Wordplay
a roleplaying game

'a six sided dice paradise...'

by Graham Spearing

Far over the misty mountains cold
To dungeons deep and caverns old
We must away, ere break of day,
To find our long-forgotten gold.

The Hobbit, J.R.R. Tolkien

Wordplay Games

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Introduction

Welcome to Wordplay, a small book that gives you a complete and absorbing game to play with your friends. This game uses descriptive phrases and applies them directly into play by giving the phrase a value, which is converted into a number of six sided dice that you throw. The game is of a type known as 'table top' or 'pen and paper' roleplaying. This introduction explains what these roleplaying games are.

Wordplay is very easy to play and is designed to be used in any created setting and genre that you wish to explore. The game features the following:

- Free flowing character creation allowing a player to describe their alter ego in the game and use those descriptions as 'Traits' which are then split between Body, Mind and Soul categories.
- Your game character will have an amazing and extraordinary life.
- A fun dice building game. Describe what your character is doing and make use of as many advantages as possible to build your hand of dice.
- Roll your dice and get as many successes as possible - highest wins. Only the dice that land on the table count!
- Create goals for your characters and drive them forward to succeed.
- Pre-designed 'themes' - ready made settings to inspire you to create and play straight away .

Instead of numerous complicated rules, Wordplay provides group story telling opportunities that are translated into dice for your characters. The game is light, open and encourages players to give vivid descriptions that build a shared story. Wordplay is a 'six sided dice paradise', so a large number of six sided dice are needed to play.

So, this is a book and a set of game rules at the same time. You won't find this to be a dry set of instructions. This book is your best friend, sitting you down on a comfy sofa, plying you with hot tea and, with some excitement, telling you all about Wordplay. Sometimes the book will become florid and whimsical, but hopes never to confuse you. Most of all the book wants you to gather as many six sided dice as you can find and start to play.

Speaking of which, can you hear something...?

Sounds in the forest

Lorth had not travelled far from the icy forest road where the Aurnic trade caravan waited, pensively, for his return. The crisp still air carried every sound and he concentrated to pick up the echo of the movement that he thought he had heard moments earlier. He was alone in the forest clearing but within shouting distance of his mercenary companions, who guarded the long trail of brightly adorned wagons watchfully.

Then, all at once, there were two sets of noises. To his left many footsteps could be heard receding deeper into the forest, and there a cowled figure momentarily appeared running at great speed. The

second sound was a heavier crashing noise to his right. Someone or something out of view was heading either towards him or towards the road.

Lorth hefted his axe and in a split second made his decision...

What did Lorth decide to do? In Wordplay you get to decide. Lorth is a 'player character', a player's persona in the game. His actions will be dependant on the decisions of the player and the player alone. This game gives you a structure to help you design and document a character like Lorth and to help you find out what happens to him as you decide how he will react to situations such as the sounds in the forest.

Roleplaying games are different from more conventional games such as charades, board games or computer games that you may be familiar with, but they share many common features. This introduction will outline how roleplaying games differ and, hopefully, inspire you to give them a go.

Perhaps the first, most noticeable difference, is that roleplaying games are usually open ended in terms of duration. When you all sit down to play a game it could be a self contained entertainment that has a beginning, middle and end. Typically, however, a game session will form a part of an ongoing adventure story that will continue when you meet again for a follow up game. Sometimes these multi game adventures can build upon each other, creating a huge epic that will take many games to complete.

One of the other main differences is that roleplaying games are not explicitly about winning and losing. Rather than having a specific end objective, such as having the most money, or being the first to complete a race to the finish on a game board layout, this game's main expectation is only to provide some structure to an enjoyable experience, immersing players in the lives and worlds of your collective imaginary creations. That doesn't mean that Wordplay is aimless. The players' characters will become the main protagonists in your collective stories. These characters will also have their own particular goals which, through play, the players will work towards completing. A game of Wordplay may be about one specific story with a constructed range of defined objectives. It may turn out to be a number of stories that, over time, weave together into a great saga drawing in the aspirations of all the players' characters and, by extension, the players themselves.

Tabletop roleplaying games have provided a structured approach to the creation of imaginary worlds and adventures for players across the globe from the mid 1970s. Since that time there have been many games produced specialising in different periods and genres, medieval fantasy and science fiction/space opera being two of the most popular. Though these games have developed new rules and new places of emphasis in their design, some fundamentals seem to have survived over the decades. As they are all, at root, social games, they work best with a group of players who meet together often. Most have a game co-ordinator who creates the back story and guides the players through the shared imaginary world; Wordplay calls this special player a 'Navigator'. Players will record their characters on paper, providing them with pointers on how to play them and any game rules that define how their character can respond to the challenges that the shared story confronts them with.

What is meant by the 'tabletop' in tabletop roleplaying games? It doesn't mean that everyone takes it in turns to climb on a table and act out the role of their in game character; but don't let me stifle any enthusiasm out there! The name comes from the convention that players sit around a table to play, providing a surface on which to roll dice and place notes, pencils, drinks and snacks. The shared table space and close proximity of fellow players also provides a focus for play and a convenient

place for the Navigator to provide any props such as pictures or maps or play atmospheric music. In Wordplay players will be rolling large numbers of six sided dice, so it's also useful to have a level surface on which to roll them. You might choose to sit round in comfy chairs, on cushions, or on the croquet lawn. Where you play can influence the nature of the experience, but feel free to experiment to see what fits for you and the space that is most comfortable for your group.

What do players actually do in this game?

The Navigator has a central role to provide and describe a setting for the game, planned and developed before the game commences. She will also draft out a back story and plot with hooks for the players to explore using their characters created using the guidance from this book.

During a game players will move in and out of character. When describing actions, asking rule questions, or going off on a tangent, the player will speak in their own voice. When 'being' the character during play and speaking to other characters the player will speak in the 'first person' as if they were that character, though appropriate accents and square shouldered amateur dramatics are entirely optional!

Players will not only enjoy the setting and story conceived by their Navigator but also create their own stories and objectives, which they will play out to develop their created characters and the shared game world. Although player created characters are two dimensional written descriptions on paper, with enthusiastic play they can become very three dimensional people. A great deal of the fun of this game is to be found when players create and sustain believable and enjoyable characters that will live long in the memory after the biscuit crumbs have been swept away and the game itself has finished.

[SIDEBAR]As a point of reassurance it is worth stating that you don't need to be a great actor to enjoy playing these games, or be particularly good at different voice tone or accents. There's a lot of fun to be had with role-playing games: the satisfaction of solving mysteries, seeing your character develop and progress, or perhaps die nobly in some meaningful endeavour. It's also a social experience, often supplemented with drinks and tasty snacks.[SIDEBAR]

Wordplay games can be set in any shared universe that you and your fellow players wish to develop. It could be our world and time, perhaps our world but at another time, or a completely different and fantastical world and setting. This setting is usually created by the Navigator and inspired from any number of sources including novels, films, computer games, and other roleplaying games. Settings can be separate and unconnected, or joined together by time travel, wormholes, dimensional travel or even dream sequences. Settings may be huge sprawling star systems, planets and kingdoms, claustrophobic and choking cities, sinister suburbia, or shambolic ancient castles. This book has a few starter 'Themes', prepared examples, to help you develop characters in specific genres and settings. As a Navigator or player you may use these as the basis for your own setting, adapting them or writing completely new ones as you see fit.

For most of the game rules part of the book we will be staying with Lorth, a northern barbarian mercenary from a fantastical alternate world, to serve as an example, illustrating how to create characters and use the Wordplay game to resolve the situations they get into.

What you need to play

This book has all the guidance that you will need to play many hours of fun and absorbing roleplaying games. You will also need some other things to get a game of Wordplay up and running. These include: some time, other players, some space, a large number of six sided dice, pencil and papers, and some imagination. Anything else is optional. Let's look at these, and some of those optional extras, in more detail.

Time

A game of Wordplay can typically take from two to five hours of playing time. This will depend on the preference of the group and the type of stories that they want to tell.

A game is often described as a 'session', with many linked sessions making up a 'campaign'; a complete and involved series of adventures that make up a satisfying story, with a beginning, a middle and, more often than not, an end. A campaign, even if played regularly, could take weeks, months or even years to complete, depending on how involved the story and how frequently you can all meet. On the other hand one session of Wordplay could be a complete and self contained game that could be played out to completion in a few hours.

With Wordplay you have a game that could take one evening, or the rest of your life to finish.

Fellow players

Wordplay expects there to be two types of players. One player will take on the role of the Navigator. The Navigator prepares the game world that the other player characters will live in, and provides a story outline that the other players will explore during the game. All aspects of this game world will be created by the Navigator as and when they are needed, including all the other people that the players' characters will meet. This sounds daunting, but isn't really, and can be the most rewarding aspect of the game. Further guidance for Navigators is found later in Wordplay.

[SIDEBAR]The 'Navigator' has been named as such in Wordplay as the role is an active one, guiding the players through the story, drawing together themes that emerge in play and working to bring the game to a successful conclusion. In other games of this type the role has been given a plethora of different names including: Dungeon Master, Games Master, Narrator and Storyteller. [/SIDEBAR]

All other players in the game each create a character to play in the game world prepared by the Navigator, and breath life into their characters by interacting with other player characters, the game world and the people that the Navigator has populated it with.

A setting and adventure needs to be prepared by the Navigator before you can start playing Wordplay properly. Your group may decide to make things up as you go along, playing off the different types of character created by the players, and seeing where your spontaneous play takes you. Usually the game will go well if your group's Navigator has done the preparation and readied a vividly realised setting and story outline to Challenge the player characters.

A small group would be one Navigator and one or two players. An average sized group would be one Navigator and about four players. Huge games can also be played with Navigator teams and

many players. The preparation for the game, where characters are created and the game world laid out is entertaining in and of itself. Effectively you are playing Wordplay 'solo', in anticipation of the actual game session. Character creation and world creation can also be done collaboratively in the group, with the Navigator preparing the story and readying surprises and challenges for the player characters.

The Themes section of this game gives some ready to use ideas for running games in different genres.

Space

Regardless of the nature of the game you intend to play, it is well worth having a gaming table available with enough seating room for all players, in a place with the minimum distraction. A gaming table helps the group to focus on each other and the game. What's more, players will routinely be rolling large numbers of six-sided dice and a table gives you somewhere to roll them. Any dice that fall off the table when rolled don't count as part of the player's total. Settees, comfy chairs and thick pile carpets voraciously eat dice, so beware.

In the virtual and connected world we live in today some games may even be played across the Internet using free and readily available voice and video conferencing software. It's not always possible to meet around a physical table, so these technologies can bring people together to play. The experience is somewhat different, but remains wholly enjoyable.

[SIDEBAR] The author has used Skype software to audio conference with other players. This is just one example and there are many 'remote tabletop' solutions available for download. Some have dice rollers and other wizardry to complete the experience. Simple audio conference facilities will more than suffice however.[/SIDEBAR]

Imagination

Wordplay, like other roleplaying games, feeds hungrily off your imagination. The process of designing your game world, creating your character, or playing together to create a great story taps into your imaginative self. The game aches for you to express yourself through your character and the myriad exciting situations that they will undoubtedly find themselves in.

Collectively who knows where your intertwined imaginations will take you? Wordplay provides a structured framework to allow you to travel along those paths that will bring you laughter, discovery, conflict and revelations.

Let go.

A six sided dice paradise

When players' characters are faced with challenges in the game's story, six sided dice are rolled to help decide what happens. The number of dice that are rolled depends on the capability of the character and how favourable the circumstances are to them. The more capable the character and favourable the circumstances, the more dice you get to roll. Rolling more dice means you have better odds of succeeding at the challenge your character is facing. Even starter heroes with good equipment, a couple of companions to help them, and some other positive factors can require

around twelve dice to be rolled. It is quite conceivable that experienced and high powered characters with lots of helpful friends and special equipment will be needing their players to throw a good sixteen or more six sided dice for them.

To accommodate this it is well worth each player having their own set of six sided dice. It is recommended that you buy a six sided 'dice block' that are available over the Internet or at specialist game stores. If you put 'd6 dice block' into an Internet search engine you will be inundated with on-line stores that will sell you beautiful and inexpensive blocks of six sided dice. Experience tells that it is best to get the 12mm sized dice, as you can hold quite a large number of them in your cupped, nervously sweaty hands. The 12mm dice block gives you 36 six sided dice, which is more than enough for two players. The dice come in many colours, so pick some contrasts to give your game table some dramatic flashes of colour.

Wordplay is a six sided dice paradise!

Sundries

A number of sharpened pencils, rubbers and spare scrap paper is always useful to make notes and record outcomes in play that affect player characters. Often these notes are written on the player character's own sheet. These games are also known as 'pen and paper' roleplaying games to differentiate them from computer roleplaying games.

If you are digitally inclined, a laptop with a copy of this game, some music and images can prove a powerful game aid. When used well they can help to evoke atmosphere, remind you of a rule, and even provide Internet connected information at the push of a few keys. However, don't let such technical frippery distract you. Computing is a digital resource to support the game and not the game itself.

A thesaurus could be useful when creating descriptions of your characters and then changing them over the course of play.

Wordplay sessions around the gaming table are social affairs, which are optionally enhanced by a tempting array of snacks and drinks to fuel the imagination, all adding to the sense of occasion. Without wishing to be prescriptive, there is nothing to beat a couple of pots of hot tea accompanied by generous helpings of biscuits. Home made cakes, pizzas and all manner of unhealthy sugary temptations are all usually welcomed by the group.

How to navigate through this book

This book is not a fictional narrative, so there is little point in flipping to the last page to find out what happens. What? You already have? Shame on you! The book is laid out in a reasonably logical manner, even conforming to the convention of putting the Introduction at the beginning. To come we have the following main chapters:

Glossary – collecting together all the strange terms that this game uses with an expectant familiarity. Keep it bookmarked.
Player Characters – a guide to creating the person you will play during your game.
Challenges – how Wordplay structures the moments of tension that the player characters will experience during the game. Most of the rules are in this chapter.

Outcomes – how Challenges effect characters. Also how characters change during the game.
Powers – how to give supernatural abilities to characters.
Equipment – how stuff can help player characters win Challenges.
Navigating – extra help for the Navigator, but useful for all to read.
Themes – example settings for you to use in your games

All chapters, after the glossary, will have a summary at the end. These summaries seek to re-express and encapsulate the core concepts from the chapter that you need to understand. They serve as a quick refresh with as many of the main points as possible succinctly summarised together.

Throughout the book, for no better reason than convenience, Players are spoken of as male and Navigators as female.

Glossary

Wordplay uses some terms that will be unfamiliar to readers, especially those who are new to tabletop roleplaying games. For convenience these specialist terms are grouped together here, before we get properly started. Don't allow them to put you off, they'll become much clearer when you are actually playing a game.

If you are new to Wordplay you can safely skip this chapter and dive straight into the 'Player Characters' chapter that follows.

Term	Description
5d	Wordplay uses six sided dice. When the game tells you how many dice to pick up it will use notation like '5d'. 5d means five dice. 3d means three dice and so on.
BMS	Body, Mind and Soul - the three categories within which a player character is described.
Building your hand	The process of getting as many six sided dice into your hand as possible before throwing them. Wordplay advises on how many dice you can legitimately have at any one time.
Challenge	An important encounter or event that tests one or more player characters. The outcome is not certain and dice will often be used to help determine what happens.
Character Sheet	One or more sheets of paper used to record all the necessary details about a player's character.
Damage Trait	If defeated in a Challenge a character will be given a new Trait to record on their character sheet. This 'Damage Trait' is a disadvantage that will hamper them when they face their next Challenge. The damage could be physical, mental or social depending on the nature of the Challenge. Damage Traits are temporary and can be healed.
Experience Point	These are awarded to player characters by the Navigator and recorded on the character sheet. They are awarded for good play, experiencing difficult Challenges, and achieving player character goals. Experience points are spent to improve player character Traits.
Goal	Players record several goals that they wish their characters to achieve during the game on their character sheets. These can be small simple things or major life changing aspirations. Experience points are awarded for completing them.
Navigator	A name for one of the players of the game. The Navigator designs the backdrop, the framework for story and all the other characters not controlled by the players
Navigator Character	A character in the game that is controlled by the Navigator.

Foundation Trait	The main Trait that a player picks from their character sheet to use to overcome a Challenge.
Four Ps	Pre-play, People, Place and Profession are four sources of inspiration from which a player can choose Traits for their character.
Initiative	Calculated at the beginning of a Round to see who acts first in the Challenge.
Momentum	If a Round is won with a Victory level of at least '2', then the character is allowed to dictate what the next Round's Challenge is about.
Player Character	A character in the game that is controlled by one of the players other than the Navigator.
Round	A flexible unit of time used in Multi-Roll Challenges during which all players get a chance to say what their characters do and roll some dice. A Multi-Roll Challenge may have many Rounds before it is concluded.
Session	Enough time to play one game of Wordplay. This typically lasts between two and four hours, though could be longer.
Success	Each die thrown may provide a success for a character in a Challenge. A result of 4 or 5 on a die grants one success and a result of '6' provides two successes. Players total their successes and aim for as many as possible.
Trait	Descriptive phrases that are given to player characters to define what they look like, what they can do, what they know, who they love, indeed just about anything that you might need to know about a character that could have an impact on the game story.
Victory Level	How well a winning character does in a Challenge. It is calculated using the number of successes a winning character has compared to a difficulty number.

Player Characters

The players in a game of Wordplay control the main characters that are the focus of the story that the gaming group will tell together. They are often the heroes of the tale, sometimes the anti-heroes. Even if they are only the servants, looking on as great events unfold, they remain the focus of the game and instrumental in shaping the direction of the shared story.

This chapter takes you through the process of creating your character. The character is designed within the context of a particular game, and probably in collaboration with fellow players and coordinated by the game's Navigator. You will use the 'Themes' section of this book extensively, or themes that have been created by yourself or your group. If you just feel like creating characters for the fun of it, then go ahead, but usually they will be created with a particular game in mind and designed as a group in preparation for a game.

All the information about your character is recorded on a Wordplay character sheet, an example of which is on p###. A downloadable version is also available on the Wordplay website. It would be well worth having a copy of the character sheet in front of you as you read through this chapter.

As you play out stories together using Wordplay there will be a continuing interaction between the Player Characters and the characters that the Navigator controls. As you play and tell stories together events will happen, catchphrases will be coined, scars both physical and mental gathered.

Traits

Player Characters are defined by words known as 'Traits'. Any descriptive phrase or ability can be included as a Trait. Traits are noticeable character attributes that are likely to have an impact during a game session. These words and numbers are recorded on the character sheet for reference during play. The character sheet serves to lay out in one place all the crucial factors that contribute to describing the character and how they can influence the game world and shape the collective story throughout the game. Some of the Traits are descriptive, informing the player and others in the group how the PC looks or acts, some will summarise their personal history, some will be positive, others will be negative.

As part of character generation, Traits are given a numeric value between 1 and 12, which represents how much the Trait will help a character succeed at Challenges set by the Navigator. High Trait scores allow a character to face great perils and difficult situations and still come through victorious. More on this in the Challenges chapter.

Some Traits may describe extraordinary and supernatural powers. These powers are often found in heroic and pulp stories. In Wordplay they have been given their own chapter: Powers. In game terms these 'Powers' function exactly as all other Traits, but what they can do to a game world can be surprising and amazing. If you want your character to be able to fly for example, then go and take a quick look now.

Traits are grouped into one of three areas: Body, Mind and Soul. Example Traits in each category

are listed below.

Body Traits

These are physical Traits that might include character looks, physical and movement abilities.

E.g. Swordfighting, Run for your life, Beautiful, Graceful, Camouflage, Comfortably girthed, Enormous hair, Legs that go on for ever, Tall.

Mind Traits

These reflect knowledge, deductive abilities and perception.

E.g. Scan for movement, Knowledge of ancient temples, Navigation, Pop trivia, South Yorkshire ticketing discount schemes, SQL database administration, Sharp eyes.

Soul Traits

These reflect personality, passions, artistic and social abilities.

E.g. Streetwise, Garrulous, Love the princess, People watching, Hate the dragon, Worship Slortar - fiend of the six tribulations, Gentle, Bombastic, Watercolour painter, Butter people up.

Traits are used continuously throughout a game of Wordplay. They highlight how your character can interact with the game world and influence the shared story, acting as the keys to drive your character off the page and into the heart of the action around the table. Traits are entered on the character sheet for reference during the game. Get to know your character Traits and make them your own; you're going to be using them a lot.

Let's make a start.

Concept

All player characters start with a concept. This is one line of text that sums up who the character is in a nutshell. If someone were to come up to your gaming table and ask what sort of character you are playing then you could read aloud the concept and they would leave with a good idea as to who it is you are roleplaying.

examples:

A truculent teenage skateboarder with a magically active imagination.
A northern barbarian mercenary seeking glory in the southern city plain.
An independent minded free trader and smuggler up to her armpits in debt with the star patrol only one step away
I say! A topping if gormless dilettante with some of the largest and loudest trousers anywhere in the Big Smoke.
Impossibly she came from beyond the City, knowing its last secret, with a licence to thrill for those

who can find her.

For long running games it is entirely conceivable that a character's concept will change over the lifetime of the stories that you are creating at the game table. That, as they say, is life for you.

What's in a name?

The character's name is right at the top of the character sheet, but it can often be the last thing you think about when you are creating a new persona to play. Bear in mind that the character's name will be used a lot in the game and may even say something about your character. I can see that twinkle in your eye so, before you reach for the Ikea catalogue for some random inspiration, it's worth noting that the character's name will, along with everything else, be heavily influenced by the theme that you are playing.

If the game is an epic fantasy of swords and sorcery, for example, think twice before choosing 'Nigel' as your character's name. If your game is set in an established setting, fictional or otherwise, then a ready mix of names should be available to you from literature, or after some research.

Age

You'll also find room to express the character's age. Starting player characters could be any age, though if you play someone older then this can be reflected in the experience and power levels (p###) that the character starts with. There is no need to put down an exact number of years of age, rather add a phrase that describes something about how the character's age effects their behaviour, or how they look. This phrase is likely to include Traits that you can optionally add to the character sheet. You'll find out how later, but for now here are a few examples of character age:

examples
A boisterous and headstrong youth
In middle years and weighed down by petty responsibilities
In later years but impetuous and frisky
Of a certain age and clinging on, slightly desperately, to her youth

These examples contain nice phrases, Traits, that help round out the character. We'll come back to them later.

Goals

Player characters are given goals to achieve. These are task focussed actions to be achieved in the game world as part of the story you are creating. Up to three goals are noted on the character sheet. They are there to guide a player in directing the character's actions during play. The character will get a bonus when facing Challenges that are tightly bound to their goals. Similarly if the character is initiating actions that run counter to their goals then he will take a penalty.

Goals can be grouped in a number of ways. A suggested array of goal types is:

- A longer term goal that sits deeply in the heart of the character and could take a long life journey to complete.
- A goal that is shared with other members of the group.
- A goal that is directly related to the current story and game session.

Goals should be focussed around a clear outcome, an objective that can be achieved during the game through character action. 'I want to be the best swordsman' is not focussed enough, and will be very difficult to tell if and when it has been achieved. 'I wish to prove my swordsmanship is better than the greatest in the world by besting Monsieur D'Antalen in a duel' is just right. We have a Goal and an objective bursting with story potential. Similarly 'I want to be happy' is insufficiently focussed, however laudable! 'I wish to experience the expensive temptations of the House of Seven Red Lanterns and still be able to walk afterwards' is bang on target, as it were.

Of the three goals, it's always worth having at least one that is short term and focussed on the story being played in that session. It helps to drive play and ties character behaviour closely to the shared narrative.

Once a Goal is successfully achieved the player transfers it to a list of completed goals on their character sheet. The process of transferring the completed Goal triggers a reward of experience points given by the Navigator to help the character grow and improve their Traits. The more difficult a goal is to achieve, and the more world changing it proves to be, will influence the number of experience points that the Navigator decides to award when it is completed. Guidance on how many experience points to reward a player for a completed goal can be found in the Character Experience section (p###).

Competed goals are also kept as a list by the player as a record of what has been achieved over the game life of the character. A player can write a a new goal on the character sheet to replace the completed one. The Navigator may also give characters goals.

Ideally, if characters are being created as a group activity, then these goals should be agreed up front between the players and the Navigator. It could even mean that player characters share common goals, or that the Navigator would like to provide some shared goals to the players. In this way a common goal will link and bind the player characters together with a shared purpose.

example goals:

Find the Sword of Chaos and cast it into the Maelstrom before Grasmorth, the Dark Lord, returns to our world
Win the hand of the princess
Find out why the children keep disappearing
Trick the guard into giving me the key
Make this trade run profitable
Ask Miranda for a date and take her with me through the shimmering portal...

