* 20 yards (18 meters) to her movement next round.
- **Turn** by 60° left or right. This counts as 20 yards (18 meters) of movement and subtracts 20 yards (18 meters) from movement the next round.
- **Slip** 20 yards (18 meters) diagonally forward to the left or right without turning. This counts as 20 yards (18 meters) of movement and subtracts 40 yards (37 meters) from the flyer’s movement the next round. The flyer can, but doesn’t have to, make up to two turns in the opposite direction (turn left after a right slip or *vice versa*) at the *end* of the slip—these count as separate maneuvers, of course, but don’t count as being “in a row”.

Advanced maneuvers can be made only while flying, not gliding. For a loop or roll maneuver, only the place where the flyer ends up is described. She actually goes through a big circular path to get there, but that only matters if the narrator thinks she might crash into something along the way, like a hill or another flyer.

- **Half-loop** by turning 180° and gaining *or* losing 40 yards (37 meters) of altitude. This counts as 20 yards (18 meters) of movement and subtracts 40 yards (37 meters) from movement the next round. A *full loop* is two half-loop maneuvers put together, not moving to another hex, but counting as 40 yards of movement. Subtract 80 yards (73 meters) from the flyer’s movement the next round.
- **Half-roll** 20 yards (18 meters) diagonally forward to the left or right without turning. This counts as 20 yards (18 meters) of movement and subtracts 20 yards (18 meters) from movement the next round. A *barrel roll* is two half-roll maneuvers put together, moving 20 yards (18 meters) diagonally forward one way, then 20 yards (18 meters) diagonally forward the opposite way. It counts as 40 yards (37 meters) of movement and subtracts 40 yards (37 meters) from movement the next round.
- A **zoom** starts with a *zoom-dive*; a flyer stops moving and instead loses altitude equal to her movement. (For example, a flyer who was moving at 100 yards per round now moves zero yards and loses 100 yards of altitude.) The only kind of maneuver she can make is “lose altitude”. Each round she zoom-dives, gravity subtracts an extra 240 yards (219 meters) from altitude. (Lose 240 extra yards on the first round, 480 on the second, 720 on the third, and so on.) When she stops zoom-diving, she has to spend the next round in a *level zoom*. She doesn’t lose any more altitude, but she moves a number of yards equal to the altitude she lost on the last round of the zoom-dive. (For example, a flyer who lost 500 yards on the last round of a zoom-dive moves 500 yards and stays at the same altitude.) The only kind of maneuver she can make is “slow down”. Once she’s spent at least one round in a level zoom, she can go into a *zoom-climb*, which is the opposite of a zoom-dive—instead of losing altitude, she gains it. Gravity subtracts from the altitude gained, and she can subtract another 20 yards for each maneuver she uses to “put on the brakes”. The zoom ends when she stops level-zooming or zoom-climbing. The difficulty of a zoom is 1 for each 40 yards (37 meters) the flyer zooms in the round. If she zoom-dives 1880 yards (1719 meters) in a round, she may **break the sound barrier**; add 10 to the difficulty for that round!

The normal movement difficulties are for good conditions—for example, a hard, even surface like a road (if it isn’t slick), still water, calm air, or climbing a ladder. Add to the difficulty for obstacles or problems; here are some examples.

- Add 5 for an uneven surface, small obstacles, choppy water, or climbing a tree.
- Add 10 for big obstacles, a strong current, rough air, or climbing a rough wall.
- Add 15 for lots of big, close obstacles, stormy weather, or a few hazards in the air.
- Add 20 for a narrow walkway (such as a rope bridge or a cliff trail), big waves, climbing a smooth wall, or lots of hazards in the air.
- Add 25 or more for a collapsing hallway, or swimming or flying in a hurricane. ★

~ Rounds ~

MOST OF THE TIME, the narrator and players can use the same tricks that writers do when it comes to telling the story. If a pony spends hours doing something tedious like searching through a library, it's enough to spend only a few real minutes covering that. On the other hand, sometimes it's important to keep track of exactly what's happening when, and what order that ponies are doing things. Fighting's a big reason for that, but it isn't the only one.

To help the narrator and players keep track when things get fast and complicated, time is broken down into five-second periods called *rounds*. Once every pony or creature that's involved has had a turn to do things in the round, it's over, and a new round starts if the narrator thinks it's needed. When the narrator decides the fight, or whatever reason it's important to use rounds, is over, everyone can go back to the normal way of handling time.

Step 1: Initiative

The narrator has a choice of ways to figure out *initiative*, the order that ponies and other creatures take their turns in a round. This doesn't count as an action. Of course, a pony or creature who's unconscious, can't move, or otherwise isn't able to do anything doesn't get a turn in a round, if she hasn't taken it already.

- The narrator and players make rolls for all the ponies and creatures who are involved, using Speed dice plus a Talent if the narrator thinks it applies. The highest roll goes first, the next highest roll goes second, and so on, until all the ponies and creatures are listed in order. (The narrator should keep track on scratch paper.) Either everyone rolls once at the start of the first round and acts in the same order until the rounds are over, which is faster and easier, or rolls at the beginning of every round, which is slower but more realistic.
- The pony or creature who does the first thing that matters acts first, and all ponies and creatures act in the same order until the rounds end. An example would be a pony or creature going first because she surprises others in an ambush. The narrator can decide to do this just for the first round, then switch to Speed rolls.

If the narrator decides not to use die rolls, or if die rolls are tied, the narrator can decide the order of initiative by comparing the number of dice the tied ponies or creatures have in something. The highest number of dice goes first, the next highest goes second, and so on. Once a pony or creature is on the list, the narrator doesn't need to compare her any more. The tie-breaking order is: a Talent that lets a pony or creature go first, Speed, Smarts, then special equipment or a situation that lets a pony or creature go first. If the narrator prefers, the tied ponies and creatures instead can roll again to break ties.

