

NEW WORLDS  
The “Tell Your Story” Role Playing Party Game

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### I. Introduction

1. Have you ever read a book or watched a TV show or movie and thought, “if I was a character in this story, I would have done things differently?” Is there an imaginary world you’ve always wanted to explore? This is the game for you.

Welcome to “New Worlds,” an easy-to-play role playing game (or RPG) that lets you tell the story you’ve always wanted to tell. In the game, each player creates a character, a fictional identity that exists in the world of the story. Each character has certain strengths and weaknesses, defined by his or her player as the game begins. In the New Worlds RPG, the players’ characters are heroes like those found in movies and books. They can be just like your favorite novel or film hero, or a completely original creation. New Worlds is designed for characters of all types, from children and their animal friends exploring the world around them, to “super cops” busting drug dealers and gangsters, to mythological gods and goddesses struggling over the fate of planets.

Role playing games, as the name implies, are about playing a role. In other kinds of games, the goal is to be the last player left, the one with the best collection of cards, or the first one to the finish line. In this game, the dice aren’t rolled to see how far you move on a board; they’re rolled to see how well your character does at what he or she attempts to do. In a sense, you’re already playing the game as you create a character, even before the story begins, since you get to choose your character’s skills and talents.

Each player also gets a chance to be the narrator of the story, describing what happens to the characters, and the referee of the game rules. Because the game is created by the players, the amount of time you spend playing the game can be as brief as just a few minutes to as long as several days. Everyone wins the game, since everyone is participating together to tell the story.

You may be familiar with pencil-and-paper table-top role playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Vampire: The Requiem*, or online RPGs like “World Of Warcraft” or “Second Life.” New Worlds is like those games, but it’s made for everyone; you don’t have to spend an hour crunching numbers or shopping for weapons and imaginary magic spells. This book and a few small items are all that’s needed to play. You don’t have to own an expensive video game system or a series of thick manuals; this rulebook is enough for years of entertainment.

New Worlds is made both for people who have been gaming for years, and for those who have a story to tell, but haven’t touched a game since putting the *Monopoly* board in the basement a decade ago.

The phrase “Role Playing” is used outside the gaming world, too. Psychologists use it to help people work through their problems, and TV and movie actors are playing the roles of their characters on screen, complete with costuming, accents and sometimes even stunt people and special effects. New Worlds is role playing, but it’s also a game. You don’t have to dress up or sort out your life. Just have fun.

### 2. Terms

There are a few words used throughout the rulebook you’ll need to know to play the game.

- **Player:** Each real-world person playing the game. People from any age group are welcome, though the game may be too complicated for children younger than about 10 or 12 years old. Younger children can still participate in the game, though, by rolling the dice, collecting Reward Markers and even helping players add up their dice results.
- **Character:** Each player begins the game with one character. The character can be one that’s been provided here in the rulebook, one found online, or one the player creates himself. In some settings, a character could be called an “adventurer” or “hero” – though characters can also be anti-heroes or even villains. Characters are usually a little bit larger than life, like the heroes of movies and novels. They’re often capable of doing things no real world person could easily accomplish, and they almost always look good doing it.

Example characters for various settings are included at the end of this book. Depending on the game setting, a character can be anything from a goblin to a lawyer to a factory worker to a robot, or even something really unusual, like a talking car or cartoon animal.

The characters usually work together as a group. It may feature one really powerful character and his or her sidekicks and assistants (think of Indiana Jones and his allies), or a team of equally talented characters (like a group of police detectives investigating a murder). Sometimes the group may split up (say, so each character can explore a different alleyway), but most often the characters stay together.

In the game rules, characters are measured using three Traits, measuring their skills and abilities. These Traits have Levels, numbers which indicate how good the character is with that Trait. Characters also have goals they want to achieve, and connections, who are friends, contacts and loved ones who might play a part in a particular story.

There will be other people and creatures in your story too – monsters, neighbors, love interests, store owners, wicked villains, innocent bystanders, and so on. They aren't characters, but they will also have Traits, though not as many Levels in those Traits.

- **Narrator**: Like the director of a movie or the author of a novel, the Narrator describes what's happening in the story. The other players tell the Narrator what their characters are doing in response. Players take turns as Narrator.
- **Setting**: These are descriptions of the fictional world in which the characters are taking part. This includes a location (when and where stories take place – on a spaceship, in modern day London, in the Wild West, etc.), a tone (serious, romantic, funny, etc.), and an idea of the kinds of things characters might see or do in that setting.

The setting defines what kind of characters are in the game, but doesn't limit them; a modern-day thriller set on the streets of New York City could include police officers, businessmen, teenage gang members, newspaper reporters, and any other kind of character the players can think of.

- **Game Session**: The time spent playing New Worlds, which could be as brief as a few minutes or as long as an evening or an entire weekend. At the end of the game session, the story may be over, or it could be at a dramatic stopping point, so the adventure can pick right back up at that same point in the next game session, with the players eager to find out what happens next.

### **3. What you need to play**

- **Players**: A lot of movies and novels feature a lone character who's good at everything, but New Worlds works best with between three and six characters, each contributing different abilities, skills and powers to the party. Two players can be enough to play, and the game can also easily include eight or 10 characters. The "Demo" rules at the beginning of this book are written so one player can play by himself or herself.
- **Rulebook**: Once characters are created, the rulebook is only really needed as a reference. The game is straightforward enough that you likely won't need it during the game. It might help to have another rulebook or two to make character creation a little faster.

There are three sections to the rulebook:

1. **Demo (Page XX)**: This brief story gets you playing New Worlds immediately, even if you're playing by yourself. Feel free to make a copy of this quick start for anyone who's curious about the game.
2. **Quick Start (Page XX)**: A compact version of the New Worlds rules, enough for your first few games, and a good reference once you're familiar with a rules.
3. **Advanced Game Rules (Page XX)**: The full New Worlds rules start here. They provide all the information you need to know to play the game with the characters found in the book or online. In the advanced game rules section of the rulebook, you'll find rules variants, other ideas you can choose to add to New Worlds to make the exact game you and your friends want to play.

- **Character Sheets**: Players describe their characters by writing down their abilities and backgrounds on a character sheet. Two blank character sheets – free for you to photocopy or print out – are included at the end of the rulebook. The introductory character sheet includes a guide to some of the game rules, for players brand-new to the game, while

the standard character sheet is for more experienced players. Once you are very familiar with the New Worlds rules, you may not even need a character sheet. You can fit all of a character's game information on an index card, or you could even memorize his Trait Levels!

For your first game, select one of the settings described in the back of this book. Each has a number of pre-created characters for the players to choose. Each player gets one character. Pick the one you like best, and take a copy of that character's character sheet. If two players want to use the same character, that's okay. Just re-name one and decide why those two characters are so similar (are they twins, or do they just happen to have similar attitudes and backgrounds?).

In future games, you may want to create your own character from scratch. Rules for doing that are provided in the Advanced Game Rules section in this book.

- **Pencils or Pens:** Each player will need one to fill out their character sheet, if they don't use pre-created characters. If the players are using some of the variant rules later in this book, they may also need to keep track of other information for their characters.
- **Dice:** The dice are rolled when a character attempts to do something. The higher the result, the better the character does. To play, you'll need two normal, cube-shaped six-sided dice per player. Borrow the dice from a game like *Monopoly* or *Risk*, or if you don't have any dice lying around in another game box, you can buy dice at a hobby shop or toy store for very little money.
- **Markers:** Tokens are used to award players for their participation in the story. In fact, they're called "Reward Markers." Any set of small items, like poker chips, glass or plastic counters, or pennies will work fine. Small candies are good too, as long as you don't eat them right away!

You'll need five markers for each player. Each player puts one on the "Reward Markers" space on the bottom of his or her character sheet, and puts the others in a pile in the middle of the table, with all the other players' extra markers.

- **Playing Surface:** Since New Worlds is about telling a story, it can be played almost anywhere. Most often, though, it will be played around a table. That gives each player a place to put their character sheet, pencils and dice, and even a few snacks.

#### 4. Playing New Worlds

##### **This is a book, not a game! What about a board or cards?**

New Worlds is about telling a story, so there's no need to move pawns on a board or figurines on a table. You don't have to collect a hand of cards or a pile of fake money. It's all done simply by talking, and rolling a few dice.

Players don't have to dress up like their characters, walk around or speak using language their characters would use, though that may make the game more visually interesting.

##### **A word on gender**

The rulebook uses the word "him," "he" and "his" to refer to players and characters, except when specifically discussing a female player or character. No offense is meant; it's just easier than writing "they" or "him and her" all the time.

##### **THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT RULE**

This has nothing to do with dice or character sheets: *If you're not sure, talk it over with the other players.* Even before you pick or create your character, talk about the kind of story you want to tell, and the kind of characters that will fit in the setting.

During the game, talk with the other players about what your character can and can't do. Because each New Worlds game session can be completely different from the last one, there may even be times you disagree with the Narrator or another player about what your character can accomplish. Give your opinion, have the Narrator give his, and try to come to an agreement. You can even point to scenes from movies, TV shows and novels to support your view: if a TV character can do something, why can't your character?

