

Hack100

**A STREAMLINED PERCENTILE-BASED
ROLE-PLAYING GAME**

Release 0.02
August 2020

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

I've always liked percentile-based systems for role-playing games. The early editions of the popular d100 systems were the staples of my formative adventuring back in the 1980s. In terms of game mechanics, percentile systems provide an unmatched clarity over the likelihood of an action's success or failure. They also tend to be more flexible, avoiding rigid character classes and levels.

However, many traditional d100 systems are also relatively detailed, particularly in their use of skills. The most recent edition of the original percentile-based role-playing game has a character sheet that runs to four pages and features nearly one hundred individual skills. That's fine if you're happy to invest the time needed to create such detailed characters. My personal preference is for something more streamlined. Hence this ruleset.

Hack100 is a system in which characters can be created in minutes, and the vast majority of in-game actions can be covered by a dozen, rather than dozens of, skills. Its origins lie in a supplement I wrote back in 2011 that transplanted a light d100 mechanic onto the Basic Fantasy

Role-Playing Game (basicfantasy.org). I doubt that anyone ever ran a game using that supplement, but my own playtesting demonstrated the possibilities of running d100 games with greatly reduced skill lists. A decade later, Hack100 builds upon that idea to provide a lightweight, standalone role-playing game.

HANG ON ... WHAT'S A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

Ah! This isn't the place to answer that question. Hack100 assumes that the reader is already familiar with role-playing games and their terminologies. Fortunately, there are plenty of online resources, including examples of play, to fill in any such gaps. Start by searching for "*what is a tabletop role-playing game?*" (as opposed to a computer role-playing game) and you'll be well on your way.

DICE

This game uses ten-sided dice. These are either rolled individually to generate a number between 1 and 10 (a roll of zero is a 10), or in pairs with one die designated as the "tens" and the other as the "units" to generate a number between 1 and 100. So, for example, if the tens die rolls an 8 and the units die rolls a 2, then the overall result is 82. Zeroes on both dice is a roll of 100. For greater clarity, ten-sided dice are available

that label the "tens" die in multiples of 10 (as shown below).



In describing dice rolls, we'll follow the usual conventions so:

- **d10** is shorthand for a ten-sided dice.
- **d100** is shorthand for using two ten-sided dice to generate a number between 1 and 100 (as described above).
- **1d10** means roll one ten-sided dice to generate a number between 1 and 10.
- **2d10** means roll two ten-sided dice and add the results together to generate a number between 2 and 20.
- **3d10+4** means roll three ten-sided dice, add the results together, and then add 4 to the result to generate a number between 7 and 34.

GAME GENRES

Hack100 has been written primarily with fantasy games in mind. This is reflected in the way aspects such as character creation, equipment lists and magic are presented. However, it would be perfectly possible to use Hack100 to run many other game genres - cosmic horror, science fiction, etc. This is discussed in Chapter x.

HACK100RPG.COM

For more resources relating to Hack100, including optional rules, character sheets and a blog that provides commentary on the development of the game, visit hack100rpg.com.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTER CREATION

ABILITIES

In Hack100, the relative strengths and weaknesses of a character are described by twelve **Abilities**. These represent common attributes, characteristics, skills and knowledge possessed, to varying degrees, by all adventurers. There are four Abilities relating to a character's physical prowess (Strength, Agility, Stealth and Toughness), four relating to their mental or intellectual capacity (Perception, Reasoning, Influence and Willpower), and four relating to their broader expertise in key areas of competence (Hand-to-Hand, Ranged, Arcane and Spiritual).

Each of the twelve Abilities has an associated percentage value. The higher the percentage, the more likely a character is to succeed when undertaking an activity that is relevant to that Ability. For a starting character, each Ability has a base value of $2d10+20\%$. However, to reflect individual aptitudes, a further 20% may be added to the value of any single Ability, and 10% to one other. A character's Abilities will increase as they become more experienced.

Each Ability also has an associated **Bonus** equal to its "tens" value. For example, if a character's Strength is 32, then their Strength Bonus is 3.

PHYSICAL ABILITIES

Strength is a measure of physical power. It is the relevant Ability when trying to push, pull or lift heavy objects. Strength also affects the amount of damage inflicted by a character in hand-to-hand combat.

Agility quantifies physical dexterity. Jumping, balancing, climbing and dodging are all examples of activities covered by Agility.

