

High Quality Role Playing



This is a world of magic, a world of monsters, and most importantly a world of heroes. The heroes of this world ride boldly into battle, they single-handedly take down armies, they fight giants and dragons in hand-to-hand combat, they rescue princesses, and they win kingdoms. They are grand, mighty, and destined from birth. Their deeds are song and legend even as they are done.

You are not one of these heroes. You are an ordinary person, driven by desperation, foolishness, or dumb luck out to the deep forests, the high mountains, the dry desert, or the dark underground, driven face to face with monsters that will kill you as soon as look at you.

If you do what you have to do, if you're smart and lucky and quick-witted, then maybe, just maybe, you'll survive.

HQRPG Basic Guide

Contest Edition, Aug 2009

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This is Our Game

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Introduction

What is a Role Playing Game

A role-playing game, at its most basic, is like a board game except, instead of using a board, you're using the players' shared imagination to play the game. But that's a little bit abstract. If, when you were playing Monopoly, you could say "my Dog is going to bite your Shoe as it goes by" and it might actually work, that'd be like a role-playing game. Instead of a piece, each player has an imaginary person, called a character. Instead of a board, we imagine a whole world that these characters inhabit.

In many role-playing games, including this one, the players are not in direct competition with each other. Rather, they are all cooperating in a struggle against imaginary dangers, which are controlled by a referee player called the Game Master (GM for short). That the game is cooperative does not mean that there aren't winners and losers, however. If your character dies, you have lost the game. If your character triumphs—whatever that means for them—then you have won. The easiest route to triumph is usually, but not always, cooperation.

What makes this game High Quality

High Quality Role Playing is a high quality game because it emphasizes the fundamental aspects of role playing and de-emphasizes the aspects which are more easily replicated by other forms of game (such as video games).

In particular High Quality Role Playing (HQRPG for short) places primary importance on the shared imagination of the players, and less importance on details such as number-crunching. The best strategies in High Quality Role Playing involve thinking critically about the imaginary environment: both the threats your character faces and the resources she has at her disposal. The worst strategies involve approaching the game the way you'd approach a video game or card game: with definite mathematical resources and formulas.

The World

HQRPG is a medieval or classical period fantasy game. It is not ill-suited for other settings, but will take some effort.

That said, there is no default world of HQRPG. No atlas, no maps, and no guidebooks. You are encouraged to draw your own as you play.

Character Creation

If you're not the GM, make your character by rolling on a series of tables in order. If you are the GM you have your own things to do in your own section.

If you have played HQRPG before, you can also use your character from last time. You may keep one item from last in addition to what you get from your profession. You don't get to add any traits or professions unless you pay for them, so if you do this, skip to "group circumstances" and "group location."

Initial Trait Table: Roll or choose

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Healthy or Tough or Big |
| 2 | Sickly or Cowardly or Small |
| 3 | Veteran or Fearless or Handsome |
| 4 | Faithful or Otherkind |
| 5 | Focused or Sideline Skill |
| 6 | Magical trait or other trait not listed |

Profession Table: Roll or choose

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1-3 | Tenant |
| 4 | Yeoman |
| 5 | Specialist  Specialist subtable |
| 6 | Urbanite  Urbanite subtable |

Specialist Subtable: Roll

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Blacksmith |
| 2 | Weaver |
| 3 | Merchant |
| 4 | Tinker |
| 5 | Layabout |
| 6 | Gentry / Religious
 Rural Gentry subtable |

Rural Gentry / Religious Subtable: Roll

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Priest |
| 2 | Monk |
| 3 | Household Staff |
| 4 | Bastard |
| 5 | Squire |
| 6 | Local Lordling |

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Urban Subtable: Roll

- 1 Beggar
- 2 Shopkeep
- 3 Scribe
- 4 Barber
- 5 Craftsman  Craftsman subtable
- 6 Guard

Craftsman Subtable: Roll

- 1 Jeweler
- 2 Tailor
- 3 Farrier
- 4 Cooper
- 5 Chef
- 6 Moneylender

After rolling for your profession, go to your profession description and work with the GM to figure out what sort of skills and possessions your character has based on their profession.

Now pick (or roll for) a second trait, and a name and age and physical description of your character.

Group Situation

Once everyone is done with personal character creation, roll or choose for what has driven your group into dire straits:

Group Circumstances Table: Roll or GM chooses

- 1 Lost everything
- 2 Attacked by Monsters
- 3 Dumb Luck
- 4 Foolishness
- 5 Mission
- 6 Exile

And roll for what sort of location you're in:

Group Location Table: Roll of GM chooses

- 1 Deep forest
- 2 Abandoned habitat
- 3 Desert
- 4 Mountains
- 5 Underground
- 6 GM chooses / other

Now you're ready to play!

Playing the Game

In the process of playing the game, mostly what you'll be doing is describing the actions that your character takes, saying what your character says, and listening to the game master describe the environment and the situation, particularly in reaction to your actions.

In many situations, you might take a desperate action, not certain whether you're going to succeed and fail. In these situations, the game rules come in more heavily.

Doing things

In general, when you're going to do something significant (not just walking around or whatever) that gives you an advantage or may give you an advantage in the future, roll a die. On a 1, you fail with some permanent or disastrous consequence. Otherwise, you succeed. On a six, you succeed admirably and gain some additional advantage, either an extension of the original or an unexpected new thing.

If it's extra-difficult, you fail on a 1-2, with the same permanent consequence. If it's ridiculously

difficult, you fail on a 1-3. That's pretty rough. Maybe try doing something else, instead?

If you should be able to do it within your profession or traits, you don't have to roll, although you can if you want. If it's extra-difficult, you must roll, but you only fail on a 1. If it's ridiculously difficult, you must roll, and you fail on a 1-2.

Magical things you need traits for, and are always ridiculously difficult.

