

TRESHOLD

The word "TRESHOLD" is rendered in a blue, stylized, gothic-style font. The letter 'O' is replaced by a silhouette of a person standing on a globe, with the globe's horizon line visible.

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Introduction

Welcome, adventurer! You managed to step over a threshold and find the rules of a simple roleplaying game. In case you already know, what roleplaying games are, you can freely skip this section and continue with chapter **Character creation**.

What are RPGs?

Unlike traditional board or card games, roleplaying games are more like an improvised theater. No, don't freak out! Those games are trying to bring the joy we had when we were kids and played to our heroes from movies, books and tales. Those were the childish games – roleplaying games follow certain rules that bring some tactics, strategy and fair randomness into game.

How is it played?

Game is lead mostly by single player, let's call him **Guide**. This guide prepares the adventure, enemies and other characters that other players' characters may meet during game. Then, based on events that he describes, players react using their characters, following the rules from this book and characteristics of their heroes. Well, don't be scared – rules are so intuitive and simple, you will get them after first read.

These rules are intended to play medieval and fantasy-flavoured world, where magic is not a common thing. You can play only as humans and – as far as is known, they cannot handle magic. During adventures you may find some magical items and creatures, that don't exist in real life, though.

Handbook usage

This handbook is divided on two parts – a Heroes and Guide part. Players are okay to read only the first part, however, Guide should read all the rules, to be able to create and manage a great adventure full of events, creatures and treasures.

Rules examples are written in gray italics.

Important rules are written bold in border.

Every decimal numbers are rounded up.

Game requirements

You will need mostly your imagination a sheet of paper, a pencil and preferably four six-sided dice.

You can use an official web-based application to write down all your characters, notes and adventures. The app is available here: <http://treshold.jocho.sk>



Keep in mind that game lasts at least two hours, so try to find a calm place to play and bring with yourself some food and drinks.

Heroes

Character creation

You decided to immerse into the world full of adventures, tension and danger. Great. Hence, you need to create a character for that. Only through it you can really experience all the good and bad things that game brings.

We create a dummy character in these examples.

A proper hero needs a name and some job. Think about both of them and then write them down.

*Our character will be named **Farl**. He will be a **woodcutter**.*

Every character is defined by physical condition and mentality. That's why every hero has defined following attributes:



Condition

It represents physical condition of a character, how fast and strong it is.

It determines an order of characters during combat or situations when players cannot agree on their order.

At last, it defines amount of large items a character can bear without being overcumbered.



Will

Represents mental dimension of a hero. How well-read, educated and influenced it is.

It also defines an amount of troubles and wounds a character can handle.

Now distribute **10 points** among these attributes. Make sure there is at least 1 point in each.

Now as you know your character's condition and will, you can define his **focus**. A focus should reflect character of your hero.

If character's action is related with his focus, you get +3 bonus to roll.



Strength

If a character solves most of the situations using his muscles and brute force, his focus will be strength.



Dexterity

A hero that jumps a lot, does crazy acrobatic tricks or is somehow dexterous, will be given dexterity as his focus.



Common sense

This focus is for a hero that can talk himself out of any trouble, knows everybody in town and can react swiftly to unawaited situations.



Knowledge

When a hero is well-read, can support his arguments and always tries to prepare before he acts, his domain will be knowledge.

Focus of a hero can but doesn't have to correspond to attribute point distribution nor his job. No one always does what he wants to and even a robust man can enjoy reading books.

Farl got distributed 4 points to will and 6 to condition and as he is a woodcutter, his focus will be strength.

Aspects

Attributes are something like a core skelet of any character. But the differences that differentiate every being from each other are represented by aspects.

By aspect you can imagine a short, mostly one-word characteristic of your character. This characteristic can affect his physical or mental abilities. You can find a short list of aspect examples at the end of this handbook.

Aspect can be both positive and negative. Nature of the aspect is defined on current events during a story.

Aspects that define the character are **personal** aspects. If a hero is affected by external influence, he gets a **global** aspects. Lastly, **wounds** represent third type of aspects.

Amount of personal aspects = (condition + will) ÷ 2.

Character's job is an aspect too, but don't count it into this amount.

*Farl got 5 aspects to start: **honest, flippant, tree expert, adventurous and accurate.** As it rains outside, he got a global aspect **soaked.** Moreover, he cut his hand during sharpening his axe, so he's got a **cut arm wound.***

If it possible to level the aspect, define exact **three** levels. First level adds/removes **ONE**, second level **THREE** and third **FIVE** points to roll.

No aspect can have more than three levels.

Created hero has every aspect on its first level.