Remember, though, you don't want to turn the game into an argument; it's just a game, and everyone is there to have fun. If you really can't decide, just roll one die: the person who has the highest result on the die wins the dispute. If there is a tie, roll again.

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT RULE**

*New Worlds is your game.* You can make any changes you want (for example, improving characters before the story starts, ignoring a certain rule that you don't think makes sense, or rolling a different kind of die throughout the game). You can add and subtract Traits or anything else you see in the rulebook. Remember, New Worlds, like all games, is about having fun. In all cases, do whatever makes the game more exciting and enjoyable for everyone.

## QUICK-START RULES

The New Worlds game is about telling a story. Each player chooses a character, a fictional identity they'll take on during the game session, and also plays the role of Narrator, helping the other players bring the story to life.

### Object Of The Game

The players work together to tell a satisfying story, full of challenges for their characters to overcome. But at the same time, they're collecting Reward Markers for achieving tasks and defeating enemies. When all the Reward Markers have been collected, the player with the most wins the game.

### Set Up

Each player gets one character sheet from the lists in the back of the book, two dice and five Reward Markers. Place one Reward Marker on the "Reward Markers" space on your character sheet, and put the other four in a pile in the middle of the table with all the other Reward Markers.

You can find explanations for all the parts of the character sheet in the advanced New Worlds rules later in this book..

The top half of the character sheet (from "Name" down to "Connections") provides a personality profile of your character – who he is, what he acts like and what he wants out of life. Use this as a guideline when describing what your character is doing. For example, a character's Description might say he "easily makes connections with people." During a game, make sure your character does just that: have him walk right up to people that the Narrator introduces to the story, shake hands, ask how they're doing, and so on. You don't have to do exactly what's listed in Description, Goal and other parts of the character sheet. Just use those sentences as guidelines.

In the section marked "Game Information," you'll see four things – three Traits with Levels, and one space for Reward Markers.

*Traits and Trait Levels:* These describe what your character is and what he's best at. He's so good at these things that they improve his chances when facing a challenge (more on this below). Every character has the same three Traits:

Body, representing your character's strength and speed.

Mind, representing your character's intelligence and spirituality.

Social, representing your character's skill at dealing with others.

Your Traits are measured in Levels, with your best Trait, your "strength," at Level 3, your second-best Trait at Level 2, and your "weak spot" at Level 1. Don't worry, though; even a Trait Level of 1 isn't too bad. Everyone else in the world, like the people and creatures Narrators introduce into the game, have most or all their Traits at Level 0 (zero).

*Reward Markers:* Reward Markers track your character's progress in the story, and are your "score" in the game. You start with one in this area of the character sheet, and collect them as the game continues.

### Playing The Game

When it's your turn in a New Worlds game session, you'll be Narrator, describing part of the story for the other players. When you're not Narrator, you're still in the game, playing your character. Decide in any way you want which player will be the first Narrator.

As Narrator, describe a situation for a character or characters to encounter. If you're the first Narrator in the game, you get to start the story. On every Narrator's turn after that, the current Narrator should try and describe a situation that makes sense, based on what has already been described by previous Narrators and the other players whose characters have faced challenges (more on this in the advanced game rules). For example, if the past few Narrators have told a story about a rock and roll band trying to make it big in London and New York, it wouldn't make sense if the band was suddenly flying a spaceship across the universe – unless the band is made up of wacky aliens.

Provide a few sentences of description, and wrap up your narration by presenting a challenge, and choosing one of the characters in that part of the story to face the challenge. The Narrator can pick any character he wants, though it's best to pick one that hasn't had to face a challenge in a while, so everyone gets a chance to play. There are three kinds of challenges, and it's up to the Narrator to decide which kind he wants to introduce to the story:

Decision Challenges: A character must make a choice that doesn't involve risk. Decision challenges include answering a police detective's question, choosing a door to open, or agreeing or disagreeing to lead a campaign for the local mayor, among others.

Task Challenges: A character must try to overcome an obstacle, or try to use his skills. Task challenges include putting together the right magic words to cast a spell, sailing a ship through a windstorm, or moving carefully over a floor covered in broken glass, among others.

Conflict Challenges: A character must try to overcome another person or creature. Task challenges include fist-fights, gun battles, negotiating with a salesman for a lower price on a car, or staying out of sight of the fierce bloodhound that's hunting the character, among others.

The Narrator picks one character to face that challenge, and the player with that character now takes part in the story. But all the other players are involved in the game too – if you think of a good idea that would help the Narrator's description, go ahead and say it, even if you're not Narrator or the player with the character facing the challenge. New Worlds is about telling a good story, with everyone's help.

The Narrator will also name the Trait he thinks best fits the action the character is trying. The player will use his Trait Level for that Trait when creating a dice total (see below).

A Narrator may ask for suggestions if he can't think of a way to keep the story going, or may even "pass" his turn as Narrator.

### **Facing A Challenge**

If the Narrator describes a challenge and names your character to face the challenge, it's your turn to act. What you do depends on the type of challenge the Narrator selected.

If it is a decision challenge, you get to make the decision. If it's a decision that would affect the whole group, like choosing to take on an assignment from the President, talk with the other players before making a choice. If your character is facing the challenge, though, you get to make the final decision. You don't need to create a dice total when facing a decision challenge.

If it is a task challenge, you describe what your character is going to do in response to the challenge, then create a dice total (see below). If your dice total is **8 or more**, you succeed at the action. If your dice total is **7 or less**, you fail at the action.

If it is a conflict challenge, you describe what your character is going to do in response to the challenge, then you create a dice total (see below), and the Narrator creates one too, by rolling one die and adding +4 to the result. If your dice total is **greater than or equal to the Narrator's dice total**, you succeed at the action. If your dice total is **less than the Narrator's dice total**, you fail at the action.

### **Dice Totals**

To create a dice total, start with the Trait Level of the Trait the Narrator named for the challenge. For example, a character facing the task challenge of "striking out a baseball batter" would likely use the Body Trait.

Then, roll both dice and add their results together, and add the Trait Level of the Trait the Narrator selected to that result. Your final dice total will be some number between 3 and 15.

### **Success And Failure**

If you succeed at a task or conflict challenge, pick up a Reward Marker from the pile in the middle of the table, and put it in the "Reward Markers" space on the character sheet. If you roll doubles (the same number on both dice), you can pick up an extra Reward Marker.

If you fail at a task or conflict challenge, nothing happens. You don't pick up any new Reward Marker or lose a Reward Marker you already collected. You also do not collect a Reward Marker for rolling doubles.

If your character faced a decision challenge, you don't pick up or put back any Reward Markers.

Now, the player whose character face the challenge describes what happened, based on what he rolled, and what the Narrator described. Give just a sentence or two. For example, if the character succeeded at a task challenge of "striking out a baseball batter," the player could simply say, "I struck him out," or "I blasted three past the batter, and didn't even give him a chance to swing." If the character failed at a conflict challenge of "a Wild West quick draw at high noon," the player could say, "I missed," or "I shot him in the arm, but he got me good in the chest. It's a serious wound."

Once the player is finished with his brief description, the player next to the Narrator becomes the new Narrator.

### **Winning The Game**

When there are no more Reward Markers in the middle of the table, the game is nearly over. Every player gets one more chance to be Narrator and wrap up the story.

Once all the players have had a last chance to be Narrator, the game ends – hopefully with the final Narrator wrapping up the story with "The end," "And they all lived happily ever after," "We saved the world," or something similar.

Count the number of Reward Markers on your character sheet. The player or players with the most Reward Markers wins the game.

## ADVANCED RULES

### HOW TO PLAY

#### 1. Pick The First Narrator

To select the first Narrator, have one player volunteer, or roll one die. The person with the highest result becomes Narrator for the first turn. If there is a tie, roll again.

*Erik, Tracy, Anne and Marc are playing a game of New Worlds, and they sit around the table in that order. They've looked through the example settings, and decided to use the action-adventure super-spy "Apostle Strategy" setting. Each player selects a character from the pre-created characters – Erik picks Davis, Tracy picks Jen, Marc picks Bill and Anne picks Keiko. Each player puts one marker on the "Reward Markers" space on his or her character sheet, and puts four more in a pile in the middle of the table. Erik volunteers to be the first Narrator.*

#### 2. Starting A Turn

During the game, each player has two tasks:

1. He will take on the role of his character, the one whose character sheet he is using.
2. He will take turns with the other players, spending some time as the Narrator. As you've already read, the Narrator describes what's happening to the characters, and presents them with challenges to overcome. Each player may spend a different amount of time as Narrator, and some players may not have as many turns as Narrator. That's okay; the real action of the game is done by the players when they are in the role of their characters.

At any time during the game, even when you're not Narrator, feel free to contribute ideas to the game. If you have a suggestion for the current Narrator, say so (try starting with, "What if this happens?" or "I think it would be exciting if..."). This game is about telling a story, and the plot can only get better with more ideas to choose from.

If a quote from your favorite movie seems appropriate for that moment in the story, or you think of something funny, go ahead and shout it out. New Worlds is a game; have fun with it.