Step 2: Actions

When it's a pony's or creature's turn in a round, the narrator or player controlling that pony or creature decides what she will do. First, the narrator or player must decide how many *full actions* the pony or creature will take in the round. Any pony or creature can take one full action in a round without a problem, but trying to take more than one in a round is harder. For every extra full action, subtract 1 die from *all* task rolls (not rolls for injury, resisting injury, or initiative) the pony or creature makes in that round; this is a *multi-action penalty*. For example, a pony trying to take four full actions in a round subtracts 3 dice from all four of them. If the penalty subtracts all the dice a pony or creature can roll for an action, the roll fails automatically. The narrator or player doesn't have to say right away what all the actions will be; instead, each action can be described one at a time, as it happens.

A **full action** is anything a pony or creature does that takes effort or concentration. Most of the time, a full action needs a task roll of some kind. Some full actions do special things, add to or subtract from the difficulties of other rolls, or need the ponies or creatures to do certain things. A pony or creature can use only one full action in a round to move. Here are some examples of full actions; the narrator has to decide if an action that isn't on the list is a full action.

- **Attacking** in any way. Besides using hooves, head, wings, or teeth, this includes using a weapon or wrestling. Some more specific examples follow.
- **Punching or boxing** a pony or creature.
- **Kicking or bucking** a pony or creature.
- **Pushing** a pony or creature.
- **Tripping** a pony or creature.
- **Choking** a pony or creature.
- **Grabbing** a pony or creature. Depending on where the pony or creature is grabbed, she may not be able to take any actions other than trying to escape.
- **Pinning** a pony or creature—holding her to the ground or tacking a piece of her clothing to a wall or a nearby object. The pony or creature can't use whatever parts of her body have been pinned. Pinning the whole pony or creature to the ground is pretty much the same as tackling her.
- **Tackling** a pony or creature. Once tackled, the pony or creature can't take any actions other than talking or trying to break the attacker's grip.
- **Breaking or escaping** being pinned or tackled by another pony or creature.
- **Throwing** something at or to another pony or creature.
- **Lunging** with a pointed weapon, such as a sword or a knife.
- **Slashing** with an edged weapon, such as a sword or a knife.
- **Entangling** a pony or creature using a rope, net, or whip (for example).
- **Shooting** a sling, bow, firearm, or other weapon that throws projectiles.
- **Knocking** something, such as a weapon, from a pony's or creature's grip. ▶

- Using an **active defense**—full defense, normal defense, blocking, or parrying.
- **Moving**, in good conditions, more than half the distance the pony or creature can walk, swim, or climb in a round, rounding up, flying more than 250 yards (229 meters) in the round, jumping several times in a row, jumping over another pony or creature, or jumping onto a table. A roll is needed only for trying to do something tricky or if the pony or creature is trying to flee or run away.
- **Moving**, in bad conditions, more than one yard (0.9 meter) walking, swimming, or climbing, flying more than 50 yards (45 meters), or jumping more than once in the round. A roll probably will be needed. If conditions are *very* bad, the narrator may decide that any movement at all is a full action.
- **Getting up** again after falling or being knocked or thrown to the ground.
- Trying a **stunt** with a moving vehicle, such as a cart, wagon, or carriage.
- **Catching** a thrown or dropped object or creature. The catcher can take this action right after the throwing or dropping action. This is one of the few times a pony or creature can take an action before her initiative.
- **Carrying** something heavy and doing anything else at the same time other than walking or talking.
- **Speaking** more than a few words or a sentence, such as explaining a plan or talking about complicated ideas or information, to nearby ponies or creatures.
- **Readying** a weapon or device, including drawing or reloading a bow or firearm, sheathing or unsheathing a blade, or a similar action. Usually a task roll isn't needed, but if the narrator may ask for one if there's a lot of stress or confusion.
- Doing a quick **task** that takes a few seconds. The pony or creature may try to rush the task, if she's in a hurry and the task normally takes longer than a round.
- **Starting or continuing** a task that takes longer than a single round to finish.
- **Waiting** before taking more actions. The next section talks more about this.

A pony or creature can use a full action to *wait* for something else to happen before taking more actions. (This is why the narrator or player doesn't have to describe all a pony's or creature's actions up front.) The narrator or player can say why the pony or creature is waiting—"I'll wait for him to attack," for example—or say just that the pony or creature is waiting—for instance, "I'm not sure what's going on, so I'll wait to see what happens before I do anything else."

If a pony or creature is waiting for something in particular, the narrator can let her take an action if or when that something happens, after any task roll is made but before the die roll's effect. Using the example of the pony waiting for a creature to attack, when the creature attacks, that pony would be able to take another action after the attack die roll but before anything else happens.

A pony or creature can take a few actions, wait (another action), take some more actions, wait again (another action), and so on, as long as she has enough actions in the round to do everything. If the pony or creature hasn't used up all her actions by the end of the round, she loses the actions she hasn't taken.

A **free action** is anything a pony or creature can do automatically, without much effort or a die roll, except under the worst conditions. Free actions don't count when figuring out what the pony's or creature's multi-action penalty is. If the narrator thinks a task needs concentration, and therefore a die roll, to do right, it usually isn't a free action. Here are some examples of free actions.

- **Speaking** a few words to another pony or creature nearby.
- **Glancing** around a room (maybe with a Smarts roll to notice something).
- **Moving** a short distance—no more than half normal walk, swim, or climb distance for a round (rounding up), a single jump, or flying no faster than 250 yards (229 meters) in a round under good conditions; moving no more than one yard (0.9 meter) or flying no more than 50 yards (45 meters) under bad conditions.
- Dropping **prone** (lying face-down on the ground) on purpose or getting up from doing so.
- Deciding initiative, rolling to resist illness or injury, and rolling to resist shock or surprise count as "free actions".

Step 3: Is It Over?