Items

No hero starts a journey with empty hands. Not even yours. Until a Guide did not prepare a special beginning of your journey, you can assign an equipment to your hero.

During creation roll two dice. Higher roll represents amount of items, lower one number of aspects you can assign to those items. As during character creation, created items also can have only 1st level aspects.

Item effect

If your character uses an item for an action it was **meant** to be, you get **+3 bonus** to your roll. However, if an item is used as **improvised** item, you get only **+1 bonus** to roll.

Farl was surprised by jackal during travel. In confusion he grabbed a branch for protection. Using it for his defense and attacks, he will get only +1 point to his rolls. As soon as he drags his sword from the backpack, he'll get +3 points instead.

Item aspects

Every item can have assigned aspects too – up to three and it doesn't matter whether they are positive or negative. Item aspects can **modify bonus/penalty** to roll (just like character aspects) or change **level** of given **wounds**.

*Farl obtained a **ballanced sharp sword** – when he will fight with it, he will get +4 points for using a **sword** (+3) that is **ballanced** (+1). A **sharp** aspect will be used only when he successfully hits the target. Then he will cause immediately two wounds instead of one.*

Miraculous aspects

Items can have **miraculous** or **special** aspects too. Those can be applied only when you roll at least **aspects difficulty level**. This level will be written after aspect's name in brackets.

Healing potion – removes 3 wound leveles (2). Fire sword – sets a target of attack on fire (6).

A Guide will tell you a difficulty level to every aspect.

Inventory

Every character carries his own backpack. The backpack has **10 positions** for all the items he currently doesn't use or wear. Every hero has equally large backpack.

Items are declared as small or large. **Large** item has at least one of its dimensions as long as character's arm is. **Small** items can be **stacked** into single backpack position without any amount limit.

Equipped items are not counted into backpack limit.

Our Farl has backpack stuffed with a sword, an axe, a leather armor, 3 healing potions, a bread and 2 torches. He has space to store other 4 small items.

Equipment

A Character can hold up to one large and one small item in his hands. Jewelry or parts of a clothing that have no effect to overcoming the obstacles nor combat are considered as part of a dress and they are not needed to be written down.

Armor does not have unique parts – write it down collectively as **armor**.

Burden

If your hero carries more large items he currently can handle (equipped or in backpack), he gets single **over-encumbered** aspect for every item he carries over that limit. A hero cannot handle more than 3 large items over his limit.

| |
|---|
| Amount of large items carried without burden = condition ÷ 2 |
|---|

*Farl got small keg of wine. As long as he will carry it in his backpack, he will have 1st level of **over-encumbered** aspect.*

Obstacles

Every hero will have to overcome various obstacles during his adventures, whether it may be swindling the merchant, crashing the lock, climbing the rock or resisting the effects of a poison.

The Guide tells you how difficult those obstacles are. He sets the target number that represents their difficulty and tells you only whether their overcoming is easy, hard, impossible and so.

Then you will describe an intention of your character. Based on your description you'll get a guidance, how to find out the result of your hero's effort:

- Add or subtract points for every aspect (personal, global or wound) that may affect overcoming the obstacle.
- If hero's action relates to his focus, you get a focus bonus.
- Roll two dice and sum up the result.

If the result is **equal** or **higher than** defined **difficulty**, a character **overcame** the obstacle. Otherwise your hero can try to overcome it again after an hour or immediately when he loses/gains relevant aspect..

*Farl was on a rural dance and asked a girl dancing. A Guide decided, that dancing is **average** test of **dexterity**. Farl rolled 6 and 4 and as he did not apply any aspect nor focus, his result is 10. He told the result to his Guide that agreed that it is enough. Farl danced well and girl was pleased.*

Cooperation

Sometimes more heroes are needed to overcome the obstacle. Or they find themselves in a situation, where a cooperation can really make advancement much easier.

In that case **every participated hero** tries to overcome the obstacle in a standard way. However, the obstacle will be **conquered** already when **at least half** of the heroes succeeds.

Farl with fellow villagers played a child game, where players in a team jump over a manger filled by swill. Farl has two villagers in his team. They hold their hands, create a chain and try to perform a jump. Farl rolled 9 total, one villager rolled a 4 and the other one rolled 11. They managed to accomplish this average task, although they had to pull one player with 'em.

Combat

Heroes meet lots of various bandits, predator or even mythic creatures during their travels. As only a few of them will be friendly, it is good to tell a word or two about combat.

Order of combatants is defined by their **condition**. If more combatants have same condition, the provocateurs come first. If one side attacks unexpectedly (as result of ambush or ruse), every member of that side gets an **advantage** during 1st round.