Character Traits

So, let's say that you arrive for a game of Wordplay without a character to play. While you go to put the kettle on, or buy a huge round of drinks, you have some time to get information together on who it is you will be playing. A player may decide to start with no Traits for his character and find out who he wants to play as the game gets under way. That's fine, the character will build and grow at the pace the player wishes. In this case use some of the guidelines below, especially 'Experience and power levels'.

If you are going to create a character then where do you start? It is the Navigator's job to help draw you into the game and ensure that your new character will quickly play a part in the action. She will be able to give you pointers on the genre being played, perhaps the story so far and current characters already in play, with some practical ideas on the sorts of character goals and Traits that will fit in. It's ideal for a group to create characters together, so that they can build associations and conflicts with each other right from the start. Shared goals can also prove to be a powerful way of cementing the group together. Such a group character creation session is not always possible, so the Navigator plays a part in drawing all this together.

Let's explore the standard way of creating a Wordplay character through the Four Ps...

The Four Ps

Pre-play, **P**eople, **P**lace and **P**rofession all provide lists of Body, Mind and Soul Traits to pick from. However, don't overly worry about that structure. In Wordplay Traits essentially come from you the player as you describe your character. What do you want your character to look and be like, be able to do, to know, to love, to hate? As you build up this picture, your character Traits will emerge naturally. All you need to do is write them down on your character sheet and Wordplay will advise you what to do with them. To provide some inspiration there are some lists of possible Traits to pick from later in Wordplay, especially in the Powers and Themes chapters. Don't let any list in this book tie you down. Just put down what feels right for you, it's going to be your character after all.

We'll now take a look at each of the Four Ps in turn.

Pre-play Traits

Some players like to write a story about their character in order to provide them with some context and introduce them into the game. This could be just a couple of lines of text, like an expanded concept, such as:

example

He came out of the North, a tall warrior of Lhuthia, hefting a battle axe with a determined look in his eye. His powerful frame was encased in fur and metal scale. He wishes to make his mark in these strange southern lands, and his axe should help with that...

Other players may wish to write a few pages of story that give a good picture of the character and their immediate history. Typically a couple of paragraphs with lots of rich description is recommended, especially using words and phrases that can be lifted and placed on the character sheet for use in play.

example

Lorth had to leave the Northern land of Lhuthia in a hurry, hunted by the Clan Lords for his supposed betrayal. A tall, powerfully built man, encased in fur and metal scale armour, with long raven braided hair, he is every inch the Northic warrior. Brooding over wrongs done to him, he strides south to escape enemies and make a name for himself in the southern lands.

Keen eyed for danger and fearless in battle, Lorth effortlessly carries a battleaxe and round shield. He can look beneath the surface of people and sense their motives. This has saved him on more than one occasion. He is naturally suspicious and wary and will only find friendship with those who prove themselves through their actions.

Pick out interesting Traits from the Pre-play, and place them in one of the BMS categories. From the example above the following Traits could be added to Lorth's character sheet:

Body: Battleaxe, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Shield, Tall
Mind: Keen eyed, Sense motive
Soul: Brooding, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Suspicious, Wary

We also now know where he is from thanks in part to some of the cultural information that has been drawn from the game world presented by the Navigator, and we also know that he is a warrior. These will provide 'Place' and 'Profession' Traits for Lorth (see below).

You might be able to find some more from the example Pre-play text that could have been included on the character sheet. The decision as to which and how many Traits are selected for the character is up to the player, possibly in collaboration with the Navigator and other players.

The next three Ps are used to flesh out your character further, representing lists of Traits that you can pick from. These Traits will be found in the particular 'Theme' you are using for your game. They can also be created on the fly if you wish.

People

In science fiction and fantasy games characters may not necessarily be human as we understand it. Perhaps they were once human, but transformed by magic, genetic engineering, different evolutionary development or from worlds very different from our own? They may be very different sentient species from humanity. These alternate races will also provide a tasty list of Traits to help shape your character.

Place

This is the dominant culture and location that has shaped and influenced the character before entering play. Place Traits also reflect the character's 'place' in that society. Were they born to an aristocratic family of decadence, or from a struggling underclass living on the edge of survival?

Profession

Traits are also gained from a previous occupation. These will be learned abilities that have helped the character make their way in their world, and provide Traits that will help them in the stories

created in the game.

Trait Crossover

Some Traits could find a home in more than one of the BMS categories. If this happens then pick one of Body, Mind or Soul and place it there. Rationalise how that Trait is used more in that particular BMS vein than the other two.

example
The Trait 'People watching' encompasses both perception abilities, in the Mind category, and an appreciation of social norms and behaviour, more typically associated with the Soul category. You could make a case for the Trait being in either category. If it is placed in 'Mind' then you are emphasising the perceptive qualities noticing particular behaviours and unusual changes in the flow of dress and behaviour of the crowd you are watching. If the Trait is placed in 'Soul' then you are emphasising the interpretative nature of the Trait, intuitively recognising why someone is behaving the way they are and where they got that cool plastic bandanna from.

As a player you would tend towards describing how any particular Trait is used in a Challenge with a leaning towards the category it is sitting in. It's a fine point; comes with practice, but worth noting now.

Characters with Powers

Some game themes include supernatural powers. In these settings player characters will have Traits that allow them to break the laws of nature. The theme will have example powers in their Profession chapter. Characters that have these in their four Ps should refer to the Powers chapter. Powers are treated the same way as any other Trait, however they use some additional rules due to their extraordinary nature. The Powers chapter helps a player understand how to express the Traits on the character sheet and use them in play.

Most Powers are identified as part of picking a Profession but can appear in any of the four Ps.

Loves, Friends and Enemies

The Four Ps may also create Traits that are based on relationships that point to the existence of other characters. Traits of this kind will often be phrased as follows:

Love my beautiful bride
Hate the Gallan brothers
Infatuated with Dylan
Look after Auntie Jessie (this one might be a Goal instead)

These Traits will generally belong in the Soul category of BMS. However some relationships are more 'physical', so may reside in 'Body' whilst others, rarely, may be fundamentally about the mind, particularly academic teachers.

Any Trait present on the character sheet that identifies an individual permits the character to create that character too. The Navigator may only wish for the character to have one easy to apply Trait. So, in the above example it may simply be 'Dylan 4d'. Dylan is at 4d when facing Challenges in the game. Player or Navigator may wish to have the character partially or fully 'fleshed out'. If so, Dylan would become a separate character and created using the guidance in this chapter and also 'Navigator Characters' (p###). Who plays the character is up to the group. It could be the player who has the Trait that caused character creation in the first place, another player, or the Navigator. This new character is called a Supporting Character and though not the main focus of the story, may well become pivotal as events unfold.

How many Traits should I start with?

You can adopt one of two approaches to the number of Traits you use to a describe a character. These are outlined below.

Variety is the spice of life

This approach delights in providing characters with a sizeable number of Traits for characters to use in play. If using this option then it is recommend that your character starts with about ten Traits in each of Body, Mind and Soul, though the precise number will depend on the player. The Navigator may wish to set an upper limit to the number of starting Traits in each category.

Too many Traits lead to a cluttered character sheet with superfluous entries that are never used in play.

Variety is the Spice of Life is the default approach used throughout Wordplay and the worked up example of character generation will use it.

Less is more

An equally valid approach is to severely limit the number of Traits that a character has. This could be as little as one Trait from each of the four 'Ps': Pre-play, People, Place and Profession.

You could even take the approach of assigning dice to the Body, Mind and Soul categories themselves, with all other aspects of the character described through the Pre-play text.

If this approach is taken there will be fewer and more broadly applicable Traits in play. As a consequence these Traits will be used much more extensively and are more likely to be applied to Challenges in which they don't fit quite so well. The Navigator is therefore likely to impose difficulty modifiers due to stretching their use. Another impact of lower numbers of Traits is that characters will have less helping Traits to build their hand of dice with. This will be clearer once you have read the Challenges chapter, but suffice to say that less Traits make for simpler characters and simpler play. This is the great draw of 'less is more'. Characters can be drawn quickly and play started straight away.

example
The Navigator decides that the game will use 'Less is More' with two Traits in each of the BMS categories. Lorth could be quickly described as follows:

Body: Bold and bloody combat, Run tirelessly
Mind: Battle strategy, See danger coming
Soul: Fearless, Homesick

Looking for contradictions

As it is a very easy and open process to add Traits to a character, it is always worth checking them once they have all been entered onto the character sheet. Do the Traits sit well together and make sense of the character that you are trying to create? Remove Traits that contradict the character's concept or that seem to unhelpfully conflict with other Traits. Feel free to replace them with other more appropriate Traits that fit together better as a whole.

Useful Traits to have

Every game theme will accentuate certain situations, which will create Challenges for characters. Characters who have complimentary and useful Traits for these situations will be more successful than those that do not. Themes will highlight the key sorts of Traits that the characters will need through the 'three Ps' that they will list. In many thrilling and action packed adventures, regardless of theme, the following Traits are often called on:

Perception Traits – your character needs to be aware of what's going on around him, especially in times of danger.
Movement Traits – being able to catch or escape enemies or nimbly navigate certain types of terrain marks out the action hero.
Endurance Traits – a capacity to withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune will help you to keep your character in play longer. This could include strength of character and willpower as well as physical endurance.
Combat Traits – ability with weapons, a cool head and knowledge of tactics, will keep your character alive and help him through the most terrifying of martial Challenges

Depending on your character concept, it is worth having some useful Traits in at least two of these categories. It isn't any fun to have a character that doesn't have useful Traits to use in a game. The Navigator is there to ensure that this is not the case. Above all stay true to the overall character concept and work with the Navigator to make sure the finished character is going to fit in to the game's storyline and give the player plenty of useful things to do.

Flaws

Flaws are Traits that describes a negative aspect to the character. From one point of view they are 'Traits that it is not useful to have'. As in real life, Flaws can add a defining and interesting signature to a character, really bringing a rounded feel to personality and usually making the play experience more fun. With exceptions, it is also true to say that a Flaw can, from other perspectives, have positive sides that can be used to great effect in a game. Greed, hatred, jealousy or obsessions, while clouding character judgement can be used to powerfully tunnel game play down certain avenues.

There will come times when a Flaw is extremely helpful to an opposing character or situation. When this happens a player can voluntarily announce the Flaw to the Navigator and offer it as a bonus to their opponent in a game Challenge. The player character may gain a reward for doing

this. How that works is explained in the Experience section (p###).

Alternatively the Navigator may look through a character's Traits and pick out one that will help the Navigator win a Challenge against the player character. The effect of this is explained in Building Your Hand of Dice (p###).

Putting a value on the Traits

Once all Traits have been selected and placed into categories on the Wordplay character sheet, they are assigned numeric values. These numbers denote how powerful the Trait is in the game. A Trait with a value of 1 is very weak and will not be able to be used successfully, other than for comic value, in any complex situations in the game. A Trait with a value of 12 is as powerful as it can be. It is very rare to find anything with a Trait as high as 12. A Trait with a value of 6 is regarded as a step up in power, proving significant and influential in the resolution of Challenges. The Trait number value is the base number of dice rolled by a player when their character uses that Trait when facing a Challenge. This is also known as the 'Foundation' Trait. More on this in the Challenge chapter. As the number denotes the number of dice a 'd' is placed after the number in this text. So, a character might have the following Mind Trait: Obsessed with trains 4d. It is worth noting that once you are accustomed to the notation it is not really necessary to include the 'd'. With very few exceptions, a number almost always means a number of six sided dice so the 'd' can be dropped.

An average unnamed background Navigator character will be have a value of 3 with most of their Traits, with also a 4 included for an expert or particularly noteworthy individual. Player characters and named Navigator characters will have more Traits and at much higher levels.

Experience and power levels

For standard characters in the game use the 'Starter Hero' spread of Trait values as given below. The examples provided assume that the 'Variety is the spice of life' approach is being used for Traits.

Starter player Hero or significant named Navigator character :
2 Traits at 6d
5 Traits at 5d
9 Traits at 4d
All other Traits start at 3d

Other Starter levels can be applied to a character depending on the needs of the story. Here are some suggestions:

An experienced Navigator character
1 Trait at 6d
3 Traits at 5d
5 Traits at 4d
9 Traits at 3d
All other Traits start at 2d

Lesser hero or notable Navigator character
2 Traits at 5d

9 Traits at 4d
All other Traits start at 3d

Established Hero, Powerful villain
1 Trait at 7d
3 Traits at 6d
5 Traits at 5d
9 Traits at 4d
All other Traits start at 3d

Legendary Hero, Arch villain
1 Trait at 9d
2 Traits at 8d
3 Traits at 7d
5 Traits at 6d
9 Traits at 5d
13 Traits at 4d
Any other Traits start at 3d

 If 'Less is more' is being used then the templates above can still be used but only in part. Use the first three rows of the template. One Trait gets the first value, Two Traits uses the second value and all other Traits takes the third value.

example

Starter player Hero or significant named Navigator character :
1 Trait at 6d
2 Traits at 5d
All other Traits start at 4d

Wealth

Wealth reflects both the purchasing power of the character and a reflection of the assets owned by, and favours owed to, the player character. Wealth is rated as a Trait just like everything else, with a score of one to twelve dice. A character with one die in wealth is the poorest of the poor, having to scratch about from day to day with minimal, old and worn possessions, uncertain as to where the next meal will come from.

Wealth is abstracted to one rating, removing the need to keep track of exact coinage owned or long lists of possessions and equipment. Unless your game is focussed on asset management, and let's hope it is not, the wealth rating can be used to quickly assess whether a character has the resources to acquire a particular item necessary for the story, and also gives an overall feel for the standard of living the character is likely to expect.

If the resource difficulty dice (p###) is less than or equal to the character's wealth dice then they can

acquire the resource through a No Roll Challenge. They just get the stuff. Clearly this could be open to abuse if a player just wants to acquire lots of things for their character, so 'over spending' will result in the reduction of wealth levels or the creation of debt. Debt is regarded as a 'Damage Trait' to wealth and is looked at in Challenge Outcomes on p###.

Wealth levels

The table below gives some idea of the relative material value of the twelve wealth levels. This list has to be taken with a pinch of salt as it has positions and titles taken from different times and places that cannot really be mixed in a sensible fashion. Rather view it as a progression, and not a smooth or regular one, up the ladder of wealth and material.

Wealth level	Description	Material Standard of Living
1d	Stick picker, jobless, the poor, homeless	Hand to mouth, day by day existence, no luxuries, increased likelihood of disease
2d	Administrative assistant, Minimum wage earner, foot soldier, guard	Basic, limited opportunities, a few inexpensive luxuries
3d	Supervisor, Townsman, Trader, wandering adventurer	Reasonable standard of living, some luxuries
4d	Middle manager, Guildsman, Merchant, Tomb robber	Comfortable with a number of luxuries, larger and better accommodation and continually improved prospects
5d	Executive, Professional, Dilettante,	Used to regular luxuries
6d	Reality show celebrity, Top executives, Crime lord	Pampered, small entourage of other workers to support the lifestyle
7d	Prince, Celebrity	Several homes, many luxuries, choices in all things
8d	Mega rock star, Popular artist, Highly successful business owner	The high life of luxuries and notoriety, wants for nothing
9d	King	Regular feasting, hunting and politicking, with great wealth and power to affect other lives.
10d	Tyrant. Powerful and wealthy noble	Frequent and mind bogglingly ostentatious displays of wealth.
11d	Shadowy tycoon	Anything that can be bought can be yours, and that's most things.
12d	Emperor of all worlds	A combination of great wealth across many palaces and worlds

Player characters will be allocated an initial wealth level based on the main profession selected during character generation and any hints from Pre-play text. This initial level may go up and down depending on circumstances that arise during the game. If the game does not need to focus on wealth then this initial level can simply be maintained as a point of reference as to how easy it is for the character to gain new items during play.

Acquiring items, or living a lifestyle, set at a greater level than your wealth is difficult to achieve and may have consequences. To acquire items in the game is a type of Challenge and is covered in

the main equipment section (p###). Gaining and losing wealth levels is mentioned in the Experience section on p###.

Starting Equipment

Players can select any starting equipment for their player character that makes sense based on their selected 'Four Ps'. The Pre-play story may indicate the ownership of some item, property, or business that maintains their lifestyle. The selected profession may have some typical equipment that is useful to it such as weapons, armour, tools, horse, starship or other high tech gadget. The People and Place selections may encourage ownership of items to support being a part of those communities and locations.

Items listed on the character sheet are immediately available to the character and can be used in the story. Other items will need to be acquired in play. Use common sense. Some items will be trivial for the character to have due to their position and background, other more specialist items may be more difficult to acquire.

Just make it up

If you meet up with some friends and spontaneously decide to play a game of Wordplay then how can you do this when you don't have any characters and setting prepared? Simple. Just make it up as you go along. Players can start with no Traits at all and decide what they will be as they play. The Navigator simply hands out the spread of Trait numbers that each player can spend on Traits and off you go.

As a player character enters a Challenge the player can make up a Trait or two on the fly and apply values to them as they go along. If the game becomes a continuing series of stories then the player characters will grow out to their full lists of Traits as play progresses.

Example Character Creation

Elaine is guiding Tom through the creation of a new character for a sweeping fantasy epic that the group are playing. The 'Epic Fantasy' Theme is being used to generate ideas for the game background and in generating characters. In this example Tom has already come up with his pre-play text and has a good idea of what his character is going to be like.

Elaine: Ok, who would you like to be?
Tom: I've brought some pre-play text with me and some ideas on the Traits I'd like to use from it.
Elaine: Great, let's take a look... yes, that looks fine.
Tom is creating a character called Lorth, a northern 'barbarian' heading into the south in a hurry. Tom's pre-play text can be found on p###.

Lorth's Traits so far, after taking some from the pre-play text:

Body: Battleaxe, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Shield, Tall

Mind: Keen eyed, Sense motive
Soul: Brooding, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Suspicious, Wary

Elaine: Do you want to note down your character's concept now or later?
Tom: I 'll put one down now as I think I'm pretty clear who Lorth is going to be.

"A northern barbarian mercenary seeking glory in the southern city plain."

Elaine: OK. Do you want to add any Traits based on your concept text?
Tom: Could I add 'seeking glory'?
Elaine: Nice. I'd say that was a Soul Trait so let's add it in there. How would you describe his age?
Tom: He's definitely young, but old enough to have seen a bit of life and disappointment. How about: 'A young man full of energy and anticipation'.
Elaine: Any Traits from that?
Tom: Not for now, no, but I might use 'anticipation' in some way later!
Elaine: From your Pre-play it looks like you will want to use the 'Warrior' for your Profession Traits, and 'The Northern Thane Lands' for your Places Traits?
Tom: Yes that sounds good. I'll start with the Place Traits.

Tom picks out the following Traits from 'The Northern Thane Lands': Rugged, Dragon lore, Know clan stories, Predict weather, Speak own language, Declaim deeds.

Tom: Right, now to pick Traits from the Warrior profession. How am I doing? Have I got too many?
Elaine: No, you're fine. You'll want to pick out some combat Traits to establish Lorth as a warrior. He isn't a wizard or priest so I don't think we'll need to refer to the Powers chapter.

Tom picks out the following Traits from the 'Warrior' Profession: Brawling, Endure wound, Sword fighting, Wear armour with ease, Battle strategy, Horsemanship, Look for danger, Spot opponent's weakness, Think with sword, Treat wound, Calm in battle.

Lorth's Traits so far:

Body: Battleaxe, Brawling, Endure wound, Long raven braided hair, Powerfully built, Rugged, Shield, Sword fighting, Tall, Wear armour with ease
Mind: Battle strategy, Clan knowledge, Dragon lore, Horsemanship, Keen eyed, Know clan stories, Look for danger, Predict weather, Sense motive, Speak own language, Spot opponent's weakness, Think with sword, Treat wound
Soul: Brooding, Calm in battle, Declaim deeds, Fearless in battle, Hunted by Clan Lords, Seeking glory, Suspicious, Wary

Elaine: That's a nice mix of Traits and I'm starting to get a real picture of him. Let's look at goals now. I'd like you to have two character goals for now. A further one is likely to be added when we get to play.
Elaine: I'd like a long term goal for him to avenge the wrong done to him which caused him to flee his homeland. I don't know what it is yet, can we work that out later?
Elaine: Sure. How about a shorter, more immediate goal? You are going to be starting play as a mercenary guard of a long merchant caravan...
Tom: I'll make the goal to ensure that all caravans get to our destination safely.
Elaine: Good. You can equip him with any weapons he has as a Trait in, scale armour, helmet and shield. That should be good enough to grant him a 2d equipment bonus (see Equipment p###). As a

wandering adventurer he has a Wealth of 3d.

Tom: Am I finished?

Elaine: Nearly. Let's just check the Traits you have so far and see if there are any overlaps or things you might like to add in at this stage.

Tom: I have both 'Calm in battle' and 'Fearless in battle'. They're distinct but quite similar. I think I'll keep Fearless. Could I have a 'listening' and 'speak other language' Mind Traits? I'd also like a 'run tirelessly' Body Trait just to round him out.

Elaine: That's fine. We have one more step to take. We need to assign numbers of dice to all your Traits. I am giving you a starting experience of 'Starter Player Hero', which gives you two Traits at 6d, five Traits at 5d, nine Traits at 4d, and all other Traits start at 3d. I suggest that you first put the high numbers in the Traits you want to have as the most important.

Tom assigns the Traits to his character. Lorth's beginning character sheet follows.

Wordplay

Name: Lorth **Age:** A young man full of energy and anticipation **Gender:** Male **Exp:** **Trait Groups:** Northern Thane Lands, Warrior **Concept:** A northern barbarian mercenary seeking glory in the southern city plain.	**Pre-play** Lorth had to leave the Northern land of Lhuthia in a hurry, hunted by the Clan Lords for his supposed betrayal. A tall, powerfully built man, encased in fur and metal scale armour, with long raven braided hair, he is every inch the Northic warrior. Brooding over wrongs done to him, he strides south to escape enemies and make a name for himself in the southern lands.
Goals OOO Focussed desires and outcomes that drives actions during play. 1. To avenge the wrong done to him that caused him to flee his homeland 2. To ensure that all caravans get to our destination safely 3. **Doubts** Doubts due to failed invoked goals. 1. 2. 3.	Keen eyed for danger and fearless in battle, Lorth effortlessly carries a battleaxe and round shield. He can look beneath the surface of people and sense their motives. This has saved him on more than one occasion. He is naturally suspicious and wary and will only find friendship with those who prove themselves through their actions.

Body

Battleaxe 6
Brawling 4
Endure wound 5
Long raven braided hair 3
Powerfully built 6
Rugged 3
Run tirelessly 4
Shield 3
Sword fighting 5
Tall 4
Wear armour with ease 3

Mind

Battle strategy 5
Clan knowledge 4
Dragon lore 3
Horsemanship 3
Keen eyed 3
Know clan stories 3
Listening intently 4
Look for danger 5
Predict weather 3
Sense motive 3
Speak other language 3
Speak own language 4
Spot opponent's weakness 3
Think with sword 4
Treat wound 4

Soul

Brooding 3
Declaim deeds 3
Fearless in battle 5
Hunted by Clan Lords 3
Seeking glory 4
Suspicious 3
Wary 3

Equipment & Wealth

Wealth: Wandering Adventurer 3
Equipment: Broadsword, Battleaxe, Shield, Scale armour, Helm (2d)

Trait Lists

Below are some starter open lists of example Traits for players to use either directly, or as inspiration for their own Traits, when creating characters. Players will generally start by taking Traits from their Pre-play, People, Place and Profession lists. In addition players are free to make up their own expansive and colourful Traits to enrich their characters and create fun responses to Challenges in play.

Players in a hurry to create a character may also choose to simply pick up to ten Traits from each of Body, Mind and Soul below and start playing. The open lists below are fairly generic and do not pre-suppose any particular game theme, though some examples may not fit the game you are playing.

