



## **Dark Saga Rules Manual**

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[www.stormshock.com](http://www.stormshock.com)

## ***The Dark Saga Rules Manual***



### **A free versatile role-playing game from StormShock Games**

Dark Saga is a complete role-playing game system available for free on the web. The rules are completely separate from the content of the game, making room for infinite expansion. You can use Dark Saga rules for any type of world or style of play. Some of the features

include:

- Easy and flexible rules
- Requires as little or as much role-playing as you wish
- Everything is free for non-commercial downloading and printing
- Unlimited expandability

Visit StormShock RPG at [www.stormshock.com/rpg](http://www.stormshock.com/rpg).

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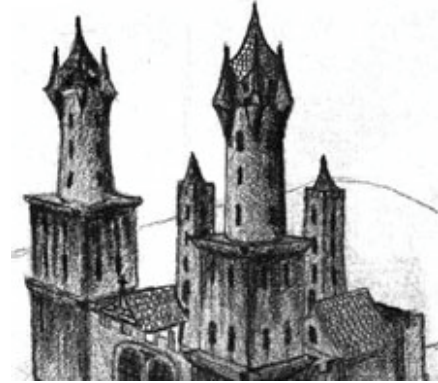
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## Introduction



With the Dark Saga rules system you can create a legendary hero, choose the hero's actions, and create an epic story. The rules can be adapted for use in fantasy, science fiction, or historical simulation games. The only limit is your imagination.

### Role-playing Games (RPGs)

If you're completely new to RPGs, you may be wondering what they are. In the traditional sense, RPGs are games in which players assume the roles of fictional characters and explore fictional worlds created by a player called the game master. The game master would mediate all of the other players' interactions with the fantasy world and tell them the results of their actions in the form of a story. So an RPG is like an interactive story where the players make decisions for the protagonists and the game master tells the story. In Dark Saga, the game master is called the *narrator*.

RPGs are not like other games. There is no score and no way to win or lose. RPG games can be played continuously for as long as you like and what you do in previous game sessions usually carry on to the next. For example, if your character finds a magical weapon during one playing session, he or she may use it in the next game. Most of the fun in RPGs is from building your characters into powerful heroes.

### What You Need to Play

Everything you need to play Dark Saga is available online for free download. You will need:

- This rules manual
- A hero record (which is scratch paper or the record found at the end of this manual)
- A pencil and paper
- Two ten-sided dice
- Miniature figures, counters, or something to keep track of where characters are during combat

Additionally, the narrator will need some source material for the game setting, which is available at StormShock RPG ([www.stormshock.com/rpg](http://www.stormshock.com/rpg)). You can also find additional Dark Saga supplements and downloads at StormShock RPG.

### Using Dice

Dark Saga uses dice to determine the success or failure of events during the game. We use two ten-sided dice. Ten-sided dice can be found at local gaming or hobby stores, or can be purchased online. You can also use a computer program to make dice rolls. StormShock RPG has a simple dice roller program you can download and use.

There is a standard notation for die rolls. The roll of a ten-sided die is denoted as **d10**. The **d** stands for **dice** and the **10** stands for the number of sides of the dice. If you see a number to the left of the **d**, it means you must roll that many dice. For example, **3d10** means **three ten-sided dice**. If you only have one ten-sided die, then you can always roll it three times and add up the results. Finally, you may see something like **2d10+5**. That means **roll two 10-sided dice and then add 5 to the result**.

Sometimes you may be asked to roll **d100**. That can be done by rolling two ten-sided dice. The first die is the tens digit and the second die you roll is the ones digit. So if you roll a **6** for the first die and a **4** for the second die then you get **64**. A roll of two zeroes represents **100**.

Percentage rolls can be made with a **d100** roll. You need to roll equal to or less than a percentage to succeed. Suppose the chance of striking an opponent is **30%**. Then you would roll **1d100**. If you get **30 or less** then you hit the opponent. If you roll **31** or higher then you missed.

