

**SENTINEL  
COMICS**  
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

# GAMEPLAY GUIDE



**YOUR ADVENTURE BEGINS HERE...**

# SENTINEL COMICS

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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GREETINGS, HEROES!

Welcome to **Sentinel Comics: The Roleplaying Game**! This starter kit guides you through learning the game and sets you up to create your own adventures and tell your own stories in the world of *Sentinel Comics*. If you've played the *Sentinels of the Multiverse* card game or app, or the *Sentinels Tactics* tactical skirmish game, you'll be familiar with the heroes, villains, and environments you encounter here. If you haven't, are you ever in for a treat!

**Sentinel Comics: The Roleplaying Game** is different from the other *Sentinel Comics* games in two fundamental ways (and if you've played RPGs before, go ahead and skip this bit—you know it already). While the hero sheet—analogue to your deck in *Sentinels of the Multiverse*—gives you a long list of specific powers, abilities, and amazing things your character can do, *you* decide what decisions they make, what things they say, what thoughts they have; the only limit is your imagination. Second, the open-ended nature of this type of game requires a special player—the **game moderator**, or **GM**—to make those same decisions for all the other characters, to frame the scenes, to apply the rules, and numerous other tasks.

What you need to play the **Sentinel Comics RPG**:

- Three to seven people, including the GM
- Some index cards or slips of paper and pencils
- A handful (at least three of each) of polyhedral dice of sizes  $\triangle 4$  (four sided),  $\square 6$  (six sided, etc.),  $\triangle 8$ ,  $\diamond 10$ , and  $\circ 12$ . It's helpful if each player has their own set, and the GM needs a few more than that, especially  $\square 6$  and  $\triangle 8$ .
- A couple of hours

## WHAT YOU DO

What do you do in a game of **Sentinel Comics RPG**? You take on the role of one of the heroes from the pages of *Sentinel Comics: Legacy* or *Tachyon* or *Bunker* or *Unity* or any of the other heroes, or even one of your own invention! This is your character, called a **player character** because it's a character controlled by a player, as opposed to characters controlled by the game moderator (GM). You speak, make decisions, and take actions for your character.

When we talk about “what you do,” there are two levels to talk about: what you do *as a hero*, and what you do *as a player*. But we should probably first mention what you do *as a game moderator*, since that particular player has extra responsibilities.

### AS THE GAME MODERATOR

You present the world of *Sentinel Comics* to the players. You set the stage for intense action scenes, you describe the environments, and you play the roles of all the characters the players interact with, be they supervillains or innocent bystanders. Several tools are at your disposal to help players create their own stories, including the game's rules and published adventures. It's a big job, we know, but we've got you covered. Go check out “How to Run the **Sentinel Comics RPG**” on page 15 when you're ready to begin game moderating.

### AS A HERO

Do what heroes do! Defend the weak and the innocent. Throw a wrench in the works when the villains set their plans in motion. Jump in and lend a hand when your teammates are in trouble. Stand up for your principles. Punch evil right in the face.

*Save the day.*

No pressure.

### AS A PLAYER

You make decisions for your character. You decide what they do and say and think and feel. You choose what powers and qualities they employ at any given moment. You describe the comic book panel where your character performs an amazing feat. You gather up dice and roll them out when interesting uncertainty arises, then apply the results to see what happens next. During play, this looks a little like the example on the next page, featuring the hero *Legacy* and a tyrannosaurus rex!

## GAMEPLAY EXAMPLE

Let's say you're playing the hero Legacy, and you find yourself confronted by a gigantic tyrannosaurus who's attempting to eat the 12th Street Bridge in downtown Megalopolis! The GM sets the scene for you.

"The tyrannosaurus has nearly gnawed through some of the suspension cables," she says. "The bridge shudders—it could fall any second. What do you do?"

You think for a second. "Where is it standing? Is it in the river, or what?" you ask the GM.

"No, it's on the bridge, standing on the roadway," she says. "Apparently, it's not very smart."

"Is there traffic?" you ask.

"Yes! Loads of cars, a school bus full of kids, and a tanker truck marked FLAMMABLE. All the traffic is stopped, lots of honking. Some people are abandoning their cars and running. There are several cop cars with sirens blaring, fighting their way through the traffic jam approaching the bridge. *Twang!* Another cable was just chewed through! What do you do?"

You have a decision to make. Legacy's priority would be to protect the school children, because that's the sort of hero Legacy is. You could probably move the school bus, with the kids inside, to safety. But if the bridge falls and the tanker explodes while you're doing it, it's curtains for everyone else. "Okay," you say decisively, "I fly down to the nearest cop car. Officers! Get the school kids off the bridge. I'll keep this prehistoric pest off your backs!"

The GM grins. "Perfect! The cops trust your leadership, I don't think that requires a roll. One of them yells 'You got it, sir!' and she gets on the radio to coordinate the rescue. What do you do to distract the dinosaur?"

"Fly in there first and get right in its ugly face, of course," you say, miming punches with clenched fists. "I don't care if I deal any damage, I just don't want it to chew on the bridge. Or any cops."

"That sounds like an **Overcome** action," the GM says. (What's an Overcome action? It's when you deal with an obstacle or difficulty, such as distracting an angry dinosaur. We talk more about all sorts of actions starting on page 5.) "What power, quality, and status are you using?"

You look at your hero sheet, which describes Legacy's powers, qualities, and status dice. "Well," you say, "I said I wanted to fly in there, so I'm going to go with my Flight power, which is a  $\diamond 8$ . Also, I'm taking the lead here, so I'll use my Leadership quality, which is a  $\diamond 10$ . And we're currently in the Green zone, so that's a  $\square 6$ . Correct?" The GM just nods, eager to see what happens next. You roll the dice. "I got a 4, 7, and 8. The **Mid** result is 7." (What's the Mid result? The middle number rolled of a trio of dice—we talk a lot about that on page 3 and page 9.)

"Looking at the result chart for Overcome actions, a 7 is success with a **minor twist**," says the GM. (Result chart? Minor twist? What? Well, a twist is when something unexpected happens to complicate things. We cover all this in "How You Do It" on page 4.) "How about, as you're pummeling it, it head-butts you, dealing you your **Min** die of damage?" (The Min die is the lowest result of a trio of dice.)

You don't like it, but it's only 4 points of damage. That's not so bad. "Okay, I'll take 4 points off my Health. But now I have the undivided attention of the tyrannosaurus, right?" you ask.

"Sure do," confirms the GM. And your turn is done!












## ★ GYRO: YOUR STATUS

In the *Sentinel Comics RPG*, **GYRO** does not refer to a delicious sandwich but rather the color-coded status of a scene or a hero. GYRO stands for Green, Yellow, Red, or Out. The scene has a **Scene Tracker**, which is sort of a countdown clock that ratchets up the tension and danger. Each hero also has their own **GYRO status** based on their own Health—the more Health you lose, the further along the GYRO track you are, from the Green zone, to the Yellow zone, to the Red zone, and ultimately, Out. Check out the Hero Booklets in this Starter Kit to see actual examples of how those work.

## ★ ROLL THE BONES: DICE

Sometimes the action you take has an uncertain outcome. Will you succeed or fail? Will there be some unforeseen complication that results from what you do? To answer those questions, you take up dice.

The dice we use in the *Sentinel Comics RPG* are differentiated by how many sides they have. A  has four sides, a  has six sides, etc. We use five different sorts: , , , , and  as can be seen to the right. Multiples of one size of die are noted with a numeral in front of the die, such as 2 (two 6-sided dice), 3 (three 8-sided dice), etc.

We build and roll a collection of dice—a **dice pool**. The pool is always exactly three dice, and the dice you roll are determined by the details listed on your hero sheet. Depending on the action you're taking, you choose one die from your **powers**, one from your **qualities**, and one from your **status**.

- **Powers:** Your superhuman talents, whether innate, coming from gear or technology, or some combination of the two.
- **Qualities:** Skills, talents, and other traits your hero learned through training or study.
- **Status:** How your hero handles danger and changing circumstances.

