

Unnamed Swashbuckling RPG

Wild and crazy swashbuckling adventure

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Basic Rules

Core mechanic: Roll 2d20. The person with narrative control picks which d20 roll counts. Add the appropriate stat, any relevant skills, and any other modifiers. Check the result against the opposing character or a set difficulty, with the higher total succeeding.

A roll of a 1 on the chosen d20 is an automatic catastrophic and/or hilarious failure. A roll of a natural 20 is an automatic wild success, providing the player can describe it sufficiently well.

Narrative control: This usually falls to whichever character is currently acting; however, if two characters are acting, it falls to whoever describes the scene better or has more of a stake in the outcome. The GM is final arbiter of this, or it can be decided by vote.

Control can also be bought via an auction of Kismet Points. Players bid Kismet Points either aloud or silently, GM's discretion. Winner pays and chooses the d20; in silent auction mode, all parties involved pay.

Auctions held before the die roll have no barrier to entry. Auctions after the die roll cost 1 Kismet Point to enter, nonrefundable.

The GM counts as a player for purposes of determining narrative control; NPCs will by default be controlled by the GM, but can have control taken by other players. Likewise, the GM can vie for control of a PC's dice if it seems appropriate. A player who takes control of the GM's dice does not necessarily get to see them; they can simply specify "high die" or "low die."

Kismet Points: Players start each session with 15+1d4 Kismet Points. Players may trade Kismet Points or barter them with one another. A player receives a free Kismet Point whenever the same number comes up on both d20s. Kismet Points do not carry over between sessions.

The GM starts each game with an arbitrary and secret number of Kismet Points, which may be determined by rolling 4d8, but could also depend on the narrative needs of the story arc or the mood the GM is in that day.

Stats

Primary Stats

Wit: Shrewdness, alacrity, cunning, and an ear for puns. The ability to engage in a duel of wits and not be unarmed. Roughly equivalent to both Intelligence and Charisma. Wit is the key to captaining ships.

Daring: Bravery, backbone, grittiness. The ability to keep going when the chips are down, possibly without even noticing. Vaguely equivalent to Constitution, except not necessarily physical. Daring is the key to absorbing damage.

Flair: Flamboyance, derring-do, and putting the swash in swashbuckle. The ability to pull off crazy stunts, and look stylish while doing it. Somewhat like a combination of Dexterity and Charisma. Flair is the key to movement and stunts.

Might: Great strength, powerful magic, or whatever psychics do. The ability to do what you do best. Like Strength for fighters or Intelligence for mages (but without the handicap of being able to figure things out [or even necessarily being literate]). Might is the key to dealing damage with your specialty attacks.

You'll notice that there is no stat equivalent to Wisdom. That's because these are swashbucklers.

Secondary Stats

Secondary stats are not generated in the same way as the primary stats, nor do they have associated skills.

Health: Hit points, toughness, life. The ability to take damage and not be dead yet.

Luck: Karma, fortune's favor. The ability to turn situations in your favor.

Dread: Reputation, intimidation factor. How well-known you are as a fearsome swashbuckler.

Stat Generation

Primary stats are ranked on a scale of 1 to 7, and start at 0. The average person is a 3. The average badass swashbuckling hero (or villain) is a 4. Most characters will be about average in some things, and far above average in others.

Stats can be generated in several ways:

- * Start with a total of 16 points and distribute them among each stat.
- * Roll 4d8 and distribute the points among the stats, with any extra points becoming Kismet Points useable in the first session.
- * Roll 1d8+1 for each stat in order, with extra points becoming Kismet Points.

Health is calculated as follows: $40 + ((\text{Daring} + \text{Might} + \text{Dread}) * 6)$. At the GM's discretion, players may each add 1d8 to the health of their character.

Luck is calculated as follows: $(\text{Wit} + \text{Flair}) * 1.5$, rounded down. A character starts each session with their Luck value in Luck Tokens, and may spend one for any one of the following effects:

- * Absorb 1d8 in damage without losing Health.
- * Deal an extra 1d8 in damage.
- * Add +3 to any d20 roll.
- * Take back a minor stupid thing they just did.
- * Regain 1d8 Health.
- * Change a single d8 roll of their own or someone else's into an 8 or a 1.

No more than 2 Luck Tokens may be spent at once. The GM may wish to restrict the number of Luck Tokens which can be spent during each scene.

Dread starts out as 0. It is increased through advancing the character.

Skills

A skill is either trained or untrained, and correlates to a stat. Each player starts with as many

trained skills in each stat as they have points in that stat. So a character with a Flair of 4 could have 4 Flair-related skills. At the GM's discretion, characters may roll a d4 and add that many trained skills under any stat or combination of stats.