### Gender Stereotypes

Gender-specific pronouns are intentionally alternated and any stereotypes you may interpret from these texts are strictly coincidental. In the real world, about half of the population are female and the other half are male. There is no reason why this should be any different in games, unless that unbalance is part of the storyline. Male and female genders are equal in these rules.

### Some Important Terms

**Character** - A character is any imaginary person or being in the game. Characters include heroes, monsters, and commoners.

**Hero** - A hero is a protagonist character controlled by a player. When you play Dark Saga you will decide what actions your imaginary hero will take.

**Monster** - A monster is any character who is hostile to the heroes.

**Narrator** - The narrator is a special player who controls everything in the game that is not controlled by the players. There is only one narrator in each game.

**Player** - Players are the actual real-life people such as you who play the Dark Saga game.

**Roll** - A roll is the act of checking to see if an action succeeded or failed. Rolls usually use stats to determine the results of an action.

**Rules** - Rules are the mechanics of the game. They tell you how to play, but do not provide any content such as monsters, spells, or quests.

**Settings** - Settings provide the content for a game. Typical settings will include characters, skills, monsters, quests, and many other components useful for playing the game.

**Stat** - A stat is the number used to measure a character's ability.

### The Epic Aspect of Dark Saga

Dark Saga is an epic adventure game. That means the game should run a lot like a movie or novel. During the game all of the players should do their best to develop a personality for the characters they control.

The Dark Saga game is about the battle between good and evil, right and wrong, or justice and injustice. The players will always play the protagonists who fight evil. Just like in a movie, you win by helping good prevail.

Also like in a good movie or novel, you may add elements of romance, tragedy, and heroism into the story. Adding such emotional elements helps make the game fun, more entertaining, and much more memorable. You should cooperate with other players to make the game a fun experience for all of you. Don't be afraid to have your hero die for a heroic cause and would elevate the game. Just create a new hero and play again, perhaps picking up where the last game left off as a different character.

### A Note about Fantasy Games

Dark Saga is not real life. Dark Saga is just a game that is no more real than any board game you have played. This is an important distinction because Dark Saga is a role-playing game. Please realize that everything that happens in the Dark Saga game is strictly imaginary and should not carry over to real life!

## Abilities



Playing heroes in Dark Saga is fun because of their abilities. The Dark Saga system allows an infinite variety of character types to be created and uses a very flexible system of skills and traits to define them.

### Prerequisites

Some abilities have prerequisites that must first be met before the ability can be learned. Abilities that have prerequisites include a section on the requirements that must be met before the ability can be learned. For example, for a sorceress to be able to cast three lightning bolts at once, she must first be able to cast one at a time. The skill description for multiple lightning bolts would list single lightning bolts as a prerequisite.

### Ability Levels

Many abilities can be improved upon, especially skills. If an ability can be improved, it will be listed in the ability description under a section labeled *Improvement*.

If a character has an ability above level one, it should be noted in the character description or record sheet. For example, if a warrior has two levels of the strength skill, it would be listed in his character record as "Strength (level 2)" or "Strength [2]".

### Starting Abilities

All characters are assumed to be able to do anything that the average human being can do, unless otherwise noted in the character description. The same is true with heroes. Without any skills or traits, a hero is the same as

an average human being. The skills and traits make the hero above average.

When playing the game, assume that a hero can perform any ability as well as a regular person, even if the hero does not have that ability.

### Traits

Traits are abilities and quirks that your hero was born with, such as birthmarks, keen eyesight, or even wings! You choose traits for your hero using *trait points*. You will only receive trait points for hero creation, and any trait points you do not use by the time your hero is created will become extra skill points. Heroes cannot gain additional trait points during the course of the game under normal circumstances.

The number of trait points your Hero receives during creation varies depending on the type of game setting you are playing. In a game based on real history you may only have 1 trait point to use for your hero. In a science fiction game with aliens, mutants, and genetic engineering you may be given 25. The more trait points you have, the more outlandish your heroes can be. A good number of trait points to use for a traditional fantasy setting is 15.

