

Reign

RULES

A GAME OF LORDS
AND LEADERS



Reign

The *Reign* roleplaying game expands the frontiers of fantasy gaming by elevating the action to an international stage. Monarchs and mercenaries gamble armies and fortunes to win nations in a rich and vibrant fantasy setting. *Reign's* simple but complete rules model the triumphs and disasters of societies as small as a village or as large as a realm-spanning religion. With *Reign*, your characters can defend and bring prosperity to threatened lands—or, if you prefer, conquer and pillage on a vast and awesome scale. This Second Edition of Greg Stolze's game of lords and leaders is built from the start to put the characters in charge of nations, churches, cults, and criminal mobs. You aren't just doing the King's tasks—you can be the King doing the tasks. You become the movers and shakers in the setting, or fail due to your own glorious hubris.

ONE ROLL DOES IT ALL

Powered by the One Roll Engine (or ORE) popularized by games like *Godlike*, *Nemesis*, and *Wild Talents*, *Reign* can take your characters from beggars to emperors. A throw of the dice tells you not just whether you succeeded but how much and how you did it, or it can tell you not only your character's stats, traits, and skills, but how and why they developed those strengths and weaknesses. If you're already a fan of the ORE, *Reign* is familiar (though with a few interesting refinements). If it's new to you, the ORE resolves events in delicate detail without cumbersome layers of contingent rolls.

REVISED AND EXPANDED

Reign Second Edition completely reorganizes the *Reign* rules for easier references and better clarity, offering loads of options that let you mechanize what you want to emphasize—whether that's sailcraft, chase scenes, or duels of manners. Rules for making your own esoteric disciplines, a fluid hand-to-hand combat system, systems for ordering your minions into glorious war, and even methods for navigating the stormy seas await you within these pages.

THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Reign's group-resolution rules are self-contained and easily stacked on top of any other roleplaying system. Want a concrete way to model what happens to the city when your superheroes destroy the Cult of Moloch Triumphant? Use *Reign* to stat up the city and the cult. Ever wonder who'd win if two rival government conspiracies went head to head? *Reign* lets you measure their weaknesses and strengths then test them against one another. Fantasy kingdoms, cosmic empires, and secretive cabals can all be easily managed and modeled with *Reign*.

The companion volumes *Reign: Realms* and *Reign: Realities* offer fully developed worlds for use with *Reign: Rules* but are not necessary for play.



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Reign & RULES

A GAME OF LORDS AND LEADERS

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**VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BACKERS OF THE REIGN KICKSTARTER.
THIS NEW EDITION WOULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT YOUR PATIENCE AND SUPPORT.**

**DEDICATED TO TIM TONER, WHOSE IMAGINATION
IS MATCHED ONLY BY HIS GENEROSITY.**

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 6

Rules and Setting..... 6
 What is the One-Roll Engine? 7
 Which Dice do I use, and How Many? 7
 Reading the Result 7
 Types of Rolls 8
 What If It's Really Tricky? 10
Game Terms 10
 Types of Dice 10
 Other Terms 12

CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTER GENERATION..... 14

Generation Methods 15
Common Elements 15
 Stats..... 15
 Skills 15
 Martial Paths & Esoteric Disciplines..... 21
 Money..... 21
 Passions..... 22
 Advantages..... 22
 Problems 23
Point Buy 23
One Random Roll 23
Mix and Match 24
Character Generation Strategy 29

CHAPTER THREE: THE PLAYER'S CHAPTER..... 31

Skills..... 31
Character Development 38
 Earning XP..... 38
 Spending XP..... 38
Advantages..... 40
Problems 43
Esoteric Disciplines 44
 Ardent Scholarship 44
 Autumn Warfare 45
 Beloved Dignity 46
 Blades for the Empress 46
 The Blessings of Ciovla..... 46
 Brute Racing..... 47
 The Courtier's Legendary Appeal 47
 Dancing Unseen 48
 The Divine Regimen 49
 Ear of the Bard's Guild 49
 Elder Eyes..... 50
 Eloquence and Elocution 50
 The Eyes of the Crown of Salck 50
 Financial Sophistication 50