Things like having the right tools, the local conditions, etc. can affect the difficulty. Digging a ditch with a shovel in a couple of hours shouldn't even need a roll. Without a shovel, it's worth a roll. Without a shovel in an hour in the a hailstorm? That's ridiculously difficult.

Generally speaking, actions should happen on their own. However, sometimes there are simply competitive actions: who can run faster, for instance. In this case, who-ever rolls higher does it better. An appropriate profession or trait adds +2. Multiples don't stack. Failures are still disastrous, sixes (as a die result, not with bonuses) still have extra oomph.

Fighting

You can use the fighting rules every time that there's a danger that's time sensitive.

Everyone says what the heck their character is doing. You can go back and forth about this: "oh, if you're going to be digging a trench, I'm going to stay in the front and cover you." Figure it all out. All monsters, except otherwise noted, do a standard attack / defense.

☛ If you do a standard sort of fighting action, you roll an attack die and a defense die.

☛ If you're just being defensive and that's it, roll two defense dice and use whichever one.

☛ If you're going completely all-out on your attack, roll two attack dice and use whichever one. You must be Fearless to do this.

☛ If you're doing something, and at the same time remaining engaged in the fight, roll defense and action.

☛ If you're just doing something and not paying attention to the fight, roll two action dice and take the best. You must be Focused to do this.

Miscellaneous actions during a fight work like before, with a new possible result: not yet. It means you don't succeed, but no permanent

failure. If you get "not yet" twice in a row, it's a failure.

For most things

1-2 not yet
3-5 did it
6 did it+

For difficult things

1 failure
2-3 not yet
4-5 Did it
6 did it+

For ridiculously difficult things

1-2 failure
3-4 not yet
5-6 did it

Consider the time-scale and chaos of combat when you consider difficulty.

Attack roll

Roll a die. Add one for the following:

☛ Your weapon is clearly superior to their armor.

☛ You're faster or stronger than they are.

☛ You're overwhelming them numerically or tactically.

Defense roll

Roll a die. Add one for the following:

- ☛ Your armor is clearly superior to their weapon.
- ☛ You're way more maneuverable than them.
- ☛ You're so big or so small that they just can't deal with you.

If the strike roll beats the defense roll, the strike lands. Roll for damage:

Damage Roll

- 1-3 Standing
- 4-5 Shock
- 6 Dead

Add +1 to this roll if the weapon is really heavy or big, +1 if it is sharp, spiked, on fire, or otherwise extra-dangerous, and +1 if it is magical.

Regardless of bonuses, if you roll a 1, you're standing somehow. If it would have been "shock" anyway, take record two hits instead of one.

If you're just fist-fighting, instead use this table:

Fistfighting Damage Roll

- 1-4 Standing
- 5-6 Shock

If you roll a 6, roll again. If you roll another "shock" result, you killed them. If you're really much bigger than them, or you don't know your own strength, add +1 to this roll.

Here's the table for ridiculously tough shit. You don't get to use this table.

Ridiculously Tough Shit Damage Roll

- 1-5 Standing
- 6 Maybe it's hurt? Roll again on the regular damage table w/o mods.

Shock

Shock means you go down and can't act for the rest of the combat.

Acting Through Shock

If you really, really, want to act, roll a die. On a 6, you can act this turn, but only use one die (so single defense, or single other action,

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or a single attack if you're fearless) and you have to roll two dice and take the lower one. Additionally, any sort of even vaguely strenuous action gives you an extra hit.

Going down on your own

You can choose to go down even if you get a standing result. This is the same as going down from Shock. Maybe now the monsters will think you're less of a threat.

Aftermath and Injury

Mark down each hit you take. A "shock" hit counts double.

After the fight is over, for each hit you took, roll a die and consult the initial injury table. During the fight, as long as you don't go into shock, adrenaline kept you up.

Initial Injury Table

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1-4 | You're okay, bruised and scratch and maybe even bleeding, but you'll cope. |
| 5-6 | Serious. 🖱️ Serious Injury subtable |

Serious injury subtable

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | Nasty wound. Going to leave a serious scar, unless it's internal, like a broken rib. Makes everything harder until it heals. Roll every three days. On a 6, it heals. +1 for being treated by someone who knows what they're doing + rest + good nutrition + warm and dry. On a 1, it becomes infected. |
| 3-4 | Infected. Roll every day. On a 5-6, it gets better. Otherwise, it gets worse. If it gets better three days in a row, you're healed. If it gets worse three days in a row, you die. Being active, or in unsanitary conditions, is a -1. Being treated by someone who knows what they're doing is a +1. Absolute rest + good nutrition + warm and dry gives another +1. |
| 5 | Incapacitating injury. Like a broken limb or something. Seriously impedes all actions. Roll ever week. On a 6, it heals. +1 for being treated by someone who knows what they're doing + rest + good nutrition + warm and dry. On a 1, it becomes infected. |
| 6 | Something at least as bad or the GM picks. |

Aftermath

In the aftermath of your character's adventure, the survivors will regroup and recover, though not unchanged by the experience.

Your characters will receive experience points from the conflict, which represent the degree to which it has changed them. They can spend on new traits or changing their profession to represent this change.

You cannot buy new traits or change professions in ways which are not justified by your adventure.

Experience Points

- ☛ Surviving combat for the first time is worth 50 experience.
- ☛ Recovering from a wound for the first time is worth 50 .
- ☛ Contributing to the game in an amazingly cool way is worth 50.
- ☛ Encountering threats is worth a variable amount of experience, see below.

Encountering a normal threat

No XP

Encounter a tough threat

- ☛ No XP for surviving
- ☛ 10 XP for dealing with it.
- ☛ 15 XP for taking it out.

