

Alea lacta Est!

Alea lacta Est, or AIE, is a simple role-playing game, designed to introduce new players to tabletop role-playing – having one universal roll for everything makes for a very simple game. That said, AIE is also suitable for more experienced role-players. A single step removed from a free-form role-play, it allows virtually any character concept to take hold.

Player Roles

AIE works with any number of players (though if you have over six you might consider playing multiple separate games) and one Game Master. The Game Master's job is to come up with a storyline, control non-player characters ("NPCs"), and decide on the results of the players' own actions based on their die rolls. The players create characters, and follow the storyline set by the GM (or their own devices!)

The Core System

Most actions just happen. If you walk somewhere, you just go somewhere you currently aren't. Clearly, you shouldn't need to roll for that. Neither should you have to roll to eat breakfast each day. Of course, if you're walking across a bridge on the verge of collapse, or trying to survive the deadly poison that you unwittingly consumed, it's a different story.

Hint for GMs: Try asking a dramatic question – in the form of "Does the character manage to do [X], or will [Y] happen?". If it sounds silly, such as: "Does Tobias manage to eat his breakfast, or will he drop his spoon first?" you probably don't need to roll. On the other hand, "Does Tobias manage to cross the rickety bridge, or will he fall into the water?" sounds like a good question, so go ahead and make your player roll. Also consider what will happen if the character fails – if Tobias falls off the bridge, he might drown, which isn't a great way to die.

If you want to do something which might actually have a chance of failure, you roll 2d6 – that's two normal six-sided dice. The GM then compares the result to this table. "Effect" lists the effect that most actions will have, while "Successes" are primarily used in combat, though the GM might find some other creative use for them.

2d6	Effect	Successes
Under 2*	You fail the action utterly, and injure yourself horrifically in the process	0
2	You fail the action, and probably manage to do yourself an injury, or do something antithetical to what you were trying to.	0
3-4	You miss, or otherwise fail in a rather nondescript manner.	0
5-6	You partially succeed in your action.	1
7	You succeed in as much of your action as you can be expected to in one round.	2
8-9	You do slightly more than succeed. You succeed particularly quickly or particularly well, or accomplish something else minor as well.	3
10-11	You succeed very well on the action. A particularly well done (or just plain lucky) performance.	4
12	You complete the action as fast and as well as is possible for a normal person.	5
13+*	You complete the task better than most people are capable of. You get an extra degree of success for each point over 12 you roll.	5+

*You can't actually roll these, of course, but you can get them through special conditions which modify your roll.

Your result might be increased or decreased by easy or difficult circumstances, at the GM's discretion – if you're doing something easy, you might get +2 to the roll.

Conflicts and Combats

If you're fighting an enemy, their attempts to fight back could be represented by opposed rolls. These work as follows:

- Both people roll 2d6
- If the person taking the action rolls higher, they find the difference between their roll and their opponent's, and add 4.
- If so, the effect is resolved as on the table above. If not, nothing happens.

Combat is also pretty simple. Everyone rolls 4d6 and the highest goes first, the second highest second, and so forth. Then, everyone goes into rounds, meaning that characters can take a single action every time their turn comes up. A round is probably about 6 seconds, but that depends on what exactly you're doing - if you're firing siege engines at each other, a round could be five or ten times as long.

You deal damage by attacking your opponents – this is always going to be an opposed roll, unless they're unconscious, tied up or otherwise unable to fight back. This is where successes come in: for each degree of success you roll, you deal an amount of damage equal to your weapon's damage value – for example, the sample NPC Anna has throwing knives listed as dealing 2 damage. If Anna rolls a total of 11 against a total of 7, she would achieve a result of 8 (11-7+4), which corresponds to 3 successes. That means that Anna will do 6 (2*3) damage with her attack.

Your fist is a weapon, which provides a -2 penalty on rolls to attack with it and deals only one point of damage per success.

When you take damage, you lose hit points. You normally have 50 to start with, and you regain 20 if you sleep or are unconscious for 8 hours. You can be healed, which restores one hit point per degree of success, but only once per hour. Losing hit points has a

Hit points	Effect
41+	You are Uninjured. You do not feel the effects of what little, if any damage you have taken.
31-40	You are Barely Injured. You take a -1 penalty on all rolls.
21-30	You are Injured. You take a -2 penalty on all rolls.
11-20	You are Badly Wounded. You take a -3 penalty on all rolls.
1-10	You are Unconscious. You cannot act, including defending yourself, until you are healed.
0	You are Dead. Resurrecting characters may be an option at the GM's discretion, but otherwise you will have to create a new character.

negative effect on you, as shown in the table to the right:

Character Creation

Creating a character is easy – you choose two things you are good at, one thing you are bad at, and one special talent you have. You get a bonus on all rolls made to do the two things you are good at, and a penalty on rolls to do the thing you're bad at. What exactly this bonus or penalty is can be found by consulting the following table:

Situation/uses	Example	Bonus	Penalty
The modifier is really specific, and it's hard to make them apply in all situations.	You only get a benefit when jumping between rooftops	+5	N/A
The modifier is moderately difficult to activate, but really, really easy not to.	You must be attacking with a specific weapon	+3	N/A
The action comes up fairly often, but is hardly routine.	You get the modifier on all attempts to jump	+3	-5
The action is relatively common.	You get the modifier on ranged attacks	+2	-3
The action is very common.	You get the modifier on all attacks	+1	-1

You can never have more than +6 or less than -6 to a roll, except in specific situations which will specify this. Also, if you roll an actual result of 2 on the dice (a "Natural 2" or "Snake-eyes"), your final result can never be better than 4.

You can increase your hit points to 55 instead of one of the things your character is good at, or your penalty can be -5 to your hit points. You can also modify the roll to see who goes first in combat by +4 or -6 in this way (The modifier is double the normal, because it's a 4d6 roll).

Your special ability could be the ability to cast magic, or move inhumanly fast, and so forth. The GM should decide what special abilities are acceptable.

Later in the game, the GM may decide that the players may gain additional bonuses and special abilities. When you gain a bonus, you may instead remove your penalty.

Items:

Items have a rarity value which basically shows how good they are, and how much you're likely to get for them. The rarities, in order, are:

(Unique)	Legendary	Rare	Uncommon	Common	Trivial	(Worthless)
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Apart from Unique or Worthless, all items can be swapped out for two of the category to their left, or an equivalent amount of money. Unique and Worthless different - unique items are difficult to get your hands on, and you can't usually buy or sell them. Worthless items are anything that doesn't cost enough that it's worth accounting for it – food and water are the obvious examples.

Examples of the different item types, and the number of each rarity that players should start with (though the GM may change this), are included below:

Rarity:	Example:	Stats:	Players start with:
Unique	Excalibur	+4 to attack rolls, +2 to defence rolls, 1d3 damage per success. Can only be wielded by Arthur Pendragon	0
Legendary	A sword made by Hephaestus	+6 to attack rolls, +3 to defence rolls, 1d6 damage per success.*	0
Rare	Titanium full plate	+3 to defence rolls, reduce damage taken by 3.	1
Uncommon	A good quality tool	+3 on the relevant roll (eg picking locks with a lock-pick, building things with a hammer or saw, etc.)	2
Common	A bow	+1 to attack rolls, 3 damage per success.	3
Trivial	20 Arrows	Required for bow. About half will survive impact and can be collected later.	2
Worthless	Food, Clothes, String, etc.	No mechanical effect	Any number

*Note how the legendary item can actually be better than the unique item – unique should not be thought of as being above legendary, though it sometimes is.

Special rules:

There are several more special cases that you should be aware of. The GM should feel free to make his own rules to keep track of new situations as they arise.

Size and Scale: Anything which isn't a human, including armies that might consist of multiple humans but is too large to keep track of each soldier, follows exactly the same rules as people, but will often get massive bonuses (or penalties, if it's smaller) against single humans. This is an exception to the maximum of +6 modifier rule: there is no way that a common person is going to defeat a whole squad of archers, though a powerful wizard might.

Damaging items: Items do have hitpoints, but they can't fall unconscious or take penalties: they can only "die" (be destroyed). The GM won't give you item hit points unless you really decide you want to sunder it.

Multiple actions: You can take more than one action in a round, but you take a -2 penalty on any roll you make for actions during the round, though you needn't roll if you wouldn't have to normally. This does mean that you're potentially making multiple separate rolls in the same round, and each one has its own bonuses/penalties. The penalty is separate from the maximum of +6 bonus - that is, it's applied after the bonus cap. So if you have a +8 bonus, and try to take three actions, the bonus is reduced to +6 and then you take the -4 penalty for multiple actions. Similarly, if you have a penalty of -7, this becomes -6 and then you take a penalty.

You may never take more than 3 actions in a round. Charging is one action. Talking is no actions. Taking out an arrow and shooting someone is one action. Common sense should be applied when deciding which actions can fit into one round. A modern pistol can be loaded and shot in the same round, a gunpowder musket cannot.

A World in Turmoil: Example Setting

A role-playing game cannot be played without a world in which to play it. While AIE is just as comfortable being played in a world of teleporters and lasers as it is in one of swords and sorcery, an example setting is provided below for you to start with. Remember that AIE is your game, and can be played in whatever way you like!

The city of Eisenhafen is a proud port city, and the main of the Imperial army resides there. Most of the Empire's trade happens there, and there is a thriving community in the shadow of the Iron Keep. What they do not tell you is that it is also the Empire's greatest criminal hive. Fully one fifth of the ships that enter and leave port are either unlicensed, carrying contraband, or both. There is a massive black market, and most of the city is ruled by a literal criminal underground – many houses have secret entrances to what is known as the Undercity, where you can find so-called "Guilds," which are named to mock their legitimate counterparts, and divide between them virtually every criminal activity known to man – Assassins', Thieves', and so forth are just the beginning. The Imperial army and the Undercity guilds vie for control over the city, while the magi have other plans. No-one's sure what these plans are, but the fact that they seem to involve the army and the Guilds at the same time doesn't help.