A trained skill gives a +1 bonus to rolls in that situation. Skills are at the discretion of the GM. "Stealth," for example, is too broad, but "sneaking quietly" or "blending into shadows" would be valid skills. Which stat a skill falls under is also at the GM's discretion.

Each skill also gives 1d8 worth of mechanical benefit once per scene. For example, a character with the "healing" skill (under Wit for non-magical healing or Might for divine or magical) could heal themselves or an ally for 1d8 worth of Health. A character with the "shrugging off injuries" skill under Daring could ignore 1d8 of damage from an attack. Someone with the "fireballs" Might skill could add 1d8 damage to a fireball attack, or add 1d8 to their d20 roll to attempt to hit with the fireball.

Example skills in each category:

Wit: Composing couplets, deadly insults, handling cursed artifacts, seduction, bluffing, playing musical instruments, deciphering codes, perceptiveness, sensing lies. Certain magical skills can go here for non-arcane characters.

Daring: Walking through fire, surviving falls from heights, recovering from injuries, ignoring intimidation, intimidating others. Certain physical combat skills can go here for non-martial characters.

Flair: Skulking in shadows, swinging from ropes, balancing on rolling barrels, climbing unclimbeable things, leaping across rooftops, cheating at cards, balancing. Certain physical combat skills can go here for non-martial characters.

Might: Anything related to the character's theme. Flying jump kicks, ancient martial arts, or throwing enemies through walls for martial characters, illusion spells, potion brewing, throwing fireballs or demon summoning for magical characters, and anything that seems appropriate for any other kind of character.

Combat

Combat proceeds in rounds, with each character taking one turn per round. Characters roll a Wit check to see in which order they act. This can be done at the beginning of combat, or at the start of each round. Characters who are surprised take a penalty to this check, the size of which depends on the exact situation.

Movement

Movement is meant to be abstracted, but if you wish to play on a grid, then each character can move their Flair in squares every round. For attacks that would have a range, such as a berserker's charge or a mage's fireball, the range is equal to the Might of the character in squares.

Attacking

The attacking character describes their attack, then rolls whatever stat is most appropriate in the situation - usually Might, but it could also be Flair for a character swinging on a rope and kicking a chandelier at their enemy, Daring for a character rolling through an oil fire and bear hugging their enemy, or Wit for a character attempting to bait an opponent into a deadly mistake.

Any applicable skill is added to the roll. Multiple skills could be added from multiple stats, if the attack encompasses all of them - for example, a character leaping across rafters and attacking with a rapier could add both skills, despite rafter-leaping coming from Flair and rapier-brandishing

coming from Might. This encourages complex, over-the-top attacks, though obviously subject to the GM's discretion.

The defending character likewise describes their action, and rolls whatever stat is appropriate, adding the relevant skill or skills. Flair is best for dodging, Daring for simply soaking up attacks, and Wit for distracting the enemy with wordplay. Might can also be appropriate.

Whichever character has the higher total wins. Each character will normally have narrative control over their own roll at this point, but depending on how the scene has been going, who gives a more vivid description, who has more recently bribed the GM, and other equally important factors, the narrative control could go either way.

The winning character rolls a number of d8s equal to the value of the stat used in the attack. They choose three of these, and add up the total. The attack does that much damage.

The defender ignores an amount of damage equal to their Daring. The remaining damage is subtracted from Health.

A character who drops below 0 Health is unconscious. Unconscious characters who continue taking damage fall further into negative Health totals. Unconscious characters can be slain only with a coup de grace, which any character present on the battlefield can attempt to deflect. Deflecting a coup de grace can be done by action of the character, or description on the part of the player; e.g., "As Turak is about to stab Captain Silverbeard through the chest, a barrel rolls out of the hatch and knocks him over!" Deflection via description is done with an unmodified pair of d20 rolls.

Unconscious characters who are not attacked will usually survive and recovery normally. Characters who are in extreme situations, e.g., pits of lava, may die (instantly or after several rounds), at the GM's discretion.

Damage from non-combat situations, such as falling and spontaneous combustion, will be decided by the GM rolling a bunch of dice behind the screen and then making up a number without looking at them. This is similar to how other games handle it, but easier to remember and more honest.

Recovery

During combat, unconscious characters roll a d8 once per round. On an odd roll, they regain that much Health. If this pushes their Health above 0, they regain consciousness. A character that regains consciousness, either through natural recovery or the spending of Luck Tokens, regains an additional 3d8 of Health as soon as they become conscious.

