

Hero Wars

Roleplaying in Glorantha

Game System Synopsis

This section contains all the essential rules to play *Hero Wars*.
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Abilities

An **ability** is any skill, magic, item or other feature that is written on the character sheet. The name is a word or phrase that indicates the kinds of actions the character can attempt with it. Each ability has a **target number**, which range from 1 to 20. The higher the number, the better the hero's ability. The target number is also called the **ability rating**.

Default Target Number

When a hero has no ability to use in a particular situation, not even a skill affected by an **improvisational modifier** (see below) the target number is 6 if it is a ability anyone could be expected to have (Climb, Jump), or 0 if the ability is exotic or requires special knowledge (Read Kralori Dragon Runes).

Mastery

Heroes attain **masteries** when an ability is greater than 20. A mastery in a skill is indicated by the Mastery Rune (⚡) following the target number. Thus, an ability of 21 is expressed as 1⚡; an ability of 30 is 10⚡. Multiple masteries are possible, and are indicated by a number following the mastery rune; thus 8⚡2 indicates a total skill equivalent of 48.

Canceling Masteries

When characters with unequal masteries oppose each other, eliminate the same number of masteries from each to find their actual chances. Thus, if a 5⚡2 character is fighting a 7⚡3 opponent, the test is resolved as an ability of 5 against one of 7⚡.

Special Case

When opponents have the same number of masteries, the masteries are cancelled. Both characters roll as if they had no masteries, with the following exception: when both fail, treat it as if they had both succeeded. The lower roll is considered to be the winner.

Die Rolls and Degree of Success

Results are found by rolling a twenty-sided die (d20). Generally, it is better to roll low than high. A roll

equal to or lower than the target number is a **success**, and a roll over the target number is a **failure**. A roll of 1 is a **critical success** unless the target number is 1, in which case it is a **success**. A roll of 20 is a **fumble** unless the target number is 20, in which case it is a failure.

Bumps

A **bump up** changes a die roll to a more favorable result: fumble becomes failure, etc. Critical successes cannot be bumped up. Multiple bumps can affect the die roll.

Modifiers

Modifiers are always applied to the ability rating, never to the die roll. A positive modifier is called a **bonus**. A negative modifier is called a **penalty**.

Common Modifiers

Improvisation	-1 to -20 (-3 default)
Multiple Defense	-3 per extra attacker
Multiple Attack	-3 per extra defender

Dropping below Mastery

Modifiers may drop abilities below mastery levels. Thus, a 2⚡ ability with a -5 modifier becomes a 17 ability.

Augmentation

Augmentation is a target number bonus from magic or mundane abilities. Augmentation success is determined by a simple contest. The feat is opposed by the desired bonus, according to this table:

Augmentation Resistance Chart

<i>Desired Bonus</i>	<i>Desired Edge</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
+1	+2	5
+2	+4	10
+3	+6	15
Each +1	Each +2	+5

Augmentation Results Chart

Complete/Major Victory	Target gains x2 bonus
Minor/Marginal Victory	Target gains bonus
Narrator Decides or Tie	No effect

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Marginal/Minor Defeat	Target gains penalty
Complete/Major Defeat	Target gains x2 penalty

Resistance

The default resistance is 14 if no higher resistance (such an ability) is applicable. Physical magic can be resisted by magic or appropriate physical abilities. Mental magic can be resisted by magic or appropriate mental abilities.

Action Points (APs)

Action Points are a measure of how well a character is accomplishing his goals in an extended contest. They are calculated based on the target number of the first ability used in the contest, even if a different ability is used in a later exchange. Often shortened to AP for convenience.

Total Starting APs

The total starting APs of a character are equal to his target number, plus 20 APs per mastery, plus modifiers.

Desperation Stake

A hero or pivotal narrator character may bid more APs than he currently has, up to his total starting APs.

Edges (Λ) and Handicaps (Λ-x)

An edge is a situational modifier, whether from magic or other abilities. An edge is a number added to the stake when your opponent must forfeit or transfer APs. A handicap is much like an edge, but is subtracted from the stake when your opponent must forfeit or transfer APs.

Trading Wounds for APs

The winner of an exchange may convert 7 APs worth of a transfer or forfeit into a wound. The loser keeps the 7 APs, but suffers a Hurt. You may not inflict multiple wounds from a single result.

Lending APs

You can transfer APs to another character on your side if you have an appropriate ability. Roll on the Simple Contest chart. The target number is equal to lender's ability; the resistance is the number of APs being loaned.

AP Loan Chart

Complete or Major Victory	Target gains APs
Minor or Marginal Victory	Target gains APs; Lender loses APs
Narrator Decides, Tie	No change
Marginal or Minor Defeat	Lender loses APs
Complete or Major Defeat	Both lose APs

Tests

Most activities are automatically successful. Walking, talking, climbing around, and other ordinary activities that are easily within the capability of the characters just happen when the player says they do. Any action that might fail needs a Contest.