Encounter a really tough threat

- ☛ 10 XP for surviving
- ☛ 20 XP for dealing with it
- ☛ 30 XP for taking it out

Encounter a fucking ridiculous threat

- ☛ 20 XP for surviving
- ☛ 40 XP for dealing with it.
- ☛ 50 XP for taking it out

Encounter a mind-numbingly difficult threat

- ☛ 40 XP for surviving
- ☛ 80 XP for dealing with it
- ☛ 100 XP for taking it out

Encounter an impossible threat

- ☛ 100 XP for surviving
- ☛ +50 XP if you get the better of it

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“surviving” means that you confronted the threat in some way and lived.

“dealing” with a threat means handling it, but in a non-permanent way: sneaking by, tricking it, redirecting it, etc.

“taking it out” means it’s not going to be a threat ever again, one way or the other.

Advancement

To advance, you spend XP to gain a Trait or change Professions. This must be justified by the results of the adventure, so you can’t just become a yeoman if you’re not landed. But if you find enough cash to buy yourself some land, you can become a yeoman for the next adventure.

Cost for a new trait

Present # of Traits	Cost for new trait
2	200
3	400
4	800
5	1500
6	3000
7	6000
8	12000
9	25000
10	50000
11	100000
12	200000
13+	(cost of a new trait at -10) * 1000

Cost for a Profession Change

# of times Profession has changed	Cost for profession change
0	100
1	200
2	400
3	600
4	800
5 +	1000

A new adventure with the same character

When you start a new adventure, you can choose to use your old character or leave him in peace. If you leave him in peace, make a new character.

If using an old character who has just changed professions: You can use the skills, but not the equipment, of your last profession as well as your present one. After that, you're too rusty to be of use. If you need one, the GM should make up new professions for you. For instance, if you save a princess and marry her, you should have "prince" as a profession now.

If using an old character you can keep one significant piece of equipment from your adventure. Everything else goes away: spent, stolen, lost, forgotten.

Old wounds may still be active, or may have lingering effects. That's up to you and the GM.

Player's Appendix

Trait and Profession Listings

On Traits

Some traits have explicit mechanical effects. Others don't. Regardless, the important thing is that your character has this trait. The GM should come up with mechanical effects as needed.

Otherkind: You have some trace of faery or magical blood which makes you clever, sharp, or lucky. When you roll two dice, you may look at the results first and then decide which one applies to which category.

Healthy: You can ignore one of the following with injury recovery: Rest, good nutrition, warm and dry.

Tough: You can ignore a weapon being big, heavy, sharp, on fire, or otherwise dangerous.

Focused: You can keep your mind at the task at hand and ignore other things going on around you.

Fearless: Either you're simply not afraid of anything, or you're able to conquer your fear and face things anyway. You cannot have this trait and veteran.

Sideline Skill: You can do something that normally is the realm of another profession. For instance, you can read and write even though you're not a monk. Or you can play a musical instrument even though you aren't a layabout. You can only take this once.

Veteran: You've been to war. You're good at camping, digging ditches, laying low, keeping calm under fire, and dealing with officers. You cannot have both this trait and fearless.

Good Reflexes: You act, and your action takes effect, before everyone else.

Big: You're bigger than everyone else. Can't be both big and small, natch.

Small: You're smaller than everyone else. Can't be both small and big, natch.

Handsome: You're good looking.

Cowardly: You're good at running away, seeming helpless (you can go down before you're even hit, if you like) and such things.

Sickly: You've lived with illness all your life. You don't have trouble w/ contracting diseases. What's another disease?

Faithful: You believe in and trust God with a pure and open heart. You can't both do magic and have this trait.

Packrat: You keep everything. You can keep 3 significant items from adventure to adventure.

Another Trait: Make up a trait in collaboration with the GM.

Magic Traits

You must already have an appropriate trait or profession to have a magic trait. Otherkind is appropriate for most magics. Priest is appropriate for Sorcerer or Cultist. And so on.

Magic is always ridiculously difficult, and magical failure is always brutally nasty. At the very least, it's equivalent to Shock. If appropriate, it can outright kill you, or worse.

Magic, like all skills, works if it works. There's no resistance roll, you can't "shake it off." It just works.

Bloodmage: You can do magic with blood. You take at least a hit when you do it, unless you or someone else is already bleeding. You must drink fresh blood on the night of the new moon, or you lose your magic.

Dentist: You can do magic with your teeth. You must pull out a tooth to do magic. You can also extract the magical tooth from magical creatures, like dragons and unicorns. When they're gone, they're gone.

Hedgemage: You can do magic with herbs. You need to gather the herbs beforehand. You don't just have them ahead of time. They're used up when you do the magic. If you ever light a fire, you lose your magic.

Sorcerer: You can do magic with names. You need to know the name to use the magic. If you ever are called by your own real name, you lose your magic. Choose three people, other than you, who know it.

Warlock: You can do magic with human sacrifices. You need to kill the person, yourself, right then. If you ever ask for forgiveness from God in true faith, you lose your magic.

Wizard: You can do magic with books. Your true heart is in a book somewhere. Where? Whoever can read it has power over your life, death, and actions. If it is destroyed, you die. If it is defiled, you lose your magic.

Witch: You can do magic with sex. You have to have sex with someone right then for the magic to work. If you bear a child, or someone else bears your child, you lose your magic.

Druid: You can do magic with astronomical observations. Only at night, only if you can see the stars, and only if the stars are right for it.

Savant: You can do magic with your own memories. The magic is based on the memory. When you use it, you forget that memory. If you take a bad blow to the head, you lose your magic. Then again, a second blow might get it back to you.

On Professions

At the start of the game, a profession provides the basic skills and equipment for a character. The exact details of the skills should be agreed on between the player and the game master, all that is presented her is a basic description.

Many professions list alternative professions. These are other things which your character also might be, depending on the circumstances of the situation or setting. Such a decision is up to the player and the game master.

