

# The play's the thing.

The critically acclaimed role-playing game system — featured in the Origins-Award nominated RPGs, *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* and *Silver Age Sentinels* — is now available in a exquisitely complete, compact format for an astonishingly low price!

Infinitely flexible and eminently scalable, the *Tri-Stat dX: Core Role-Playing Game System* is the ultimate tool for running any adventure you can imagine — any genre, setting, theme, mood, time period, or power level.



## Tri-Stat dX:

The ideal companion if you're going to be stuck on a desert island and can only bring one role-playing game book with you.



# ▲ TRI-STAT

## WRITTEN BY

Mark C. MacKinnon

## ADDITIONAL WRITING BY

Adam Jury, Stephen Kenson, Jeff Mackintosh, David L. Pulver, Jesse Scoble

## ART DIRECTION AND GRAPHIC PRODUCTION BY

Jeff Mackintosh

## EDITING BY

Jeff Mackintosh, Jesse Scoble

## SPECIAL THANKS

To the hundreds of Tri-Stat playtesters that contributed to the system since GUARDIANS OF ORDER hit the scene in 1997.



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GUARDIANS OF ORDER, INC. • P.O. Box 25016, 370 Stone Road, Guelph, Ontario, CANADA, N1G 4T4  
Phone: (519) 821-7174 • Fax: (519) 821-7635 • [info@guardiansorder.com](mailto:info@guardiansorder.com) • <http://www.guardiansorder.com>

Core System Role-Playing Game



## ROLE-PLAYING GAME MANIFESTO

THESE RULES ARE WRITTEN ON PAPER, NOT ETCHED IN STONE TABLETS.

RULES ARE SUGGESTED GUIDELINES, NOT REQUIRED EDICTS.

IF THE RULES DON'T SAY YOU CAN'T DO SOMETHING, YOU CAN.

THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL ANSWERS, ONLY OFFICIAL OPINIONS.

WHEN DICE CONFLICT WITH THE STORY, THE STORY ALWAYS WINS.

MIN/MAXING AND MUNCHKINISM AREN'T PROBLEMS WITH THE GAME;  
THEY'RE PROBLEMS WITH THE PLAYER.

THE GAME MASTER HAS FULL DISCRETIONARY POWER OVER THE GAME.

THE GAME MASTER ALWAYS WORKS WITH, NOT AGAINST, THE PLAYERS.

A GAME THAT IS NOT FUN IS NO LONGER A GAME — IT'S A CHORE.

THIS BOOK CONTAINS THE ANSWERS TO ALL THINGS.

WHEN THE ABOVE DOES NOT APPLY, MAKE IT UP.

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# WELCOME TO TRI-STAT dX

The quest for the perfect role-playing system. Endless ... tireless ... it constantly eludes your grasp. You cross your fingers and take a deep breath as you open the first page of this book. Is Tri-Stat dX the answer you've been waiting for?

Sorry, but probably not. It may come damn close, though.

Everyone has a preference concerning the elements they like in an RPG. Rules-light vs. rules-heavy. Point-based vs. class-based. Effects-based vs. power-based. Three stats vs. six stats vs. nine stats. Multi-genre vs. campaign specific. Roll low vs. roll high. Modular vs. integrated. Bell curve vs. linear. d6 vs. d10 vs. d20. Independent rolls vs. opposed rolls. Role-playing intensive vs. combat intensive. The list is endless.

Our Role-Playing Game Manifesto on page 2 gives you insight into our design philosophy at GUARDIANS OF ORDER. If you want a few more hints into what Tri-Stat dX has in store, you can consider it a rules-light, point-based, effects-based, three-stat, multi-genre, roll-low, modular, bell-curved, independent-rolling, role-playing-intensive game system that uses any sized dice.

So is this the game for you?

Read on. We'll let Tri-Stat dX speak for itself.

## HISTORY OF THE TRI-STAT SYSTEM

The Tri-Stat System premiered at GenCon 1997 in our first publication, *Big Eyes, Small Mouth*. It used two six-sided dice to resolve all tasks, didn't include a skill system, and had very few rules. The little 96-page anime RPG was an instant success, selling through its first print run very quickly and earning an Origins Award nomination for the Best RPG.

Over a year later, Tri-Stat was expanded in the *Sailor Moon RPG and Resource Book* to include more options and game mechanics. From 1999 to 2002, new mechanics and options were added to each RPG that we published to customise the game to suit our goals. The core elements remained the same, but the details were refined.

