d20ES

The extra simple d20 tabletop roleplaying system

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction

d20 Extra Simple (d20ES) is a rules-light narrative-focused tabletop roleplaying system. It does not take place in any specific setting and can be adapted to any story you would like to tell.

As this is a rules-light system, it is catered towards players and game masters that have a little bit more experience playing roleplaying games.

Getting Started

You need a group of two to six people, along with some paper, dice, pencils and a comfortable space to play in. One player will be the **Game Master (GM)**, who will help to set the scene, determine the **outcome** of **actions** and act as the **non-player characters (NPCs)**. Everyone else will control one **player character (PC)**.

Players should agree upon a **game concept** before each creating a **character concept** that exists within the game world. The game is based on 'theatre of the mind' gameplay, where the player's dialogue describes the actions they attempt and the GM calls for the necessary **skill checks** or **rules**.

The group of PCs may called a **group** or **party** and will interact with each other, the world and NPCs under the guidance of the GM, dice and these rules. Everything you need to play is included within this book, along with something to take notes on and one **twenty-sided die (d20)** and a handful of regular **six-sided dice (d6)** per player.

Character Creation

1. Select your **descriptor**
2. Choose your **skills**
3. Define your **tics**

Descriptors

Descriptors help to describe your character in broad strokes. They allow you to apply **minor effort (ME)** at no cost to their associated combat or skill checks. Each player should select one of the following descriptors for their character.

Smart

A **smart** PC is better at wielding the forces of nature, whether they manifest as **arcane** or **scientific powers**. PCs can add a minor effort die at no cost when making **arcane/scientific combat rolls** and **intelligence-based skill checks**.

Smooth Talker

A **smooth talking** PC is better at using their **wit** to take them out of precarious situations and wend their way into another's confidence. PCs can add a minor effort die at no cost when making **smooth talker skill checks**.

When a smooth talker scores a **critical hit** or **defeats an enemy**, they can choose to give all nearby PCs that can see and hear them **advantage** until the end of their next turn or give all enemies that can see and hear them **disadvantage** until the end of their next turn.

Strong

A **strong** PC is better at **close combat** and being able to **resist damage**, as well as skills that require **strength**. PCs can add a minor effort die at no cost when making **melee combat rolls** and **strength-based skill checks**.

Swift

A **swift** PC is better at **ranged** combat and being able to **dodge attacks**, as well as skills requiring **dexterity**. PCs can add a minor effort die at no cost when making **ranged combat rolls** and **dexterity-based skill checks**.

Tough

A **tough** PC gains an extra level on the **health track**. When this level of health is lost, the PC may not gain **advantage** until the end of their next turn. A tough PC can also add an effort die at no cost when making **endurance-based skill checks**.

Skills

Skills help you to further individualise your character. They are non-combat specific (i.e. they are not related to character skill with different weaponry or combat styles) and allow your PC to gain **advantage** once per **scene**, when using that skill. Each player may select two skills for their character to be trained in.

A list of common skills is provided on the following page, but any skill may be taken, with your GM's permission. Each skill must be associated with an appropriate **descriptor**, which allows the PC to apply **minor effort** when using that skill at no cost.

Where multiple descriptors are listed, the player must choose one. This does not, however, prevent any PC without that descriptor from selecting that skill.

- Acrobatics (Swift)
- Delve / Analyse (Smart)
- Athletics (Strong)
- Bluff (Smooth Talker)
- Diplomacy (Smooth Talker)
- Endurance (Tough)
- First Aid (Smart / Tough)
- Insight (Smart)
- Intimidate (Strong / Smooth Talker)
- Perception (Smart)
- Stealth (Swift / Smart)

Tics

Tics do not modify **combat or skill checks**, but encourage players to **roleplay** their characters, gaining additional **minor effort** dice (d6) in return, when their PC's tic adds flavour to the story, at the GM's discretion.

Each player starts with three minor effort dice. Players may choose to keep their own set of d6s to roll as they apply minor effort, or simply mark down their remaining uses on their character sheet and roll from a communal pool of d6s.

Each player should create a tic, which can be any action unique to their PC that does not affect gameplay. Some examples are provided below.