Tenant: You are a farmer on someone else's land. You own nothing: everything that you have is given to you by your landlord, and you must toil in order to be fed. If you do own something, it is by the grace of your landlord alone.

Alternatives: Serf, Slave, Miner. May also have specialized skills, such as shepherding or very basic craft skills.

Yeoman: You are a free man, with your own land and rights under law, and although it is likely quite modest you're worlds better off than a Tenant.

Alternatives: Freeman, family head, innkeeper.

Blacksmith: You operate a smithy, making and fixing iron implements for the local area, mostly horseshoes, ploughs, pitchforks, nails, and other pieces of farming equipment.

Alternatives: Builder, stonecarver, or some other profession that requires specialized knowledge and brute physical strength. Also, a journeyman blacksmith, not yet settled in a community.

Weaver: You make your living by spinning wool into yarn, and turning yarn into clothes, blankets, and other useful objects.

Merchant: You purchase whatever local goods people have too much of, and sell whatever goods cannot be produced locally. People are a little suspicious of you because you don't seem to work for a living, but your life is actually not that easy, and society depends on your effort.

Alternatives: You can be a travelling merchant, or a local store-keep. It's up to you.

Tinker: You fix pots, pans, buckets, candle sticks, anything made of tin or other weak metals. Properly, a tinker is a traveller, and thus distrusted as an outsider and stranger to the community. It doesn't help that many tinkers are gypsies.

Alternatives: Another sort of itinerant profession. Alternatively, if you're settled in one community, you're a tinsmith, which is much more respectable.

Layabout: You're a lazy good-for-nothing who doesn't actually do any work, but somehow manages to sponge a living anyway. You probably have many non-productive skills, like seducing people, music and singing, and gambling.

Alternatives: Conman, travelling musician, professional gambler, or, you know, a mix of all of the above.

Priest: You're the local priest, responsible for providing religious services for the community and also being a community center. You often represent the interests of the people of the whole to the local lord.

Monk: You're a member of a religious order, retreated from the sinful world for a life of austerity, prayer, meditation, and copying manuscripts. You no physical possessions and often more-than-a-little contempt for the outside world.

Alternatives: Hermit or recluse.

Household Staff: You are a member of the household staff of the local lord. While legally, this makes you similar to a tenant, you are nonetheless a member of the social elite. You have skills related to your specific role in the household, so figure out what that is.

Bastard: You're the acknowledged bastard child of a noble. While you have no official place in the family, you (and your mother if she's still alive and unmarried) are supported by your father. You may or may not live in his household, and you may or may not be a spiteful dick about it.

Alternatives: You could be an unacknowledged bastard, in which case roll again for your day-to-day profession.

Squire: Squire encompasses two very different roles. Either you are an apprentice to a local knight, from a noble family and expected to become a knight yourself, or you are a non-noble man of some distinction and standing who manages the local community on behalf of the lord. Figure out which one you are.

Alternatives: Mayor, who manages the local community on behalf of the lord, but is chosen by the local people rather than appointed by the lord. Bandit leader or other community leader.

Local Lordling: You are the acknowledged, legitimate child of a local lord, but you're not the oldest living child, so you're going to have to make your own way in the world. You have a moderate amount of tutoring and training, but not as much as your older brother.

Alternatives: Daughter of a local lord.

Beggar: You beg on the street for a living.

Alternatives: Pickpocket, burglar, thug.

Shopkeep: You run a small shop in the city. It might be specialized or it might be general.

Alternatives: Boarding house manager, innkeep.

Scribe: You can read and write, and you make your money writing things on behalf of people who can't.

Alternatives: Bookkeeper, librarian, accountant.

Barber: You cut hair, shave people, let blood, treat illness, and generally deal with any non-violent situation where a sharp blade is needed.

Guard: You're one of the men charged with keeping order within the city. You might be hired by the local elite, or you might be an employee of the city's lord. Alternatively, you might be employed protecting an individual's property or person.

Craftsman Professions:

The city supports a wide variety of highly specialized craftsmen who could not survive in more rural areas. The following is really just a list of examples: feel free to make your own.

Jeweler: You appraise gemstones and cut them to fix into jewelry.

Tailor: You make and repair clothes.

Farrier: You care for horses. This includes making shoes, doctoring them, appraising them, and buying and selling them.

Cooper: You make barrels.

Chef: You make food. You might be employed in a public house, or in the household of the noble or the wealthy.

Moneylender: You lend money to people and live off the interest. Despite being universally despised, often cheated by the local nobles (your primary customers) and sometimes being driven out of town, you do okay for yourself. You're almost certainly a Jew.

GM's Introduction

If you're not going to be a GM for the game, you can stop reading here. This section has nothing of interest for you. None of it is particularly secret, although it might spoil a little bit of the surprise, so you can keep reading if you want. But you don't have to.

Being a game master

Being a game master means taking on more responsibility than a regular player. This is more responsibility than a dealer in poker or a banker in monopoly, but it is not an overwhelming or overarching responsibility. You are responsible for organizing the game, creating the scenario, portraying the world outside of the characters, and refereeing the outcomes of the character's actions. That's a lot of responsibility. Don't add to it unnecessarily, however, by taking the responsibilities of the whole group onto yourself. You are not responsible for everyone's fun.

As a game master, you don't have winning and losing conditions the way that other players do. Your primary reward is the joy of watching the players interact with your scenario.

How to run the game

When designing your scenario, you have a pretty cruel mind towards the characters. By which I mean you should create situations which are very difficult for them and will likely kill them. To some degree, this is a matter of taste, but the game allows for you to be as cruel as you want to, including creating elements which you think are impossible to survive.

In fact, as an important point, it is a good idea not to have a pre-planned solution to any of your problems, as that will prejudice you against other solutions. Player's characters are very creative, but they're not good mind readers.

