BASIC ROLEPLAYING

Quick-Start Edition

Sample file

Revised by
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CHAOSIUM INC.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION
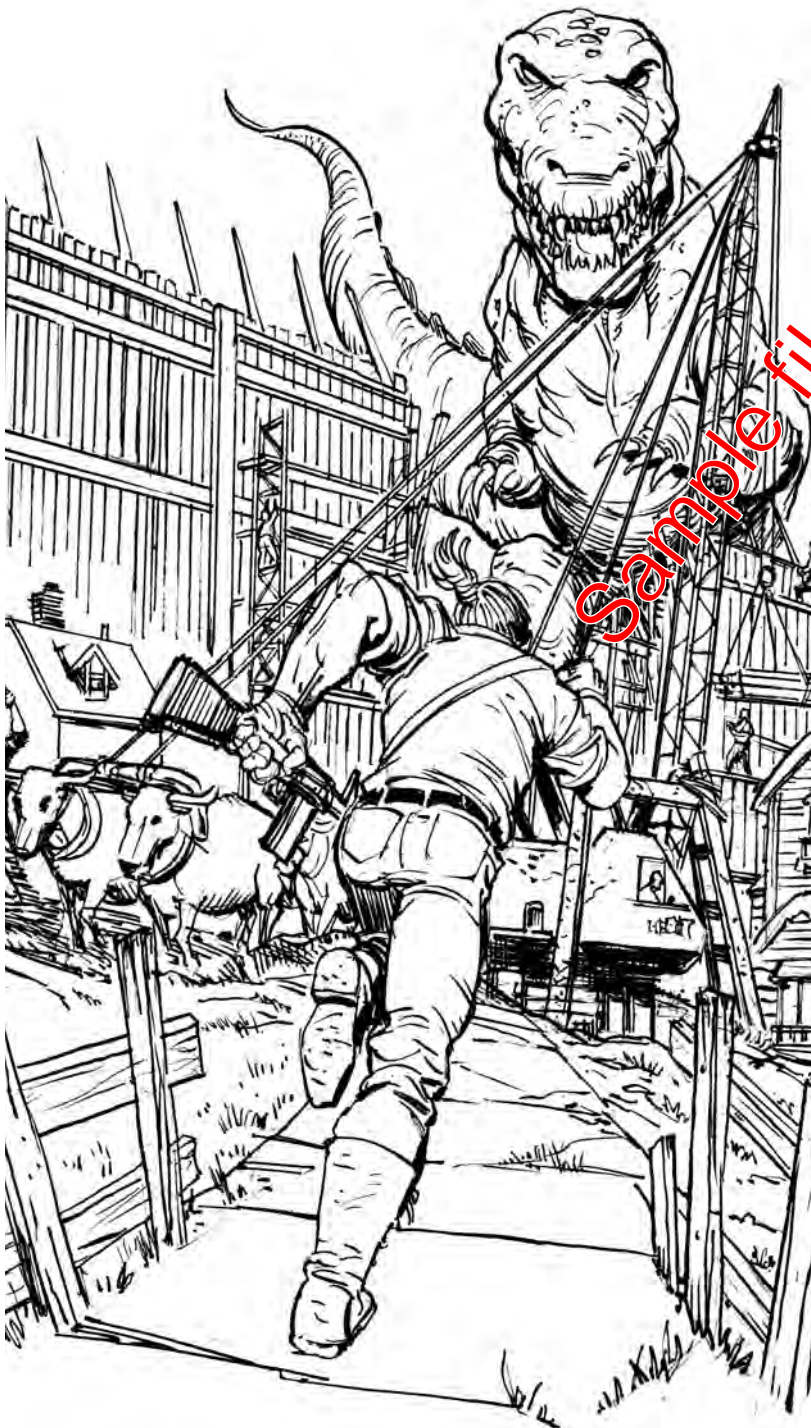
This is the quick start version of *Basic Role-playing*; Chaosium, Inc's D100 roleplaying game system. The *Basic Roleplaying* system (BRP for short) has been utilized in some of the most influential roleplaying games published in the past thirty years (among them *Call of Cthulhu*, *RuneQuest*, *Stormbringer*, and others). This streamlined set of BRP rules is usable in a variety of settings. Presented here is basic character creation; the system; combat; equipment; and a sample combat.

Though the *Basic Roleplaying* core rulebook is recommended for the variety of options and details it provides, these fast play rules contain enough information for enterprising players and gamemasters to run game sessions and even campaigns without further reference. Only imagination and some "homework" are required to turn these quick start rules into a BRP campaign.

Despite the size of the core rulebook, the beauty of the BRP system is its brevity. The fundamentals of the game rules can be described in a few pages, which is the mission of this quick start version.

What is a Roleplaying Game?

