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Hack100

Simple, Flexible D100 Gaming

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Simple, Flexible D100 Gaming

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Introduction

Author's Introduction

I have always liked percentile-based 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 d100 systems are also relatively detailed, particularly in their use of skills. The 2018 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 prepared 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 are covered by around a dozen, rather than dozens of, skills. It is also very flexible, eschewing standard lists of professions, skills, spells and monsters in favour of a freeform approach.

Hang On ... What's a Role-Playing Game?

Ah! This isn't the place to answer that question. This book assumes that the reader is already familiar with the concept of role-playing games.

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 will be well on your way.



Dice

Hack100 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.

In describing dice rolls, the usual conventions are followed:

- **d10** is shorthand for a ten-sided die.
- **d100** is shorthand for using two ten-sided dice to generate a number between 1 and 100 (as described above).
- **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.
- A **d5** can be simulated by rolling a d10 and dividing the result by two, rounding up.

Game Genres

Hack100 has not been written with a particular genre of game in mind. It is intended to be a generic system.

There is sufficient flexibility in its approach to aspects such as character creation, skills, powers, equipment and monsters that it should be possible to run most traditional genres without too much trouble, including fantasy, sci-fi and cosmic horror.

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.

Acknowledgements

Hack100 is, of course, inspired by many of the role-playing games that came before it. However, certain specific aspects of Hack100 are particularly indebted to work of Steve Perrin, Ray Turney & Friends (percentile system), Christian Mehrstam (system flexibility), Newt Newport (one-sentence character backgrounds) and Gavin Norman (presentation).

Player Characters

Character Creation

Player character creation in Hack100 is quick and easy. The following six steps summarise the process. Further details are provided on the pages that follow.

A character sheet is available for download at hack100rpg.com.

Background and Motivation

Write a single sentence to describe the character's **Background** and their **Motivation** for adventuring (page 9).

Abilities

Roll $2d10+20\%$ for each of the character's ten **Abilities** (page 10).

A further 20% may then be added to one Ability, and 10% to one other.

Physical Abilities: Strength, Agility, Stealth, Toughness.

Mental Abilities: Perception, Reasoning, Influence, Willpower.

Combat Abilities: Melee, Ranged.

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

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

Specialism

Specialisms (page 11) are abilities that require a level of innate talent, training or expert knowledge. Starting characters have a free choice of one Specialism at $2d10+30\%$.

"Supernatural" Specialisms, such as magic, are known as **Powers** (page 20).

Health

Health (page 19) is a measure of the general well-being of a character.

To calculate a character's Health, add their **Toughness Bonus** and their **Willpower Bonus**, and then multiply the result by two.

e.g. if Toughness = 28 and Willpower = 41, then Health = $(2 + 4) \times 2 = 12$.

Equipment

The GM and player agree upon a plausible set of starting equipment for the character based on their background (page 11).

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

Name

Give the character a name and they are ready to start adventuring.

Backgrounds and Motivations

Every character should be summarised with a single sentence that describes their **Background** (which may be related to their Specialism - see *page 11*), and their wider **Motivation** for adventuring.

This gives the character context without the need for lengthy biographies and backstories.

It also provides the Referee with plot hooks for future adventures.

Random Examples

For inspiration, the table below can be used to generate random Backgrounds and Motivations. Pick an option (or roll 1d10) for each column.

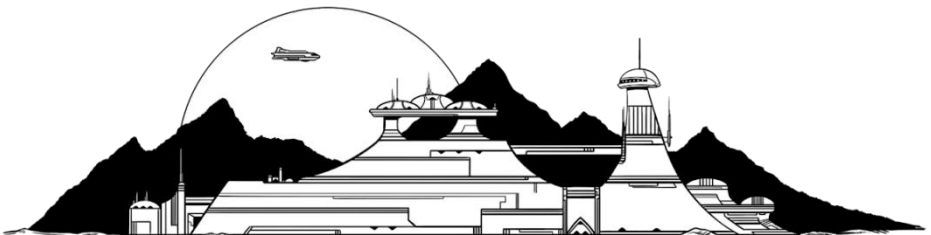
Not all of the combinations will necessarily make sense, so adjust, elaborate or re-roll accordingly.

Group Motivations

Whilst different characters within a group may have a range of Backgrounds, it often makes sense for two or more members of a group to share a Motivation. This provides a common cause for adventuring.