During play, you have the responsibility of gauging the difficulty and effects of the player's actions. In this, you should be open-minded but skeptical. Ask them questions about exact what they're doing and how, then assign a difficulty based on how hard it is, not on the expected result. If they succeed in the roll, they succeed. Do not make them roll again for the same thing. Likewise, if they fail, give a real permanent setback which blocks further progress. Don't be afraid to include injury.

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During combat, the monsters almost always take basic combat action: attack and defend. So it's simply your choice of who to attack. I generally have the monster attack the weakest convenient target. In the case of monsters such as kobolds and orcs who are tactically trained or tricky, play them to the hilt.

In assigning experience points, be clear and err slightly on the side of generosity. During advancement, make sure to require justification for each new trait or profession change. Don't be afraid to say no.

Scenario Creation

Remember back in the player's section it says "if you're the GM you have your own section?" Here it is.

The first thing to do with your scenario creation is consider the environment that the characters are in and their reasons for being there. Here's the appropriate charts, reproduced from the player's section.

Group Situation

Once everyone is done with personal character creation, roll or choose for what has driven your group into dire straights:

Group Circumstances Table: Roll or GM chooses

1	Lost everything
2	Attacked by Monsters
3	Dumb Luck
4	Foolishness
5	Mission
6	Exile

And roll for what sort of location you're in:

Group Location Table: Roll or GM chooses

1	Deep forest
2	Abandoned habitat
3	Desert
4	Mountains
5	Underground
6	GM chooses / other

Elaborate on this bare-bones result if you like, or just keep it in the back of your mind to elaborate on later.

Signature Enemies

You're going to want two or three enemies to be the signature enemies of the adventure: when the characters encounter an enemy, it will be one of these. You can choose the signature enemies, or roll one on the table on the next page and then choose one or two other enemies that go well with your initial roll.

To use the table, roll two dice in sequence or of different colors. Don't add them together, just read the result from the table.

Signature Enemies Table

1st	2nd	Enemy
1	1	Dragon
	2	Giant
	3-4	Ogre or Troll
	5	Giant Worm
	6	Hero
2	1-2	Orcs
	3-4	Gobblies
	5-6	Kobolds or Shadows
3	1-2	Wolves
	3	Wild Boar
	4	Ordinary People
	5	Werewolves
	6	Mage
	4	1-2
3-4		Ghost
5-6		Vampire
5	1-2	Possessed Person
	3-4	Demon
	5	Angel
	6	The Devil
6	1-6	Make up a new enemy

So let's say that I'm preparing the game, and the group's situation is that they've been attacked by monsters and the location is "deep forest." I roll on the signature enemies table and get a 3 and a 2: Wolves. Okay, so wolves are attacking them in the deep forest? Why? Maybe some larger predator is eating all the game. Like a dragon? So I choose to have my signature enemies be wolves and a dragon. I might include some mountain lions or other wilderness creatures, too.

Locations

Your scenario should be divided up into a set of locations. What exactly a "location" is depends on the environment. In an abandoned habitat they might be rooms. Underground they're cave chambers. In the deep forest things might get a little more messy: they could just be regions of the forest.

For each location roll once each for the presence of danger and the presence of resources. You don't have to know exactly how many locations you have, just roll until you have enough.

The presence of danger increases the odds of there being resources. If there is an enemy indicated, add +2 to the resources roll. If there is a man-made trap, add +1.

Presence of danger table

- 1-2 Nothing
- 3 Special Feature
- 4 Trap or Natural Hazard
- 5-6 Enemy

Presence of resources table

- 1-5 Nothing
- 6 Hidden Resources
- 7-8 Open Resources

Special Feature: Special Feature means that there is some sort of interesting special feature of this room, which can range from a huge chandelier to a cliffside to a hidden door to a magical fountain. If you get this result, roll again.

Trap: Trap means a man-made trap, usually designed to kill although sometimes merely designed to capture. Unwary characters may well be caught in it and killed. Make the trap appropriate to the surroundings.

Natural Hazard: Natural Hazard is like Trap, but naturally occurring, rather than man-made: so things like quicksand and landslides rather than poisoned gas and pit traps.

Enemy: Means that there is an enemy present here.

Nothing: Means that there are no particular resources here. That doesn't mean that clever players won't find things to use, it just means, don't go out of your way.

Hidden Resources: There is some sort of treasure or resource in this area, but it's hidden. You have to look hard to find it.

Open Resources: There are treasures just laying around in the open. Of course, they're guarded by an enemy or trap. If the resources are usable by the enemy, the enemy will use them.

Types of Resources

Resources come in many forms. The simplest form is some sort of treasure: a hidden cache of ancient coins, jewels, or art. But that's not always appropriate. Other resources can be in

terms of natural resources in the area, hides and teeth of enemy animals, and so on. Don't just have a wolf pack running around with cash money. Use your imagination.

The greatest of all resources to come across is a magical device or magical weapon. These are a rather big deal and don't expect to necessarily find them too often.

If you want a table for resources, use the following, but only if you can't decide.

Resources Table

1-3 Minor Resource (a few coins, etc)

4-5 Medium Resource

6 Major Resource ➡ Major resource subtable

Major Resource Subtable

1-3 Major Treasure (gold coins, jewels, art)

4 Particularly rare or useful item (unicorn horn, rare herbs, etc)

5 Culturally or Socially important item (lost crown, forbidden book, etc.)

6 Magical Resource ➡ Magical resource

Magical Resource Subtable

1-2 Magical Device

3-4 Magical Armor

5-6 Magical Weapon

Sketching the Map

Now that you have all the locations rolled up, sketch out a brief map of how they're related to each other. You don't need to be too specific, just something to relate to in play.

Take a moment to add in anything that might be missing from a location. For instance, maybe there's living things that aren't enemies, maybe there's extra scenery details, clues that a dragon has passed through recently, the works.