- Constantly taps their foot while standing.
- Always carries a comb and brushes their hair.
- Needs to use their fingers to count.

Gear

PCs starting a new story start with appropriate **gear**, which is not expected to impact the wounds they inflict or sustain. As PCs progress through their story, they can **acquire** gear that allows them to inflict **additional damage** or **absorb some damage** they would otherwise sustain, at the GM's discretion.

Upskilling

As characters progress through the story they become better at what they do or gain new skills. By expending some effort during down time, they are able to formalise those improvements. Players can trade in three **minor effort** dice to **upskill** their PCs in a number of ways:

- Choose to **train** an additional **skill**. Once per **scene**, your character may gain **advantage** with that skill. *Any character may have a maximum of five skills, after which they may choose instead to replace one trained skill with another.*
- **Specialise** in one trained skill. Your character may now gain **advantage** with that **skill** twice per **scene**. *Any character may have a maximum of two specialised skills, after which they may choose instead to swap their specialisation to a different trained skill.*
- Increase your character's stamina. Your character may now apply **minor effort** once per **day** at no cost. *The length of a day is determined by the story and at your GM's discretion.*

Once a character has upskilled at least three times, one of the following options may also be selected, at a cost of five **minor effort** dice when upskilling:

- Increase your character's health. Your character may now take an extra **wound** before **dying**. *Any character may select this trait only once.*
- Increase your character's willpower. Your character may now apply **major effort** twice per **day**. *Any character may select this trait only once.*

Playing the Game

The **story** is driven by the players narrating the **actions** and **dialogue** of their characters within the world of the game. Whenever a PC attempts an **action** that has an element of chance, their player must roll **dice** to determine its outcome.

Whether the player is attempting to roll higher than a **target number (TN)** or an **opposing roll (OR)**, by the GM, depends on whether the PC's action is being actively opposed by another character. In the event of a tie, the defender succeeds.

Difficulty	TN	Difficulty	TN
Simple	2-5	Challenging	16-20
Standard	6-10	Formidable	21-25
Demanding	11-15	Heroic	26-30

Order of Play

Each **scene** will begin with a **description** by the GM, after which the PCs may begin to interact with each other, NPCs and the world. In scenes where seconds matter (where PCs are engaged in **combat** or must make actions under **pressure**), time is split into **rounds** of roughly 10 seconds. Each PC involved in that round has a **turn**.

Initiative
Before the scene begins, all PCs involved roll a d20 to determine their **initiative**. **Highest** goes first. Ties go to the character with the **swift** descriptor, then to the character with the most **skills** associated with the swift descriptor.

Order of Actions

During each PC's turn, the following occurs:

1. The player describes the action they would like their PC to commence.
2. If required, the GM may state the rule check and target number for that action.
3. The player rolls to resolve the action and applies any effort.
4. The GM or the player narrates the result of the action.

Multiple Actions per Turn

If a player would like to attempt more than one action per turn, they may do so, with each subsequent action costing a **minor effort** die.

Distance and Movement

Distances are described using three abstracted categories: close, short and long. **Close** distance is roughly 5 m (or 15 ft). **Short** distance is roughly triple close distance (15 m or 45 ft) and **long** distance is any distance greater than a short distance.

A character may **travel** up to a **close** distance during their turn without expending an action. To travel a **short** distance, the character will need to expend **one action** during their turn. A partial or total **long** distance may only be travelled by making an appropriate, generally dexterity-based (swift), **skill check**.

Dice

Both twenty-sided (d20) and regular six-sided (d6) are used to resolve **actions** in d20ES. Actions are primarily resolved using a single d20. Situations may turn in the favour of the PCs, providing them an **advantage**, or leave them scrambling, placing them at a **disadvantage**. PCs may also choose to apply either **minor** or **major effort** towards an action to improve its chances of success.

Advantage

A player whose PC is in a **superior** position when taking an action rolls two d20s and may use the **higher** value.

Disadvantage

A player whose PC is in an **inferior** position when taking an action rolls two d20s and must use the **lower** value.

Minor Effort

PCs apply minor effort by stretching their abilities just that little bit further. It is applied by rolling a **d6** and adding that value to the total. A PC may apply minor effort, once per scene, when making a skill check in which they are trained, without expending one of their d6s.

