

KnownWorld RPG

An Alternate PFRPG1E Dice Mechanic

started 2/16/2009 by NPC (Nathanael Phillip Cole)
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Preface: *I understand that there might be some of you who don't share my opinions of the core Palladium Mechanics. Kudos to you; your patience for rules that are awful is far superior to mine, and I truly salute you. Heck, if it weren't for folks like you, I wonder if I ever would have started playing tabletop role-playing games in the first place!* - NPC

The purpose of this document is to strip out the core dice mechanics from the Palladium Fantasy RPG 1st Edition, and replace them with a much better, less "ultimately stupidly ass-backwards" mechanic than the craptastic mind-boggling system that is currently there. The ultimate goal is to do this while leaving the rest of the superstructure as intact as possible; the skeleton gets replaced, while none of the actual "peripheral" game material is edited at all.

Some initial notes, though. This document is primarily designed to work with the 1st Edition rules of Palladium FRPG. I see you gasp with shock and confusion. "Why" you ask? Because that was the first tabletop game I ever actually played, and despite its horrid rules, nostalgia has taken a hold of my better senses and driven me to write this, so I can go back and enjoy all those lands and peoples again without having to completely port all of it to a whole other gaming system. I look over and see the books on my gaming shelf, taunting me with their use-worn spines that fit comfortably into the grooves of my hands. Yet even after shaking off the nostalgia, the Palladium Fantasy "Known World" setting is one of my favorite RPG settings ever. It's just the rules that I can't stand anymore. By replacing (some might call it "renovating") the skeleton, I intend to leave everything else intact - all the bonuses, modifiers, traps, damage amounts, spell effects, races, places, faces and so on. I'm just removing the framework and replacing it with a better, more robust one. Kinda like the Six Million Dollar Man.

I'm sure that this could also work for 2nd Edition PFRPG, and maybe even Rifts, Nightbane, and any of the other plethora of Palladium Books games. The mechanics of those are largely similar to 1st Edition rules, with the major difference being the addition of PPE, a crap-ton of SDC and Physical Skills, and Mega Damage. Since KnownWorld largely leaves the original damage and magic system intact (mainly because there's just something so eerily satisfying about rolling a fistful of damage dice!), those don't really make that much of a difference. Perhaps one day, if people actually *like* these rules, I might release an updated "KnownVerse" revision for the later editions.

Of course, this conversion is completely free. I ain't even going to begin to *think* about opening the pus-filled can of carnivorous worms that would spew all over me were I to attempt to gainfully infringe upon the copyright of Palladium Books. That also means that **this fan-made product requires the use of the Palladium Fantasy core rules book.**

Before We Begin...

A Note on "Balance"

As any veteran of Palladium's rules can tell you, characters in the so-called "megaverse" are by no means balanced. Wussy vagabond beggar-types frequently adventure alongside the likes of men who can single-handedly *murder the flaming nuclei of ancient stars*. This is (for me and many fans) one of the whole central points of the entire game, its settings, and the rules system that drives them. I have no intention of removing that focus, because it's also one of my main attractions to it:

life is unfair, and many folks have a much better lot in life than you, so deal with it.

As such, I have made huge efforts to **not** challenge that inherent and crucial balance paradigm. The OCCs and skills and abilities will remain as unbalanced as they previously were, and you can just learn to like it. So nyaaah.

Out With the Old...

Okay, let's completely remove the core D20 and D100 mechanics from the game. That's right: no more D20-based strike, parry, dodge, or saving rolls, and no more "you just get to fail all the goddamned time" percentile-based skill checks. Seriously, who actually *likes* failing everything? You'd think we were playing *Fading Suns* or *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* or something. You should cleanse these baleful mechanics from your mind, and forget they ever existed. Shoo away, you! Also, those character attribute scores of yours? Keep the actual core eight attributes, but throw away those numbers you rolled, because they're worthless now.

Now, the first thing you need to do is to pick your character's Race.

Character Creation

It Starts With Your Race...

Now that that's all out of the way, let's review how things are done in this new system. It's all based on your race. Take a look at the Racial Attribute Chart on Page 3 of the core rules. Look up your chosen character race and write down those base single-digit numbers next to each of your core 8 attributes. Those are now your *actual* base attributes - for example, a Human character would have 3's in all eight of her attributes. At the time of character creation, you can raise and lower them for as much as four points of variation from your racial standard - meaning you can lower at most four points total to increase at most four point total. However, nothing can be lowered below 1, and nothing can be raise more than two points above its core racial standard.