The book you hold in your hands is a roleplaying game, a rules framework that allows players to enact stories of adventure, acting out the parts of the main characters. The game rules provide guidelines for what can or can't be done, and dice rolls determine whether the characters succeed or fail at what they attempt to do. In roleplaying games, one player takes on the role of the gamemaster (GM), while the other players assume the roles of player characters (PCs). The GM also acts out the roles of characters not guided by players: these are called non-player characters (NPCs).

Roleplaying is a social game, like improvising a story for a play, television show, or movie. Player characters are the primary roles: PCs are the protagonists the stories revolve around. A PC might be a swaggering gunfighter, depressed pri-

The Basic Roleplaying Core Rulebook

For 30 years Chaosium, Inc. has published games using the *Basic Roleplaying* system. These cover a range of settings, from period horror (*Call of Cthulhu, Cthulhu Dark Ages*), heroic fantasy (*Rune-Quest* and *ElfQuest*), super heroics (*Superworld*), science fiction (*Ringworld*), sword-and-sorcery (*Storm-bringer, Hawkmoon,* and *Elric!*), and others (including *Worlds of Wonder*, which contained fantasy, super heroics, and science fiction in one box). All of these games used the BRP system, though variants called for additional or different rules required for the setting.

Because of its flexible and near-transparent design, the BRP system was highly influential in games to come, introducing new concepts and mechanics as well as new paradigms for game play and character development. It was even more successful among players themselves, and many GMs used a variety of BRP games to cobble together "dream" rules sets, utilizing rules from one BRP game to augment play in another.

In summer 2008, Chaosium, Inc. published *Basic Roleplaying,* a weighty 400-page core rulebook compiling all of the variant rules and systems, unifying the system into a comprehensive set of core rules, including a wide variety of optional rules to allow each GM to customize his or her individual games as desired.

vate eye, mighty sorcerer, brightly–clad super hero, or a humble spacefarer trying to make ends meet. The GM devises and presents the situations that the players adventure through, describing the world where they roam and how that world is affected by the PCs' actions. While each player plays only one PC, the GM presents the entire game setting—representing all of its people, places, monsters, and even gods.

The GM has a story to present, an interactive scenario in which the PCs are challenged to interact with NPCs that the GM personifies. Play is mostly conversation: the GM outlines some situation or encounter and the players say what the PCs say or attempt to do. Rules provide impartial guidelines for successes and failures of actions attempted. Using the game rules, players announce what the PCs will do, and roll dice to determine what happens. If needed, the GM interprets how the PCs' actions affect the game world (NPCs, etc.). The PCs will use skills and abilities to face these challenges, oppose other PCs and NPCs, and to explore the setting the GM has created.

Players create PCs by defining them with rules that help measure capabilities in quantifiable terms. This information is written down on the character sheet. Information on a character sheet includes things like strength, intelligence, speed, education, skills, and other abstract elements that make up a person – though 'personality' is evoked by how the PC is played by the player. *For example, though there is no numerical value for 'irritable', the player may speak in such a manner and give that personality to the PC.* The PC's character sheet is a cross between a résumé and a report card: it defines what he or she can do, and how good he or she is at it. Roleplaying is what brings the character to life.

There is a major difference between what the player knows and what the PC knows. At the gaming table players are privy to "behind the scenes" information that PCs don't have, and they must be careful not to take advantage of this knowledge. Dice rolls are used to determine if a PC will know something, even when the player may already know the answer. Similarly, there is no reason a PC's expertise is limited to things the player knows—a PC can be an expert in fields the player has no idea about.

The purpose of roleplaying is to have a good time. It's fun to deal with dangers that are not truly dangerous, threats that vanish when everyone rises from the table, and monsters that evaporate when the lights go on. If play goes well, the players feel that they've been to an exciting new world for a while, find strength in coping with it, and may even know victory.

Length of Play

How long does role playing take? There are three ways to measure time spent role playing. First is the *session*. This is the actual amount required to play a game. Game sessions usually last from three to five hours, though some are shorter and sometimes they go for much longer. The second measure of game time is the *scenario*. This is a chapter of the story. There is usually a beginning, middle, and an ending to a scenario, consisting of some roleplaying, some action, and a dramatic resolution. The longest measure of game time is the *campaign*, a series of scenarios linked together to form an epic or engrossing longer story. For an easy way to wrap your head around it, liken it to reading a novel. The session is the amount of time to read a chapter. The scenario is one or more chapters. The campaign is the whole novel itself. 'One–shot' games are scenarios that do not have a place in a campaign—they're like short stories. They may take longer than one sitting to read, but they do not continue beyond the end of the story.

Materials Required to Play

Players will need little other than this rulebook, a pencil, paper, and a set of gaming dice. Dice are available at most gaming and hobby stores, and come in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes. See below for more information on dice and dice–rolling methods. Some gaming groups use miniatures as a representation of the characters: if so, players might each bring a miniature resembling his or her PC. The primary ingredient required is creative energy, though snacks are also appreciated.