## ★ RESULTS: MIN, MID, MAX

Roll your dice pool, generating three numbers. The **Min** die is the die that rolled the lowest number (you decide which in the event of a tie); the **Max** die is the highest, and the **Mid** die is the die that rolled the middle value. The **effect die** is the one you look at for your result, which is usually the one showing the Mid value. Some abilities can change that to Max, Max+Mid, or some other result—the description of the ability tells you how it works. See “How You Do It” on page 4 for a detailed description of how to interpret and apply the results.

## DICE REFERENCE

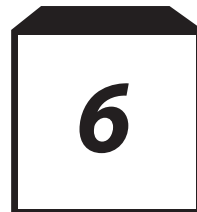
### YOUR DIE



### DIE ICON



Four-sided Die



Six-sided Die



Eight-sided Die



Ten-sided Die



Twelve-sided Die

## WHY YOU DO IT

Heroes all have their own motivations for being heroic. The “why” is as important as the “what,” if for no other reason than it frequently defines the “what.”

### YOU'RE A HERO

You're a hero. The heroes in the world of *Sentinels Comics* can't abide villainy, they don't tolerate evil, and they will protect the freedom and the outright existence of the people of Earth. But even so, every hero has their own reasons to work and struggle and fight.

### YOU'RE A TEAMMATE

Heroes in *Sentinel Comics* rarely act alone; usually there's a team trying to solve a problem. Working as a team not only means having a plan that uses each teammate's unique talents to their fullest, but also talking through problems with your comrades. Was Absolute Zero a little reckless in that last fight? Did you learn some important information about Expatriette's mother in your investigations in Rook City? Sometimes these talks aren't easy, but they have to happen.

### PLAY TO YOUR PERSONALITY

Every character has a **personality**: Lone Wolf, Stalwart, Fast Talking, etc. These descriptors are more than just a way to generate stats during character creation; they reveal a fundamental aspect of your character. A Lone Wolf won't solve problems in the same way as a Natural Leader. And that's a good thing—it's the diversity of problem solving techniques that give the team strength in a wide variety of circumstances.

### PLAY TO YOUR PRINCIPLES

One of the sections on your hero sheet describes your **principles**, which represent your core beliefs and fundamental personality traits. These are powerful guides to your hero's motivation. Whenever you doubt what your character would do, or see two or more equally plausible ways forward, consult your principles and play to those. You can't go wrong. Even if it leads to less-than-optimal decisions, it will lead to *interesting* decisions and great characterization.



## HOW YOU DO IT

A session of play usually lasts from 2-4 hours. In keeping with the comic book aesthetic, each game session is called an **issue**, as in an issue of a comic book. Each issue is made up of individual scenes. You can think of every action and event in scenes as taking place in panels on the pages of *Sentinel Comics*!

### TAKING ACTION

As the game begins, the GM presents situations and scenes. (More about how to do that starting on page 15.) You and the other players each decide how your heroes react, and that begins the play of the game. Whenever someone does something with an uncertain outcome, that's an **action**.

#### HERE'S THE PROCEDURE FOR TAKING ACTION:

1. Describe what you want to do
2. Decide what action to take
3. Choose an ability or basic action
4. Determine your power, quality, and status
5. Roll the dice and apply the results
6. Hand Off the action to the next character

### SNEAKY STEP ZERO: WHO'S GOING NEXT?

You decide who gets to take their turn after you! When you're taking your turn, it's a good idea to think for a second about who that will be and give them a gentle nudge in the ribs (or maybe just say “Hey, you wanna go next?”) so they start thinking about what they want to do. Don't worry, you're not locked in—you're allowed to change your mind right up until the last moment of your turn, when you hand off the action.

### DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO

First, describe to the GM and other players what you want to do. It's OK for other players to toss out ideas or make suggestions, especially if someone has an idea for a cool combination of actions or a plan for a team-up between your heroes. However, it's *vital* that the final decision about what your character does is *yours*—don't let suggestions become quarterbacking. The GM should step in if that starts happening.

An important part of the description should be your intended outcome. What's your goal here? You don't just punch a villain—is your goal to damage him? Distract him? Knock him away from that control panel? Stating your goal is important for the next step: deciding what specific action to take.

**NEED A LITTLE INSPIRATION?**  
**IF YOU FEEL A LITTLE LOST ABOUT COMING UP**  
**WITH A COOL ACTION DESCRIPTION, LOOK AT YOUR**  
**HERO'S POWERS AND QUALITIES ON YOUR HERO SHEET.**  
**THEY SHOULD GIVE YOU IDEAS FOR FLAVORFUL**  
**DESCRIPTIONS THAT MATCH**  
**YOUR HERO'S STYLE.**

## COMIC BOOK ACTION

When you describe an action your character takes in a scene, talk about it as if it's a dynamic, vividly-illustrated comic book panel. A punch isn't just a punch; it's a devastating uppercut, your fist leaving a white trail behind it, your target lifted completely off the ground and flying several feet backwards. You don't just duck into the shadows, you *become* the shadows themselves, with only your eyes visible, and even then only if you want someone to know that you are watching. This is a comic book roleplaying game, not a physics documentary—interpret time and space as fluidly as your favorite comic books do.



## CHOOSE YOUR ACTION

There are five (six actually, but Recover is a special case) fundamental types of actions you can take. Your stated goal usually determines which one of these basic actions your character is attempting. This matters because the outcomes are handled differently based on what sort of action you're taking.

- **Attack:** Trying to hurt someone by dealing damage
- **Overcome:** Getting past an obstacle
- **Boost:** Assisting or empowering yourself or an ally
- **Hinder:** Making things more difficult for an opponent
- **Defend:** Preventing damage to yourself or another
- **Recover:** Getting Health back (this special action isn't usually used in action scenes)

Attack, Overcome, Boost, Hinder, and Defend are the five basic actions that make up the bulk of the things characters do in **Sentinel Comics: The Roleplaying Game**. On page 8, we talk about abilities and other ways to use basic actions in more interesting ways. But first, let's take a look at each of these actions.

### ★ **ATTACK**

An **Attack** is how your hero attempts to inflict some kind of direct harm—that is, deal damage—to another character, whether it's physical (a series of punches), emotional (mocking taunts), or even mental (psychic manipulation). A successful Attack deals damage to the target, either reducing their Health, or forcing them to roll a save to survive. The amount of damage is determined by the number on the effect die, which is the Mid die in a basic action.

Some abilities allow you to instead use a different die for the Attack's effect die. (We'll get into abilities and other ways to use actions on page 8.) Any character or object with a Health rating or represented by a die can be the target of an Attack.

- **Damage:** A successful Attack deals damage to the target, reducing the target's Health by the amount shown on the effect die. In the case of a minion or lieutenant, damage forces them to save to stick around. When the target's Health reaches zero, they're incapacitated or the object is disabled. If a minion fails a save, they're immediately incapacitated.

If you're trying to break an object that doesn't have Health—such as smashing through a steel door, etc.—use an Overcome action instead.



## ★ OVERCOME

When your hero is presented with an obstacle and getting past it carries a risk of failure, injury to a hero, or dire consequences, it's time to use an **Overcome** action. Examples include leaping onto a bank robber's speeding getaway car; decrypting a computer's files while a bomb ticks down, or convincing a reticent Mayor to help you out in a scene.

