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Dodeca System Open Source Rules (1.5)

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Let's Make a Game

So you've played the Dodeca System before (we presume), bought [There's a Game in this Book](#) and its companion materials (we hope) and you're ready to take it to the next level: making your own game world. Fantastic! We like to see people get industrious with their gaming, exploring all they can do with the rules to make something unique. That's why we've put out this collection of tools to help you forge ahead with your own rules.

What we need to establish, though, is what you have to do to make a new gaming world. If you're playing in more than just a generic fantasy setting (which we have to assume since otherwise you could just play [There's a Game in this Book](#) and *The World of Towne*), there's a lot to consider, from the socio-economic setup of the world to how the various races and populations interact (if you allow for more than just Humans as your only playable race -- if you're running an Earth-adjacent society, maybe you don't need more than one sentient race). You have to consider special powers (and how they'll effect everything in the world) as well as Skills, Equipment, Combat, Money... all of this is dependent upon the foundation you give yourself: your game world.

So let's take a moment to discuss creating a game world...

A World of Possibilities

While there are probably plenty of ways to create your own game world (depending on how foreign to us Earth-based humanoids you want to go), let's follow the easiest course we can: your game world, whatever it may be, will be Earth-like, with land, water, and an oxygen-rich atmosphere -- everything we normally expect in a habitable world. Your characters are likely going to be humanoid (probably humans will be a default race) with two arms and two legs (barring misfortune), and they'll have to do all the usual humanoid activities (eat, sleep, breathe, etc.).

It may seem silly to go over all this, but what if you

want to play shape-shifting spheroids who live on a world with a tiny, dense, inner "core" of land while the entirety of the "habitable" world is a thick, aqueous solution (like jelly)? Well, sure, you can do that, and you might have a great adventure in mind... but we would be willing to bet at least a few of your players will be lost trying to navigate this society (let alone even visualizing it while playing). Characters living in that world might have different needs. They certainly wouldn't build civilizations the way we do, and there wouldn't be any of the adventure tropes we've come to expect from the genre (there wouldn't be a dungeon crawl to play through since dungeons, let alone any other kind of firm, physical structure, would be impossible to build here).

No, for most game worlds, let's keep it simple. Earth-like, humanoid, playable.

With a basic world in mind, you'll then want to think about the time period you'll have your characters running through. Unless you're actually playing on Earth (which is totally allowed, and it will certainly make finding maps of areas to play in much easier since we humans have done a good job researching and documenting our world), don't concern yourself overly much with specific years (at least, not until you feel like writing a history of the world). Instead, think of it like the ages of Earth: Stone Age, Iron Age, Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, Post-Apocalyptic Future, or any other era in-between. There are a couple of reasons to make this decision:

For one, the technology level will determine what equipment your people will be able to buy. That's an obvious, easy-to-understand issue since Bronze Age warriors won't be able to buy steel swords (for example). The level of technology you allow will determine weapons, armor, items, food quality, medicines, and on and on.

Just think about the fact that a character could get an infection (from a mortal wound, if you feel like doing that). Without proper medicine (which comes with a more advanced civilization), that infection could become lethal -- you'd either have to allow magic (which is another decision we'll

discuss soon), have the technology level be at a place where characters can get antibiotics, or just assume that mortal wounds will kill you because the technology level sucks and that's what you get for living in the wrong time period.

Along with technology though, everything else is affected by your time period. There is a whole range of socio-economic factors that you'd need to consider, from whether democracies exist (the ancient Greeks had a form of it, so you may have to consider if the Greeks have an analogue on your world) to if your societies live in feudal empires or can trust in the protection of your more civilized land (the Romans were able to spread peace and prosperity through their borders, but other time periods before and after weren't so lucky).

We cannot stress enough how important it is to know your time period and relative governmental setup before continuing your world building. Before you even begin to get into rules for Skills, Powers (and Magic), Equipment, and everything else, really think about your world and how civilization has grown; this will affect the setting your characters are dropping into. Trust us, someone will ask about it during the game, and if you don't have an answer ready you'll struggle to figure one out during play (we speak from experience).

Attributes

With your world established in some form (probably with some notes and maybe a little historical background to go along with), we can begin to establish stats for your characters. While we recommend you follow the standard point distribution (20 Attribute Points, 30 Skill Points, 4 Power Points, 20 Finishing Points), the exact numbers are open to you (as you're the Game Maker). It's best to stick close to these numbers just to avoid over-powering (or under-powering) your characters... but you're the boss.