You may also choose *flaw traits* for your hero. Flaw traits are traits that restrict or hinder your hero. If you choose to give your hero flaws, you will gain extra skill points in exchange.

### Traits and Character Appearance

Traits often greatly affect what characters look like. Every trait description has a section suggesting how gaining the trait can change the way the character looks. These are merely guidelines so you do not need to follow them word for word, but you should always consider how the trait affects the look of your character.

### Sample Trait: Charm Resistance

*This is the first sample ability offered in this manual. You can find many more by going to the StormShock RPG website at [www.stormshock.com/rpg](http://www.stormshock.com/rpg) and downloading a setting manual for Dark Saga.*

Charm resistance is a natural resistance to mind control. Attempts to take control of the mind of

someone with this ability, whether by magic or by psychic power, often fail.

**Cost:** 1 trait point cost per level

**Gameplay Effects:** The character has a 30% resistance to magic or psychic powers that affect the mind. This includes sleep spells, charm spells, or mind control attempts by psychic talents.

**Improvement:** This trait can be upgraded to level 2 during character creation for a 90% resistance.

**Appearance:** It is hard to tell when someone is resistant to mind control. Such characters often seem very serious and well-grounded. Sometimes even this is not the case. Some say that you can tell by the faint glimmer in the eyes.

### Sample Trait: Extended Lifespan

Characters with extended lifespan live far beyond the average lifespan of a human.

**Cost:** 1 trait point per level

**Gameplay Effects:** For each level of this trait the maximum age the character can expect to live increases by about one hundred years. Also as a result of the extended lifespan the character reaches adulthood ten years later per level of this trait.

The rules for aging become slightly different with this trait. Starting at middle-age, decrease physical skills every number of years equal to the level of this trait. For example, a character with extended lifespan level 3 can expect to live to around the age of 400 years. You will begin to take away one skill point worth of physical skills every three years starting at the age of two hundred to compensate for aging effects.

**Improvement:** This trait can be purchased as many times as you like. Each time it is purchased you may add 100 years to the character's expected lifespan. Assume that characters without this trait can live up to around 100 years.

**Appearance:** In most cases, extended lifespan makes characters appear to age much slower than regular people. In rare cases however, a character with extended lifespan may appear to age normally, but live an unnaturally long life.

### Sample Flaw Trait: Frailty

Frail characters lack the bodily health or mass of most other characters. They can take much less physical punishment than most characters.

**Cost:** 3 trait points, gain 6 bonus skill points

**Gameplay Effects:** With this Trait, you lose 2 starting hit points per level down to a minimum of 1 hit point. You have a -1 penalty per level for skills that rely heavily on stamina, natural resistance to toxins, or mental concentration.

**Improvement:** You may increase your frailty level up to a maximum of level 5.

**Appearance:** Frail characters usually get sick often. They are much skinnier or much smaller than the average person.

### Sample Trait: Nightvision

Nightvision allows characters to see in the dark. This trait is very common among subterranean creatures.

**Cost:** 2 trait points

**Gameplay Effects:** Characters with Nightvision can see up to 60 feet in darkness.

**Appearance:** Characters who can see with nightvision often have different eyes than humans. Their eyes are usually beady or glassy looking and of a different color, such as red or milky white. Characters with nightvision also tend to have larger eyes.

### Sample Trait: Perception

Characters with perception have heightened senses and notice things that most people do not.

**Cost:** 2 trait points

**Gameplay Effects:** There is a 20% chance the character will notice a hidden item or door just by coming within 10 feet of it. When actively searching for something, there is a 40% chance he or she will find it.

**Improvement:** This trait may be purchased a maximum of three times. Each time it is purchased beyond the first time the percentages of finding hidden objects will increase by 20%. The maximum chance of finding a hidden object by actively searching is 80%.

**Appearance:** Perceptive characters usually look no different than anyone else, except for the fact that they seem more alert than the average person. Sometimes perceptive characters may have larger eyes, ears, or noses to guide their senses.

### Race Kits

Many fantasy game settings include heroes who are not human. We call the different types of non-human heroes *races*. Some examples of traditional races are elves and dwarves.

Races in Dark Saga are defined simply as groupings of traits. Elves may have pointed ears giving them better hearing. Dwarves may be able to see in the dark and withstand poison. Since traits define races in Dark Saga, there may be several pre-made groupings of traits called *race kits* available for your game setting. Choosing a race kit helps make hero creation faster by allowing you to quickly choose common groupings of traits.

Just like when choosing individual traits, you must pay for race kits using trait points. Each race kit has a trait point cost that you must spend if you want to use the race for your hero. If you have enough trait points, you can also choose a race kit and spend the remaining points on individual traits. Remember, any remaining trait points you have after your hero is completed becomes extra skill points.

### Race Kit Descriptions

You can find descriptions of race kits in the Dark Saga settings. These descriptions have specific headings that describe the race in a standard way. Below is what those headings mean:

**Description** – A general overview of the race without any game statistics.

**Traits** – A listing of traits that are included with the race kit.

**Bonus Skills** – If the race kit includes flaw traits, this is the listing of bonus skills that the race includes to compensate for the flaws.

### Sample Race Kit: High Elf

High Elves are a slender and graceful sylvan race that inhabits many of the older forests. They have long pointed ears and tend to be as tall as humans, but much more slender.

High Elves live very long lives, many living to be over 500 years old. At the age of 60, many of them leave to explore the world as a rite of passage. The ones that survive return to their old forest homes to live the rest of their lives crafting great works of beauty.

**Cost:** 13 trait points

**Traits:** Charm Resistance, Extended Lifespan (level 5), Frailty, Nightvision, Perception

**Bonus Skills:** Elven Combat, Language (Elven), Surprise

### Skills

Skills are what define a hero's abilities. Each Dark Saga setting will have its own set of skills for your heroes to learn. Skills are what separates your hero from all the others and makes the game fun, so they are among the most important aspects of Dark Saga. As a hero progresses in the game, she will be able to earn more skill points to hone her skills.

There are no attributes or ability scores in Dark Saga. All such scores are measured solely by skills. Dark Saga skills are hierarchical, meaning that you cannot learn more technical skills until you have learned the basics. Therefore a Hero cannot learn a third level magic skill until she has learned the first and second level Magic skills.

Unlike traits, skills can be gained during the course of the game. At the beginning of the game each hero normally receives 25 skill points to purchase skills. Like trait points, different settings may allow you to start with different amounts of skill points.

You do not have to use all of your skill points at the beginning of the game. In fact, you are encouraged to save a few for purchasing starting equipment or for later use in buying more expensive skills.

### Sample Skill: Archery

Archery is skill in using bows of all sorts. Characters skilled in archery have improved accuracy and know how to place their arrows to maximize damage.

**Cost:** 2 skill points

**Gameplay Effects:** The character gains +1 to attack and damage rolls when attacking with a bow and arrow.

**Improvement:** This skill may be purchased as many times as the character wishes. Each upgrade adds +1 to the character's attack and damage rolls and is cumulative. For every third level of this skill purchased, an additional arrow may be fired per round.

### Sample Skill: Elven Combat

All elves of proper upbringing are taught the techniques of combat from an early age. These techniques have been passed down for many long elven generations.

**Prerequisites:** To purchase this skill you must first purchase an elf race kit.

**Cost:** 3 skill points

**Gameplay Effects:** The elven character gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls when using a bow and arrow. The character may also fire an additional arrow per round. Gain a second free round of attacks when using the surprise skill in a forested environment.

**Improvement:** This skill may be purchased as many times as the character likes. Each time this skill is upgraded, the character gains +1 to attack, damage, and surprise (in the forest) rolls.

### Sample Skill: Language

All characters can speak in a common tongue, but to learn additional languages that not all characters may know, the language skill must be purchased.

**Prerequisites:** The character must have been in contact with someone who knows and is willing to teach the language for at least two years. Another way of learning the language is being in contact with speakers of the language for at least four years.

**Cost:** 1 skill points

**Gameplay Effects:** The character may choose an additional language to be able to read, write, and speak. You may choose from the following languages: Elven.

**Improvement:** This skill may be purchased more than once to learn additional languages from the list above.

### Sample Skill: Surprise

This is the ability to attack the enemy before they had the chance to prepare for the attack.

**Cost:** 2 skill points

**Gameplay Effects:** Gain a free round of attacks (with no threat of counterattack until the next round) if the enemy is not expecting an attack. There is a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls when the enemy is surprised. The +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls is only in effect in the rounds when the enemy cannot counterattack.

**Improvement:** Each additional time this skill is purchased the character gains a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls.

### Role Kits

Like race kits, *role kits* are designed to save time in creating heroes. If all you want to do is generate a quick hero and begin playing, you can just choose a role kit and be on your way. Role kits are sets of

pre-selected skills that make up a certain type of hero.

For example, if you were playing in a medieval fantasy setting, you may be able to choose from role kits like the knight, the wizard, or the elven archer. Choosing the elven archer role kit may give you skills in archery, surprise, and perhaps several other skills. Choosing a role kit also comes with a skill point price depending on how many skills you get as a result of choosing the role.

### Sample Role Kit: Elven Archer

Elven archers are legendary for their prowess with the bow and the speed in which they can destroy their enemies and silently fade back into the forest.

**Prerequisites:** An elven race kit.

**Cost:** 6 skill points

**Skills:** Archery, Elven Combat, Surprise

*Note: When skills are duplicated, that means you should consider the duplicated skill an upgrade of the skill. For example if you choose the High Elf race kit, which includes the surprise skill, and then choose the elven archer role kit, which also includes the surprise skill, your character would have a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls during an ambush. Furthermore, the two elven combat skills that would be included with the high elf and elven archer kits would give the character a total of +5 attack and damage and two rounds of surprise when in a forested environment.*

### Using Unfamiliar Skills

A hero is assumed to know how to do anything that any regular person can do. This includes opening regular doors, talking to other people, or even very basic swimming.

Other times a character may attempt a skill that he does not know. In these cases, the narrator must make a judgment as to how well the character can perform the skill without any knowledge in it. For example, let's say a hero cannot swim but he falls into a river. Can he manage to stay above the water even if he has never swum in his life? These are calls that the narrator needs to make.

One way of resolving this is to look up the skill or a similar skill and take half of what the skill description says as a guideline. The narrator can also come up with a percentage chance that the hero succeeds, such as "your hero has a 20%

chance of making it to shore before hitting the rapids”.

### **Improving Skills**

Your hero will gain additional skill points as he or she goes on quests and completes goals. Your narrator will give you more skill points as your hero progresses through the game. You can use additional skill points to gain new skills or advance

skills your hero already has. Skill points can also be saved for later use in purchasing more expensive skills.

During the course of the game players can gain skill points as a reward for playing the game well. At the end of each gaming session the narrator gives the players skill points according to how well the players played the game.

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## Background



When designing a hero, be sure to think about the story behind your hero. What kind of hero do you want to create? Think about background, motivations, and personality. These things are hard to make statistics or rules for, so they should be handled by the players, narrator, or both.

### Name and Gender

Complete your hero by making up a name. Your hero's name does not affect game play. Though your hero's gender does not affect the game in any way, it will affect the type of name you choose for your hero. If you have trouble thinking of a name, try a free name program like

StormShock NameGen  
([www.stormshock.com/rpg/namegen](http://www.stormshock.com/rpg/namegen)).

### Physical Description

After you have chosen traits, skills, gender, and a name, it is time to write a quick physical description of your character. This is a good time to look at your traits and determine what your character probably looks like. If the character has many strength-related skills, she is probably muscular. If she can see in the dark, she probably has large unusual looking eyes. If she can fly, she probably has wings. Trait descriptions also come with an appearance section that may help you in your character description.

Along with your description you can determine some descriptive stats that may become useful during the game. These stats may be height, weight, age, or dominant hand. You don't have to think of everything right now. If you need to know something during the game that you haven't written down yet, just figure it out on the spot and write it down.