To determine the outcome of your Overcome action, look up the value of your effect die on this list:

EFFECT DIE RESULT	OUTCOME
0 or Less	Action utterly, spectacularly fails
1-3	Action fails, or succeeds with a major twist
4-7	Action succeeds, but with a minor twist
8-11	Action completely succeeds
12+	Action succeeds beyond expectations

- **Action utterly, spectacularly fails:** The action not only doesn't have its intended effect, it also makes the situation more complicated and dangerous. Potentially even worse, you might also look silly or incompetent in the process.
- **Action fails, or succeeds with a major twist:** You get to choose between these two results. On a failure, the action simply doesn't work. You tried to leap onto the car but were thrown off on a sharp turn; you couldn't break the encryption; the Mayor definitively says, "Not interested." On a success with a major twist, you succeed—you're clinging to the car; you have the files, the Mayor is willing to help—but a twist occurs that changes the situation. Bad guys in the car you're clinging to lean out the window with guns. The system you've hacked places a tracking program on your own system. The Mayor will help, but only if you agree to something that goes against your principles. Twists are unexpected situations that complicate—but don't negate—your success; we talk a lot more about them in the "Twists" section on page 11.
- **Action succeeds, but with a minor twist:** On a success with a minor twist, the action creates a nuisance or annoying effect in addition to succeeding. When this happens, you select an appropriate twist by answering a minor twist question related to one of your principles, or you let the GM choose a twist from the scene or the environment, or create one of their own. As with major twists, the minor twist can't be used to undo your success. However, once again, you can choose to just fail if you don't like the options presented to you.



- **Action completely succeeds:** Pretty much exactly what it says on the tin—the outcome of your action matches up with your stated intent as much as possible, given the circumstances. You landed solidly on the speeding getaway car; you grabbed the files moments before the system was wiped, the Mayor is willing to help. No muss, no fuss.
- **Action succeeds beyond expectations:** You knocked it out of the park. You get what you wanted with a bonus side effect. You're on the getaway car within easy reach of the engine—one punch would disable it. You got not only the files you wanted but also a clue about a scheme you didn't even know about yet. The Mayor is not only willing but *happy* to help. The effect can include removing a minor twist from a prior action. If nothing else suggests itself, this benefit is equivalent to a +2 bonus, or recovered Health equal to the Min die.

## ★ BOOST/HINDER

This related pair of actions either helps yourself or an ally (Boost), or makes it tougher for an opponent (Hinder). They are linked here because they work the same way, just with opposite results. When you use a Boost or Hinder action, you are making a **mod**—a bonus or a penalty to some characters' ongoing actions. The Boost action creates a positive mod, or a **bonus**. Having just the right gadget at just the right time. Giving a rousing pre-battle speech, inspiring your allies. On the other hand, the Hinder action creates a negative mod or a **penalty**. Knocking an opponent off-balance. Grabbing the edge of the blast door and pushing with all your might, closing your foe behind it.

The effect die determines the size of the mod you create:

EFFECT DIE RESULT	MOD SIZE
0 or Less	No bonus or penalty is created
1-3	+/- 1
4-7	+/- 2
8-11	+/- 3
12+	+/- 4

Always name your mod when it's created, with either a quick description or a comic book quip. To keep track of it, write it out on a notecard, such as "Pocket Analyzer +2" or "Watch out for that first step -3."

A mod applies to the effect die rolled on a later die roll, either adding to or subtracting from the result. You, as creator of the mod, can usually decide who uses that bonus or penalty as long as it makes sense in the fiction of the scene—not everyone can just grab the "Massive Sword +4" you found and wield it.

- **Duration:** Usually, mods go away after one use, though abilities and effects may extend their duration. If you want a mod to last for two uses, you may take an appropriate minor twist when you create it. Some abilities let you create **persistent** or **exclusive** mods. Persistent mods last until the end of the scene or until no longer appropriate. Exclusive mods are particularly notable or powerful, and cannot be used at the same time as other exclusive mods on a roll. Most abilities that make mods persistent also make them exclusive.

You can cancel and remove a mod by creating an opposing bonus or penalty against it. So if someone has a penalty of "I'm tied up! -3", you can get rid of it by creating a +3 bonus. If you only manage +2, the penalty changes to "I'm tied up! -1." If you exceed the penalty you're trying to counter, you lose the difference—no "making change" with the excess.

Remember that just because the mod is expended doesn't mean whatever it represents is gone. If you create a bonus of "bo staff +2" and use it in one action, you may still have the bo staff, even though the bonus was used up and has gone away. Continue to describe your actions as if you have it if you wish. That narrative truth continues, even if it's no longer a bonus to your dice rolls, until something happens in the narrative to change it.

## ★ DEFEND

Heroes and villains are always taking steps to protect themselves from harm. That means the villain doesn't make a special Defend action when you Attack her—you just make your Attack and deal damage; it's assumed that the target is taking steps to deflect the Attack. But maybe you *really* want to focus on protecting yourself; say, you're trying to buy time for your friends to finish a mission while the villain focuses Attacks on you. This calls for a **Defend** action.

When you Defend, you describe what you're doing to avoid an Attack or threat. After you roll, note the number showing on the effect die—write it down so you don't forget. Before your next turn, when you would next lose Health you reduce the amount you lose by that number. If you aren't Attacked before your next turn, the effect is wasted. Alternatively, you may Defend another character and reduce their Health lost instead.

If you are somehow under the effect of two (or more) Defend actions, choose the higher result to use; do not combine them.

- **Hit the Deck!** Occasionally, an Attack looks so serious that you want to throw yourself into a defensive position, heedless of other dangers. A basic Defend action can be done once per round, out of turn, as a **Reaction** by activating a minor twist (see "Twists" on page 11). You may only Defend yourself this way and not other characters.

## ★ RECOVER

Recover is the action you take to regain Health or restore Health to another character during an action scene. You can only take this action if you have an ability that explicitly tells you to do so. In those cases, the ability's description tells you how it works. In those abilities, the word "Recover" simply means "regain that much Health." A target can never regain more Health than their total—you can't recover something you never had!

Regaining Health between action scenes doesn't use the Recover action. That's more story-based healing, which we address in Montage Scenes on page 14.

## ★ REACTIONS

**Reactions** are specific things you can do as the result of some trigger event happening. You can Defend as a Reaction (as described in Hit the Deck) and some abilities give you the option for other Reactions; the ability's description has all the pertinent details. No matter how many Reaction abilities you have, you can only perform one Reaction a round, resetting at the start of your turn. So, if you use your Reaction during your turn, you won't get another until the start of your next turn.

## ★ AUGMENTING ACTIONS

### BASIC ACTIONS

All of the actions on the last few pages are called **basic actions**. They are the standard types of things you can do, like throwing a solid punch or investigating for clues. However, there are a couple of ways to do even more with your actions!

### ABILITIES

An **ability** is a special trick you know that lets you change how your dice results are applied. Every hero has a list of several abilities to choose from. Pick the ability you want to use based on these criteria:

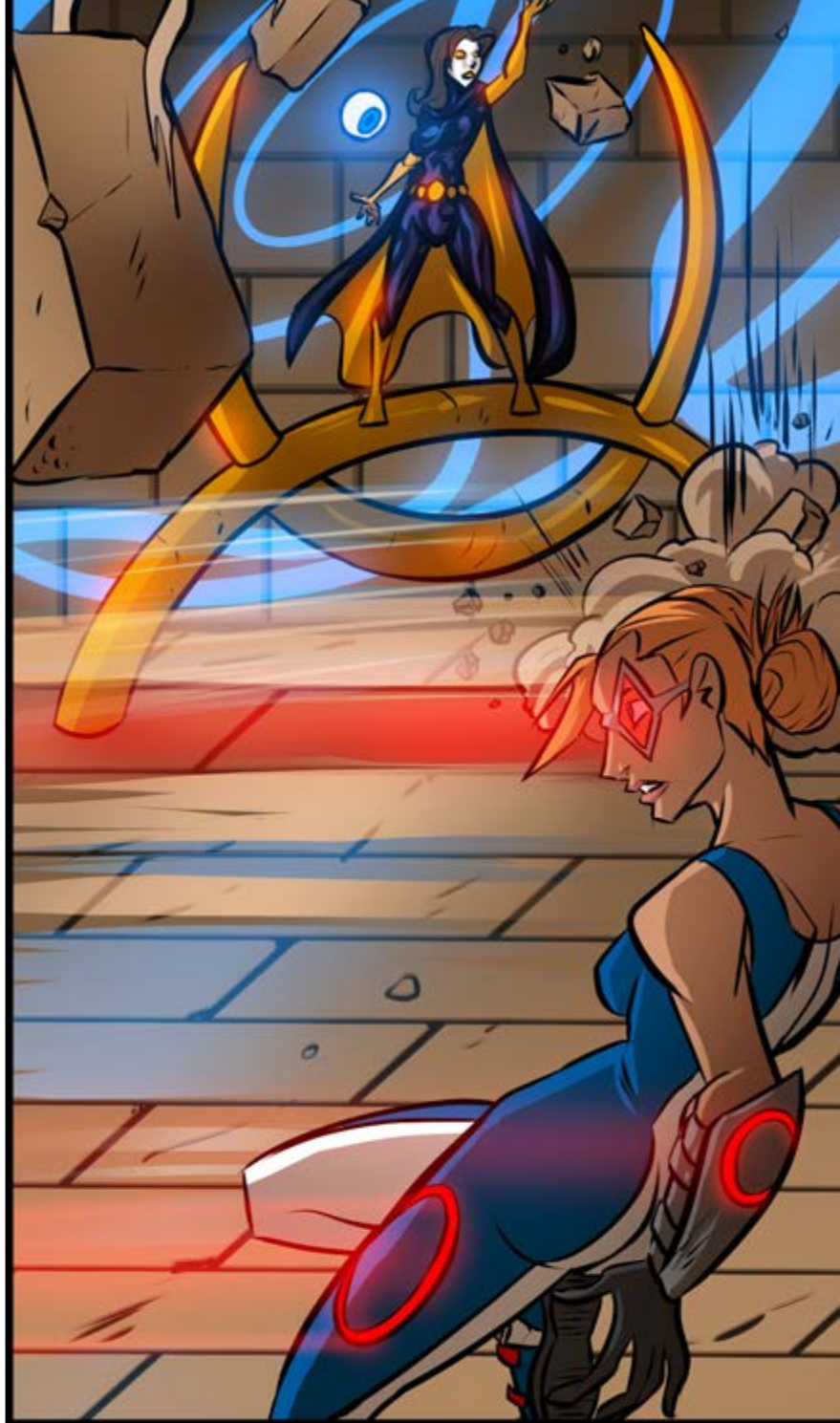
- Make sure the ability you choose is available to you based on your GYRO status. Some abilities are only available if you're in the Yellow or Red zone. You can choose an ability from a zone one more severe than the one you're in for the price of a minor twist.
- Make sure the ability you choose works with your verbal description of your hero's action. (You can modify your description if you like.)
- Make sure the ability you choose is applicable to the action (Boost, Attack, etc.) you've decided to make.

### RISKY ACTIONS

Want something more than a basic action, but don't have an ability for it? Do you want to hit the bad guy with fire while also setting the room on fire, or knock them over the railing while doing a bit of damage? Surely there's a way to stack effects like this in a comic book game.

There is! You can always choose to add an extra effect to your basic action by taking a **risky action**. A risky action only works for a basic action, and only as circumstances warrant it. If you're doing something you've practiced, it's an ability. There will definitely be some fallout—hence the “risky”—so choose an appropriate minor twist when you decide to take a risky action.

*The box to the right shows some examples of effects.*



### EFFECT EXAMPLES

- An Attack that normally hits only one target can hit an extra target with the same die.
- The Attack is more powerful and uses the Max die instead.
- The Attack has an extra effect with the Min die, like Hinder the target by destroying their weapon in the process.
- An Overcome action also uses the Min die to deal damage to a target in the way.
- A Hinder action also moves the target far enough away that they'll have trouble making their way back.
- A Defend action also Boosts an ally using your Min die.

## DETERMINING YOUR POWER, QUALITY, & STATUS

Now you assemble your dice pool. You described your action, with appropriate comic book action flair, and that description should guide your choices here. Look at your hero sheet and choose the right power, the right quality, and the right status. Take up the dice associated with each of these items—it should always be exactly three dice—and you're ready to roll.

When picking your power and quality, remember to check if the ability you chose only works with a particular power or quality. If it does, the text of the ability will specify that power or quality.

### POWERS

**Powers** are your supernatural talents, whether innate, coming from gear or gadgets, or some combination of the two. Wraith's Throwing Knives, Bunker's Power Armor, and Absolute Zero's Cold are all examples of powers. They're rated as die sizes: from  $\square_6$  (above human average) to  $\textcircled{12}$  (godlike).

### QUALITIES

**Qualities** are skills, talents, and other traits that your hero has learned. Qualities can come from all sorts of places. Some are self-taught, while others are learned through rigorous one-on-one or small group training or through organizational training or education, such as military training. Still others are things that make you who you are—something unique to your personal heroic story. Examples of qualities include Unity's Technology, Tachyon's Science, and Legacy's Leadership. Like powers, they're rated as die sizes: from  $\square_6$  (solid competency) to  $\textcircled{12}$  (world class).

### STATUS

**Status** represents how your hero reacts to challenging circumstances, defined by your Health and the scene's GYRO at the moment. You take the status die for the tracker that's farther along: the scene's or yours. For instance, if your Health is in the Green zone but the scene tracker is in Yellow, use your Yellow status die. As with qualities and powers, it's defined by die sizes: from  $\square_6$  (unconcerned) to  $\textcircled{12}$  (will give anything).

#### WHAT IF NOTHING APPLIES?

If you don't have a power or quality that applies to the situation, you can always use a default  $\triangle_4$  (untrained). Ask your GM first though, since they might have some ideas of how to do what you want using the powers and qualities you do have.

## ROLLING DICE & RESULTS

Once you have your pool, roll them bones! Make sure you always roll them out on the table where everyone can see them—GM too. No rolling behind a screen in this game, even for the GM!

### MIN, MID, MAX, AND THE EFFECT DIE

Your pool of three dice generates three numbers that you arrange into numerical order. The die generating the lowest number is the **Min** die. The one that produces the middle number is the **Mid** die. The one with the highest number is the **Max** die. If two or three dice are tied, you can put the tied dice in your preferred order.

Results



In this case, the  $\textcircled{10}$  is the Min die, the  $\square_6$  is the Mid die, and the  $\textcircled{8}$  is the Max die, due to the results rolled.

Results



In this case, you could choose the Mid to be the  $\square_6$  and the Max to be the  $\textcircled{12}$ , as they both rolled 6s.

Results



**Min, Mid, and Max** die are interchangeable. You can put these in any order as they're all 5s.

The **effect die** is the die used for the result. This is the Mid die, unless you have an ability or there's an effect in play that says otherwise. For example, you might have an ability that lets you use the Max die for fire Attacks.

### ALTERING THE RESULTS

You can change the results—add a static bonus to the result, use a different die, add a new effect, etc.—in two main ways: abilities and mods.

- **Abilities:** Apply the effects of the ability you chose before you rolled. Some apply a static bonus to the result on the effect die. Some let you use your Max die (or even Max+Min dice) as your effect die.
- **Mods:** If there are one or more mods in play that give you a bonus or a penalty, apply them to the

result on the effect die. For instance, if you are trying an Overcome action with a penalty of -2, and your effect die shows a 5, the penalty reduces the actual result to a 3, which you look up on the chart (page 6) and see that it produces a failure or success with a major twist.

## HAND OFF THE ACTIONS TO THE NEXT CHARACTER

Once you've applied your results, your turn is done! You decide who acts next—even if you gave someone a heads up earlier; you can change your mind now. You may choose any hero, villain, or the environment who hasn't yet had a turn this **round** (a round ends once every active hero, villain, and environment has acted). If you go last in the round, you're free to choose anyone to kick off the next round! Except yourself—you can't pick yourself to go again, since that would give you two turns in a row.

And that's the end of the action sequence!

## PLAYING THE GAME

As a scene escalates, matters grow increasingly dire, leading to the heroes pulling out all the proverbial stops. The **Sentinel Comics RPG** tracks that sense of urgency and desperation with GYRO.

Every hero, villain, scene, and environment has its own **GYRO** tracker (GYRO stands for **Green, Yellow, Red, and Out**). A tracker starts at Green, but then negative circumstances push it into the Yellow and Red zones, and potentially all the way to Out. For heroes and villains, this happens by losing Health. For scenes, this happens according to the scene tracker.