Outside of combat, characters are assumed to heal fully after every battle except when dramatically appropriate. Random die-rolling is also encouraged as a way to determine healing.

Certain characters may also have skills which relate to healing or regeneration, and can speed up recovery in and out of combat. If magical items are present in the campaign, these also may aid with recovery for conscious and unconscious characters alike.

Ships

Ship Stats

Ship combat is similar to character combat. Each ship has a Flair and Daring rating, based on what type of vessel it is. Rather than Might, a ship's attacks are determined by its Captain's Dread. Larger vessels (minimum crew of 5 or above) may also add half the First Mate's Dread to attacks. Which ship moves first is determined by the Captain's Wit score.

Rather than Health, ships have Morale. Morale is reduced by taking damage, and also by witnessing acts of daring on the part of the attackers and incompetence on the part of the defenders.

A ship's Morale is calculated as follows: (Daring + Captain's Wit + number of crew) * 5. Larger vessels may also add the First Mate's Wit to their Morale total. The number of crew used for the calculation is the number of crew present, not the potential number of crew who could fit on the ship. If a crew member dies, the Morale of the ship immediately drops by 5.

Ships have a minimum number of required crew, and a maximum number of crew that can fit on the ship. Crews generally have to be paid, either a steady wage or a share of the plunder.

Each individual ship has attacks that are used in conjunction with the Captain's Dread, exactly how Might skills function in regular combat. The most standard attack is Cannons, but Trebuchets or Flaming Trebuchets also occur, as well as even more eldritch forms of attack. Different attacks have different ranges and limitations; for example, broadside cannons can only fire when the attacking boat is broadside to the defending boat.

Ships also have Dread Ratings. A Captain must have at least that much Dread to command the ship. Attempting to command a ship with a higher Dread Rating than one's own Dread requires constant checks to keep the crew in line, and keep the vessel itself under control. Once each per scene, the Captain and First Mate can add the ship's Dread Rating to any one ship-related check.

Maneuvering

All non-attack maneuvers are based on the Captain's Wit. A ship can move its Flair in distance every round. Simply moving over normal (i.e., non-stormy or reef-infested) seas without turning does not require a check unless wind conditions are accounted for. Turning does require a check; a failed check means the ship continues in the same direction.

Running aground can damage the ship, as can running afoul of reefs. Failed checks during storms also cause Morale damage, and some crew might be washed overboard.

Accounting for wind is optional, as these rules may be considered confusing. If wind conditions are included, then a ship can move its Flair on a beam reach, 1.5x its Flair (rounded down) on a run and (in certain ships) on a close haul, and half its Flair (rounded down) while tacking directly upwind.

If the Captain fails a check to maneuver the ship while heading upwind, the ship is stuck in irons and will take another check next round to get out of irons. It drifts one square backwards but otherwise does not move. Any rounds spent in irons beyond the first incur 1d8 of Morale damage. A ship that fails while on a run may jibe, substantially lowering crew Morale but not impacting speed. A ship whose Captain fails on a beam reach moves at only half its Flair.

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Combat

Crew members are typically occupied with sailing or firing weapons. They make checks representing how well they fulfill these tasks. Successes deal 1d8 of damage to the enemy ship's Morale, while failures deal 1d8 damage to their own ship's Morale.

The Captain spends their turns making the ship's attack and defense rolls. As in regular combat, they roll their Dread (and possibly the First Mate's) and the ship's attack type against the enemy, and if successful, roll their Dread's worth of d8s. Unlike in regular combat, the Captain chooses 4 d8s to deal damage with, rather than 3.

The First Mate may either assist with the Captain's attacks, or with the crew's. A First Mate may help up to their Wit in crew members with checks every round. The First Mate only makes one

check to assist, no matter how many crew are being helped.

For large combats with many NPC crew members, the crew's activities can be abstracted into three pairs of d20 rolls. All successes or failures indicates that is what occurred, while a partial success or failure indicates only a small amount of Morale damage is dealt or sustained.

Boarding

When a ship is reduced to less than half its Morale, a boarding may be attempted. The attacking ship must be within its Flair in distance from the defending ship. This maneuver is based on the Captain's Wit. The opposing Captain also rolls a Wit-based defence.

If the attacking Captain wins, the attacking ship pulls alongside the defending one. Half as many crew may board for free as the difference in totals between the attacking Captain's check and the defender's. The remaining crew may attempt various acrobatics to board as well. Either the Captain or the First Mate must always board, while the other must stay on their own ship.