#### 3. The Narrator

The Narrator will set the scene for the other characters, describing where they are and what kind of trouble they are running into (heroes are made when they solve problems and defeat opponents, after all). The Narrator has complete control over what he describes, as long as it meets these requirements:

1. It makes sense within the setting of the game (as described in this book or created ahead of time by the players as a group).

For example, in a game where characters are government secret agents in 2005, a Narrator shouldn't describe a scene where an army of trolls marches into view – unless your game is set in a very unusual version of 2005.

2. It "flows," or makes sense following what happened on the previous Narrator's turn.

For example, if the previous Narrator said the characters were on board a cruise ship in the Pacific Ocean, they can't suddenly jump to the planet Mars on the next turn – unless your game has characters traveling through time and space regularly. Instead, the next Narrator could describe what's happening on board the ship, or he could say the cruise ship is now at port, and describe what happens to the characters on land.

Obviously, on the very first turn of a new game, this requirement doesn't apply.

3. It does not permanently eliminate a player's character, any major friend of the characters, a significant possession of a character, or an object or creature that is vital to the story. You can suggest that a character falls out of the action, but only the player of that character can say his character is dead.

This requirement does not apply to acquaintances, innocent bystanders and minor foes (like the super-villain's nameless, faceless army of soldiers. Feel free to wipe them out, as long as that makes sense for your game). Major villains (like the super-villain himself) can be defeated at any time it makes sense in the story – usually at the climax of your plot.



In the same way (for example), if the characters are carrying a valuable treasure, a Narrator cannot say the treasure suddenly no longer exists – but he could say the treasure is broken or that it has been stolen, especially if it's been out of sight for at least a few moments.

4. It introduces a challenge for one of the characters, but does not determine what the character does in response to the challenge. See “Challenges,” below.

For example, you can say a character is trying to talk a wealthy woman into donating money to his cause, but you can't decide exactly what the character says, or if he succeeds. That's what a player will do this turn.

When you are Narrator, describe things that would make for an interesting story: physical and social trials for the characters to survive, emotional dramas for them to work through, and villains for them to outwit or defeat. If you describe a scene that doesn't meet the above requirements, other players may point this out to you. Try to come up with a better scene; perhaps the other players have suggestions for you. Ultimately, though, when you're the Narrator, you get to make the final decision on what happens.

You don't have to include all the player characters in your description each time you're Narrator. Maybe a few of them are somewhere else at that moment, or they're all together, but only one character has the know-how needed for a particular challenge. If a character hasn't faced any challenges lately, try to include that character in the scene. Every player should have a chance to contribute.

*I don't know what should happen next!*

If you don't have any ideas for a scene, take a look at each player's character sheet for inspiration. Maybe a character has a connection you can bring into the story, or you could say the characters discover a clue that helps one of them achieve his goal.

If you're really stuck, ask the other players for help. They'll be contributing ideas all along anyway – this game is about discussing your options and creating a story. Remember that when you're Narrator, you have final say on what happens in a scene.

Don't use this as a chance to ruin the tale that's being told, though. You're all trying to create a story together. If a Narrator describes something that you don't like, tell him why you're unhappy with his plot development, and see if you can come to an agreement on a course of action (though the current Narrator still makes the final decision on what actually happens). Don't wait, and try to take revenge when you become Narrator. That will probably upset all the other players, and make the game no fun.

If you still can't think of anything, don't worry. Say you want to “pass,” and the player to your left will become Narrator.

Sometimes, you may have an idea as Narrator that seems good at first, but doesn't lead to a challenge of some kind. You can decide to “undo” what you described and say something else, especially if someone suggests an interesting idea. Or, simply say “pass,” and leave what you've described to the next Narrator, who can use what you described and develop a challenge from it. That Narrator might instead choose to leave the description you provided as is, and begin a new scene.

*Goals*

A Narrator can describe a scene that allows a character (even his own) to permanently achieve his goal, or allows the group to reach its group goal (see below), though these scenes should be rare. If a character achieves his goal, he picks up a Reward Marker (see PAGE XX), and sets a new goal for his character. A player can only pick up one Reward Marker for achieving a goal per game session.

### **Group Goal**

A group goal helps give players an idea of where the story should go. While each character has his own goal, the players can also agree on a goal the entire group is trying to achieve. This should be determined in each particular game session, when a Narrator suggests it. For example, the first Narrator in a setting where the characters are knights sent on quests by the king might describe a scene by saying, “The king asks you to rescue his daughter. The princess has been captured by an evil wizard, who has taken her to his dark tower in the western desert.” Then, the Narrator will introduce a challenge. In this case, the group goal is to rescue the princess. By the end of that game session, the characters should have made

their way across the desert, found the dark tower, and rescued the princess. If they haven't, schedule a time to play again, and continue the adventure!

The first Narrator doesn't have to suggest a group goal, instead creating a challenge for a character to overcome before the heroes even discover they have a quest to fulfill. Another Narrator may offer a group goal later in the game session, and still another Narrator might tweak the group goal if he has a good idea, as long as it doesn't completely change the group goal that's already been described.

If the group achieves its goal and the game session isn't over, create a new goal for the group. No one receives a Reward Marker for achieving a group goal.

Group goals aren't recorded on a character sheet, but one player might want to write down the group goal anyway, in case the players forget as they're telling the story.

Several possible group goals are presented in each of the settings later in this book, to give you an idea of the kind of adventures characters in that setting might have. The players don't always have to decide on a group goal – say, in a setting where their characters spend most of their time talking and working with one another, not performing missions they've been assigned.

*As Narrator, **Erik** takes the first turn. He starts by saying, “We are a group of Apostles working to cut crime in inner-city Detroit. It's the early afternoon, and the streets are busy with traffic and people headed to lunch. Right now, we're headed toward a church to speak with a priest about a suspected drug dealer.”*

***Erik** has set the scene, but he's not done being the Narrator yet, since he hasn't presented a challenge to any of the characters. He also hasn't selected a group goal, though he doesn't have to right now.*

*Since all four of the characters are walking together, they're all included in the scene. **Erik**'s description is helpful to the other players; they already know what the inner city looks like, and the kind of things the characters might see there. **Erik** has also made sure there will be people for the characters to interact with (the priest and maybe a drug dealer). Depending on the challenge that **Erik** presents, and the results of that challenge, the next Narrator could describe what happens in the church, and how the priest reacts to the characters.*

#### **4. Challenges**

Note that one of your tasks as Narrator is to introduce a challenge. This is an activity of some kind that advances the plot of the story. It requires one of the characters to make a choice or test his abilities. It can be anything from picking a room to walk into, to attacking a fire-breathing dragon, to asking the cutest guy in class out on a date. Challenges are usually personal, and fairly small; “conquer an enemy nation” is too much to ask a character to do in one challenge, but confronting a corrupt bank manager with his wicked deeds face to face might be a possibility.

Each of the game settings presented later in this book suggests typical challenges characters might face in that setting. Use those suggestions to create challenges in your own game.

Once you've described the challenge, select one character to face that challenge. It should be a character who would logically be appropriate for that challenge.

For example, if three characters are in a scene, but one of them is sleeping, one of the other two would have to face the challenge. The Narrator should also think about selecting a character that has a high Level for the Trait used in the challenge (more on this below).

It's up to the Narrator for this turn to decide which character meets the challenge. The Narrator can even select his own character to face the challenge, though that's obviously not as much fun for the other players.

When you are Narrator, you can actually use the words, “Here's the challenge,” while describing a situation. Most of the time, though, it's probably pretty clear when the Narrator is introducing a challenge, especially if he names one character in his description of the scene.

The Narrator will also need to decide which kind of challenge the character is facing. There are three kinds:

✧ Decision Challenges feature a character making a choice that does not run the risk of failure. Some of these challenges involve deciding whether or not to take an action, while others involve deciding what your character sees or hears, and still others involve deciding what your character will say to someone else (a person or creature the Narrator has described, or another character). Decision challenges include: Answering the professor's questions, picking a destination on a map, selecting a kind of car to drive, interrogating a suspect in a crime, choosing to lead a group of rebels against their foes, deciding to meet a mysterious stranger, and so on. Unlike a task or conflict challenge, the Narrator does not need to select the Trait that best fits the challenge (more on this below).

Once in a while, a decision challenge may be presented to all the players at once – like a baron asking the heroes to slay the Black Knight, or the same Black Knight asking the characters to accept a bag of gold coins in exchange for his life. Even though it's up to the group to agree or disagree, only the character given the challenge tells the Narrator the group's decision.

✧ Task Challenges feature a character dealing with an object or obstacle, or using his skills and possessions in a way that could lead to the character being unable to achieve his goals. Task challenges include: Figuring out a complex math problem, finding food in the wilderness, resisting the urge to turn and run after stepping into the path of a man-eating lion, picking the lock on a security door, driving a car safely down a crowded street, staying awake for 24 hours in a row, and so on. In a task challenge, the character runs the risk of being hurt or not being able to solve a problem. In a task challenge, the Narrator picks the Trait that best fits the challenge (see below).