Example Backgrounds and Motivations

	Background		Motivation	
1	ambitious	author/poet	avoiding	a specific item[details].
2	bored	captain/pilot	documenting	answers [about ...].
3	exiled	explorer	escaping	a specific person [details].
4	idealistic	mercenary	fighting for	a specific place [details].
5	old	missionary	investigating	a specific organisation [details].
6	A(n)	penniless	mystic	justice [for ...].
7		pious	noble	representing
8	rebellious	priest	researching	revenge [for/against ...].
9	vengeful	scientist	resisting	the truth [about ...].
10	young	soldier	seeking	wealth.



Abilities

The relative strengths and weaknesses of a character are described by ten **Abilities**. These represent common attributes, characteristics, skills and knowledge possessed, to varying degrees, by all.

Each Ability has an associated percentage value. The higher the value, the more likely a character is to succeed when undertaking a task related to that Ability.

Starting Abilities

For a starting character, each Ability has a base value of $2d10+20\%$. However, to reflect individual aptitudes, 20% may be added to any one Ability, and 10% to one other. A character's Abilities will increase as they become more experienced.

Ability Bonus

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

Summary of Abilities

Ability	Description	Examples of Use
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	Finding hidden objects; spotting small details; reading the intentions of others
Reasoning	Mental dexterity	Comprehending complexity; recalling details from memory; resisting an illusion
Influence	Powers of persuasion	Haggling; intimidating; extracting information; persuading others
Willpower	Mental resilience	Resisting temptation; maintaining morale in combat; overcoming fear
Melee	Close combat skills	Striking and parrying with hand weapons; brawling; martial arts
Ranged	Throwing/shooting skills	Throwing knives; shooting bows; firing guns

Specialisms

In addition to their ten Abilities, which are common to everyone, characters also have a small number of **Specialisms**.

Specialisms are abilities that require a certain amount of innate talent, training, or expert knowledge. They are an aspect of the character that differentiates them from the majority of other people in their world.

Choosing Specialisms

There is no fixed list of Specialisms in Hack100. Rather, they are agreed between the Referee and the player. They might relate to a character's vocation. Or they might derive from some prior teaching or training.

In the same way as Abilities, a character's relative competence in a given Specialism is expressed as a percentile number.

Extraordinary or supernatural Specialisms, such as magic, are known as **Powers** (*page 20*).

Starting Specialisms

New characters begin with one Specialism (or Power) at a starting percentage of $2d10+30\%$.

Example Specialisms

Archaeology, Bushcraft, Demonology, Divination, Engineering, Fire Magic, IT, Languages, Locksmithing, Medicine, Musicianship, Occult, Pickpocketing, Piloting, Telekinesis, Theology, etc., etc.

Equipment

In Hack100, there is no "shopping list" of standard goods for new characters. Rather, 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.

Random Starting Equipment

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) and $5d10$ units of currency.

Weapons and Armour

The effectiveness of different types of weapons and armour is described in the Combat chapter on *pages 15* and *16* respectively.

Note that wearing armour imposes an Agility penalty (*page 16*).

Encumbrance

There is no quantitative encumbrance system in Hack100. Instead, each character must specify, on their character sheet, where each item of equipment is stored about their person.

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 to visualise the character.

Tasks

Task Rolls

Whenever a character's action has a non-negligible chance and consequence of failure, the Referee should call for a **Task Roll**.

Performing a Task Roll

1. Select the Ability or Specialism that is most relevant to the task at hand. This provides the base **Target Percentage**.
2. The Referee may then adjust the base Target Percentage by a **Difficulty Modifier**.
3. Roll 1d100. If the roll is less than or equal to the **Modified Target Percentage**, the task is successful. Otherwise, the task fails.
4. A roll of 01-05 is always successful. A roll of 96-00 is always a failure (except with Opposed Tasks - see *page 13*).
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.

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.

In such cases, a **Difficulty Modifier** is applied to the Target Percentage.

Difficulty Modifier

Difficulty	Modifier
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

Sometimes things will go better or worse than usual.

Criticals

A successful Task Roll that is also a double (e.g. 11, 22) is a **Critical** and the character receives some extra benefit.

This might mean that the task is performed particularly well or quickly, or that it brings some additional (but related) advantage.

In combat (*page 17*), this might mean inflicting additional damage or causing an opponent to drop their weapon.

A non-combat example would be a critical Influence Task Roll leading to the target divulging additional important information.

Fumbles

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 snap, unintended offence is caused, or tasks generally take longer or are performed more noisily.

