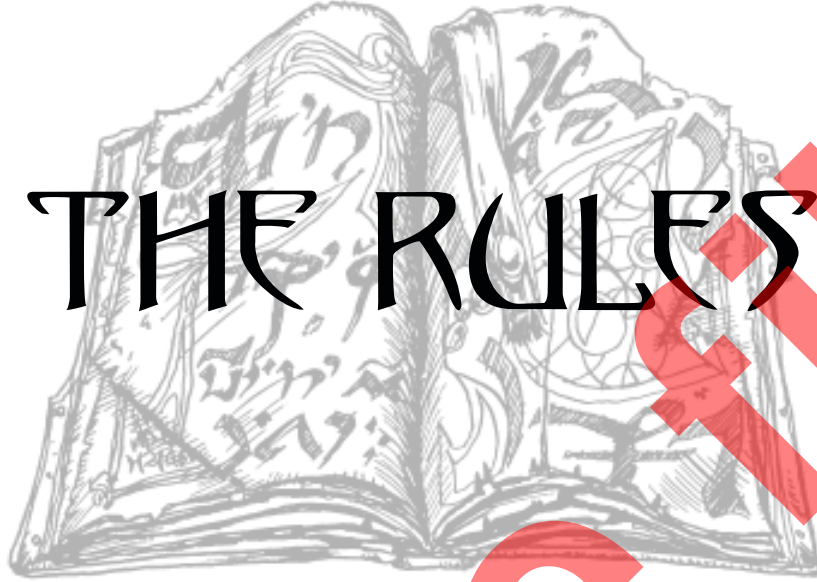


CHAPTER ONE

THE RULES



This chapter contains the complete rule system for the 4th edition of the Talislanta fantasy role playing game. It includes:

Introduction: overview of the basics of role playing. If you're an experienced role player you can skip this part and begin with Materials.

The Action Table: an explanation of the single rule that's used for all actions in the game

Character Creation: Guidelines for designing characters used in the game.

Attributes, Skills, Combat, and Magic: General rules and examples for each. Skills, Combat and Magic each receive a more thorough treatment in their own chapters, as well.

INTRODUCTION

Talisanta is a role playing game (or RPG for short) designed for two or more players. One person must play the part of the Gamemaster (called the GM), while the others take on the role of Player-Characters (called PCs).

OBJECT OF THE GAME

Role playing games are like simulations of your favorite movie or television series. The Gamemaster helps establish the setting and the basic premise of each adventure, while the Players take on the roles of

the series' main characters. Together, the participants will create an ongoing series of adventures called a campaign. A Talislanta campaign is open-ended, and can last as long as the Gamemaster and Players like. The only object of the game is to have fun.

THE ROLE OF THE GAMEMASTER

The Gamemaster plays a vital part in the Talislanta game, serving as a combination narrator, moderator, and role-player. As narrator, the GM must set the stage for each adventure the Players will undertake, helping to describe what the PCs see, hear, and sense about their surroundings. As moderator, the GM is required to judge the results of all actions undertaken by the PCs and to remain fair and objective at all times. As role-player, the GM must play the parts of all non-player characters (NPCs) and creatures that the PCs meet during the course of their game careers.

GMs have to know the rules of the game, as well as the Talislantan milieu. They have to be creative, and they should always remember that the PCs are the focal point of the campaign. If the players are enjoying the game, the GM is doing a good job.

THE ROLE OF THE PLAYER

The main role of each player is to choose and create a Player-Character that will serve as his or her game persona. Because every PC must interact with the Talislantan milieu, you should be familiar with your character's culture, homeland, and profession. Develop

a personality for your PC: is he brave or cowardly, selfish or altruistic? What are his likes and dislikes? What is he afraid of, and what does he believe in? Does your PC have a goal in life? The more you know about your PC, the more interesting he or she will be to you and to the other players in the game.

Players should learn the basic rules of the game, particularly those that pertain directly to their character's Skills and Equipment. The guidelines in the Character Creation section will tell you everything you need to know about making a good PC.

MATERIALS

To play the Talislanta RPG you'll need at least one twenty-sided die (called a d20). These can be found at any hobby or game store. Pencil and paper usually come in handy, too. Everything else you'll need to play has been provided in this book.

GETTING READY TO PLAY

Like most RPGs, Talislanta is not a "pick-up and play" type of game. To get the most out of your Talislanta campaign, the Gamemaster and players should spend some time looking through the Traveler's Guide section of this book, which describes the continent of Talislanta and its diverse inhabitants. The Gamemaster's Section in Chapter 6 contains advice on planning a Talislanta campaign that will be best suited to your group. The GM should read this section and discuss it with the players before beginning play.

THE ACTION TABLE	
ROLL	RESULT
0 or less	Mishap
1 - 5	Failure
6 - 10	Partial Success
11 - 19	Full Success
20 or more	Critical Success

OVERVIEW: THE ACTION TABLE

All actions in the Talislanta game are resolved by a single, simple procedure:

1. **Compare the character's Skill or Attribute Rating with the Degree of Difficulty (the relative ease or difficulty of the action).**
2. **Take the difference (a positive number, a negative number, or zero) and add it to a d20 roll.**
3. **Consult the Action Table for the result.**

That's all you really need to know. All the rules in this book are just variations of the above procedure. Players contribute by describing the Intent of their character's actions to the GM. Then it's the GM's job to interpret the outcome of the Action Table and how it effects the particular scene the player characters are involved in.

For your convenience, the Action Table is printed on the character sheet provided in the back of this book.

ACTION TABLE KEY

- **Mishap:** not only does the attempted action fail, but it fails miserably and may have additional negative consequences (accidental damage to the character attempting the action, opposite of the intended effect, etc.). It's the GM's job to determine the actual results of any Mishap, based on the circumstances surrounding the attempted action.
- **Failure:** the action fails to achieve the intended result.
- **Partial Success:** the action is only moderately successful, achieving part but not all of the intended effect (such as half-damage from an attack or partial effect from a spell, for example).
- **Full Success:** the action achieves the intended result.
- **Critical Success:** the action is even more successful than intended, achieving the player's stated intent and also yielding additional benefits of some sort (attack causes a Critical Wound that disables the opponent, increased effect from a spell, etc.). It's the GM's job to determine the actual results and extent of any Critical Success, based on prevailing circumstances.

ACTION TABLE MODIFIERS

Action Table die rolls may be subject to bonuses or penalties for any of the following modifiers:

- **Attributes**
- **Skill ratings**
- **Intent**
- **Degree of Difficulty**
- **Opposing Attributes or Skills**
- **Multiple actions**
- **Non-proficiency penalty**

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes represent natural abilities, such as strength, intelligence, and dexterity. Each has a numerical value, referred to as its Attribute Rating. In the Talislanta game, the Attribute Rating for a humanoid of “average” ability is “0”; an attribute rating of +1 or greater is above average, while a rating of -1 or lower is below average.

Attributes can be used as modifiers to specific Skills by adding the Attribute’s numerical value to the level of the Skill (the total is referred to as the Skill Rating; q.v.). Attributes can also be used to determine the result of actions for which there is no specific skill; for example, lifting a heavy object (a function of the Strength Attribute) or trying to locate a lost item (a function of the Perception attribute).

Whenever an Attribute is used by itself for an Action Table die roll, it is always doubled. Note that this applies to negative-rated Attributes as well. Zero-rated Attributes remain the same.

SKILL RATINGS

Skills are abilities acquired through training and practice, such as combat and magic. There are two terms used to describe Skills: Level and Rating. Skill Level indicates the character’s degree of training, with “0” representing a basic level of proficiency. A Skill’s Level can be improved with training and experience (see Improving Skills, in this section).

Skill Rating is the combination of a character’s training (Level) and natural ability (a related Attribute). Each Skill has an Attribute that acts as its modifier; for example, the modifier for the Thieving talent, Picking Pockets, is Dexterity. To determine the thief’s overall Skill Rating, add the level of the Skill plus its Attribute modifier. Whenever a Skill is used for an Action Table die roll, always use its Skill Rating.

INTENT

Intent is a player’s description of what his or her Character hopes to accomplish by a particular action. This helps the Gamemaster determine the chance of success for the attempted action, as well as its actual outcome. For example, the Intent of an attack might be to injure, disarm, trip, or any of a dozen other stratagems. If the player informs the Gamemaster beforehand of the character’s intentions, the GM will be better prepared to interpret the Action Table die result. Intent is also important in helping the GM establish an action’s Degree of Difficulty.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

Degree of Difficulty is a modifier determined by the Gamemaster. It is based on the GM’s appraisal of how hard or easy it would be for an individual with an Attribute or Skill Rating of “0” to attempt a given action. The Degree of Difficulty modifier typically ranges between +10 and -10, with easy actions being given a bonus (+1, +2, etc.) on the Action Table die roll, and difficult actions being given a penalty (-1, -2, etc.). The character’s Intent and any extraordinary circumstances surrounding the proposed action are also factors in determining Degree of Difficulty.

OPPOSED ACTIONS

Whenever a character attempts an action that is directly opposed by another individual or creature, the opponent’s ability rating is used as the Degree of Difficulty. In such cases, the Degree of Difficulty will either be the opponent’s Skill Rating or an Attribute Rating, whichever is most appropriate.