✧ Conflict Challenges feature a character dealing with another person or creature, in a way that could lead to the character being unable to achieve his goals. Conflict challenges often (but do not always) involve fighting and combat, where failing the challenge means the character is injured or even killed. Conflict challenges include: A shoot-out with enemy soldiers, bargaining with a prison guard to be let out from behind bars, negotiating for a better deal on a new business suit, a sword duel with a fierce ogre, trying to run faster than a man-eating lion, out-flying a rival pilot, and so on. In a conflict challenge, the Narrator picks the Trait that best fits the challenge (see below).

### *Picking A Trait*

Each Trait is a word that describes an ability each character has. When presenting a task or conflict challenge, the Narrator will name the Trait that best fits the action. Usually, it's pretty clear which Trait is best for the challenge, though the player whose character is facing the challenge can suggest using a different Trait, if he can explain how it would be used to accomplish the challenge. The Narrator makes the final decision on which Trait applies to the challenge.

For example, a Narrator describing the task challenge of climbing a mountain could say the character facing that challenge would use his Body Trait to climb. But the player could say his character had wilderness survival training, which uses the Mind Trait. The Narrator could change his mind and agree that the Mind Trait fits the challenge, or he could say that since the character needs to actually climb the mountain, the Body Trait is the one that applies.

The Trait the Narrator names is the one the player uses when facing the challenge (see section 5). The three Traits are:

Body: This represents your character's physical abilities – running, jumping, swinging a sword, driving a car, picking the lock after being locked out of your car, trying to stay awake long enough to finish a term paper, and so on. Using equipment like a pistol, a knife or a home repair tool kit would also fall under the Body Trait.

Mind: This represents your character's mental abilities – studying clues, navigating a route for an airplane, researching the law, looking for a secret passageway inside a haunted mansion, reprogramming a computer, and so on. Using equipment like the Internet, a library of dusty ancient books or a map would also fall under the Mind Trait.

Social: This represents your character's personal abilities – convincing a security guard to let you into an office after hours, fast-talking an old friend into buying the next round of drinks, inspiring your fellow athletes into giving it their all for the last few minutes of the big game, negotiating with your boss for a huge raise,

and so on. Using equipment like a credit card, an ID badge or a briefcase full of small, unmarked bills would also fall under the Social Trait.

You can even represent characters with supernatural powers using the three Traits. For example, a mighty wizard could summon the spirit of his ancestor by chanting magic words (Mind Trait to conjure up the ghost), and a costumed super hero could race to the scene of a crime at the speed of light (Body Trait to run super-fast).

*Erik continues his turn as Narrator by presenting a challenge. “As we cross a bridge over the highway, Jen sees a suspicious van on the road,” he says. Jen is the character facing this challenge.*

*Erik could say this is a decision challenge and let **Tracy** (who is playing the Jen character) describe why the van is suspicious, but he wants to get the action moving right away.*

*Erik says this is a task challenge, since **Tracy** runs the risk of failure. He says, “Jen isn’t sure, but it looks like the driver is searching for our heroes.” Jen is trying to make out what the van’s driver is doing, and not spotting danger could lead to trouble. **Erik** decides that looking into the van requires Jen’s ability at seeing things (her Mind Trait).*

## 5. Facing The Challenge

If the challenge is a decision challenge, the player that the Narrator selected this turn faces the challenge by making a decision. The player takes a look at his character sheet and thinks about how his character would react to the challenge, keeping in mind his attitude, skills and abilities (Traits), goal and group goal, if any. In a decision challenge, the character does not roll dice, and does not need to add a Trait Level to the result. The character cannot succeed or fail at the challenge; he simply makes a choice, or figures out what to say.

If the challenge is a task or conflict challenge, the player that the Narrator selected this turn gets a chance to have his character face the challenge. The player named by the Narrator must make a dice roll; he can’t refuse the challenge, or pass it to another player.

To face a task or conflict challenge, a player follows two steps.

1. First, he rolls two dice and adds their results together to get a “dice total” between 2 and 12.
2. Next, he looks at Trait the Narrator has picked for the challenge, and adds its Level to the dice total.

### EXAMPLE

#### Rolling The Dice

The player facing the challenge:

1. Rolls two dice and adds them together to create a dice total;
2. adds the Trait Level of the Trait the Narrator named for the challenge to the dice total.

For a task challenge:

The player **succeeds** if the dice total is **8 or more**.

The player **fails** if the dice total is **7 or less**.

For a conflict challenge, the Narrator for this turn rolls one die and adds +4 to create his own dice total for the animal, creature or person facing off against the character. He also adds the Trait Level of the Trait the opponent is using. It may not be the same Trait as the one the character is using. See page XX to determine Traits for animals, enemies and other opponents.

The player **succeeds** if the total is **greater than or equal to the Narrator’s dice total**.

The player **fails** if the total is **less than the Narrator’s dice total**.

If the character succeeds at a task or conflict challenge, the player picks up one Reward Marker from the pile in the middle of the table and puts it in the “Reward Markers” space on his character sheet. If he rolls doubles (the same number

on both dice), he collects another Reward Marker. If it was the last Reward Marker in the center of the table, the game is nearly over.

If the character fails a task or conflict challenge, his Reward Markers aren't affected. The player doesn't pick up any new Reward Markers, or lose any he already has. If he rolls doubles but fails the challenge, he does not pick up a Reward Marker.

Now, the character who faced the challenge gets to describe what happens to his character and everyone else in the scene.

If the character faced a decision challenge, describe what happens as a result of making that decision.

If the character faced a task or conflict challenge, take a look at the result of the dice roll, not only to see if the character succeeded or failed, but how well or poorly the character performed. For example, a dice total of 6 on a task challenge is a failure (since 6 is less than the necessary 8 by a difference of two), but not as bad a failure as a dice total of 2 (since 2 is less than the necessary 8 by a much bigger difference of six).

As with each player's turn as Narrator, what's described now should make sense according to the storyline and what the players know about their characters and opponents. The player isn't taking over the Narrator position, though, so try to limit the description to what's happened as a result of the challenge.

### *EXAMPLE*

#### *It's Okay To Fail*

New Worlds games are about telling a story, so failing a task or conflict challenge may be even better than succeeding. Depending on what the Narrator and players describe, failure can introduce new complications to a story, or take in a new, fun, exciting direction. You aren't penalized for failing a standard challenge, so don't worry about getting a high dice total every time.

## **6. Ending A Turn**

Once the result of the challenge is determined, the turn is over. The player to the left of the current Narrator takes the next turn and becomes the new Narrator. If the players are "stuck" at a certain point in the story because of a failed challenge, the new Narrator's turn might be very brief, as he presents the same challenge again.

On the other hand, the new Narrator might simply create a new scene, declaring that the characters eventually accomplished the previous challenge. That almost violates the requirement of a new scene "flowing" from the previous one, and should only be done if the players seem to be having a lot of trouble getting a successful dice result, or can't come up with a creative, interesting way to approach the challenge.

For example, say one Narrator describes a scene where the characters have to convince a suspicious orderly to let them into a hospital. The Narrator picks the character he thinks would be most effective at the challenge, and decides that it's a conflict (the character vs. the orderly). The player faces the challenge but fails. On the next turn, the next Narrator could describe how a different character in the group tries to get past the orderly. Alternately, he could just say that the first character tries again, and the same player gets to roll the dice a second time. If the new Narrator has a good idea for what happens inside the hospital instead, he might decide to skip ahead in the story a little bit. He could begin his turn by saying the characters got past the orderly eventually... then move on to a new challenge.

#### *Time*

A Narrator may describe a scene that may take any amount of time – he could describe a scene where a character is trying to climb the side of a mountain (an activity that lasts hours), while the next Narrator may describe a scene where the character tries to start a fire in harsh, stinging wind (an activity that lasts minutes). A conflict challenge that represents an action-packed fight includes not just one pull of a pistol trigger or swing of an axe, but also defensive moves (ducking out of the way, parrying a blow), dialogue (the villain's sneering challenge as he thrusts his sword) and other activities. Other kinds of conflict challenges also represent more than a split-second piece of the confrontation – a lawyer could take hours or even days cross-examining a witness in a courtroom.

#### *Distance*

Like time, distances are flexible; if a character is trying to see something really far away, it becomes a task challenge, usually using the Mind Trait. A character can leap across the room to grab a falling object before it hits the floor – but the leap would be one challenge (especially if it involves hopping over obstacles), and the grab might be another challenge. If it matters, figure the average human or human-like character moves about 10 yards or meters per turn.

### EXAMPLE

## 7. INCREASING THE DIFFICULTY

As characters move through a story, they'll face more demanding puzzles and tougher opponents. Major challenges could happen at any time – the beginning of a story, when characters find themselves facing a new, unexpected danger, in the middle of a story, just when the characters are beginning to think they've got the situation under control, or at the end of the story, when the characters face their worst enemy or their greatest fear.

A player can choose to increase the difficulty of a task or conflict challenge whenever it is his character's turn to face a challenge, as long as he has at least one Reward Marker to risk. If he has no Reward Markers on the "Reward Markers" space on his character sheet, he cannot increase the difficulty of a challenge. A player cannot choose to increase the difficulty of a decision challenge, since he runs no risk of failure in that type of challenge.