Effects of Criticals and Fumbles

For both Criticals and Fumbles, players should be encouraged to offer suggestions as to the nature of the outcome. Nevertheless, 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**.

Resolving 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 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.

Only the winner of an Opposed Task receives the extra benefits of a Critical. Similarly, only the loser suffers the penalties of a Fumble.

Combat

Combat Overview

Combat in Hack100 uses the same task resolution system that was described in the previous chapter.

A **Ranged Task Roll** is used to determine whether an attack with a missile weapon is successful.

An **Opposed Melee Task Roll** is used to resolve close-quarters combat.

In addition to these Task Rolls, it is also necessary to introduce:

- An **Initiative** system for deciding the order in which combatants act.
- A means of determining the **Damage** inflicted by a successful attack, factoring in the effects of different weapon and armour types.



Combat Sequence

Combat takes place over a series of rounds in the following sequence.

Initiative

Each combatant rolls for **Initiative** on 1d10 + their Agility Bonus.

They then act in Initiative order, highest first. Tied Initiatives act simultaneously.

A combatant may decide to delay their turn until later in the round.

Movement and Actions

Each round, a combatant may move up to their **Movement** allowance and take one **Action**.

Movement is discussed on *page 16*.

An **Action** is something that requires a combatant's full attention. For example, making an attack, using a Specialism, retrieving something from a backpack, or administering first aid.

This Movement and Action may take place in any order. Movement may also be split on either side of an Action provided a combatant's total Movement isn't exceeded.

Ranged Attacks

Missile attacks are made using a **Ranged Task Roll**.

Melee Attacks

Close-quarters attacks are made using an **Opposed Melee Task Roll**.

The defender may oppose using either their **Melee Ability** (an attempt to parry) or their **Agility Ability** (an attempt to dodge).

In order to be able to parry using their **Melee Ability**, a combatant must have an appropriate weapon or shield. For example, parrying “Unarmed” is fine in a fist fight, less so against a sword.

Calculate Damage

The **Damage** from a successful attack is calculated as the tens die from the **Task Roll** plus the net **Damage Modifier** due to the attacker's weapon and the defender's armour.

Typical **Damage Modifiers for Weapons** (*page 15*) and **Armour** (*page 16*) are provided in the tables that follow.

Apply Damage

Any resulting **Damage** is deducted from the defender's **Health** (*page 19*).

Repeat

When all combatants have acted, a new round starts.

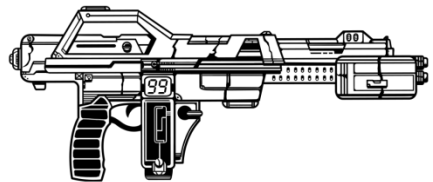
Weapons

Every weapon has a **Damage Modifier** – a value that is added to the tens die of a successful attack roll when determining **Damage**.

The table below lists some typical **Damage Modifiers** that the Referee can use as the basis for the weapons in their game. These values can be adjusted or expanded accordingly to suit particular preferences.

Weapon Damage Modifiers

Weapon	Damage Modifier
Unarmed	0
Improvised	+1
Sling	+2
Dagger	+2
Bow	+3
1-Handed Sword	+4
Crossbow	+4
2-Handed Sword	+5
Hand Gun	+6
Rifle	+7
Laser Pistol	+8
Laser Sword	+9



Armour

Armour provides the wearer with a negative Damage Modifier, reducing the effect of any hits received. A shield can also be used to further reduce Damage. Details are provided in the table below.

However, armour is also, to varying degrees, cumbersome. It therefore reduces Agility and Movement when worn.

Again, the Referee should feel free to amend or expand the armour table to suit their own game setting.

Armour			
Armour	Damage Modifier	Agility Penalty	Movement per Round
None	0	0	12 m / 8 squares
Leather	-1	-10%	9 m / 6 squares
Chain	-2	-20%	6 m / 4 squares
Plate	-3	-30%	3 m / 2 squares
Shield	-1	-10%	-
Modern Body Armour	-4	-10%	9 m / 6 squares
Futuristic Power Armour	-6	-20%	6 m / 4 squares

Movement

Standard unarmoured characters may move up to 12 metres in each combat round in addition to taking one Action.

They may move before their Action, or after their Action, or they may split their Movement either side of their Action.

They may also forego their Action and take a second move (i.e. up to a total of 24 metres for a standard unarmoured character).