Stealth describes the ability of a character to go unnoticed. It covers aspects such as moving silently, traversing ground without leaving tracks, hiding, and blending into a crowd.

Toughness characterises inherent physical resilience. A high Toughness means that a character will, for example, be more resistant to poison, disease, harsh environments and prolonged exertion.

MENTAL ABILITIES

Perception represents how observant a character is. This includes finding hidden objects, spotting small details and reading the intentions of others.

Reasoning is an indication of mental dexterity. It is the ability to comprehend complex concepts, solve problems and recall details from memory.

Influence describes the ability to sway the opinions or actions of others. This might be achieved by a variety of methods including charm, reasoned argument, or intimidation.

Willpower characterises mental resilience and tenacity. It is the determination to keep on going when things are tough. Or having sufficient strength of mind to avoid giving in to temptation.

EXPERTISE ABILITIES

Hand-to-Hand is a combat Ability. It is used to resolve close-range fighting, whether unarmed or with weapons.

The **Ranged** Ability is used to determine the accuracy with which a character can throw or shoot something.

Arcane represents a character's understanding of matters mysterious. Depending upon the setting of the game, this might include magic, the occult or highly advanced technology.

The **Spiritual** Ability is a measure of a character's attunement to their belief system, whether that's religious, philosophical, or something else. The higher a character's Spiritual Attribute, the more likely they are to derive benefits from their belief system, e.g. having their prayers answered, or being able to perform "miracles". This is another Ability for which

the effects will be dependent upon the setting of the game.

Table 1 provides a summary of Abilities.

SPECIALISMS

In addition to their twelve Abilities, which are common to everyone, characters also have a small number of **Specialisms**. These are relatively niche abilities that require a certain amount of innate talent, training, or expert knowledge. They are what marks someone out from the average person. They need not be supernatural or superpowered (although they might be, depending on the game's setting). They are simply an aspect of the character that differentiates them from the majority of other people in their world.

To keep things flexible, there is no fixed list of Specialisms in Hack100. Rather, they are agreed between the Referee and a player. They might relate to a character's vocation (e.g. medicine, locksmithing, sailing). Or they might derive from some prior teaching or training (e.g. knowledge of a non-native language, herb lore, history). They might even relate to an unusual power or ability (e.g. telekinesis, prophetic dreaming). In the same way as Abilities, a character's relative competence in a given Specialism is expressed as a percentile number. New characters begin with one Specialism at a starting percentage of $2d10+30\%$.

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Examples of Use</i>
Strength	Brute strength	Lifting, pushing or pulling a heavy object; holding back a crushing trap; arm wrestling
Agility	Physical dexterity	Jumping; balancing; climbing; dodging
Stealth	Ability to pass unnoticed	Moving silently, travelling without leaving tracks; blending into a crowd
Toughness	Physical resilience	Resisting the effects of poison, disease or harsh environments; extended exercise
Perception	Powers of observation	Spotting hidden details; finding hidden objects; reading the intentions of others
Reasoning	Mental dexterity	Comprehending complex concepts; recalling details from memory; resisting an illusion
Influence	Powers of persuasion	Haggling; intimidating; extracting information; persuading others to do something
Willpower	Mental resilience	Resisting temptation; maintaining morale in combat; overcoming fear
Hand-to-Hand	Melee combat skills	Striking and parrying with hand weapons; brawling; martial arts
Ranged	Throwing and shooting skills	Throwing knives; shooting bows; firing guns
Arcane	Understanding of matters mysterious	Practising magic; knowledge of the occult; understanding advanced technology
Spiritual	Degree of attunement to one's belief system	Performing "miracles"; asking for divine assistance; communing with spirits

Table 1 - Summary of Abilities

HEALTH

Health is a measure of the general well-being of a character. It decreases with injury or illness. If the game's setting includes magic or similar powers, the draining effect of using such abilities also depletes Health. When a character reaches zero Health, they fall unconscious and are at risk of dying. A character will recover Health with rest over time. There may also be other means of recovering Health such as treatment, spells or potions.

A character's maximum Health is derived from their Toughness and Willpower Abilities. This is intended to reflect that the ability to "keep going" when things are difficult is dependent on both physical and mental resilience. The maximum Health of a character is calculated by summing their Toughness Bonus and their Willpower Bonus and multiplying the result by two. For example, a character with a Toughness of 47 and a Willpower of 35 would have a Health of $(4+3) \times 2 = 14$.

BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

So far, the focus in this chapter has been solely on the numbers that define a character in Hack100. Whilst these are essential from a game mechanics perspective, they are, nevertheless, rather dry. Apart from each character's Specialism, they tell us nothing about their wider background and

motivation for adventuring. To address this, write a single sentence that describes these aspects. For example:

- A halfling cartographer documenting uncharted lands.
- A wizard's apprentice seeking ingredients for her master's work.
- A deserter from the army seeking employment as a mercenary to pay off gambling debts.

Each of the above examples tells us something about that character's background (which will often be related to their Specialism), as well as their wider motivation for adventuring. It gives the character context without the need for lengthy biographies and backstories. And it provides the Referee with hooks for future adventures.

EQUIPMENT & ENCUMBRANCE

The final stage of character creation is to decide upon an adventurer's starting equipment. In Hack100, there is no "shopping list" of standard goods for new characters. Rather, it is recommended that the player and the Referee agree upon the equipment a given character might reasonably expect to own based upon the campaign setting and the character's Specialism, background and motivation. Of

course, the Referee's decisions in such matters are final.

If there is a preference for introducing a random element to starting equipment, then assume that each new character has the travelling clothes they are wearing, together with 1d10 other items (including any weapons or armour), 1d10 silver pieces and 1d10 copper pieces.

In terms of determining how much a character can carry, there is no quantitative encumbrance system in Hack100. Instead, each character must specify, on their character sheet, where each item of their equipment is stored about their person. For example:

- Leather armour (wearing)
- Sword (in scabbard, on belt)
- Backpack (back)
- First aid kit (backpack)

By requiring characters to declare how they are carrying each item of equipment, it immediately makes it obvious as to whether this seems plausible. It also helps with visualising the character.

The Referee has the final say as to whether a character's proposed breakdown of items by carrying location is reasonable. If it's not, they may require the character to forego

some items, or apply penalties to Agility task rolls or movement until a suitable adjustment is made. For example, if a party wants to transport lots of treasure they have found, the Referee might rule that they'll have to free up some space in their backpacks to accommodate it. As described in Chapter 4, armour also carries an Agility penalty.

AN EXAMPLE CHARACTER

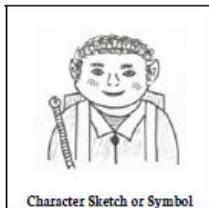
As a summary of this chapter, the example character on the next page was created using the following steps:

1. If you already have a character concept in mind, start with their **Background and Motivation**. Here we create Rurro the Roving - "*A halfling cartographer documenting uncharted lands*".
2. For each **Ability** roll 2d10+20%. Then add 20% to any one Ability (Rurro's player selects Stealth) and 10% to another (Reasoning).
3. Decide upon the character's **Specialism**. From Rurro's Background there is an obvious choice - Cartography. This has a starting value of 2d10+30%.
4. Calculate the character's **Health** by adding together their Toughness **Bonus** (the "tens" value) and their Willpower **Bonus**, and then multiplying the result by two. For Rurro it's $(3+3) \times 2 = 12$.

HACK100 CHARACTER SHEET

NAME Rurro the Roving

BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION A halfling cartographer documenting
uncharted lands



ABILITIES

	Bonus	Check		Bonus	Check		Bonus	Check		Bonus	Check				
Strength	2	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agility	2	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stealth	5	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Toughness	3	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perception	3	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reasoning	4	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	Influence	2	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Will Power	3	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand-to-Hand	3	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ranged	3	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcane	3	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spiritual	2	8	<input type="checkbox"/>

SPECIALISMS

	Bonus	Check	
<u>Cartography</u>	3	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____			<input type="checkbox"/>

HEALTH

-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39

EQUIPMENT

Item	Location	Item	Location
<u>Travelling clothes</u>	<u>Wearing</u>	<u>Tinderbox</u>	<u>Backpack</u>
<u>Walking stick</u> (+1 damage modifier)	<u>Carried</u>	<u>Rations - 1 week</u>	<u>Backpack</u>
<u>Sling and stones</u> (+2 damage modifier)	<u>Belt</u>	<u>Waterskin</u>	<u>Backpack</u>
<u>Backpack</u>	<u>Back</u>	<u>Parchment</u>	<u>Backpack</u>
<u>Tent</u>	<u>Attached to</u> <u>backpack</u>	<u>Pen & ink</u>	<u>Backpack</u>
<u>Bedroll</u>	<u>Attached to</u> <u>backpack</u>	_____	_____