Body Traits

Agile, Albino, Athlete, Armourer, Beautiful, Bilious, Brawling, Breathless, Cat like, Clumsy, Curvy figure, Cut purse, Dancer, Dodge incoming, Double jointed, Drink like a fish, Drive vehicle (specify: cart, coach, car, lorry) Emaciated, Endless legs, Enormous trousers, Fine manipulation, Flows like wind in the grass, Fly, Gawky, Gorgeous, Hardy, Kung fu, Light fingered, Mighty, One more wafer thin mint, Pace bowler, Pilot (specify: aircraft, grav vehicle, starship e.t.c.), Prone to

fainting, Pugilist, Ride, Run like the wind, Sparkling eyes, Strong, Supple, Surgeon, Thin as a rake, Three year life span, Weapon use (specify), Weight lifting, Well preserved, Zero gravity manoeuvres

Mind Traits

Airhead, Architect, Astrogator, Boffin, Clever, Computing, Cunning as a fox, Find hidden things, Find your way, Gormless, Hacking networks, Know (any specialist subject subject you care to list), Magic, Medicine, Occult knowledge, Listen intently, Photographic memory, Pub quizzes, Scan for danger, See it coming, Sensor operator, Speak language (state which one), Stammer, Starship engineer, Taste poison, Treat wound, Trivia, Vacuous, Write eloquently

Soul Traits

Acerbic, Acting, Always on the make, Appreciate (anything you care to list), Artistic, Bold, Brash, Brittle, Charismatic, Charming, Come alive in battle, Diligent, Don't look at me I'm shy, Egotistical, Endlessly submissive, Fastidious, Feckless, Feisty, Guide the dead, Gullible, Kind, Lie convincingly, Love (anyone or anything you care to list), Loved by (anyone or anything you care to list), Morose, Portentous windbag, Scheming and plotting, See the dead, Selfless, Smooth talker, Streetwise, Worship god (specify)

Player Characters – a summary

Player characters are at the heart of the game. Here is a summary of the key points introduced in this chapter:

- Traits are descriptive phrases that help to define an aspect of the character
- Characters have three categories in which most Traits are placed: Body, Mind and Soul (BMS)
- Think of a concept - one sentence that encapsulates the character and write it down
- Think of up to two Goals that the character will have. These could be long or short term achievements the character wants to reach in the game. Share ideas and Goals with other players. More than one PC can have the same Goal. Write these down.
- A third, short term, Goal is likely to be set once the Navigator has described the nature of the session.
- Write some text that describes the character; who they are, where they are from, what they are able to do, who they know and what they want out of life. This is called your Pre-play text.
- Identify Traits from the concept and the Pre-play text and write each one down under one of the BMS categories.
- Select a People Place and Profession from the game's Theme that fit with your concept and Pre-play text. Write down each one in the Traits section at the top of the character sheet.
- Pick Traits from these three lists that appeal to your sense of your character.
- Or just make up some Traits that feel right using the People Places and Professions as sources of inspiration.

- Aim for about ten Traits in each BMS category. You may have more or less. Check with the Navigator to see how many they want to use for starting characters
- Supernatural Traits are outlined in the Powers chapter.
- Once Traits have been written down give them a reality check. Do they fit with the character concept and what you want to play? Alter to suit.
- Apply a number of dice to each Trait. The Navigator will decide which spread of numbers to use, or make one up on the spot. 'Starter Hero' is the recommended spread of numbers.
- Decide on the Wealth Trait dice and starting equipment.
- Create any companions or notable family and friends as required.
- Play.

Challenges

Challenges are at the heart of the game. As your group's story unfolds dynamically across the gaming table, the Player and Navigator Characters will encounter danger, uncertainty, moments when only their skill, ability, passion and knowledge can take them forward. These moments are called 'Challenges' in Wordplay. This chapter explains how the character you have created interacts with the game world that your group is sharing.

Below are some example Challenges that your characters may face:

- Your warrior must fight the vicious ogre in order to enter the ruins.
- Your detective needs to be able to notice the half opened letter carefully placed on the table in the murderer's room.
- Somehow your buffoon of a wastrel must successfully engage in a diverting conversation of some substance, for more than 15 minutes, with the irascible Major, to give your chums time to 'borrow' his trophy silverware for the evening's prank.
- The chaos army of Slurg attempts a final assault on the fair city of Darnfuel.
- Can you climb the alabaster tower before the assassin robot rounds the corner?

Challenges are declared at key moments of uncertainty in the game, when a scene being described in the story reaches a moment where the Player Character must use their Traits to determine the direction the story will take. These will be moments of tension when the outcome really matters, when there are consequences. Wordplay provides a fun way to resolve these Challenges using six sided dice and the information recorded on the character sheets.

As you can see from the above examples, a Challenge could be set as a brief moment in time where an individual character is tested, but could equally represent something that takes much longer and involves large numbers of people. Either way, whatever the scale of that moment in time, it is regarded as a Challenge and resolved as outlined in this chapter.

What you basically need to know

When a character is faced with a Challenge in the game, the player seeks to place as many six sided dice in their hands as possible. Once they have amassed their hand of dice they throw them. The Navigator will also throw their own hand of dice. Wordplay will advise how many dice you are able to throw and how to read the dice. The side that gets the best result wins the Challenge.

Essentially that is the core of Wordplay. In the following chapter you can navigate through the extra detail and examples. It is, however, always worth coming back to the basics. When Wordplay is being used to help adjudicate the outcome of Challenges, then build up a huge tower of dice in your hands and throw them!

How to run a Challenge

Challenges happen continually throughout a game of Wordplay. In a short while they will become second nature and you won't need to refer to this book very much. For now let's take them apart piece by piece to see how they work.

Here's a step by step summary of how Challenges work

1. Declare a Challenge
2. Check intent and desired outcomes
3. The group decide what sort of Challenge it is. There are three options:
   A No Roll Challenge
   A One Roll Challenge
   A Multi Roll Challenge
4. Set the difficulty
5. Build your Hand of Dice
6. Roll your dice
7. See who wins

We'll now step through each of these in turn

1. Declare a Challenge

Anyone, player or Navigator, can declare a Challenge when it seems appropriate. Often a Navigator will be describing a scene when a Challenge seems right. During play a typical exchange might be like this:

Navigator: Ok, you're outside the palisade wall. A guard is standing watchfully at the open gate.
Player: I want to attack the guard!
Navigator: OK, that'll need a Challenge roll! What do you want the outcome to be?
Player: I want to knock out the guard and slip through the open gate
Navigator: Cool. The guard is startled but readies his spear. His intent appears to be to skewer you to the ground. Let's make this a One Roll Challenge.

We will now explore the heart of the game and find out about outcomes, dice and your odds of success..

2. Check intent and desired outcomes

Often the outcome of a Challenge is implicit when it is set up. The character might be trying to get over the wall, or to seduce the guard, or to win the race. It is usually worth being sure that everyone agrees what their desired outcome will be. Players have a habit of surprising the Navigator with unexpected outcomes.

Where each side have the same desired outcome it's easy to work out what's going on. Where two or more individuals or groups want different outcomes it is important to structure the Challenge to

understand who gets to decide first what the Challenge is about. All the protagonists in a Challenge might be looking to get something different out of the scene. In this case there may be a number of Challenges to resolve, with individual protagonists using different Traits in order to achieve their own outcomes. When deciding what to do players will pick out the key Trait that they are going to use to drive the action forward. This is known as the Foundation Trait. The order in which these Challenges are resolved is taken from the highest Foundation Trait down to the lowest.

Some Navigators may wish to control what the outcome of the Challenge will be, waiting until the Traits are selected and dice are rolled (if dice are being used).

example
"Success will give you the location of the concealed entrance. Failure means that you are convinced that there are no under-chambers and that the clue you have been given was false. You will also have to take a 'Scratch' Mind Damage Trait (explained in the Outcomes chapter) of 'confused and disappointed 1d'."

3. What sort of Challenge?

There are three different ways that Challenges can be played in the game. They are all related to each other, only differing in the level of detail used to resolve them. The method the group elects to use for any particular Challenge is purely a matter of taste. If you find that one method is consistently more enjoyable than another, then use that method, even exclusively.

Each method is covered in more detail later in this chapter. For now we just need to have an idea how they differ from each other.

No Roll Challenges
Forget about the need for dice. Trait values are used without rolling dice for them. Navigator and players will look at the situation and the relative Traits of the participants and simply decide what happens. Usually the character with the higher Traits will win.

Use when you want to move on quickly and just need to check that a character has a Trait at a high enough level to get past an obstacle.

One Roll Challenges
A more structured method. Each side in the Challenge creates a hand of dice based on Traits that they use to win the Challenge. Dice are thrown and the side with the most successes wins.

Use when you want a quick resolution to a Challenge and want to get out the dice.

Multi Roll Challenges
An extension to One Roll Challenges that gives the participants the opportunity to roll several hands of dice before a winner is determined.

Use when you want to take time in detailing the Challenge. Different Traits can be used over multiple dice rolls before a character wins.

4. Setting a Difficulty

In Challenges where two active opponents face each other the difficulty is set by the opponent's dice roll. The more successes the opponent achieves the higher the difficulty the player character will face. To win the Challenge you need to get more successes than your opponent.

For other Challenges the Navigator will set a difficulty and roll that number of dice. The player must get more successes than the Navigator to win the Challenge.

Remember the odds

Players of Wordplay will throw groups of six sided dice to determine how well they fare in Challenges. Every dice in the hand has a 50/50 chance of being at least one success. If a player has 6 dice in their hand then they are likely to get about 3 successes. Statistically this is not quite accurate as every 'six' rolled on a die adds two successes to the total. So, to allow for this, the average number of successes to be expected for a dice throw containing between one and fifteen dice is listed below.

Difficulty Levels

Difficulties are usually rated from one to fifteen dice. These dice are rolled by the Navigator to determine the number of successes the player character must beat to win the Challenge.

Difficulty Dice	Difficulty Description	Expected number of successes
1d	Not much of a challenge	0 to 1
2d	Sleepwalking	1 or 2
3d	Easy	About 2
4d	Routine	2 or 3
5d	Challenging	3 or 4
6d	Difficult	About 4
7d	Exacting	4 or 5
8d	Ambitious	5 or 6
9d	Formidable	About 6
10d	Audacious	6 or 7
11d	Heroic	7 or 8
12d	Titanic	About 8
13d	Impossible	8 or 9
14d	Even more impossible	9 or 10
15d	Look, it's just not possible	About 10

For certain Challenges the opposition number of successes is not rolled using dice, but instead the

Navigator may simply state how many successes the player needs to beat. If this is the case then the Navigator needs to 'remember the odds'. A 5d 'Challenging' difficulty averages at approximately 3.4 successes, or between 3 and 4. If the Navigator sets a Challenge at 'difficult' then either she rolls five dice or she decides that the difficulty to beat is three or four successes, and simply calls that number out, or keeps the difficulty a secret until after the player has rolled his dice, for extra suspense.

examples

Climbing a low garden wall: 2d
Climbing the alabaster tower of doom: 6d
Climbing the alabaster tower of doom immediately after a light rain shower: 8d
Climbing the alabaster tower of doom during a light rain shower after you have just been lightly oiled in the slave pits: 10d

5. Building Your Hand of Dice

All dice roads will lead to this section of the game. This is where you find out how to build your hand of dice. The aim is to have as huge a mound of dice in the hand to throw as possible, an avalanche of cubic power that will bury your opponent in the glory of your victory. Well, having a lot of dice is a good thing anyway.

The following sections will help you build your hand of dice, whether you are in a One or Multi Roll Challenge.

Choosing the Foundation Trait

The Foundation Trait is the one which is best suited to meet the Challenge. It is usually clear which of the character's Traits should be the Foundation. If the Challenge has been set by an opponent then they will have picked their Foundation Trait. Both Foundation Traits will usually come from the same BMS category. A Body based Foundation Trait Challenge will need to be opposed with a Body Trait for example.

If the payer is unsure then it can be selected collaboratively with the Navigator or with the other players. The Foundation Trait defines the starting number of dice the player will have in their hand. It also sets the BMS category that will be damaged if the Challenge is lost.

What happens if I don't have an appropriate Trait?

When looking for a Foundation Trait you may not find one that exactly matches the way you wish to meet the Challenge. If this happens then choose one that is close, or one that you can convince the Navigator and group of its usefulness in the Challenge. The Navigator may increase the difficulty of the Challenge when a character is not using a Trait that is quite right for a Challenge.

This will often happen when the Trait is quite generic such as 'Observant' rather than specific such as 'Eye for the ladies'. Broadly applicable Traits are extremely useful in the game as they can be frequently applied to many Challenges, however the downside is that they are not targeted into a

specialist area that might be useful and well matched for a particular Challenge.

Here are some example increases in difficulty if your character doesn't have a well matched Foundation Trait:

+1d difficulty - The Trait is close to what is needed but not a complete match or is too generic
+2d difficulty - The Trait is not that close but is still applicable
+4d difficulty - You're kidding me. You're going to do what with that Trait?!

Care needs to be taken, because these increases in difficulty actually provide those dice to the opposition to roll against you! So, if you are without any Trait that can really help then the Navigator will probably allow you to start with a Foundation of 1 or 2 dice, unless some specialist knowledge is required as a Foundation, in which case you may not be able to roll any dice, or perhaps the Navigator will grant you a dramatically hopeless and desperate single die.

Building on the Foundation

So, your character is in a Challenge and you've picked out the Foundation Trait that you are going to use. The next step is to account for all the other factors that will improve your character's chances and give you more dice to throw. This is called 'building your hand'.

Here is a list of the sorts of things that can help your character

- ◆ Help from the character's other Traits
- ◆ Help from equipment
- ◆ Help from Goals
- ◆ Help from magic or other powers
- ◆ Help from favourable circumstances
- ◆ Help from friendly characters
- ◆ Help from the player's description

Each of these is expanded on below. Try to get as many dice as you can into your hand before you make your roll. The more dice you have, the more likely your character is to succeed.

Help from the character's other Traits

Up to **two** supporting Traits in addition to the Foundation Trait, at the Navigator's discretion, can be selected from the character's sheet to provide extra dice into the hand before the throw. The player needs to be able to justify how these two Traits support winning the Challenge. The player does this by describing how they go about their actions to win the Challenge, including how the supporting Traits help. The character will gain between one and four dice to their hand for each selected supporting Trait, depending on its value.

Divide the supporting Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice you get to add into your hand.

So, a Trait:

- ◆ between 1 and 2 provides no help

- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to help the character
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to help the character
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to help the character
- at 12 provides +4d to help the character

Opposing Navigator characters will often be able to use supporting Traits to improve their dice hands too.

example
Let's look at a combat Challenge that Lorth is embroiled in. He had six dice in his Foundation Trait of 'Battle axe' and chooses two supporting Traits: 'Fearless in battle' (5d) and 'Spot opponents weakness' (3d). Both these Traits are between 3 and 5 dice so each provide +1 die to help.

Help from equipment

How helpful equipment can be in Wordplay depends on the type of game you are playing in. Some game themes will wish to emphasise the positive effect of good equipment by providing a wider range of bonus dice. Other games may be less interested in equipment, focussing instead on the characters' own Traits. The game's 'equipment effect' is provided by the Navigator at the start of a game, or series of games. Usually only one type of equipment can provide bonus dice for a Challenge. Equipment could be anything that the character has access to that could help in the Challenge. More information on equipment is found in the Equipment chapter. Standard equipment bonuses are as follows:

Poor, obsolete, tatty +0d
Light, basic, adequate +1d
Medium, good +2d
Heavy, finely crafted, superb +3d
The best available +4d

Not all Challenges will provide opportunity to use equipment, but it is important not to forget it, as it's there to help you get some more dice into your hand. So, if the Navigator is using the standard equipment bonuses then average equipment designed to help in a particular Challenge will tend to give a solid +2 dice into your hand. Circumstances can vary the number of helping dice that equipment provides. The Navigator will sometimes modify the number of dice with a quick explanation.

example
Armour and weapons, an established fetish area in roleplaying games, provide helping dice in opposed combat. Chainmail armour and an average sword grants a total of +2d. Arms and armour are rated together, so typically a good set of armour and weapons will simply provide one +2d helping bonus to the Challenge.

Equipment could be anything, so try to be inventive. If you're looking to impress at a social occasion then this might be useful: Beautiful dress +2d!

Help from Goals

If a Challenge can be linked to one of the character's Goals then the player can 'Invoke a Goal'. The

player describes why the Goal is linked and how it influences the determination f the character. The player gets a bonus equal to half the Foundation Trait value rounded up. More information on invoking Goals can be found on p###.

Help from magic or other powers

Magic or special powers can help in a number of ways. If a character is under the influence of a beneficial power then it may add dice as a special circumstantial bonus.

Favourable circumstances

Sometimes circumstances are in your character's favour, at other times you will be in a sticky situation where outside forces seem to be, or really are, conspiring to make things difficult for you. This has a mechanical effect in the game when undertaking a Challenge. Circumstances that improve things for your character grant bonus dice. This generally adds from +1d for a slightly beneficial circumstance through to +4d for a great advantage. Similarly, if circumstances are running against your character then the difficulty is raised between +1 and +4 dice, granting those dice to the opposing force.

Circumstantial modifiers are all cumulative.

A favourable circumstance always adds dice to your hand. An unfavourable circumstance adds to the Navigator's Challenge difficulty dice, which may be an active opponent to the player character.

examples

Perception checks
Conditions are murky, smoky, or misty +1d to difficulty
It is deep night with little if any light +2d to difficulty
Far away +2d difficulty

Combat
Surprised – Opponent gains Initiative and +3d
Holding the high ground +1d
Outnumbered +1d to opponents dice for every extra opponent after the first, up to +3d
Poor footing +1d to difficulty

Also see 'Everything can have Traits' p### in the Navigator chapter to see how the Navigator can use the very description of the Challenge set-up to provide circumstantial bonus opportunities into play.

Help from friendly characters

Friendly characters may also choose to help a character win a particular Challenge. The player explains how they are helping and which Traits they will be using. The Navigator will typically allow the helping friendly character to use one Trait to help, but sometimes will permit up to two depending on circumstances and how much the helping character can positively affect the outcome.

The player of the helping character gets to roll between one and four dice per Trait being used to help, depending on the strength of the helping character's Trait.

Divide the supporting Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice the helping player gets to roll to help you. So, if the friendly character's supporting Trait is:

- between 1 and 2 it provides no help
- between 3 and 5 it provides +1d to help the leader
- between 6 and 8 it provides +2d to help the leader
- between 9 and 11 it provides +3d to help the leader
- at 12 it provides +4d to help the leader

When the character rolls their dice the helping player rolls their character's dice too. The helping player calls out the number of successes, if any, that they have contributed to winning the Challenge.

Help from the player

Narration and other circumstances can provide bonus dice.

+1d   Good description of action
+2d   Awesome description that draws approval from the group

Help from opponents' Flaws

An optional rule includes the possibility for opponent characters to also help a character win a Challenge by offering one of their flaws, an unhelpful Trait, to provide a bonus against them. One Trait that can sensibly thought of as a Flaw in that Challenge can provide a bonus to the opponent. This cuts both ways. A Navigator can take a Trait from a player character and use it to help one of their characters and a player can take a Trait from a Navigator character and use it as a helping Trait for them too.

The opponent's flaw is given to the character as dice. The player rolls their opponents 'flaw dice' as part of their hand of dice. It's fun to use different colour dice to represent the flaw dice. That way the opponent will be able to see if their flaw has contributed to the character's total. A flaw Trait will allow the other player to roll between one and four dice depending on the strength of the Trait. Only one flaw can be exploited per dice roll. Sometimes there will not be a flaw to exploit. A Navigator may choose to only use this option for a limited number crucial Challenges.

Divide the flaw Trait by 3 and round down. That's the number of dice the opposing player gets to roll to help them. So, if the opposing characters flaw Trait is:

- between 1 and 2 provides no help
- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to help
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to help
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to help
- at 12 it provides +4d to help

Characters can volunteer a flaw to an opponent in a Challenge for a reward in experience points.

Factoring in Damage Traits

These Traits don't help your character at all, but have been included here as a reminder! If the character has damage noted in the BMS category of the Foundation Trait, then this is applied now. Damage and Fatigue Traits add their dice into the opposition's hand! Also check if the character is currently suffering from any environmental damage (p###).

[SIDEBAR]Whenever a character has circumstances against them in a Challenge such as damage from defeats, or being outnumbered, or other difficult factors then the penalty dice are added to the opposition's hand rather than being taken off the character. By giving the opposition the dice it increases their hand and gives them a better chance to get more successes.[/SIDEBAR]

Goals

Characters have identified goals. These goals are the key drivers that propel the character into action. They will be achievable through action in the game. A goal could be something short term and relatively easy for the character to achieve, or could be deep drivers that will stay with them for a very long time in the game. Up to three goals are recorded on the character sheet.

Invoking Goals

Characters have up to three goals noted on their character sheets. Goals can be achieved and completed during game time, providing a bonus to the character. Some goals are long term drivers that may take many, many sessions to achieve. Whether the character's goals are short term and quicker to achieve, or long term and take the character a lifetime to achieve, they can be 'Invoked' up to three times during a typical game session to provide a bonus to the character. That's three in total, not three times for each one.

When a player invokes one of their character's goals they are stepping forward and using a key motivator to help drive forward the action in their preferred direction. They are throwing their heart and soul into the endeavour and digging deep into the character's psyche, sharpening their focus for success.

The player must link the goal to the Challenge. This can happen before the dice are rolled and also afterwards. The player declares why the goal can help motivate the character to perform better at the Challenge. Once the link between action and goal is made the player gets a bonus, which differs depending on whether it is declared before or after the dice are rolled.

Here's the procedure:

- A character can invoke their goals up to three times per game session.
- The Challenge Foundation Trait is picked
- The player may declare that they 'Invoke a Goal' before or after they throw the dice
- Only one goal can be invoked per Challenge
- Helping characters do not invoke goals
- The player describes why this Challenge is applicable to the Goal being invoked

- An 'invoked goal' provides the character with focus and extra determination to complete the Challenge, or determination to immediately respond to a defeat, reflected in the provision of additional dice and other bonuses to help the player win the Challenge.
- The character gains one of the following:

If declared before dice are rolled:
  - Bonus dice equal to half the Foundation Trait (round up). This bonus is available either to a Single-Roll Challenge, or throughout a Multi-Roll Challenge where the same Foundation Trait is being used.

If declared after dice are rolled:
  - Re-roll any dice roll in its entirety.
  - Improve a Victory Level on the Outcome table by one
  - Turn any sort of defeat and damage into a tie (but still suffer a doubt – see below)

The Reward

If a character wins a Challenge in which they have invoked a goal then they immediately gain a number of experience points equal to half the Foundation Trait used (round up).

The Risk

If the character does not win the Challenge dice roll then, in addition to any other Damage Traits meted out, a 'Doubt Trait' is created that is linked to the goal that was invoked. The Trait is created by the player, though the Navigator may wish to provide suggestions. The Doubt Trait has a starting level equal to the level of defeat the player has suffered. So, a minor defeat on the Challenge dice roll would give a doubt Trait rated at 1d. A major defeat would create a Doubt Trait of 2d and so on.

The next time the goal is invoked it provides the bonus dice to the player as usual, but also provides the difficulty, or opponent, bonus dice equal to the linked Doubt Trait. If the player character wins this Challenge then the Doubt Trait is reduced by 1d, possibly removing it. If the player character loses the Challenge again then, in addition to the other damage they suffer, the Doubt Trait is increased by 1d.

Once a goal has a Doubt Trait linked to it it cannot be discarded for a new goal. In some way the doubts need to be cleared through successes, or the goal itself has to be achieved. Once the goal is achieved the linked Doubt Trait is removed.

Characters can, therefore, be burdened with doubts linked to their key goals; worries and uncertainties that gnaw away beneath the surface, distracting, consuming, irritating. That's life.

Scale

Scale is a way of accentuating the differences between two forces that are engaged in a Challenge. If a player character is running after a sports car on a flat road then they are going to find it difficult to catch it. When it comes to 'moving quickly', in these conditions, the sports car is considered to be on a different scale to the person.

When characters or vehicles of different scales oppose each other in Challenges then use the guidance below. Three types of scale are introduced in this game: size, speed, and domain. Other scales can be created by using the framework provided here.

The Scale Effect

Scale is one of the few instances in Wordplay where extra dice are not involved. Instead, Scale influences how you read the dice.

If one of the protagonists in a Challenge is opposing another with a Scale of one level less than them then the opponent will only get successes on a 5 or more on each die where the particular Scale might contribute to the Challenge. This scale effect should only be applied where the creature/ structure might warrant it.

If there is a difference of two levels in Scale, then the weaker scale creature/vehicle will only get successes on a 6 or more on each die. This six works as usual and provides two successes.

If there is a difference of three levels in Scale, then the weaker scale creature/vehicle will only scores successes on a 6 or more and a six only counts as one success.

If there is a difference of four levels in Size Scale, then the weaker scale creature/vehicle will only scores one success on a 6 or more, while the better scale scores successes on a 3 or more, and so on.

This is summarised in the scale table below.

Scale difference table

Scale Difference	Effect on weaker Scale opponent
1	Successes with dice on 5-6
2	Successes with dice on a 6 (this 6 counts as two successes as usual)
3	Successes with dice on a 6 (and only counts as one success)
4	Successes with dice on a 6 and stronger Scale gains successes on 3-6

Using Scale in Challenges

When and where Scale can be applied it can have a dramatic affect on the outcome of Challenges. Here is some guidance on how to use Scale when it comes into play.