Only the player facing a challenge can choose to increase the difficulty of that challenge, though the Narrator and other players can encourage him to do so (if it's a tense moment in the story, if the character is face-to-face with his arch-enemy, and so on). A player has to say he's increasing the difficulty of a challenge before he rolls the dice – the character either increases the difficulty of a challenge, or faces a standard challenge (see above). You don't ever have to increase the difficulty of a challenge if you don't want to, even if other players do when their characters are being challenged.

If a player increases the difficulty, he describes how much harder the challenge actually is for his character, building on what the Narrator has described. For example, a character increasing the difficulty on a task challenge of "Hacking into a secret government computer" might say his character knows the computer has a program that will alert government agents if his hacking skills can't do the job. A character increasing the difficulty on a conflict challenge of "Picking up a woman at the bar" might say his character knows the woman isn't interested in him, but he wants to prove he can win the heart of any girl.

### Rolling The Dice

If the difficulty is increased on a task challenge, the player **succeeds** if the dice total is **11 or more**.

The player **fails** if the dice total is **10 or less**.

If the difficulty is increased on a conflict challenge, the Narrator rolls one die and adds +8 to create a dice total.

Like a standard conflict challenge, the Narrator adds a Trait Level for the opponent's Trait that best fits the challenge.

The player **succeeds** if the total is **equal to or greater than the Narrator's dice total**.

The player **fails** if the total is **less than the Narrator's dice total**.

As with a standard task or conflict challenge, after the dice are rolled, the player whose character faced a more difficult challenge describes what happens to his character and everyone else in the scene.

If he **succeeded** at the challenge, the Reward Marker the player risked by increasing the difficulty of the challenge stays put in the "Reward Markers" space on his character sheet; the character took a risk and made it. The player picks up two Reward Markers and puts them in the "Reward Markers" space on his character sheet. The Narrator who presented the challenge to the character picks up one Reward Marker and puts it in the "Reward Markers" space on his character sheet. Increasing the difficulty has benefits for everyone. If the player rolls doubles, he picks up an additional Reward Marker, but the Narrator does not collect another Reward Marker.

If he **failed** the challenge, the player and the Narrator for that turn each remove one Reward Marker from the "Reward Marker" spaces on their character sheets and put them in the pile in the middle of the table. Since the player could not increase a challenge without having a Reward Marker to risk, he will always lose a Reward Marker. If the Narrator for the turn does not have any Reward Markers to lose, he does not have to give up a Reward Marker to the pile in the center of

the table. As with a standard challenge, rolling doubles but failing the challenge does not allow the player to pick up another Reward Marker.

### *EXAMPLE*

## **8. Characters vs. Characters**

In most settings, the characters are a team of heroes, each using their individual skills and abilities (in the form of Traits) to reach their goals. However, each character also has a distinct personality, and that may lead to characters arguing or even fighting with one another. This shouldn't happen too often, as the object of the game is to have fun telling a story, not for your character to be superior to another. Then again, maybe you're playing a game in a "soap opera"-type setting, where all the characters ever do is try to seduce and swindle one another.

All character vs. character challenges are conflicts, but the Narrator does not roll dice. Instead, he names two players whose characters will face off against one another. Both players roll dice, and both can use a Trait that fits the action they are describing to create dice totals like normal. Characters only face each other in standard challenges. Players cannot choose to increase the difficulty in a character vs. character conflict – other characters are already powerful opponents!

The winner of the challenge is the one with the highest dice total. If there's a tie, roll again.

## **9. Harm and lost Traits**

When he is Narrator, or after facing a challenge, a player may say his character, other characters, their enemies or just innocent bystanders are harmed or injured. If it makes the story more interesting and exciting, that "damage" may affect a character's Traits, causing the character to temporarily lose the use of a Trait. Make a note on the character sheet when a Trait is lost.

If the Narrator declares another player's character loses a use of a Trait, that player has to agree. If he does not, the Trait is not lost.

For example, the Narrator might say a character with a trusty six-shooter revolver (using the Body Trait) runs out of bullets or drops his gun. If he faces a challenge where the trusty six-shooter would be useful, the player can't add the Trait Level to dice totals until the character is able to reload, or when he picks the gun up off the ground. If the player wanted his character to ride a horse, though, he would still be able to use his Body Trait Level for that dice total, since riding a horse doesn't involve using the character's six-shooter.

Any Narrator can say a character's use of a lost Trait has been recovered, as long as it makes sense in his scene (and the player who lost the Trait agrees). Since a character with fewer ways of using a Trait is slightly less effective than other characters, a Trait should probably not be "lost" for too long.

### *Killing A Character*

Even if a Narrator describes a conflict as an attack using nuclear weapons, or a point-blank assault from a gun-wielding foe, only the player controlling a character can decide if his character actually dies. In both of those examples, it would make sense for the story if the character is at least seriously wounded (even if he succeeds at a challenge). But if the player wants his character to stay alive, the character will continue in the game. The player will need to explain how his character survived, however.

If a player chooses to "kill off" his character, he can do so at any time – give that player a chance to give his character a moving dying speech and a dramatic ending. The player can take a few minutes and create a new character using the rules in this book, introducing that character to the story whenever it's appropriate (next time he is Narrator, or if another player decides to do so and the player with the new character agrees).

All of the Reward Markers on the dead character's character sheet are out of the game when the character is removed; the new character starts the game with one Reward Marker. Place it on the "Reward Markers" space on the character sheet, and put four more Reward Markers into the pile in the center of the table.

Alternately, a player with a dead character can simply continue on as a Narrator, without a new character, when it's his turn. A player making this choice can still earn Reward Markers, but can't use them to increase the difficulty of challenges. A player without a character can't be selected to face a challenge, either.

#### **IV. REWARD MARKERS**

Reward Markers are the result of daring escapes, clever dialogue, and the vital information that saves the day. Each game session begins with one Reward Marker on the "Earned Reward Markers" space on each player's character sheet. The other Reward Markers go in a pile in the middle of the table, an equal number for each player. The more markers, the longer the game. A standard game uses five per player, one on each character sheet and four in the middle of the table.

There are five ways to earn Reward Markers, but a player does not have to collect a Reward Marker in any of these situations, if he does not want to.

1. *Success At A Standard Challenge*: A player earns one Reward Marker when his character faces a standard task or conflict challenge, and succeeds.
2. *Rolling Doubles*: When you succeed at any kind of challenge where you have to determine a dice total (a standard task challenge, a standard conflict challenge, or a task or conflict challenge where you have decided to increase the difficulty), you can pick up a Reward Marker from the pile if the results on both dice are the same (you "roll doubles").
3. *Increasing The Difficulty*: A player picks up two Reward Markers from the pile if he increases the difficulty of a task or a conflict challenge, and succeeds. A Narrator picks up one Reward Marker if the player succeeds.
4. *Making The Game Fun*: Any time a player makes what you think is an interesting, exciting and fun contribution to the story, take a Reward Marker from the pile and hand it to the player. Since players are able to make suggestions at any time, any player can earn a Reward Marker this way; that player doesn't have to be Narrator, the player whose character is currently facing a challenge, or even a player who has a character in the scene.

A player can only earn one Reward Marker per contribution, though; if he says something that makes the whole group laugh, and all of them reach for the Reward Marker pile, the player only takes one of the markers. A player cannot give his own character a Reward Marker in this way – it has to be given freely by another player.

5. *Achieving Your Goal*: A player can pick up a Reward Marker from the pile for his own character if the character achieves the goal listed on his character sheet. Only that character's player can decide if the character has achieved the goal, or if he's close, but not quite there.

If the character has achieved his goal, it's time to set a new goal. A player can only earn one Reward Marker per game session for achieving a goal; character goals are motivation to develop the character's personality, not to score points.

Whenever a player earns a Reward Marker, he places it on the "Reward Markers" space on his character sheet. A character can earn any number of Reward Markers during the game, as long as there are still markers to pick up from the middle of the table. A character can have any number of Reward Markers on the "Reward Markers" space on the character sheet.

#### *EXAMPLE*

When there are no more Reward Markers in the center of the table, the game is almost over.

#### **V. ENDING THE GAME**

When there are no Reward Markers in the center of the table (every Marker has been collected by a player), it's time to bring the story to a close. Each player gets one more chance to be Narrator, describing a scene as usual. Characters will still face challenges during the final turn. It's also a good time to increase the difficulty, and collect those last Reward Markers. Have the ultimate showdown with the evil villain. Finally work up the courage to tell your secret crush you love her. Get evidence of the Senator's crooked dealings on the top of every political blog and newspaper in the country. It's up to you to decide what happens.



A player can choose to “pass” his turn as Narrator at the end of the game; maybe another player came up with a really good description of what happened to the heroes, and there’s no need to say anything else. On the last turn, any Narrator can end his scene description with the words, “The End,” instead of setting up a challenge for a character, but make sure all the other players have had a last chance to be Narrator or “pass” before finally ending the game.