### Morals

Sometimes you will need to know whether a character is good or evil. All heroes are good, but some monsters are evil (though not all). Many artifacts or magical effects work differently with good or evil characters.

## Items



Items are anything that a character can pick up and use. Treasure, weapons, armor, and tools are all items. The type of items you can get and how much they cost are all part of settings.

When you first create your hero, any remaining skill points can be used to purchase starting equipment. Typically, 1 skill point can be used to start your hero out with cheap equipment, 2 skill points can buy moderate quality equipment, and 4 skill points can buy equipment fit for an aristocrat. The narrator has the final say on what kind of equipment you can buy with your extra skill points.

Whether you spend any skill points on equipment or not, all characters will automatically begin the game with at least cheap clothing and enough basic equipment to live a squalid life.

### Weapons

Weapons are items that can be used to inflict damage upon others. All weapons have several key statistics that distinguish them from other weapons. Below are definitions of the statistics you will find in setting manuals:

*Type* - Type shows how the weapon can be used. Melee weapons are used in hand-to-hand combat. Thrown weapons can be thrown at opponents. Ranged weapons are weapons that fire projectiles from a distance.

If the weapon is ranged or thrown, the type section will also say how far the weapon can fire.

*Hands* - This is how many hands are required to wield the weapon. This is important if your character is going to carry a shield or more than one weapon.

*Weight* - the weight of the weapon in tens of pounds.

### Sample Weapon: Bow and Arrows

A bow and arrows is a powerful ranged weapon that can be used to take out enemies before they ever get near.

**Type:** Ranged (100 feet)

**Hands:** 2

**Weight:** 1

**Gameplay Effects:** +6 damage

### Encumbrance

When characters carry too many items they are likely to be slowed down by the weight. Dark Saga uses a system of movement rates and item weights to reflect this. For simplicity, weights are given in tens of pounds. Therefore, an item that weighs about 23 pounds may be listed as having a weight of 2.

An average human in Dark Saga can carry up to a weight of 5 without being burdened. The average human can carry a weight of up to 10, but can only move at half the normal movement rate.

## Combat



All characters can attack another Character. An attack counts as an action. All Characters can also defend themselves. A defense does not count as an action.

There are four main statistics associated with combat. These

are *attack*, *defend*, *damage*, and *armor*. *Attack* represents the chance that a character will hit an opponent. *Defend* is the chance that an *attack* will be avoided. The opponent takes *damage* if an attack against him succeeds. *Armor* absorbs *damage* to reduce the effect of successful attacks.

The attack and defend scores are usually zero for inexperienced fighters. Skills and traits can raise or lower attack and defend scores. The damage score depends on the type of weapon used in an attack, while the armor score depends on what type of armor the person is wearing.

To attack, roll a ten-sided die and add the attack score to it. The defender then rolls a ten-sided die and adds his defend score to it. If the attacker has a higher result, then the attack succeeds and the defender will take damage. If the defender has a higher result, then the attack was avoided or blocked. If an attack succeeds, then the attacker rolls a ten-sided die and adds his damage to it. Then the defender's armor score plus a 1d10 roll is subtracted from the result. This is the amount of damage taken by the defender. If the resulting damage is less than one or the minimum damage for the weapon, then the damage will be one or the weapon's minimum damage, whichever is higher. Damage is subtracted from the opponent's hit points.

### Filling in the Combat Stats

Average human beings with no equipment have scores of zero in attack, defend, damage, and

armor. Items, traits, and skills may change these stats.

All heroes begin with a base score of 10 *hit points*. *Hit points* represent the amount of damage the hero can take before falling unconscious.

### Surprise

Sometimes characters may choose to set up a surprise attack on their opponents. Surprised characters cannot perform any action during the first round of attack. Characters have a 30% chance of surprising their opponents if their opponents are unaware of their presence.