The General's Visage..... 51
 Golden Insight 52
 Heart Stealing 53
 Inner Senses..... 53
 The Jester's Course..... 53
 Military Deceit 54
 One With the Land 54
 Opetkan Vanishing..... 55
 Path of the Moistened Eye 56
 Pickpocket's Failsafe..... 56
 Political Whispers..... 57
 Proper Climbing..... 57
 Pure Breath Techniques..... 58
 Relentless Pursuit 58
 Respectful Clarity of Speech..... 58
 The School of Perpetual Readiness..... 59
 Soul Armor 60
 Spiritual Escutcheon 60
 Strategic Education..... 61
 Suuldru Mount 61
 Svrana Run 61
 Troubadour's Fortune 62
 Truil Bodywork 63
 The Tyrant's Command 63
 Ussient Herbalism..... 64
Constructing Esoteric Disciplines 65
Money..... 72
 Buying Things..... 72
 Losing Wealth 73
 Gaining Wealth..... 73

CHAPTER FOUR: GETTING THE GAME YOU WANT 77

Mixing It Up 79
 The Raider Reunion..... 79
 Iron Gadflies..... 79
 Bardic Mania 79

CHAPTER FIVE: COMPANIES 80

What is a Company?..... 80
 Goal 80
 The Qualities of a Company..... 80
 Managing Qualities..... 85
 Raising the Pool..... 86
What Companies Do 87
 Attack 87
 Being Informed..... 88
 Counter-Espionage..... 89
 Defend 89
 Espionage..... 89

Improve the Culture 90
Policing 90
Rise in Stature 90
Train and Levy Troops 91
Unconventional Warfare..... 91
Merging and Dividing 93
Combining Companies 93
Improving a Quality 96
Combining 96
Conquest 96
Experience 97
Company Generation 98
Some Company Examples 98
Small Companies 98
Medium Companies 99
Large Companies 100
Assets 101
Influence Assets 101
Might Assets 101
Sovereignty Assets 102
Territory Assets 102
Treasure Assets 103
A Kingdom in a Fistful of Dice 104
What Sets Mean 104
CHAPTER SIX: COMBAT 109
Resolving Combat 109
The Combat Round 109
Damage 110
Cover 111
Environment 112
Gear 113
Armor 113
Weapons 114
Combat Conditions 115
The Seven Maneuvers of Highly Effective People ... 116
Attack 116
Dodge 116
Parry 116
Move 117
Aim 117
Called Shot 117
Multiple Actions 118
Unworthy Opponents 118
Threat 118
Out of the Action 119
Morale Attacks 119
Ganging Up 119
Minion Tactics and Limitations 120
Strategies Against Mobs 121
My Loyal Followers 123
Equipment & Enchantment 123
Inspiration 123
Simplified Combat 125
Get on the Same Page 125
Trust Your GM 125
Try New Stuff 125

**CHAPTER SEVEN:
ADVANCED COMBAT 126**

Simple Maneuvers 126
Display Move 127
Draw 127
Feint 127
Pin 128
Restrain 128
Shove 128
Stand 129
Tackle 129
Threaten 129
Wait 129
Advanced Maneuvers 130
Charge 130
Disarm 130
Disfiguring Strike 130
Display Kill 131
Knockout 131
Slam 132
Strangle 133
Trip 133

Expert Maneuvers 134
Combinations 134
Iron Kiss 134
Redirect 134
Submission Hold 135

Martial Paths 136
Broadcutter's Path 136
The Black Thirst 137
Eye of Death 137
Guai's Path 138
Hell's Hooks 139
The Horsewoman's Course 139
Iron Tortoise Technique 140
Maemeck War-Pick 141
Path of the Razor Heart 141
Path of the Serpent's Fangs 142
Path of Twin Fury 142
Roloneepo (Kicking Sailor) 143
The School of the Insouciant Monkey 145
Spearman Squad 145
Thunder Fist Techniques 146
The Winnowing Axe 146
The Yielding Way 146

CHAPTER EIGHT: FLUID COMBAT 148

The Phases of Fluid Combat 148
Effects Of Fluid Combat 149
Fluid Martial Techniques 152
Flying Serpent's Coil 152

CHAPTER NINE: DIE, MEN! 153

You Need 153
Defining the Scale 153
The Map 154

Setting Up..... 154
 In Battle 154
 That's Enough, But There's More 157

**CHAPTER TEN:
 ENEMIES OF AWFUL SCALE..... 159**

The Factors of an Epic Threat..... 159
 The Factors..... 159
 Attack 160
 Defend 160
Epic Injuries 160