If playing with floor plans, which typically consist of 1.5 m x 1.5 m square grids, a Movement of 12 metres equates to 8 squares.

Movement is reduced by any armour a character is wearing as indicated in the table above. Armour also provides a negative Difficulty Modifier to any Agility Task Rolls whilst worn.

Referees should feel free to modify Movement rates accordingly. Some creatures may be naturally faster or slower. Terrain may also affect Movement, e.g. wading through water, climbing steep stairs, clambering over a wall, or traversing a crowded room.

Engaging and Disengaging

As soon as one combatant makes a Melee Task Roll against an opponent, the two are said to be **Engaged** in combat. Once Engaged, there are three main ways in which a combatant can Disengage.

Subduing

A combatant is free to disengage if they are able to subdue their opponent, even if only temporarily. For example, by knocking them over, rendering them unconscious, or otherwise incapacitating them.

Tactical Withdrawal

The combatant may make a controlled tactical withdrawal by moving up to half of their Movement allowance directly away from their opponent(s). This counts as both their Movement AND their Action for the round. The disengaging combatant may still oppose any attacks upon them during that round by attempting to parry or dodge.

Running Away

The combatant may simply turn and flee at up to twice their Movement allowance directly away from their opponent(s), foregoing any Action that round. Each Engaged opponent gets an Easy (+20%) free attack that the disengaging combatant may NOT oppose.

Criticals and Fumbles in Combat

As discussed in the chapter on Tasks, there are no pre-defined benefits or penalties attached to Criticals and Fumbles in Hack100. The Referee, with input from the players, is free to decide, on a case-by-case basis, the additional consequences of Criticals and Fumbles as befitting the narrative of the game.

However, because combat is likely to be a relatively frequent source of Criticals and Fumbles, some suggested outcomes are offered in the table overleaf. These are just examples. There are many more possibilities depending upon the exact situation within a game. For example, if a character is standing on a table whilst fighting and rolls a Fumble, then perhaps the table collapses from underneath them.

Remember, only the winner of an Opposed Task receives the extra benefits of a Critical. Similarly, only the loser suffers the penalties of a Fumble.

In general, the intention is that whilst Criticals and Fumbles should tip the balance of a fight in favour of one combatant or another, they shouldn't necessarily be decisive in determining the eventual outcome of an encounter.



Example Criticals as an Attacker

Mighty blow! In melee, the attacker adds their Strength Bonus to the calculated Damage.

Precise shot! A missile attack adds the shooter's/thrower's Ranged Bonus to the calculated Damage.

Finds the gap! The defender's armour is ignored when calculating Damage.

Knocked down! The defender is pushed to the ground.

Disarmed! The defender's weapon or shield is dislodged from their hand.

Example Criticals as a Defender

Disarmed! The attacker's weapon is parried from their hand.

Driven back! The attacker is pushed back, disengaging them from combat.

Counterattack! The defender's parry inflicts Damage upon their attacker, calculated in the normal way.

Sidestep! The dodging defender wrong-foots the attacker creating an opening. The defender's next attack has an Easy (+20%) Difficulty Modifier.

Example Fumbles as an Attacker

Dropped! The attacker drops their weapon.

Breaks! The attacker's weapon breaks.

Lost! The attacker's thrown weapon misses and is permanently lost.

Ouch! The attacker inadvertently injures themselves, with Damage calculated in the normal way.

Example Fumbles as a Defender

Dropped! The defender drops their weapon or shield.

Breaks! The defender's weapon or shield breaks.

Trips The defender trips and falls whilst attempting to dodge.

Health

Health is a measure of the general well-being of a character. In Hack100, there are two main ways in which a character can lose Health:

- From physical damage, e.g. through combat, falling, or some other mishap.
- Through the draining effects of using an unusual, “supernatural”, Specialism, e.g. magic, psionics, shapeshifting, etc. Such Specialisms are referred to as **Powers**.

Powers are discussed in more detail in the next chapter (*page 20*). For now, it is enough to know that the loss and recovery of Health from using Powers works in the same way as it does for physical damage.

Zero and Negative Health

When a character's Health reaches zero, they fall unconscious. When their Health reaches a negative value equal to their Toughness Bonus plus their Willpower Bonus, they die.



Recovering Health

Characters recover Health naturally at a rate of 2 Health per day, 4 if resting fully.

Health may also be replenished through the use of a relevant Specialism, such as medicine or magic. It is left to the Referee to determine the effectiveness of such interventions. A “heroic” game will typically be more generous than a “gritty” game when it comes to Health recovery.