Oh, and see those two stats called M.A. and P.B.? We're going to combine them into a new stat called S.A. (Social Appeal). Average their base numbers, rounding up. Place it right after M.E. in the lineup. Now you have seven core attributes, each with a single-digit number.

Attribute Bonuses

Since attributes are no longer rolled at the time of character creation, there are no more bonuses based on attributes of score 16 and higher. The whole chart that shows those bonuses can forevermore be forgotten. Instead, having high attributes is a bonus in and of itself, as it directly increases the number of dice you roll in a check, and thus increases your chances of success.

Hit Points

Hit Points still exist! Your starting hit points are equal to six times your P.E. attribute, and you determine them normally based on your level (1D6 at level 1, etc)

OCC and Skills

You pick your OCC and skills and such normally. OCC attribute requirements are completely done away with (who uses attribute requirements these days, anyway?). All skills have the same base progression of percentages and bonuses. See below for details on how to record those skills properly, though.

ISP, PPE, and Spells/Powers

Magic, psionic potential, powers, ISP, and spells per day are handled per normal rules. Determining if your character has innate psionics is handled as usual, although if a player wishes to be a Mind Mage, I suggest just letting them skip the roll and play a Mind Mage, as that is more fun. However, should you indeed try and roll, you get to apply your base M.E. score as a minor bonus to the percentage roll for Psionics.

The Base Dice Checks

So, what do those new character attribute scores actually do? Why, they determine how many dice you roll in any situation! The base mechanic now goes something like this:

Roll X # of dice, total them, add any applicable modifiers, and try to attain as high a multiple of 6 as possible.

In the above, X = the number Rank of your relevant core attribute. The standard die size is a D6, but some effects might change this. Each attribute is linked to certain core actions, as outlined below:

Attribute	Linked Areas
I.Q.	Skills of Smarts, Knowledge, Perception, and Know-How
M.E.	Psionic/Holy Empowerment/Resistance; Staying Cool and Capable
S.A.	Skills of social interaction and persuasion
P.S.	Feats of strength and brawn
P.P.	Skills of manual dexterity and combat prowess
P.E.	Skills of athletics and stamina
Spd	Initiative!

There are two major types of dice checks: **Opposed** and **Unopposed**. Unopposed checks are handled exactly as written above. When you roll your dice, total their face results. Then, see if you have any applicable skill or ability bonuses or penalties. Skill bonuses are based off the tens digit of the skill's total percentage - so if your total skill percentage is 17%, you get a +1 to checks for that skill. Ability bonuses and penalties (strike, parry, dodge, saving throws) are translated directly from the character's OCC, Racial, and hand-to-Hand bonuses.

For every increment of 6 that you roll, you gain a **Success**. Thus, a roll of 12 is two successes, a roll of 25 is four successes, and so on. The GM will tell you how many successes you need to complete whatever task is at hand, using the following guidelines:

Successes	Level of Success
1	Routine Task (tying a square knot)
2	Simple Task (repairing a torn shirt)
3	Moderately difficult Task (climbing a high fence)
4	Challenging Task (eating 40 hot dogs like it ain't no thang)
5	Rather Difficult Task (sneaking past the sleeping dragon)
6+	Extremely Difficult Task (resurrecting the dead)

For most unopposed tests, achieving the required number of successes is all you need, and each additional success allows you to add some extra "oomph" to the outcome, like a bit of narration or a special quality to the situation.

Critical Success! Whenever **more than half** of your base rolled dice score 6s, you gain a bonus

die to roll and add to the total. If that die also scores a 6, roll another, and so on. This is even available when only rolling a single die.

Critical Failure! Whenever **more than half** of your base rolled dice score 1s, you gain a penalty die to your total. Roll a d6 and subtract it from your total. If this rolls a 6, then roll another d6 and subtract it too, and so on. If your total is somehow **less than zero**, you have fumbled your action. Talk to your GM to see how he or she handles critical fumbles in the game, as every GM usually handles these differently.

Helping: When two or more characters are working together to accomplish a task, designate one character as the acting character, and the others as assisting characters. The acting character rolls the dice as normal, but gets a bonus based on the number of characters assisting and their abilities. Determine the dice pools for each assisting character as if that character were attempting the task on their own. Each assistant should then divide their dice pool by the total number of participating characters, rounding off normally. If positive, add the remainder to the acting character's dice pool. When too many people work on the same task, they start to become redundant and eventually get in the way.

For opposed checks, read further below.

Opposed Dice Checks

When you are taking a direct action against someone, they can try to resist, circumstances permitting. Attacking a non-helpless for is an example, or charming a suspicious guard is another. Just about any action that is directly against another character or creature is an Opposed check.

When rolling an opposed check, both sides of the conflict roll against each other. The "Aggressing" character (the one pressing the conflict) must *equal or exceed* the other character's opposed roll in order to achieve a single success. Each six points over the opponent nets another success.

Below are some examples of Opposed Rolls:

Action	Rolls
Combat	Strike vs Parry or Dodge (or unopposed)
Charm	Charm Skill vs ME
Stealth	Prowl Skill vs IQ

If *both* sides are considered Aggressing (like in an arm-wrestling contest or a race), one side must *exceed* in order to achieve the first success. If tied, the result is a stalemate or tie, whichever is applicable.

Interpreting Modifiers, Converting Stats

Converting in-game effects and modifiers from the core rules to the KnownWorld system is pretty simple and intuitive. Most often, these conversions will happen with little numerical change at all. As far as KnownWorld is concerned, there are two main types of modifiers to keep track of: **Pool** Modifiers, which alter the number of dice rolled in a test, and **Roll** Modifiers, which alter the dice roll totals of those test. These two base types of modifiers are derived from the printed PFRPG rules texts according to the following guidelines:

Converting Hard-Coded Stats: For creatures that have set pre-rolled stats in PFRPG, or game effects that directly transform a character's attribute to a hard-coded number, divide the numbers by 4 and round up. *For example, the Level 4 Wizard Spell "Size of the Behemoth" has an effect (among several others) that increases the target's P.S. to 30. In the KnownWorld system, this would increase the PS score to 8 (because $30/4$ [rounded up] = 8), giving the character 8 base*

dice for making PS-based tests for the duration of that spell.

Converting Attribute Dice Modifiers: Some effects in PFRPG will give temporary bonus dice, which are supposed to be rolled immediately, the results of which are either temporarily (such as spells) or permanently (such as 2nd Edition's physical skills) added to an attribute. In these cases, simply add that solid number of dice to the base KnownWorld attribute, regardless of the original die size from the effect, *unless* the die type is a d10 or d12, in which case the bonus is doubled. These modifiers are effectively considered **Pool** modifiers. *For example, if you have a Speed of 3 and you are hit with a spell that increases your speed by 3D4, then add +3 to your Speed attribute. You would have the exact same increase were the bonus a 3D6 or a 3D6. If the spell had increased it by 3D10, however, you would have increased your Speed by +6.*

Converting Solid Attribute Modifiers: Some effects might give you a set bonus or penalty to an attribute. In KnownWorld, these modifiers are instead applied as **Roll** Modifiers for that attribute (skills, combat, etc). *For example, if you are affected by a spell that lowers your P.P by 4, then you instead subtract that four points from all P.P.-based dice roll totals for the duration of the spell.*

Converting Dice Roll Modifiers: Any time you have an effect which gives a bonus or penalty to any in-game roll of the dice (strike, saving throws, etc), that modifier is directly converted into KnownWorld as a **Pool** Modifier for all tests of that type. *For example, if a W.P. skill gives you a +3 to Parry, then you have +3 to all dice pools made to Parry with that weapon.*

Converting Percentages: Percentages are the only slightly tricky conversion. If an effect in the game is special and listed with a set percentage of accomplishing a task, then just roll it as-is. If an effect modifies a skill percentage, then add it to the total - if the tens digit changes, then the skill bonus changes too (see skills section further below for more details).

Example Actions

Below is a short list of a few of the most common actions in the game, and how to determine the basic dice pools for those actions.

Action	Base Pools
Strike	PP + WP Strike Modifier
Parry	PP + WP Parry Bonus
Dodge	PP + H2H Skill Dodge Bonus
Stealth	PP + 1/10 (round up) Prowl Skill %
Perception	IQ + 1/10 (round up) Perception Skill %
Persuade	SA + 1/10 (round up) Charm Skill %

I think you probably get the basic format, so let's move on.

Skills

Keeping Track of your Skills

On your character sheet, you should write down five things for each skill you have: Skill Name, Skill Level, Base Percentage, Percentage Bonus, and Percentage Total. When you get a new skill, write down its name, jot down that it is at level 1, jot down the base percentage of that skill (see the skill's appropriate skill table), and write down any bonus you might have for it (mostly from OCC-specific or Racial bonuses). Finally, add the base and the bonus together to get your total.

When you attain a new OCC experience level, increase the "Level" of each skill you already know by one, and adjust their base percentage

Interpreting your Skills

When it comes time to use your skills, look at the percentage total and mentally remove the ones digit. Meaning, if your Prowl skill total is 47%, we only care about that 4 in the tens digit (the 7 means nothing). That number determines the bonus you get to your base dice check. So in this case, when you make your Prowl roll (most likely using your P.P. attribute), you add +4 to the dice total. **In other words, for every 10% of a skill bonus, your Pool modifier to tests of that skill is +1.**

And yes, you read that correctly, but I will elaborate: **single-digit skill percentage totals provide no dice pool bonuses, unless modified through magic or other such effects.** Since the ones digit doesn't count, having a skill with a total below 10% will not give you a dice pool bonus. However, it will still count as you knowing the skill for the sake of avoiding the Unskilled penalty.

However, on the plus side, *there is no longer a predetermined cap on skills!* In 2nd Edition PFRPG rules, skills are increased by an amount each level. Normally this amount freezes when the total of the base + all modifiers equals 98%, making all further increases completely pointless, but in KnownWorld, this hard limit is removed. Skills can proceed infinitely, with each new multiple of 10 increasing the die roll bonus. So if your skill total was 138%, you'd have a whopping +13 to the roll!

New Skill: Charm

The new Charm skill is linked to the new S.A. attribute. It uses the Prowl skill's advancement table.

New Skill: Perception

This new skill is linked to the I.Q. attribute, and is included in order to help counter people who use the Prowl skill. It has the same advancement table as the Prowl skill

Unskilled Checks

Normally, most skills can't be attempted without a base percentage in the skill. However, if the GM allows it, unskilled attempts may be made on some skills. However, doing so is much harder. First of all, your base attribute is reduced by 1 point for the purpose of the skill check. If this lowers your attribute to zero, you cannot attempt the check. Second, you roll D4s instead of D6s when actually rolling the reduced attribute. This makes it possible, albeit unlikely, and emphasizes the importance of skill training. Additionally, the GM can decree that some skill tests are simply beyond the ability of the untrained character.

Combat!

Combat flows similarly, but has a lot of changes. The structure is mostly intact: roll initiative, take actions, resolve actions, roll initiative, etc.

Initiative

The Initiative structure is still mostly the same, but the roll has been changed. At the beginning of a round, each player rolls their Speed dice to determine initiative order. Characters take actions on their turns, and characters with the same results act simultaneously. Before rolling the initiative dice, however, players can voluntarily choose to sacrifice one or more of their dice (to a minimum of one dice left for the initiative roll) to give themselves an equal number of additional actions this

round. So, if you have three dice and sacrifice one, then you give yourself one extra action this round but only roll two initiative dice at the start of the round.

Number of Actions

During a combat round, you can make a number of actions determined by your Hand-to-Hand skill's "Attacks Per Melee" bonus, with a default of one action for those who have no such bonus. Additionally, if you set aside any Initiative dice for additional actions, you gain that number of dice as additional actions.

An "Action" consists of anything that involves more than a second or two of your time: making an attack, dodging, casting a spell, etc. For non-"Man-of-Arms" OCCs, Parrying requires an action, but Man-of-Arms OCC can automatically attempt to Parry any attack in their "front arc" of awareness. Parrying and Dodging can happen any time they are required during the round, while Striking and performing other actions must happen when your initiative turn is up.

Note that if you want to dodge, you *must* set aside actions for it. It is important to note that you *do not* have to use all of your allotted actions each round, and I advise saving one or more in case you need to dodge. If you need to dodge and do not have an action to devote to it, you can subtract a die from the next round's initiative roll, to a minimum of one. If you have exhausted even that, then you simply cannot dodge. Tough luck, buddy. **If you are concerned, then leave an action or two free for unexpected circumstances.**

Combat Movement

If you are the kind of group that uses battle mats to approximate combat movement, a character can freely and easily move a number of squares each round equal to her Speed attribute. The character can move more than this, but it requires actions. Each action dedicated to movement allows her to move another increment of her Speed attribute. However, this must be declared before she declares any other actions, as each action she dedicates to movement applies a cumulative -1 penalty to all other actions taken that round (including automatic actions like Parries, etc).

If you're not using battle mats and don't really care about exact measurements, then just use the Speed attribute as a loose approximation of how far you move in relation to each other.