Major Effort

PCs apply major effort by stretching their abilities significantly. It is applied by **doubling** the value of a d20 roll. A PC may apply major effort once per day to any action.

Critical Success and Failure

Rolling a 20 on a d20, without modifiers, is known as a **critical success** and the PC automatically succeeds at the action being resolved, unless the opposed roll is also a critical success. In this case, modifiers are added and totals compared, as normal.

Rolling a 1 on a d20, without modifiers, is known as a **critical failure** and the PC automatically fails at the action being resolved, unless the opposed roll is also a critical failure. In this case, both characters fail their actions.

Neither a critical success nor a critical failure may be adjusted by applying **effort**.

Skill Checks

Skill checks are made whenever an **action** taken by the PC, outside of combat, requires prior knowledge or practice and has the chance to **fail**. They are also used when the PC makes an action against another **unaware** PC or an unaware NPC.

d20 ± dis/advantage + effort vs. TN

If the sum of the roll exceeds the **target number (TN)**, set by the GM, then the PC succeeds. If it does not, then the PC fails to complete the action as they desired.

Skill Check Example
Ben throws himself blindly into an alleyway and finds himself face to face with a chain link fence, topped with razor wire. The only way he's going to be able to escape the police is if he climbs over this fence.
Ben is strong, but is at a disadvantage from being wounded moments before he threw himself into the alleyway from a stray bullet striking him in his thigh.
Ben rolls two d20s, 14 and 18, and must use the lower one due to disadvantage. As Ben is strong, he can spend one effort die without cost on athletic activities, such as climbing, where he gets a 2. The total is 16 (14+2). The DC for climbing the chain link fence without hurting himself is demanding (12). Ben's total to climb the fence is greater than the DC, so he succeeds.
Ben climbs the fence, even with his wounded leg and manoeuvres through the razor wire. Just as he starts to climb down on the other side torchlight pierces through the darkness and Ben drops the last metre, grimacing has he lands on his bad leg and then runs off into the mist, leaving the bobbing lights behind.

Opposed Rolls

Opposed rolls are made whenever an **action** taken by the PC is **resisted** by some active force, which is able to react to the actions taken by the PC. One example of such a force is **another character**. Opposed rolls are made in both combat and non-combat situations.

 (PC) d20 ± dis/advantage + effort vs. (GM) d20 ± dis/advantage + effort

If the sum of the PC's roll exceeds the sum of the GM's roll, then the PC succeeds. If it does not, then the PC fails to complete the action as they desired.

Skill

Opposed skill checks are made whenever a PC attempts to **influence** another character, who is **aware** of the attempt.

Opposed (Skill) Roll Example
Mark knows that Diedre hasn't told him everything that she knows, so he decides to butter her up a little.
Diedre (GM): "So, the young whelp has come back for another taste of Diedre, has he?"
Mark: "Diedre, you are sweeter and more intoxicating than this wonderful champagne we sip upon this evening."
Since both Mark and Diedre know that Mark is trying to flatter her, Mark tries to roll a bluff check, while Diedre opposes it using her insight.
Mark is a smooth talker, so he rolls a bluff check with a minor effort die at no cost, giving him a total of 8. Diedre rolls a 9, with no modifiers.
While Mark has not succeeded, since the rolls were close, the GM decides that Diedre will give him another chance.

Combat

Opposed combat rolls are made whenever the PC attempts to **attack** another character.

If the PC **succeeds** at the opposed roll when **attacking**, they hit their opponent and that opponent takes one or more **wounds**.

If the PC **fails** the opposed roll while **defending** themselves from an opponent's attack, they take one or more wounds.

Opposed (Combat) Roll Example
Emily attempts to shoot the gunman standing by the crates with her revolver.
She is swift and rolls a d20 and a minor effort die without cost for a total of 9. The gunman tries to dodge behind the crates and rolls a 14, without applying any effort.
The gunman is fast enough to dodge behind the crates as Emily's bullet streaks through where he was standing moments ago.

Wounds

As a PC takes **damage**, they will gain **wounds** and suffer detrimental effects, which will increase in severity, ultimately leading to **death**. Each time a PC takes damage, they will be elevated one stage along the **wound track**.