Remember, during play, enemies might move around from place to place.

Great! Now you're ready to start.

During Play

Unlike ordinary players, whose sole task in play is to guide and control their character, the game master has several different tasks during play. These include representing the environment, deciding the difficulty of actions, making decisions about ambiguous situations, and controlling the enemies of the characters during combat. In this section, we'll get into more depth about how each of these responsibilities works.

Play the Environment

The primary thing that the GM does during play is play the environment. This means describing the surroundings of the characters as they perceive it, and also it means engaging in a dialogue with the players about the exact details. For instance, if someone goes to look more closely at a door, you should describe it in more detail. It's okay if you don't have the details all worked out ahead of time: just make it up as it goes.

While it's fun to add some color and pep to your description: and I'll give you some tips for that

in a bit, it's important to understand that your primary purpose in playing the environment is not tone, but utility. The characters are going to be outnumbered and in danger, and the exact details of their environment may be the difference between life and death, victory or defeat. So you don't need to pull out the big adjectives.

That said, a little bit of elaboration can go a long way in making all the players (including you) more engaged in the game. An excellent way to do this is to incorporate one or two senses outside of sight in your descriptions. What sounds can the characters hear? Are there any smells? How does the old rotten tree feel to the touch? And so on.

While you're doing this, if there's something going on that the players don't know about, drop hints. You don't have to make it obvious, though. If they don't pick up on the hints, that's their fault, not yours.

Decide Difficulties

When the characters attempt to take an action which might pose difficulties for them or which will give them a significant advantage, as the

GM you must decide how difficult the task is, and the consequences of success and failure.

When you make this decision, you have five options:

☛ The action is simple: It does not require a roll.

☛ The action is ordinary: It does not require a roll for a skilled character, and fails on a 1 for all other characters.

☛ The action is quite difficult: It requires a roll even for skilled characters. It fails on a 1 or 2 for other characters.

☛ The action is ridiculously difficult: It fails on a 1 or a 2 even for skilled characters. It fails on a 1-3 for most characters.

☛ The action is simply impossible: it cannot be even attempted.

When assessing the difficulty, consider all conditions external to the character: the task itself, the environmental conditions, the time constraints, the tools available, and so on. Do not consider the character themselves: the privileges for skilled characters are a part of that consideration.

In particular, there is a temptation to assess the actions of skilled characters as more difficult than they should be because you feel that “there should be a roll for it.” Deny this feeling. Whether or not there should be a roll for it is the decision of the player of the skilled character, not you. That’s part of being skilled.

Also, when assessing whether or not an action is impossible, remember that even a ridiculously difficult action has a high possibility of being successful. So totally ridiculous actions should be simply impossible.

Consequences

The consequences of an action roll are also largely in the hands of the GM. Every action roll has three possible results:

☛ The roll fails, and therefore the action fails in a significant way.

☛ The roll succeeds, and therefore the action succeeds.

☛ The roll is a 6, in which case the action is a success with an extra bonus.

Before a roll is taken, you should have a good idea in your head about what the consequences

of failure and success will be. You don't have to think too hard about the consequences of a 6: it's the same as success, but with some little bit of extra oomph.

In terms of failure, a failure in HQRPG is not simply that the action does not succeed. It also includes the introduction of a significant cost of obstacle which makes it impossible or at least very difficult to attempt the action again. For instance, when digging a ditch in the rain, a character might slip and sprain their ankle, strike a hard rock and break their shovel, or simply take too much time digging the ditch so it's only half-completed when the giant shows up.

If you can't think of a good result of failure, some sort of injury is always a good default.

Success, similarly, is total. No action in HQRPG should ever require more than a single roll. If a character is rolling to climb over a high wall, they climb it. If they are rolling to sneak into an Orc camp, they enter the camp, and should not have to roll again for sneaking unless they reveal themselves in some way. Making a player roll again and again is cheating.

Before the roll, make sure that you and the player are on the same page about exactly what success means, in terms of the game's fiction. Just talk it out until you both agree to something reasonable.

Likewise, before the roll, you should have an idea what the consequences of failure are. You don't have to share this with the player but it is often a good idea to do so.

If, after, considering the consequences of success and the failure, the player decides not to have their character take the action, they can take the action back without consequence.

Optional Rule: Saving Rolls

When, outside of combat, something occurs which causes immediate death to a character through no immediate fault of their own or their player, and you're feeling just a tad-bit guilty about it, you have the option of offering the players a saving roll, which they can accept or reject.

A saving roll works as follows: Roll a die. On a 6, they survive through absolute dumb luck. Otherwise, they die.

If there's a circumstance where multiple characters are threatened by the same event (the group triggers a trap which fills the room with poisoned gas, say) make a single saving roll for the whole group.

Never give a saving roll against a magic spell, the failure of a skill roll, or any event during a fight.

Control the Enemies

During a fight, you're going to control the enemies. In general, this is pretty simple. Most enemies will only ever do a simple attack-defense combination. You do need to decide who they're attacking, where they're moving, and so on. In general, try to think of the enemies as intelligent (or animal) creatures trying desperately to survive a deadly situation. Don't try to be "fair" to the characters. Hit the weakest ones, retreat if you have to, and so on.

Certain combatants are more clever than most. For these, it's a good idea to prepare a few dirty tricks ahead of time, just to keep the players on their toes, and don't be afraid to improvise during the fight as well.

Character Death

Characters in HQRPG, particularly incautious and unlucky characters, die a lot. There's nothing inherently wrong with this—indeed, it's a key part of the game—but it does mean that the player of that character will have trouble participating in the game.

Different GMs will have different approaches to resolving the problem of a player without a character. Here's a few suggestions:

- ☛ Have the player make a new character, and bring the new character in as soon as possible. If you like, pick a profession which will have an easy time showing up in the present situation.
- ☛ Recruit the player as a GM's assistant: Have the player control some enemies during fights, brainstorm ideas with you, and generally work together with you on GMing.
- ☛ Let the player hang around and act as an advisor to the rest of the players, getting involved with group decisions and so on.
- ☛ Do nothing. Losing your character is losing the game after all.