Now, we're going to try to dissuade from adding more Attributes than the standard core, set, but before we do that we should probably establish what the core Attributes are:

Brains

How smart a character is -- book-smarts and intelligence. If you're using damaging Powers (discussed in a bit), we also recommend that each point of Brains should give the players a certain amount of points they can spend (and recharge) over time on their damaging Powers.

Brawn

How physically strong a character is. Brawn is combined with physical combat Skills to produce a character's Base Attack (combat is discussed very briefly later in this supplement).

Charm

The suaveness and social skill of a character. Charm combines with Vicious Taunt (if you're using that Skill) to produce a character's verbal Base Attack.

Cool

How well a character can keep calm under pressure. Cool combines with ranged combat Skills to produce a character's ranged Base Attack.

Notice

A character's ability to see information around them and process it quickly. Notice combines with a dice roll to produce a character's rank in the Order of Combat.

Savvy

The wisdom your character possesses. Can be used in instances when a character may otherwise succumb to their more gullible instincts. If you're using damaging Powers, we recommend using Savvy as a kind of bonus to damage dealt.

Speed

The reflexes and dexterity of a character. Speed combines with the Parry Skill (and its ilk) to produce a character's Base Defend.

Vitality

The physical fitness of a character. We recommend having each point of Vitality grant a certain number of Health Points (the damage characters can take and survive in combat situations).

One thing we don't recommend, though, is changing around the Attributes. These Attributes are the basic physical makeup of all your characters, and while they may have different points allotted for their stats (some may be stronger, some smarter, others better looking), the core Attributes are going to remain from one character to the next. It's hard to find a way to segment these down further than they already are, but combining (or straight removing) them doesn't make much sense either -- characters can be physical strong, yet slow, so while Brawn and Speed may both rely on muscles, they have very different functions. So please, we urge you, do not remove or combine Attributes.

We also recommend against adding new Attributes unless you really have to. For example, maybe you want to have cybernetics in a futuristic game, and would like a way to quantify how well people can use their cybernetics. It seems like a new Attribute, like Cy-Sense, could be in order.

And sure, from one perspective, maybe it does make sense. You can use Cy-Sense as a sort of Cool check, and if the characters get in a pinch they may have to roll their Cy to see if they retain complete control over their cybernetics.

Or maybe it's like their Brains stat. Maybe each point of Cy-Sense gives characters 5 points in cybernetic vitality. As they gain more cybernetic enhancements (and thus use up their cybernetic vitality points), the characters become less and less human, responding to situations more robotic-ly, until such time as they use up all their points and die (or something).

Sure, in both those situations you could do that... and yet, hopefully you've already seen why that's not necessary. Creating a Cy-Sense that acts like a Cool check isn't needed since characters already have a Cool stat. Why have another Attribute that does the same thing as a pre-existing one. It just dilutes the amount of points characters get (and unnecessarily divides their focus across stats).

In the case of a Brains-like stat, here we have the question why you have Cy-Sense when you have

Brains. Think about it: you have cybernetics, so whatever Magic would be able to do, Cybernetics can do instead. Are you going to have both? Is that necessary. And if you don't have both (cybernetics and Magic), then why not just allot Brains over cybernetics and remove the confusing Cy-Sense Attribute?

Honestly, in any situation where you can come up with a new Attribute, the existing ones will probably do the job you're looking for, and you don't have to add more points (or create new stats) to pull it off. It's so rare to find a situation where new Attributes are actually needed that we feel comfortable saying, definitively, don't make new Attributes. Just don't do it.

Stat Meters

Those that have played in the 1.0 version of Dodeca System might notice that the Looks Attribute wasn't among the stats listed (on page 3 of this supplement). That's because we discovered people just didn't roll for Looks (ourselves included). When we thought about it, Looks as a traditional Attribute no longer made sense, so it was removed from that section of the character sheet.

In its place, we've introduced stat meters, two long ovals that range from 0 to 120 (although they can go into negatives as needed) that represent social aspects of the character. These can be such stats as Looks (how pretty a character is) or Honor (the innate fame, and lawfulness, of a character), as well as Coolness (how awesome other people think you are), Rage (how angry you are and how much you have to fight to keep it down), or any one of a number of other stats you might come up with.

By and large these stats are used specifically for social settings, although there might be some instances where you come up with other ideas. Maybe there was an outbreak of Space Fly on a starbase and your characters are the team of agents sent in to clean it up. In this context, maybe an Infection meter makes sense -- the longer they go without decontamination, the

more likely they are to succumb to the plague. Go too far and they could die, or become space vampires, or something. There's a lot of potential in the meters, so all you have to do is be creative and think of a couple of stats you want to track.