### Willpower

Sometimes we need to know how strong a character's mind is. Perhaps a Hero is trying to concentrate on something through a raging battle, or maybe a priest is trying to resist temptation. These require strong willpower.

Mental power is measured with the *willpower* stat. All heroes start with a base *willpower* of 0, which may be changed by traits or skills.

### Morale

Heroes do not always have to kill every enemy to win. Sometimes the monsters realize that they cannot win and they run away. Morale helps the narrator determine whether or not monsters decide to run away.

Every monster has a morale percentage. The morale percentage is the chance that the monsters stay and fight despite suffering casualties. Make a percentage roll and check it against the monster's morale every time any of the following happen:

- The monster is alone and has lost half of its hit points
- The monster is in a group and half of the members of the group have fallen
- The monster or monsters are outnumbered more than 2 to 1 by same-size or larger opponents (i.e. will not apply to a giant being attacked by 3 humans)
- The monster is unable to affect the Hero after several rounds of combat (how many rounds it takes is up to the narrator)

If the roll succeeds, the monsters will stay and fight.

If the roll fails, the monsters will attempt to run. If there is no way of escaping death, the monsters will fight with increased ferocity, gaining a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

## The Narrator



Dark Saga and fantasy role-playing games in general have a special player. In Dark Saga this player is called the *narrator*. The *narrator's* job is to describe things to the players and determine the effects of their actions.

The *narrator* is in charge of describing the environment surrounding the players' heroes. As the heroes explore the fantasy world, the narrator will tell a story about what the heroes see and hear. The narrator gets to control every non-player character in the game, including monsters.

The narrator controls the way the game is played, so it is important that he knows the rules well. Whenever the players try an action, the narrator must be able to decide whether the action succeeds or fails. At the end of each game session, the narrator also gives out rewards to the players if they succeed, such as more skill points and treasures for their heroes.

Before each game session, the narrator should read through the quest manual. A quest manual is like a movie script, but with many open-ended parts where the outcome is not certain. The quest manual has everything the narrator needs to know about how to run the game, except for these rules. Being the narrator is often fun because she knows all about the quest before the players play it.

For each game, one person must be the narrator. Ideally, the players in your group can take turns being narrator. In the beginning, you should be narrator first until all of the players learn how the game works.

### Fairness

The most important part of the narrator's job is to keep the game fair. Dark Saga is a game, and that means it's supposed to be fun. The Narrator should help the players have fun by winning, but also provide enough challenge and imagination so that it does not become boring. The most important element of RPGs is imagination.

### Running a Storybook Game

Sometimes the narrator may want to make the game more dramatic as opposed to realistic. To run a storybook type game the narrator can fudge the rules whenever something should have killed the players' heroes. Maybe a bullet glanced off of a medallion the hero was wearing. Or perhaps a wizard friend of the hero shows up just in time to cast a spell to save the hero's life. With some imagination on the part of the narrator, these events can serve as interesting plot twists.

## Questing



Whenever you play Dark Saga, your hero is questing. Quests are the heart of the game. During quests, your hero goes on missions, fights evil, solves mysteries, rescues people, and anything else the narrator can think of that would make a good story.

### Time

Every action in the Dark Saga game takes a specific amount of *game time* to complete. Most combat actions like attacking or casting spells take 5 seconds of *game time* to complete. *Game time* is fictional time and is different from *real time*. *Real time* is the time that passes in the real world. Game time is the time that passes in your hero's fictional world. It is possible that 2 weeks of game time pass while only 2 minutes of real Time pass in your game. All time mentioned from here on are in game time unless otherwise specified.

A *round* is 5 seconds of game time. We use rounds to make the game easier to manage. Rounds are used to manage game time when the heroes are in a place where each of their actions are important, such as in underground dungeons or in combat.

### Movement

Most heroes can move at 120 feet per minute under normal circumstances. Characters may move up to half the movement rate while performing an action.

Heroes can swim at half their movement rate unless wearing armor. When wearing non-metal armor, Heroes can swim at one-third their

movement rate. Heroes wearing metal armor cannot swim at all.