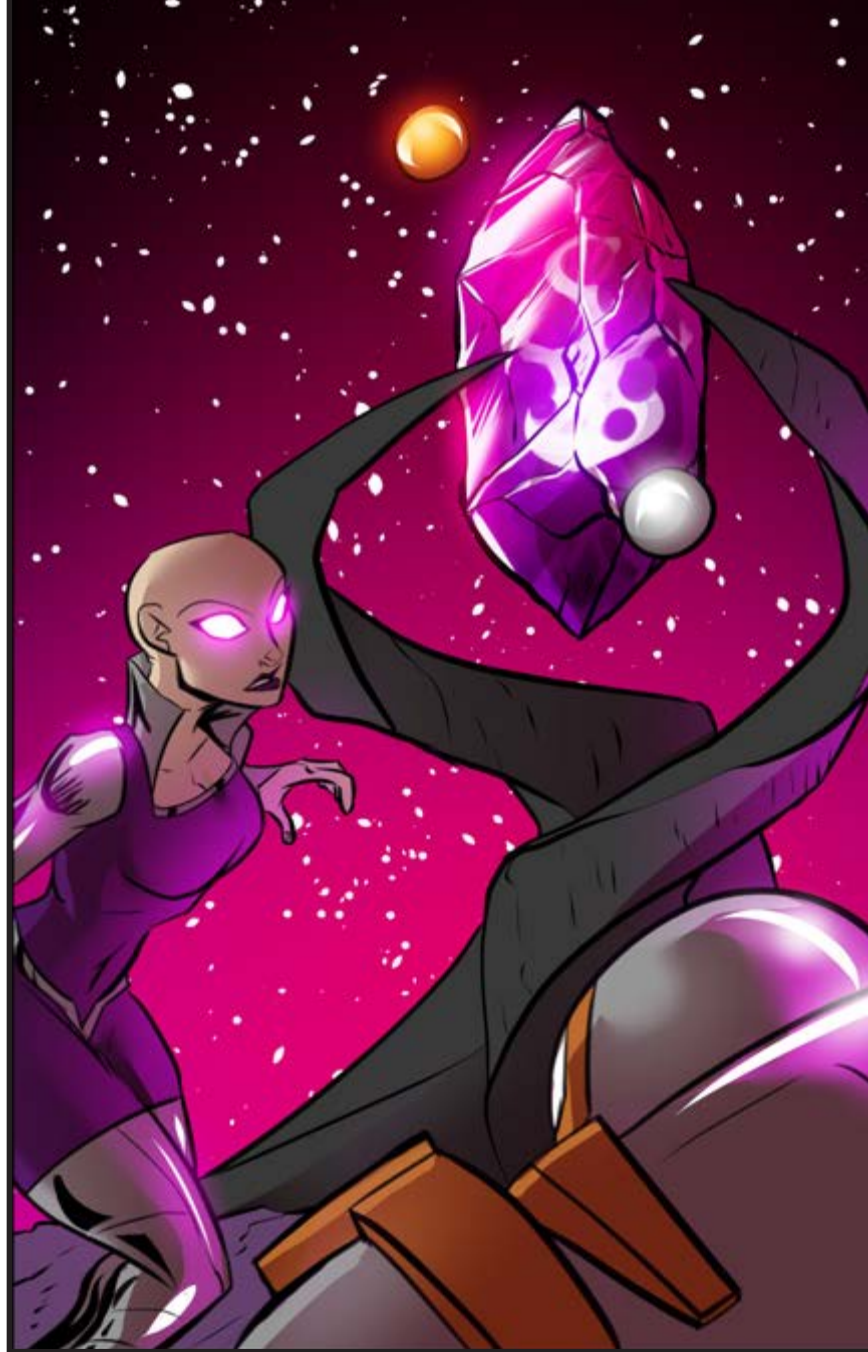
### ★ SCENE TRACKER

The **scene tracker** is a series of (usually) 8 boxes that get checked off each time the environment takes a turn. Other events, such as twists, can also cause the tracker to advance a box. The first two boxes are coded Green, then four Yellow, then two Red:



After both Green boxes are filled, every character in the scene is assumed to be in the Yellow status, regardless of their personal status. When all Yellow boxes are filled, everyone is in Red, etc.

Some environments might have different numbers of boxes, or different distribution among the three colors,



or both. Some scenes don't have an environment, or the environment is highly neutral. In those cases, the environment's turn is just to check off a box.

### ★ CHARACTER HEALTH

Heroes and villains track their individual status using their Health. The total Health you have is divided into three roughly equal ranges; when your Health is in the first range, you're Green. In the second, you're Yellow, in the third, Red. Once you're at zero Health, you're Out.

### ★ UNLOCKING ABILITIES

Specific abilities and scene/environmental twists unlock when trackers hit certain colors. A hero in the Yellow zone has access to all their Green or Yellow abilities on their hero sheet. Being in the Red Zone unlocks all their Green, Yellow, and Red abilities. Being in the Out zone

only grants an Out ability.

If a hero gets desperate, they can take a minor twist to use an ability one zone higher than their current zone (Yellow, if they're in Green, or Red if they're in Yellow). Or if they're truly desperate, they can take a major twist to use any ability on their sheet.

A hero in the Out zone has been knocked out of the fight, either from passing out from the stress of the fight or from some other circumstance that prevents them from participating any further, like being thrown into outer space (a surprisingly common occupational hazard for heroes). A hero's Out ability represents the influence they still have on the battle, which might be a tangible superpower that still has an ongoing effect or just the other heroes flashing back to that hero's help and learning from their teachings.

## ★ TWISTS

Twists come in two degrees, major and minor, depending on how severely they shake things up. Each hero sheet has a list of twist suggestions that relate to that hero's **principles**, at both major and minor levels. If the player doesn't want to use a principle-related twist listed on their hero sheet, the GM may suggest one.

GM-suggested twists come from a variety of sources. The environment and scene provide suggested twists, some of which are only available if the scene status is Yellow or Red. Alternatively, the GM can make twists up on the spot based on the action at that moment.

Either way, it's up to the player and the GM to come up with an appropriate twist *that does not negate the success*. That's really important—if the player is paying for success with increased complication in the scene, the GM should not use the twist to take the success away!

### MINOR & MAJOR TWIST EXAMPLES

- The hero loses Health equal to the Max die (minor) or Max+Mid dice (major).
- The hero is Hindered using the Max+Min dice (if a major twist, this penalty is persistent).
- The hero must sacrifice something important to them in order to succeed at another goal (how important determines minor or major).
- The scene escalates toward a more dangerous state (scene tracker advances 1 box for minor, or ▲ for major).
- The hero is separated from the rest of the group as a result of the action (minor).
- The hero draws attention in the form of a new minion equal to their Mid die (minor), or a squad of Mid die sized minions equal to number of heroes (major).

In general, minor twists are inconveniences and wrinkles in the scene that get in your way, whereas major twists are more punishing—possibly even creating significantly worse situations! Choosing what sacrifices to make is all part of being a hero.

If a player doesn't like the option the GM presents, they can decline the twist in favor of outright failure. In all cases, the GM gets final approval of the twist to ensure it best fits the fiction.

## ★ HERO POINTS

In every **issue** (one game session), heroes can earn one or more **hero points**. Every time you, or any other hero, use the Green abilities associated with one of your principles in an Overcome action (whether or not the action is a success), each hero in the team earns one hero point. Each hero may earn a maximum of five hero points per issue.

At the end of an issue, you can trade your hero points for **floating bonuses**. Each hero point converts to one point of bonus, divided however you choose. For example, you can turn five hero points into a +3 bonus and a +2 bonus, or a +4 bonus and a +1 bonus, or five +1 bonuses. You don't have to define or name them until you use them, though you should call back to what you learned or acquired in the previous issue. So if you've allocated a +3 bonus, and then discover you need some help convincing a public works official to let you into the sewers, you remember that in a previous issue the Mayor promised you a favor. You decide to activate that +3 bonus and call it "Favor from the Mayor" to make sure your Overcome roll succeeds at convincing the official to help you! These bonuses are **exclusive**, meaning you can only use one of them on a specific roll.