The narrator decides whether to go on to a new round, or that there's no need to do so. For a new round, go back to step one and start again. ★

~ Live and Learn ~

AS THE GAME GOES ON, the players' ponies may get better at their Talents or learn new Talents. When the narrator decides a player's pony deserves some experience, she can let the player add one die to one of the pony's Talents, or add to the pony a new Secondary Earth or Fire Talent of one die. The Talent being improved or added should be one the pony's had a chance to practice or learn.

This shouldn't happen too often, or the ponies will end up being super-powered very quickly. The narrator should dole out experience dice only once in a long while, after several adventures (or episodes or stories—whatever term the group prefers to use). A good time to do so is when a player has done an exceptionally good job of role-playing or has been exceptionally clever. Aptitudes can't be improved except under very special circumstances—usually something magical and rare—with the permission of the narrator.

Another way to keep a pony from getting too powerful at a Talent is to limit how many dice it can have. Since earth ponies are better at Earth and Fire Talents, they can have more dice in a Secondary Talent than unicorn and pegasus ponies.

- Any pony may have up to five dice in a Primary Talent.
- An earth pony may have up to five dice in a Secondary Talent.
- A unicorn or pegasus pony may have up to three dice in a Secondary Talent. ★

~ *Fatigue and Rest* ~

PONIES WHO EXERT THEMSELVES get tired and must rest. When a pony exerts herself, including casting spells, the pony's player makes a *fatigue* roll using the pony's Hardiness dice, plus a Talent if the narrator agrees that it applies to the task, every so often, depending on how hard the pony is working. If a pony's exertion is shorter than one full time interval, just make one roll. The basic difficulty of the first roll is 0; add 3 to the difficulty for every roll after that. (So the second roll's difficulty is 3, the third one's difficulty is 6, and so on.)

- A pony doing **light work** rolls every hour. Some examples are walking, carrying (or levitating) a light load, or flying no more than 200 yards (183 meters) per round.
- A pony doing **moderate work** rolls every ten minutes. Some examples are trotting, jumping a few times a minute, flying 201 to 400 yards (184–366 meters) per round, or carrying (or levitating) a medium load.
- A pony doing **heavy work** rolls every minute. Some examples are cantering, swimming, climbing, jumping constantly, flying 401 to 800 yards (367–732 meters) per round but slower than sound, fighting, or carrying a heavy load.
- A pony making a **maximum effort** rolls every round. Some examples are galloping, flying more than 800 yards (732 meters) per round, or carrying (or levitating) a load that is at least very heavy.

Modifiers can be applied in special situations. Here are a few examples, but the narrator can make up more if she thinks they might be needed.

- Add 5 to the difficulty for hot weather; add 10 for very hot weather.
- A pony exerting herself more than one way rolls for the heaviest work and adds 5 to the difficulty for each extra exertion. For example, a pony cantering while carrying a medium load is doing heavy work and adds 5 to the difficulty.
- A pony doing only light work, even if she's doing multiple things, can skip fatigue rolls if the narrator agrees she's pacing herself. (In other words, it's treated as a "trivial task", and doesn't count as exertion.) An example would be a pony who's strolling, moving at half walking speed, maybe while carrying a light load.

Any time a pony fails a fatigue roll, she gets more tired and has a harder time doing things, until she takes a break and gets some rest. Once the pony has rested, the difficulty for her fatigue rolls starts over again at 0.

- A pony who fails one fatigue roll is **winded**. She subtracts 1 die from all task rolls and fatigue rolls until she's rested for half as long as the exertion lasted.
- A pony who fails two fatigue rolls is **tired**. She subtracts 2 dice from all task rolls and fatigue rolls until she's rested for as long as the exertion lasted.
- A pony who fails three fatigue rolls is **exhausted**. She subtracts 3 dice from all task rolls and can't exert herself any more until she's rested for twice as long as the exertion lasted.

Sleep

A pony staying up longer than she should makes a fatigue roll every hour of missed sleep with a difficulty of 5 per roll. (The first roll's difficulty is 5, the second roll's is 10, the third one's is 15, and so on.) The narrator can modify the difficulty depending on what's going on around the pony. If it's peaceful and quiet, or the pony's really comfortable, that increases the difficulty. If it's loud or uncomfortable, or the pony's trying to stay active (walking around, say), that decreases the difficulty.

This is treated just like a normal fatigue roll. After the third failed sleep-fatigue roll, the pony falls asleep no matter what. Other ponies trying to keep her awake must keep doing it constantly or the sleepy pony will drift off again. A pony stays sleepy, with the penalty for being "winded", "tired", or "exhausted", until she makes up the lost sleep. A pony can be sleepy *and* tired, combining both penalties.

Normally, *trying* to fall asleep is routine, but if conditions are bad, like being cold, wet, hungry, or surrounded by loud noise, the pony makes a Hardiness roll every ten minutes, with a difficulty of 5 for each bad condition. If the pony's awake long enough, the narrator may give the pony a penalty for lost sleep.

A pony who's trying to wake up or who's being waked makes a Hardiness roll each round with a difficulty of 5. If it's too early (less than a full night's sleep), add to the difficulty. Loud noises or other disturbances decrease the difficulty. A big success means the pony wakes up alert. A small success means the pony wakes up groggy and disoriented. A small failure means the pony doesn't quite wake up, but is dozing. A big failure means the pony stays fast asleep. ★

~ *Other Creatures* ~

Ponies aren't the only creatures, or even the only intelligent creatures, in the world. The narrator should use the rules for creating a pony as a guideline when creating a different creature. A small creature gets fewer dice, of course, and a larger creature gets more. If it's big enough or old enough, like a full-grown dragon, it might get more (maybe a lot more) than 5 dice in Muscle or Hardiness and might have a lot of Talents. An animal that isn't intelligent gets 1 die of Smarts, no dice in Learning, and is very limited in what Talents it might have. A creature that's intelligent, but not as bright as most ponies, gets 1 die of Smarts and 1 die of Learning, and might have limited Talents. A narrator who has other role-playing games might be able to use them for ideas, too.