Scale can be cumulative

Sometimes a character enjoys the advantage of two types of Scale over an opponent for a particular Challenge. In this instance the effect of scale is cumulative.

Scales can cancel each other out

Sometimes two opposing forces in a Challenge wish to use a different Scale advantage against each other in such a way that the Navigator thinks that they will cancel each other out. If this is the case then assume that Scale has no practical effect on either side and dice are rolled as normal.

Scale and supporting Traits

Sometimes Traits at different scales are used to support each other in a Challenge. How do you know what the overall Scale is when, let's say, a Mundane Trait is being supported by a Magical Scale one?

The general rule is that if a higher scaled Trait is supporting a lesser scaled Trait with helping dice then it doesn't also provide the benefit of its Scale as well. Conversely, if a higher Scaled Trait is being supported by a lower Scaled Trait, the higher scaled Trait does not lose its Scale level.

example
A character with a Mundane Scale Swordplay 6 is supported by a Magical sword 'magic blade of doom' 2d. The character is now on 8d, but is not on the magical Scale.

In some Challenges the Navigator may decide that the influence of Scale by the supporting Trait, equipment, or helping character is so significant that it does shift the Scale or opens up new possibilities.

example
The character with the magic sword now faces a ghostly ghoul that can only be harmed by forces on the Magical Scale. The Navigator decides that the effect of the magic sword will allow this. The ghoul is now in trouble..

Size Scale

How large a character, creature or vehicle is can have a dramatic effect on the outcome of certain types of Challenges. Size Scale is numbered below:

1. Tiny
2. Human
3. Very large creature / vehicle
4. Starship/Liner/enormous magical creature
5. Large space station, huge starship
6. Planet

This scale effect should only be applied where the creature/structure might warrant it. Just because something is big does not necessarily mean it will be more proficient in a combat Challenge for example. Sometime being smaller and lower down the size scale will be more advantageous, for example when hiding or avoiding being hit by an attack . Scale can provide benefits in both directions.

Speed Scale

Speed Scale is typically used in chases and pursuits.

1. Slower than human
2. Human
3. Fast Animal, Slow vehicle
4. Wheeled Vehicle
5. Flyer
6. Space

This Scale effect should only be applied where the creature/structure might warrant it. Some vehicles, such as a milk float, though of Vehicle Scale in size, could legitimately be regarded as moving at best on the human Speed Scale, and not with many dice at that!

If being fast is a disadvantage rather than an advantage then reverse the guidance above. Slower characters will get the advantage and the faster will take the penalty.

Domain Scale

Domain Scales are used when the mundane world collides with other magical and godly realms. There are three basic domains in Wordplay:

1. Mundane
2. Magical / mystical / supernatural
3. Divine

A character who is using a Mundane Trait in a Challenge, which is the norm, against a Magical one, which is exceptional, in a Challenge, will only get successes on a 5 or more on each die.

A Caution on Scale

If the Navigator wishes to accentuate something, such as a magical item, or an immensely powerful weapon, or something of incredible beauty, he can not only provide it with a high Trait value, but also put it onto the Magical Scale. Be warned though, a combination of a high Trait value and forcing opponents to only gain successes on a 5 or more makes for a very powerful effect in the game, so use Scale with caution. Magic effects are already powerful and reality bending, placing them on a higher scale than the Mundane makes resisting them much more difficult. The decision on how to use scale will largely be influenced by the genre and the overall effect desired.

6. Roll Your Dice

You have now accumulated all the dice that you can use for this Challenge, and other dice that any friendly helping players will be rolling too. You started with your Foundation Trait, and have added in extra dice due to the factors above. Each side calls out the number of dice they are going to throw. Opponents will then know the quality of the opposition they are facing.

Right, time to throw the dice!

Reading the dice

How small are your dice? How big are your hands? These could be important questions, as Wordplay is a six sided dice paradise, so a sizeable number of dice will be needed. When dice are thrown they are read as follows:

- Remove all dice that come up with a 1, 2 or 3, they are of no use to you.
- Dice that fall off the table, or are at an angle, are not counted. They are placed with the dice that scored a 1, 2 or 3.
- Each remaining die with a result of 4 or 5 gives you one success
- Each remaining die with a result of 6 gives you two successes.
- Add up your successes.

Example dice roll

Stuart is rolling eight dice. He scores: 1, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6
What a roll! The 1 and 3 are discarded leaving 4, 4, 5, 6, 6, 6

The 4,4,5 give three successes.
The 6,6,6 give six successes (two for each six)
That's a mighty nine successes altogether.

Count up the number of successes. If you are sat around a gaming table, only the dice that stay on the table count. Any dice that end in another player's lap, or fly off the end of the table onto the floor, are automatic failures.

If the Navigator is controlling a large group of characters with the same Traits and numbers she can just roll once for her group of characters and apply that result to each individual in that group. It's quicker!

7. See Who Wins

In a No Roll Challenge the winner is arbitrated between the Navigator and the players. Generally it is the character with the best and most appropriate Traits that wins.

In a One Roll Challenge the winner is the character that rolls the highest number of successes. If there is a tie, the character with the highest Foundation Trait wins. If the Foundation Traits are the same then it is a tie.

In a Multi Roll Challenge the winner is calculated in just the same way as a One Roll Challenge except that it only applies for the first Round of dice rolls. There may be several Rounds of dice rolls until one side wins. This allows for some cut and thrust, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, or losing when all seemed so easy.

Outcomes are covered in much more detail in the next chapter.

Using Challenges

This section provides some further detail on each of the Challenge types to help you get the most out of each of them.

Using No Roll Challenges

It is often the case that in a typical game of Wordplay events are described by the players and the Navigator and the story moves on without any need for Challenges. There will be no need to roll dice and check character sheets. It is only when there are important consequences or particular significance to a moment in the game that the Navigator, and it is almost always the Navigator, will declare a Challenge, with the outcome in the hands of fate and player judgement.

When the Navigator decides that the Challenge should either be won or lost without testing the characters then the Challenge and outcome can be described without recourse to any game rules at all. Sometimes the story is much more important than the rules. Rather than jumping into the rules and using big piles of dice, as detailed in the other methods below, the Navigator simply describes the Challenge and, ideally with collaboration from the players suggesting the Traits they want to use, what the outcome of the Challenge is. The outcome could be positive or negative for the players.

If the Navigator decides that the outcome is going to be negative for the player characters, then there needs to be a spirit of trust in the group, where the players are pulling together to create an enjoyable session and memorable story. Some players may come from a boardgame or wargame background, or be used to the conventions of some other tabletop roleplaying games, where it is often assumed that the dice decide the outcome, especially if their characters are threatened with setbacks. Rules provide a structure and, sometimes, an independent arbiter for outcomes, however Wordplay and many other roleplaying games emphasise the collective story over intricate and impersonal rules. No Roll Challenges are just an explicit reference to common practice: the Navigator and player group enjoying the process of moving their collective story along without the need for rules to act as an arbiter.

It has to be said that a lot of the fun in Wordplay is to be had by throwing huge handfuls of dice onto the game table. For that you'll want to use One and Multi Roll Challenges, which are described below.

Use numbers without rolling dice

If you have a lot of characters in play and don't want to slow the game down by rolling lots of dice you can use the table on p### to calculate the average number of successes they generate. Just use that number.

example

Elaine has three zombie warriors guarding the entrance to a tomb. They are keen to engage in an 'eat the hero Lorth for breakfast Challenge'. They have a total of nine dice each, including their bonus for outnumbering the solitary barbarian morsel. Checking the table on p### Elaine notes that on average nine dice will generate six successes. Elaine decides to simply state that they all manage six successes in the Challenge. Let's hope Lorth manages to average more or he's in serious trouble!

If alternative Scales are in play (p###) then it is always best to roll the dice, as Scale affects the result of each individual die thrown.

Using One Roll Challenges

A 'One Roll Challenge' is resolved with one roll of the dice by the Navigator and one by the player. This method is ideal if you want to move on quickly from the Challenge without it taking a lot of game time to resolve.

The Navigator describes the Challenge

The Navigator describes the Challenge to the players and sets the degree of difficulty by giving it a 'hand of dice' that will be thrown to oppose the player character. The higher the number of dice in the hand, the more difficult the Challenge. A difficulty of '1 die' is a very easy Challenge, a difficulty of '4 dice' is more challenging. A Challenge can be set at difficulty '15 dice' but that is almost impossible to beat; only a hugely capable player character with a wide range of other beneficial circumstances to help will win such a Challenge.

Sometimes situations will arise where players challenge each other. That's great. Follow the guidance below but the Navigator can sit on the sidelines and adjudicate rather than throw dice themselves.

example
"You hunt through the ruins of the ancient fortress looking for the concealed entrance to the under chambers."

Build Your Hand of Dice

Dice are accumulated by the player using the procedure on p###

Winning and losing

If your total successes are greater than the successes rolled by the Navigator then you win the Challenge. The more successes you have compared to your opposition, the better the quality of your victory. If your total successes are equal to the Navigator then it is a tie and it is up to the Navigator to decide who has won the Challenge, if anyone. If your total successes are less than the Navigator then you have lost the Challenge and you have to take the winner's chosen outcome.

The outcome of the Challenge is described by the Navigator. The Navigator is the final arbiter of the outcome of any Challenge. A good Navigator will listen to her players and use their ideas to enliven both the Challenge itself and the description of the outcome.

example

"Well done! I only score three successes for the difficulty of locating the entrance, while you score six successes, so you definitely win! Hanos' methodical approach, and careful observation quickly brings you to the most likely location of the entrance, a regular square hole, covered, or perhaps camouflaged, by vines, revealing a stone staircase heading down into the gloom. You also observe recent human sized booted prints that seem to be heading both into and out of the entrance."

Winning a Challenge is largely its own reward. and gains the positive outcome that was either implicit or explicitly defined at the beginning of the Challenge. The player character may be further rewarded if they win a Challenge and have invoked one of their Goals. If they lose the Challenge they may be given a new Damage Trait.

Example One-Roll Challenge

Lorth leaps a crevasse

Lorth the Northic Barbarian is being chased by an entire war party of orcs and runs into a crevasse. He decides to try and leap over it. The crevasse is given a base difficulty to be successfully jumped. In this case the Navigator has made it 'Exacting', which is 6d (six dice).

He doesn't have any specific jumping Traits, but does have a Body Trait called 'Powerfully built' 6d, which the player wishes to use as his 'Foundation Trait', the main Trait he's going to use to win the Challenge. The player can also use up to two more Traits to act as support. The player is desperate and picks out a Soul Trait 'Wary' 3d and a Mind Trait 'Look for danger' 4d. After a player description of what Lorth is doing, which involves warily moving down the edge of the crevasse looking for dangerous positions to jump from, he picks out what looks the best location and, using his powerfully built physique, launches himself over the crevasse.

The Foundation Trait gives the player 6d in their hand. The Navigator is generous and allows both the supporting Traits to be used (she might have allowed only one or neither of them). The two Traits add a total of +2d to the player's total, taking this up to 8d. however the Navigator decides that the Foundation Trait isn't an exact match for the needs of the Challenge, though she can see why it has been chosen, and increases the difficulty of the attempt by +1d. In Wordplay any increase in difficulty adds to the opposing force's dice. So the difficulty to jump the crevasse is now 7d.

Other factors could be thrown in to make things easier or more awkward for the character. Some of the game is about using description to try and get the best circumstances for your character. Positive circumstances can give between 1 and 4 dice into your hand. Bad circumstances (a blustery wind perhaps?) add between 1 and 4 dice to the difficulty. Equipment, if useful, also adds bonus dice.

The character could also, possibly, invoke a goal. If the Challenge is tied closely to one of the character's predefined goals then they can get bonus dice. Let's assume this visceral Challenge doesn't get any more complicated.

Dice are thrown. 8d for the player and 7d for the crevasse.

Crevasse scores: 1,3,3,3,4,5,6 = 4 successes
Lorth scores: 1,1,1,5,5,5,6,6 = 7 successes

Lorth is safely over the crevasse. Let's see if the orcs follow?!

With Single Roll Challenges you can frame the scene up front by describing the outcome of success and failure. Had he failed perhaps Lorth was left part way down the other side clinging on and with a new Damage Trait of 'Wrenched Shoulder' 1d (this adds to the difficulty of all Body based Challenges until healed).

When to use One Roll Challenges

The One Roll Challenge has the advantage of being simple and quick to resolve, with outcomes agreed up front. Some Navigators' style of running games may mean that they choose to control the outcomes of the Challenge by keeping them secret until the end. Experiment with what works for you, but be sure that the players know what the dice roll means before dice are hurled onto the table.

One Roll Challenges are very quick to use, focusing on the outcomes and the description of the players taking part. Players whose characters face an outcome of death, insanity or being permanently outcast may want to put more game time into the resolution of this key event in the game. If that is so, then those Challenges may be better resolved through Multi-Roll Challenges, which are described later.

One roll but two Challenges

What if the Navigator and the Player are each wanting different Challenges that may, or may not, lead to different sorts of outcomes? For example, the Navigator's latest terrifying monstrosity shambles into the story to challenge the hapless player to a tentacle slapping contest. The player is more interested in seeing his character running away, and escape, at great speed. Is this a combat Challenge or a speed running Challenge?

The Navigator assesses if it is possible for the two Challenges to happen at the same time. If they can then there are three ways that you can handle this.

1. One Roll
Each character can use their Foundation Trait and describe what they are doing. A hand of dice is built for each side. Outcomes are based on the collision between the actions that opponents are taking in the Challenge. Once the outcomes are agreed for the winner and loser of the Challenge, each opponent can roll their dice and see who has the most successes. In the example above the monstrosity makes a tentacle slapping roll and the player uses his best 'running away' Trait. If the monstrosity wins the player character gets a good slapping. If the player wins their character manages to get away without a scratch.

2. Two Rolls
Sometimes what the Navigator and player want the Challenge to be are so at odds with each other that it makes it difficult to use a One Roll Challenge and still make sense of what is going on. Instead, break things down into separate Challenges. The Navigator assesses which of the two Challenges will happen first. This will either be dictated by story logic, or by the side with the highest Foundation Trait. This first Challenge is resolved. Depending on the result the second Challenge is then undertaken.

In the example above, the Navigator may decide that the character must face the monstrosity in a combat Challenge using appropriate Traits, before trying an 'escape' Challenge. Or maybe the other way round.

3. Both Challenges happen with no roll of the dice

If both sides are adamantly seeking outcomes from different Challenges at the same time whatever the opposition is doing then both sides simply achieve their outcome without a Challenge and dice roll. This needs to be carefully adjudicated by the Navigator, especially if there are serious consequences to either side, but as long as everyone understands what is happening the Navigator can rule on the overall outcome without the need for a Challenge.

Group One Roll Challenges

What happens if two groups, rather than two individuals, are opposing each other for a Challenge? How do you keep track of everyone's outcomes and keep things simple with a One Roll Challenge?

In this case all characters involved on each side are bound by the agreed outcomes of the Challenge. Pick one character on each side to act as the leader. Other characters on the leader's side will also roll dice to add to the leader's total successes by describing how they use **one** of their Traits to help. The number of dice they provide to the lead character depends on the level of their contributing Trait.

Friendly characters use the 'Help from friendly characters' rule in Building Your Hand of Dice(p##).

Characters may also provide a special equipment bonus to help in the Challenge if it is an extraordinary item that materially affects the Challenge.

The leader creates their own hand of dice as usual using all the options available to them.

If the relative weight of numbers on each side is important then the side that outnumbers the other gets an additional circumstantial bonus:

Outnumber opponent's side +2d
Outnumber opponent's side by greater than 2:1 +4d

Each leader rolls their dice. All contributing characters on their side roll their own dice to support their leaders. Add together all the successes on each side. The Winning side is the one with the most successes. They achieve their desired outcome. The losing side must all face the outcome consequences and receive any appropriate Damage Traits. Damage Traits are covered in the Outcomes chapter.

Pairing off

If the Challenge is a combat one then, if possible, the Navigator can choose to 'pair off' opponents and have them each roll their hand of dice against each other. This way everyone gets to roll and individual victories assessed. Of course, this means that members of each opposing group will win their own Challenges but won't necessarily decide an overall group win. The overall result of the Challenge will be interpreted by the Navigator based on the number of successful Challenges on

each side.

Using Multi Roll Challenges

Multi Roll Challenges follow all the guidance above on One Roll Challenges. The main difference is that the outcome may not be decided on just one roll of the dice. It may take several rolls from everyone to find out who the Challenge winners are. It's worth noting that they especially come into their own in two circumstances:

◆ If the Challenge has an outcome that risks removing the player character permanently from play (death, banishment, planar shift, terminal embarrassment, unrecoverable destitution or despair).

◆ The Navigator or player wishes to provide emphasis to the Challenge and allow use of tactics and the option of switching Traits to succeed.

The challenge is set-up exactly as described in One Roll Challenges. An overall outcome is decided between the players. What is this Challenge about? However, rather than deciding the final outcome on one roll of the dice, many dice rolls may be required to finish the Challenge. As such Multi-Roll Challenges provide some extra structure to help make sense of what is going on.

Rounds

Each opportunity for all Challenge participants to roll the dice is called a 'Round'. A Multi-Roll Challenge may have many Rounds until a winner is resolved. A Round has no set time period and will vary depending on the nature of the Challenge. A combat Challenge may set the duration of a Round to a few frantic seconds each. A Challenge to besiege a city might set each Round to a month.

Both the Navigator and the players participate in describing actions in each Round.

Initiative

Each individual character considers what they want to happen; what outcome would they like to attain? A player chooses a Foundation Trait, which is the main Trait that a character is to use to achieve their desired outcome. The character with the highest Foundation Trait can take the Initiative and declares their Challenge first. In effect they define what the Challenge will be about for this first Round. The character will start with the Trait's value in dice to meet the Challenge. The opposing character, who does not have the Initiative, must use applicable Traits of their own to meet the Challenge of the Initiative holder. The offered Challenge may be what the opponent wanted anyway, but if it is not then the opponent will have to win Initiative in order to be able to define what the next Round's Challenge will be about. Each Challenge is resolved in Initiative order.

example
Tom has declared a combat Challenge this round. Lorth is going to swing his mighty axe and chop an ogre in half. Lorth has a Foundation Trait of 'Battle axe' at 6. The ogre wishes no part of this and would rather try to escape using its 'Run cravenly away' Foundation Trait at 7. In theory the ogre has the Initiative and can force Lorth into a decision as to whether he will accept the Challenge and

try and catch the fleeing monster using some sort of movement Trait. However, the Navigator rules that the unlucky ogre is too close to Lorth to easily break into an escape and must therefore do something about the Axe attack this round. If the axe is successfully evaded then the Navigator may allow the ogre to try to escape in the following round.

A character that has the Initiative may keep it if they have 'Momentum'. See below.

[SIDEBAR]A group may decide collectively what they want the outcome to be in a Challenge. It speeds up play if there are sizeable groups of players and Navigator characters in action. If this is the case each group picks an individual, usually the one with the highest appropriate Foundation Trait, to act as the leader and call the type of action that the group wants to undertake. This only works if all members of the group want to achieve the same thing.[/SIDEBAR]

Finishing a Round

When the final Challenge is complete the Round is over. Navigator and players reflect on the outcome of the Challenges in that Round and re-assess what all characters wish to do in the next Round. The Navigator may restrict any changes in the nature of the Challenge between Rounds if she is not persuaded by a player. She may decide that the current declared Challenge cannot be switched and needs to be fully resolved first. A character with Momentum can dictate what the next round's Challenge is about, though the Navigator always has final say. See below.

Victory, Outcomes and Momentum

As with Single Roll Challenges, both sides roll for their number of successes. The relative values of each side's roll are compared. The character with the higher number of successes wins and the difference between his successes and his opponent's successes is described as the Victory Level. The Victory Level is checked on the Outcome Table (p###) to see what has happened that round.

The Outcome Table provides a suggested level of damage to the losing side. A Damage Trait is immediately given to the loser, which will hamper them in subsequent rounds and beyond. This setback should be supplemented with a colourful description of what actually happened.

If the winner scores two or more successes than their opponent then they have ***Momentum*** in this Challenge and have either gained, or regained, the 'Initiative'. This enables them to decide whether the next Round will be the same sort of Challenge or a new one, with different outcomes, using different Foundation Traits (e.g. a change from a fighting Challenge to a running away Challenge.) The two characters will oppose each other on this new Challenge in the next Round. Initiative can fluctuate as opposing characters win Challenges.

If at the end of a Round the number of successes are the same, or only one more, then both sides can either continue with the current Challenge or each can declare a new one calculating Initiative based on the highest Foundation Trait as above.

Rounds continue until one character is defeated and both sides agree to finish the Challenge and describe the final outcome. The level of defeat is always dictated by the Outcome table.

If a character wins a Round with a Victory Level of 7 then they automatically win the Challenge

and knock their opponent out. What this means depends on the nature of the Challenge. If it is a deadly fight then the loser may have been killed. If it is a cake making competition then the Navigator may simply pass a 'your cakes taste like sawdust 2d' Damage Trait when compared to the winner's gastronomic brilliance.

Here is a summary of the steps to Multi Roll Challenges:

1. Each opposing roll of the dice is regarded as a Round.
2. A Round has no set time period and will vary depending on the nature of the Challenge.
3. If different sides want different sorts of Challenges then the highest Trait decides which Challenge will be completed first. They have the 'Initiative'.
4. Both characters roll and compare number of successes.
5. The one with the most successes wins the Round.
6. The number of successes greater than the opponent is the Victory Level.
7. The Victory Level is checked on the Outcome Table which is detailed in the Outcome chapter. The loser must receive a Damage Trait.
8. The amount of BMS damage appropriate for the Challenge may be set by the Navigator.
9. If the winner has a Victory Level of 2 or greater they have Momentum, keep or gain the Initiative and can decide on the Challenge for the next Round.
10. The next Round may be the same sort of Challenge or another one, with different outcomes, using different Foundation Traits. (e.g. a change from a fighting Challenge to a running away Challenge).
11. The two characters will oppose each other on this new Challenge in the next Round. Initiative can fluctuate as opposing characters win Challenges.
12. If at the end of a Round it is a tie, or Victory level was only 1, then both sides can continue with the current Challenge or declare a new one.
13. Rounds continue until one character or side is defeated, or when both sides are happy that the Challenge has been logically concluded and that the final outcome can be described. The level of defeat is dictated by the Outcome table.
14. If a character wins a Round with a Victory Level of 7 then they automatically win the Challenge

The Outcome Table and damage are covered in the following Outcomes chapter.

Group Multi Roll Challenges

In Multi Roll Challenges all group members act as individuals with their own dice to try and achieve their own outcomes. There could be a range of different Body, Mind and Soul Challenges being carried out each Round. The Navigator and players need to arbitrate to make sense of the particular Challenge being undertaken by opposing characters at any one point in time.

Challenges in a Round are carried out in the order of Initiative; calculated from the highest Foundation Trait. If there is a tie then the Challenges happen at the same time.

An example Multi-Roll Challenge is found in the Outcomes Chapter on p.###

Challenges – a summary

Challenges are the means to drive forward the story, test the player characters, and heighten tension and uncertainty around the table. Challenges are what makes Wordplay a game rather than simply collective storytelling.

Here is a summary of the key points introduced in this chapter:

- Challenges are used at points of tension in the story, when the outcome is uncertain and events will have consequences that will influence both the direction of the story and the player characters involved.
- Players seek to amass as many six sided dice as Wordplay allows them, to give them the best chance to win the Challenge.
- Each six sided die can grant a number of successes when thrown. A die with a result of 1-3 (or which has fallen off the table) gives zero successes. A result of 4-5 gives one success. A result of 6 gives two successes. Count up all the successes on the dice to see how well you do.
- In the 'Building your Hand of Dice' section the various ways players can gain dice are explained. These include:
    - Picking your most relevant and important Trait. This is your Foundation and gives you a number of dice equal to the value of the Trait
    - Two further Traits can provide supporting dice
    - Appropriate equipment can provide bonus dice
    - Positive circumstances give between 1 and 4 dice
    - Friends can use one of their Traits to support a friend in a Challenge
    - Goals can be invoked three times in a session. Invoking a goal provides extra dice but failure will lead to 'doubts'.
    - Good player descriptions provide extra dice at the behest of the Navigator
    - An opponent's flaw can also provide helping dice
    - Negative factors provide dice to the opposing force in the Challenge
- Scale provides a guide for when two opposing forces are significantly mismatched due to some common factor. The three scales included are Size, Speed, and Power Domain.
- Before a Challenge is resolved everyone agrees what they want the outcome to be.
- Three methods of resolving Challenges are provided. Any of them can be used as suits the group.
    - A No-Roll Challenge dispenses with the need for dice. The Navigator decides what the outcome will be and tells the players.
    - A Single-Roll Challenge has each side or player roll the dice once. The side or player with the most successes wins and achieves their outcome.
    - A Multi-Roll Challenge allows a Challenge to take more than one dice roll to resolve.
- Challenges can reflect any duration of in game time.
- Multi-Roll Challenges introduce 'Rounds'. A Round is a segment of time where each player can roll the dice once. The outcome of each Round is determined before moving onto the next one.
- Characters that score at least two more successes than the opposition not only win the Round but also gain 'Momentum' allowing them to dictate what the next Round's Challenge will be about.