CHAPTER ELEVEN: AFTER THEM! 162

The Lead 162
 Gaining vs. Offsetting..... 162
 Ganging Up 163
 Trumping..... 163
 Pursuit Tactics 164
 Evasion Tactics 164
 Equipment Advantage..... 165
 Resolving Pursuit Rounds 165
System-Specific Esoteric Disciplines 168
 Brute Racing..... 168
 Elder Eyes..... 169
 Pickpocket's Failsafe..... 169
Using Other Esoteric Disciplines 170

CHAPTER TWELVE: MAGIC 172

What Can It Do?..... 172
 What Can It Not Do?..... 173
 How Difficult Is It?..... 173
 How Did It Affect the Setting? 174
Creating New Magic Styles 174
Building Your Own Magic 178
 How Do you Properly Balance Spells? 178
 Spell Building Examples 180
 Burned At the Stake 183
 Poisoned by a Scorned Lover..... 183

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN:
 DREADFUL THINGS OCCUR 183**

Thrown Off a Cliff..... 185
 Drowned..... 185
 Dying a Slow, Agonizing, Helpless,
 Meaningless Death..... 185
General Bestiary 187
 Unworthy Animals 188
 Meaningful Threats 188

**CHAPTER FOURTEEN:
 WORK FOR YOUR LIVES!..... 193**

Overview..... 193
Your Ship 193
 Locations 193
 It's A Custom Frigate..... 194

Crew..... 194
The Storm..... 195
Sink or Sail..... 196
 Beforehand..... 196
 In the Storm..... 197
Fixing..... 200
Sinking 200
 Love Blossoms 201

**CHAPTER FIFTEEN:
 SPLENDID THINGS OCCUR..... 201**

Acquires an Enchanted Artifact..... 204
Receives Lands, Titles & Awards of Merit 206
 Knight..... 206
 Lord/Lady 207
 Duke/Duchess..... 208
 King/Queen 208
 Emperor/Empress..... 208
 Officer of the Crown..... 208
 General 209
 Judge 209
 Master 209
 _____ to Her Royal Highness 209
 Champion 209
 Advisor to the Throne..... 210
 Confidential Pursuer..... 210
 Ambassador 211
Lives Happily Ever After 211

APPENDIX ONE: NAIN 212

One-Roll Monsters..... 212

APPENDIX TWO: ARDWIN 216

The Dwarves..... 216
Metal Heart..... 217
The Dwarven Way 217
 The Elves..... 218
Woodwise 218
Forest Wisdom..... 219
 The Gnomes..... 220
Earth Affinity..... 220
Gnomish Manners..... 220
 The Goblins 221
Goblinry..... 222
The Way Goblins Do Things 222
 The Orcs..... 223
The Mysteries of Purity..... 223
Orc Ways..... 224
 The Sprites 225
Glammer..... 225
Sprite Ways 226

INDEX 227

CHARACTER SHEET 234

COMPANY SHEET..... 238

By my words, cities burn. In my youth, I carried the sword, led from the front, charged the gap and showed the soldiers around me that I would risk death at their side. Those days their shed blood mingled with that of royalty. I killed men face to face, in the clash of arms, and at night I drank in victory and slept in perfect tranquility.

I miss those days.

War taught me well how to seize men's hearts with words, and in the peace I traveled our new lands, telling all they were now free, they were now part of a greater nation, they were partaking in a triumphant destiny that would remake the world. I spoke my grand words and they believed, they endured the taxes on their labor and the exhaustion of their fields and, in time, they gave me their children for the next war. The last war, I promised them. I gave them my word, my royal vow.

Those nights I drank to be cordial. Most nights I slept, having listened only to the very fanatics I'd persuaded. Most nights I believed it all.

That next war I served as general and I came to understand why my youth had been a series of triumphs, that a good war is not built on fair fights but on maneuver and advantage and the treachery of the frightened. I welcomed betrayers and I poisoned brave champions before they could shake my ranks' confidence. I countenanced atrocity to terrify my enemies, I led sorcerers who could sweep the land with plague, bring the dead back hungry, shatter walls in on the children, the wives, the frail elders huddled within. Given the choice to crush everything the enemy fought for, I accepted it and eagerly.