MONEY

Gold 0 Silver 5 Copper 2

5. Finally, in consultation with the Referee, decide upon the character's starting **equipment**. Rurro's player decides to use the random equipment option, so rolls 1d10 to determine how many items they possess in addition to their travelling clothes (they roll a 10). Picking equipment befitting a roving cartographer they choose a walking stick (that will double as a makeshift melee weapon), a sling, a backpack, a tent, a bedroll, a tinderbox, 1 week's rations, a waterskin, some parchment, and a writing set. For each item of equipment, the carrying location is clearly stated on the character sheet. In terms of money, Rurro has 1d10 (5) silver pieces and 1d10 (2) copper pieces.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

ABILITIES

Physical: Strength, Agility, Stealth, Toughness.

Mental: Perception, Reasoning, Influence, Willpower.

Expertise: Hand-to-Hand, Ranged, Arcane, Spiritual.

Each Ability has an associated **Bonus** equal to its "10s" value.

e.g. if Strength = 32%, Strength Bonus = 3

Roll 2d10+20% for each Ability. A further 20% may be added to one Ability and 10% to one other.

SPECIALISMS

Specialisms require a level of innate talent, training or expert knowledge. Starting characters have a free choice of one Specialism at 2d10+30%.

HEALTH

Health = 2 x (Toughness Bonus + Willpower Bonus).

BACKGROUND & MOTIVATION

A single sentence describing a character's background (perhaps in reference to their Specialism) and motivation for adventuring.

STARTING EQUIPMENT

As agreed with the Referee. Or 1 set of travelling clothes + 1d10 items of equipment + 1d10 silver + 1d10 copper.

For each item, the carrying location must be clearly stated.

CHAPTER 3

TASK RESOLUTION

A game of Hack100 consists of two main types of interaction:

- An ongoing dialogue between the Referee and the players. The Referee describes the situation facing the characters. Based on that description, the players state what their characters would like to do. The Referee then decides upon the outcomes of the stated actions.
- Whenever a protagonist's action has a non-negligible chance and consequence of failure, the Referee should call for a **Task Roll**. A routine activity such as walking up a flight of stairs would not require a Task Roll. Running down a flight of stairs whilst pursued by an enemy probably would - there would be a chance of stumbling with the possible consequence of injury. Another consequence of failing a task might be lost time, e.g. repeated failures to pick a lock.

The procedure for performing a Task Roll is as follows:

1. Select the Ability or Specialism that is most relevant to the task at hand. This is the base **Target Percentage**.
2. The Referee may then adjust the base Target Percentage by a **Difficulty Modifier** (see below).
3. Roll 1d100. If the roll is less than or equal to the **Modified Target Percentage**, the task is successful. Otherwise, the task is failed.
4. A roll of 01-05 is always successful. A roll of 96-00 is always a failure.
5. A roll that is a success and a double is a **Critical** (e.g. 11, 22) and brings extra benefits. A roll that is a failure and a double (e.g. 99, 00) is a **Fumble** and there will be additional consequences.

TASK ROLL DIFFICULTY MODIFIERS

Sometimes the Referee may decide that a certain Task Roll is either easier or more difficult than usual. This could be for a variety of reasons including the prevailing local conditions, the specialist nature or complexity of the task, or the fact that someone (or something) is actively trying to disrupt the undertaking.

For example, when an Agility Task Roll is used to determine whether a character successfully climbs a surface, the Referee might rule the Task Difficulty as "Hard" if the surface is particularly smooth or slippery, and modify the Target Percentage accordingly.

Other examples of situations that might make a given task either easier or more difficult include:

- Trying to hit a target that is particularly large (easier) or small (more difficult).
- Trying to hit a target that is behind cover (more difficult).
- Trying to shoot a target that is closer (easier) or further away (more difficult).
- Trying to hit a target that is restrained in some way (easier).
- The advantage or disadvantage of height.
- The prevailing weather conditions or level of light.
- Trying to communicate with someone in their non-native language (more difficult).
- Trying to move something that is particularly light (easier) or heavy (more difficult).
- Trying to perform a specialist task for which the character is not trained (more difficult).

The table below summarises the suggested Difficulty Modifiers, although the Referee is free to amend these as they see fit. However, to avoid unnecessary complexity that slows

the game down, it is recommended that relatively small modifications (e.g. +/-5% or +/-10%) are avoided as unnecessary. Difficulty Modifiers are best treated with a broad brush.