- In Single-Roll Challenges that involve two opposing groups, one dice roll can be made for each group. Each group picks a leader who builds their hand of dice and gets help from other members of the group who also throw their helping dice. All members of the group share the same outcome.

Outcomes

Every Challenge will have an outcome as described in each of the suggested Challenge methods. More often than not there will be a winner and a loser. Just occasionally there will be a tie. Outcomes will have a direct impact on the shape of the shared narrative driving it in new and possibly unexpected directions. This chapter provides the detail on what impact these outcomes have on a character in a game sense, detailing damage and its effect in play.

Winners and losers

The player that rolls the highest number of successes is either the winner of the Challenge outright for One Roll Challenges, or winner of the Round in Multi Roll Challenges.

The Outcome Table can be used as a way of determining the relative victory and defeat of the two sides. If the Outcome Table is being used then the number of successes higher than the difficulty is called the **Victory Level**. The Outcome table below gives information on what happens for each Victory level. 'Victory Levels' and the 'Outcome Results Table' are central to the resolution of Multi Roll Challenges, but are also there as a guide to 'No Roll' and 'Single Roll' Challenges too where the outcome may simply be narrated by the Navigator rather than referring to the Table.

If both sides get the same number of successes then there is no clear winner for that Challenge and it is a tie. Ties will favour the side with the highest Foundation Trait. If Foundation Traits are also tied then ties will go to a 'defender', if there is one. At best a player might get a very marginal victory out of a tie if other circumstances, or the general thrust of the story, would benefit from such an outcome.

Challenges more usually have winners and losers. Once you know what the Victory Level is you can refer to the Outcome Results Table to see the effect:

Outcome Results Table

Victory level	Victory	Body, Mind or Soul Damage Traits	Natural Recovery	Difficulty to Heal
1	Knife edge	**Scratch:** No lasting effect, but the difficulty is at +1d to the next roll	Straight away or after the next roll	3d
2-3	Minor	**Hurt:** 1d BMS Damage Trait	End of the session or one week 'in game' time	6d
4-5	Major	**Damaged:** 2d BMS Damage Trait	Two sessions or one month 'in game' time	8d
6	Emphatic	**Incapacitated:** 3d BMS Damage Trait, plus immediately knocked out of the Challenge	Three sessions or three months 'in game' time	10d
7+	Complete	Navigator may decide that the character has received such grievous damage that they should be permanently **removed from play**	It's all over bar the shouting	12d

Find your Victory Level and read along the row.

Victory: The description of the Victory Level
BMS Damage Traits: The loser suffers damage. Space has been made on the character sheet for the player to create new Damage Traits. Alternatively, the Navigator may also prepare 'Damage Cards'. Players are handed these cards when their character is damaged, and must keep them until they are healed.

Losers are damaged in the BMS category that their Foundation Trait was taken from. The damage is used as a negative factor in any subsequent Challenges they may face where they use a Foundation Trait from that category. Penalties are also cumulative in each category. So two Body 'Hurt' Damage Traits would give the difficulty, or opponent, a total of +2d in all Challenges where the character uses a Body Foundation Trait. However, two Body 'Hurt' Damage Traits do not become one 'Damaged' Trait, they remain two separate 'Hurt' level Traits.

Natural Recovery: How long it takes, in favourable conditions, for the character to be healed from that level of damage without much intervention. The example durations in the table are given for physical damage incurred through physical misadventure or mortal combat. Favourable circumstances will vary slightly depending on whether it is Body, Mind or Soul damage.

Difficulty to heal: This difficulty is used when Mundane or Magical Traits are used in a Challenge to heal the character. Even Complete defeat may be healed by dramatic action, magic, or super-advanced technology.

Defeat

When defeated in a Challenge the level and effect of that defeat is either determined by the agreed outcome in One Roll Challenges or by the opponent's Victory level on the Outcomes Table for Multi-roll Challenges.

In Wordplay there are five main levels of defeat that are described by the generic titles: Scratch, Hurt, Damaged, Incapacitated and Removed from play. The fifth level, 'Removed from play', signifies that the character has been so badly hurt that there is a danger that they will have to be removed from play completely. If the Navigator decides that this is the case then it is time for the player to generate a new character.

When receiving damage the player creates a new Damage Trait description and also notes the associated value. This value is added to the difficulty of further Challenges that uses Foundation Traits drawn from that category.

Some example Trait descriptions are described below grouped by severity and BMS category.

Scratch

This is just a relatively minor irritation. It isn't generally necessary to actually write down Scratch level Damage Traits because they only last for a short amount of game time, generally up to the next dice roll by the player, or after a Navigator defined period of in game time. For completeness here are some example Scratch Traits:

Body: T'is but a scratch, Pulled muscle, Twisted ankle, Bruised
Mind: Distracted, Disturbed thoughts, Slightly uncertain, Strange dream
Soul: Slightly embarrassed, Cross, Rather put out

Hurt

This is serious damage that impairs the performance of the character. Each Hurt Trait has a rating of 1d, which is added to any difficulty or opponent's hand of dice where the character uses a Foundation Trait from the category that has the Hurt Trait.

Body: 'Bad gash', 'Badly pulled muscle', 'Sprained ankle', 'Weeping sores'
Mind: 'Confused', 'Perplexed', 'Diverted'
Soul: 'Saddened', 'Angry', 'Emotional', 'Upset', 'Picked on'

Damaged

This is even more serious damage that further impairs the performance of the character. These Traits are rated at 2d each.

Body: 'Gaping wound', 'Torn muscle', 'Smashed ankle', 'Broken rib'
Mind: 'Unhinged', 'Lost and confused'
Soul: 'Depressed', 'Incandescent', 'Speechless', 'Isolated'

Incapacitated

When receiving an Incapacitated level of damage the character is immediately knocked out of any Challenge. They have also been seriously damaged and will take some time to recover. If the opponent's victory level is much above 6 then it could be that the character has been permanently removed from the game. This tends to happen in combat and other dangerous situations, but can also happen if the character has lost a loved one or has witnessed great horrors.

Each of these Traits are rated at 3d

Body: 'Unconscious', 'Ripped muscle', 'Pulped ankle', 'Smashed ribs'
Mind: 'Insane', 'Completely lost and introverted'
Soul: 'Suicidal', 'Seething rage', 'Banished and reviled'

All BMS damage has a cumulative effect on the character. If a character receives two 'Hurt' Body defeats then all Challenges using Body Traits provide +2d to the difficulty.

If the player wishes to use a Trait either as support to themselves, or to help another character, where the supporting Trait is from a BMS category that has Damage Traits associated with it, then that is still allowed. However, in this case first reduce the supporting Trait by the amount of associated damage before calculating the number of dice that it is going to provide in support.

example

Dom's character wishes to use his character's 'Scan surroundings for danger' 6d Mind Trait to help a friend. Ordinarily this would give him two dice to throw to help his friend. However, he is currently suffering from a 'Mesmerised by Sula the dancing girl' 1d Mind Damage Trait. This damage reduces his 'Scan surroundings for danger' to 5d for the purposes of supporting a friend. A 5d supporting Trait only provides one die to help.

Putting a cap on Defeat

Often a Navigator will put a cap on the level of defeat. For example, if a character emphatically manages to hide from a seeking opponent with a Victory Level of 6 it is unlikely to drive the seeker insane! Rather the Navigator may decide to penalise the seeker either with a Mental 'Scratch' signifying that they just have the feeling that something is out there, or maybe with a hurt (1d) to signify that the seeker has become confused and diverted by this sneaky opponent that they are actively and futilely tracking.

Only when faced with grim and bloodthirsty opponents, or the most mind wrenching of horrors, or the most desperate and dangerous of social situations would the Navigator utilise the full effect of the defeat on the Outcome Table. It is always important to consider any outcomes that may have been agreed at the start of a Challenge and use that to guide the type and severity of the level of any defeat.

An example Multi Roll Challenge with outcomes

Here is a worked up example of a multi-roll Challenge using Initiative, Momentum and the outcome table.

example
Tom is playing Lorth, a Northern barbarian who finds himself out of his depth in the city state of Trellor on the southern Tremallion plain. Sally is playing Billi, a barbarian who is out of his depth except in battle. In a dark alleyway they are confronted by three inhuman assassins of the Order of The Grey Lord. Elaine, the Navigator, decides this will be a Multi-roll Challenge and introduces it:

Elaine: The figures move towards you out of the shadows at great speed. A glint of a blade from one betrays it's intent. What do you want to do?
Tom: In a blur of motion Lorth readies his axe and balances himself for the exchange!
Sally: I fade left and ready my sword.
Elaine: A combat Challenge it is then, at least for this round. The assassins have five dice in swordsmanship, and are using their 'strike from shadows' and 'heart of ice' Traits. With equipment that puts each figure on ten dice.
Tom: Lorth has six dice in Battle Axe. He is going to use his 'Fearless in battle' and 'Spot opponent's weakness' Traits. With equipment that puts me on ten dice too. Lorth crouches ready like a feral creature eyeing his opponent carefully ready to spring at the right moment to cut it down. Er, you did say 'it' didn't you?
Elaine: Nice description. Have another die.
Tom: That puts me on eleven dice.
Sally: Billi has Broadsword at six dice. He will be using his 'Fearsome war cry' and 'Brute strength' both at five dice. These each grant a +1 dice bonus. His equipment grants him a further two dice. I

am on ten dice. He bellows an enormous battle cry at the figures coming towards him and braces himself with brutish strength to cut them down!

Elaine: You're both on form tonight. You can have another die for your description.

Sally: Great, that's eleven dice for me too.

Elaine: Billi has two of the assassins attacking him. This gives them both an extra +1d bonus as they outnumber you.

Sally: I know no fear.

Elaine: We'll see. Roll the dice!

Tom: Yes! Nine successes.

Sally: Not bad, I get eight successes.

Elaine: I'm going to roll once for the two shadowy figures on Billi and once for the figure against Lorth. First the one attacking Lorth. No! Only five successes. That gives you a Victory Level of 4, which is a major victory giving your opponent a 'Hurt 2d' Damage Trait. (Elaine had memorised the Outcomes Table a long time ago.) Your axe smashes into his sword and slides down into his leg, cutting deeply. He has 'Deep bloody slash to the right thigh 2d', a Body Damage Trait.

Right, now Billi. Your opponents each get six successes. You also beat them with a Victory Level of 2. That's a minor victory, they both take a Hurt Damage Trait and you have the Momentum to dictate next round's Challenge.

Sally: Billi's blade slices through his assailants catching both with vicious cuts. Billi jumps back and readies his guard.

Elaine: Right, they each have 'Vicious cut 1d' damage. That all took only a few heartbeats of time. It's the next round. You both have the Initiative and Momentum as you had two or more successes than your opponents. It's up to you what the next round will be about. What do you want to do?

Tom: I want to press home my advantage. I'm looking to put this opponent out of the fight, but I'd now like him alive if at all possible!

Sally: I'll take Lorth's lead and spring forward, with my blade held high but for a killing blow.

Elaine: I think the assassin against Lorth would want to escape, but he must face whatever Challenge you are wanting to set. So, he is going to continue with his swordsmanship as his Foundation Trait, but also use 'Heart of ice' and 'Sneer in the face of danger' Traits. He remains on ten dice. A hissing sound erupts from your opponent startling you for a moment; what sort of creature is it that you are facing?

Billi's two assailants wish to redouble their efforts hoping their numeric advantage will see them through.

Tom: I shall use the same Traits again. I wheel round my wounded opponent looking to strike again as it betrays a faltering defence due to the wound. I'm on ten dice.

Elaine: Good tactical thinking, for which I'll give you one dice. You also gain two further dice thanks to your opponent's Damage Trait of 2d.

Tom: Excellent, I'm on thirteen dice!

Sally: I'll keep my Traits as they are looking to use my brutish strength to cut down the enemy.

Tom: I get nine successes.

Elaine: I only get five. You gain another major victory. I judge that this is enough for you to succeed in your intent. The opponent takes another Hurt Damage Trait at 2d. Your axe cuts deeply into its sword arm forcing it to drop the blade and crumple helplessly at your feet.

Sally: I get eight successes.

Elaine: I only have five again. That's a further Minor victory giving them another Hurt damage

each. They stagger back nursing their wounds, unable to find away through your arcing blade. As they look round they see Lorth appear from the shadows evening up the odds. You still have the Momentum so can define the Challenge for next round. What's it to be?
Tom: Have a guess...

Healing

Natural Recovery

Damage can be healed over time, through natural recovery. Damage Traits can be removed from a character either after a number of game sessions or over a period of time in the game, whichever occurs first The period of in-game time you select will vary according to the type of damage inflicted; fatigue will recover quicker than physical injury for example. See 'Environmental Challenges' for some worked up examples on p###.

Whichever time period is decided upon, Damage Traits will reduce in effect over a number of game sessions if the in game time has not been completed. Usually, a Damaged level Trait will be at 2d for the game session in which it took place, at 1d for the next game session, and will be removed completely the session after that. Incapacitated Traits take three game sessions to be completely removed. Reduce any outstanding Damage Traits at the start of any game session.

Some common sense will need to apply here. If there are a number of consecutive game sessions covering a very short period of in game time then the Navigator may decide not to reduce the effect of Damage Traits, even though game sessions have been completed.

example

Lorth suffers a Hurt level Body damage. He now has a 'Gashed shoulder' Damage Trait rated at 1d. He will have this until the end of the game session. At the beginning of the next session the player can remove it from the character sheet. However, during the game session Lorth rests for a week in a small isolated village. Once this is described the player can, at the Navigator's discretion, remove the Damage Trait due to natural healing.

Healing Traits

Rather than spending valuable game time for a character to recover, healing Traits such as 'treat wound', 'counselling', or 're-arrange wardrobe' can be used to reduce the level of, or immediately remove, the Damage Trait.

The base difficulty to heal damage is also given in the Outcome Table. This difficulty may be increased by circumstances at the Navigator's discretion. Player characters that are using their healing Traits can be supported by other characters, and even the character that is damaged in the usual way.

Success with such a healing Challenge always reduces the severity of the Damage Trait by **one**

level, regardless of Victory Level.

- Scratches are immediately ignored and the character does not give +1d to the difficulty on the next roll.
- Hurts become Scratches. The character will suffer a 1d bonus to the difficulty on their next roll that uses a Foundation Trait from that category, and then it is removed.
- Damaged becomes Hurt.
- Incapacitated becomes Damaged

example

Chantelle has suffered a Soul Hurt Trait 'Fashion disaster' 1d . Jefferson has 'High Street Shopping' at 5d. He adds in his 'Day time TV trivia' and 'Celebrity fashion knowledge' Traits to boost his dice to 7d. Checking the Outcomes Result Table, Chantelle's 'Fashion disaster' 1d Hurt is a 6 dice Challenge to heal. The Navigator rolls the dice and gets 3 successes, setting the difficulty for Jefferson to beat. Jefferson scores an amazing 7 successes (in part due to two sixes). After only one day of flamboyant shopping, resulting in several new outfits, Chantelle wows the club crowd the following evening and removes the 'Fashion disaster' Trait from the Soul damage section of the character sheet.

Positive Experiences and Circumstances

Body, Mind and Soul Damage Traits can be healed more quickly if the character is immersed in positive and affirming experiences, or finds themselves comfortably and skilfully being looked after. Perhaps the character is surrounded and supported by loved ones, in a high-tech hospital, or in a particularly tranquil or even magical place? The Navigator can set a Trait value to such an experience or care setting and use that directly in a Challenge against the damage, or to support other characters that are using healing Traits. In effect the location and circumstances provide an 'equipment bonus' to the character that is actively trying to heal the character.

example

Lorth is wearied by the amount of carnage he has wrought in the name of glory. He has two Mind Hurt Traits: 'Reflecting on the faces of the dead' and 'Hearing the lamentation of women'. Unwittingly he has entered one of the faerie healing glades. The Navigator assigns a value of 7d to the magical healing glade. As the glade is magical the Navigator is using the Scale rules (see p###), which will mean that the Hurt Traits healing difficulty only get successes on 5 or more on each die instead of the usual 4 or more. Each Hurt Damage Trait is 6d to heal. Lorth's player rolls 6d for each of his damage Traits and scores 3 and 1 successes respectively. The Navigator decides to roll once for the healing glade and apply the successes against each of the Hurt Traits. The Navigator rolls 4 successes, which is enough to overcome each of the Damage Traits. Both of the Hurt Damage Traits are immediately down graded to mere Scratches.

Healing Body Damage Traits

Body Damage Traits will have been created due to physical damage, be it through terrifying combat, disastrous accidents, or other unavoidable physical calamity. Time and rest is the great healer for physical damage. This can be augmented by medical knowledge, drugs, science fiction regeneration devices, and the wonders of magic and the channelled powers of the gods.

example healing Traits: Faith healer, First aid, Physician, Set bones, Treat disease, Treat wounds

example favourable circumstances: Comfortable 4d, Drugs 8d, High Tech Hospital 7d, Well looked after 5d
example magic and other powers: Fountain of the healing goddess 10d, Heal wound spell 7d, Potion of healing 8d, Regeneration tank 9d

Healing Mind Damage Traits

The mind is complex, fragile, prone to confusion, doubt and uncertainties, always seeking to understand and interpret the external stimuli that surround it. Player characters will receive mental Damage Traits when they encounter confusing mysteries and blasphemous monstrosities. Whenever the ordered world of the mind is assaulted it may become damaged, unhinged, broken.

Once again time plays a part in restoring sanity and clarity to a person. Other healing Traits and circumstance ideas are below:

example healing Traits: Comedian, Counselling, Explain clearly, Love, Meditation, Psychiatrist
example favourable circumstances: Comfortable 4d, Country retreat 5d, Drugs 6d, Psychiatric hospital 3d
example magic and other powers: Dream magic 7d, Mind healing spell 7d, Soothing veil dance of the healing goddess 10d

Healing Soul Damage Traits

The social and spiritual part of a person is under constant challenge and assault. The need to 'fit in' to fast moving societal groups, the loneliness of modern life, the manoeuvring of politics and the drudgery of daily life can all take their toll on a person. Player characters will receive Soul Damage Traits when their view of society and people are challenged, when they are being excluded by a social group, or their very moral fibre or relationships are being confronted and challenged.

example healing Traits: Enlightened confidence, Etiquette, Image consultant, Love, Moral philosophy, Party on dude, Reorganise wardrobe, Welcoming
example favourable circumstances: Fashionable clothes 4d, Good friendship 7d, Uplifting experiences 5d
example magic and other powers: Honoured by the gods 7d, Soul cleansing ritual 7d

Environmental Challenges

With all Challenges and outcomes described we are going to revisit Challenges one more time to see how easily and widely they can be applied. There are no new rules here, but simply a restating of the principles of Challenges and outcomes and applied to a wide range of potential situations.

Environmental Challenges are used when the Navigator wants to pit the player character against a range of different external forces, testing their mettle and fortitude. They are almost always One Roll Challenges. Example environmental Challenges would include:

Fatigue – laden down with heavy armour and high tech weaponry and then physically pushed to the

limit
Shock – facing blasphemous horrors and lurking terrors that claw away at the mind
Morale – under continuous fire or under heavy pressure sucking away at the very soul
The elements – wind, snow, heat, eldritch storms, lengthy bouts of horrible weather during the summer

It is usually the Navigator who will call for a Challenge, though a player may choose to test their character if they wish against some element described in the story. The Challenge is given a difficulty level depending on the activity described in the game session. Here are some examples:

Environmental Challenge Examples

Fatigue - A short combat scene (difficulty 4d)
Shock- Facing an undead opponent (difficulty 6d)
Morale – A long car journey with small children (difficulty 7d)
Morale – Under a lengthy barrage after a recent defeat (difficulty 9d)
Elements – Exposed to a freezing blizzard for a full day (difficulty 9d)
Fatigue - A long combat scene (difficulty 10d)
Shock- Facing an undead opponent that looks to be a loved relative (difficulty 11d)
Fatigue – Fighting in a lengthy pitched battle (difficulty 12d)

Players must choose an appropriate Foundation Trait to meet the Challenge. This could be anything from Body, Mind or Soul denoting endurance, stamina, strength of character or similar qualities. As with all Challenges the player can use up to two additional relevant Traits to support the character and look for helping dice from wherever they can. The Navigator can throw in additional circumstantial factors that either reduce or increase the difficulty of the Challenge for the player character.

As usual, once the dice have been amassed they are thrown and successes compared against the difficulty. If the player gets at least equal to the difficulty then their character is unaffected and has succeeded in the Challenge. If the difficulty level is higher than the player's number of successes then the result is checked on the outcome table below.

Environmental Challenge Outcomes

Environmental Challenges use the standard Outcome Table (p###). Damage Traits are given suitably described names and dice values as usual. In terms of recovery the Navigator can set any in game period of time that feels right before the Trait can be removed. Here are some examples for fatigue, shock and morale:

Victory	Fatigue Outcome	Fatigue Recovery	Shock Outcome	Shock Recovery	Morale Outcome	Morale Recovery
Knife edge	Out of breath	1 hour	Unnerved	3 hours	Shaken	3 hours
Minor	Tired	3 hours	Scared	8 hours	Dispirited	8 hours
Major	Exhausted	8 hours sleep	Horrified	2 days	Overwhelmed	1 week

| **Emphatic** | Incapacitated | 1 day and nigh of rest | Gibbering wreck | 1 week | Broken | 2 weeks |
| **Complete** | Removed from play | It's all over | Removed from play | It's all over | Removed from play | It's all over |

Sessions to downgrade and the difficulty for healing Traits are also as per the standard Outcome Table.

example
Lorth has survived a lengthy and intense battle with a mountain troll. To complicate his lonely and precarious existence yet further the Navigator asks for a Fatigue Challenge with a difficulty of 10d. Lorth has 'Powerfully built' at 6d and uses 'Wear armour with ease' 3d and 'Fearless in battle' 5d to provide a couple of helping dice for a total of 8d. Lorth's player rolls a below par three successes, while the Fatigue Challenge has five successes. The Fatigue Challenge has a Victory Level of two. This is a Minor Victory (Tired) giving Lorth a 1d Fatigue Trait to add to the difficulty to all Challenges until he can recover. This will take either three hours of in game rest or one session. He also took a bad wound ('Gaping sword gash' Body Damage Trait at 2d) during the battle. Cumulatively, Lorth is currently on 3d worth of Damage Traits for all Body related Challenges. Lorth is in big trouble.

Encumbrance

What's a roleplaying game without encumbrance rules that you can cheerfully ignore? Well, here they are, a circumstantial penalty to characters in fatigue Challenges.

The Navigator and player may decide between them that a character is carrying enough to be regarded as encumbered. Typically this would be when a character is wearing heavy armour with little training, or carrying a sizeable backpack. A character can either be light, medium or heavily encumbered:

Encumbrance	**Fatigue Challenge difficulty increase**
Unencumbered	+0d
Light Encumbrance	+1d
Medium Encumbrance	+2d
Heavy Encumbrance	+4d

The level of encumbrance is negotiated between player and Navigator. The Equipment section gives some guidance on how to apply an encumbrance level to a character.

Character Experience

During campaign play characters will grow through the experiences encountered in the game. This experience is given a point value in the game. Experience points are collected and can be spent to

improve and develop new character Traits.

Gaining experience

There are a number of ways that characters can gain experience points. They are detailed below.

Turning Up

A base of 1 to 3 experience points are awarded to each player character at the end of a game session. If the session played out was tough for the characters then the Navigator may elect to be more generous with this award. If there weren't a lot of Challenges during the session, or the Navigator wants the players to suffer a bit, then she may choose to not provide any experience points at all.

Invoking Goals

Players can invoke their character's Goals up to three times per game session. If successful in the ensuing Challenge they gain experience points equal to half the Foundation Trait (round up). See invoking Goals (p###)

Completing Goals

A character completing a goal will also receive a number of experience points. The suggested amounts are based on the Goal's story significance or difficulty to complete.