Some players may want to play other creatures than ponies. It's up to the narrator whether the players can, but anything she allows probably should be pretty similar to ponies in the number of dice the creatures get, though the dice might be moved around some. Also remember that the show is mainly about the ponies, so there isn't a lot of information on anything else. That means the narrator may have to do a lot more work in figuring out how she wants to handle those other creatures, like where they come from and how their societies work. ★

THE SHOW DOESN'T TALK about them directly, but it's clear that birth and death are part of life for the ponies. Getting sick, getting hurt, and getting better are things any pony will do, especially one who goes on adventures.

Sometimes the show does something pretty terrible to a pony—say, squishing her under a falling piano or smacking her into a cliff—but she's just fine in the next scene! On the other hand, sometimes a whole plot depends on (for example) a pony being rescued from, or finding a way to avoid, going *splat* after a good long fall. As a result, this is one place where the difference between a literal game and a figurative game is most noticeable. Along with the rules are suggestions for how to handle them, depending on which kind of game is being played.

Levels of Illness or Injury

The narrator and players need a way to keep track of how sick or hurt ponies get when bad things happen to them. It matters more in a figurative game, of course, but even in a literal game ponies may stagger around dizzily or get covered with bandages or casts—that's part of the cartoon fun.

When a pony may get sick or hurt, dice are rolled to see how badly. The worse the illness or injury may be, the more dice are rolled. The pony's player rolls the pony's Hardiness dice plus the dice for any protection the pony has (for example, vaccinations or armor), and that's subtracted from the illness or injury roll. If the result is zero or less, the pony doesn't suffer anything worse than a few snuffles or bruises. If the result is more than zero, the pony gets sick or hurt. The pony's player checks off, on her Pony Form, the level that matches the final result. For a foal, the narrator may want to cut the injury or illness die result in half. (Kids bounce.)

- A pony is **bruised** by a result of 0 or less.
- A pony is **stunned** by a result of 1–3. A stunned pony subtracts 1 die from all task rolls this round and next round.
- A pony suffers **minor illness or injury** from a result of 4–6. A pony with a minor illness or injury subtracts 1 die from all task rolls until healed.
- A pony suffers **serious illness or injury** from a result of 7–9. A pony with a serious illness or injury subtracts 2 dice from all task rolls until healed.
- A pony suffers **major illness or injury** from a result of 10–12 and must make a Hardiness roll with a difficulty of 15. If the roll is successful, the pony stays conscious. Failure means the pony is unconscious for 10 dice of minutes. (In a literal game, this can be 10 dice of rounds instead.) A pony with a major illness or injury subtracts 3 dice from all task rolls until healed.
- A pony suffers **mortal illness or injury** from a result of 13–15, falls over unconscious, and stays that way until healed. Each minute, make a Hardiness roll for the pony; if the result is less than the number of minutes since the pony suffered mortal illness or injury, the pony dies. (A literal game can ignore the last part.)
- A pony **dies** immediately from a result of 16 or greater.

If a pony gets sick or hurt again, worse than she already is, check off the new level. If the new illness or injury *isn't* worse, increase the pony's illness or injury by one level. That may sound complicated, but once everyone gets used to it, keeping track should be pretty easy. Here are examples, using a pony with a serious injury:

- If the new injury is a major injury, mortal injury, or death, check off that level of injury—major injury, mortal injury, or death, whichever one it is.
- If the new injury is a stun, minor injury, or serious injury, increase the pony's injury by one level, checking off major injury.

The narrator doesn't have to stick to the rules when doing so seems unfair or dampens the fun. If players are okay with the idea that their ponies are doing dangerous things and could get killed, the narrator can let the chips fall where they may, but if players don't want to lose ponies they care about or are playing a literal game, the narrator can fudge things to give ponies better chances to survive.

Natural Dangers

A lot of things can happen to a pony, even if she doesn't go out on adventures. Accidents, horseplay (ahem), and plain bad luck can be as dangerous as dragons.

Holding breath: A pony who's underwater or high in the air may try to hold her breath. Roll the pony's Hardiness dice; the total of the die roll is the number of rounds the pony can hold her breath. If the pony can take some deep breaths first, the narrator should give the pony a bonus. A pony who has a Talent the narrator thinks will help can add the dice for it, and the number of rounds is twice the total of the die roll. Once the pony runs out of breath, she starts to asphyxiate.

Asphyxiation: Roll as long as a pony can't breathe, adding 1 die each round. (Roll 1 die on the first round, 2 dice on the second, 3 dice on the third, and so on.)

Drowning: Every time a pony fails a swimming roll, roll injury dice equal to the number of failed swimming rolls. (For example, the third time a pony fails a swimming roll, roll three dice of drowning injury.) The failed swimming rolls don't have to be in a row, but they must be during the same time the pony's in the water.

Dehydration: Roll every 12 hours after the first 12 hours that a pony can't get any water, adding 1 die each 12 hours. (Roll 1 die on the second 12 hours, 2 dice on the third, 3 dice on the fourth, and so on.) For every 10° F (5.6° C) hotter than 80° F (27° C), cut the time in half—but no less than 1 hour—and double the water that the pony needs. A pony recovers from dehydration using the normal healing rules, as long as there is enough water for the pony to drink.

Starvation: Roll every day after the first day that a pony can't get any food, adding 1 die each day. (Roll 1 die on the second day, 2 dice on the third, 3 dice on the fourth, and so on.) A pony that eats a little food stretches out the time. For example, a pony who eats half the food she needs rolls every two days instead of every day. A pony recovers from starvation using the normal healing rules, as long as there is enough food for the pony to eat. ♠

Cold: Every hour, roll 1 die for every 10° F (5.6° C) less than 50° F (10° C). Wearing warm clothing adds 5° to 20° F (2.8–11° C), depending on how good it is. Exercising to stay warm adds 1 die to a pony's Hardiness roll for each level of work.