<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Trivial	Automatic Success
Easy	+20%
Normal	-
Hard	-20%
Very Hard	-40%

Where multiple factors are in play, the Difficulty Modifier represents the net effect of those factors. For example, the Referee may decide that the net effect of trying to shoot a large, but distant, target is a zero modifier.

CRITICALS AND FUMBLES

A successful roll that is also a double (e.g. 11, 22) is a **Critical** and the protagonist concerned receives some extra benefit. This might mean that the task is performed particularly well or quickly, or that it brings some additional (but related) benefit. In combat, this typically means inflicting additional damage or causing an opponent to drop their weapon (see Chapter 4). Non-combat examples would include a critical Influence roll leading to the target divulging additional important information,

or a critical Arcane roll leading to a spell's effects being magnified in terms of its range, duration or power.

Conversely, a failed roll that is also a double (e.g. 99, 00) is a **Fumble** and something has gone badly wrong. Weapons are dropped, bowstrings are snapped, unintended offence is caused, or tasks generally take longer or are performed more noisily.

For both Criticals and Fumbles, players should be encouraged to offer suggestions as to the nature of the spectacular success or failure, but, as always, the Referee's decision on such matters is final.

OPPOSED TASKS

Situations will arise in which there is a need to pit an Ability of a character against an Ability of an adversary. For example:

- A character attempting to sneak past a guard would pit their Stealth Ability against the guard's Perception Ability.
- A character attempting to hold a door shut would test their Strength Ability against the Strength Ability of whoever (or whatever) was trying to open the door.
- A character trying to bribe someone might pit their Influence Ability against the target's Willpower Ability.

Such "contests" are known as **Opposed Tasks**. To resolve an Opposed Task, each competitor performs a Task Roll as usual, but rather than there being a pass/fail outcome, the two results are compared. A Critical success beats an ordinary success, which beats an ordinary failure, which beats a Fumble. In the case of a tie, the highest roll wins, thereby favouring the more proficient competitor.

TASK RESOLUTION EXAMPLE

Having strayed into the wrong part of town, Rurro finds himself pursued by two footpads intent on relieving him of his money.

The street is crowded and the halfling hopes that by ducking down a shady sidestreet he'll lose his would-be robbers. The Referee calls for Opposed Stealth / Perception Task Rolls - a Stealth Task Roll for Rurro to see if he can lose his pursuers amongst the crowd; a Perception Task Roll for the footpads to see if they can keep Rurro in their view. Both Task Rolls are ruled to be of "Normal" difficulty, so no modifier is applied.

Rurro's player rolls 66 against his Stealth of 50% - a Fumble! The Referee rolls 81 for the footpads against their Perception of 40%. That's an ordinary failure, but enough to beat Rurro's Fumble.

Because of the Fumble, the Referee decides that not only did the two footpads spot Rurro darting

into the sidestreet but that the alleyway turns out to be a dead-end. Rurro is trapped!

Rurro's player asks what's at the end of the alley. The Referee states that it's a six-foot-high wall. Keen to avoid a fight, Rurro's player decides that he will attempt to scale the wall and jump down the other side. Given that, as a Halfling, Rurro is considerably shorter than the wall, the Referee calls for a Hard Agility roll. Rurro's Agility is 26%, so with a -20% modifier for the "Hard" difficulty, that leaves Rurro with only a 6% chance of success.

Fortunately, the dice smile on Rurro - a roll of 04 sees him scale the wall safely and out of the immediate clutches of the footpads.

The chase continues ...

TASK RESOLUTION SUMMARY

1. Select the Ability or Specialism that is most relevant to the task at hand. This is the base **Target Percentage**.
2. Adjust the base Target Percentage by the **Difficulty Modifier**.

<i>Difficulty</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Trivial	Automatic Success
Easy	-20%
Normal	-
Hard	-20%
Very Hard	-40%

3. Roll 1d100. If the roll is less than or equal to the **Modified Target Percentage**, the task is successful. Otherwise, the task is failed.
4. A roll of 01-05 is always successful. A roll of 96-00 is always a failure.
5. A roll that is a success and a double is a **Critical** (e.g. 11, 22). A roll that is a failure and a double (e.g. 99, 00) is a **Fumble**.

For Opposed Tasks (e.g. Perception vs. Stealth),
 criticals > ordinary successes > ordinary failures >
 fumbles. In the case of a tie, the highest roll wins.