The goal has a negligible story impact or was very easy to achieve	1 Exp
The goal has a minor story impact or was difficult to achieve	3 Exp
The goal has a major story impact or was very difficult to achieve	10 Exp
The goal has a cataclysmic story impact or was extraordinarily difficult to achieve, or was one of the character's defining long term goals	20 Exp

Providing Flaws

If a player voluntarily gives a Flaw Trait bonus to their opponent then they get experience points equal to the dice given, but only if they lose that dice roll.

Spending Experience

Experience points can be spent to improve an existing Trait or to create a new one at any time between or during a game session.

Adding a new Trait

A new Trait can be added to a character sheet with the agreement of the Navigator at a cost of 2

experience points. The Trait needs to make sense to the story being created by the group and to the character that is being given it. A new Trait starts at the base value provided in the 'Experience and power level' section on page###. Usually this will be 3d.

A new Trait may be started at a higher level if the player and Navigator are in agreement. Usually this is either because the player already has a similar Trait which could give the character a head start or that it has been agreed that the Trait is a hitherto unknown but important aspect of the character that needs to be expressed. The player still need only spend 2 experience points.

example
Lorth has been given a mace. He has no Trait for this but his player thinks that as a warrior, and experienced with Axes, he could legitimately start at 3d with it. The Navigator, generously, agrees. The player spends 2 Experience points and now has Mace at 3d.

Improving Traits

A player can spend experience points to improve their character's Traits. The number of points required to increase a Trait depends on its level.

New Trait level wanted	Experience point cost
Between 3d and 5d	New level value in points
Between 6d and 9d	New level value x 1.5 (round up) in points
Between 10d and 12d	New level value x2 in points

example
Lorth, a warrior from the frozen lands of Lhuthia wishes to increase his Battle Axe Trait, which is in his Body category. It is currently at 6d. To move to 7d requires eleven experience points (x 1.5, rounded up). To get to level 8d he will need to spend a further twelve experience points.

Morphing Traits

Traits can change almost imperceptibly over time. As a character develops in light of experience, the nature of their already expressed Traits will subtly change. At the end of any game session a player can choose, or a Navigator can suggest, that one of a character's Traits should be re-written. Traits will usually keep their numeric value when morphed. This does not cost any experience points.

Part of the reason for this is that a player uses Traits actively to form part of the description of their character's actions in a Challenge. By morphing the description of Traits, those descriptions can stay fresh. When playing Wordplay, a thesaurus is an invaluable resource for building Traits and morphing them.

example
A character has 'Watchful' as a Mind Trait. At the end of a session a player changes this to 'Ever vigilant'. No real material change to the Trait; well not much, but a slight change in emphasis.

Losing Traits

At any time a player can request to the Navigator that they retire one of the character's Traits that is not being used, or no longer appears relevant or appropriate. The group's story may take the character in new and unexpected directions. Loves could be lost, enemies could become firm friends, new experiences negate some of the Traits that initially defined the character.

Lost Traits are recorded on the player character sheet alongside completed goals. Lost Traits are given a date when they were removed and one line of text to explain why.

Lost Traits can be recovered from the back of the character sheet at the cost of 1 experience point and re-entered onto the front of the sheet along with the active Traits if story circumstance encourages this. The Trait recovers at one die less than the value it was when it was retired. Leave the Trait in the record of the lost Traits for reference.

Gaining Wealth

In many of the stories that will be played out at your gaming table player characters will have many opportunities to gain wealth through fair means and foul. Discovered treasure, promotion to a position of power, unexpected inheritance, anything could happen and probably will. As the wealth system is a convenient abstraction, the rules for acquiring wealth are also suitably open to easy application and interpretation.

Characters are given a wealth level when first created. Typically this is derived from the profession they have selected, but could also be inferred from the Pre-play text, or from a general discussion between player and Navigator. Characters could start the game extremely wealthy or completely destitute. What's really important is how this wealth, or lack of it, can be used to propel ideas for stories in the game.

Wealth levels can be gained temporarily. During a game session an uncovered sack of coins might provide +1 Wealth Level for two sessions. This increase in wealth level might be conditional, only applying to those characters that are at a certain level already.

Losing Wealth

Tragedy, foolishness, even a knowingly profligate lifestyle, can affect wealth levels during the course of a game. If the player wishes, or the story dictates, his character may lose wealth levels temporarily or permanently.

Gaining Debt

Player characters may acquire debt during play. Debt is allocated a Debt level in just the same way as Wealth. Depending on the story the level of debt can add to Wealth levels too, as the character may have received a sizeable loan, allowing them to acquire more things or live out a more expensive lifestyle.

Over time the Debt level will act as an increase to the difficulty in acquiring equipment and living at

the character's Wealth level. Debts need to be recovered and often have strings attached to them. Focus on this if it makes for an interesting story and drives forward the narrative in the game that you are playing.

Outcomes – a summary

Challenges will have winners and losers. Winners get to progress their own stories in the direction they wanted, losers will be damaged, suffer setbacks, and will have to find new ways to get themselves on the right track. The outcome chapter details what winning and losing means in a Wordplay game.

- Outcomes are worth thinking about at the beginning of a Challenge. What do you want to achieve as an outcome of the Challenge? If you win you'll get what you wanted, if you lose you won't.
- In no-roll and single-roll Challenges the outcome is discussed and agreed at the beginning of the Challenge.
- In multi-roll Challenges the overall outcome is expressed but the Outcome Table will provide the detail as to what happens in a Challenge.
- The Outcome Table is a guide only.
- If you gain more successes than your opponent then you win the Challenge.
- The amount you get more than your opponent is your Victory Level. The higher your Victory Level the better your success and the more damage you inflict on your opponent.
- At the Navigator's discretion, damage effects can be downgraded to reflect the winner's wishes and in line with the desired outcome.
- Damage is inflicted as Damage Traits on the losers Foundation Trait BMS category.
- Damage Traits provide bonus dice to the difficulty or opposition in subsequent Challenges that use a Foundation Trait from the same BMS category.
- Each Damage Trait is tracked separately and is reduced by 1d at the beginning of each game session or for a period of time in the game.
- Damage Traits resist active healing attempts by challenging the healer.
- A successful healing Challenge downgrades the Damage Trait by one die.
- All sorts of environmental effects can Challenge a player character. Standard Outcome rules apply though recovery periods are negotiable depending on the type of damage inflicted.
- Experience points are collected by characters during play. They are used in campaign games by being spent to increase a character's Traits.
- Invoking and completing Goals provides a character with additional experience points.
- Traits can also be changed, 'morphed', or removed to the Lost Traits section of the character sheet as the character changes over time.
- Wealth is a Trait like any other. It can be increased and decreased depending on the development of the story.

Powers

Powers are special Traits that represent extraordinary abilities not available to regular people in the game. Powers provide characters with access to the supernatural realm and to the Scale rules (p###). Game themes that wish to explore magical power, superheroes, or strange mind powers will find Powers extremely useful.

The power available to the character could be something learnt, acquired by birth as a special talent, or an affinity that came to the character due to an experience in the game story. Characters that have special powers have a defining special Power Trait that determines how powerful they are and directs the sort of powers the character has access to.

Powers when creating characters

Powers are often first encountered when creating a character. Any of the Four Ps can signpost that the character should be given supernatural powers. This chapter gives examples on how to structure these Traits and how to use them in the game.

If the Theme that you are playing, or the particular character, has no specific supernatural powers associated with them then this chapter need not be referred to.

Main Power Trait

The character takes one or more Main Power Traits that define the level of power that can be learnt. This Trait can be improved like any other. A character may gain one of these Traits as a consequence of selecting one of the People or Professions in a Theme. Perhaps the character's story in the Pre-play text points towards some kind of supernatural of Power.

Some example Main Power Traits might be:

- Magical power
- Necromancy
- Favoured of [insert uncompromising and interventionist deity name here]
- Mystic
- Awakened Telepath
- Shaman spirit talker

This Trait will be further defined by other Power Effect Traits that will sit beneath it. The Main Power Trait sets the upper dice level achievable for all other Power Effect Traits, representing the overall level of understanding and power of the character.

A 'Magic' Trait of 1d, for example, represents an absolute novice, who is just starting to make their way in understanding the magical arts. Once this mage has increased their Main Power Trait to 'Magic 7d' or more they are starting to gather phenomenal power and understanding of the secret

ways of changing the world to their own will. This Main Power Trait defines how effective the character is when using other subordinate Power Effect Traits and usually acts as a helping Trait for the other various magical Power Effect Traits that the character might take.

The Traits are all on the Magical scale (see p###).

Power Effect Traits

In addition to the Main Power Trait the character will need to have Power Effect Traits that describe their powers. These are the Traits that are actually rolled when facing Challenges that test the character's magical power. As with all other Traits they can simply be described as desired.

So, a character that has the Wizard Main Power Trait would also have Power Effect Traits that allow practical application of the Magic:

example
Wizard 6d
Blast of eldritch power 6d, Fly 4d, Know the unknowable 4d, Minor cantrips 5d, Pool of floating light 4d

The wizard may also choose useful Mundane Traits to help use these powers such as: Clear mind, Focus will, Research musty tomes etc.

Creating an Effect

Creating a Power Effect is a Challenge like any other. A minimum number of successes is set by the Navigator depending on how impressive the desired effect is. The more powerful the effect desired, the greater the minimum number of successes required. Unless the user of the power achieves that minimum number of successes then the power will fail and achieve no effect at all. There might be an embarrassing spark, or the sound of giggling, but no actual effect.

A guide to the minimum number of successes is determined by referencing the Power Table below.

Power Table

The Power Table provides a quick guide to the minimum number of successes a Power effect must achieve for it to be successful. Range, duration and area of effect are all provided as examples, though the Navigator may decide to use other aspects that need consideration. Once an effect is described by the player it is given a Power level using the most powerful effect that it demands.

If the minimum number of successes is equalled or surpassed then the effect comes into play. The Power wielding character may be required to succeed at a 'Payback Challenge', the difficulty of which is defined by the number of successes achieved when creating the effect.

The Power Table

Minimum	Power level	Range of effect	Duration of	Area of effect	Payback

number of successes			effect		Challenge
1	Weak	immediate vicinity 10 meters	Seconds	One person	1d
3	Minor	local area 50 meters	Minutes	Small group	3d
5	Average	At range 100m	Up to an Hour	Dispersed groups	5d
7	Major	At range 200m	Hours	Large group	7d
9	Adept	In sight	Days	City wide	9d
11	Master	Beyond sight	Weeks	Province wide	11d
15	Cataclysmic	Light Years	Years	Planet wide	15d

example

A wizard wishes to project a ball of magical fire into a horde of advancing zombies using his 'Eldritch ball of fire' Trait. I mean, why wouldn't you? The wizard uses the Foundation Trait of Eldritch ball of fire 6d, with two supporting Traits of Wizard 6d (his Main Power Trait), and Focus will 4d. In addition he carries a stave of power focus giving an equipment bonus of +2d. This gives him eleven dice in total. The zombies happen to have a Trait called 'Vulnerable to fire 4d' which the Navigator grants as a helping Trait to the wizard, upping his total to twelve dice.

The Navigator only needs to check if there is anything particular about the Challenge that needs to be taken into account. In this case the area of effect is a small group and they are about 100 meters away. Checking the Power table the Navigator can see that the small group area effect requires a minimum of three successes and that the range requires a minimum of five successes. Unless the wizard scores at least five successes then the effect will fail.

The wizard unleashes his 12d ball of fire and scores eight successes. This is enough for the effect to come into play. The zombies can resist the effect and choose 'Relentless stagger' as their Foundation Trait; they are simply going to shuffle through the raging ball of fire. In total they come up with eight dice. The Navigator decides to roll once and apply the result to each of the zombies. The scale rules are in play, as the fire is Magical, which means that only fives and sixes will count as successes for the zombies. They manage three successes, giving the wizard a victory level of 5 and a Major Victory on the Outcome Table. Each of the zombies are allocated a 2d Body Damage Trait 'Scorched and smouldering'...

Containing Power

In the example above the character has created an effect with eight successes. The player can decide how many of these successes they want to keep. Five were required for the effect to come in to play, so that is the minimum. The player can decide to keep between five and eight successes. This is called 'containing power'. The more successes kept, the more powerful the effect and the harder it is to resist by the target, but it's up to the player how many successes they wish to keep and use to power the effect.

When a player wishes their character to wield one of their powers there is usually a price to pay for it. The nature of this payment, and the frequency it has to be applied, is determined by the Navigator and player when designing the power. The default expectation of Wordplay is that every

time an effect is called into play the wielder of the power must immediately take a Payback Challenge. The Challenge difficulty is equal to the number of successes achieved **and kept** by the power wielder. In the example above the wizard would be facing an 8d Payback Challenge as he decided to keep all eight successes.

The Foundation Trait used to resist this Payback Challenge can vary considerably depending on how the power is conceived. Does using the power physically drain or damage the user? Pick an appropriate Body Trait. Does the power drive the user towards the edge of sanity and back? Use a Mind Trait. Or maybe the power eats away at the user's will, their moral fibre? Use a Soul Trait. A failure to meet the Payback Challenge will create a Damage Trait in the appropriate BMS category reflecting the risks associated with using the power. If the power is simply exhausting to use then the 'damage' will be fatigue and reflected as a Fatigue Damage Trait applied to the Body category.

You may decide to allow the Main Power Trait to act as one of the helping Traits in the Payback Challenge. Other Traits and equipment may provide help to win the Payback Challenge.

If Wordplay's default Payback Challenge is too frequent or burdening to the game's vision of the power being used, then a Navigator may choose to only require a Payback Challenge when the number of successes kept is equal to or greater than the Foundation Trait used. In this way a power wielder who does not push their power successes beyond their Main Power Trait are able to contain it without risking any untoward effect.

Resisting Powers

Power effects are resisted just like any other Challenge. If the effect is targeted at another character then they will be able to choose some Traits to resist the effect on them. If the Foundation Trait used by the resisting character is on the Mundane scale then they will need to score 5 or more on each die as per the scale rules to resist the power.

If the resisting character is also using a Power based Foundation Trait then they will be operating on the same scale as the power wielding attacker and thus no scale disadvantage will apply.

It could be argued in the example above that the zombies 'Relentless stagger' is Magical, as the dead are not noted for their perambulatory ability. Should they be on the same scale as the ball of fire? Possibly, but the Navigator decides that a raging ball of magical fire is precisely not what the zombies are equipped to cope with, so chose to have them operate on the Mundane scale.

Creating Powers

Creating Powers in Wordplay is no different from imagining any other part of the game world that you play in. Imagine and collect a library of Traits that describes how the power works, what forces influence it, what supports its existence, and what the cost is to those that wield it. That's about all you need to do.

What follows are a series of suggested steps to creating powers in your game.

The Main Power Trait

The Main Power Trait acts as a top level Trait defining the sort of power that the character has and sets the upper limit to the number of dice that any associated powers can have. You could decide to only require one Main Power Trait for the character. This is especially useful if you are following the 'Less is more' option for Traits (p.###).

Example Main Power Traits
Acolyte, Alchemist, Druid, Elementalist, Enchanter, Hag, Illusionist, Mage, Mutant, Mystic, Necromancer, Numerologist, Priest, Psion, Shaman, Sorcerer, Super, Telepath, Warlock, Wizard

A character that wishes to have power over the recently dead decides to have a Main Power Trait called 'Necromancer' If 'Less is More' then that's all the character will need.

Necromancer 6d

If 'Variety is the Spice of life' then the character will take additional Power Effect Traits that explain precisely what the character can do.

Main Power Trait: Necromancer 6d
Power Effect Traits: Create and control corpse 5d, Descend into the underworld 5d, Sense death 3d, Speak to the dead 4d,

In this example 'Power Effect Traits' cannot have more dice than the Main Power Trait that they belong to. The Main Power Trait, 'Necromancer', acts as a helping Trait for the powers that belong to it.

Describe Powers

Powers Effects are placed on a character sheet as described above. The Navigator should keep in mind the Power Table above when thinking of what the power can do and the minimum number of successes required to achieve it.

If you are developing a series of magic powers then these can be described as 'spells'. If you are adapting magic that is already described in another roleplaying game then simply use the spell description as the Trait name and assign a minimum number of successes to successfully achieve the effect described in the other game. A greater number of successes achieved by the power user over the minimum number required by the spell to create the effect could be used in a number of ways:

- makes the effect more difficult for an unwilling recipient to resist
- creates a more impressive looking, wider area, or longer lasting effect than expected
  Or
- extra successes have no material effect on the game.

A character who takes the 'Wizard' Main Power Trait might look a bit like this:

Wizard 6d
Ball of light 4d, Blast of energy 6d, Cantrips 5d, Float about for a bit 3d, Healing hands 6d, Imperious gaze 3d, Shadow walking 4d, Speak into the mind 3d

Complementary Character Traits

A character that chooses to have a Special Power can also take a series of complementary Mundane Traits that both reflect the sort of person that would take that power, and provide helping Traits that can be used when building the hand of dice in Challenges.

Example
Continuing with the necromancer example above a character may take complementary Traits such as:

Appreciate beauteous putrefaction, Bone lore, Death dance, Deathly palour, Intimidating when wearing black, Recite the Book of the Dead, Shallow breathing, Skeletal grin

Create your own lists of complementary character Traits for each power that are in play to act as examples and inspiration when characters are being created. As with any list they can be used 'as is' or serve as a jump off point for the player's fiendish imagination!

Favourable Circumstances

Many powers will have circumstances that actively enhance their potential. These circumstances will vary considerably between powers and can either be appreciated on the fly during play or can be skilfully used in a premeditated way as part of the story. Particular powers may also benefit from complementary circumstances. Our necromancer may benefit from undertaking his abject magic from inside a tomb or a graveyard for example, or a druid from within an ancient and sacred grove.

Favourable Circumstances give the player or Navigator an excuse to help when building their hand of dice. More dice and the greater chance of more successes, more power, more impressive effects. If only it can all be contained! Circumstances typically provide a **total** bonus of between +1 to +4 dice. A generous Navigator may choose to stack some of these bonuses or increase the upper level of bonuses for a particularly significant circumstance.

Some example favourable circumstances are below.

Time
Festival day, Full moon, Holy day, Lunar eclipse, Midnight, Sixth hour of the sixth day, Solar eclipse, The stars are aligned, The witching hour

Place
Astride a dragon, Crop circle, Deity's temple, Faerie glade, Graveyard, Hyperspace, In the centre of the labyrinth, Ley lines, Occult circle, Stone circle, Zero-G

Other
A lock of hair, First born child, Focus of power, Impressionable human minds, Magic mirror, Prime number of targets, Ring of power, Trance

When designing a power it is often worth listing example favourable circumstances to reflect the

way the practitioner of the power understands how best to use the power that they have. These circumstances will also then be available for reference in play.

Unfavourable Circumstances

There may also be circumstances that make using the power particularly difficult. These are likely to come out in play. Targets of damaging effects may have special protection themselves, including many of the things listed as favourable circumstances above. A place may be barren of magical potential, it having been stripped away in some ancient war. The balance of favourable and unfavourable circumstances is determined by the Navigator. Players can seek to influence her decision as much as possible, through eloquence, story building ideas and arrant bribery.

In the end the Navigator will decide and the dice will fall.

Containing the Power

As outlined above, decide what the cost is to the user of the power. For example a magical discipline may require the wizard to look deep into the hidden fabric of the world and realign it into a pattern that matches his will. To do this he must see the world afresh and challenge the shared understanding of how others think it should be. The cost? An assault on his sanity. These wizards can become unhinged, wild eyed and cast adrift in the choppy seas of understanding. Some strong Mind Traits should be developed by the character to manage the strains on his sanity.

Look again at what the Power gives the character and then challenge them accordingly. Most power wielding characters will have flaws, doubts and weaknesses that can, at just the wrong moment in time, bring them crashing back to our own shared reality.

Example Powers

Three example types of Power are outlined below: Magic, The Gods, and Psionics. Each Power is provided a list of example Traits from which you can build your own Power.

Magic

Mighty wizards, witches, warlocks, sorcerers, eldritch magi battling their own thirst for power and knowledge even as they unlock incredible forces which they wield to further their arcane ends.

Main Power Traits

Alchemist, Enchanter, Illusionist, Magic affinity, Mystic, Necromancer, Pinball wizard, Mage, Numerologist, Seer, Shaman, Sorcerer, Spell caster, Technomancer, Voodoo, Warlock, Witch, Wizard

Summoning

A common type of magic user in the Epic Fantasy genre is the sorcerer who can summon beings

from another realm and unleash them according to his will into his own world. These could be elemental powers, spirits from the underworld, monsters from under the bed, or vile demons from dark planes of terror. The power of the creature summoned is equal to the number of successes achieved. Summoned creatures may be set minimum numbers of successes required to bring them into the world.

The Power effect would be described like this: Summon [type of being]

Once summoned the character will be able to charge the being with a task that they must perform. The being will stay for up to one day, though this may be extended by further days on repeating a successful Payback Challenge.

The being can be described by the player, generating a number of Traits at two dice lower than the summoned creature's main Trait. Most Challenges will be met by the summoned creature's main Trait and supported by the other described Traits. In negotiation with the Navigator a summoned creature can also have useful 'equipment' such as wings, fangs, scaly skin, googly eyes and anything else that will create fun and mayhem in play.

example

A sorcerer has 'Summon Deklah Fighting Demon' (seven minimum successes). Eight successes are achieved on the summoning. The sorcerer describes the demon as follows:

Deklah fighting demons are cruel and cunning fighters who fearlessly run towards their prey on huge spiny legs. Two arm like appendages end in vicious bone spines that the Deklah use to thresh their prey to death before consuming the internal organs with their multi tiered rows of sharp yellow teeth. Their scaly black bodies slowly ooze a murky green evil smelling puss.

Deklah Fighting Demon 8d
Cruel, Cunning, Evil pus, Fearless, Huge spiny legs, Multi tiered rows of sharp yellow teeth, Ooze slime, Run, Scaly black body, Thresh to death, Vicious bone spines (all at 6d)

Enchanting

Enchanting is a Main Power Trait that enables the user to create special items of power that sustain magical effects within them, allowing them to be used by other non magical characters.

- Enchanting acts as a cap to the maximum number of dice that can be used by the other power Trait that is being used to be added to the item.
- The Power Effect Trait is used as the Foundation Trait, with Enchanting used as a supporting Trait.
- If the magical effect is limited to a number of uses per day (half the Enchanting Trait, rounded down) then every week spent enchanting permits the item to have 1d of magic power.
- If the magical effect is unlimited in the number of uses per day then every two weeks of enchanting permits the item to have 1d of magic power
- Once the enchanter has decided to finish the item, he rolls to see how many successes he gains. If the number of successes is equal or greater than the cumulative number of dice required by the item then the enchanting is a success. If it is less than the item requires then

the enchanting fails and the components are ruined.

example

An enchanter (6d) has 'Weave blade of cutting' at 6d. He decides to create a minor magical blade which permanently has the 'Weave blade of cutting' effect. The maximum effect that he can add is 6d, determined by his enchanting Trait. He decides to go for the full 6d effect. This will take twelve weeks of preparation, double the usual as he wishes this to be a permanent effect.

At the end of twelve weeks he rolls his 6d enchanting with 6d supporting Trait Weave blade of cutting, and Metalworking 5d, with 'created within wizard's tower' as a further favourable circumstance bonus of 1d. This gives him a total of 9d. He gets six successes, which is just enough to create the effect The player should explain what the magical effect actually is. The description makes it sound like the blade can agilely weave a pattern as it slashes into the enemy. Mechanically, the effect provides +2 dice to the sword wielder.

Power Effects

Power Effects are often described as 'Spells' in the Epic Fantasy genre and by other games that include the use of magic. In the examples below no attempt is made to slavishly describe the power's effect. Most are either self explanatory, or can be negotiated flexibly and creatively in play. Also, no minimum success levels have been stated. Some effects will have no minimum or maximum and simply scale in power according to the number of successes achieved by the power user. Other more impressive sounding Traits may need minimum success levels before coming into play. Use the Power Table as a guide.

Power Effect Traits are gained and improved just like any other Trait.

Cantrips

Cantrips is a useful catch all Trait for minor magic that has limited game effect but provides useful small scale effects that sets the magic using character apart without using greater powers. Cantrips could be used for the following effects: moving small items, creating candlelight, removing dirt or polishing an item, gently touching someone etc. Cantrips would usually come into effect with two successes.

Example Effects

Below are a series of example magical Power Effect Traits or 'spells'. They are grouped under headings, though these are provided only for convenience and have no particular significance when creating characters with magical abilities.

Particular magical Traits may specialise in groups of magical effects, others may be able to pick effects from a wide range. A Main Power Trait of Illusionist for example will specialise in the Illusion spells category, but may be able to take some from others. If you're looking to create a necromancer then examples are given above, specialising in death and animation Effects. A 'wizard' Main Power Trait may be able to pick effects quite broadly.