If the players enjoy their characters and want to play again, make sure the last Narrator can end his scene description with the phrase, “To Be Continued…” instead of “The End.” If you decide to use the same characters in another game session but one player can’t make it, don’t worry. Just make sure at the start of that game session, the first Narrator explains why the character isn’t around (maybe he was called away on a family emergency, is in the hospital, or he just had to take some time for “his own thing.”).

If there aren’t any Reward Markers left in the center of the table but the players want to continue the game, simply add more. Take them from the “Reward Markers” space on each player’s character sheet, or bring them from outside the game. Try to add at least two markers per player. Put all the new Reward Markers in the center of the table.

### **Picking A Winner (Optional)**

If all the players enjoyed telling a story and like what happened to their characters (or at least most of it), they win. The game is meant for the players to work together, not compete for first place.

That’s an unusual idea for players used to more traditional kinds of games. If the group must have a single player as the “winner,” have each player count their Reward Markers after the last Narrator takes his final turn. The player with the most Reward Markers has the character who had the biggest adventure, and the one that can be considered the game winner. If there’s a tie, both (or all) of those characters win the game.

*At the end of the game, Keiko (Anne’s character) has five Reward Markers on her character sheet. Anne has a “score” of 5 for the game.*

## **VI. ADVANCING CHARACTERS**

If you’ve ever seen a movie sequel, you know your favorite characters return from the previous film more developed: they’ve built up their skills, earned a fortune, found true love, or something similar. Your New Worlds character can do the same thing.

After a game session ends, each player can choose to improve one of his character’s Traits by one Level. A Trait Level can be increased above 3, to a maximum of Level 5.

Try to advance a Trait that was used in a major way in the story you just told. If your character used one of his Traits several times during the game but another Trait only once, it would make sense to improve that first Trait, though you don’t have to. This represents your character learning and growing from his experiences.

### *EXAMPLE*

## **VARIANT GAME RULES**

All of these rules put emphasis on a certain part of the game – the telling a story aspect of Narrating, using props to illustrate the game, and so on. Before the game session begins, talk with the other players about which variant rules you want to use in the game, if any. Each game session can use a different set of rules, if the players wish, though they’ll need to stick with a rule throughout the session, and all the players will have to use the same set of variant rules.

### *The Single Narrator*

In a traditional role playing game, one player is the Narrator for the entire game, and doesn’t play a character of his own. He’s usually called the “Game Master” or “Storyteller.” The other players take on the roles of the characters. They face challenges, but it’s up to the Narrator to decide the plot of the adventure, and how to make characters fit into the storyline he’s already created. You can play New Worlds in this style, though it calls for a lot more work on the Narrator’s part, since he’s responsible for creating the entire storyline, and managing all the people, places and creatures the characters interact with.

### *Storytelling*

You can change the rules to eliminate the dice and Reward Markers entirely, by making every challenge a decision challenge, even the ones that would be task or conflict challenges in the standard rules. This makes New Worlds less of a game and more of an exercise in improvisational theater or creative writing.

Since you're not collecting Reward Markers in this version of the game, the players will have to agree on a time to end the game (maybe when the story comes to a natural ending point, or at a certain time on the clock).

### *Miniatures and Map*

In some games, especially in settings where characters are often moving around and fighting, it may help to have the Narrator and players illustrate a scene by drawing on a piece of paper, a white board or a computer screen, or using action figures, miniature figurines, or other game playing pieces on a map or board on the game table. These props can help illustrate where characters and their opponents are in relation to one another.

If you are using miniature figures (or larger figurines like action figures or dolls), refer to the appropriate scale below to find how far your figure move in one turn. You can move in any direction (including diagonally).

- 3.5 inch-tall action figures: Roll one die and multiply by 2 to find the number of inches (or game board spaces) the character moves.
- 12 inch-tall figures (dolls): Roll one die and multiply by 3 to find the number of inches (or game board spaces) the character moves.
- Board game: Roll one die and move that many spaces on the game board.
- Table top: Roll one die and move that many inches (multiply by 2.5 (round up) to determine movement in centimeters).

Obstructions like walls or uneven ground may reduce the number of inches or spaces a character can move on a turn. Other creatures and vehicles may also move more or fewer inches or spaces on a turn.

Instead of rolling a die, players could decide that human and human-sized characters can move 6 inches or spaces each turn, since most game maps found at hobby game stores use the scale of one inch or space equals five feet in the "real world." You can draw out a game map by using 1 inch squares, or even grab a chessboard to use as a makeshift map.

### *Open-Ended Dice*

When your character faces a challenge, reroll each die with a result of 6, and include the new result in the dice total. If the rerolled die is another 6, roll again. Keep going until you don't roll a 6. Using this variant rule, your character's dice total may be much higher than 8, 11, or anything the Narrator rolls. Don't forget to describe your success at the challenge as something amazing! If you roll more than one 6 when rerolling dice, you can pick up an additional Reward Marker for "rolling doubles."

### *Critical Success and Critical Failure*

When your character is facing any kind of task or conflict challenge, if you roll a 6 and 6 on the dice, your character has scored a "critical success." You automatically succeed at the challenge, even if it's a conflict challenge and the Narrator's dice total was higher than your dice total. In the story, a critical success means something really fantastic has happened. A character singing in front of an audience may give such a good performance that he'll be approached by a record company, or a character trying to get his spaceship back to life may make just the right tweak – one that makes the ship fly better than ever.

On the other hand, if you roll a 1 and 1 on the dice, your character has scored a "critical failure." You automatically fail at the action. In the story, a critical failure means something really bad has happened to your character. A character on the run from a pack of dogs might trip, fall, and sprain his ankle, or a character trying to lift a man's wallet might get caught – by a police officer.

### *Hit Points*

In many role playing games, characters are designed to be skilled warriors. They carry weapons and armor, and have various talents and abilities devoted to hitting and killing enemies. The New Worlds game is about telling stories, not taking lives, but players may wish to add more detail to violent challenges.

Using this optional rule, a character's physical, mental and spiritual health is measured in the form of Hit Points. A character loses Hit Points when he or she is injured in some way, but Hit Points represent more than just blood loss and broken bones. Hit Points are a gauge of your character's life force: his physical and mental health and well-being. It measures not just a character's ability to survive a fight, but also his willingness to keep going, his sanity and even the condition of his soul. Any time a character is in a struggle with someone (or something) else, he risks losing Hit Points.

Players will need to add the words "Hit Points" to their character sheets. Every character starts with 5 Hit Points.

If a task or conflict challenge is described as one that can cause harm to a character, determine success or failure as you normally do using the New Worlds rules. On a success, his Hit Points are not affected. Whenever your character fails at a challenge, and you describe the results of that failure as harm to your character, however, reduce the character's Hit Points by 1, or more if the challenge is one that results in significant harm, like being shot point-blank, or being swallowed whole by a raging dinosaur.

If your character's Hit Points fall to 0 (zero) or less, he's immediately out of action. What that means exactly depends on the kind of damage the character suffered that wiped away his last few Hit Points. If a gang of thugs hold your character's head underwater for several minutes, his Hit Points will gradually fade away. When he falls to 0 (zero), he's been drowned. A boxer getting pummeled by his opponent may fall unconscious when his Hit Points disappear.

Remember, Hit Points don't just measure physical damage – a teenage girl turned down by every boy she asks to the prom will also lose Hit Points, and when she reaches 0, she'll be too depressed to do anything more than sit in a corner and mope (and that explains why she might say, "I have no life."). All damage is applied to Hit Points, no matter what caused it; a character could suffer after being stabbed by a knife, and also when the attacker carrying that knife makes a cutting remark about his cowardice. It's possible to take the bouncer at a bar out of action just by making enough wisecracks, though it's unlikely your character will have enough time to come up with that many jokes before the bouncer decks him (and decreases your character's Hit Points).

If your character's Hit Points fall to 0 (zero), you can also choose to make your character is unconscious or even dead. In the standard New Worlds rules, you can decide when your character is actually dead, but if you use this optional rule, your character is out of action when his Hit Points reach 0, no matter what. It's still up to the player if his character is actually killed. The player can also choose to have his character die at any time, even if the character still has Hit Points remaining.

Injury may also cause a character to temporarily lose one or more Traits, as described in the rules above.

Characters can recover Hit Points, up to the starting Hit Point amount of 5, by succeeding at task challenges to apply first aid, drink magical healing potions, give the other characters a pep talk, and so on, or simply when a Narrator says a character has regained health or energy.

With this optional rule, opponents will have Hit Points, too. The average person (people who aren't the heroes and major villains of an adventure) has only 2 or 3 Hit Points – they can stay in the action for a little while, but not too long. Hit Point amounts for an opponent may change from Narrator to Narrator, depending on how important the foe is to the story. The Narrator who determined the opponent's Hit Points also determines what happens when the opponent's Hit Points fall to 0 or less. Opponents rarely recover Hit Points – they're in the story to cause trouble for the heroes, not to be the heroes of their own stories.