Those nights, I slept poorly. Or I drank.

Now I wear the crown. My father fell to an assassin who was never captured, who may well be a laborer in my very castle. The people who once adored me whisper that by my hand this deed was done. The whispers are fed by the mothers whose sons never came back, by the soldiers who saw their compatriots made monstrous by enchantment, by the paupers taxed into penury by the army's hungry demands.

I cannot sleep, and I dare not drink.

The conquered lands have rebelled, and the riots are beginning even here. My own people cry out against me. My people, for whom my blood fell, and that of so many others. The people call me a liar and a murderer, when everything I have done is for them, for the land, for my country.

But the troops who looted and came home rich in my employ, they are loyal. The wizards answer my call, for gold or power or simply a chance to test their twisted might. I speak the word, sign the paper, gesture with my royal scepter and all the horrors I have raised can descend on those cities, my cities, the cities I won.

At my command they too can burn.

If I do it, I know what the passionate speakers will say, and I know what cause will call the brave swordsmen. If I turn on my own in wrath, there is no turning back until the land is completely broken, chained with despair, sapped of will like a whipped and whimpering dog.

It may be the only way.





Chapter One Introduction

Leadership and authority are not inherently dull.

Welcome to *Reign*, a game of excitement, intrigue, mass battles, tough choices, and dramatic personal responsibility. It's a fantasy game, so you can expect bizarre creatures and glint-eyed barbarians with battle-notched swords. It's also a political game, so look forward to deceitful ambassadors, wretched betrayers, cunning spies—but also loyal governors, heroic generals and stern, implacable monarchs. Moreover, *Reign* is designed from the ground up to let you be one of the movers and shakers. Your character can become the High Priestess, the general, or even the ruler of a nation.

You do this with a **Company**. Many roleplaying games pit a small mismatched band against the evil cult or the brain-washed army or the mindless hordes of twisted Servitors of the Dark Ones. In *Reign*, you get some servitors of your own. Your Company is larger and more influential than a few oddball adventurers, and you can use it to work your will on the world at large. There's a price, of course: the power your followers give you is balanced by your responsibility to them.

Reign is based on the One Roll Engine, and I've tried to leave the system open. There are other One Roll Engine games out there—*Godlike*, *Nemesis*, *Wild Talents*, *A Dirty World* and *Better Angels*. The Company system from *Reign* should easily sit on top of those, allowing you to add a layer of government to those games' personal focus. In fact, I've tried to make the Company rules portable enough that you could stack them on top of any other RPG you play.

RULES AND SETTING

Tabletop RPGs are conversation-created stories told, most often, by a group of players in collaboration with a game moderator or "GM." Now and again, to throw a wrench in everyone's plans, dice get thrown. There's a set of rules—the "engine" or "mechanics"—that open up some options and cut others off. "You can only kill that guy in a single stroke if you roll a pair of tens," just to keep things interesting. If you're an experienced gamer, you get all this.

If you're new, hey, welcome! You belong here. I've got a couple articles up on the internet for total beginners at the following places:

- <http://www.gregstolze.com/HowtoPlay.zip>
- <http://www.gregstolze.com/HowtoRun.zip>

This edition of *Reign* has two books, divided by rules and setting, but as you get into them, it becomes clear that the division is... imperfect. The rules have elements of setting baked in to their descriptions because that's how they were composed and conceived. The rules are tailored for the setting (and, eventually, settings). So feel free to read either book first. Reading the rules can make the different cultures more sensible since this game focuses on societies and guiding or controlling them. On the other hand, reading the setting first can inspire you to see what sort of character you want to have.

YOU GET A PASS

As a GM, there is one set of circumstances where you should let the players succeed without rolling even if the task is important or tricky. It's when the options are "either they succeed or everything stops." If there's no story unless they succeed at getting through a particular door, their attempts to pick it or batter it down shouldn't require a roll.

D. Vincent Baker phrases it as "say yes or roll the dice." My take on that is, if an outcome doesn't matter, letting the characters be awesome has few downsides. I'd clarify it to "make your yes/no/maybe situations clear." Some things they just can't do—"No, you can't roll to chew through handcuffs, c'mon." Some things, *many* things, you roll for, but some you just give them. Understand that sometimes your first instinct may be to make 'em roll, but the game moves faster and has more interesting events if you let the little stuff slide.

and what sorts of adventures you want to pursue, leading you to the many, many, *many* specialized options in this volume.