When making difficult climbs, Heroes need a rope to climb. They can climb at a rate of 20 feet per minute, but have a 20% chance of falling each minute they climb. Characters take 3 damage for every 10 feet they fall when they hit the ground.

### Searching

Many times objects, doors, or controls may be hidden. Characters often have to search an area to find such secrets. A Character may search a 20-foot section of wall in ten minutes. The character normally has a 20% chance of finding any secrets that may be hidden in the wall. The narrator must make this roll because the player shouldn't know if their searching was successful or not.

### Gaining Experience

After each gaming session, the narrator gives out experience rewards to the heroes for playing well. Experience rewards come in the form of skill points. Skill points can be used to buy your heroes more abilities. The narrator must give the heroes whatever she thinks is fair.

Heroes gain skill points to represent the heroes getting more experienced from playing. That means that sometimes the narrator can give heroes extra skill points that can only be spend for certain things. Suppose there is a thief hero who attempted to pick several locks during a quest. At the end of the quest, the narrator may give the hero skill points to improve the hero's lock picking skills.

### The Rule of the Narrator

In Dark Saga, the narrator is sort of like a referee. The goal of the narrator should be to keep the game fair and fun. So not everything the narrator says will go with the rules. Also, there are not rules for everything, so sometimes the narrator has to make up a solution. Just remember that the narrator has the right to change anything in the game for the sake of fun and fairness.

### **Hero Aging**

Sometimes it is useful to know a character's age. Some monsters can cause heroes to age unnaturally fast, or sometimes the narrator may have several years pass before the next quest. Different races live to different ages, and aging affects the abilities of characters as they age.

Every hero race has a maximum age. Unless there is magic involved, heroes of that race cannot live past their maximum age. People usually die naturally before they reach the maximum age, so when a hero gets very old, the Narrator should find a dramatic time for the hero to die. Heroes always seem to know when they will die. Perhaps the narrator may arrange one last quest for the hero to go on in which the Hero does not expect to return. Or maybe the hero wills her most prized possession to a good friend at her death bed before she dies.

When heroes reach half of their maximum age, they begin to lose their physical strengths. A

middle-aged Hero loses one skill point worth of physical skills every year, and one trait point worth of physical traits every ten years until he has none left.

### **Hero Death**

All heroes begin the game with 10 hit points. Hit points represent the amount of damage a character can take before falling unconscious. At zero hit points, the character falls unconscious. If reduced to -10 or fewer hit points, the character dies. Once a character falls below one hit point, she cannot regain consciousness for at least a day.

Characters regain two hit points per day due to natural healing. In the event that a hero dies, certain magic can be applied to raise the dead, though it will cost lots of wealth. Otherwise, sometimes heroes die too! Just create another hero and start a new game.

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## Hero Creation Guide



Use this guide as a checklist for creating a hero. You will need to print up a copy of the hero record (found at the end of this manual) or use a piece of scratch paper as your hero

record. Fill out the hero record as you create your Hero. It is a good idea to check with your narrator before creating a hero. Some narrators have house rules or special preferences for creating heroes.

### 1. Choose Traits

Traits are special features a hero is born with. The first thing you need to do when creating a hero is choose his or her traits. Normally you would get 15 trait points to buy traits, but this may vary depending on the setting your narrator is using.

Trait points cannot be used anymore after your hero is completed. Any unused trait points become skill points.

### 2. Choose Skills

Skills are abilities that the hero has learned over time. Heroes normally begin with 25 skill points to buy skills. Again, this may vary between game settings. Unused skill points may be used during hero creation to purchase starting equipment.

### 3. Choose Starting Equipment

Unused skill points can be used to purchase starting equipment. Choose starting equipment at your narrator's discretion. In general, 1 skill point buys you cheap equipment, 2 skill points gets you average questing equipment, and with 4 Skill Points you can begin the game with almost any non-magical equipment.

### 4. Finishing Touches

Now record combat stats or any other kinds of stats that may be important onto your hero record. Name your hero and write down a basic description and background story. Your hero's gender should be the same as your own.