Mooks are the nameless minions of a master villain – the army of troops all in identical uniforms, the giggling girls who look and act just like the nasty head cheerleader, and so on. Their role in the story is to slow down the heroes, and give the bad guy time to come up with a plan. Mooks usually have 3 or less Hit Points a piece, and often only 1 Hit Point each. Nearly any successful conflict challenge results in their defeat. They're not supposed to be a real challenge, after all.

Significant enemies, like powerful robots, gang leaders and fierce dragons, will have 10, 20, or more Hit Points. They usually don't recover their Hit Points – but a villain who reaches 0 Hit Points is likely to just be unconscious, or able to make a lucky escape before he's killed. After all, a good bad guy is worth facing again.

*Slowing down advancement*

If you're able to get a group of players together regularly, you may find your character advancing quickly. To keep your characters from getting more powerful than their setting can handle, players may decide to simply slow down the rate they improve a Trait's Level – say, once every two or three game sessions, instead of at the end of each game session. You'll have to keep track of how many game sessions have passed since your character last advanced.

## CREATING A CHARACTER

There are two ways to select a character to play in the game.

1. Pick one of the pre-created characters listed on the character sheets in the following chapters. Feel free to change the character's name and description to something you prefer. If you're more comfortable with the game rules, go ahead and adjust the character's goal, connections and Traits or Trait Levels, if you like. Suggestions on ways to do this are found below.
2. You can create a character from scratch. Grab a blank character sheet, a pencil or pen, and write in whatever you would like. A blank character sheet, free for you to copy, is available at the back of this rulebook and on the website. If you're a beginner to the New Worlds game, try the introductory character sheet, which shows you how to determine a dice total, the numbers you need to roll when facing challenges, and how you can earn and spend Reward Markers. If you've been playing for a while, you might want to use the standard character sheet, which has more space for you to describe your character.

Before filling out your character sheet, though, talk with the other players about the game's setting and tone. Keep in mind the kind of characters that are appropriate, and come up with a concept for your character – an idea of the character you want to play. Think about not just his skills, possessions and powers, but also his appearance, personality and attitude, and how he fits in with the other characters in the group. Borrow a characteristic you've seen in a character from a book, TV show or movie. Maybe you could play a character just like your real-life self, except with the ability to cast magic spells. Whatever you decide, keep that concept in mind as you start creating your character.

*Erik decides to create a new character for an game in the “Apostle Strategy” setting, Davis’ cousin Taylor. He’s a skilled basketball player – in fact, Erik decides, he’s an NBA star – and though Taylor isn’t an Apostle himself, he knows about them thanks to Davis. Taylor’s a connection: he’s a high-profile guy who can use his name to keep the public on the side of the Apostles. And he has money.*

Let’s look at each area of the character sheet:

**1. Name:** Simply put, this is your character’s name. It can be his given name, a code name his superiors use, a favorite nickname, or several of these. To make the game world seem a little more real, the other players may refer to you by your character name during the game, especially when they’re Narrator.

Make sure it’s not too long or difficult to say, and make sure it’s appropriate. “Joe The Jackalope” might fit in a setting where all the characters are cartoon animals, but “Sir Joe” probably won’t work in the world of King Arthur and his knights – unless the other players agree that it’s okay. You’ll also probably want to avoid “famous” character names, like “Harry Potter” or “George Washington,” unless you’re intentionally playing a well-known character.

*Erik can’t think of a last name just yet, but decides to nickname Taylor “Bullseye” for his accuracy on the basketball court.*

**2. Player:** Write your real-life name here, just to keep track of whose character sheet is whose. At the end of a game session, you could hang on to your character sheet, or one player might collect it along with the rulebook and all the other game materials.

**3. Quote:** Invent a clever phrase for your character, or give an example of the kind of thing he might say. You can change your character’s quote after playing the game for a while, especially if your character develops a catch phrase, something he’ll say at least once per game session.

Borrowing a quote from a movie or TV show is a good way to describe your character – if your character sounds like a famous hero, he probably acts like that hero too.

*Erik always liked that saying from the movie “Terminator 2”: “Hasta la vista, baby!”*

**4. Setting:** This is the game setting you and the other players are using for the game. It can be one from later in this book, or be one of the group's own creation. Setting can refer to a specific game environment (like "Medical Miracles") or just give a general description of the game world (like "1920s Chicago").

*Erik writes "Apostle Strategy" in this space on Taylor's character sheet, and puts "Detroit" next to it, since he overheard the other players talking about making their next game about Apostles in New York City.*

**5. Description:** This is where you present your character's looks and personality. Start with your character concept, and when you have determined your character's Traits (see below), explain how they fit with the character. Your character's description can be as long or short as you like; it may grow, the longer you play the character. "Life-changing" events may also adjust the character's description. Think about things like:

- ✧ **Appearance:** what your character looks like physically. Attractive? Rugged? Short? Well-built? Missing a finger? Green eyes? What kind of clothes does he like? Is there a specific piece of clothing he's always wearing? Does he style his hair a certain way? Does he even have hair?
- ✧ **Background:** your character's personal history. Where he grew up, what he was doing before the story begins, the kind of education he had, and so on. Characters could have attended school, been taught by a mystic high on a mountaintop, been born into wealth and status, fallen into poverty, spent years in military service, been the subject of government tests that provided super-human abilities, or anything else you can think of.
- ✧ **Behavior:** your character's attitude and personality. Friendly? Silent? Aggressive? Loves the finer things in life? Always giving opinions where they aren't welcome? Since you, the player, will be describing what your character is doing as you play the game, the behavior you write down here should be what you're actually going to play. If your character is described as "nosy," be nosy – keep trying to find out what other characters are doing, go places you've been forbidden to go, and so on. If you're not ready to jump into an entirely different role, describe a character like your real-life self.

If you've got an artistic bent, there is also space here to draw a picture of your character, or use an image from a book or the Internet.

*Erik already has some of his character's description together – Taylor is a NBA star, he's wealthy, etc. He decides that Taylor grew up in California before his move to Detroit, so he's laid back and always seems to have a healthy tan. He's in good shape, and when he's not on the basketball court he likes the celebrity lifestyle. Taylor would be at a nightclub every night, if he didn't keep getting mixed up in adventures with the other players' characters!*

**6. Goal:** What gets your character out of bed in the morning (or ends his quiet hours, if he doesn't sleep)? It could be something broad, like "seek revenge on criminals like the ones that killed his wife," or something a more specific, like "make sure his three daughters find decent, hard-working men to marry."

Though you earn a Reward Marker for achieving a goal, you don't have to come up with a goal that will definitely be met some day – "make a lot of money" can be the springboard for a lot of stories. Your character's goal may be the opposite of another character's goal. That too can lead to interesting stories as both players try to achieve their goals, and still face challenges that benefit one another.

#### *Creating a character's Goal*

Select one goal and write it down. You can change your goal at any time, but be sure to let the other players know your new goal so they can work it into the story when they are Narrator. You must select a new goal if your old goal is achieved, and you pick up a Reward Marker for it, but only once per game session. You can only have one goal at a time.

*Taylor wants to help his cousin stay away from the Apostle Strategy, and he'd like to be in the NBA Hall of Fame one day too. But his real goal in life is to "Be the center of attention." Erik probably won't pick up a Reward Marker for achieving that goal, unless Taylor grabs headlines around the world somehow. But that goal will make for interesting stories. Taylor always wants to draw a crowd – good if the characters want to get the word out about something, bad if they're trying to hide.*

**EXAMPLE GOALS:** Win the big race, find out what happened to your missing father, find true love, finish your tour of duty, get a better job

**7. Connections:** Connections describe other important individuals in a character's life: loved ones, pets, co-workers, patrons, business associates, mentors, etc. Connections can also be organizations, like a government agency, an international corporation, a ship's crew or a sports team.

Connections, like goals, will be used by Narrators to create scenes. Say the characters are police officers who need to get the scoop on a mysterious newcomer. A Narrator says they go to their local bar, where they find an informant: Jimmy, a gangster one of the characters has been using as a link to the criminal underground. Jimmy is listed as one of that character's connections. In this case, the informant could have been anyone, but the Narrator draws the characters a little deeper into the story by using an individual they already know. Maybe every time the characters need an informant, Jimmy is brought into the plot, no matter who is the Narrator.

It's assumed the characters were already familiar with one another before the story starts (for example, they're all from the same family, or they went through basic training together), or are meeting for the first time as the story begins (maybe they all sat at the same table at the tavern, and decided to work together). As a result, characters are never connections with one another, though they might have connections in common (like the sister of one character, who is dating another character, or the martial arts master who taught the entire group).

You can change your character's connections or add new connections at any time, as long as it makes sense in the story. Though there are two dots underneath "Connections" on the character sheet, you can have any number of connections at the same time, as long as each is written down on the sheet. Keep in mind, though, that not everyone is a connection; your character may see the same bank teller each week when he goes to cash his paycheck, but the bank teller isn't going to have much to contribute to your character's story – unless the bank teller is also secretly your liaison with a secret spy agency.

As with goals, if you change a connection, tell the other players so they can use that information when they're Narrator.

#### *Creating a character's Connections*

When creating a character, decide on two connections, and write each next to a dot in the "Connections" area of the character sheet. Some examples are listed below.