On Making Things Up

During the course of play, as the GM you're going to be required to make a lot of stuff up, and pass judgement on a lot of things. This is probably the most important thing that you do as a GM, and although there aren't really rules for it, it'd be remiss to let the GM's guide go by without at least mentioning it.

Making things up

Sometimes you have to make things up. New professions, new traits, new enemies, not to mention large chunks of the scenario preparation.

In general, you can't go wrong with what you make up. For example, if you look at the enemy listings, they're simply a list of description and a list of considerations (with the exception of Hero, which actually contains some new rules). The traits and professions likewise are mostly descriptive. As long as you stick to description, not new rules, everything will be fine.

This is not to say you shouldn't make up new rules, but if you're concerned or inexperienced,

you're on safer ground with the descriptive. And you're not really short-changing the players that way, because HQRPG puts a strong emphasis on the shared imagination, and purely descriptive traits, resources, and professions can be as powerful as the rest, if not more so.

Passing Judgement

Likewise, as a GM you have to make decisions about difficulty, consequences, whether or not a weapon counts as big, tactical considerations, and so on. Like with making things up, it's okay to get this a little bit wrong, because each judgement is basically temporary.

If you're really stuck, you can always depend on the other players. "Hey, guys, do you think that a sledgehammer counts as big? Why or why not?" Don't just put it to a vote, ask them to give you their ideas and arguments, and then make a decision. Normally you won't want to do this, but for an important issue it can be worth it to talk it out.

GM's Appendix

Enemy Listings

Dragon

A dragon is at least 30 feet tall, flies, breaths fire, has impenetrable scales, sharp claws, and eats. Whether or not it's intelligent is up to the GM.

Considerations

- ☞ It can fly
- ☞ It's insanely tough
- ☞ It has better armor than your weapons
- ☞ It's too big for you to deal effectively with
- ☞ Its claws can cut through anything
- ☞ Can breathe goutts of fire or poison
- ☞ It's magical

Giant

A giant is at a huge man who is fond of eating sheep and people, and even more fond of cruelly torturing them to death first.

Considerations

- ☞ He's huge
- ☞ He's insanely tough
- ☞ His skin itself counts are pretty darned good armor
- ☞ He's too big for you to deal effectively with
- ☞ A grown man can stand in his footprint and not reach the lip.
- ☞ He may have a magical castle somewhere or he could just live in a cave

Ogres and Trolls

Ogres and trolls are big cannibals that guard bridges or extract brutal concessions for those who can't afford them.

Considerations

- ☛ Quite big
- ☛ Tough skin counts as pretty good armor
- ☛ Either weapons count as fists or is entirely immune to ordinary weapons
- ☛ Has at least a huge weapon or sharp claws
- ☛ Fond of setting traps
- ☛ Possessed of gargantuan appetites
- ☛ Greedy
- ☛ Possibly magical

Orcs

Orcs are brutally militant, raised from birth to be perfect warriors. They use a race of human slaves, who are not even taught to speak, for their farming and craft labor. Their state has no purpose but war and agriculture.

Considerations

- ☛ There are usually a lot of them
- ☛ Organized
- ☛ Very good soldiers
- ☛ High quality weapons and armor
- ☛ Tough
- ☛ Consider themselves superior to all humans
- ☛ Bureaucratic
- ☛ Patriotic

Gobblies

Gobblies are vicious little hungry things that breed like (and with) rats in the ground. They are sniffly, snout nosed, and can eat anything.

Considerations

- ☛ Always hungry
- ☛ Sharp teeth can bite through anything
- ☛ Carry disease
- ☛ Come in packs
- ☛ Their king is more intelligent, and prone to tricks and plans
- ☛ Very fast moving and maneuverable

Kobolds

Tiny little curdled men, vaguely resembling lizards, that live inside the earths. They emerge into the world through mineshafts.

Considerations

- ☛ Territorial
- ☛ Take captives
- ☛ Prone to setting traps, and then setting them off in combat
- ☛ Attack in groups
- ☛ Not afraid to ambush
- ☛ Not afraid to retreat
- ☛ Can hide and see perfectly in darkness
- ☛ Glowing red eyes

Shadows

The royal caste of the kobolds have become so dark that they are completely shadows.

Considerations

- ☞ Feeds off the shadows of the living
- ☞ Immune to any weapons or normal attacks.
- ☞ Not actually physically present
- ☞ Can pass through anywhere where a shadow would pass.
- ☞ Can hide in your own shadow
- ☞ Speak terrible words in terrible whispers
- ☞ Command kobolds

Wild Boar

Wild Boars do not often eat human flesh, but there are those with a taste for it.

Considerations

- ☞ Extraordinarily tough
- ☞ Charges when startled
- ☞ Huge tusks
- ☞ Gnashing teeth
- ☞ Massively strong
- ☞ Almost too large to be dealt with
- ☞ Shrugs of many attacks

Wolves

Wolves stalk the night, preying on those that stray from the herd, whether they are sheep, cows, or men.

Considerations

- ☞ Can see in the dark
- ☞ Very intelligent
- ☞ Hunt in packs
- ☞ Bone-chilling howls
- ☞ Patient
- ☞ Fast when they need to be

Vampire

Vampires are those that are so wicked that they have remained on earth even after their own death, for they fear God's judgement. They must regularly bathe in the blood of innocents to survive and keep their souls pure enough to avoid the fires of hell. They are often debauched, wealthy nobles.