Healing Spells

Cure disease, Cure wounds, Energise, Heal the mind, Heal the soul, Purify and cleanse, Rest in peace

Destructive Spells
Blast of power, Fireball, I've got a banger, Kaboom, Lightening bolt, Mystic Missile, Pull the innards out, Rocket, Swirling cloud of biting, That's gotta hurt, Tremor

Elemental Spells
Breathe underwater, Create water, Keep warm, Laugh at the fire breathing dragon, Part the sea, Solid air, Stop the river, Summon air elemental, Summon earth elemental, Summon fire elemental, Summon water elemental, Swirling tornado, Turn to ice, Walk on water, Walk through fire

Natural Spells
Calm the wild beast, Entangling undergrowth, Grow, Hear the forest, Healing plants, Make fertile, Plentiful yield, Speak to animals, Summon nature spirits, Talk to the trees, Travel to faerie,

Illusion Spells
Aroma, Change appearance, Create visual illusion, False sound, Hide away from view, Illusion with substance, It's disappeared!, Mirage, Phantasms, Trick of the light, Where did that come from?

Scrying Spells
Peeping Tom, See beyond, See the history of a place, Sense enemies, The truth of it, Trace through the ether, View from afar, Whispers in the wind,

Movement Spells
Blink, Enormous leap, Fly like a bird in the sky, Move between planes, Pass through walls, Slow right down, Run like the clappers

Other Spells
Eldritch shield, Glue, Glowing light, Sense magic, Seal portal, Sealed with a loving kiss, Sharpen swords

Character Traits

Here are a range of example useful character Traits for a magical character to have as supporting Traits when creating power effects. They are a mix of Body, Mind and Soul.

Ancient lore, Assured, Astrology, Astronomy, Booming laugh, Commanding voice, Focussed, History of magic, Hold sanity together, Innocent of power, Legerdemain, Look beyond the obvious, Maintain perspective, Memorise, Observant, Patient, Potions and blending, Read lips, Read magic, Read runes, See numbers, Studious, Incorruptible, Unflappable,

Favourable circumstances

When everything is lined up for the magical character, when all preparation and other factors are ready, the process of creating a magical effect is always much smoother. Rest assured that players will wish to have as many favourable circumstances as possible to help make their effects more powerful and safer to create. Each favourable circumstance provides one die into the hand. Usually up to four can be given for any one effect.

These circumstances can be created in the game by imaginative players. However, sometimes a

particular circumstance is an absolute requirement for the magical effect to happen at all. This could be a rare alignment of stars and planets, a sacrifice of a human victim, the first born of the king coming of age, Tangerine Dream music, anything that fits well into the story and makes sense of the magic being created. These necessary circumstances can form central drivers to the narrative that you are creating. They might set the players an in game time limit to achieve certain tasks, drive them to save and protect particular characters, or force them to listen to German techno music.

Unfavourable circumstances

Unfavourable circumstances increase the difficulty, the minimum number of successes required, for the magical effect to come into play. Missing physical components? Trying to create a fiery effect while standing in a waterfall? It's not going to help.

Use these with care. Increasing the minimum required successes is tough on the magic using character.

The Gods

Your game setting may be overseen by meddling deities that either seek dominion in the world or to protect it from unruly higher powers. Their agents in the world revere them and carry their power in a physical and tangible form, creating new converts and spreading the message of the god.

The underlying principles of 'The Gods' are identical to 'Magic' above, though the underlying reasons for the existence of these powers is very different. When supernatural effects from 'The Gods' are used by characters it is based on powers provided by the deity itself. The form of this power will be dependant on the nature and character of the deity. Worshippers of the deity will be encouraged to follow particular goals and use significant Traits. Some of the most gifted, chosen by the deity will also become receptacles for their divine power.

Main Power Traits

Acolyte, Blessed, Chosen one, Devotee, Favoured of the gods, Hermit, Messiah, Minister, Monk, Nun, Initiate, Preacher, Priestess, Prophet,

Deities and Power

Some example deities are listed below. The template can be used for ideas when creating characters who have powers from a deity. Each deity in a Navigator created world should have one of these templates completed for PCs and NCs that derive power from them.

Marden, God of War
Born in battle, constantly planning and executing crusades and wars in recognition that all life and creation is born of strife and conflict. Priests of Marden are greatly feared as death and destruction inevitably follow them. They are called upon by kings to lead their armies and protect them from the ravages of merciless neighbours.

Domains: Battle, Destruction, Victory against the odds, War

Expected Goals:
To fight the last battle with honour and die bravely
To prepare the army for the next and final campaign
To honour the memory of fallen ancestors and follow in their footsteps...

Typical Traits: Battle strategy, Berserker, Bloodthirsty, Brave, Carouse wildly, Come alive in battle, Commanding presence, Endurance, Forage, Formation fighting, Laugh at death, Lead the charge, Look for a fight, Make camp, Mounted combat, Pitiless, Refuse to feel pain, Relentless, Siegecraft, Strong, Tactics, Unflinching, Weapon abilities

Typical Power Effects: Armour of Marden, Bless weapon, Doubt and despair, Fearless in battle, Heal wound, Over the wall, Power charge, Rally with power, Red mist of destruction, Scything arc of doom, Smite, Steady the line, Target

Favourable Circumstances: A battlefield, A companion slain by your enemy, Outnumbered, The sun behind you,

Payback Challenge: Marden drains the body of every last moment of killing potential. The worshipper is left worn and fatigued when using his powers. Body Traits must be used to withstand fatigue Payback effects. On occasion the soul is drawn into a dark place after so much killing and the Navigator may call for a Soul based Payback Challenge to resist Damage Traits of mournful regret, despair and wracking guilt.

Eryelme – Mistress of the Forest
The quiet mistress who once ruled all the world but now watches warily from her shrinking dark canopy of trees. The Watchers of Eryelme are protectors of the forest and all living things. They seek ways that men and other beings can live in harmony with the land, rather than destroying it.

Domains: Forest, Observation, Protection, Stillness

Expected Goals:
To protect the forest and preserve all that is living within
To extend the power of the forest into the lands of men

Typical Traits: Archery, Beast lore, Bird song, Blend into the background, Climb, Faerie lore, Forest lore, Herbal lore, Patient, Stave fighting, Take the long view, Tend plants,

Typical Power Effects: (see Nature Spells above) Enrich the land, Entangling undergrowth, Heal tree, Quench fire, Rapid growth, Silence of the forest, Summon tree sentinel, Travel to faerie, Whisper to the forest

Favourable Circumstances:
An ancient circle of stones, A summer's breeze, In the depths of the forest, In a glade, Ley line node of old power,

Payback Challenge: It is said the Watchers of the forest eventually become a tree themselves.

These channels of Eryelme must resist becoming one with the forest and forgetting who they are, if they are to continue to serve in their present form. This requires a Soul Payback Challenge with damage reflecting a need to 'listen to the wind', feel the earth on your feet, and fail to see the relevance of human discourse.

Rorthal - God of Kings and Storms
The great Lord of the Middle Kingdom, the old god who, restless with energy, brings life and power into the halls of the Northern people. A god of kings and poets and restless heroes.

Domains: Command, Energy, Storm,

Expected Goals:
To seek freedom against the bounds of the world
To rule the earth and the air by energetic force of will and arms
To recount the great deeds of the ancestors to inspire the people for the dangers to come

Typical Traits: Battle strategy, Bloodthirsty, Brave, Energetic, Storytelling, Strong, Tactics, Tireless

Typical Power Effects: Breath of life, Call clouds, Command people, Create storm, Knock down, Fly like the wind, Gust of wind, Pocket of air, Story effects, Summon storm elemental,

Favourable Circumstances:
A windy day, In one of the ancient storm temples, Up a mountain,

Payback Challenge: Storm priests must battle against the ravages of Fatigue when channelling the raw power of mighty Rorthal. Body Traits are used in Payback Challenges, with failure inflicting fatigue damage.

Omnibyte – Essence of the net
In the depths of what we know as the Internet, an intelligence has evolved that resides between the points of presence, behind the firewalls and through all the routers into any server or connected device. It is more than the collected understanding of mankind, and it has a plan...

Hackers of the Omnibyte connect to it through wireless Internet connections and complex access programs.

Domains: Data fortresses, Knowledge of all things, Next Generation, Wired and wireless networks,

Expected Goals:
To keep all code open
To resist all human constructed proprietary code bases
To ready the masses for the next main release upgrade

Typical Traits: Coding, Computer hardware knowledge, Current affairs, Geek, Graphical user interface design, Kernel hacking, Networking, Perl, System testing, Trivia, Webmonkey

Typical Power Effects: Control expert systems, Direct interface into the mind, Down systems, Penetrate security, Project avatar

Favourable Circumstances: Cool running PC, Fast networks, Linux operating system, Warm fingers

Payback Challenge: Continued reverence of Omnibyte chains the devotee to the network, sucking them away from the alternative real world into a digital perfection. Other than increasing terminal geekiness, hackers must maintain a connection with the real world through Mind Payback Challenges or they will permanently lose themselves in the virtual world.

Psionics

Psionics forms a part of the next stage of mental evolution. Latent mind power unleashed, by next generation minds, mutants, or other worldly beings. Powers that originate from the development of the sentient mind beyond anything we can comprehend today. Often this form of special power can be found in science fiction settings. In practical game terms psionics will operate identically to magic with Payback Challenges against fatigue and madness required as the mind becomes unhinged as it seeks to control the flow of power coursing through it.

Main Power Traits

Adept, Psion, Psyker, Telepath, Telekinetic, Teleportation, Clairvoyance, Mind and Body

Telepathy

Telepathy is the discipline which enables the adept to sense and enter into other sentient minds. It is, perhaps, the most feared of disciplines as the very inner workings of the unprotected consciousness can be laid bare by the skilled telepath.

Powers effects
Controlled hallucinations, Command mind, Emotion sense, Influence mind, Interstellar communication, Locate mind, Mind attack, Mind shield, Mind targeting, Sense life, Telepathy

Telekenesis

Telekenesis, a Main Power Trait, is the discipline which enables the adept to manipulate and move matter with the power of the mind. It really is mind over matter! In addition the more skilled adept is able to modify matter at a nuclear level, creating immense power that can energise power cells and large reactors.

Powers effects
Body armour, Battle shield, Create warp point, Energy manipulation, Matter weakness, Mind over gravity, Mind shield, Move matter, Power up, Sense matter, Unravel matter

Teleportation

Teleportation, a Main Power Trait, allows the adept to move to another point in Space and Time

instantaneously. The minimum number of successes will be based on factors such as the adepts knowledge of the place that he is teleporting to, the amount of matter being moved, and any atmospheric or other circumstances that might intervene with the process of teleporting.

Powers effects
Blink, Mind shield, Stay out of phase, Teleport

Clairvoyance

With this Main Power Trait the adept is able to peer into and through the many dimensions of the universe, to understand the history of a place, to see into the future, and see and experience objects in remote places.

Powers effects
Item history, Mind shield, Perceptive resonance, Precognition, Remote viewing, See into the distance, See the truth, Vision,

Mind and Body

The adept can use the power of the mind to focus in on his own material body and alter and augment it. This Main Power Trait has the following example Power Effect Traits.

Powers effects
Armour of the mind, Become gaseous, Enhance senses, Flow as liquid, Indomitable will, Intelligent design, Mind shield, Regenerate, Self heal, Sinuous power, Toughen,

Circumstances

As with magic, the potential for psionics creates a wide range of questions for the game setting. These questions need to e thought through by the Navigator who must provide the context for their use in the game.

Here are some example questions:

- Are psionics only available to certain sentient races?
- Do particular materials enhance or subdue psionic activity?
- Can psionic potential be stored in material objects?
- Does hyperspace, or other alternate dimensions, influence the power and possibilities of psionics?
- Are there any societal constraints placed on the use of psionics? Do Psions form an elite that rule the normals? Do non-psions fear and persecute psionic sentients?
- Can psionics be taught and developed through learning and education or are they inherent to certain individuals that need nurturing?
- How are Psions used by governments and by their military and security forces in particular?

Powers – a summary

The Powers chapter covers a range of character Traits that are especially out of the ordinary and probably unusual depending on the nature of the Theme being played. Examples provided include: magic; divine provided powers, and psionic mind powers.

- Some Themes will not use Powers at all.
- Powers are on the Magical / Mystical / Supernatural scale. This means that Mundane Traits that are used to resist them need to score fives and sixes to get any successes.
- Powers that are resisted by defending Powers are not affected by Scale rules.
- Powers are described using Traits, as is standard throughout Wordplay.
- A Power often has a 'Main Power Trait' that fundamentally describes the Power.
- The Main Power Trait can have subservient Power Effect Traits, that describe aspects of the power. The Power Effect Traits have their own dice but these are capped by the Main Power Trait.
- Powers require a minimum number of successes to be effective. The minimum number required depends on the complexity of the effect desired.
- Favourable circumstances, special equipment, and Mundane Traits can all help create successes when using a power in the usual way.
- After rolling the dice the player can decide how many successes they wish to keep. This is called 'containing the power'.
- The Powers Table has a range of types of complexity and suggested minimum number of successes.
- Powers cost a character to use them. The cost varies with the power and is made real in the game by a Payback Challenge. These Challenges can happen every time the power is used or when the minimum number of successes achieved is greater than the Main Power Trait value.

Equipment

Wordplay focusses on the individual character, their goals, loves, capacities, capabilities and peculiarities, rather than the technology, tools, and other external equipment that may assist them in getting the job done. Nevertheless, equipment used in Challenges provides an ideal opportunity to get more dice thrown across the table. This section covers the sort of equipment that characters will wear, or pick up and use to face Challenges. In general equipment worn, carried and wielded by characters serves to provide a number of extra dice to help in Challenges.

In addition vehicles are also examined. Plenty of genres will use ground vehicles, aircraft, and space ships. This section will advise on how to represent vehicles in the game.

Setting bonus levels

The simplest way to factor in the effect of characters using equipment is to simply assign it a bonus die value. This represents the number of dice it contributes to the players dice roll in Challenges that make use of the equipment. The bonus will depend on the quality of the item and the degree of emphasis that the Navigator wants to place on equipment in any particular Challenge.

Typical bonuses for different quality of equipment are suggested below.

Equipment Quality	Example Equipment	Bonus
Seen better days, obsolete, unfashionable	A rusty sword and battered armour, a gamers t-shirt that's seen too many conventions (actually this might provide an increase in difficulty if it is a seduction Challenge)	+0d
Poor quality, mass produced, work a day, functional, cheap	Orc arms and armour, cheap dress from the high street, Microsoft Windows OS	+1d
Average quality and effectiveness.	Well made weapons and armour	+2d
High quality, beautifully crafted and very effective	Mac OS, Dwarven crafted arms and armour	+3d
Rare and superb quality, state of the art, with this sword you will be invincible, expensive	Linux OS, this game,	+4d

So a character who goes into combat wearing chainmail and a standard sword and shield would get +2d for equipment. Similarly a standard firearm is likely to grant a +2d bonus in ranged combat Challenges. A character who goes into an interview with a cheap suit and slightly worn shirt might muster a +1d for the 'convince panel' Challenge.

example
A pistol in a science fiction game would simply be described as follows:

11mm Manhunter Binary Propellant Pistol   +2d

Equipment Traits

Optionally a Navigator may wish to provide more emphasis to equipment in their setting. Any specialist item of equipment can also have Traits assigned to it for use in the game. These Traits will have ratings from one to twelve and provide helping dice in just the same way as friendly characters can help in Challenges. How much these Traits are detailed and emphasised in play depends on how much the Navigator and group wish equipment to influence the outcome of any Challenge. Equipment may also be given a Size or Speed scale (see Scale).

The Navigator can decide if one or two of the listed equipment Traits can be used to provide a bonus to the equipment user. The usual formula is used to calculate the bonus:

- between 1 and 2 provides no help
- between 3 and 5 provides +1d to the equipment user
- between 6 and 8 provides +2d to the equipment user
- between 9 and 11 provides +3d to the equipment user
- at 12 it provides +4d to the equipment user

example

Let's look at that pistol again:

11mm Manhunter Binary Propellant Pistol
Clean action 5d
High penetration 6d
Rugged 7d
Semi-auto burst 3d

When shooting the gun, a player is likely to use the 'High Penetration' (+2d) and Semi-auto burst (+1d) Traits, providing a total +3d bonus (assuming two Traits allowed).

If equipment Traits are used then the bonuses will tend to be higher and the effect more noticeable in a Challenge. Traits can be taken from real life descriptions of items.

- Obsolete and ineffective items will have Traits that go up to 2d (+0d bonus)
- Poor quality items will have Traits that go up to 5d (+1d bonus)
- Average equipment will have Traits that go up to 8d (+2d bonus)
- Excellent items will have Traits that go up to 11d (+3d bonus)
- The absolute best item will have a Trait at 12d (+4d bonus)

Vehicles

In many themes vehicles can take centre stage of the action, exhibit personality quirks, and dramatically affecting the outcome of a story. However, at heart, it is the decisions made by the players that ultimately dictate the direction of the story. Vehicles will generally act in a supporting role as backdrop and scenery providing Trait bonuses to player characters' Foundation Traits in Challenges.

This short section provides guidance on how to create entertaining vehicles to offer setting scenery, chases, dogfights and last ditch escapes.

Scale

Vehicles are rated with both a Size and Speed Scale (p###).

Traits

Vehicles can be described very simply using one main Trait that provides something to use in Challenges.

example
People carrier 5d (Size Scale 3, Speed Scale 4))

This single Trait can be built upon and expanded out to include a whole range of useful aspects that can find expression in play. In this sense they start to take on a personality of their own and become characters in their own right.

Vehicles can either have a simple list of Traits to play with or can be structured along similar lines to characters. For a more structured approach vehicles would have Traits in the following categories:

- Structure
- Electronics
- Movement

Trait numbers follow the same rules as other equipment described above. Decide what the quality and effectiveness of the vehicle is and where it is placed on the standard 1-12d spectrum.

Larger vehicles, such as articulated lorries, main battle tanks and spacecraft, will also have equipment that should be listed and factored into Challenges.

Structure

Traits that describe the vehicles physical form, robustness, armour, state of repair, comfort, general condition go in here.

Electronics

Traits that describe the vehicle's sensors, navigation and computer systems go in here.

Movement

Traits that describe the vehicle's speed, engines, agility and manoeuvrability are all entered in this category.

Example Vehicles

Modern Saloon Car

Size Scale: 2 Vehicle (5 seater family saloon)
Speed Scale: 3 Wheeled vehicle

Structure: Generous electric heated wing mirrors 6d, Light body panelling and plastic 4d, Metallic paint 5d, Pointless grilles 4d Spongy seats 3d
Electronics: Air conditioning 5d, Engine computer system 4d, Road lights 5d, Satellite navigation system 6d
Movement: Energetic engine 4d, Turbo 5d, Good road tyres 5d

Sherman Tank

Size Scale: 2 Vehicle (World War 2 era medium tank)
Speed Scale: 2 Slow Vehicle (tracked)

Structure: Heavy armour 4d, Bulletproof 7d, Tommycooker 6d, Rugged 4d
Electronics: Radio 5d
Movement: Dodgy transmission 5d, Smash through terrain 4d, Stabilisation 3d, Tracked drive 4d,
Armament: 75 mm gun (Scale 2) +3d, Gun sights 3d, Wet ammunition stowage 6d, .50 Cal Browning Machine gun (Scale 1) +3d

L.A. Police Patrol Grav Car

Size Scale: 2 Vehicle (4 seater grav car)
Speed Scale: 4 Flyer (gravitic drive)

Structure: Reinforced body panelling 4d, Sleek angular lines 6d, Tough frame 4d
Electronics: Computer system 6d, Flashing lights 5d, Irritating siren 5d, L.A. navigation system 7d, Searchlight 3d
Movement: Gravitic flight 3d, Steady climb 4d, Turbo thrusters 5d

Equipment costs

Equipment is given a cost rating along similar lines to Wealth. The cost is a guide to the expense to acquire the item outright. This can be modified to to local circumstances and common sense.

An example list of costs are provided below.

Cost level	Typical items

1d	Inadequate bare meal, basic clothes
2d	No frills basic food, cheap clothes, basic accommodation, basic weapons, old vehicle, old horse
3d	Variety of foods, reasonable clothes, standard accommodation, reasonable vehicle, well made weapons and armour, horse
4d	Good food, good quality clothes, spacious accommodation, new vehicle, a range of quality and state of the art weapons, war horse
5d	Rich delicacies, high fashion, large dwelling, high performance vehicle,
6d	Helicopter, small starship, castle (along with curtains), jewellery and precious items
7d	Personal jet, starship, rare artefacts and treasures, a mercenary band
8d	Huge tracts of land, an army
9d	
10d	Kingdom, planetary system
11d	
12d	An armada of warships, huge palaces, enormous harem in every palace

Acquiring Equipment

Resources that characters need or desire are acquired either through a No Roll or a One Roll Challenge, with a difficulty set by the Navigator depending on the resources value, rarity, market, and any other circumstances.

Characters use their Wealth level as the Foundation Trait for these Challenges. Equipment rated equal or less than the characters wealth can generally be gained as a No Roll Challenge. The player character just gets the stuff. Frequent acquisitions of items that are either at, or one die less than, the character's wealth will result in the player character losing a wealth level at the Navigator's behest.

If a character wants an item that is more costly than their wealth level then a One Roll Challenge is required.

The One Roll Challenge works like any other with the character's Wealth acting as the Foundation Trait. This can be supported by appropriate Traits such as haggling, trader and other Traits that the player can persuade the Navigator could help. Player characters can help in the usual way either by using one of their Traits in an imaginative way to create helping dice or by lending some money. The Navigator can also create increases to difficulty in gaining the item through rarity and other factors.

If a friendly player lends some money (by using their wealth Trait as a support to the player character) then optionally this can create a number of dice of debt up to the number of successes the supporting player achieved. The process of paying back this debt needs to be narrated and may involve the player losing wealth dice on a one to one basis to immediately clear it, or paying back over an agreed period of in game time. If your instincts are to work out compound interest rates you are probably playing the wrong game.

Equipment – a summary

Equipment isn't the main focus of Wordplay; it's about the player characters and their stories. However, equipment can play a part in helping a character win Challenges. Equipment can have stories and histories of its own that become entwined in the central story being played out at the game table.

- Equipment provides a bonus depending on quality, providing typically between 1 to 4 dice.
- Games that accentuate hardware might offer higher bonuses.
- Equipment can be rated simply as a bonus or given Traits as with characters.
- Equipment can offer two Traits as support to a character using the standard helping dice rule
- Vehicles are rated either as bonus dice or with Traits
- Equipment is rated with a Cost level in a similar way to Wealth.

Navigating

This section is for Navigators, but all players are equally welcome. It provides ideas on some of the things you will want to think about when you run a game using Wordplay. How do I create a setting and story for the game? How do I make the game enjoyable? How do I make best use of Wordplay to enliven our game session? This chapter will provide some pointers. When it comes to pen and paper roleplaying games nobody has all the answers, but there are a few places where you can get some excellent advice. At the end of the chapter a few of these will be highlighted for further investigation.

[SIDEBAR]
If you're new to the hobby then there's nothing to compare to finding a group and playing a roleplaying game. You'll find many different games and styles of expressing and playing them. In addition to local groups that can be found via the Internet and local game stores there are game conventions for fellow enthusiasts, which provide opportunity to taste different games and how to run them. Accepting that the quality of convention games will be variable and that the format of such games are typically self contained to about four hours in length, you'll still get good insights into what the hobby is about.[/SIDEBAR]

Creating Worlds

In some stories the Divine took but six days to create the world that we find ourselves in. You may further reflect that in other stories our world took millions of years to develop. As such, you can be forgiven for worrying that it might take you a bit longer to create your own game world. However you choose to look at it, the shrubberies alone could take you years to get just right.

Panic not. Designing a setting is a creative and enjoyable experience that can take as little or as long as you want it to. Also, remember that you're not alone. You have the errant and diverse imagination of your group of players (if you have them yet). They will have something to say about the world that their characters are from and in which they will adventure. Ask them what they would like to see and who they would like to meet.

Others have already blazed trails and born new places for you to set your games in. Some are even found in this book. The Themes chapter provides you with a taster for a setting, prepared with Wordplay in mind. Perhaps you'd like to start with an epic fantasy world of lost empires, dragons, evil overlords and quests against impossible odds? The Epic Fantasy theme provided will give you a good grounding to get you started and playing.