The GM will need a little bit more than a player, but not much more. A copy of this rulebook and more blank paper for notes is the minimum, while a GM may choose to bring additional copies of the character sheet provided on page 31 (or found online at **www.chaosium.com**). The GM will need at least one full set of dice. If the group likes to use miniatures for role playing, then the GM should bring a small assortment of miniatures to represent the various NPCs and creatures the PCs will encounter.

Dice and Reading Dice Results

Basic Roleplaying uses a variety of polyhedral dice to obtain random results. These are available in a wide range of sizes, colors, and qualities from games and hobby stores, or other sources. To play, a group will need at least one set of these dice, though it is easier and more convenient if each player has a set. A typical gaming dice includes the following dice: D4, D6, D8, D10, D12, and D20.

The most important dice roll in *Basic Roleplaying* is the percentile dice roll, which is a roll of two ten-sided dice (or one ten-sided die rolled twice). In a percentile dice roll, the first value is the "tens" while the second is the "ones." For example, a roll of 3 and 7 on percentile dice means a result of 37. Generally, with percentile dice, the lower you roll, the better.

Other dice rolls involve multiples, combinations, or dice results that are modified. *For example: 3D6 means roll three six-sided dice; D10+D4 means roll a D10 and a D4 and add the results together; D8+1 means roll a D8 and add 1 to the result.* D6-2 means roll a D6 and subtract 2 from the result. Die rolls are never modified to below 0, however, so the example of D6-2 with a roll of 1 or 2 will just equal 0.

Responsibilities of the Gamemaster

Sometimes, the GM has the most fun in the game, but this comes with the largest share of responsibility. Using a published scenario or one he or she has created, the GM narrates the game universe and acts as the PCs' opposition. That opposition must be smart and mean, or the players will be bored, and it must be presented fairly, or they will be outraged and the game will not be fun (which is the primary point of roleplaying). Whereas each player must share the spotlight with all of the other players, the GM is constantly interacting with all of the players.

The GM should read and be familiar with these rules. Know the general procedures for combat and powers, but it's not necessary to memorize everything—most questions can be answered as they arise.

As for scenarios, there are a vast range of scenarios for many different settings and games. Chaosium Inc. has published many adventures for *Call of Cthulhu* and other game lines, most of which utilize the *Basic Roleplaying* system. Other games are plentiful—and converting a scenario from one of them to *Basic Roleplaying* is fairly easy. Ideas for scenarios are also easy to come by—almost any film or book with some aspect of danger and excitement can be turned into a roleplaying scenario.

Ultimately, all that's required is to come up with a story, write up some foes or encounters. Invite some friends over and have them create characters. Summarize the rules for them, and it's time to play.

INTRODUCTION
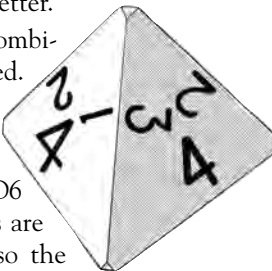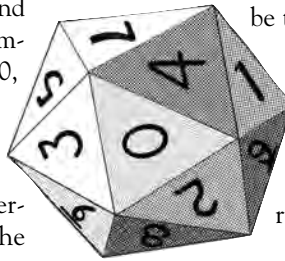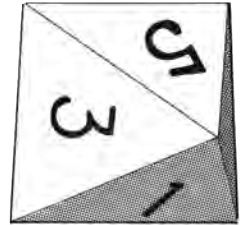
CHAPTER TWO
CHARACTERS

*E*ach player will need to create a player character. The player character (PC) is a representation of him- or herself in the game world and does not have to be anything like the actual player. Players can be their exact opposites as their PCs: strange races, exotic and dangerous professions, even the opposite gender are some of the possibilities. The gamemaster (GM) may ask that the players create PCs suitable for a particular setting, so if the game is set in the Old West, no spaceship captains, medieval wizards, or cavemen. (On the other hand, quite a bit of fun can be had trying to get these wholly-inappropriate characters into this setting, and seeing how they react to it.)

This section covers the process of creating a player character for *Basic Roleplaying*. The procedure for creating a non-player character (NPC) is less involved, and is covered later.

The Character Sheet

Each player will need a copy of the character sheet presented on pages 11 and 45 of this book. It's possible to just write everything onto a blank sheet of paper, but the character sheet makes things a lot easier. *The character sheet presented here is a simplified version of the normal* Basic Roleplaying *character sheet, which has additional information not covered in this quick start.* The character sheet includes the following sections:

• **Identity**: This is for the character's basic information, aspects that don't have any game effects but help detail *who* the character is.

• **Characteristics & Rolls**: These values describe qualities of the character such as how strong she is, how smart he is, how fast she is, how attractive he is, etc. Rolls are based off characteristics, and are percentage values rolled to see if the character succeeds or fails at a task.