Considerations

- ☞ Ridiculously tough
- ☞ Ridiculously strong
- ☞ They have wolves and bats at their command
- ☞ Can take the shape of a wolf or a bat
- ☞ Can fly
- ☞ Can become mist
- ☞ Masters of blood magic
- ☞ Esoteric restrictions on their behavior.
- ☞ Manipulative
- ☞ Controls weak-willed men easily
- ☞ Very, very attractive
- ☞ Placing a stone from a church wall into their mouth might stop one.

Demon

Demons are creatures of the darkness beyond the site of the Creator. They are creeping, terrible, vile things that should not exist. They all have sworn allegiance to the Devil, but bicker amongst themselves for rank and status, and not a one is loyal. They cannot understand mercy or kindness.

Considerations

- ☛ Ridiculously tough
- ☛ Some are too huge to deal with
- ☛ Some are merely large
- ☛ Some are tiny
- ☛ Foul and cretinous.
- ☛ Can use name magic
- ☛ Sharp claws and teeth
- ☛ Powers of fire, disease, and rot

Possessed People

Possessed people have some sort of demon or spirit living inside of them, using the victim's body as a shell to enact their own will. Sometimes the demon can be driven out, sometimes it can't be.

Considerations

- ☛ Speaks in a terrible voice from beyond space.
- ☛ Cannot go into shock.
- ☛ Can use magic. All failures cause injury to the host body.
- ☛ At times, the original person can speak, and beg for their life
- ☛ Capable of strength far beyond an ordinary person
- ☛ Remarkably fast moving
- ☛ Sometimes, the possessor remains even after death

The Devil

The Devil is the cosmic force of all evil in the world, opposed to the Almighty God and committed to corrupt and destroy His creation in whatever way he possibly can. He captures the souls of the faithless and denies them Kingdom Come.

Considerations

- ☞ The most beautiful of the angels
- ☞ Probably unkillable. Certainly immune to direct attacks.
- ☞ Tests humanity
- ☞ Makes deals
- ☞ Smarter than any of you
- ☞ Can appear in any form he wants
- ☞ Can do most magic automatically, and without price.
- ☞ Has seen the endless nothingness that comes outside the Eye of the Creator, and yet still will not ask but once for forgiveness.
- ☞ Roams the earth and goes back and forth
- ☞ Plays the fiddle

Angel

Angels are the race that God made before men, perfect in their praise for God and perfect in their execution of His will. They were made to bow before men at the dawn of time.

Considerations

- ☞ Radiant beings
- ☞ Exist outside of time
- ☞ To look on them in their true form is to be struck mad
- ☞ Have flaming swords that point in every direction
- ☞ Serving the Perfect Will of God
- ☞ Not willing to be interrupted

The Walking Dead

The dead have risen from their graves, animated by some curse or sin or dark magic, and pursue the living to devour them whole.

Considerations

- ☛ Either slow moving or very fast and stealthy
- ☛ Tough
- ☛ Have claws and teeth
- ☛ Usually come in huge numbers
- ☛ Those whose flesh has totally rotted away may be immune to many weapons.
- ☛ Terrifying
- ☛ Want to devour the living
- ☛ Those that are killed by them may rise again as walking dead

Ghosts

Unlike the walking dead, ghosts have purpose in this world: usually some sort of unfinished business or perhaps a curse or maybe they were just so wicked in life that not even the Devil would take them.

Considerations

- ☛ Not actual physical, they suffer no harm from physical things
- ☛ Can throw things around
- ☛ Cold
- ☛ Terrible screams
- ☛ Terrible, terrible screams

Giant Worm

Giant worms are creatures from the depths of the earth, scaled and armored, with thousands of teeth in their ringed mouths. They devour entire grain harvests, herds of cattle and sheep, and often people as well.

Considerations

- ☛ Well armored by its scales
- ☛ Thousands of sharp teeth
- ☛ Absolutely humongous, far too large to be reasonably dealt with
- ☛ Lurks beneath the ground almost silently
- ☛ Sensitive to vibration

Mage

Mages are capable of terrible dark magics. They stew in secret towers, abandoned dungeons, underground cults, or mis-advising kings.

Considerations

- ☛ Has at least one type of magic, and is very capable at it
- ☛ Often old
- ☛ Sometimes ancient
- ☛ Sometimes already dead
- ☛ Usually wicked
- ☛ Rarely young and beautiful
- ☛ Always corrupted by their power
- ☛ Godless

Ordinary People

Ordinary people are just like you, except they're not forced to deal with the same crap that you are. Bastards.

Considerations

- ☹️ Often cowardly
- ☹️ Usually sick
- ☹️ Unhelpful
- ☹️ Nasty
- ☹️ Brutish
- ☹️ Short

Werewolves

Werewolves are ordinary people who, under the light of the full moon, turn into ravening monstrous wolves.

Considerations

- ☹️ Most of the time, are like Ordinary people
- ☹️ As a wolf, has all wolf considerations, additionally is very large and quite strong
- ☹️ Cannot be harmed by ordinary weapons

Hero

Heroes are the great champions of the world, anointed by God and Destiny and adored by people everywhere. There is no challenge they can't face, no monster they cannot defeat. They all have ridiculous hair.

Considerations

- ☛ Have magical weapons and armor
- ☛ Most are tough
- ☛ Can use charms. Charms are magic w/o sacrifice, although the hero must roll for it. Instead of magical mishaps, they simply cannot use charms for the rest of the day.
- ☛ Supremely confident
- ☛ Terrifically skilled at whatever they need to do
- ☛ Sometimes shout the names of their attacks as they make them
- ☛ Can spend a hero point to reroll a die
- ☛ Often steal anything not nailed down
- ☛ Are above the law
- ☛ Often come in parties

High Quality Role Playing

Character Sheet

Player Name:

Character Details:

Character Name:

Profession:

Previous Profession (if any):

Skills:

Traits:

Character Sketch:

Possessions:

Possessions not carried:

Injuries: