



Playtest v.2 (Big Bad Con 2023)

By Daniel Kwan & Liana Mackenzie

# WANDERING BLADES

# QUICKSTART GUIDE

---

Written by

**DANIEL KWAN**

@danielhkwan

Game Design by

**DANIEL KWAN &  
LIANA MACKENZIE**

@danielhkwan & @valorliana

Graphic Design Consultation by

**WILL PARKS**

@willdparks

Branding by

**VERONICA ING**

Links:

[danielhkwan.com](https://danielhkwan.com)

[valorousgames.com](https://valorousgames.com)

[patreon.com/danielhkwan](https://patreon.com/danielhkwan)

[willparks.ca](https://willparks.ca)

[helloveroni.ca](https://helloveroni.ca)

# WANDERING BLADES?

*Wandering Blades* is a rules light, low fantasy tabletop role playing game inspired by Chinese martial arts media and old-school renaissance (OSR) games like *Errant*, *Vaults of Vaarn*, and *Old School Essentials*. *Wandering Blades* is designed around the following core principles:

- **Combat is dangerous** - When players decide to engage in combat, their characters risk death. The weapons and martial arts techniques wielded by their characters are instruments of death, but so are those of their enemies.
- **Simple, yet tactical** - The system of *Wandering Blades* is designed to create a gameplay experience that is easy for players to learn while providing them with a lot of tactical depth.
- **Toolbox experience** - The rules in *Wandering Blades* are written as guidelines. They are open to player interpretation and expansion. Use what works best for your table.

## WUXIA & XUANHUAN

These rules are designed to be used in stories inspired by the *wuxia* and *xuanhuan* genres of Chinese fiction.

**Wuxia** (literally “martial heroes”) features protagonists who are regular people, but capable of achieving seemingly supernatural fighting abilities through martial arts and internal energy training. This genre is often viewed as “low fantasy,” as it doesn’t typically feature any magic.

**Xuanhuan** (literally “mysterious fantasy”) is a subgenre of Chinese fantasy fiction that often blends Western elements and settings with Chinese folklore and mythology. Supernatural beings, Daoist cultivation, and thematic elements like feng shui and the occult are present in *xuanhuan* stories. The Chinese character *huan* refers to the imaginary and is also found in other fantasy genres like *qihuan* (a neutral term for fantasy) and *mohuan* (another term to describe stories that incorporate magical elements from Western fantasy).

## JIANGHU & WULIN

Central to wuxia stories are the complicated concepts of *jianghu* [jee-aang hu] and *wulin* [woo-leen].

**Jianghu** (literally “rivers and lakes”) can be generally defined as the social sphere of martial artists in wuxia stories. While the meaning of jianghu is highly nuanced and has evolved throughout China’s history, it exists in contrast to miaotang [me-ow taang] (literally “the temple”) – the imperial court and official government infrastructure. Put simply, jianghu exists outside of the miaotang.

**Wulin** (literally “martial forest”) is a term closely associated with jianghu and is used to describe the social circle or community of martial artists.

Jin Yong, one of the most revered wuxia writers of all time, was renowned for his construction of a complex jianghu and wulin that spanned vast geographic locales and was inhabited by countless characters from a diverse array of backgrounds. His protagonists belonged to a variety of martial arts sects and went on thrilling adventures against secret societies, bandits, corrupt officials, and even rebel forces! Look to his most popular work, the Condor Trilogy – consisting of *The Legend of the Condor Heroes*, *The Return of the Condor Heroes*, and *The Heaven Sword and Dragon Saber* – for additional inspiration!

# 1 CHARACTER CREATION

## CHARACTER FUNDAMENTALS

### Step 1: Determine

- Attributes
- Hit Points
- Qi Points
- Dodge
- Carrying Capacity
- Speed

### Step 2: Create

- Drive
- Keepsake
- Connection

### Step 3: Select

- Character Class
- Techniques
- Equipment

## ATTRIBUTES

A player character's (PC) attributes represent the characteristics that define their abilities and how they will react in different situations. There are four attributes that each character possesses: Strength, Agility, Focus, and Intellect.

**Strength** represents a character's physical power. It determines how much weight they can carry, how hard they can hit, and their ability to perform physically demanding feats. Strength is used to determine item slots.

**Agility** represents a character's quickness, coordination, and reflexes. It determines how fast a character can move, how well they dodge attacks, and their ability to perform tasks that require dexterity. Agility is used to determine dodge.

**Focus** represents a character's mental fortitude, discipline, determination, perceptiveness, and wisdom. It determines how well a character can concentrate, resist mental attacks, and the amount of qi they can cultivate. Focus is used to determine qi points.

**Intellect** represents a character's knowledge of the world and problem-solving skills. It determines how well a character can assess situations, learn, and find creative solutions to problems. Intellect is used to determine the number of techniques a character can know.

Each attribute has an attribute bonus and an attribute score. These are determined by rolling 4d6 and assigning each roll to an attribute. The value of each roll is the attribute's bonus. An attribute's score is determined by adding 10 to the bonus. For example, if you roll 3d6 for your character's strength and get a 2, 4, and 6, their Strength bonus will be +2 and their Strength score will be 12.

Rolling for attribute bonuses and defences is a great way of creating characters with interesting flaws and strengths. However, if you wish to choose your own flaws and strengths based on a character concept, you may instead distribute 14 points as you wish between all four attributes. All attributes must have at least 1 point, and can have no more than 6 points.

## HIT POINTS

**Hit Points** (HP) represent a character's health and vitality. They are a measure of a character or non-player character's (NPC) ability to avoid or withstand serious injury. A character's hit points are determined by rolling their class **hit die** (HD) during character creation. When creating a character, roll their class HD to determine their starting hit points. Each time a character gains a new level, they are able to roll their class HD to increase their hit point maximum.

When a character or NPC takes damage, their hit points are reduced by that amount. At 0 hit points, they are susceptible to wounds, which are serious injuries that can result in death.

**Optional Rule:** Instead of rolling class HD when creating a character, the table can agree to starting at maximum HD (the highest possible roll). As characters advance, characters gain ½ their hit dice with each new level.

## QI POINTS

Every character in *Wandering Blades* uses **qi** to aid them in their adventures by performing martial arts techniques and incredible feats. The amount of qi that a character can wield is measured by qi points. A character's base qi points are equal to their Focus bonus.

## DODGE

**Dodge** represents a character's ability to avoid being hit by an attacker. It is determined by a character's Agility score. In combat, characters can also rely on their equipment to **guard** against blows.

## CARRYING CAPACITY

**Carrying capacity** represents how much weight a character can carry before becoming encumbered. This is represented by a number equal to a character's Strength score.

**Weight** in this game is calculated in the number of item slots an item takes up. To keep things simple, items like a backpack do not count towards carrying capacity since a character would use them to store their items.

## SPEED

A character's **speed** determines how fast they move in combat. This is measured in feet and is determined by multiplying a character's Agility bonus by 10 (ex. +2 agility = 20 ft. move speed). In combat, character speed can be used abstractly or measured on a grid.

## DRIVE

Each character has a **drive** - a strong inner motivation, passion, or desire that they pursue as part of the shared story of the table. A character's drive is a powerful force that shapes their behaviour, personality, and actions. Once per session, a player can tap into their character's drive to automatically succeed on a single die roll. They must justify how their drive helps them succeed.

## KEEPSAKE

Each character starts with a **keepsake**, a small item that is kept as a treasured memento. It can be anything from a piece of jewellery to a letter that holds sentimental value. A character's keepsake is very likely tied to their drive. This item does not take up an item slot and cannot be a weapon. Keepsakes are used to help craft a character's backstory.

## CONNECTION

A **connection** is an important relationship that a character has with another member of the party. This connection can be romantic, platonic, or even strained. What's important is that the connection one PC has with another serves as a way to collaboratively create entanglements within the backstories of every player. This can be related to a character's drive and keepsake, or be something completely independent of those! Connections are primarily used by the GM to create interesting role play opportunities and challenges.

## CHARACTER CLASS

In *Wandering Blades*, a character's **class** defines what they can do and their worldview. During initial playtesting, there will be five character classes rolled out over the coming months in later versions of this document:

- **Youxia** - a wandering hero who protects the innocent and seeks to correct injustices using their martial skills and diplomacy.
- **Bandit** - a skilled outlaw who operates outside the laws of the jianghu or miaotang.
- **Underworld Operative** - a master of a shadowy network of informants, spies, and local gangs.
- **Apothecary** - a master of medicines and poisons.
- **Daoshi** - a scholar who studies mysteries and the occult.

## CLASS FEATURES

Each class has its own set of **class features**. These outline a **class hit dice**, **starting equipment**, and unique **adventuring features**.

**Bonus Qi:** Each class receives bonus qi points at each level. These add to their base qi point pool.

**Techniques:** Characters start with a number of known techniques determined by their class. When a character levels up, they are able to select 1 new technique.



## TECHNIQUES

**Techniques** are martial powers and special abilities that require qi points to use. There are four types of Techniques: Combat, Reactive, Support, and Esoteric.

- **Combat techniques** are special martial arts attacks. In combat, unless it is otherwise stated, a character can only use one combat Technique per turn.
- **Reactive techniques** are used in response to what is happening during a scene. In combat, reactive techniques can only be used once per turn.
- **Support techniques** are used to aid your allies or disrupt adversaries in combat. In combat, support techniques can only be used once per turn.
- **Esoteric techniques** are magical actions. They require item slots to use because of the paraphernalia (such as manuals) required to wield them. In combat, esoteric techniques can only be used once per turn.

## LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Characters start with a number of known techniques determined by their class. When a character levels up, they are able to select 1 new technique.

### **Optional rule: Seeking Knowledge**

Instead of adding a technique every level, new techniques must either be learned from martial arts manuals, masters, or through creativity and diligent practice (negotiated with the GM).

## 2 CHARACTER CLASSES

### THE YOUXIA

You are a youxia [yo she-ah] - a wandering hero who protects the innocent and seeks to correct injustices using their martial skills and diplomacy. You are neither a knight or a bandit. You have no allegiances to orders, monarchs, or noble families. Driven by an unwavering sense of justice, you avenge wrongs and help the poor - often through acts of violent heroism.

#### YOUXIA CLASS FEATURES

**Class Hit Die** - 1d10 per level.

**Starting equipment** - 1 weapon, 1 piece of light armour, Traveller's Kit

**Hero in Disguise** - You have a unique disguise, persona, and identity that allows you to blend into certain areas (GMs discretion). Any non-combat checks that leverage your disguise are amplified. This false identity must be

a labourer, peasant, or farmer. It takes less than an hour to become their alter-ego and they can remain in it indefinitely or until they are discovered or reveal their martial prowess. Once a youxia removes their disguise or is discovered, they may not use it again until they have completed a long rest.

**Signature Weapon** - You have a few signature weapons that you wield, each with their own unique name. A signature weapon deals damage one category higher without changing the weight category. The number of signature weapons a youxia can possess is dependent on their level.

**Martial Arts Sect** - You are a disciple of a martial arts sect. Your time spent as a disciple has granted you a distinct martial arts style and as such, you have mastered secret techniques unknown to those outside of your sect. As a devout member of your chosen sect, you will always have a home to return to and can call upon your fellow disciples when you require assistance.

Level	Bonus Qi Points	Signature Weapons
1	2	1
2	2	1
3	3	2
4	3	2
5	4	3

## YOUXIA TECHNIQUES

A youxia starts with two general techniques of their choice and two from a martial arts sect of their choosing. When a youxia gains a new level, they may add either one general technique or one from their chosen sect.

### GENERAL TECHNIQUES

- **Focused Strike** (1 Qi Point - Combat) - A single attack is amplified and cannot be modified by a target's Guard.
- **Misdirect & Strike** (1 Qi Point - Combat) - Distract an opponent before striking them from an unexpected angle. The next attack rolls made by your allies this round are amplified and rolled with Intellect.
- **Focused Dodge** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - Add your Focus bonus to your dodge against a single attack.
- **Disarming Strike** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - Disarm an adversary - make a check against their Agility score to disarm an opponent. If able, you may take and ready their weapon.
- **Heroic Strike** (3 Qi Points - Combat) - Deal maximum damage on a single attack. This technique can be declared after an attack resolves.

### MOUNTAIN ORCHID SECT TECHNIQUES

- **Twilight Thrust** (1 Qi Point - Combat) - You may move in a straight line and make an Attack as a single action.
- **Gale Slash** (2 Qi Points - Combat) - A single attack creates a gust of wind that can knock a single opponent within close to mid-range off balance. They must make an Agility saving throw with a difficulty equal to your attack roll. On a failed roll, they must use an action to regain their footing.
- **Moonlit Swordplay** (2 Qi Points - Combat) - Using a single attack action, strike two nearby adversaries with a single attack roll. You may add one qi point for every additional target.

# THE BANDIT

You are a bandit, a skilled outlaw who operates outside the laws of the jianghu or miaotang. While often motivated by the desire for power or wealth, bandits are also driven by a sense of rebellion and the desire to write their own destiny.

## BANDIT CLASS FEATURES

**Class Hit Die** - 1d12 per level.

**Starting equipment** - 1 weapon, 1 piece of armour, Warrior's Kit

**Brutal Strikes** - Your unarmed strikes deal 1d4 damage. You wield improvised weapons as if they are conventional weapons.