- *Dominion Tank Police RPG and Resource Book* included a mecha creation system and Skills.
- *Demon City Shinjuku RPG and Resource Book* added new magical/occult-related powers.
- *Tenchi Muyo! RPG and Resource Book* added new powers, including Duplicate and Summon/Control Servant.
- *Big Eyes, Small Mouth Second Edition* compiled the previously published Tri-Stat System material, added new combat options, and expanded on the genre-dependent costs for Skills.
- *Ghost Dog RPG and Resource Book* introduced grittier game mechanics, including Shock Value, for more realistic games.
- *Heaven & Earth Second Edition* changed dice rolling to drawing from a deck of playing cards, and featured an innovative destiny and fate mechanic.
- *El-Hazard RPG and Resource Book* incorporated mystery game points through a GM-driven Unknown Superpowers Attribute.
- *Hong Kong Action Theatre! Second Edition* changed the Stat costs to staged values and modified the all-or-nothing damage to all, nothing, or 50%.

In mid-2002, the Tri-Stat System changed substantially in the release of our *Silver Age Sentinels* superhero RPG. To reflect the awesome power characters have in comics, the scope of Tri-Stat powers expanded from 6 Levels to 10 Levels, Stats grew from 12 to 20 values, and average Point totals increased from 30-60 to 100-300. Additionally, 10-sided dice were used instead of 6-sided dice and Attributes became more customisable — adding area, duration, range, and target options — through the inclusion of Power Modifier Values. This wasn't the Tri-Stat System you used to play.

To further address superhero power levels, *Silver Age Sentinels* included a sidebar about scaling the Tri-Stat System. Of the three options presented, the one that suggested changing the game dice from d10s to another dice size struck a chord with us.

We had discovered our grand unification theory ... and it was right in front of us the entire time. The evolution of the Tri-Stat System moved beyond d6 (*BESM*) and d10 (*SAS*) to the new standard — dX.

# APPLICATIONS OF TRI-STAT dX

Tri-Stat dX is the ideal game for running any adventure you can imagine — any genre, setting, theme, mood, time period, or power level. You can create characters for any nationality, race, occupation, archetype, class, or background. In short, Tri-Stat dX can handle anything you can throw at it ... and then some.

The flexibility of Tri-Stat dX is a result of its scalability. By changing the dice type used in games of different power levels — low-powered games use dice with fewer sides, while high-powered games use dice with a greater number of sides — Tri-Stat is easily customised for your campaign.

## DICE AND NOTATIONS

Tri-Stat dX uses polyhedral (multi-sided) dice during game play, though usually only a single die type in each adventure or campaign. This typically includes dice with the following number of sides: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, or (rarely) 20. When you need to generate a random number with a dice roll, always roll two dice with the appropriate number of sides, known as rolling 2dX, where:

- d represents the word "dice"
- X is the type of dice rolled (number of sides)

For example, 2dX in a street-level detective game would likely indicate 2d6 (roll two 6-sided dice), while 2dX in a superhero game could instead mean 2d10. The values showing on each die after the roll are added together to generate a random number between 2 and 2X. If your roll of 2dX generates a 4 on one die and a 6 on another, for instance, the final result is 10.

Sometimes X, called the "game dice," is used by itself in the text to suggest an upper limit for a specific game mechanic. For example, the game Attributes (page 9) available to characters typically range from Level 1 through Level X. Consequently, up to Level 8 is available in a posthuman game (8-sided dice); up to Level 12 is available in an inhuman game (12-sided dice).

The character power levels and associated game dice are explained further on page 7.

## WHY CHANGE THE DICE?

The dice size needs to change to alter the probabilities of achieving success for the range of character aptitudes. For example, a Stat of 4 represents the adult human average. In Tri-Stat dX, to succeed in a Stat-related task, the player must roll his or her character's Stat or lower on two dice (task resolution is explained in Chapter 7: Game Mechanics; page 58). In a superhero game that uses d10, the probability of rolling 4 or less is only 6% — not very likely. This is a desired result, though, since average humans shouldn't often succeed in tasks that are considered normal for a superhero game.

In a human-level game that uses d6, though, the probability increases to 17%. Again, this percentage matches the desired result since an average human should have a reasonable, not miniscule, chance of succeeding in a game where above-average humans are the normal player characters.

Changing the size of the dice is an easy way to scale the game to the correct power level (and thus success frequency) for the players characters.

## SAMPLE GENRES/SETTINGS/ PERIODS/THEMES

Included herein is a small sample of 30 different campaign types that are ideal for use with Tri-Stat dX, along with the most commonly associated game dice.

### MULTI-GENRE

#### Any Campaign

Perhaps time-travel is in the plans, or maybe you're just not sure where your campaign will be going. If you need flexibility, the Multi-Genre campaign is what you need! Game Dice: d6 or d10.

## MODERN DAY

### Action Adventure

Like an adrenalin-pumping movie, Action Adventure campaigns thrust the heroes into the thick of things right from the get-go. While moral and ethical dilemmas will be present, the tempo should always pounding — play hard or go home! Game Dice: d8.

### Animal Adventures

Animals speak their own languages and have their own adventures, independent, in spite, or because of humans. You may be avoiding slavery, saving your relatives, finding a new home, or all of the above and more! Game Dice: d4.