One thing we will discourage, though, is having more than two meters on the sheet. Through testing we've found that two stat meters is about as many as players will tolerate before the sheet becomes too complex for a quick glance. In theory you could add more, but we really wouldn't recommend it.

Skills

While Attributes are the innate physical stats for your characters, Skills are stats and abilities they've trained in over time. [There's a Game in this Book](#) provided a comprehensive listing of Skills, (more than you might need), and we've taken the liberty of listing a fine selection of those Skills here (while adding a few suggested additions to aid in most scenarios). Use these to get your ideas flowing for the kinds of Skills you want to include in your game -- you don't have to include them all, but it's probably not a bad idea to allow most of them as optional Skills in case your players have specific situations in mind where these abilities are actually appropriate.

For example, an easy situation to envision is a player in a modern setting wanting to take Ride (a horse-based Skill). While some of us can ride horses now, there is probably a good portion of the population that has never ridden a horse (especially in a situation other than a birthday party pony ride). For most characters in a modern setting, Ride doesn't need to be on the sheet, so don't include it (just let your players choose it and write it in if need be). Or maybe they want to be able to ride motorcycles (which is different from both riding a horse and driving a car). Maybe you need to add Drive Cycle to your list. Think through these possibilities and be ready to add some suggestion your players might make.

The Skills available to use (and improve upon) include:

Agriculture (Brains)
The study of farming and growing vegetables.

Alchemy (Brains)
Mystical sciences, usually related to magic.

Archery (Cool)
Fire a bow and arrow (and/or crossbow)

Armpit (Charm)
Play your armpit as an instrument.

Avoid Pursuit (Savvy)
Run from people, and do it well.

Blacksmithing (Brawn)
Metalworking and forging.

Brawling (Brawn)
Fight with your fists.

Carpentry (Brawn)
Woodworking and whittling.

Catch (Notice)
Catch a ball (and other thrown objects).

Chemistry (Brains)
The science of matter (non-mystical).

Cook (Brains)
Fend for yourself when it comes to food.

Dancing (Charm)
Put on a show with your body (non-sexual, probably).

Direction Sense (Savvy)
Figure out where you're going from the clues around you.

Disguise (Looks)
Put on a costume and make it work.

Drive (Speed)
Drive a car or other four-wheeled motor vehicle.

Endurance (Health)
Sustain feats of physical prowess.

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Fishing (Notice)

Catch fish with hooks and twine.

Forgery (Savvy)

Create convincing duplicates of real works.

Fortitude (Cool)

Be strong in the face of danger.

Gain Trust (Looks)

Use your wiles to bring others to your side.

Gambling (Savvy)

Take a chance with dice or cards

Hold Breath (Health)

Keep alive without drawing a breathe for longer periods of time (without passing out).

Hunting (Notice)

Find and kill prey.

Interrogate (Cool)

Get information out of people by using your physical scariness.

Interview (Brains)

Get information out of people by asking the right questions.

Intimidate (Looks)

Being the biggest, scariest person in the room.

Investigate (Notice)

Look for clues to find information

Iron Will (Health)

Take damage, poison, and other ailments and keep on standing.

Languages (Brains)

Study languages and get the gist of written words.

Laws (Brains)

Understand the rules of society.

Martial Arts (Speed)

Unarmed combat (with an eastern flourish).

Masonry (Brawn)

Stone work and architecture.

Massage (Charm)

Rub muscles to relieve tension (could be sexual).

Melee (Brawn)

Fight with weapons.

Painting (Savvy)

Create art with paints and brushes.

Parry (Speed)

Deflect damage with your weapons.

Perform (Looks)

Act in character and put on a show.

Persuade (Charm)

Convince others to do your bidding.

Pick Locks (Cool)

Use tools (or just paper clips) to open locks.

Pottery (Speed)

Create art with clay and dexterity.

Read Lips (Notice)

See what others are saying and understand their words (even from a distance).

Research (Brains)

Use books and look up facts to find clues.

Ride (Savvy)

Ride a horse (or other trained animal).

Running (Health)

Run, at speed and length, without tiring.

Sculpting (Cool)

Create art with stone, chisels, and hammers.

Seduce (Looks)

Use your wiles to bring others into your bed (or other convenient location).

Singing (Charm)

Perform with music and your voice.

Sniper (Cool)

Shoot from a long distance.

Spot Traps (Notice)

See dangers around you before stumbling into them.

Stealth (Cool)

Move unnoticed.

Subterfuge (Charm)

Use subtlety and misdirection.

Survival (Savvy)

Survive on your own in the great outdoors.

Swimming (Health)

Move, at speed and length, through water without drowning.