You *must* convert hero points to bonuses between issues; you can't carry them over from one issue to the next. Likewise, unused floating bonuses go away at the end of the issue.

Track hero points and floating bonuses on the front page of your hero sheet. After an issue is completed, you, the other players, and the GM decide on an issue title. Record the issue's title and issue number under Back Issues on your hero sheet.

## ★ COLLECTIONS

You develop a comic book **collection** of your hero's prior appearances, starting with a First Appearance collection that each hero gains as part of their creation.

You can call on each of your collections once per session, using previous adventures to help you. This has one of the following three effects:

- After rolling, change the number on one die to anything you choose. Determine Min/Mid/Max after doing so.
- Establish one fact about a scene your hero is in, based on a previous issue. (Yes, just make something up, as long as it isn't ridiculous and is rooted in the events or lessons from that back issue. If your idea is out of line, the GM will veto it and ask you to think of another one. Feel free to collaborate with your GM on the bit of story canon you're creating!)
- You can invoke your collection instead of taking a minor twist, provided you can think of an explanation of how it's relevant to the situation.

However you use it, you have to justify how that previous adventure helps with the current situation. For instance, when fighting Miss Information, Tachyon's player might say, "When I last fought Miss Information, she suffered a wound on her right side... I think I can use that to my advantage now." This comment comes with an editor's note: "See **Liberty Comics** #12: Terror in Megalopolis." Always include an editor's note—these details lend the whole thing an air of authenticity.

### **HEY YOU, GM!**

Be flexible in adjudicating how players apply these bonuses. Don't require perfect recall about what happened in a previous adventure. The barest justification should work. Remember, comics get retconned all the time.



**TURN TO PAGE 15 TO LEARN RULES FOR GMS**

# HERO REFERENCE

## TAKING ACTION

When you're in an action scene and it's your turn, describe your action, choose whether you're using an **ability** or **basic action**, and assemble your dice pool by taking an appropriate die from **powers**, one from **qualities**, and one from **status**.



Min die



Mid die



Max die



Min die + Max die = 10



Basic actions use your **Mid** die—the middle value of the three dice you rolled. Some abilities and other traits use your **Min** (lowest rolling) or **Max** (highest rolling) die instead, or some combination, like your **Min+Max** (lowest rolling plus highest rolling). If an ability does not specify a die, use your Mid.

## BASIC ACTIONS

### OVERCOME

When your hero faces an obstacle or risky endeavor, one that carries a risk of failure, injury to a hero, or dire consequences, this requires the hero to **Overcome** the challenge.

Assemble your dice pool, roll those dice, and then compare your result to the following list:

EFFECT DIE RESULT	OUTCOME
0 or Less	Action utterly, spectacularly fails
1-3	Action fails, or succeeds with a major twist
4-7	Action succeeds, but with a minor twist
8-11	Action completely succeeds
12+	Action succeeds beyond expectations

When your hero takes a twist, you as a player decide if you'll answer one of the questions under your principles (if appropriate to the scene) or you can let your GM decide an appropriate twist. A twist is always that: a plot twist, so work with your GM to determine an event that makes the story more interesting and moves the plot forward.

### ATTACK

If your hero tries to deal damage to another character, whether it's physical (a series of punches), emotional (mocking taunts), or mental (psychic blasts), that's an **Attack**.

Assemble your dice pool, and inflict **damage** to your target equal to that result. If the target is a character with a Health rating, they lose that much Health. If the target is a minion, they roll a **minion save** to see if you knock them out immediately or not.

### BOOST OR HINDER

When you **Boost** or **Hinder**, you make an effect called a **mod**. The Boost action creates a **bonus** for you or an ally; the Hinder action creates a **penalty** for an opponent.

Assemble your dice pool, roll those dice, and then compare your result to the following list to determine the mod size:

EFFECT DIE RESULT	MOD SIZE
0 or Less	No bonus or penalty is created
1-3	+/- 1
4-7	+/- 2
8-11	+/- 3
12+	+/- 4

Any number of bonuses and penalties can be applied to a roll, except only one **exclusive** mod can be used on a roll. Bonuses or penalties only apply for one roll and then go away unless they are **persistent** or an ability dictates their duration.

### DEFEND

Your hero is always taking steps to protect themselves, but there are times when they want to focus on protecting themselves or someone else. In a **Defend** action, you describe what your hero is doing to avoid or reduce an Attack. Assemble your dice pool, roll those dice, and note your result. When you or the target you are Defending would next lose Health before your next turn, reduce the amount taken by your Defend result. If you or the target you're Defending are not Attacked before your next turn, the effect is wasted.

If you are under the effect of multiple Defend actions, choose the higher result to use; do not combine them.





## SPECIAL CASES

### RECOVER

Some abilities or other circumstances let you use a die from your roll to **Recover** as part of your action. Regain lost Health equal to that die's result, up to the maximum of your Green zone range. For recovering outside of action scenes, see Montage Scenes.

### REACTIONS

Reactions (labeled with an R) are specific actions you can do in response to something happening. No matter how many abilities you have that grant reactions, you can only perform one reaction per round. This resets at the start of your turn.

### INHERENT

Inherent abilities (labeled with an I) are always on. They are constant facts about your hero, like heavy plating on your armor, or a keen eye out for trouble. You don't have to specifically activate these abilities—they just happen.

### RISKY ACTIONS

You can choose to add an extra effect to your basic action by taking a risky action. There will definitely be fallout—hence the “risky” part—so choose an appropriate minor twist when you decide to take a risky action.

### ACTION EXAMPLES

- An Attack that normally hits only one target can hit an extra target with the same die.
- An Attack is more powerful and uses the Max die.
- An Attack has an extra effect using the Min die, like Hinder the target.
- An Overcome action also deals damage to a target in the way using the Min die.
- A Hinder action also moves the target far enough away that they will have trouble making their way back.
- A Boost action creates a persistent bonus instead of fading after one use.
- A Defend action also Boosts an ally using your Min die.

A risky action only works for a basic action, and should only be as circumstances warrant it. If you're doing something you've practiced, it's an ability.

### HIT THE DECK!

A common risky action is to take a Defend action when facing an enemy's massive attack. A basic Defend action can be done out of turn as a reaction by activating a minor twist. You may only Defend yourself this way and not others.

### COLLECTIONS

As you play your hero, you develop a comic book collection of your hero's prior appearances. The Starter Kit heroes all start with a First Appearance collection.

You can call on each of your collections once per session, using previous experiences to help you and marking off that collection as you do so. This has one of several effects:

- After rolling, you can change the number on one die to any side of that die you choose. Determine Min/Mid/Max after doing so.
- Establish one fact about a scene your hero is in, based on a previous issue. (Yes, just make something up, as long as it isn't ridiculous and is rooted in the events or lessons from that back issue. If your idea is out of line, the GM will veto it and ask you to think of another one.)
- You can invoke your collection instead of taking a minor twist, provided you can think of an explanation for how it's relevant to the situation.

However you use it, you have to justify how that previous adventure helps with the current situation.

### MONTAGE SCENES

When moving between action scenes, the heroes might be in a montage scene to cover what happens in the downtime.

Heroes can also use montage scenes to Recover lost Health if there's time to do so. Each hero describes how they recover from the events of the previous action scene. They Recover Health up to the maximum of the next zone up. They may choose to take a minor twist (that lasts through the next scene as well) to Recover two zones, or if they were in dire straights, they may take a major twist to Recover all of their Health at once.



## GAME MODERATING

### ★ HOW TO RUN THE SENTINEL COMICS RPG

So you're excited about this game and you're curious about taking on the role of **game moderator** AKA **GM**? We're excited too—it's tons of fun to run! Or maybe you just want to know more about the building blocks that make a typical **Sentinel Comics RPG** session. Either way, you're in the right place.

Chances are, you've at least heard of roleplaying games and know the vast majority of them have a referee/game master to run them. We won't retrace the entire concept; you can find plenty of examples in popular culture and media. Instead, we're going to focus on running this game in particular.