Player on turn may call up to **two different** actions:

- attack
- movement
- setting (dis)advantage
- interaction

Attack

To find out if the attacker punches his target, attacker must get his attack and target his defense value. Both of them sum up:

- **bonus** for **focus** (only when suitable action is called)
- **bonuses** and **penalties** for used and equipped items
- **bonuses** and **penalties** for every aspect levels, that may affect the attack/defense action
- attacker adds **2× dice roll**
- target adds **1× dice roll** and either his **condition** if the attack's nature is physical, or **will**, when it's mental.

*Farl was suddenly incidiously attacked by a drunk. After adding focus, aspect bonuses and rolls, drunk's attack is 12 and Farl's defense 7. Hence Farl got a **crippled** wound.*

If the attack is **equal or higher than** defense, a target obtains single level of wound, that reflects result of attacker's attack. If the target should get the same wound aspect again, he only raises level of already existing aspect.

Spending the points of will you can one-time ignore corresponding amount of your hero's wounds that you would have to count in.

Farl, right after the kick, decided to turn and attack by his fist. His attack was only 7 so he spent a point of will to ignore his crippled wound and raised his attack to 8. It was enough to smack out some teeth from drunk's mouth.

Results of your actions always describes the Guide, but when you manage to defeat your enemy, he may let you describe, how you did it, by yourself.

Movement

Sometimes the target of an attack is too far, lever that hero wants to pull is in a difficult place or a villain runs away. Then the speed of your characters really matters, so let's talk a bit about movement.

Movement speed is defined by character's condition. For every point in this attribute your hero can run 10 feet per his turn. Just like the obstacles or attacks movement is altered by character's aspects too.

Traveled distance = consition +/- aspects [x10 feet]

Setting (dis)advantage

A hero does not either attack or run around. Instead, he may try to invoke an action, that may put any combat participant into better position. The target then gets an **advantage**. On the other side, a hero can grant himself or the others a **disadvantage**.

Since a character has advantage, you roll **four** dice and count only **higher two**. While in disadvantage, you also roll four dice, but count only **lower two**.

If you are a target of an attack and you have dis/advantage, you roll **two dice** and count in higher or lower die respectively.

A Drunk got Farl on his back. Fall didn't hurt Farl, but now he has a disadvantage to any performed action until he stands up.

Advantage and disadvantage last either to the end of a battle or until affected character won't change his position.

Interaction

During this action your character can change **single** item in his hand, put on a hat, slipper one boot, pull a lever, press a button, close the door or steer the wheel.

Hero may also communicate or interact with another character.

Consistent actions

You may decide that your hero will perform only single action during his turn, but more **consistently**. Then you are granted **+1 bonus** point to that action – as a bonus to attack, movement or using/equipping second item.

Healing

During the adventure heroes get wounded from time to time – either because of combat, falling into a trap or by environment.

As we know, wounds are represented by aspects – unlike personal aspects that character cannot get rid of wittingly, wounds can be cured. Let's define wounds a hero can bear before he faints as **stamina**.

$$\text{stamina} = (\text{condition} + \text{will}) \div 2.$$

Duration of a healing process depends on wound level:

| Healing the wounds | | Will points restoration | |
|--------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1. level | 1 day | 1 point | 1 hour |
| 2. level | 3 days | | |
| 3. level | 5 days | | |

When a character begins healing process, he starts to cure the **highest level** of a **single** chosen wound.

While being in safety at home, hospital or monastery, the healing process is **3× faster**.

Hero sometimes loses will points to ignore wounds he suffers. They are restored automatically by short rest (a point per hour).

After the fight, Farl has wounded shoulder and si crippled; he will be cured within 2 days. All spent will points will have restored after 4 hours of rest.

If a hero interrupts his healing process/rest, or is disturbed, whole healing process will reset and will won't be restored.

Unconsciousness & Death

In a moment a hero's amount of **wounds equals** his **stamina**, he falls unconscious. While being fainted, he fails in every obstacle test and combat situation automatically.

Unconsciousness

A fainted hero automatically starts healing process of a wound you may select. When he gets rid of this single wound, his consciousness returns and you regain full control over your hero once again.

Death

Sometimes it happens, that total amount of wounds get higher than hero can bear. Then, sadly, hero dies.

In Treshold rules you won't find any gods or supernatural phenomena that would return your fallen hero back to life. If he dies, he's gone. Deal with it, give him last lookback and move on.

If your character dies in a battle, you alone can describe the scene that ended his journey.

Remember, sometimes the death is good; it may bring redemption to your soul, or save lives of the others.