As a guide, it is suggested that everyday Specialisms such as First Aid should be limited to one application per character per day, with each successful application restoring 1-5 Health (in addition to any natural recovery). This will require a successful Task Roll. A Critical automatically recovers 5 Health, whilst a Fumble causes 2 points of further damage, negating any natural recovery.

The effectiveness of a restorative Power should be proportional to the Health invested in it by the applicant. For example, each point of Health committed by the Specialist might restore 2 Health to the beneficiary. A Specialist cannot heal themselves in this way.

When a character's maximum Health goes up due to an increase in their Toughness or Willpower Ability, these additional points are added to their current Health total.

Powers

A **Power** is any form of extraordinary or supernatural Specialism.

It might be the ability to cast spells or perform miracles. However, it could also encompass a wide range of other special abilities such as shapeshifting, psionics, berserking, prophesying, etc.

As with all Specialisms, Powers are Abilities that differentiate an individual from the vast majority. Unlike regular Specialisms, Powers go beyond rational everyday understanding.

How Powers Work

The underlying consequence of using Powers is that they are mentally and/or physically draining.

As such, whenever a character uses a Power there is an associated Health cost. The more significant the Power, the higher the Health cost.

Therefore, characters with Powers must manage their use carefully. Do the benefits of using a Power in a given situation outweigh the detrimental effect on the character's Health?

Using Powers

In Hack100, there are no predefined lists of Powers. Instead, a flexible approach is adopted based on an open-ended collaboration between the players and the Referee.

The exact effects of a Power, in terms of its effect, intensity and duration, along with the associated Health cost, are agreed upon at the point of use, with the Referee always having the final say.

The procedure for using a Power is as follows:

1. The character describes the desired effect of using the Power.
2. Taking into account the nature of the effect, as well as its intended intensity and duration, the Referee rules on the associated Health cost.
3. The Referee may also impose a Difficulty Modifier for the upcoming Task Roll if the desired effect seems particularly challenging in comparison to the scope of the associated Power. Similarly, a player might accept a higher Difficulty Modifier in return, for example, for a lower Health cost.

4. Steps 1-3 are repeated until the player and the Referee reach a negotiated agreement on the balance between the effect of the Power, the corresponding Health cost and any Difficulty Modifier. This isn't intended to be a prolonged bargaining exercise. Rather it is the Referee and the player reaching an agreement on the use of the Power. The Referee ultimately makes the final ruling.
5. The character makes a Task Roll against the relevant Power.
6. If the Task Roll is successful, the Power takes effect. Otherwise, nothing happens.
7. The Health cost applies only AFTER the effects of the Power have been applied in full. For temporary Powers with a fixed duration, this means the point at which the Power's effects expire. For Powers that have a permanent effect, this means the point at which the effect is applied.
8. A Critical means that the Power only costs 1 Health. A Fumble means that the Power consumes the full Health cost, but nothing happens.

It is recommended that the Referee keeps a record of negotiated Power uses. This will save time when the Power is used in a similar way again. It also provides a benchmark or precedent for future Power usage.



Powers Example: Spellcasting

A common application of Powers in fantasy games will be the casting of spells.

With regards to the specific wording of a given spell caster's Power, it is recommended that very broad definitions (e.g. "Magic") are avoided in favour of narrower areas of focus (e.g. "Fire Magic", "Illusionism", "Necromancy", etc.). This will help to keep the range of a given spell caster's ability within well-defined boundaries, and also ensure that their magic use has a distinctive flavour.

Below are some examples of typical magical effects. For each, suggestions are provided as to how they might be handled in Hack100, particularly concerning their Difficulty and Health cost. All, of course, require a successful Task Roll against the relevant Power.

1. **Create a magical light equivalent to a torch or lantern.** Easy (+20%) Difficulty. Costs 1 Health per hour.
2. **Magically move an object.** Easy (+20%) Difficulty. Costs 1 Health per kg per minute.
3. **Magically increase a weapon's damage or armour's protection.** Normal Difficulty. Costs 2 Health per additional point of damage/protection. Lasts for one encounter.
4. **Restore Health to someone else.** Normal Difficulty. Costs 1 Health per 2 points of Health restored. Instantaneous. A caster cannot heal themselves in this way.