A comic book design team is a useful metaphor to explain the roles of players and the GM in a play session. Each player represents a member of a creative team assigned to a comic book title. The play session is the writers, artists, inkers, and interns working together to get the next issue out. In that metaphor, the GM is the editor. They are part of the team and share the responsibility of getting the issue out, but they're also responsible for pushing the team in the right direction, making creative calls, and maintaining the team's focus on the task at hand.

As the GM, you are the glue that brings everything together. Your primary job is to help your players create an amazing story. With the help of the rules, and a published adventure or adventures of your own, you get to describe and personalize everything and everyone the heroes interact with. From burning skyscrapers to crashing planes, from space stations to parallel worlds, you make the world of the game come to life for all of your players.

You describe things that heroes perceive and then engage in discussions with your players to move the story forward. Sometimes, when a hero wants to perform an action whose outcome could significantly alter the stakes at hand, the dice come out and rolls are made.

Let's briefly talk about the six issues included in this Starter Kit before moving on to the building blocks of a **Sentinel Comics RPG** story.

### ★ HOW TO USE THE SIX ISSUES!

The six Starter Kit issues each tell a story that connects together in a fun way. Each issue should take about one, 90ish minute game session, but that's not a hard and fast rule. Some groups will go through more quickly, and others will dig deep into individual scenes, making issues last multiple sessions—that's all up to you and your players. We're not here to constrain how each issue is used. We're much more interested in providing you the tools you need to play.

The first issue—Issue #1—is *Freedom Five #801*, and it's a very good place to start. If you're playing through all six issues with your group, you will all experience *Freedom Five #801* first, and then follow up with *Freedom Five #802*, which is labeled Issue #2. However, the story gets far less linear after that!

The order of Issues #3, #4, and #5 are up to you and your group of heroes. At the end of Issue #2, the heroes have three options of how to continue the story. They will eventually cover all three possible adventures, but the order they do it in is up to them. That's why each of those issues is labeled "3/4/5". Then, you take them through the big final issue, coming back to *Freedom Five #803* for the grand finale!

For more details on each of those issues, check out the Story Summary section at the beginning of Issue #1. But remember: those issues are all for *GM's eyes only*! You don't want to give the story away before the heroes are able to figure it out on their own!



## ★ ISSUES AND SCENES

A **Sentinel Comics RPG** GM comes to the game table with the plan of a story. The plan can take the form of a published adventure, called an **issue** (such as the issues that are part of this very Starter Kit), or you can create your own! For now, we're going to focus on the issues in this Starter Kit, but **Sentinel Comics: The Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook** will provide tools and advice on how to create your very own issues.

Like in comic books, some story arcs require multiple issues. In the same vein, **Sentinel Comics RPG** issues can be published in a series of 6 interconnected stories. These arcs are called **collections**.

An issue is composed of a series of **scenes**. Each scene features a problem or a situation that needs the attention of your players' heroes. Some issues feature linear stories where scenes are played in a specific order until the issue reaches a conclusion. Others are more open-ended with the possibility of playing scenes in various combinations, including skipping some scenes, depending on the choices of the heroes and the outcomes of their actions. There are two primary types of scenes: action scenes and montage scenes.

An **action scene** features trouble that needs heroes. It's about punching villains, saving civilians, and putting out literal and figurative fires. Such scenes are peppered with the sound of dice clattering, players talking excitedly, and descriptions of destruction and mayhem.

A **montage scene** covers moments where the GM and players need to explore parts of the story that don't require the dice. It's about experiencing personal moments, going through flashback moments, and dealing with people affected by the actions of superpowered heroes in a mostly normal world.

In the issues included with this Starter Set, all the scenes have everything you need to run them.



## PARTS OF ACTION SCENES

An action scene starts with setting up the GYRO scene tracker and a description of where the story takes place. In some cases, you'll find statistics for the environment. We explain the tracker and the environment a bit later.

The scene presents an initial situation. You start with the story in your hands and describe to the players what happens near or around the heroes before things go wrong. Often, players have an opportunity to poke around the scene and ask questions. Don't require action rolls from them unless they want to perform something heroic that has significant stakes in the story at hand.

Then something goes wrong in the scene, which you describe to the players with as much detail as you can manage. In published issues, this is where you'll find all the details and game stats for foes and challenges along with advice on how to play them in the scene.

Next the scene covers what happens once the heroes are done dealing with the foes and challenges, whether they succeed or fail. It lays out the likely outcomes and where to go from there.

Now, let's look at what makes up an action scene.

## ★ THE SCENE TRACKER

Action scenes start with a color coded GYRO scene tracker. During the action sequence, whenever the scene takes a turn, check off one of the spaces, from left to right. Other elements of the scene might require you to mark additional spaces at other times in the round.

The scene tracker measures the intensity of the scene. When it's in Yellow, all heroes in the scene can use Yellow abilities. If the scene has an environment or if villains have Yellow twists or abilities, you may use them as well as the Green ones. The same goes when the tracker hits Red.

The scene ends immediately if you must mark a space beyond the last Red one. In published issues, a scene's description has the details of what happens. Usually, it means the villain, foes, or whatever threats the heroes were dealing with weren't defeated and they now have to deal with the negative consequences of that failure. A bomb goes off, a villain takes off with plutonium, the heroes get captured, the city suffers severe damage, etc.

Heroes may want to prevent the scene tracker from progressing. In most cases, unless indicated otherwise in the scene, a hero can take an Overcome action to try to stabilize the situation. If successful, you don't check a box during the scene's next turn. Of course, this can backfire horribly if the hero fails the roll. Feel free to add an extra check if the action fails spectacularly.

## ★ ENVIRONMENTS

Some action scenes occur in dynamic **environments** that provide opportunities for interesting twists beyond those already planned. They represent the hazards and peculiarities of where the action occurs.

Environments come with a description to help you set the scene for the players. They also have their own dice pool made of three short representative descriptors. For example, a high tech military base could have a pool like:



Under this, an environment has a list of GYRO coded minor and major twists for you to tap into during the scene. Whenever the need for a twist comes up, the player can choose one from their character sheet or you may pick one from the environment's list. They list things that can happen and provide the required rules to describe the impacts.

For example, in our base, a Green minor twist could be:

**GREEN**

### MINOR TWIST

**Spotted!** Roll the environment's dice and deploy Mid soldier minions. They act on the next turn.

This means you would roll the environment's dice pool and add a number of soldier minions equal to the value of the Mid dice.

Note that each of an environment's major twists can only be used once a scene (unless it states otherwise), so check it off after you use it.

Unless otherwise noted, you don't take basic actions on the environment's turn. Instead, you roll its dice pool and pick one of its twists. You can use any minor twists you want or any major twists that haven't come up yet. Note that some twists affect heroes and foes alike.

Some environments have an additional list of threats. These provide you with additional scene-specific dangers and trouble you can bring in during the environment's turn in the action sequence. In such cases you get to pick either a twist or a threat from the lists provided.

If a twist or threat brings minions into the scene, they appear during the environment's turn, but take their first turn on the next round.

*For more on twists and coming up with your own, check out the Twists section and examples on page 11.*

## ★ MINIONS AND LIEUTENANTS

Many action scenes feature minor foes that don't rate the power level of full blown supervillains. The game has two types that follow similar rules: minions and lieutenants.

Minions are easy-to-dispatch foes represented by one die and a few lines of description to help you run them. For instances, here are three spidery robots!

### ANGRY SPIDER BOTS

**3 6 MINIONS**

#### DESCRIPTION

Small robot spiders with diamond mandibles that can slice through steel, eyes that project military-grade lasers, and high-strength tensile polymer "webs".

#### ABILITY

**Spider Webs:** +1 to Hinder when making webs.

#### TACTICS

Whenever an Attacking bot gets destroyed, they are replaced by any bots left without a valid target.