Goals and advancement

Every hero advances when fulfilling his duty. As in real life, he has to act to his own convictions therefore write down the nearest **goal** your hero **wants** to achieve.

Hero's goal should be a challenge that costs some effort and time.

Farl decided to visit his friend Nom in alchemyst's guild on the other end of a kingdom.

Everytime a hero achieves his current goal, you get 1 point and write down new goal. Then you can invest that point to **rise** the **level** of single personal **aspect**, or to raise **condition** or **will**.

If by raising one of his attributes a character gets availability to add new aspect, write it down during nearest rest. Aspects a hero obtains should reflect experienced adventures.

*Farl met a lot of people during his journey to Nom, that's why he raised his will by 2 points and added a **talkative** aspect.*

**That is all you need to know to bring your character to life.
To the adventure!**

Guide

How to lead the game

You began to read second part of this handbook, so let us assume it is you who wants to become the Guide of your group. It will be your duty to prepare whole adventure, non-player characters (NPCs) and tasks heroes will have to accomplish. However, always remember following rule:

Have fun by playing with players, not by defeating them.

Game beginning

As Treshold is game for less experienced players, prepare the story where players' heroes are already either well-known group or they share common place and are given the same task they must accomplish.

Characters should have common task that must be accomplished.

A Mayor called a group of heroes to get rid of an evil witch that lives in a swamp past the village.

Story construction

As a good Guide you should know that everytime players get an opportunity to make a decision, they mostly decide in a way you did not await.

Contrary to the header, don't prepare whole story. Prepare the main plot and think about key points in it – what will happen, when heroes fulfill certain point, what happens when they won't, and how this will affect next story development.

1. *A group gets a quest – to get rid of an evil witch that lives in a swamp past the village.*
2. *Witch is not really bad, only scary. She's mayor's unwanted daughter and he wants to get rid of her because she knows, how he got his prestigious position.*
3. *Group won't reveal true identity of the witch – will they end her life and come for the reward? Will mayor reward them?*
4. *Or group finds out the truth – will they punish the mayor? Or will they kill the witch anyways?*

Characters' goals

As you constructed basic skeleton of the story, you can guide your players to choose right goals for their characters. Try to set the goals they can accomplish within single session. They don't have to kill the dragon or reconcile neighbour kingdoms; simplest goals are just okay. However although simple, goals still should cost some effort and time to reach.

Players agree that after being given a task, their goal is to find the witches hideout.

Maybe you decide that you will play the adventures for a longer period of time. Then you should set the goals that last at least one and half, maybe two sessions each.

Scenes

It is you, who prepares the story and it's your duty to prepare the environment where it will be settled too. You don't have to create whole world with mythology, gods nor history. It is okay for first adventures to think about story, where it will take place

and prepare those places. Inspire yourself by key points of the plot. Then you will have prepared locations for the most important parts of your story. It doesn't take such effort to create paths that connect those strong places.

You can write following notes to every scene:

- name of the scene
- what's in here, how does it look, sound, smell
- what characters appear in this scene
- what characters do have their story bond here

A scene notes about meeting the witch may look like this:

- *Scene: Before the cabin in the middle of the swamp*
- *Description: low light, heavy smell of swamp, occasional trees and wind whistle*
- *NPCs: Witch*
- *Quest: kill the witch*

Don't forget – always should focus on building atmosphere indirectly. If something should be scary, try to describe it in a way, players will be affraid of the imaginaion. The effect will be much more stronger as if you only said that this and that is terrifying.

Investigate your players' fears, what makes them laugh or enjoy the game – and implement it into your story.

Obstacle difficulty

No adventurer brags in the evening like he entered empty cave, opened not-so-locked iron bars and opened the chest containing the key to the mystery. Adventures are full of obstacles and now we will talk a bit about creating them.

During every obstacle creation ask and answer yourself following three questions:

What is the obstacle's nature ? You will find out what focus can hero's player apply.

How difficult is this obstacle for average person? Answering that you will get basic span of values a player must roll to make his hero succeed.

Does the location affect obstacle difficulty? If it doesn't, use the middle value of the selected span. Otherwise use lower or higher value respectively.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------|---|---|------|---|---|---------|---|----|-----------|----|----|------|----|----|
| Difficulty | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| Obstacle | trivial | | | easy | | | average | | | difficult | | | hard | | |

Then acknowledge the player with obstacle's difficulty by its word alternative. He then tries to roll at least the target number that you don't have to tell him. It helps to build the tension.

Aspect difficulty level

If a player asks you to set aspect difficulty level, follow the obstacle difficulty table. The stronger aspect effect is, the higher difficulty will be. When you cannot decide, **use** value 7.