*Davis is connected to Taylor, but as he's also a player's character, he doesn't count (even if Taylor is used in a game and Davis isn't). Taylor also has "Friend Who's A Doctor" listed as a Trait. He already has links to other people, even before Erik writes down Taylor's connections. He decides one connection is Taylor's business manager, and another is his high school coach, who always seems to have a piece of good advice.*

**EXAMPLE CONNECTIONS:** Boss, husband, translator, brother-in-law who's a firefighter, spirit of a long-dead ancestor, chauffeur, rich eccentric aunt, secret agent "handler"

**8. Traits And Trait Levels:** Traits are what you use to play the game. As you've seen above, every character has the same three Traits.

- Body, representing your character's strength and speed.
- Mind, representing your character's intelligence and spirituality.
- Social, representing your character's skill at dealing with others.

Your character's Traits are measured with Levels, numbers representing your character's ability with that Trait. There are six Levels of Traits. Each also has related terms that may help you better describe your character. For example, you could describe your character's Social Trait as "Level 3," or you could say he is "above average" in social situations. Your "weekend warrior" character might have a Body Trait Level of 1.

**LEVEL 0 Unheroic** (below-average, real world, ordinary, etc.): Characters do not have any Traits at this Level, but the average person on the street – i.e., not a player character – has Traits of 0 (zero). Characters are the heroes in a game session. They start the story better than the average person.

LEVEL 1 Developing (dabbler, low-level, mild, slight, okay, etc.): The character has some natural but untrained talent with the Trait, or is just beginning to understand what the Trait does for him.

LEVEL 2 Average (fair, mediocre, good, typical, etc.): The character is reasonably competent at any common use of the Trait.

LEVEL 3 Great (above average, very good, professional, capable, proficient, trained, etc.): A character with a Trait at this level is better than the average person, and can be counted on to perform well when the Trait comes into play. The character can use the Trait competently in almost any situation, and can even use it to make a living.

LEVEL 4 Excellent (experienced, expert, high-level, outstanding, remarkable, etc.): A Trait at this level is one the character is known for among his friends and family. If it's a skill, the character is a well-trained professional or a talented amateur. He's comfortable teaching others at least one use of the Trait, if it's the kind that can be taught. Characters do not begin the game with this Trait Level, but can improve a Trait to this Level after playing the game for a while.

LEVEL 5 Incredible (amazing, mastery, superb, among the best, etc.): A character with a Trait at this level has a high degree of natural ability, training and experience. Depending on the Trait, the character could be among the best in a city, nation or even planet at that Trait. He may have created new and original uses for the Trait. Even strangers think of this Trait when they hear the character's name. Characters do not begin the game with this Trait Level, but can improve a Trait to this Level after playing the game for a while.

### *Creating a character's Trait Levels*

When you're creating your character, assign Level 3 to one of your Traits, Level 2 to a second Trait and Level 1 to the third Trait. If you wish, you can also write down which uses of those Traits your character is best at, to help you decide when to increase the difficulty in a challenge. Write down each of your character's Trait Levels on the character sheet.

### *Spending Trait Levels (Optional)*

Alternately, you can have 6 Trait Levels, assigned to Traits in any amounts you wish. Each Trait must have a Level, and it must be between 0 (zero) and 5 – you're not limited to a starting Trait Level of 1, 2 or 3 using this optional rule. Any Trait Levels you don't spend on your character's Traits are lost.

### *Adding Traits (Optional)*

Some game settings might call for adding or changing the Traits – for example, a world where the characters are all professional wrestlers, boxers and martial artists might be a good place to have a "Fight" Trait in addition to the Body Trait. A game setting full of high-end business deals could call for a "Negotiation" Trait, since some characters might be good negotiators but not necessarily brilliant (Mind Trait) or charming (Social Trait). If the players agree, all characters in the game can have one or more additional Traits, which are used just like the Body, Mind and Social Traits when creating challenges. Simply write down the Trait name and its related Level on the character sheet.

Assign another Level 2 to Traits when creating a character with an additional Trait. A science fiction game setting might have five Traits: the new Psychic Power and Spaceships, in addition to the Body, Mind and Social Traits. In this case, players assign Level 3 to one Trait, Level 1 to another Trait, and Level 2 to the remaining three Traits. The new Traits don't have to be assigned Level 2.

If you're using the optional Spending Trait Levels rule above, each character has 6 Trait Levels +2 Trait Levels per additional Trait.

### *The Basket Weaving Acrobat*

Since characters only have three Traits, there's a good chance that two or more characters in a game will have similar Trait Levels. If one player says his character is a master basket weaver, the character could have a Body Trait Level of 3, representing the character's skill at manipulating tiny strips of wood. Another player might have an Olympic-class acrobat, also with a Body Trait Level of 3. Does that mean the basket weaver has the same chance of getting a perfect score on the balance beam? The New Worlds rules say he does, since both characters add a Trait Level of 3 to any dice total using the Body Trait. But it's up to the players to decide which uses of those Traits matter to their characters, and when the rule really applies.

In this case, it's unlikely that a Narrator would have the basket weaving character face a challenge of "competing on the balance beam," especially if the Olympic acrobat character was available to face the challenge. It simply doesn't make



sense for the story the players are trying to tell. Even if the basket weaver does face the balance beam challenge, though, the player can still be true to the character he's created, and increase the difficulty for the challenge.

### *Money and possessions*

It's assumed that your character has enough money to cover his living expenses with a little, or a lot, left over. He's also assumed to have enough clothing and food, a place to live, transportation (a car, a horse, etc.), and the materials he needs to do his job – computers, weapons, specialized tools, etc. If your character doesn't carry those items with him or have them back at home or his office or headquarters, he'll be able to pick them up whenever a Narrator adds them to the story.

### *Languages*

Your character begins the game already fluent in speaking, writing and reading his native language, as well as any other languages the players agree your character can have. Most of the time, though, characters in fiction seem to understand one another without much difficulty, even if one character ends up translating, or another only communicates through body language or computerized beeps and clicks.

*So far, all the characters in the game have started with three Traits, so **Erik** follows suit for “Bullseye” Taylor. “NBA Star” is his first Trait (a Major Trait), which covers a lot of ground – basketball skill, a high-profile lifestyle, millions of dollars in the bank. That frees up room for the other Traits. **Erik** knows his character will get into trouble with the Apostle Strategy (that seems to be what happens in every game session!), so he decides Taylor might need to know “Tae Kwon Do” (also a Major Trait) to keep himself safe. Taylor also has a “Friend Who’s A Doctor” (Minor Trait) thanks to his time as a spokesperson for the American Red Cross, another Trait that will fit a challenge if one of the characters gets hurt.*

**Reward Markers:** This space is used during a game session. Leave it empty.

## NEW WORLDS RULES REFERENCE

The **Narrator** describes a scene that meets these requirements:

1. It makes sense within the setting of the game.
2. It “flows,” or makes sense following what happened on the previous Narrator’s turn.
3. It does not permanently eliminate a player’s character or any other major friend, enemy or object.
4. It introduces a task, conflict or decision challenge for one of the characters. If it is a task or conflict challenge, the Trait used for the challenge also needs to be chosen.

### **Facing a task or conflict challenge**

The player facing the challenge:

1. Rolls two dice and adds them together to create a dice total;
2. adds the Trait Level of the Trait the Narrator selected for the challenge to the dice total.

For a task challenge:

The player **succeeds** if the dice total is **8 or more**. The player collects one Reward Marker, and a second if he rolls doubles.

The player **fails** if the dice total is **7 or less**.

For a conflict challenge, the Narrator for this turn rolls one die and adds 4 to create a dice total.

The player **succeeds** if the total is **equal to or greater than the Narrator’s dice total**. The player collects one Reward Marker, and a second if he rolls doubles.

The player **fails** if the total is **less than the Narrator’s dice total**.

### **Increasing the difficulty**

A player whose character is facing a challenge, and who has a Reward Marker to risk, can increase the difficulty of the challenge.

For a task challenge:

The player **succeeds** if the dice total is **11 or more**. The player collects two Reward Markers, and a third if he rolls doubles, and the Narrator who presented the challenge collects one Reward Marker.

The player **fails** if the dice total is **10 or less**. The player and Narrator who presented the challenge each lose one Reward Marker.

For a conflict challenge, the Narrator for this turn rolls one die and adds 8 to create a dice total.

The player **succeeds** if the total is **equal to or greater than the Narrator’s dice total**. The player collects two Reward Markers, and a third if he rolls doubles, and the Narrator who presented the challenge collects one Reward Marker.

The player **fails** if the total is **less than the Narrator’s dice total**. The player and Narrator who presented the challenge each lose one Reward Marker.

### **Advancing a character**

Add 1 to one of your character’s Trait Levels. The highest Trait Level is 5.

### **Character creation**

1. Determine your character’s name, quote, description, goal and two connections.
2. Assign Trait Levels 1, 2 and 3 to the Body, Mind and Social Traits in any order you wish.
3. Put one Reward Marker on your character sheet. Place the other four in the center of the table.