The first part of this rulebook is the general stuff that shows up in 90+% of the *Reign* games played—how players roll to do things, how they make characters, etc. The second part is a collection of modular rules that your group can use to play the stuff you enjoy while disregarding elements that interest you less. If you want to emphasize combat, you can use a set of highly particular "advanced" rules. If that interests you less than having exciting chase scenes, you can use simpler fights and the more elaborate pursuit mechanics in the chapter entitled **After Them!** In different recipes, different ingredients get used.

This book also has a third section of appendices, covering mechanics for the first two alternate fantasy settings: Nain, and Ardwin. Each has been updated with suggested system recipes from part two.

WHAT IS THE ONE-ROLL ENGINE?

The One-Roll Engine (or ORE for short) is a set of rules for deciding if an event happens in the game's shared setting. Players and the Game Master roll dice. The results of those rolls determine events that aren't otherwise obvious.

No one rolls for actions that are trivially easy or for actions that are impossible. You can't roll to shoot down the sun. You don't need to roll to tie your shoes. You only have to roll during an archery contest if someone cares about the outcome and if it matters to where the game is going. But if an event is in some doubt, and matters to the course of events, you roll dice to see what happens.

WHICH DICE DO I USE, AND HOW MANY?

The ORE uses ten-sided dice (or d10s). In most cases, you roll a number of dice equal to a character's **Stat** (a measure of general natural talent) plus a **Skill** (which measures training, experience or narrow intuitive ability). This combined number is called your **pool** for that task. If, for example, my character is trying to convince a merchant to give me a break on a large purchase, I'd roll my "haggle pool." This consists of my Haggle Skill (which measures mercantile bullying) and my Command Stat (which shows how generally impressive and overbearing I can be). If my Haggle Skill is 4 and my Command Stat is 2, my pool for haggling is 6 dice (The abbreviation of this is **6D**).

REIGN: REALMS

The rules in this book can definitely be adapted to a world of your own creation, but *Reign's* default setting is a pair of continents named Heluso and Milonda, and the details on them are covered in the second *Reign* book, *Realms*. The two continents are home to many nations, ranging from a ragtag group of primitive nomads up through the world's greatest political entity, The Empire. The *Realms* book has a bit of a non-standard structure, starting out with an overview of all of those cultures. After those individual writeups, you get a general overview of the world, which is *decidedly non-scientific*. Brace yourselves.

Maybe this sounds backwards, starting with the immediate and only then expanding out to the general, but my intention is to clarify. By the time you reach the chapter on the continents, you should already have a good understanding of the daily concerns of the people living on them, and that's ultimately where your stories are going to play out. Check out *Reign: Realms* and immerse yourself!

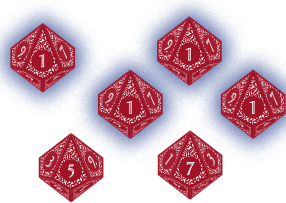
READING THE RESULT

You want to look for **matches**—dice in your pool that turned up the same number. If I roll 2,3,5,6,9, and 10, I receive zero matches and the roll fails.. If I roll 1,1,4,5,7, and 7, I receive two matches. One is a pair of 1s (abbreviated **2x1**), and one is a pair of sevens (**2x7**). It's a little like poker—you're looking for pairs and treys, and higher cards are generally better.

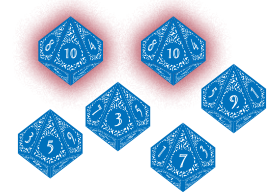
There are two measures of success with this system: how many dice turned up in a set (the set's **Width**) and the size of the number itself (its **Height**).

The most common set is the smallest, a pair. That's a match with Width 2. A pair of twos, a pair of nines, a pair of fives—they all have different Heights but the same Width.

Higher and Wider are both desirable, though in different ways. A **4x1** result has poor Height but great Width. A **2x10** result has great Height but poor Width. Which is better? That depends on the situation because Height and Width indicate different things.



GOOD WIDTH, POOR HEIGHT



POOR WIDTH, GOOD HEIGHT