The heroes of the story, then, might be new recruits of the Imperial army, Undercity guilders, magi, or just commoners trying to make sense of it all. The setting is deliberately left open to allow any kind of adventuring group to take form.

Sample NPCs

Here, there are a few sample NPCs. Their levels of power vary, and very few make suitable player characters. Some represent unspecific people, of whom there might be more than one (there could easily be three practically-identical town guards), whereas others are named: major players in the politics of Eisenhafen. That said, you could make other characters with similar abilities – a Marshal might have similar abilities to Jonah. Ammunition is not listed unless it is likely to run out – Khazek only has three bombs, but Jonah has many arrows.

Name	Abilities	Items	Who are they?
City Guard	+1 attack	Sword 3 dmg +1 atk, shield +2 def	A guard in Eisenhafen. The same stat-line could be used for a mercenary or a guildler grunt.. There's no reason you couldn't alter his weapons either – he could have a bow, or a flintlock, or a halberd.
Sailor	+3 sailing	Cutlass 3 dmg +1 atk	A sailor of some sort. Could be legitimate or a pirate. Might have other skills, but don't waste time rolling.
Thief	+2 hide, +2 defence	Dagger 2 dmg +2 pick locks	A thief. Could be an assassin; add +2 attack in that case.
Captain Jonah	+3 attack with bow, allies get +1 all rolls	Longbow 4 dmg +2 atk, armour -2 dmg	A high-ranking officer and major mover in Eisenhafen. De facto in command of the Imperial army, despite being outranked by several other officers.
Champion Casper	+3 attack, +3 defence, 55 hit points	Greatsword d6+2 dmg, armour -2 dmg	The champion of Eisenhafen. Those who end up in court may choose trial by combat, in which case they face Casper. Only Anna has ever beaten him, escaping several counts of murder and theft.
"Anna"	+3 atk, +3 hide, +5 def, jump 10* as high/far	Throwing knives 2 dmg +2 atk, knife 4 dmg	An assassin, a thief, and just about anything else you're prepared to pay for, Anna doesn't actually exist in Imperial records – the reason being she was born male, and escaped to restart her life. (And earn money!)
"Spinner"	Allies get +3 all rolls	Throwing knives 2 dmg +2 atk	Aged leader of the Assassins. His nickname comes from the sound of his knives spinning through the air.
Khazek, the alchemist	+3 magic, fire bolt 1d6 damage	3 Fire bombs 1d6 damage 10 ft area.	The potion-maker of the magi. The target of numerous thefts, due to his variety of interesting creations: a potion which allows you to alter your body, a potion which causes the user to fly, and all manner of others.
Lord Voth	+5 magic, telekinesis	Magic sword 1d6 damage	All other magi answer to the secretive Voth, one of few who know what the magi are really planning.

Character Sheet:

Here are two example character sheets. One is empty; the other contains Anna's details as an example of how to fill the sheet out.

My name is:	My profession is:
_____	_____
I live in:	

This is a short summary of my life:	

I am good at:	Which means that I get:
_____	_____
I am also good at:	Which means that I get:
_____	_____
I have the special ability to:	_____

Through out my travels, I have become skilled in the following things:	

I am equipped with:	Body:
Head: _____	R hand: _____
L hand: _____	Feet: _____
Legs: _____	Back: _____
Neck: _____	R ring: _____
L ring: _____	

My name is:	My profession is:
Anna	Assassin
I live in:	
The Undercity of Eisenhafen	
This is a short summary of my life:	
I was born the son of a merchant family. Tiring of the expectations of me as heir to the family and the company, I absconded to the Undercity, where I lived out the rest of my life as a girl. Currently, I'm after one of Khazak's new potions, which if he's to be believed (credit where it's due, he usually is) gives the drinker the ability to transform their body. Meanwhile, I'm just taking whatever jobs I can get paid for.	
I am good at:	Which means that I get:
Murder!	+3 to attack rolls
I am also good at:	Which means that I get:
Hiding	+3 to rolls made to hide
I have the special ability to:	
Jump ten times as high or far as normal	
Through out my travels, I have become skilled in the following things:	
Defending myself - +5 on defence rolls.	

I am equipped with:	Body:
Head: An nondescript hairband	An enticing black dress
L hand: Throwing knives 2 dmg +3 atk	R hand: Knife 4 dmg
Legs: Bare skin	Feet: Nothing
Neck: My favourite necklace	Back: Sometimes a cloak
L ring: A cheap, rusting iron ring	R ring: Nothing