A Captain whose ship has been boarded can attempt to sail away from the boarding vessel. This is another pair of Wit checks. The Captain of the boarded vessel takes a penalty equal to the number of enemies currently on his or her own ship. If the boarded Captain succeeds, each enemy crew on board has one chance to leap back to their own vessel before the two ships are separated.

When a ship is reduced to less than a quarter of its Morale, it is disabled and can no longer attack, defend, or move. It might drift with the wind or the current, but otherwise remains motionless. An attacking crew can then board easily, and engage in individual combat, or demand a surrender.

When a ship is reduced to 0 Morale, it is sunk.

Rallying and Repairs

Rather than attack, a Captain can choose instead to try and rally the crew. This can take many forms, and, on a success, restores 4d8 worth of Morale. A Captain may only raise the Morale up to $\frac{3}{4}$ (rounded down) of the normal total through rallying. All other Morale damage takes the form of physical repairs which must be done in port.

Example Ships

<u>Name</u>	<u>Dread Rating</u>	<u>Daring</u>	<u>Flair</u>	<u>Min. Crew</u>	<u>Max. Crew</u>	<u>Weapons</u>
Lucky Jake's Skiff	2	2	5	1	4	muskets
Fairwind Galleon	3	4	2	10	17	cannons
Blackkeel Cutter	8	5	8	7	12	cannons, grappling guns
Capt. Scar's Flagship	14	10	3	20	40	cannons, fire trebuchets

Non-Combat Checks

Non-combat situations requiring checks (i.e., swinging across a chasm, opening a locked door, sneaking quietly) should be handled with the core mechanic, rolling against a difficulty set by the GM.

If two characters are in opposition, they roll against each other, possibly with situational modifiers. For example, if one character is trying to force open a barred door that another is trying to keep shut, the character trying to keep the door shut has an advantage.

Any number of characters may aid one another in making checks, when appropriate. A character who succeeds at their check against a fixed difficulty adds half of their combined modifiers to the main character's check. When several characters are vying against one or more other characters, the highest roll in each group is used.

Example Checks

<u>Situation</u>	<u>Possible Skill</u>	<u>Stat</u>	<u>Difficulty</u>
Healing an ally in combat	Magical Healing	Might	15
Controlling a summoned genie	Demonology	Might	30
Wooing a fair maiden	Composing Poetry	Wit	25
Wooing a maiden with low standards	Bawdy Joke-telling	Wit	15
Reading a secret treasure map	Deciphering Codes	Wit	20
Breaking down a wooden door	Smashing Objects	Might	15
Carrying an unconscious companion	Heavy Lifting	Might	10
Walking a tightrope	Balancing	Flair	15
Swinging on a rope from ship to ship	Aerial Acrobatics	Flair	20
Opening a locked door	Lock Picking	Flair	20
Diving deep to dredge up a treasure	Holding breath	Daring	20
Running through fire without injury	Impossible Badassery	Daring	30
Keeping afloat on stormy seas	Swimming	Daring	25

Magic

While the game is primarily about swashbuckling, magic does have its place. Magical skills aren't always as straightforward as d8s of damage or swinging across chasms.

A magical skill in combat might have an effect other than damage on a successful attack. Perhaps the target takes a penalty to further rolls, is stunned, confused, or perceives an illusion. Such effects should be discussed with the GM before being chosen as skills.

Outside of combat, magical skills might scry the winds for images of enemies, or summon or calm a raging storm. Again, these effects are subject to the GM's discretion, but a good guideline is that the higher a magical character's Might, the more powerful their effects.

Example Spells

<u>Magical Skill</u>	<u>Might</u>	<u>Magical Skill</u>	<u>Might</u>
Light Small Fire	1	Scry the Winds	5
Move Small Object	2	Summon Stormwinds	6
Alter Playing Cards	3	Summon Monsters	7
Create Illusory Monster	4	Create Whirlpool	7

Items

Equipment should be less important than the characters' base stats. However, it can be fun to have some mechanical effects, especially from special items such as ancestral swords or legendary artifacts.

Weapons may add to damage, damage dice rolled, attack rolls, some combination of the above, or just look pretty. Armor typically absorbs a small amount of damage, but can add to the defense check.

Various mundane items can add situational bonuses - e.g., a well-made flute would add to a Wit check to play music. Some items may merely be necessities - having a flute is a prerequisite for playing a flute.

Magical items can do just about anything.

GMs and players are discouraged from keeping track of food and other essential yet boring supplies. Encumbrance is also not something that should be considered, though it can be fun to have vast treasure hordes hidden somewhere.