### Conspiracy

They know something that they won't tell you — or you know something that they won't believe. The military and government cover-up aliens, mutants, and more in this genre, which mixes action and investigation in near equal parts. Game Dice: d6.

### Law Enforcement

Organized and disorganized crime owns the streets, while the boys in blue try to keep the peace. Corrupt cops, mafia dons, FBI agents, CIA special ops, lawmakers, and judges — all players in the tangled webs of a law enforcement campaign. Game Dice: d6.

### Loony Cartoons

Crazy capers in worlds where reality does not apply! Characters must foil the crew of bad guys time after time, because they just don't know when to quit! Game Dice: d4 or d6.

### Occult / Horror

Horror can take many forms, from ghosts exerting night-time influence on the impressionable to cults seeking ultimate power for themselves. However the horror is created, the characters must be kept on their toes; one wrong move could be the ultimate end for them. Game Dice: d8.

### Pulp

Travel the world in search of artefacts — many not meant for man's eye — thought to be lost forever. High action and heroism mixed with grave-robbing and evil masterminds. Game Dice: d6.

### Reality TV

Some people will do anything for fifteen minutes of fame and Reality TV proves that! Daring and disgusting stunts, social drama, and physical hardships all play a role when your future lies in the hands of those you compete against — or with the watching public. Game Dice: d6.

### Romantic Comedy

How many ways can love and lust go wrong in a single session? Bad blind dates, falling for your best friend, saying the wrong name at the altar ... love hurts! Game Dice: d6.

### Soap Opera

Love. Hate. Marriage. Divorce. Bitter custody battles. Hospitals — what is so interesting about hospitals? Anything can happen in a soap opera, and backstabbing melodrama is certainly in the cards! Game Dice: d6.

### Superhero

Uphold the values of liberty, justice, security, and peace ... or flip the coin and terrorize the world with your diabolical plans! Hey, why don't you play *Silver Age Sentinels*? Game Dice: d10 or d12.

### Urban Fantasy

Myths are no longer just that; vampires, faeries, spirits, and magic all exist in the modern world, often forced to conceal their true nature for fear of persecution. Secret societies, sects, political intrigue, and backstabbing are cause for a tense and dramatic campaign. Game Dice: d6.

## HISTORICAL

### 20th Century War

From the earliest days of World War I to the many Middle Eastern conflicts in the 90s, technology and tactics have changed a great deal. Jungles to Desert; General to Grunt; Land to Air — the scope of modern war offers a wide variety of campaigns. Game Dice: d6.

### Age of Pirates

Arrrrr! Set sail for far-away ports and mysterious bounty. Along the way you'll face the unforgiving ocean, potential mutiny, and other pirates. Will the treasure still be there when you arrive? Game Dice: d6.

### Ancient China / Japan

Explore ancient dynasties while battling for and against feuding warlords. An honourable *samurai* can turn *ronin*, masterless and outcast, with one mistake. Game Dice: d6.

### Ancient Egypt

The sands of time obscure some of the most amazing human creations and a very advanced civilization. Religion and worship dominated Egyptian life, and the afterlife was seen as very important. Game Dice: d6.

### Ancient Rome / Greece

Greece was the founding point of democracy, city-states, and the site of the Trojan War. Political and military campaigns will be the focus — or go back to 700 BC and relive the first Olympics. Game Dice: d6.

### Middle Ages

Feudal times were tough on everyone, especially the lower classes. Survive the plague, live through the wars, and raise your political influence. Game Dice: d6.

### Old West

Seek out fortune and fame, but don't lose it all in a game of poker. Gold hunters, outlaws, Native Americans, sheriffs, gamblers and vigilantes roam the wild United States from east to west. Game Dice: d6.

### Stone Age

Be the first to invent the wheel! In the Stone Age, the necessities — shelter, food, fire — take centre stage as you forge ahead and create basic tools and technology. Game Dice: d4.

### Victorian

Elegant beauty and sophisticated tastes collide with overwhelming poverty and despair. The distance between the rich and poor is insurmountable, and a life of crime is the only way for some to get ahead. Game Dice: d6.

## FANTASY

### Low Fantasy

Wage war, explore mysterious new lands, and research the arcane arts. Monarchies rule the lands while gallant knights defend Queen and Country against outside threats. Game Dice: d6.

### High Fantasy

The fate of civilisation is balanced on the edge of your sword. Globe-trot (or take a handy airship) to enchanted places, each one more fiercely guarded than the last, in search of the one way to destroy true evil. Game Dice: d8.

## FUTURISTIC

### Cyberpunk / Biopunk

The dark streets of the near future are home to street *samurai*, gangers, fixers, deckers, and all types of counter-culture. Country-owning megacorps, embittered police forces, and powerful syndicates employ them as deniable assets in a world of technological evolution. Game Dice: d8.