



Spoons
a roleplaying game

Caveat!

Spoons is meant to be a novel and challenging approach to freestyle roleplaying, not a teaching tool or authoritative guide. It's inspired by Christine Miserandino's Spoon Theory, and my own experiences with chronic illness, but it's not serious business.

For mechanical purposes it was necessary to create a simplified spoon-action exchange rate, but for real-life spoonies the spoon supply and spoon-to-action ratio are very complex and individual. The Spoons gameplay engine is not intended to be an accurate depiction of any given individual's spoon situation, and it couldn't possibly be anyway, there's just too many variables in a life.

So non-spoonies please remember that playing Spoons may give you some insight into the spoonie experience, but it will not make you an authority. When a real-life spoonie describes an experience different from the game, they know what they're talking about, take their word over the game.

Thanks <3

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Presented by The Falling Dream

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If you've never played an RPG before, I'm going to give you some credit and treat you like you know what one is, I mean it's right there in the name, it's a GAME where you PLAY the ROLE of someone else, there's not much to explain.

If you have played RPGs before, it will not save you.

The rules of Spoons are very simple, allowing you to focus on the story you create with your friends. There's no special items or preparation required, and no esoterica to navigate.

What you need

- At least one other person to play with. One person will be the Spoonboss (a storyteller), the other/s will be the Spoonie/s.
- Pens or pencils
- some paper (if you've printed the zine version there's lots of space for your notes)
- Optional, never required: Two coins ~OR~ a four-sided die.

What to read

Spoonie Stuff	pp 1-7 (everyone read this)
Character Sheet	pp 8-9 (that's the middle!)
Spoonboss Stuff	pp10-18 (Spoonbosses only)

Spoons is published on a Pay-What-You-Can basis. Your support is greatly appreciated, and helps me to make more things. Thank you!

Spoonie Stuff

Let's just dive right in, ok?

Creating your character

Chronic illness can strike anyone, so give your Spoonie any qualities that you wish. Do you want to play a rich old tycoon? Or a hardworking young single parent? A professional jockey, a writer, or a cult leader? Go right ahead. What about a magical nonbinary space elf with backwards knees and burgers for fists? Go wild, seriously, anything. Your only limitations are:

1. Any special or fantastical abilities are bound by the same rules as mundane abilities, and all abilities have a spoon cost.
2. You can't have spoon-generating or spoon-recovering abilities.
3. Don't give your character a specific illness or injury to account for their limited spoons. That's not what the game is about.

The character sheet is on page 8-9. Take your time filling it out and put in as much detail as you want. Dress your character, describe their personality and lifestyle, what they have in their pockets or bag, and a few of their hobbies and interests.

Let me draw your attention to the spoon icons on the character sheet. Spoons are sort of like a currency that you use to buy actions. Any time you spend spoons in the game, colour in or cross out the appropriate number of spoons on your sheet.

Another way to say this is: Any time you do anything in the game, colour in or cross out the appropriate number of spoons on your sheet.

There are no stats in Spoons.

The only stat you have is your spoon supply. You can do anything that you can imagine, as long as you have enough spoons. An average Spoonie starts the day with 24 spoons. Five of these are pre-filled, see page 5 for more on this. If you and your friends all agree, you can create a Spoonie with more or fewer spoons, for a different challenge.

There are no difficulty rolls in Spoons.

The only metric for the difficulty of an action is spoon cost.

Do you want to make a standing jump to the moon? No. You don't have that many spoons, you can't get that many spoons, nobody has ever had that many spoons. Also you'd suffocate.

Do you want to swim the English Channel? Maybe, but probably not. It's definitely possible to have that many spoons, but the question is, do you have that many spoons?

Do you want to punch a nightmare monster in the junk? Sure. A spoon will get you three strong punches if the monster is within arm's length and you're already crouching, or step-duck-punch if you need to get into position. Of course, getting away from an enraged monster with sore junk is probably going to cost you a good few more spoons, and you still have to stop it from destroying the world, so a monster-junk-punch might not be the best use of a spoon.

There are no free actions in Spoons.

A spoon is a discreet, irreducible unit of capacity, a single thing you can do, and every action, no matter how innocuous, has a spoon cost. You have a limited number of spoons every day, and they are only regenerated by rest and sleep.

What is one spoon worth?

- Two hours of light mental activity, such as light reading, phone gaming, or watching a movie
- An hour of intense mental activity, such as research, academic reading, or PC/console gaming
- An hour of light activity such as knitting, drawing, or chilling with friends
- Half an hour of light movement, such as walking to the shops, tidying your room, or taking a shower
- Ten minutes of moderate movement, such as scrubbing the toilet, gentle swimming, or washing your hair
- Ten minutes of significant mental fortitude, such as making an important call, suppressing a fear, or dealing with someone annoying
- One minute of vigorous movement, such as fighting, swimming in open water, or skating
- One burst of motion, such as a short dash, a monster-junk-punch, or jumping a high fence
- Any incomplete action

Complex actions vs simple actions

Complex actions are actions that can be broken down into a number of simpler actions. A complex action would be something like "go to work," which could be broken down to "drive to work" "find a parking space" "work for three hours" "coffee break" "work for 2 hours" "lunch break" etc. Complex actions always cost multiple spoons.

Budgeting spoons

Getting important things done will at some point mean making tradeoffs, like skipping a shower so you can clean the toilet, eating cold leftovers so you can do an extra hour of research, or spending the day in your pyjamas so you can make an important call. You can't get more spoons, but there are ways to get a bit more out of the ones you have.

Compromise

Some actions can be reduced and folded together, for example instead of taking a shower and preparing a meal at a total cost of two spoons, you can wipe your crotch and armpits with a wet cloth and order delivery at a cost of one spoon. However, spoons can't be partially spent, so these compromises must be declared as a single action. You can't spend half a spoon now to order a pizza, and then realise you're stinky later and spend the other half spoon to wipe yourself down.

Sharing spoons

Some actions can be slightly expanded at no extra cost. Dropping an extra packet of ramen and an extra handful of frozen veg into the pot, for example, so that your companion doesn't have to spend a spoon on preparing their meal, doesn't cost any extra. Complex meal preparation, on the other hand, costs an extra spoon anyway, so two people could spend a spoon each to share the cost of preparing a complex meal together where one prepares the ingredients and the other cooks the meal.

Borrowing spoons

At any time, you can gain an extra spoon by dipping into tomorrow's spoons. However, there is an additional penalty of two of tomorrow's spoons for using one of tomorrow's spoons today, for a total cost of three. These spoons are marked spent at the start of the new

game day, and can't be rebudgeted.

Saving spoons

At a cost of two spoons today, you can have an extra spoon tomorrow. You can save a maximum of two spoons this way. Saved spoons do not carry over to a second day, and can't be used to save another spoon.

Pre-filled spoons

Each game day, five spoons are pre-filled. Those spoons cover the cost of getting out of bed, eating three meals, and going to bed. They do not include associated actions such as getting dressed, preparing meals, cleaning your teeth, or changing into pyjamas. Rebudgeting these spoons to other tasks comes at a very high penalty.

- Skipping a meal costs two spoons the next day, and you can't compromise actions for that day.
- Not getting out of bed means spending the entire day in bed, with no bathroom breaks.
- Not going to bed will result in collapse, extended sleep hours, and doubled costs for all actions the next day.

Great feats

A Great feat is an adrenal-dump heroic action such as lifting a car off a baby. Great feats have a multi-day spoon cost: 80% of your total spoon supply for the day of the feat, 40% of your total spoon supply for the next day, 20% of your total spoon supply for the day after that, and 10% of your total spoon supply for the day after that. As spoons can't be partially spent, round up when calculating; 80% of 24 is 19.2, 40% of 24 is 9.6, 20% of 24 is 4.8 and 10% of 24 is 2.4, therefore for an average player the cost of a feat would be 20 spoons, then 10, then 5, then 3.

A feat can be accomplished if you've already spent some spoons and have less than 80% of your day's spoon supply available, but the difference will need to be borrowed ahead, and must be paid off at the usual rate. Also you will collapse.

Some Great Feats can be shared and the cost split, with the bonus of shortening the recovery time. For example four people could cooperate to lift a car off a baby, bringing the cost to 20% each for the feat itself and then 10% each for the subsequent day.

Great Feats shouldn't come up often, in game as in life, but when you're saving the world you never know. They can also act as an ethical challenge, while most people wouldn't hesitate to bear the cost of lifting a car off a baby, would you be as willing to lift a car off an annoying person who's already cost you three spoons to put up with for half an hour?

HALP!

I spent all my spoons and it's only lunchtime!
What do?

The short answer is: Nothing. You spent all your spoons, you can't do anything, you must rest or sleep. Some of the ways you could spend the rest of the day might be:

- Pass out where you fall
- Lay on the floor and stare at the carpet
- Flop on the couch and ignore infomercials
- Go to bed and feel frustrated and resentful until it's time to sleep
- Take a nap and hope for the best

Recovering spoons

Naps and rest

If you run low on spoons, you can try to recover a few by taking a nap or having a lie down. Rock-paper-scissors the Spoonboss for each hour of rest to see if you recover a spoon or not.

If you want to use dice or coins, or you just plain are terrible at rock-paper-scissors, roll a D4 or flip two coins for every hour of rest, to determine whether you regain a spoon. A spoon is regained on a roll of 1, or a toss of two heads. On any other result you do not recover or spend a spoon.

You could take a four hour nap and wake up having recovered no spoons at all, and spend the rest of the evening staring at the wall, so don't count on being able to get extra spoons this way.

Sleep

One full night of restful, healthy sleep will regenerate your daily spoon supply, excluding any spent ahead the previous day.

Collapse

If you don't go to bed, or if you exceed your spoon supply, you will collapse. You will sleep from that moment until noon the next day, or fourteen hours, whichever is longer. The day after collapse, all actions cost double, and actions can't be compromised.

I know what you're thinking and it won't work

Sleep- and dream-based abilities require intense mental activity or significant mental fortitude, and because they're an action, not rest, they prevent spoons from being regained while in use.

Name:

Player:



Appearance:

Personality:

Lifestyle and interests:

Other attributes:

DAY:



DAY:



DAY:



DAY:



DAY:



DAY:



DAY:



Secret Spoonboss Stuff

Spoilers ahead! If you just want to play as a Spoonie, you can stop reading now. Spoonbosses read on.

Your most important job

Engage the players in a fun story. Set the scene. Address the characters, instead of the players. Give them a dilemma or a puzzle to solve, instead of a plot point to collect. Reveal details through play, don't infodump. Create personal stakes to drive the characters onward.

Make spoons precious

Part of your role as Spoonboss is to set the spoon cost for actions your players want to take. Challenge your players to budget their spoons, make it difficult for them to do everything that needs to be done. Pace yourself though, if your Spoonies spend all their spoons on a Great Feat on the first game-day, they may not recover in time to save the world.

Keep in mind the number of Spoonies in a scene, and scale the spoon cost of the scene accordingly. That doesn't mean just reducing or increasing the spoon cost of an action! Adapt the scene and its elements to fit. For example, a heavy wooden door might be a fair challenge for one or two Spoonies, but to six Spoonies working together it would be negligible. Huge stone doors might be an impossible challenge for one or two Spoonies, but a fair challenge for six.

Reward cooperation, make sure your Spoonies are more likely to save the world if they work together.

It's not stupid if it works

Reward lateral thinking. Players will always come up with surprising and unexpected solutions to the challenges you present, even moreso with their action restricted. Avoid fixating on a single "right" solution that they have to find, stay open to player creativity.

Six days to save the world

A scenario can be played out in a single game-day, but a multi-day adventure more fully utilises the

Spoon system. Give your Spoonies a specific time for the end of the world, and a clearly-defined world-ending force that they can (hopefully) overcome. Create obstacles, reveal clues, and provide character incentive, in about equal amounts each game-day.

Hard Mode

If you want to up the stakes, use variable spoon cost and/or variable spoon supply. They can be determined randomly, or decided by players.

Random daily spoon supply can be flipped or rolled for in much the same manner as naps. For each hour of sleep, flip two coins or roll a D4. On head-and-tail or a roll of 2 or 3, recover two spoons. On two heads or a roll of 1, recover three spoons. On two tails or a roll of 4, recover one spoon.

For random spoon cost, flip or roll for each basic action. On head-and-tail or a roll of 2 or 3, the cost is 2 spoons. On two heads or a roll of 1, the cost is 1 spoon. On two tails or a roll of 4, the cost is 3 spoons. Actions must be declared fully before flipping or rolling.

Sample scenario 1: Alien scouting party

A small contingent of alien invaders has landed in your suburb. You must repel them or a much larger force will follow.

This one lends itself well to a quick one-shot game with little preparation. It can easily be run using locations from your own suburb or estate, if you don't have time or spoons to prepare a worldmap and such.

Spoonies have no special weaponry. They can use any items that players can reasonably justify having around the house. A claw hammer would be fine, but a sword would generally not, unless a player has created a reenactor or martial artist. If a player has not specified during character creation that their character owns a firearm, they do not own or have access to a firearm.

Create a number of aliens equal to the number of Spoonies. The aliens can perform unlimited great feats, but are vulnerable to a common household item of your choice (eg. coffee, cheese, spatula, toilet paper, foam darts).

Avoid suggesting that the aliens are easily intimidated, but if the Spoonies attempt to frighten the aliens with things like masks, loud noises, or staking out the head of a defeated alien, they will find that they can and the aliens will retreat.

Sample scenario 2: A dread god rises

The stars have aligned and dark magicians are performing a terrible rite that will awaken an ancient deity from the realm of nightmares. If fully awakened and brought into the world, this entity will be unstoppable.

Spoonies are fully equipped with magical tools but require reagents and a rare book to conduct a counter-ritual. You can write a description of the counter-ritual, encourage your players to create it themselves, or handwave it.

The number of reagents needed should be equal to the number of Spoonies. Examples might be: a human skull, a cabbage, scintillating runes, cinnamon sticks, a key with no lock, magnets, candles, a reckless amount of black peppercorns, fish bones, a creepy doll.

Call the book anything that suits the mood you want to create, whether spooky or silly. Examples might be: Salt Marsh Almanac, Discoverie Of Spirites, A Modern Mother's Cookbook, The Black Goat Grimoire, Golden Leaves Of All Names And Their Corresponding Numbers.

All the required items can be found at nearby locations of your choice. If you create an occult shop setting where all the items can be found together, give it a confusing layout and an overwhelming variety of products. Otherwise, distribute the items around several mundane locations such as library, supermarket, newsagent, school.

Avoid suggesting the possibility that the dark ritual can simply be interrupted, but if the Spoonies attempt it they will find that they can, and the day is saved. However, they will find themselves squarely on the bad side of a lot of very disappointed dark magicians with large knives.

Sample Scenario 3: Barfly Machiavelli

Your Spoonies are barflies at a popular tavern/inn/cantina/spaceport. Heroes pass through regularly, looking for adventure. Villains pass through regularly as well, looking for a different type of adventure. All boast of their exploits, recruit new party members, and go on their way after a night or two. They seldom pay much attention to the barflies, largely disregarding them as hasbeens and failures. Little do they know, the barflies are the true heroes.

The Nitty-Gritty

The whole adventure takes place in the tavern/inn/cantina/spaceport. The characters have modest permanent rooms in the attached accommodation. As heroes and villains pass through, they bring the adventures with them. A bonus of this scenario is that it can be easily used for multiple or ongoing games, simply by introducing new heroes and villains, with new objectives and plans.

Every hour spent in the public bar costs 1 spoon for the constant mental and social stimulation, in addition to any tasks undertaken. However, the Spoonies' mission is revealed through the things they overhear in the bar, so they have to spend time there.

Interacting directly with Heroes or Villains takes significant mental fortitude, and costs 1 spoon every ten minutes. Spoonies can gather extra information this way, but can't influence Heroes or Villains at all, since neither listens to anyone about anything ever.

Spoonboss Characters

Differentiate your characters with posture, gestures, accents, voices, and speech quirks. This doesn't have to be a lot of acting, for instance try keeping your arms folded when speaking as one character, and incessantly tapping the table with your fingertips when speaking as another.

The **Barkeep** is a stock character who serves drinks, keeps the peace, and doesn't get involved.

Heroes are dangerously enthusiastic, naive, and a little reckless. The kind of person who will arrive and loudly announce they are seeking companions for a very important quest, then forget to lower their voice when mentioning sensitive details.

Villains are ostentatiously villainous. The kind of person who is in love with their own cleverness and describes their evil plans out loud at great length.

Bootlicks are the most dangerous characters. Their need to please those they follow makes them very attentive, they are the most likely to figure out what's going on around them and cause problems for the players.

Revealing the story

A typical Hero's entrance is "Who will join me on a great quest?! We must walk a thousand miles and face peril at every step, but the rewards will be vast and those who undertake this great journey will be heroes of the ages!"

For a great effect, have several Heroes burst in and deliver variants of this line in quick succession. The Barkeep is so inured to this that they don't even roll their eyes.

Heroes will explain the objective of their quest as they try to recruit companions, and are careless with key information. "I have been chosen to return the Orb of Power to the temple at the summit of Mount Sigfall before the great conjunction of suns three days from now, or all civilisation will be destroyed! Why of course I don't have it with me right now, that'd be asking for trouble, it's safely hidden in my room."

(Later, the same Hero) "Barkeep I will be staying for three nights, please have a full adventurer's breakfast

sent to room 215 at 6:30 sharp each morning, thank you good ser, here is a big tip, I have a lot of money."

Villains will describe their plans to their Bootlicks. "Mm, yes I shall create a distraction by feeding the Hero's horse a Calubrian firepepper, sneak into room 215, and replace the Orb Of Power with a simple melon, thereby seizing its power for myself and ensuring the destruction of civilisation as we know it!"

Nothing ever goes smoothly

Bootlicks follow both heroes and villains. A Bootlick will overhear many of the same things as the Spoonies, and may act on them.

A Hero's Bootlick may attempt to sabotage the villain's plans, for example by standing guard over the Orb or throwing all the Calubrian firepeppers out the nearest airlock.

A Villain's Bootlick will usually be directly involved in the Villain's plans, and may also attempt some light villainy of their own, such as relabeling the stable door "airlock" and picking the Hero's pockets.

Unless the Spoonies announce their plans loudly in the bar, Bootlicks are unlikely to act directly for or against them, but they may complicate matters by acting on their own agendas.

Of course, Bootlicks can and will overhear some of the Spoonies' conversations, and meddle accordingly.

Additional Heroes and Villains can be introduced at any time to provide new details to an existing story, or start a new story. A late-arriving villain pontificating "I have been tracking this foolish Hero, for it is I who sent them to deliver the Orb to the Temple, and by my clever scheme they will be the one to destroy civilisation!" would force Spoonies and Bootlicks alike to reverse their agendas.

Bootlicks don't communicate between themselves, so if a Bootlick doesn't overhear a new revelation, they are

unable to act on it. If you're feeling ambitious, you can use this to create extra complications, such as the first Villain's bootlick not getting the memo, and continuing to attempt to steal the Orb, while the Hero's bootlick attempts to dispose of it, and the second Villain's bootlick tries to protect it and keep it in the Hero's hands.

Spoonies, of course, can cooperate and communicate with each other. That doesn't mean they necessarily will.

Reel it in

Heroes and Villains announcing the length of their stay sets a reasonably firm deadline on the Spoonies' mission. You can shorten or extend their stay for any reason. A Hero or Villain can even abandon their adventure and become a barfly, for example if they fall in love with a local cutie, or fall in meaninglessness with a local nihilist.

In general though, the mission ends with the departure of the Hero or Villain who started it. The Spoonies' objective is to ensure that when the Heroes and Villains depart, they will be unable to destroy the world, intentionally or not. Though this will generally mean sabotaging Villains and helping Heroes, it can always go the other way.

If they're unsuccessful, they ought to hope the barflies at the next tavern/inn/cantina/spaceport do a better job.

SPOONBOSS NOTES

(this page is for you to write on)

You went to a friend's house for dinner last night and stayed a little later than you should've. You slept for twelve hours, it took you another four hours to get out of bed, you won't be able to dress yourself properly til tomorrow, and you need to save the world.

Presented by The Falling Dream