Bumping with Masteries

Each un-cancelled mastery raises the Degree of Success of a roll by one level.

Bumping with Hero Points

A player may spend 1 hero point to bump the result of one of his rolls by one degree of success. Only 1 hero point may be spent on one roll, and the player may only bump his own roll, not another player's or opponent's.

Consequences

Once a contest has ended, the actor and opponent determine their victory level by comparing the loser's APs on one of the two Consequences Charts. If the contest did not involve Otherworld magic, the Ordinary Contest Consequences Chart is used. If the contest occurred in the Otherworld or involved Otherworld magic the Heroic Consequences Chart is used. The loser suffers the level of defeat indicated in the chart, the winner has the same level of victory.

Parting Shots

You may make one parting shot after your opponent has been reduced below 0 APs.

Final Action

If you fall to 0 AP or less in an extended contest you are defeated and may take no further action. If you fall below 0 AP in a group extended contest, you may be able to perform a final act. However, you must have a round free from attention by the opposition. Make a test of a relevant ability such as Tough or Ignore Pain, modified by any modifiers from the Combat Results Chart, below.

You may attempt one final action each time you fall to 0 AP or less. If the gains positive APs due to the final action, he may rejoin the contest.

Final Action Results Chart

Critical Success	Take action with no penalties from wounds.
Success	Take action with wound modifiers
Failure	No action possible
Fumble	Drop to next level of Combat Result.

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Types of Tests

Test Type	When to Use	How it Works
Automatic Success	For any task which no self-respecting hero would ever fail at.	Hero succeeds.
Ability Test	For a straight-forward task with no opposition.	Hero rolls equal to or under his ability score to succeed.
Simple Contest	For a straight-forward task with opposition.	Hero succeeds if he rolls under his ability score <i>and</i> better than his opponent.
Group Simple Contest	For a straight-forward task with opposition performed by a group of heroes.	One side succeeds if a modified success beats their opponents'.
Extended Contest	For a dramatically-important task with opposition.	Hero succeeds if he reduces his opponent's Action Points to zero or less.
Group Extended Contest	For a dramatically-important task with opposition, with multiple participants on at least one side of the contest.	One side succeeds if they reduce all opponents to zero Action Points or less.

Simple Contest Results Table

	Critical Success	Success	Failure	Fumble
Critical Success	Narrator determines results	Minor Victory	Major Victory	Complete Victory
Success	Minor Defeat	Low Roller has Marginal victory . Tie is no effect	<i>Minor</i> Victory	Major Victory
Failure	Major Defeat	Minor Defeat	Both suffer Marginal defeat; Mastery Special	Minor Victory
Fumble	Complete Defeat	Major Defeat	Minor Defeat	Both suffer Complete defeat

Extended and Group Extended Contest Results Chart

	Critical Success	Success	Failure	Fumble
Critical Success	Narrator determines results	Loser Transfers 1x	Loser Transfers 2x	Loser Transfers 3x
Success	Loser Transfers 1x	High Roll forfeits 1x otherwise, tie is 0x	Loser forfeits 2x	Loser forfeits 3x
Failure	Loser Transfers 2x	Loser forfeits 2x	Both forfeit 1x; Mastery Special	Winner forfeits 1x; Loser forfeits 2x
Fumble	Loser Transfers 3x	Loser forfeits 3x	Winner forfeits 1x; Loser forfeits 2x	Both forfeit 2x

Ability Test Results Table

Roll Result	Victory Level
Critical Success	Complete Victory
Success	Minor Victory
Failure	Minor Defeat
Fumble	Complete Defeat

Ordinary and Heroic Consequences Chart

Ordinary Contest	Heroic Contest	Defeat level
0 to -10 APs	0 to -1/2x Starting APs	Marginal
-11 to -20 APs	Less than -1/2x Starting APs	Minor
-21 to -30 APs	Less than -1x Starting APs	Major
-31 or more APs	Less than -2x Starting APs	Complete

Photocopy This Page for Each Player

Combat Results

Characters may become wounded during a fight without ever dropping below 0 AP, or may be wounded but come back into the fight through a final action. In terms of the effects of injury on the story line there are four types of wound: **hurt**, **injured**, **dying**, or **dead**. A character can be hurt because he is ill, or because he was wounded in combat or misadventure. A character can win the contest even though he has more “wounds” than his opponent.

Combat Results Chart

Defeat Level	Result	Modifier to subsequent rolls
Marginal	Dazed	0
Minor	Hurt	-1
Major	Injured	-50% of ability
Complete	Dying	No actions allowed

Healthy

This is the state of health to aspire to; nothing is wrong with your character.

Dazed

The character is conscious and aware of his surroundings but is exhausted, befuddled or in shock and cannot resist efforts to capture him, tie him up, or otherwise manhandle him. This is temporary, and can be healed by as simple a means as AP loaning during a contest or resting for a few minutes after the contest ends.

Hurt

Each time a character is hurt, he suffers a -1 penalty on all action rolls. These penalties are cumulative if the character gets hurt a number of times. The penalty resets to zero at the end of each episode, or when the character is successfully treated by a healer.