Sherra the thief wants to use her Stealth skill to sneak past a watchman. Because this is an Opposed Action, the Degree of Difficulty is the watchman’s ability to detect the thief. The watchman has the Guard skill at rating 7. Sherra’s Stealth skill rating is 9. Sherra’s player rolls a d20 and adds +2 (the difference between Stealth 9 and Guard 7) to the roll. If the watchman had a Guard skill of +11, Sherra’s player would roll a d20 with a -2 modifier to the roll, instead.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS (OPTIONAL)

As a basic rule, each character is allowed to take one action per round. Optionally, this rule can be modified to allow characters to take Multiple Actions in a single round. For each action already performed during the round, characters suffer a cumulative -5 Action Table

penalty. Extra actions can be performed during a character's turn, or later in the round as responses to the actions of other characters. The GM decides what constitutes an "action" and what doesn't. Simple things like quickly looking around a room or dropping an item probably aren't actions that would add to the multiple action penalty. More complex procedures like drawing a weapon or dismounting from an equus probably would count as extra actions. In some cases, the GM may ask the player to make a skill or attribute roll to determine the success of ordinary tasks performed as part of a multiple action sequence (a DEX roll to quickly throw off a bulky cloak and still make an attack, for example).

Thena the Danuvian Virago wants to throw her empty mug at a rude male across the table, then stand up and punch him in the face. First, Thena's player makes an attack roll to hit with the mug. This is a normal attack roll since it is Thena's first action during the round. Next Thena's player rolls to see if she punches the male. This attack roll suffers a -5 penalty (in addition to any other modifiers) since Thena has already acted once during this round. If Thena wanted to then take a third action, her player would roll with a penalty of -10.

Note that a result of Mishap on any Multiple Action die roll prevents any additional action from being taken in that round. For example, if Thena's first die roll results in a Mishap, she does not get to attempt the second action.

OTHER MODIFIERS

Combat, Magic, and some of the more complicated Skills have additional rules and modifiers that the Gamemaster and players should know about. For more information see the corresponding chapters in this book.

NOTE TO PLAYERS AND GAMEMASTERS

The heart and soul of the Talislanta game system is the interaction between the players and the Gamemaster. It is the GM's job to help simulate in the game those things which make real life so unpredictable: a stroke of good fortune, a freak accident, the strange occurrences that defy all odds or lay waste to the most carefully made plans.

Players can help the Gamemaster by offering specific information on their character's Intent before

rolling on the Action Table. It is also important for players to allow their GM to embellish Action Table results without interfering in the course of the game. Gamemasters will earn the trust of their players by being fair and objective, and by maintaining a degree of moderation in their renderings. Imaginative and inventive narration is fine, as long as it's not overdone.

TIME IN THE GAME

In the Talislanta game, time is measured in discrete units, called rounds. A round is roughly six seconds long, enough time for a character to trade blows with an opponent, cast a spell, or do anything else that can be accomplished in six seconds or less.

Except in combat and similarly critical situations, it is usually not necessary for the Gamemaster to keep such strict track of time. For example, a day's ride can be covered by the GM in a single sentence, if nothing special is planned for that day. The Gamemaster should feel free to take a flexible approach about time in the game and use detailed round-by-round descriptions of the action only as needed. Similarly, the Action Table can be used to cover a few seconds of action, or an entire day of warfare.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

In role playing games such as Talislanta, characters earn Experience Points (XP for short) for their accomplishments. These points can be used to increase the level of a character's Skills, as explained in Chapter 4. Experience points are awarded by the Gamemaster, as follows:

- 1-20 XP per adventure or gaming session, based on the difficulty of the adventure and the style of campaign being used by your group, as explained in the Gamemaster's Section in Chapter 6.
- Bonus of 1-10 XP for good role playing, based on the persona that the player has created for his or her character. The GM may elect to increase or reduce this figure based on the style of the group's campaign.
- 1 XP per each game week that a character devotes to training, which can be used to improve the Skill being practiced.

CHARACTER CREATION

The following outline provides a general overview of the procedure for character creation. More specific information can be found in the corresponding sections, as indicated.

1. CHOOSE AN ARCHETYPE

The Archetype section of this book contains over a hundred different archetypes, each representing a type of character that hails from a particular Talislantan culture. Over half of these are specifically designed to be used as Player-Characters. Those designated as NPCs are Non-Player Characters, designed primarily to be used by the Gamemaster. As such, they may not be suitable for use as PCs in a beginning-level game (check with your GM). Use the Archetype Index in the Appendix to quickly find any archetype you're looking for.

Each PC archetype requires only a few modifications in order to be ready for use in the game (NPCs can be used by the GM as is, or modified as desired). After looking over the various PC archetypes, choose one that you'd like to play.