Automatic obstacles

Sometimes characters obtain an aspect that can change its level by time, for example a poisoning, disease or hypothermia. Then make a note about such character and according to the nature of the aspect ask character's player to perform automatic obstacle roll.

You can set time periods based on following table:

| time period | condition | will |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| every turn/minute | burning | torturing |
| every hour | poison | interrogation |
| every day | thirst | imprisoning |
| every three days | hunger | hostile place |

Difficulty of automatic obstacle is always **9**.

To find out hero's reaction to aspect, player counts:

- bonuses/penalties for all relevant aspects
- condition or will, based on aspect's effect nature
- 1× roll

When player manages to get at least 9, he lowers the level of that aspect. Otherwise he raises it up.

Always remember that aspect can have only 3 levels.

*The same rule applies whenever target gets 2nd level wound for the **second** time. Superfluous injury is just ignored. When you or players want to make more damage to your target, you have to focus to another body part.*

Non-playable characters

Now as you have prepared adventure and all the related locations, it is time to fill them with interesting characters.

Non-playable characters (NPCs) are created almost the same way like players' heroes. They have a name, a focus, condition and will values and aspects. However, aspects don't have to necessarily be on their 1st level, because those characters usually don't improve themselves. It is a heroes' job to do so.

During a NPC creation process you can use obstacle difficulty table. Chose the difficulty value and distribute it among condition and will.

Creatures and beings

Among other people, heroes can cross their paths with various animals, living or non-existent. During their creation follow the same steps, but instead of weapons and items, grant them personal aspects that supply the weapons – claws, teeth, poisonous tails, armored skin and so.

Battles

You can alter the difficulty of battles by spending or not spending will points of your minions.

When hero's target is in an impasse, you can grant it a **coup de grace** and kill it immediately.

Try to imagine every creature you control – sometimes a self-preservation may win and creature can decide to run away. Not every encounter must be a Lone Survivor style.

Aspect examples

Global aspects

Burning, wet, poisoned, cursed, cold, hot, asleep, paralysed, blinded, deafened, immobilized, frightened.

Personal aspects

- Fight** fighter, grimling, insidious, sharpshooter, team player, power-player, protector
- Condition** stayer, explosive, climber, swimmer, acrobat, smart, calm hand, precise
- Expertise** tracker, occultist, engineer, farmer, collector, grower, repairman [...]
- Giveness** speaker, liar, argumentist, improviser, bookworm, listener, musician, responsive, lone-wolf, taken, rational
- Abilities** rider, tamer, padfoot, cook, backwoodsman, impersonator
- General** fan / expert / mister in/to [...] knowledgeable / educated / studied [...]

Item aspects

- Weapons** acurate, balanced, puncturing, sturdy, heavy, sharp, hardened, long
- Clothing** warm, padded, cloth, waterproof, leather, tight stitched, stuffed
- Valuables** Rusty, gold, sophisticated, damaged, old

Job examples

| | |
|--|---|
| Agricultural | farmer, shepperd, maid |
| Mining | lumberjack, miner, stone breaker |
| Clothing/ leather cultivating | tanner, tailor, washer, shoemaker, luggage, hand-bagger, weaver, glover |
| Metalworking | cutler, tinker, goldsmith, copper-worker, blacksmith, caster, jeweler, melter, iron- plater, founder, swordfish, locksmith, farrier, buckle-maker, weights-creator, rasp-maker, needle-maker, keg-maker, lucernaria, mirrorer, gun producer, ball caster, boilerman, thimblor, pan manufacturer, oribatid |
| Books, paper | librarian, stationer, typist, draftsman, font engraver, bookbinder, bookseller |
| Business | merchant, shark, tripe |
| Food | Innkeeper, cook, miller, baker, confectioner, butcher, fisherman, hunter |
| Medical | herbalist, spa-worker, healer, physician, barber, dentist, druggist, midwife |
| Transport | coachman, boatman, rafter |
| Army | Gunpowder productionist, soldier, mercenary |

Timber processing carpenter, joiner, bowmaker, sawyer, coalmaker, shrike, cooper, hatchet, shipowner, basketeer

Authorities, administrat. executioner, guard, valet, mashall, diner, waiter, officer, judge, herald

Artistic bard, painter, musician, dancer, actor

Stonework tiler, stoner, bricklayer, builder

Clay processing potter, pitcher, glassworker

Alcohol processing licorice maker, wine maker, alcohol maker

Others rope binder, chandler, honey maker, assistant, astronomer, priest, slaver, thief, messenger, soap maker, hat-maker, dyer, prostitute, chimney sweeper, dairy, gravedigger

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