Injured

An injured character is badly maimed or suffers from a debilitating disease. He may act with a -50% modifier. Injured characters require magical healing or several episodes spent resting.

Dying

Dying characters are unconscious and cannot act. They will die unless quickly treated by a magical healer. Death is generally up to the Narrator to determine.

Dead

Usually, a dead character is out of the game.

Healing

There are three types of healing: First Aid and minor magical healing, which can treat hurts; major magical healing, which can treat injuries and dying; and time.

First Aid and Minor Magical Healing

First aid and other healing abilities can remove the penalties from one or more Hurts in a single action. This is resolved as an ability test. The target number of the ability is modified by -1 for each hurt being cured. The patient may attempt to augment the ability with Tough, Resilient, or similar abilities.

Major Healing

Major healing can reduce all modifiers due to injury, illness, or malign influences, but is restricted to worshippers of specific deities, saints, or spirits. Using a major healing ability to eliminate hurts can be handled as first aid. Healing injuries and near-death requires a contest against the following resistance:

Resistance to Healing

Wound	Resistance
Injury	20
Dying	10

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In the case of poison, illness, or malign influences, the resistance is the strength of the opposing force. Special feats, spells, or spirits are required to cure these types of injury: basic heal wounds magic does not affect them.

Time

Wounds heal at a rate of one hurt per day if the character rests. The narrator may modify this to account for character's actions (hiking on a wounded leg), environment (cold and wet, or dry heat), or other factors. Dying characters will rarely get better on their own.

Magical Abilities

Theists

Divine Aid

Available to any theist. Use Worship Pantheon ability as the chance to get Divine Aid

Affinities

Available to initiates and devotees. Initiates may use affinity magic with improvisational modifiers.

Feats

Feats are available to devotees of a god. Feats are rolled at the target number of the affinity to which it belongs.

Animists

Integrated Spirits

An integrated spirit grants the user a talent with a starting target number equal to the spirit's might.

Fetishes

A spirit may be bound into a fetish. If the user is the one who captured the spirit, he may use it a number of times per day equal to the victory level in the Spirit Combat. If the user did not capture the spirit himself, it is one-use.

Fetish Use

Victory level	Number of uses
Marginal	1-use
Minor	Once per day
Major	Three times per day
Complete	Integration

Skill Spirit

A skill spirit grants the user a single ability at a target number equal to its might. If the user has a similar skill, the spirit's might is used to augment his target number. Skill spirits also add their might in AP when invoked.

Passion Spirit

A passion spirit grants a bonus equal to 1/10 the spirit's might to all activities covered by the spirit's passion.

Sorcerers

Grimoires

Grimoires are collections of spells. Each grimoire has its own Read Grimoire skill.

Spells

Spells must be cast using a **talisman**, and are cast using the magician's Read Grimoire ability.

Mystics

Balance

A mystic's disciplines must be within 10 points of each other for the mystic to use counters or strikes.

Counters

Counters are defensive mystic powers.

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Strikes

When a strike is used, the target number of the strike is applied as an edge to the winner of the exchange. If the opponent is driven to 0 APs or less by a strike, a special effect is often applied. If the user of the strike loses the exchange, he permanently loses points of the ability's target number according to the defeat level.

Strike Failure Result

Defeat Level	Ability Loss
Marginal	-1
Minor	-2
Major	-4
Complete	-8

Hero Points

Hero Points are the currency of *Hero Wars*. They are assigned by the narrator at the start of a game and upon finishing an adventure. Hero Points are used to raise a hero's abilities or to bump a result.

Gaining Hero Points

1. At the start of each session, each hero gets 1 hero point.
2. At the end of each session, each hero gets 1 to 5 hero points.
3. At the end of a long, multi-session, or difficult adventure, a narrator may choose to give the heroes an additional 1 to 5 hero points.
4. At the end of each session, a narrator may choose to give certain heroes 1-3 additional hero points.

Using Hero Points

Hero points have these uses in the game:

1. To bump any action roll by a hero during play.
2. To add, cement, or increase character abilities between game sessions.

Character Development Costs

Improvement	Related to session	Unrelated to session
Improve ability by +1	1	2
Improve ability by +2	3	6
Improve ability by +3	6	12
Improve affinity, tradition knowledge, or power by +1	3	6
Improve grimoire by +1	5	10
Learn new mundane ability at 12	1	2
Learn new affinity, grimoire, tradition, or power at 12	3	6
Learn new feat	1	2
Learn new spell or blessing	2	4
Learn new weapon or fighting technique, or a subset of an ability, at the current ability rating	1	2
Capture spirit in a fetish	1	2
Integrate spirit	2	4
Gain new supporting character	1	2
Replace lost follower	0	-
Cement benefit	1	-
Gain new flaw	0	-
Buy down flaw by -1	1	2
Buy down flaw by -2	3	6
Remove flaw at 12	1	2

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