Falling: Roll 1 die for every 5 feet (1.5 meters) after the first 5 feet (1.5 meters).

Collision: If a pony smashes into something or vice versa, roll 1 die for every 5 yards (4.5 meters) per round after the first 25 yards (23 meters) per round.

Strange stuff: A pony may come across something that doesn't hurt her, but might do something weird to her instead. The narrator can use level of illness to judge how weird it gets. An example is the blue plant that plays pranks on creatures who touch it; a "major illness" could be a bigger prank than a "minor illness".

Protective Armor

The royal guard wears gold-plated ceremonial *barding* (equine armor), and there may be other kinds as well. A pony can wear only one kind of barding at a time. Barding is heavy and clumsy; for each die of protection, add 1 to the difficulty of any task that uses Speed or Agility. Wearing barding can get hot even in mild weather, but metal armor isn't much protection against cold either. Barding also won't protect a pony against certain other things—like falls, poisons, and diseases. If there's any doubt, the narrator will have to decide.

- **Leather** barding is worth 1 die of protection.
- **Mail** (often called "chainmail") barding is worth 2 dice of protection.
- **Plate** barding is worth 3 dice of protection.

First Aid (mostly for figurative games)

A mortally injured pony can be given first aid by another pony to remove the danger of death. The pony providing first aid rolls her Learning dice, plus any Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate, with a difficulty equal to the number of minutes that the patient has been mortally injured. If the roll succeeds, the patient no longer is in danger of dying. Failure means the mortally injured pony still is in danger of dying. If an attempt at first aid fails, the first-aid pony can try again, making a new roll after another five minutes have passed.

Narrators and players who want some added realism also can use this extra rule on giving first aid quickly. If first aid is successful within 5 minutes of the patient suffering mortal injury, the patient will recover completely, with no permanent damage. For every 5 minutes longer that it takes first aid to be successful, the patient permanently loses 1 die from every Talent. (A Talent can't be less than zero dice, though.) After 30 minutes, first aid no longer does any good.

It may be possible to revive a pony who's died, as long as the pony's body is still in good shape and not horribly mangled. If a unicorn can use a spell for first aid, treat the dead pony as if she's mortally injured. If normal first aid is used, a new roll must be made every five minutes until the pony can be hospitalized; if any of the rolls fails, the pony is really dead and can't be revived. At the hospital, the dead pony is treated as if she's mortally injured.

Natural Healing

Healing in a **figurative game** takes lots of rest. When a pony has spent enough time resting—not exerting herself—the pony's player can make a Hardiness roll. If the roll succeeds, reduce the pony's injury level by one (for instance, from "serious injury" to "minor injury"). If the roll fails, the pony's injury level stays the same.

A pony who *doesn't* rest, and instead is active (for instance, working or adventuring), subtracts one die from the Hardiness roll. A pony who rests for twice as long as the injury level needs adds one die to the Hardiness roll.

- A **stunned** pony recovers automatically after 1 minute.
- A pony with a **minor** illness or injury rolls after 3 days with a difficulty of 6.
- A pony with a **serious** illness or injury rolls after 3 days with a difficulty of 6.
- A pony with a **major** illness or injury rolls after 2 weeks with a difficulty of 6.
- A pony with a **mortal** illness or injury rolls after 5 weeks with a difficulty of 8.

In a **literal game**, anything short of the biggest threats to life and limb just knocks around a pony for comedic effect, and the narrator's free to ignore injury effects at will. A narrator who wants to pay *some* attention to boo-boos—especially on ponies who get into trouble when they should know better—can use minutes instead of days and hours instead of weeks for recovery periods. That allows a pony to recover from most injuries pretty quickly, but doesn't remove the peril of death, for those last-minute rescues and other dramatic moments.

Medical Treatment

A pony who knows how can give a hurt pony medical treatment to speed up healing. The nurse or physician pony rolls her Learning dice, plus any one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate, once per day. If the roll is successful, reduce the patient's injury level by one (for instance, from "serious injury" to "minor injury"). Failure means the patient's injury level stays the same.

Other ponies can help; each helper pony can add her dice for a Talent that the narrator agrees is appropriate. If the pony in charge of giving treatment has the right tools, such as medicines, bandages, surgical instruments, or whatever the narrator thinks is needed, that reduces the difficulty. Treating the patient in a clinic or hospital reduces the difficulty even more.

- For a pony with a **minor** illness or injury, the difficulty is 10.
- For a pony with a **serious** illness or injury, the difficulty is 15.
- For a pony with a **major** illness or injury, the difficulty is 20.
- For a pony with a **mortal** illness or injury, the difficulty is 25. *

~ Fighting ~

THERE IS A LITTLE FIGHTING on the show—usually when the main characters are on an adventure. Besides, fighting's a staple of adventure stories in general, so if the narrator and players want to play that kind of game, it's probably going to be very important. Most if not all fighting will happen during rounds.

Step 1: Defense

The basic difficulty of an attack depends on what the defender, or target of the attack, is doing. A defender who isn't doing anything special to avoid attacks is using a *passive defense*, which has a difficulty of 10, and doesn't count as an action. A defender trying to stop or avoid attacks is using an *active defense*, which is a contest of rolls instead of a normal difficulty—and *does* count as an action, so the penalty for multiple actions may apply! There are four kinds of active defense.