5. **Perform a magical attack (e.g. fireball, lightning bolt).** Normal Difficulty. Costs 1 Health per point of Damage (ignores the target's armour). Instantaneous.
6. **Magically influence someone to do something.** Normal Difficulty. Opposed Task Roll: caster's Power vs target's Willpower. Cost 2 Health. Each additional 1 Health provides a +5% Difficulty Modifier to the caster's Task Roll. Lasts for one encounter.

All of the above are just illustrative examples. Players and Referees should negotiate their own spell effects and their associated costs as they occur in the game.

Overall, the Difficulty and Health cost should be proportional to the effect whilst remaining consistent with the Referee's approach to magic within their game. High fantasy settings in which magic is commonplace should be more generous when it comes to Health costs than low fantasy worlds where magic is rare.

Optionally, the Referee might decide that there are additional requirements for successful spell casting - wands, staves, spell books, ingredients, the ability to voice or gesticulate, etc. The presence or absence of such factors would probably affect the Difficulty Modifier of the associated Task Roll.

A similar approach can be taken with other abilities that manipulate the world around a character such as miracles bestowed by deities, psionics, etc.

Powers Example: Shapeshifting

With a “Shapeshifting” Power, the character can transform voluntarily into another creature, often an animal such as a bear, a wolf, or an eagle. In doing so, they retain their intellectual capacity and awareness but swap their physical capabilities for those of the creature. As a result, some of their Abilities undergo a temporary adjustment.

For example, for a **bear**:

- Strength increases by 20%.
- Toughness increases by 20%. Health increases accordingly (although any existing Damage is retained).
- Influence through non-verbal communication only.
- Melee becomes a claw or bite attack with a +5 Damage Modifier.
- No Ranged attack.
- No armour.

It is suggested that the Task Roll to perform the shapeshift should be of Normal Difficulty and that the transformation should last a maximum of 1 hour and cost 8 Health (upon reverting to the character's normal form).

No further attempt to shapeshift may be made that day. Of course, the Referee is free to adjust these parameters as befitting their game world.

Lycanthropy would work similarly, except it would be beyond the control of the character. The transformation at each full moon would be unavoidable.

Powers Example: Berserking

“Berserking” works similarly to shapeshifting except that the transformation may not be under the full control of the character. Usually, the transformation is triggered in some way - perhaps by the character becoming injured or angry. The effect is usually to increase the character's physical characteristics, often quite dramatically:

- Strength increases by 20%.
- Toughness increases by 40%. Health increases accordingly (although, again, any existing Damage is retained).
- Strength Bonus is added to Melee Damage.

The Referee should decide how easy or difficult it is for the berserking state to be triggered and recovered from. For example, it might be triggered by a failed Willpower roll upon receiving Damage for the first time in any given combat.

Similarly, a successful Will Power roll may be needed to stop berserking. This may be attempted once per round. A berserking character will start to attack their own side once all the enemies in a fight have been dealt with!

The Health cost of Berserking is 10% of a Character's total Health per round of combat. The usual rules regarding zero and negative Health apply.

Improvement

Improving Abilities and Specialisms

As characters utilise their Abilities and Specialisms, they will improve.

Experience Checks

When a character makes a successful Task Roll against an Ability or Specialism, an **Experience Check** is awarded. This represents the character learning through application. The box next to the Ability or Specialism on the character sheet should be ticked.

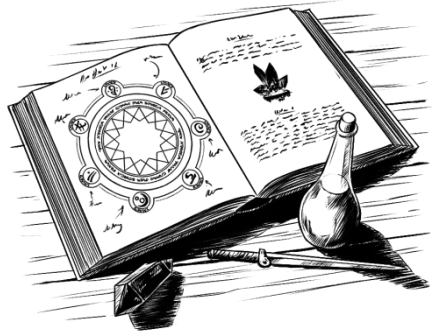
For an Experience Check to be awarded, there must have been a meaningful consequence of the Task Roll failing. For example, practising swordplay against a training dummy would not yield an Experience Check.

When a Task Roll has a positive Difficulty Modifier (making the Task Roll easier - *page 12*), an Experience Check is only awarded if the successful roll is equal to or less than the Ability or Specialism (not the Modified Target Percentage).

Experience Rolls

At the end of each play session, an **Experience Roll** is made for each Ability or Specialism that has an Experience Check against it.

To make an Experience Roll, the player rolls 1d100. If the result is greater than the current value of the character's Ability or Specialism, it increases by 1d5%. Only one Experience Roll may be made for each Ability per session.



New Specialisms

Characters may acquire new Specialisms during play. This will generally result from training, research, or an in-game event.