Attack Versus Parry/Dodge

When attacking another character, that character has the option of attempting to parry or dodge your attack. For Man-of-Arms OCCs, the parry is free and does not require an action. Non-combatant characters, however, do not get an automatic parry, and must use an action to attempt it. *All* characters, however, must devote an action to dodging if they wish to try.

When attacking an opponent who chooses to Parry or Dodge, you must equal or exceed their relevant defense roll in order to earn your first success. Each six points above that earns you another success, which in turn earns you bonus damage.

If the attack is unresisted (the target is unaware, unarmed, unarmored, or otherwise unable to defend), it is considered an opposed test. Each success past the first rewards you with bonus damage. Note that even if the opponent is not resisting, the attacker must still roll a 6 or higher to hit.

Damage and Armor

Damage is rolled as per normal rules, with standard weapon damages. Each success on the attack roll beyond the first allows the attacker to apply an amount of bonus damage equal to their P.S. attribute.

As for Armor, the stats remain the same but they function differently. When you attack and hit someone, compare your *successful* strike total to the target's AR. Note: the strike total is NOT modified by any Parry or Dodge rolls! If your strike total is *less* than the AR, you only damage the Armor's SDC, by one-half your damage roll (round down). If your Strike total is Greater than or equal to the AR, you will do half damage to both the armor's SDC and the target's HP, and if your strike roll total is six or more points higher than the AR, then you do *full* damage to both SDC and HP.

Saving Throws

Saving throws remain largely unaltered. The mechanic used is the new attribute roll mechanic, and the attribute in question is based on the save. P.E. resists Magic, Spells, Poisons, and Death, for example, while M.E. obviously resists psionics and insanity. The base saving throw difficulties remain as well, making saves potentially difficult for those with average or lower M.E. or P.E. stats (save up those Bonus Points!).

Magic and Psionics

If you stick with the core system of magic and psionics from the rules, then very few things are changed at all. Keep in mind the new attribute rolls when making saving throws, and the modifier conversions detailed above. However, I have also developed an alternate magic system available which replaces the ISP and Spells Per Day system of Palladium 1st Edition with a more unified, active-casting mechanic, while preserving all of the written spells and their effects. I've left it out of this document because I feel that it more heavily crosses the line that separates "rules replacement" from "complete fanboy house rules."

Check out my website (<http://nathanaelcole.com/knownworld>) for more details.

Bonus Points!

The Bonus Points system allows players a lot more control over their characters' destinies in a game system which more often than not forces them to fail a lot. With this system, players are given a small-but-increasing amount of Bonus Points, which they can spend to modify their own dice rolls. This meta-mechanic is an optional addition to your Palladium KnownWorld game, and is only provided here as an added gift.

Using Bonus Points

You can choose to spend bonus points at any time after you roll your dice, but before the results are declared. Bonus points can be spent on both Attribute Checks and Damage Rolls. Each Bonus Point spent on an Attribute Check gives you an extra six-sided die to that check, but the number of dice added cannot exceed the number of base dice rolled (so for an Attribute of 3, you can add at most 3 more dice). For Damage Rolls, each Bonus Point spent adds an extra die of the smallest size present (so if base damage is 3d8, you add another D8, but if the damage is 3D6 + 2D4, then you only add another D4), but the number of dice added cannot exceed the number of base dice rolled (so if you roll 3d8 base damage, the most you can add would be another 3d8, for 6d8 total damage).

You can spend five bonus points to completely reroll any one rolling of the dice. For example, you can reroll an attack roll, a dodge roll, a damage roll, a saving throw, a skill check, etc. When you reroll, you reroll all the *base* dice of that check (aka Stat + Skill, Stat + Strike, etc). You do *not* get to reroll any bonus damage dice added via Bonus points, however.

Gaining Bonus Points

Every character starts the game with a base of 20 Bonus Points, with a bonus equal to their S.A. score - yeah, that's right, the S.A. score, so perhaps you should think twice before making it your dump stat. When Bonus Points are spent, they are gone forever. You can gain more through leveling and good playing, however. Every time they gain a level, they gain 20 more points. The GM can randomly reward a free Bonus Point here and there for pretty much anything she feels - good one-liners, unexpectedly awesome roleplaying, fabulous comedy, food bribes, etc.

Conclusion

Well, I hope that someone out there finds this useful, and I hope that your romps through the Timiro Kingdom, Northern Wilderness, Baalgor Wastelands and beyond are many and adventurous.

Comments or questions? Drop by my blog: <http://nathanaelcole.com/knownworld>