Unharmed (0)
All PCs begin at this stage along the wound track. They are able to take **actions** as normal.

Stunned (1)
The PC has taken a wound and is in shock as a result. They cannot gain **advantage** until the end of their next **turn**. *Characters that are tough or have upskilled their stamina may become stunned twice before being elevated on the wound track.*

Wounded (2)
The PC has taken another wound, and its effects are beginning to show. They cannot gain **advantage** until the end of the **scene** or until they are treated with **First Aid**. *Characters that are both tough and have upskilled their stamina may become wounded twice before being elevated on the wound track.*

Grievously Wounded (3)
The PC has taken a significant wound or a number of wounds. They are at a **disadvantage** until the end of the **scene** or until they are treated with **First Aid**.

Incapacitated (4)
The PC is either unconscious or conscious, but unable to act. They will remain incapacitated until they receive **First Aid**. A successful TN 20 **endurance** check will return the PC to being **grievously wounded**.

Dead (5)
The PC has **died**. The player will need to make a new character.

First Aid

Characters may **recover** from **wounds** sustained during **scenes** by either **resting** and healing naturally or through the administration of **First Aid**. The recovery from wounds sustained by a **dead** character, or **revival** of said character, is at the discretion of the **GM**.

When resting, characters roll an **unmodified d20** and recover a number of wounds depending on the **target number (TN)** they exceed. Characters that are **incapacitated** must have **First Aid** administered to them before they are able to recover wounds from resting.

Characters **trained** in First Aid may **assist** other characters in recovering from their wounds. When applied, a First Aid skill check will recover a number of wounds depending on the target number (TN) exceeded.

Resting		First Aid	
TN	Wounds Recovered	TN	Wounds Recovered
15	1	10	1
20	2	15	2
25	3	20	3

The **time** taken to **heal** from a particular stage along the wound track increases with the severity of the wound. *A character takes a day to return to Unharmed from Wounded.* The healing time to recover a **single wound** at any stage, is half the stated time. *A character takes half a day to return to Stunned from Wounded.*

Wound Track Stage	Healing Time	Wounds Suffered	Wound Track Stage
1	1 minute	4	2 weeks
2	1 day	5	1 month
3	1 week	6	6 months

Running the Game

This section is for the **game master (GM)** and as the GM you are the architect, facilitator and arbiter of the **game concept**. You **work together** with your **players** to create, populate and change the world in which they **play**. The most important **rule** for the GM is the Rule of Awesome.

The Rule of Awesome

The Rule of Awesome simply states:

"So long as it doesn't break your game, if something a player says is awesome, find a way to make it happen."

The GM should not say **no** too much, but rather find ways to make what the players find awesome happen, even if it requires a bit more work. One of the easiest ways to do this is to say, **"yes, and…"** which allows you to agree to their (possibly) crazy idea and add a condition to temper its effects.

Setting Target Numbers

A table listing the **difficulties** and their associated **target numbers (TN)** is presented in the **Playing the Game** section. Most actions the PCs attempt should be **demanding** or **challenging** (TN 11-20).

This means that the PCs have a **50/50 chance or less** to successfully complete their action without applying effort. With effort, the PCs can find their chances **increased above 50/50**, but never too greatly.

As the PCs upskill, it is acceptable to increase the range of standard difficulties up to **formidable**, as they face greater and greater challenges.

NPC Stats

Non-player characters can categorised by **level**, which affects the **target numbers (TN)** for skill checks made against them, as well as the number of **wounds** they can take (given by their level) and the number of times they can apply **minor effort (ME)** in combat.

Level	Example	TN	ME
0	Civilian	2-6	0
1	Minion	7-9	0
2	Thug	10-12	0
3	Specialist	13-15	1
4	Lieutenant	16-18	2
5	Boss	19-21	3

Rewards

Characters should be rewarded throughout a session as they progress through scenes. Generally, each successful scene should see a player rewarded with one **minor effort (ME)** die and each failed scene (where the PCs failed to achieve their objective), two ME dice.

Players should also be rewarded immediately with ME dice during scenes when they apply their **tic** in a manner that adds **flavour** to the **story**. Other rewards can include in-game **perks** or **gear** that helps players to progress the story in more interesting ways.