Example Items

<u>Item</u>	<u>Effect</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Dragonsteel rapier	+2 damage	40 silver doubloons
Troll-fang spiked club	+1 to Might attacks	25 copper pieces
Eel-leather whip	+1 damage, crazy stunts	10 silver doubloons
Sharkhide vest	absorbs 1 damage	30 silver doubloons
Giant skull helmet	+1 to intimidate	???
Magical amulet	+1 to natural healing	20 gold doubloons

The main purpose of items, especially loot, is for character advancement. Characters can start with a small amount of items and loot, at the GM's discretion.

Character Advancement

Characters do not have levels. At the GM's discretion, they can occasionally be awarded additional stat points or trained skills. The main way characters advance is through gaining Dread.

Dread can be gained through great deeds. It is also increased by loot, ale, and wenches (or sexuality-appropriate wench equivalents).

A suggested conversion ratio is that every 100 gold doubloons the character acquires be worth 1 point of Dread. Every 75 gold doubloons they spend on ale for other swashbucklers earn them 1 point of Dread. Every wench they seduce is worth 1 point of Dread. Classier wenches may be worth more, and visa versa.

Defeating notable enemies can increase Dread, while suffering ignominious defeats decreases it. Every ship taken adds at least 1 point of Dread, with more gained if it is a larger or better armed ship than the one the character used in the attack. Having one's ship successfully boarded or sunk invokes a severe loss of Dread, with up to half the character's Dread lost, depending on the shamefulness of the defeat.

NPCs and Enemies

All things non-player may be constructed in one of two ways: just like PCs, or the quick way. The quick way is as follows:

Combat: This is the stat they use for all attacks and defenses, no matter how thematically unrelated those maneuvers may be. Either start with 4 and add 1d4, or simply pick a value, usually between 1 and 8.

Armor: The amount of damage absorbed that does not subtract from Health. Roll 1d8 or pick a number, usually between 1 and 8.

Health: Start with 20 and add $\text{Combat} * 4$, or simply pick an amount that seems right.

Other: Anything that isn't Combat. Roll 1d8, or pick a number.

Enemy ships are constructed similarly:

Threat: The overall threat level of the ship. Commensurate with Dread Rating. Roll half Threat (rounded down) dice for attacks. If you're not bothering with the Captain's Dread, use Threat for attack rolls. Use it for anything that isn't covered by something else. Roll 2d8, or pick a number.

Flair: Used for movement. If you're not statting out a Captain, use in place of the Captain's Wit. Roll 1d8 or pick a number.

Daring: Used to absorb damage. Roll 1d8 or pick a number.

Morale: Calculate based on the Daring, Captain, and crew, or use Threat * 6.

Sample Characters

Lucky Jake the Buccaneer

Wit: 6
Daring: 3 Health: 94
Flair: 4 Luck: 15
Might: 3 Dread: 3

Wit Skills

Bawdy Joke-telling
Reading the Wind
Composing Poetry
Seduction
Deciphering Secret Codes
Bluffing

Daring Skills

Resisting Intimidation
Swimming
Clinging to Ropes

Flair Skills

Card-sharking
Rope-swinging
Juggling
Fitting through Small Spaces

Might Skills

Brawler Punches
Throwing Heavy Things
Dagger Stabs

Loot

50 gold doubloons
21 silver doubloons
2 rubies
five ivory-hilted daggers

Known for his dashing good looks and unfailing charm, Lucky Jake is one of the most ironically named pirates on the seven seas. The last three ships he's served on have all been sunk, and now no crew will take him on. He's taken to plying the canals on his skiff, giving rides to rich gentlemen and stealing their wives.

When he's not on his skiff, he can be found in the taverns, gambling and brawling. He usually wins at cards and loses at fighting, which everyone agrees is a fair enough balance.

Lorelei the Enchantress

Wit: 4
Daring: 2 Health: 172
Flair: 3 Luck: 10
Might: 7 Dread: 13

Wit Skills

Weave Rhyme
Seduce
Inspire Jealousy
Discern Lies

Daring Skills

Resist Charms
Ignore Pain

Flair Skills

Walk Quietly
Pick Locks
Hide in Shadows

Might Skills

Charm
Alter Weather
Entangle
Turn Invisible
Cast Glamour
Voodoo
Confuse

Loot

gold doubloons
black pearls
fire opals
magical amulets

As much myth as woman, Lorelei is rumoured to live in a shack on the Howling Isle. Sailors make warding gestures whenever they pass by, fearful that her charms will lure them to their deaths. It is said that she possesses wealth beyond imagining - endless piles of gold, pearls, and opals. Some say that a sea-charm made by her can ward off even the direst of ills - but that it is not worth the cost.