Swipe (Speed)

The art of stealing, unnoticed, from others.

Throw Ball (Brawn)

Throw a ball a distance and have it go where you intend).

Tracking (Notice)

Follow the clues to find someone (or something) long after they've gone past.

Tumbling (Speed)

The art of moving and dodging through flexibility.

Vicious Taunt (Charm)

Cut others down with your sarcasm

A blank character sheet (devoid of just about all information, such as Skills) is provided at the back of these Open Source Rules to aid you in crafting a character sheet for your world.

POWERS

With the innate stats (Attributes), trained abilities (Skills), and social meters established, now we can discuss creating rich, powerful characters that stand above the usual rabble of the populace -- it's time to give your characters special powers.

When we discuss Powers we actually mean a couple of different categories for abilities that can function similarly. In There's a Game in this Book we call them "Class Powers" and "Magic", although you're free to call them what you will. The difference between the two is whether they can damage other characters or not (Class Powers do not, Magic does).

It's good to make a distinction between Powers that can damage and those that can't and group them separately (we recommend only allowing Finishing Points for the purchasing of damaging Powers). It's probably not a good idea to mix them together and allow characters to build up a mish-mash of the two without any differentiation between the Power groups... especially if you attach any powers to Classes.

Wait... Powers AND Classes?

A key part of the Power purchasing process comes in once players choose the Class they'll play. What Classes are available, and what kinds of Powers you'd attach to them, are up to you. For instance, in There's a Game in this Book we established twelve Classes the players can choose from. Each Class has a two different Powers associated with them. One set of Powers (what we call "Active Powers" because the characters are seen to be "actively" using them) are innate to each Class -- only they get to use those Powers no matter what. A second set of powers (what we termed "Latent Powers" happen quietly and outside observers may not notice what just happened) are associated with each Class, but these Powers are shared between Classes.

This worked out in our game when we arranged the Classes around a circle -- each of the Classes "intersected" with two neighboring Classes. Effectively, each character chose a Class and they gained access to the Active and Latent Powers of that Class and the Latent Powers of the two intersecting Classes next to it (for a total of four possible Powers).

When you set up your game, we recommend having at least six Classes to choose from (for

some variety), with at least one Power associated with each Class. You don't have to have more than one Power per Class, nor do you have to limit yourself to just two; so long as the various Powers and Classes are distinct enough that they don't feel duplicative, you can go wild with the Powers. So long as you attach at least one Power to each Class you helps to make the Classes different from each other. Plus, you add in an element of decision making for the players.

As we said before, though, don't mix damaging Powers with non-Damaging powers. As an example, let's create a world where superheroes exist. One character is an alien from another planet that can fly and summon claws of pure force to fight those who would rain down injustice on the land (heroes always talk in overblown speech). Another character is a master detective who uses stealth and their mystery solving skills to fight crime. Both characters have Powers we can easily quantify:

- Flight (Levitation)
- Force Weapons
- Observation (Mystery Solving)
- Stealth Mastery

However, of those Powers, two are obviously mystical in nature (Flight and Force Weapons) and only one actually does damage (Force Weapons). The other two (Observation and Stealth Mastery) can just be earned through practice and training, neither of which need to be mystical and so they would likely not need any kind of recharging after use (so long as the character doesn't critically fail their rolls they can use their Powers as often as they desire).

If we assigned these Powers as they are to a variety of Classes, it's almost assured that most players will pick the Classes that let them have super-powers and cause all kinds of damage to their foes. The master detective Class, though, would go largely ignored.

In a case like this we recommend dolling out powers like Observation, Stealth, Convince, Courage, and a litany of others that the super

heroes could use, but wouldn't normally be considered "damaging" (except to someone's ego, maybe). Damaging attacks (things that would seem "magical") should be grouped separately, away from the Classes -- characters would have to buy these with Finishing Points (discussed in a bit), and when these Powers were used, they would eat up a certain amount of the Brains-based meter or pool (which, in [There's a Game in this Book](#), we call Focus).

Bear in mind that you don't have to have both damaging and non-damaging Powers in your game. If you are playing a more realistic game of knights and courtly intrigue (maybe a game set during the War of the Roses, for example), damaging "mystical" Powers might not make any sense (although they'd give an interesting spin to that setting, certainly).

We do recommend that you have some kind of non-damaging powers if nothing else. You want to find a way to make each Class interesting (and not have all the characters end up the same).

Finishing Points

Once you've given your players a list of the Attributes, Skills, Classes, and Powers they can choose from (and they've been given the points to assign those), it's time to finalize their characters with Finishing Points.