Minions of the same type take a turn as a group, activating as one in the action order. Each can perform any of the game's five actions, but they only get one die each to do so. When they Attack, minions roll their die and deal the result as damage. They don't have to target the same hero. Any Boosts from allies (including other minions) only affects one of them. The same goes for any Hinder they receive, unless an ability says otherwise.

Whenever heroes Attack a minion, you roll its die as a minion save. If the damage is *higher* than the minion's result, the minion is removed from play (it's destroyed, knocked out, chased away, etc.). Any other result and the minion hangs around, but is reduced one die size. If a minion is Attacked when at a , it is always removed and does not get a minion save.

Lieutenants are harder to kill than minions. When a lieutenant is Attacked and rolls lower than a hero's Attack, its die rating goes down one step instead of the lieutenant being taken out of play.

For example, if a lieutenant gets hit for 8 points of damage and rolls a 6, it becomes a lieutenant. This goes on until a lieutenant gets taken out.

Unless otherwise indicated, minions added to a scene during the action sequence act on the *next round*.



## ★ VILLAINS

Villains are the nemeses and epic foes that heroes were born to face. They have statistics similar to heroes and play like them, including a list of GYRO abilities. Like heroes, villains have a Health score and are taken out once their Health score drops to zero. However, their status does not come from their Health, but from a story or mechanical element—something that the villain cares about in the scene, other than their Health.

### ★ PROLETARIAT STARTING HEALTH: 16

#### CURRENT HEALTH:

POWERS	QUALITIES	STATUS
Strength	Conviction	9+ Clones
Vitality	Close Combat	5-8 Clones
Hammer	Leadership	3-4 Clones
	Cold Warrior	1-2 Clones
		0 Clones

#### ABILITY

##### Absorb Duplicate (Action)

Remove any number of Proletariat clones. Roll their dice and recover that much Health.

When the villain's turn comes up, like heroes, you decide if they will perform a basic action or use one of their abilities. In either case, you choose the action or ability, and you pick your target(s) when required and roll dice.

## ★ CHALLENGES

Challenges are the obstacles that heroes can't usually solve by punching or shooting them. They have to deal with them to successfully complete the scene. Dealing with a challenge requires one or several heroes to perform successful Overcome actions.

Some challenges are linked together, requiring them to be resolved in a specific order. For example, a bomb disguised as something innocuous might need to be found rapidly (an Overcome action) before it can be disarmed or thrown into space before it explodes (another Overcome). Or perhaps some of those spider bots from the minions section have covered a group of civilians in webs!



## WEBBED HUMAN SHIELDS

#### DESCRIPTION

Some spider bots have trapped nearby civilians in webs and strung them as human shields all around the tree and throughout its branches. The webbed citizens are unconscious but otherwise unharmed.

#### ACTION

During the scene, a persistent -2 shield penalty applies to all rolls against the **Horde of Harvester Bots**.

#### RESOLUTION

Heroes can free the civilians to remove the above penalty by succeeding on two Overcome actions:

- Save one group of civilians: Overcome, penalty reduced to -1
- Save the rest of the civilians: Overcome, penalty entirely eliminated

#### OUTCOME

Accidentally bonking a civilian on the head—with all the after-action fallout you might imagine—would make for a good twist, should you need one.

If the scene tracker expires while some challenges remain unresolved, dire consequences can be expected. This is when doomsday devices are triggered, villains achieve their nefarious goals, or innocent bystanders perish in catastrophic ways. The nature of the challenge dictates what happens in the story.

## ★ ALLIES & CIVILIANS

Usually allies and civilians don't get game statistics in action scenes, mostly to keep things simpler. The help they can provide or the hindrance they create is usually built into the descriptions of a scene through the environment or through specific challenges. Exceptions might occur, and in such cases, the scene provides the necessary info to play them.

## HOW TO RUN SCENES

### ACTION SCENES

The secret to running a good action scene is giving the players a sense that they have too much to do. They're playing superheroes and the threats and challenges they face are so dire, so dangerous that it requires their specific set of skills to resolve. And even still, the forces arrayed against them feel overwhelming.

Work on your players' senses to evoke vivid images. Talk of what they see, smell, and hear. Minions and villains are larger than life. Everything makes noise, rattles, hums.

Even moments of silence should be tense and suspicious. Double down if heroes have acute senses, filling every space with vibrant descriptions and action.

While an action scene can sometimes feel complex to run, the breakdown of the action order makes it manageable. Each of the scene elements (villain, minions, challenges, environment, etc.) under your control has clearly defined mechanics for you to run them. You run each one after the other and you hand off the action order to the next logical character or element.

Speaking of action order, there's a strong chance that inexperienced players will all want to go first, leaving all the remaining elements you control at the end. This can be a very painful experience for heroes, as you can possibly play all your NPCs and threats, reach the end of the round, and pick them again at the start of the next one. While there's nothing wrong in doing that, you should inform your players so they can avoid this by planning the action order accordingly.

In a similar vein, some scenes might have an overwhelming number of minions. If they all target the same hero, it could bring them down fast. Being a GM isn't about defeating the heroes—it's about crafting the best story. Pace the scene to create drama rather than efficiency. Unless a hero wants to face all the enemies, it generally makes for a better story to spread the attention of threats among all the heroes.

Also, don't underestimate the power of your NPCs using actions other than Attack. Boost, and Hinder actions can complicate the heroes' jobs in interesting ways. Plus, since each bonus or penalty created by such actions are named, it allows you to add new elements to the scene. For instance, the spider bots in Issue #1 of this Starter Kit can shoot webs to slow heroes down, so whenever they perform a Hinder action, you get to add a Webbed penalty which adds a flavorful piece of story to the scene.

Keep an eye on the scene tracker. If it reaches the end, it doesn't necessarily mean the heroes have lost and the villains have won. Look at how close the heroes were to achieving their goals and come up with an outcome that takes their efforts into account. They won't quite get what they wanted, but they may still end up with an acceptable compromise with limited consequences.

Finally, an action scene comes to life through the many twists that come from the players' rolls. The game was designed such that heroes almost always prevail. However, their success very often depends on how much they're willing to put themselves in trouble to achieve their goals.

Whenever a twist comes up, check with the player to see if one of the twists on their hero sheet makes

sense to be brought in; if it does and the player wants it, run with it. Otherwise, you can pick one from the environment if the scene has one.

You are also free to improvise your own, based on the suggestions provided on page 11. You decide what makes more sense in the story. And remember, a twist adds trouble to a success, it does not cancel it.

## MONTAGE SCENES

Montage scenes are fairly freeform. They allow heroes to explore aspects of the story that don't involve disintegrating skyscrapers or crashing airliners. Often such scenes involve dealing with NPCs to obtain necessary information or to address some of the consequences and fallout of the heroes' recent actions. Getting summoned to Megalopolis' mayor's office to get a tongue lashing after a particularly destructive fight downtown is a typical example of a montage scene.

If you're running a prewritten issue (like in this Starter Kit), any montage scene will tell you which NPCs are involved and what they want to achieve and describe any opportunities for the heroes. You don't usually roll dice in montage scenes, but there might be the occasional Overcome action, depending on the story.

Heroes can also use montage scenes to Recover lost Health if there's time to do so. Each hero describes how they recover from the events of the previous action scene. They recover Health up to the maximum of the next zone up. They may choose to take a minor twist (that lasts through the next scene as well) to recover two zones or, if they were in dire straights, they may take a major twist to recover all of their Health.

## NOW WHAT?

We've walked through the basics of **Sentinel Comics: the Roleplaying Game**. Now comes the important part: actually running the game! GM, now's the time to open up *Issue #1, Sentinel Comics #801*. Take a read through that booklet to know what's in store for you and our heroes and prepare to run your first session. Don't worry if you haven't absorbed all the rules yet: the Starter Kit issues are designed to walk you through each part gradually, introducing concepts to both you and the heroes as you play through the issues. And in case you have any questions, you and the players can always flip back here to the Gameplay Guide to answer any issues that arise. After a while, the basics of the rules will become second nature, and you'll be able to focus most on coming up with the best heroic story you can.

*Now get out there! The heroes must save Megalopolis!*

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