2. RECORD THE ARCHETYPE'S INFORMATION

Using a pencil, record the archetype's Physical Characteristics, Attributes, Skills, Special Abilities (if any), starting Equipment, and Wealth on the Character Sheet included in the Appendix (you may photo-copy this for personal use). Choose your character's height and weight based on the range of measurements described in the archetype.

3. PERSONALIZE YOUR CHARACTER (OPTIONAL)

If you want, you can personalize your character by any of the following methods:

- Further embellish the description of your character by adding distinguishing features and detailing the outward appearance of the character, as desired. For example, you may decide that your character favors flamboyant attire, has a wicked-looking scar over one eye, affects a sinister demeanor, or whatever you choose.



- To make your character different from other characters of the same archetype, increase any Attribute (or Attributes) by a total of up to two points, and reduce any Attribute (or Attributes) by a total of two points. For example, a player creating a warrior-character might decide to increase the Warrior's Strength by +2, and decrease his Intelligence and Charisma by -1 each.
- To create personality traits for your character, review the entry for your character's homeland in the Traveler's Guide section and decide how your character differs from the typical member of her society. For example, you might choose to have your character be brave, cowardly, greedy, generous, shy, or outgoing. Traits can also have a basis in the character's personal history. For example, ever since his encounter with a werebeast, Miramus the Magician has been afraid to be alone in the woods at night.

4. DETERMINE OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Review the section on Attributes in this chapter, and follow the guidelines to determine your character's Hit Points (HP), Movement, and Encumbrance ratings.

5. CHOOSE SKILLS

If your character's archetype includes a choice of Skills, review the Skill descriptions in Chapter 4 and

choose the Skills you want. If the archetype includes a choice of magical Orders or Modes, review the chapter on Magic and decide which ones you prefer. You'll need to choose a Background skill, based on the type of culture in which your character was raised (Nomadic, Rural, Urban, etc.). You're also allowed 2 additional Common Skills of your choice.

Note that Language Skills for beginning characters are based on degree of proficiency, as follows: Basic: Level 0, Fluent: Level +3, Native: +10.

To simplify things it's best to figure out the Skill Ratings for each of your character's Skills in advance, before you begin your first adventure. To do so, add each Skill's level to its Attribute modifier and write down the totals in the appropriate space on your Character Sheet.

6. RECORD EQUIPMENT AND WEALTH

If your character's archetype includes a choice of weapons, review the chapter on Equipment and make your selections. Record any important information about your character's possessions, such as the Damage Rating of any weapons and the effective Range of any missile weapons your character may possess. See the Equipment section in Chapter 7 for information on weapons, shields, and armor.

Record your character's starting Wealth. The figures included in the archetypes are meant as guidelines, and the GM may decide to increase or decrease your character's available funds according to your character's particular background. If you want to buy additional equipment before the game begins, check the price lists in the Equipment chapter to see what's available and what your character can afford.

7. CONTACTS AND CHARACTER HISTORY

Ask your GM to provide some Contacts (acquaintances) for your character. With the GM's assistance, fill in some of the details of your character's past and the circumstances under which your character will begin his or her game career.

8. CHOOSE A NAME

Turn to your character's homeland in the Traveler's Guide section. Using the examples in the Language entry for reference, make up a name for your character. *The character is now ready to enter the world of Talislanta.*

ATTRIBUTES

In the Talislanta game system, there are eleven different attribute ratings:

- **Intelligence Rating**
- **Perception Rating**
- **Will Rating**
- **Charisma Rating**
- **Strength Rating**
- **Dexterity Rating**
- **Constitution Rating**
- **Speed Rating**
- **Combat Rating ***
- **Magic Rating ***
- **Hit Points**

* Note: Unlike previous editions of this game, Combat Rating and Magic rating are now separate attributes rather than derived characteristics.

INTELLIGENCE RATING (INT)

This is a measure of the individual's intellect and powers of reason. Intelligence is the deciding factor whenever an individual attempts to deduce the basic meaning of obscure or unfamiliar maps, dialects, or writings, appraise the relative value of goods, solve puzzles and mysteries, and so forth.

PERCEPTION RATING (PER)

This is a measure of the individual's sensory awareness, taking into account the abilities of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, plus such intangibles as instinct, intuition, and psychic talents. Perception is the deciding factor whenever an individual attempts to detect unseen presences or ambushes, detect illusions, locate lost or hidden articles, notice important details or changes in surroundings, or utilize any sensory ability.

WILL RATING (WIL)

This is a measure of the individual's willpower, determination, faith and wisdom. Will Rating determines how well a character is able to resist temptation, bribery, seduction, torture, coercion, interrogation, or spells of Influence.

CHARISMA RATING (CHA)

This is a measure of the individual's powers of persuasiveness, including such intangibles as