In-game Perks

In-game **perks** are rewards such as an NPC companion, vehicle or other **benefits** that do not directly affect the character's abilities. These should allow the player to take more interesting narrative **actions**, without significantly changing the power balance between PCs.

Gear

Gear can be split into two categories: **equipment** and **consumables**.

Equipment should allow the PCs to succeed more often at **skill checks**, or in combat do more **damage** or make it easier to **hit** their target. If appropriate to the story, **equipment** can have a **failure rating** (out of 20). After each use, the player must roll a d20 and if the roll less than or equal to the failure rating the piece of equipment fails and will either need to be **repaired** or **discarded**. In the event the player rolls a 1, the equipment becomes **irreversibly damaged**.

Consumables are **single use** items that provide the PCs with some benefit, such as a smoke bomb providing **advantage** to all PCs attempting to escape from their pursuers. These items may have a variety of effects and those effects may be more powerful than for equipment. Once used, consumables cannot be **repaired**.

Additional Stats

Sometimes a **story** may need other types of stats governing aspects of a character not necessarily covered by their physical health (**wounds**). The following examples can be used for creating others.

Sanity

Sanity may be used when telling **horror** stories where the **minds** of the PCs are at **risk**. There are five levels of sanity, but loss of sanity does not affect physical ability; instead changing how the PC **interacts** with other characters.

When a **sanity check** is required, PCs role a d6 and if their roll is equal to or lower than their sanity level, then they move up one level on the sanity **track**.

Sane (1)
The PC is well and may take actions as normal.

Suspicious (2)
The PC starts begins to suspect the motives of their fellow characters.

Paranoid (3)
The PC is now paranoid and certain that the other characters are out to get them.

Obsessed (4)
The PC becomes obsessed over one specific aspect of the story and refuses to interact with other characters unless it has to do with their obsession.

Insane (5)
The PC is now gibbering mad, however that manifests within the story, and is now under the control of the GM.

Honour

Honour may be used when telling stories where the **social standing** of a PC impacts on how **NPCs** interact with them. There are seven levels of honour, where one level is neutral, while the others either positively or negatively impact on the PC's ability to accomplish their goals with NPCs.

All PCs start as **Acknowledged**, unless otherwise stated by the GM.

Revered (+3)
Revered PCs are known to have performed many great deeds and their reputation is well known in every community. As a result they can gain (reasonable) preferential treatment from most NPCs, but at the same time they are held to the highest standards of conduct.

Honoured (+2)
Honoured PCs are known to have performed some great deeds. Their reputation is beginning to spread across a number of communities and as such, they occasionally gain some preferential treatment from NPCs, while being held to higher standards of conduct.

Respected (+1)
Respected PCs are known to have performed at least one great deed. Their reputation is localised, which provides them with occasional preferential treatment from NPCs only in those places benefitted by their deeds, while being held to a high standard of conduct.

Acknowledged (0)
PCs are not given preferential treatment over any other character the NPC may interact with.

Scorned (-1)

Scorned PCs are known to have performed at least one foul deed. Their reputation is localised, which allows them to occasionally intimidate NPCs into providing preferential treatment, but only in those places harmed by their deeds. As a result, resentment of these PCs simmers below the surface in these communities.

Feared (-2)

Feared PCs are known to have performed some foul deeds. Their reputation is beginning to spread across a number of communities, which allows them to occasionally intimidate NPCs into providing preferential treatment, but pockets of visible resentment and resistance exist among these communities.

Abhorred (-3)

Abhorred PCs are known to have performed many foul deeds. Their reputation is well known in every community. As a result, they can gain (even unreasonable) preferential treatment by intimidating NPCs, but most communities do not fear to show their resentment and pushed too far will lash out against or directly attack the PCs.

Character Sheet

Player Name _____

Name _____

Descriptor _____

Skills   S

_____ ☐
_____ ☐
_____ ☐
_____ ☐
_____ ☐

Tics

_____
_____

Gear

_____
_____
_____

Minor Effort Dice

Story _____

Portrait

Background / Notes

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Wounds

0	1	2	3	4	5	6

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