Finishing Points are free points given to players near the end of their character creation process and they can be spent on bonus stats:

Attributes: 3 points per dot

Skills: 2 points per dot

Class Powers: 5 points per dot

Off-Class Powers: 8 points per dot

Damaging Powers: 5 points per dot

These points can also be used to buy Advantages, Disadvantages, and Races (if you're allowing Races other than Humans). Let's go over the basics of each and discuss spending more points on them:

Attributes:

Since these aren't just basic stat checks but also have bonuses attached to them (such as Brawn directly affecting combat, Vitality granting players Health), these are more expensive than Skills to buy at this stage.

Skills:

Cheap to buy, but players don't necessarily gain much benefit from spending their points here (especially not if there are damaging Powers or Races to look at in your game).

Class Powers:

Our term for any of the Powers associated with Classes in your game (which may be different from damaging Powers).

Off-Class Powers:

Powers players purchase that are associated with Classes other than the one they chose.

Damaging Powers:

Special Powers that can cause damaging effects. May not necessarily be associated with specific Classes.

Advantages:

Special background and personality traits that convey a bonus to their character (like Ambidexterity, Independently Wealthy, or Always persentable). Unlike the above stats, Advantages can only be purchased with Finishing Points -- once the player completes their character, they cannot buy any further Advantages.

Disadvantages:

Like Advantages, but bad for a character. These stats give characters penalties (like Arms Like Noodles, Infamous, or Magical Null) but in exchange they grant the players more points to spend on their characters.

Races:

Special builds of Skills, Powers, Advantages, and Disadvantages, usually around a theme (like dwarves are short, angry, and bearded). We recommend having any Racial build at least have a zero-value to them (if they're well-balanced,

good and bad), if not a cost in Finishing Points (if they're more good than bad). It's probably best to not have Racial builds give players extra points (as these will likely be the only Races people then play -- players love to game the system).

Like with Powers, we aren't going to specify what Advantages, Disadvantages, or Races you have to include in your game -- a lot of it just comes down to your setting and the kinds of societal expectations the character will run into.

For instance, some combat Advantages (like Ambidextrous) may seem perfectly useful in a fantasy setting. However, in a high school setting these combat Advantages may not make the most sense (teenagers fight, but few of them fight very well or for very long before the Principal sends them to Saturday School).

Our best advice is to come up with a list of Advantages and Disadvantages that work best for your setting and use those to create Races (if you're even using them). It's better to find stats that work for your setting than to try and shoe-horn in things that don't make much sense.

Let's Go Shopping

Right now your characters are naked. As fun as that may be, we really need to get them equipped. So how do we go about doing that?

Well, like with Advantages and Disadvantages, what's available and how much they cost is entirely dependent on the setting you're playing in. For instance, There's a Game in this Book is a "default fantasy setting". We start characters with 500 Cash, which comes out to about how much a well-off person can expect to earn in a year (more than a serf, certainly, but not, by any means, royal income). Everything on that game's equipment charts is then geared to take that level of income (and the economy around it) into account.

But maybe you're playing in modern times. 500 Cash is a meager amount for a yearly salary. A teenager starting out now would have much more money to spend (since we have to buy everything

for them, from clothes, to school books, and on and on). We'd give them more money to start (but buying equipment would be easier since we already know, round about, what things should cost in this day and age).

Think through your economy and come up with appropriate numbers for starting Cash as well as equipment, and then let your players go wild.

Now Let's Talk Mechanics

With the setting established and your characters created, we can talk very briefly about mechanics for the game. As with all Dodeca System games, everything your players will need is written on the sheet (we may have blanked out the Skills and Powers but we left all the necessary numbers). They'll still be able to find their target numbers and operate as always.

When it comes to combat, things will work the same as always (so long as you haven't changed all the combat skills around completely -- you are allowed to, if you want, but then this section may be meaningless to you).

Physical combat (and point-blank ranged combat) is a matter of taking your Base Attack (Attribute plus Skill), subtracting their Base Defense (Speed plus Parry), and calculating your Skill Total (such as $7 - 4 = 3$, with 3 being the Skill Total). Again, everything is on the sheet, so if your players have played in a Dodeca System game, they'll know what to do.

And then, beyond that... you're good. If you've come up with what you need for your world and made the character sheets setting appropriate, your work is done and you can run a game.

And Then Share It With Us

And then, once you've built it and you're happy, come over to the Dodeca System website. We have a community there set up to discuss the latest in the Dodeca System, and fans can come on with their newly created games (and whatever else they've come up with) and share their

creations with the community.

www.dodecasystem.com

And you never know, we may like your ideas enough to add it to our official curated collection.

Now, go! Plan your world!