- **All-out defense** means the defender isn't doing *anything* except dodging attacks. The defender can't take any other actions, but gets to roll Agility dice, plus the dice for one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate (if any), plus 10.
- **Normal defense** means the defender's dodging *and* trying to do other things at the same time. The defender rolls Agility dice plus the dice for one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate, if any. The narrator may let a pony or creature who has some idea an attack's coming, but can't do much about it, to roll a normal defense as a free action.
- **Block** means the defender's trying to stop attacks. The defender rolls Agility dice, plus one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate (if any). If the defender uses any part of the body to block a bladed weapon (instead of a weapon or object), the weapon automatically injures the defender, unless she's wearing armor or has a Talent that covers blocking. Don't add the attacker's *strength bonus* (explained later) if the block is successful; do add the attacker's strength bonus if the block fails.
- **Parry** means the defender's trying to deflect, or push aside, attacks. The defender rolls Agility dice, plus any one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate (if any). A defender who succeeds with a parry using a sharp weapon injures the attacker, but doesn't add her strength bonus.

A pony or creature can choose an active defense only on her turn during a round; the choice of defense lasts until the pony's or creature's turn in the next round. The player only needs to roll once, and that result is used against all attacks on the pony or creature that it can be. If the pony or creature is attacked in a round before her turn, she can't change her defense against it, because she can't react quickly enough. If an active defense roll is lower than a passive defense of 10, the pony or creature just isn't doing a good job of defending—misjudging attacks, dodging the wrong way, not keeping good track of attackers, and so on.

Step 2: Attack

What kind of attack a pony or creature makes may add to or subtract from the difficulty of the attack. The attacker either can use a set number or make a die roll, or the narrator may decide that only one or the other can be used in all cases; both are listed in each of the attack descriptions. In a lot of cases, an attack may have some sort of special effect on the target, which also is described.

Disarm: The attacker tries to knock a weapon or object out of the target's grip. If the attack succeeds and the target hasn't taken any actions yet, she can use an action to try to keep her grip on the weapon or object, even if it's before her initiative. The target makes a Muscle (or Levitation) roll against the attacker's injury roll. If the target's roll is greater than the injury roll, the target keeps hold of the weapon or object; if it's less than or equal, she drops the weapon or object.

Entangle: The attacker uses a lasso, net, whip, or other flexible weapon to tangle up the target. If the attack succeeds, the end of the lasso or whip or the weave of the net wraps around the target. Unless it's spiky or otherwise special, it doesn't hurt the target, but she can't take any actions other than trying to break free, which is a contest against the weapon's "injury" roll and counts as an action, or talking. To slip out of the weapon, the target uses an Agility roll in the contest. To snap the weapon, the target uses a Muscle roll in the contest.

Grab: The attacker gets a grip on some part of the target. Different kinds of grab have different effects. Add 6 (or 2 dice) to the difficulty of the attack. Trying to escape from a grab counts as an action; to succeed, the grabbed target must win a Muscle dice contest against the attacker. Every round that a target stays grabbed, the attacker can use her strength bonus to injure the target.

- **Choke:** The attacker cuts off the target's air by pressing a limb, rope, or some kind of rod or pole against the target's windpipe. On the first round, use the attacker's strength bonus for injury dice; after that, use the general Grab rules.
- **Flip:** The attacker grabs one of the target's limbs and yanks her over to fall on the ground. A flipped target suffers 3 injury dice from hitting the ground and must spend the next round getting back up, if she can.
- **Hold:** The attacker gets hold of a target with a successful attack and does less injury, subtracting 3 or more injury dice—however much the attacker decides.
- **Slam or throw:** The attacker picks up the target and throws her into the ground, a wall, or anything solid nearby. Lifting the target counts as an action and needs a lifting roll. Slamming or throwing the target counts as a second action and also needs a "lifting" roll. The injury suffered by the target is equal to the *toughness* dice of the object she was slammed or thrown against plus the attacker's strength bonus. The attacker's strength bonus also is rolled against the object to see if it's damaged; it can resist damage with its toughness dice. ♣

- Something **flimsy** like a plywood door has 1 die of toughness.
- Something **tough** like a hard wooden door or a weapon has 2 dice of toughness.
- Something **sturdy** like a bolted steel door or a floor safe has 3 dice of toughness.
- Something **very sturdy** like a few layers of steel has 4 dice of toughness.
- Something **reinforced** like many layers of steel has 6 dice of toughness.

Knockdown, push, or trip: The attacker forces the target to stumble; the target subtracts 2 dice from her next Agility roll instead of being injured. An attacker can knock down or push a target if her Muscle, plus a Talent if the narrator agrees it's appropriate, is greater than the target's Muscle (plus Talent, if any).

- For a **push**, add 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty of the attack.
- For a **knockdown** or **trip**, add 6 (or 2 dice) to the difficulty of the attack. A knocked-down or tripped target falls to the ground; standing up takes an action.

Lunge: The attacker rushes suddenly at a target, maybe with an edged weapon. Lunging adds about half a yard (45 centimeters) to the range of an attack, but adds 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty of the attack and subtracts 1 die from injury.

Strike: The attacker tries to hit the target normally. An attacker using her own body or a weapon powered by her own muscles adds her strength bonus to the body part's or weapon's injury dice. An attacker using a weapon like a firearm that isn't powered by her own muscles doesn't add her strength bonus. A pony can attack only in the direction the part of her body she's attacking with is facing.

- **Punching** with a front hoof or **butting** with the head doesn't add to difficulty, but adds 1 point to injury. The narrator may decide an alicorn (the historical name for a unicorn horn) is too sensitive for butting because of its magic, or may decide it's sturdy enough to add 2 points to injury instead of 1 point.
- **Boxing** with both front hooves or **clipping** with a wing adds 3 (or 1 die) to difficulty and 2 points to injury. A wing clips outward from a pegasus pony's side.
- **Kicking** with a rear hoof adds 6 (or 2 dice) to difficulty and 1 die to injury.
- **Bucking** with both rear hooves adds 12 (or 4 dice) to difficulty and 2 dice to injury.
- **Biting** usually adds 3 (or 1 die) to difficulty, but if the attacker is very close, such as in a grab or tackle (either as attacker or target), subtract 3 (or 1 die) instead.