There will often be an associated cost in terms of time, money and/or favours. A suitable teacher may also be required. The Referee should determine such details on a case-by-case basis.

Newly-acquired Specialisms have a starting value of 4d10%.



Non-Player Characters

Creating Non-Player Characters

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) are the inhabitants of the game world encountered by the player characters whether friendly, indifferent or hostile, including creatures and monsters.

In keeping with Hack100's flexible approach, there is no standard list of "monsters". Rather a ten-step methodology is presented for quickly creating any NPC. The intention is to ensure that all NPCs have clear and consistent rationales for their presence in the game.

Description

Write a single evocative sentence that describes the player characters' first impressions of the NPC.

So, for example, rather than introducing an NPC as simply "*a goblin*", instead it's described as "*a short, green-skinned humanoid with large pointed ears and a mouth of sharp teeth*".

Background and Motivation

In the same way as for player characters, write a single sentence that describes the NPC's Background and Motivation. This provides the Referee with a rationale for

why the NPC is being encountered and what their possible reactions to the player characters might be.

Continuing our goblin example, we have: "*a wolf handler of the Splintered Skull tribe tasked with guarding the entrance to the tribe's lair*".

Base Ability Value

Specify the NPC's **Base Ability Value**, a general percentage that is assigned to all of their Abilities (apart from those modified in Step 4 below).

For our goblin, a relatively weak creature, we assign a value of 20%.

Modified Abilities (Optional)

Based upon the NPC's description, Background and Motivation, modify any Abilities that are meaningfully higher or lower than their Base Ability Value.

Unless the NPC is particularly significant, there should be no need to modify more than a couple of Abilities. The Base Ability Value should be adequate for most aspects of the NPC, particularly those that are peripheral to their core role.

Our goblin is a guard, so we raise their Melee and Toughness Abilities to 30%.

Specialisms (Optional)

Again, based on the NPC's Background and Motivation, add any Specialisms (or Powers) that meaningfully differentiate them from others in the world. Assign whatever percentage value to that Specialism that seems reasonable.

We give our goblin a "Wolf Handling" Specialism at a value of 60%. This represents the goblin's ability to successfully command a wolf that has been trained to respond to simple commands.

Innate Characteristics (Optional)

Some creatures and monsters will have **Innate Characteristics** - instinctive actions they are naturally capable of performing without the need for a Task Roll. Sharks can swim, pterodactyls can fly, cobras have venomous bites, etc. List any such innate characteristics that are likely to be relevant to the game.

Our goblin can see in the dark so we list "Night Vision" as an Innate Characteristic.

Health

Health is calculated in the usual way by summing the NPC's Toughness Bonus and Willpower Bonus and then multiplying the result by two.

Our goblin has a Toughness of 30% and a Willpower of 20%, giving it a Health of $(3 + 2) \times 2 = 10$.

Movement

As described in the combat chapter (*page 16*), standard characters can normally move up to 12 metres in a given round in addition to taking one action. If the NPC is significantly faster or slower than this, update their Movement value accordingly.

Movement is not only relevant to combat. The relative speed of an NPC will also be important in pursuits or races.

We leave our goblin's Movement as 12.

Equipment (Optional)

List any equipment or possessions the NPC is carrying about their person. Include armour, weapons, money and any personal effects of interest. For ease of in-game reference, include the Damage Modifiers of any armour and weapons.

We give our goblin leather armour, a spear, 1d5 coins, a wolf-tooth necklace and a stolen silver brooch. It will also have a wolf companion, but that will be a separate NPC.

Notes (Optional)

Finally, add any remaining details about the NPC that are relevant to the game.

This might include relevant information the NPC possesses, their recent activity within the context of the adventure, or particular loyalties, phobias, prejudices or weaknesses.

Example NPCs

As examples, here are the full descriptions of our goblin wolf handler and its trusty hound.