Wordplay is flexible and easy to adapt to other published settings. There are a lot of them out there, available at your local friendly game shop or online. Do you have a favourite novel, graphic novel, film or computer game? Might that form the basis of your backdrop? This game is based on the premise that you take words and phrases, assign them a value and then use them directly in play. Use the words of the author and draw out the colourful descriptions and use them as Traits to populate People, Places and Profession templates. Before you know it you'll have a setting that is breathing with the creative energy of the original author's own words that can be applied directly

into the game. By using the author's own words you will provide a direct link to the source material while imbuing your game with flavour and powerful descriptions.

Or, to put it another way, Wordplay can easily take the words of the original source material, and give you a new gaming environment in which to play. There is no need for any tortuous rule conversions. Pull out and capture the flavoursome text, apply as Traits, and start the game!

Don't worry about the shrubberies, unless your game is focussing on the shrubber profession, in which case you'll need to really go to town on all things shrub related.

If you decide to create your own setting, either a researched historical, contemporary or fantastical, then you have beginning to end creative control. A Navigator may wish to create this setting collaboratively with her players. Create cultures, peoples, places, and situations that will impact play. Start small and build from there. Designing a whole people that never have any impact on play is time better spent on the situations that the players will actively encounter and effect game sessions. The Theme structure provided with the core Wordplay game gives a good start point on the level of detail required. As everything and anything in your setting can have Traits, then it is up to you as to how far you detail Trait values for use in play.

A Good Play Session

One of the key roles of the Navigator is to facilitate an entertaining and enjoyable game session for all the participants. Everyone involved shares the responsibility of ensuring that the session is enjoyable. It helps to have consensus around the table as to what sort of game that you all want to play. Wordplay works best collaboratively. 'Goals' and the 'helping' rules when building a hand of dice set the game's stall out. Players should work together, realise common goals, help each other achieve their individual goals, meet Challenges, develop and successfully resolve stories.

If you are running a number of game sessions ensure that you ask the players to describe what they would like to see happen in the game. Some of this is covered in their character's goals, but they will want to have certain situations crop up for them to add new goals to their characters.

Conflict will sit at the heart of most game sessions. Not only life and death struggles against nefarious enemies but also affairs of the heart, tensions between player character upbringing and realities of the current game situation, divided loyalties and even conflict between player characters. Use the conflict to drive forward the action in the story as it will draw out energy, purpose and direction with new player character goals created as a consequence.

Using Wordplay

Use the Wordplay game when there is a Challenge, when the story reaches a point where a decision or test of ability is required. The game has been designed to provide a fun resolution system for Challenges using Traits to build hands of dice which are then rolled against each other. The game is there to provide an arbiter to situations using player characters' Traits. It provides a moment of tension as the impressive heaps of dice are clattered onto the table and successes are counted and compared. Wordplay isn't needed for very much more in your game session.

How often you call on the game during your session is entirely a matter of taste and pacing. An enjoyable session could never draw out the dice, with play round the table moving along in a free

form manner, referencing the information on the character sheets with the odd No Roll Challenge when required. The group may instead wish to get the dice onto the table and enjoy the thrill of counting up those successes frequently throughout the evening. Use as much of the game as you need on any particular evening to make things fun.

Just as player character goals drive forward action, remember to create shared goals between player characters to provide a ready game reason for players to cooperate with each other. Shared goals bind player characters together in the shared narrative and provides tangible experience rewards when outcomes are achieved..

What you don't need to worry about

When acting as the Navigator in a game it is probably worth keeping at the back of your mind what Wordplay is not particularly interested in from a rules perspective. In Challenges, the core philosophy of the game is to allow everyone the opportunity to describe their actions as colourfully as possible, placing dice into their hand as they go. When everyone is ready large quantities of six sided dice are hurled onto the table and fevered counting of successes begins. That's really all you need to worry about.

Some other roleplaying games give you more detail and specific rules for handling situations, often combat related. They use things like hit points by body location, fatigue points, combat rounds with specific time durations, prescribed numbers of actions per round, movement rates per round, weight that can be lifted, precise amount of money owned, numbers of bullets fired by weapon type etc. Don't worry about all that stuff. Wordplay provides a framework to create stories without the need to use these more detailed factors and rules. The game can simulate more detail through the application of bonuses and penalties, providing more dice into the hand, but this is not altogether necessary. This chapter will provide some ideas on how to develop out situations using bonus dice. This is largely decorative as the core principles will suffice to create fun games.

Navigator Characters

It is unlikely that you will have either the time or inclination to populate your game world with characters at the same level of detail as those belonging to your players. Navigator characters can be noted by one simple word and Trait value. They can be rounded out from there to include many more Traits as you see fit. This process is illustrated below.

The Spear carrier

Many of your characters will serve highly limited purposes in the story. They may be there largely to make the players' characters look good, have one line of dialogue and then thrown into the story backdrop, or to provide some opposition to their nefarious schemes. These spear characters, mooks, red shirts, cannon fodder, can be described very quickly and simply indeed:

Tough Warriors 7d

That's about all you need to have in front of you!

The 7d value assumes a Foundation Trait of about 4d, some equipment, and a supporting Trait to make up the total. If a spear carrier outlives its usefulness, going 'off script' into new territory and is required to build its part in the story then there's no need to panic. Assume that everything else it needs to do, for which it has a reasonable chance of knowing something about, is rated at about two dice less than its value. In the example above the 'tough warrior' would be rated at 5d for other warrior related Challenges that used some equipment. If standard equipment is not helpful to the spear carrier and the Challenges fall outside their core knowledge area then drop the value by a further two dice or more. So our spear carrier might look something like this:

Tough Warriors 7d
Other Warrior Challenges 5d
Doing most other stuff 3d

You can keep this fairly flexible. Bonuses,Penalties and other Circumstances will affect the spear carriers dice pool. Use the guidance above and get to a reasonable dice pool for the extra in any Challenges that they face.

Providing More Detail

Your players are going to delight in using their Traits imaginatively. They will pick out their Foundation Trait and select up to two supporting Traits and make as much of their actions as possible. Why should you miss out on all the fun with your characters? Even the aforementioned spear carriers could have interesting Traits that they may want to bring out in play. In play testing Wordplay, the players enjoyed the Navigator revealing the Traits that were being used to build their opponent's pool of dice. To do this build out the base information on the tough warriors with some Traits to throw into the cauldron of a Challenge.

Let's look at those spear carriers again:

Tough Warriors
Body: Carefully practised spear fighting 4d, Parade ground toughness 3d, Surprising turn of speed 5d, Works out a lot 4d
Mind: City geography 3d, Look for a way out 4d, Take it in turns to have a go 4d
Soul: Instinct for survival 4d, Resolute 3d, Worried 4d

Equipment: Honest spear +1d, Padded trousers +0d

The Body, Mind and Soul Traits have not come from any of the templates in the Themes section, rather they have been put in 'free form' to delight and amuse the players as they battle their way through them. The dice levels have been set with an eye on the suggested pre-experience levels in character generation and to their effect in the game session. It doesn't take very long to do. If there are other Traits that the spear carrier needs in the game session then either create them on the fly or use the fact that the Trait is not known to the spear carrier and maybe give them a pool of a couple of dice.

Significant Characters

When populating your game world you will have a number of key characters that are pivotal to the

furtherance of the story and who will interact significantly with the player characters. Significant Navigator characters will simply have more information and a greater variety of Traits to call on in the game session.

Temar, Captain of the Tough Warriors

Temar has seen it all. As a captain of the city guard he has seen things you people wouldn't believe. He is aware of the Sarok conspiracy and has pieced together a number of facts that edges him close to the the truth. Believing his days to be numbered, he has decided to live life to the full, with a flamboyance that belies his lowly station.

Body: Hard as nails 5d, Strong 4d, Swordsmanship 5d, Tough 3d,
Mind: City geography 5d, Uncover the Sarok Conspiracy 4d, Vigilant 6d
Soul: Believe days to be numbered 4d, Flamboyant 5d, Live life to the full 6d, Rugged charm 4d, Seen it all 4d

Equipment: Sword and Chainmail armour +2d

In addition to the above, sprinkle in additional Traits from the City place and Warrior templates from the Epic Fantasy theme and you have yourself a ready to go Navigator character.

Creatures are characters too

Creatures mundane, magical and extra terrestrial are described just like Navigator characters above. Some large or fast moving creatures will also benefit from Scale advantages, just like vehicles.

So, you could simply have:

Dragon 10d
Claw, tooth and scale +3d
Size Scale 3
Speed Scale 2 (4 flying)

Or you could give the Dragon some Traits to work with...

Dragon

Size Scale 3
Speed Scale 2 (4 flying)

Body: Armoured scale hide 7d, Fearsome bite 8d, Flaming breath attack 9d, Huge claws 6d, Impossibly ponderous flight 5d, Lumber along 7d, Power dive 6d, Rending strike 7d, Swallow with a lick of the lips 6d, Toast to a crisp 7d
Mind: All seeing eye 7d, Count items in hoard 8d, Cruel intelligence 5d, Smell living food 6d
Soul: Avaricious 7d, Jealous 5d, Lust for gold and treasure 8d,

Note: The scaley hide and claws could alternatively be regarded either as helping Traits, or as 'equipment' that the dragon can use granting an automatic bonus of +3d in addition to other helping Traits.

Everything can have Traits

Game protagonists are described using Traits that can be applied directly into Challenges. There's no need to stop at the characters. We have already seen that equipment, vehicles and creatures can have Traits. This principle can in fact be applied to everything that is mentioned in the game. Anything that is described can be given Traits.

For example the setting you use will be full of descriptions. Ready yourself to use these descriptions in a very practical way to affect play:

example

"The alley has one flickering light which, with complicit shadows, creates and banishes malevolent spectral forms in eerie patterns."

The Navigator could pick out the following Traits and allocate values to them: Flickering light 4d, Complicit shadows 6d, malevolent spectral forms 7d.

Set the value of the Traits to a level that reflects how much you want them to influence play. Use the standard helping rules from 'Building your hand of dice' p###.

Is the alley harbouring some mysterious force? Well, that's up to you, but if you do decide that the player characters will face some malevolent power then you have some of the Traits ready to use. Places can be claustrophobic, gloomy, calming, oppressive, all of which could be used as Traits to undermine or encourage the characters who find themselves there. These Traits could be used as supportive Traits by either side in any Challenges that take place in the vicinity.

Give the players chance to use Traits that you attach to scenery. Perhaps the player wishes to use the 'Flickering light (4d)' to manoeuvre to a position of advantage before a desperate attack? If so, that Trait will give a +1d circumstance bonus.

Challenges

Bonuses and Penalties

When running a game of Wordplay you will often wish to give the characters a bonus in Challenges for good roleplaying, great descriptions of their action, or clever tactical thinking. You do this by allowing them to roll some extra dice, thereby improving their chance of victory. Overall this will be in the range of +1d to 4d depending on circumstance and your whim. It could even be more.

Similarly, when player characters are at a disadvantage, trying something challenging, in difficult circumstances, while affected by wounds and distractions, and don't have the minimum necessary equipment you will want to give them a penalty. You do this by increasing the difficulty through increasing the number of dice available to the opposition. This will typically be in the range of +1 to +4d, but may even be more. Dice are never removed from players, instead they are added to your Navigator characters or to the difficulty of the Challenge. More dice are good; it is a six sided dice paradise after all!

So, the thing to do is to nod sagely and sprinkle bonuses and penalties about without making an industry out of it. When it comes to combat Challenges take note of the 'Guidance for Thrilling Combat' section below.

Guidance for thrilling combat

Combat often forms one of the centre pieces to a roleplaying session. It is a point in the story that can spell life or death to a player character. This section provides some additional notes on how to handle combat, which are to be used as a supplement to the other guidance in the Challenge section.

Keep it Flowing

Keep the descriptions and interaction with the players moving quickly. Combat is quick and brutal and terrifying and the interchanges between you and the players need to provide an appropriate sense of urgency. One of the advantages of Wordplay is that there aren't a lot of rules to distract the exciting narrative flow.

Keep bonuses and penalties manageable during these Challenges. Less is definitely more. A quick flow of description and dice rolling is always better than fumbling around with the minutiae of multiple circumstantial modifiers. Given the seriousness of these Challenges for their characters, players will often want to leverage the best advantage before rolling the dice. As you get used to running the game you will be able to quickly apply a range of bonuses and penalties without slowing down the pace of the scene.

Guts for Glory

At any moment a combatant can lose the stomach for a fight. From time to time in a combat Challenge you can test to see if the characters have the will and determination to carry on. These side Challenges will tend to be targeted at Soul Foundation Traits, testing the characters resolve and capacity to keep in the fight. Pick out a difficulty depending on how relatively well the character is faring in the combat Challenge.

If the character does not win this 'resolve Challenge' then either they seek to leave the combat Challenge, seek to change it to a non combat one, or suffer a penalty equal to the 'damage' caused by the 'resolve Challenge' victory level due to losing heart and courage.

Missile and Thrown Weapons

Characters will use their missile weapon Traits, other supporting Traits, and some equipment to

generate their pool of dice in combat Challenges using some sort of ranged weapon or ability. This section provides some additional circumstantial effects that you can layer in to a combat Challenge. these are especially useful for players or games that demand some detail and fine tuning of dice pools to account for a range of factors.

Always remember the advice in this chapter on the inherent nature of Wordplay. It's really not a detailed skirmish wargame rule system and it just doesn't need to be. The circumstantial modifiers noted below gives you some options to provide a convincing detailed wash over combat scenes, giving them an apparent tactical edge that they neither require or really warrant.

Only throw in these circumstance bonuses and penalties if it will add to the tone of the game and if you can add them in quickly. The best part about these suggested modifiers is that they add more dice into the mix before they are thrown.

Range factors for missile weapons
Range is another circumstantial factor that can affect the chance of wining a range combat Challenge. Wordplay is not interested in being exact about measuring ranges. Instead four range categories are suggested, which can be used by the Navigator when describing a combat. 'Long' range will be very different for a throwing knife and a laser rifle, so the application of a range band for any particular Challenge will vary by weapon and the situation described. For example one person could be operating at the Close range category while their opponent is using a weapon which gives him an 'Extreme' range or even out of range completely.

Range	Description	Bonus or Penalty dice
Point Blank	Really very close indeed, you can see the whites of their eyes, smell their fear, barn door	2d Bonus
Close	Within the weapons effective range	No Bonus or Penalty
Long	Difficult	2d Bonus to difficulty
Extreme	Ambitious	4d Bonus to difficulty

Other Missile Factors

You can use a plethora of additional circumstantial modifiers; here are a few:

Target in light cover or mostly visible: 1d to difficulty
Target in medium cover or partially visible: 2d to difficulty
Target in heavy cover or hardly visible : 3d to difficulty
Target prone: 2d to difficulty
Use the perception circumstantial difficulties if conditions are murky or dark
Armour or a carefully placed shield may give an equipment bonus if the target is simply trying to evade the missile fire

Scale
You may elect to make larger or slower targets easier to hit by awarding bonus dice to the weapon user. Small and fast targets may also gain dice to evade the missile fire.

Being a Target
A target may elect to counter a missile weapon Challenge in a number of ways. They may choose to

try and get out of the way or return fire using their weapon ability Traits as Foundation Traits. Whichever response is taken the standard Wordplay Outcomes apply, with the winner being the one with the most successes or with the highest Foundation Trait on a tie. If the target of the missile fire is the winner and was electing to try and evade the missile then the outcome is that they are not hit.

Area Effect Weapons

For extra drama, Navigator and Player characters may be able to attack more than one opponent at once with their Traits and equipment. This might be through a magical ball of energy, or a high rate of fire missile weapon, or the practical application of such exciting Traits as 'Arcing blade of doom'.

Select how many opponents are affected by the attack within an 'area of effect' and apply the one attack roll to each of them. Some targets within the area of effect may benefit from cover, others may be able to dive out of the way, others may seek to neutralize the enemy before they are hit by the weapon.

Mass Combat and Huge Battles

The story your group are creating together may include big battles with hundreds or thousands of opponents on each side. There are a number of ways that you can manage this using Wordplay, each simply using the standard rules in slightly different ways.

1. Battle as grim scenery
If the players are not involved in the conflict in any close way then the battle can simply be narrated as part of the story by the Navigator. No dice rolls or rules required.

2. Armies as characters
If players are soldiers in one or both of the armies then the armies can be given Traits just like anything else in Wordplay.

example
The army of Escalon 7d
Knights of Tammeray 6d, Wiley skirmishers 5d, Fighting for the homeland 8d.

Player characters can each offer one helping Trait to reflect their role in the battle. Perhaps they are fighting in the ranks or preparing fortifications or spying the enemy's flanks. To even things up a bit the Navigator is able to add one die to the opposing army for each player character that contributes help to the army.

Each opposing army may further attract circumstantial bonuses as described by the players.

examples
Draw them in to their doom, Favourable terrain, Sun at our backs, Outnumber the enemy, Last ditch defence

The battle is a One-Roll Challenge between the two armies. Player characters will share the fate of their army. If the players are on the winning side then they will gain some spoils, an experience award, and an opportunity to move the story along in their favour. If the players are on the losing

side then check the Victory Level of the opposing army and the appropriate level of the Damage Traits that the players must take. The exact damage inflicted will depend on how the player characters participated in the battle and could be applied to any of Body, Mind or Soul.

3. Captains and commanders

If the player characters are in command of the armies then start with the general's selected battle command Trait. Two of the army Traits will provide help as per the standard rule. The opposing commander's Trait is use as the Foundation Trait for the enemy. Otherwise use the guidance above.

How Likely Am I To Succeed?

Your players may want to know what the average chance to succeed is against an opponent or a particular difficulty.

The table below gives the percentage chance of success against different numbers of dice. The table assumes that Scale is not a factor.

```
PROBABILITY (percentage) of more successes

    |   1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9    10    11    12    13    14    15
 ---+- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- ----- -----
  1 | 30.23 18.21 10.39  5.76  3.22  1.71  1.00  0.57  0.30  0.17  0.09  0.03  0.03  0.01  0.01
  2 | 53.77 36.73 24.52 15.88  9.99  6.17  3.65  2.24  1.32  0.78  0.44  0.29  0.15  0.09  0.07
  3 | 70.19 53.35 39.42 27.88 19.27 13.00  8.76  5.70  3.63  2.36  1.48  0.94  0.59  0.34  0.20
  4 | 81.33 66.93 53.13 40.73 30.01 22.01 15.61 10.88  7.49  5.06  3.32  2.26  1.46  0.92  0.63
  5 | 88.60 77.49 64.77 52.75 41.52 32.11 23.96 17.62 12.86  9.08  6.36  4.38  2.95  2.07  1.36
  6 | 93.17 84.69 74.84 63.80 52.46 42.49 33.33 25.82 19.32 14.40 10.57  7.58  5.38  3.69  2.66
  7 | 95.85 90.00 82.07 72.67 62.25 52.42 42.83 34.15 27.33 20.97 15.87 11.77  8.82  6.38  4.43
  8 | 97.64 93.53 87.47 79.70 70.81 61.36 52.01 43.37 35.43 28.32 22.34 17.07 13.04  9.92  7.34
  9 | 98.61 95.97 91.52 85.33 78.20 69.74 60.97 51.87 43.66 36.00 29.23 23.00 18.18 14.21 10.75
 10 | 99.18 97.46 94.38 89.66 83.70 76.67 68.54 60.57 52.01 44.00 36.51 30.00 24.26 19.36 14.91
 11 | 99.57 98.37 96.35 92.69 88.06 82.36 75.16 67.74 59.62 51.83 44.39 37.29 30.84 25.19 20.11
 12 | 99.74 99.01 97.52 95.10 91.45 86.77 80.91 74.12 66.63 59.49 51.78 44.94 37.64 31.63 26.10
 13 | 99.87 99.43 98.48 96.68 93.95 90.05 85.21 79.54 73.27 66.05 59.08 51.73 44.91 38.27 32.07
 14 | 99.92 99.64 99.01 97.82 95.80 93.01 88.89 84.22 78.73 72.18 65.45 58.34 51.69 45.04 38.48
 15 | 99.96 99.79 99.36 98.54 97.02 94.90 91.94 87.74 82.89 77.48 71.62 65.17 58.30 51.68 45.23
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Setting Victory Levels

Multi Roll Challenges use the Outcome Table to determine the Victory Level of that Round's opposed dice roll. The table can also be used in One Roll Challenges as a guide to the degree of success and how far the desired outcome is achieved. You are able to manage game outcomes further by altering the range of required successes to achieve a Victory Level. By increasing the necessary range of successes more extreme victory levels become less likely. By reducing the number of successes required more Challenges will end with complete victories.

This is called Victory Scale. Navigators can set this scale to whatever they want. Either a whole game can operate on one Victory Scale or a particular Challenge can be set with a different scale, or a scale can be given to a character or group temporarily or permanently.

The Standard Scale is reproduced below. Wordplay expects you to be using this Victory Scale

throughout, but there's nothing to stop you being inventive with Victory Scales.

Standard Scale

Victory level	Victory
1	Knife edge
2-3	Minor
4-5	Major
6	Emphatic
7+	Complete

For games that have less definitive outcomes to Challenges, where outright victory is usually more qualified, then the Considered Scale can be used.

Considered Scale

Victory level	Victory
1	Knife edge
2-4	Minor
5-7	Major
8	Emphatic
9+	Complete

For games where victory is swift and absolute, where dramatic effect is bought with a narrower range of successes, then the Dramatic Scale can be used.

Dramatic Scale

Victory level	Victory
1	Knife edge
2	Minor
3	Major
4	Emphatic
5+	Complete

Feel free to mix and match your own Victory Scales however, as with other Scales, the effect on the game will be marked and defining. Handle with care!

Rewarding Play

Optionally, a Navigator can reward players with additional experience points for good playing. This can be demonstrated through a player's entertaining portrayal of their character, or supportive play that allows other players to shine in the spotlight, or providing a signature moment of hilarity or wonder in the evening's play. Navigators may use these extra points to encourage a particular style of play, reward notable successes other than those found in Goals, or even for players who are struggling with the game.

Typically a few additional experience points would be awarded, enough to make it a significant thank you.

If the Navigator does decide to reward play in this way then care should be taken. Look for the best in all the play around the table and look to spread such awards around as equitably as possible in

order to prevent any resentment or possible accusation of player favouritism.

The Navigator can, alternatively, give five extra experience points at the end of the session for the players to allocate between themselves. The only rule here is that players can't give themselves the extra experience points, they need to be given by the other players.

Navigating – a summary

It's a lot of fun taking the role of Navigator in a Wordplay game. It can seem overwhelming at first but once you've dipped your toe into the creative waters of world and story creation you may find it addictive.

- Create worlds based on your own imagination or through the work of others.
- Work with your players to get consensus about the sort of game that you are going to play and use shared goals as a way of bringing characters together
- Wordplay doesn't require detailed rules. Bonus dice can be used to allow for any apparent complexity in a Challenge situation.
- Navigator characters, adversaries and creatures can all be described simply using one Trait and a die value.
- Add more Traits to these to give a more rounded view and useful Traits to use in a Challenge.
- Everything that is described in a game effectively has Traits. These can be given a dice value and used in your game to give circumstantial bonuses adding yet more dice into players or opponents hands.
- Wordplay is readily accepting of inspiration from literature, scripts and other games. Lift original text to create Traits for games using Wordplay. There is nothing better than describing a character or setting than by using the original author's words and applying them directly into the game.
- Challenges can be managed by flexibly by applying circumstantial bonuses. Apparently complex situations with many variable factors can be reduced down to one or two bonuses.
- For example, missile weapon use can be affected by range, cover and scale.
- Don't worry about detail. Sprinkle bonus dice about the table and play.
- Large and apparently complex situations such as huge battles can be expressed in the standard way using Wordplay: assign Traits, build opposing hands of dice, roll the dice, highest number of successes wins and check the outcome on the Outcome Table.
- Some players worry about their chance of victory before rolling the dice. A table of probabilities is provided to reassure or frighten them.
- Play with reality by setting alternative ranges of successes to get Victory Levels. Three Victory Scales are suggested.
- Reward good play around the table with experience points. Be inclusive and encouraging.. Find good examples of play, give the experience points and tell the player why you have given them.

Wordplay

	Pre-play
Name: Age: Gender: Exp: Traits: Concept:	

Goals   OOO

Focussed desires and outcomes that drives actions during play.

1. To
2. To
3. To

Doubts

Doubts due to failed invoked goals.

1.
2.
3.

Body	**Mind**	**Soul**
Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait	Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait	Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait Trait
Body Damage Current Damage:	**Mind Damage** Current Damage:	**Soul Damage** Current Damage:

Equipment & Wealth

Wealth:
Equipment:

Encumbrance:

A WordPlay Powered Game

Wordplay

Completed Goals	Lost Traits

Notes