Sweep: The attacker uses a roundhouse blow or a leg sweep. Subtract 6 (or 2 dice) from the difficulty of the attack, but subtract 3 dice from injury.

Tackle: What makes this different from grabbing is that the attacker's trying to hang on to the target's whole body. Add 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty of the attack. If the tackle succeeds or the target isn't struggling, the attacker captures the target and can do normal injury dice if she wants. Each round the attacker keeps the target tackled, she can use (only) her strength bonus to injure the target. The target can't take any actions except trying to escape, using the rule under Grab.

Step 3: Special Conditions

Trying to hit a specific part of a target, surprising a target, and a lot of other choices can affect the difficulty of an attack. The attacker either can use a set number or make a die roll, or the narrator may decide that only one or the other can be used in all cases; both are listed in each of the descriptions. In a lot of cases, a special condition also may have some sort of extra effect, which also is described.

Aiming: An attacker using a weapon that shoots projectiles can track a target. Each round that an attacker takes no other actions but aiming at a specific target, she can add 1 die to the attack roll when she shoots at that target, but she can't add more than 3 dice. A moving target may add to the difficulty of the shot.

All-out attack: The attacker is putting *everything* into hitting the target, and can't take any other actions at all, including using an active defense. Subtract 6 (or 2 dice) from the difficulty of the attack, and if it hits, add 1 die to injury.

Crouch: Attacking a target that's crouched on the ground adds 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty of the attack. If the target's moving too, add another 3 (or 1 die); a crouching target can move only half as far as normal, rounding up.

Multiple weapons: A pony or creature using more than one weapon can attack with each of them in a round, but remember to apply the multi-action penalty to all the attacks.

Prone: Attacking a target that's prone, lying face-down on the ground, subtracts 6 (or 2 dice) from the difficulty of the attack at point-blank or short range but adds 6 (or 2 dice) at medium or long range.

Ready a weapon: Drawing or reloading a weapon, or doing something similar, takes one action. Normally this doesn't need a task roll, but if the narrator thinks things are unusually stressful or confusing, she may ask for one. The narrator may add to the difficulty if there isn't much room to move or the weapon is unwieldy. Drawing or reloading and attacking in the same round causes a multi-action penalty, of course, since they're two actions.

A pony or creature can try to *quick draw* a weapon, readying it and attacking with it as one action. The weapon must be one that can be quick-drawn, such as a bow and arrow, a loaded pistol, or a dagger, and the narrator or player must say, before initiative is figured out for the round, that her pony or creature will try a quick draw. The attacker can add some of the dice she normally would use for her attack to her initiative dice for that round, but she must leave at least 1 die in her attack. If she wants to attack more than once with the quick-drawn weapon, she subtracts 1 die for each attack after the first before adding dice to initiative.

For example, a unicorn royal guard wants to shoot at the mantichore in front of him before it can pounce on him. He's got a total of 8 dice in his Agility and Fighting Talent; normally he could add up to 7 dice to his initiative, but he wants to shoot twice. After subtracting 1 die for the extra attack, he's got 7 dice left, so now he can add up to 6 dice to his initiative. He decides instead to add only 3 dice to his initiative, which leaves him with 4 dice for each of his attacks.

Surprise: If an attacker gets the drop on other ponies or creatures, she can act before them in the first round or, if the narrator prefers, can add 1 die (or more) to her actions in the first round. Examples include attacking from behind, ambushes, or unexpected attacks, such as from a hypnotized friend or companion.

Unwieldy weapons or objects are longer than 2 feet (60 centimeters), hard to grip or throw, or use technology or magic the user doesn't understand. Add 5 or more to the difficulty of an attack with an unwieldy object. If the narrator thinks other things make it easier to use, such as experience, strength, or really good design (a well-balanced sword, for instance), she might add less to the difficulty.

Called shot: An attacker can try to attack a specific part of a target's body. Trying to hit an arm (front limb) or leg (back limb) causes less injury because the attacker took extra care to hit an area that's "less vital." Trying to hit the chest or abdomen doesn't add to or subtract from the difficulty or injury.

- Trying for the **head** adds 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty and 12 (or 4 dice) to injury.
- Trying for the **heart** adds 12 (or 4 dice) to difficulty and 12 (or 4 dice) to injury.
- Trying for an **arm** adds 3 (or 1 die) to difficulty and subtracts 2 points from injury.
- Trying for a **leg** or **wing** adds 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty and subtracts 1 point from injury.

If part of the body is injured enough, the narrator may decide the injury affects how well the pony or creature can use it. Except for chest injuries, the penalty listed lasts until that part of the body heals, which probably takes a few days. Medical treatment (including magic) can be applied to a specific injured location.

- A **head** injury subtracts an extra point from Smarts, Learning, and initiative rolls.
- A **chest** injury means the target can't take any actions in the next round.
- An **arm** injury subtracts an extra point from any rolls involving that arm.
- A **leg** injury subtracts an extra point from all Agility, Speed, and initiative rolls.

An attacker can try to *knock out* a target. The attacker must succeed at hitting the target's head and getting at least a "stunned" result on the injury. Subtract the difficulty of the attack from the successful attack roll; that's the number of hours the target's unconscious, unless something or someone else wakes her up before she regains consciousness on her own. Divide the level of injury in half, rounding down, before checking it off on the target. For example, reduce a "mortal" injury to a minor injury; reduce a "major" injury to a stun.

Group attack: A group of attackers like a gang or a unit of the royal guard can combine attacks. One attacker is the leader, who makes a Smarts roll, plus a Talent if the narrator agrees it's appropriate. If the roll succeeds, all the attackers use the leader's initiative and attack at once; they use the hit-location modifier, and all the successful attacks add their injury dice together. If the roll fails, the attackers use their own initiatives and take their own actions as usual.