Goblin [20%]

A short, green-skinned humanoid with large pointed ears and a mouth of sharp teeth

Background & Motivation: A wolf-handler tasked with guarding the entrance to the tribe's lair

Abilities & Specialisms: Melee 30%; Toughness 30%; Wolf Handling 60%

Innate Characteristics: Night vision

Health: 10

Movement: 12

Equipment: Leather armour [-1], spear [+3], 1d5 coins, wolf-tooth necklace, silver broach (stolen)

Notes: Was a member of the raiding party that attacked the village last night (hence the stolen broach)

Wolf [30%]

A mangy-looking creature with matted flea-ridden fur, slobbering chops and piercing yellow eyes

Background & Motivation: Divided loyalties between its handler and an insatiable appetite for fresh meat

Abilities & Specialisms: Bite 40% [+3]

Innate Characteristics: Acute sense of smell

Health: 12

Movement: 15

Equipment: Collar and leash

Notes: Trained to respond to simple commands from its handler (“Attack!”, “Stay!”, “Go find!”, etc.), but only if the handler makes a successful Wolf Handling Task Roll.



Appendix

Optional Rules

The following rules are all non-essential.

Some add content that is useful for certain game genres.

Others are rules or concepts that are commonly found in roleplaying games but which don't necessarily align with the author's vision for Hack100. However, some Referees may wish to incorporate them.

Optional Rules

Player Characters

Non-Human Characters

The core rules assume that player characters are human or human-like. However, in some game genres, particularly fantasy and science fiction, non-human characters may be an option.

The easiest way to accommodate non-human characters is by employing the same **Modified Abilities** and **Innate Characteristics** used for Non-Player Characters (*page 27*).

As examples, the table below presents **Modified Starting Abilities** for the classic fantasy non-humans. The modifications accentuate their archetypes, so:

- Dwarfs are strong and tough but not particularly agile or stealthy.
- Elves are nimble and perceptive but slight and somewhat cold and aloof.
- Halflings are inconspicuous and surprisingly strong-willed. However, their lack of size and strength is a disadvantage in melee combat.

Innate Characteristics (*page 27*) can be used to capture other non-human traits. For example, dwarfs and elves typically have Night Vision.

Generous Referees might also allow additional non-human innate Specialisms at a suitable percentage, e.g. Forest Lore for Elves, Stone Lore for Dwarfs, etc.

Example Modified Starting Abilities – Dwarfs, Elves and Halflings

Ability	Dwarf	Elf	Halfling
Strength	2d10+30%	-	2d10+10%
Agility	2d10+10%	2d10+30%	-
Stealth	2d10+10%	-	2d10+30%
Toughness	2d10+30%	2d10+10%	-
Perception	-	2d10+30%	-
Reasoning	-	-	-
Influence	-	2d10+10%	-
Willpower	-	-	2d10+30%
Melee	-	-	2d10+10%
Ranged	-	-	-

Tasks

Advantage & Disadvantage

As an alternative to applying fixed Difficulty Modifiers to Task Rolls (*page 12*), some Referees may prefer to use **Advantage** and **Disadvantage** dice.

When a Referee decides that, due to the prevailing circumstances, a given task is significantly easier than usual, the character concerned is said to have “**Advantage**”. This means that when making their d100 Task Roll they may roll two “tens” dice along with their “units” die and pick whichever “tens” die gives the most favourable result.

Similarly, if a particular task is deemed to be significantly more challenging than normal, the character has “**Disadvantage**” and the Referee picks the least favourable of the two rolled “tens” dice.

In both cases, the choice of “tens” die may be influenced by Criticals and Fumbles (*Page 13*) and combat damage (*Page 15*).

For extremely easy or difficult tasks the Referee could even award a second Advantage or Disadvantage Die, with the best/worst of the three “tens” dice selected.

For Task Rolls with “Advantage”, an Experience Check is only awarded if the roll would have been successful with either “tens” die.

Overall, the use of Advantage and Disadvantage dice tends to be somewhat quicker and easier than applying Difficulty Modifiers. However, it is also much less transparent with respect to quantifying the percentage change in the likelihood of success of a Task Roll.

Improvement

Training

At the Referee's discretion, characters may also train up their existing Abilities and Specialisms in the downtime between adventures. However, if this is allowed, it is recommended that the following restrictions are imposed:

- All training requires a teacher. The more specialised the training, the harder it will be to find suitable tuition. Locating the provider of any training might form the basis of an adventure in its own right.
- Each block of training lasts 1 month.
- The cost of the training is specified by the Referee.

- Only one Ability or Specialism may be trained at a time.
- At the end of the month, the trained Ability or Specialism is increased by 1d5%.
- No Ability or Specialism may be increased to more than 70% through training.

Training is not intended to be the primary route for character development. Certainly, it should never get in the way of adventuring. Rather, it is something to be done between adventures. If necessary, the Referee can control access to training through the non-availability of teachers - they might be busy with other students, sick, away, or otherwise preoccupied.

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