- Add 3 to the difficulty of the Smarts roll for **simple or general** commands.
 - Add 7 to the difficulty of the Smarts roll for **easy or specific** commands.
 - Add 12 to the difficulty of the roll for **difficult or very specific** commands.
 - Add 17 to the difficulty of the roll for **very difficult or precise** commands.
 - Add 22 to the difficulty for **extremely difficult or very precise** commands.
 - Add 28 to the difficulty of the Smarts roll for **exacting** commands.
- Subtract 20 from difficulty if the group will follow the leader no matter what.
 - Subtract 15 if the group's members will sacrifice themselves for each other.
 - Subtract 10 from the difficulty if the group's trained a lot to work together.
 - Subtract 5 from the difficulty if the group's trained a little to work together.
 - Don't add or subtract anything if the group's worked together a lot or is willing to.
 - Add 5 to the difficulty if the group's worked together several times.
 - Add 10 to the difficulty if the group's worked together only a few times.
 - Add 15 if the group's never worked together or most of the group hates each other.
 - add 20 if the group isn't interested in working together, all of the group hates each other, or the group's members can't communicate with each other.

Step 4: The Environment

A lot of things out of an attacker's control can affect an attack. The attacker either can use a set number or make a die roll, or the narrator may decide that only one or the other can be used in all cases; both are listed in each of the descriptions.

Cover and visibility: Smoke, fog, dim light, obstacles, or an attacker who can't see make an attack harder; a target who can't see makes an attack easier.

- Subtract 12 (or 4 dice) from the difficulty if the target can't see at all.
- Add 3 (or 1 die) to the difficulty for light smoke or fog, dim light, twilight, or cover that hides about a quarter of the target.
- Add 6 (or 2 dice) to the difficulty for thick smoke or fog, a moonlit night, or cover that hides about half the target.
- Add 12 (or 4 dice) for very thick smoke or fog, complete darkness, cover that hides about three-quarters of the target, or an attacker who can't see at all.
- If cover completely hides the target, the attacker can't hit the target directly, but if an attack does more damage than the amount of armor the cover is worth, what's left may will hit the target. Most of the time, the cover will have to be destroyed before the attacker can hit the target.

Range: Any attack can reach only so far. Weapons that shoot have short, medium, and long ranges listed for them. Weapons for fighting close up, or fighting with hooves, teeth, or any other part of the body, are limited to what's called *point-blank* range. Weapons that are long enough to be unwieldy may reach to short range, but they're hard for a pony to use. A narrator who doesn't want to look up weapon ranges and figure out distances can estimate what modifier to use.

- **Point-blank** range is 3 yards (2.7 meters) or less; subtract 5 from difficulty. A target who's a few steps away from the attacker is at point-blank range.
- **Short** range is more than 3 yards (2.7 meters) but no more than a weapon's first range listing. Shooting a rifle across a big room like a ballroom is short range.
- **Medium** range is more than the first range but no more than the second range listed for a weapon; add 5 to the difficulty of the attack. Shooting a handgun across that big ballroom is medium range. (Handguns don't shoot as far.)
- **Long** range is more than the second range but no more than the third range listed for a weapon; add 10 to the difficulty of the attack. Most shooting outdoors probably is at medium to long range.

Scale: Sometimes creatures of different sizes may fight. Bigger creatures or things are easier to hit, and usually take more punishment, than smaller creatures or things. The list of examples can guide a narrator who has to come up with a scale number for a different creature or object. The narrator can apply scale to a weapon if the attacker using it is bigger or smaller than the target. If an attacker wants to hit a weapon or object being held or carried, use the scale of the object.

Subtract the lesser scale number from the greater number. Subtracting a negative number is like adding a positive number; 6 minus -3 is the same as 6 plus 3. An attacker who's bigger than the target would add the result to the difficulty for attacking and to the injury; an attacker who's smaller than the target would subtract the result from the difficulty for attacking and from the injury. Sometimes a big object might not be very sturdy—for instance, a hot-air balloon. In that case, don't add the scale modifier to the injury from such an object or attacker.

Here's an example: A pony farmer finds a rat in her grain silo. The pony is size 0; the rat is size -9; 0 minus -9 is 9. The pony adds 9 to the difficulty of attacking the rat and adds 9 to the injury if she manages to hit it. The rat subtracts 9 from the difficulty of attacking the pony and subtracts 9 from the injury if it succeeds.

- A **full-grown dragon** is size 40.
- A **building** of 8 stories is size 24, of 4 stories is size 20, and of 2 stories is size 14.
- A **train car** is size 10, a **large wagon** is size 6, and a **small cart** is size 3.
- An **elephant** is size 8, a medium-size **dog** is size -3, and a house **cat** is size -6.
- The **sun princess** is size 3, an **adult pony** is size 0, and a **foal** is size -3.
- A **breadbox** is size -6 and a **coin** is size -15.
- A **rat** is size -9, a **mouse** is size -12, and an **ant** is size -21.

Step 5: Roll!

The difficulty of an attack can't be any less than 3, no matter how much has been added to or subtracted from it because of the kind of attack or special conditions. Once the final difficulty's been figured out, the attacker makes an Agility roll, plus one Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate (if any). If the die roll's equal to or greater than the difficulty, the attack hits the target; if it's less than the difficulty, the attack misses. A successful attack may injure the target or have whatever effect the attacker was trying to pull off.

Step 6: Injury or Effect

An attack that hits a target may injure that target. Use the injury rules to find out whether or how much the target's hurt, rolling the injury dice for the weapon, plus the attacker's strength bonus if that applies. The target gets to make a roll to resist the injury dice, of course. A narrator who wants to add weapons to her game can do some research, especially using other role-playing games, to figure out the injury dice or other effects of different weapons.

The **strength bonus** is equal to half of a pony's Muscle dice plus the dice in a Talent the narrator agrees is appropriate (if any), rounding up. For example, a pony with 3 dice in Muscle has a strength bonus of 2 dice; a pony with 5 dice in Muscle plus a Talent has a strength bonus of 3 dice. *

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