Level	Bonus Qi Points	Notoriety	Brutality
1	1	Intellect + 1	2
2	1	Intellect + 2	3
3	2	Intellect + 3	4
4	2	Intellect + 4	5
5	3	Intellect + 5	6

**Notorious** - Your exploits as a bandit are well known. This is expressed as your notoriety, a pool of points equal to your Intellect score plus a level-dependent bonus that can be spent when you leverage your reputation when making checks. For example, notoriety can be used when you attempt to leverage your reputation for ruthlessness and brutality to intimidate someone. Each point of notoriety spent reduces the Difficulty of a single check. You regain all of your notoriety after a long rest.

**Brutality** - You express yourself in combat through dramatic acts of violence. You have a number of brutality d6s that you may add to attack rolls. You may only add as many brutality dice to a roll as you'd like. You regain all of your brutality dice after a long rest.

## BANDIT TECHNIQUES

A bandit starts with two techniques of their choice that represent their prior experience. Add one technique each time a new level is gained.

- **Focused Body** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - Add your Strength bonus to Guard against a single attack. This can stack with Guard used from items.
- **Absorb Blow** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - Lower the damage of a successful attack against you by your Intellect bonus.
- **Unstoppable** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - At 0 HP, reduce the damage from incoming attacks by your Strength bonus.
- **Force with Force** (1 Qi Point - Reactive) - Match an enemy's attack with a strike of your own. Make an opposing attack roll. If it is higher than the enemy's roll, their attack is neutralised and you deal damage to them.
- **Goading Strike** (1 Qi Point - Support) - Your next attack is amplified, but deals half damage. All enemies within sight must focus their attention on you.
- **Wild Strike** (1 Qi Point - Combat) - Deliver a powerful, yet uncontrolled blow to an enemy. Your attack roll is hindered, but deals double damage.
- **Ramming Strike** (1 Qi Point - Combat) - Your attack pushes the target 10 feet away from you (from close to mid-range). This technique can be declared after an attack resolves.
- **Vanish** (1 Qi Point - Support) - Disappear from sight for a brief moment, allowing for an opportunity to evade pursuit.
- **Show of Force** (2 Qi Points - Combat) - After you successfully kill an enemy (either follower or leader), you make a display of brutality to force a morale check for the remaining enemies.
- **Rally** (2 Qi Points - Support) - Allies that have taken damage this turn recover one class hit die worth of HP.
- **Sundering Strike** (2 Qi Points - Reactive) - If an opponent successfully guards one of your attacks using armour or a weapon, you may reduce the amount of remaining guard by 1.

## 3 EQUIPMENT

### CURRENCY

Coinage in Wandering Blades is abstracted into a single currency (referred to as **coins**) instead of splitting them into different denominations.

### EMCUMBRANCE

When a player character is carrying more items than their carrying capacity, they become **encumbered**. An encumbered character's rolls are all hindered (-5 penalty).

### WEAPONS

Weapons have the following qualities:

- **Weight category** - a weapon's weight category determines how many item slots it takes up in a character's carrying capacity. There are three weapon weight categories: Light (1 item slot), Medium (2 item slots), and Heavy (3 item slots).
- **Damage category** - a weapon's damage category determines what damage die is rolled upon a successful attack. There are three weapon categories: Light (1d6 damage), Medium (1d8 damage), and Heavy (1d10 damage). The handedness of a weapon or other situations (such as a technique) may call for damage to be rolled at a category higher or lower. In this case, damage dice are adjusted along this scale: 1, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, and 1d20.
- **Guard value** - each weapon has a fixed guard value (GV) that represents a pool of d6s that can be expended in combat to reduce the total of incoming attack rolls. Once the guard of a weapon is expended, it cannot be restored until they take a long rest or visit a blacksmith. Some weapons (such as staves, bows, and crossbows) are destroyed once they are used to guard against an attack. As such, they cannot be repaired.

- **Descriptors & Special Features** - weapons also have descriptors such as range (measured by engagement zones), handedness, and special features (ex. concealable). Discretion is left to the GM, but attacking outside of a weapons range generally results in a hindered roll.

## WEAPON TABLE

Name	Guard Value	Descriptors & Special Feature(s)	Damage, Weight, & Cost (Coins)
Dagger	1	Melee (close), Mid-range (thrown), Concealable, 1H	Light (1 item slot)  One hand (1H): 1d6 Two hand (2H): 1d8  25 Coins
Jian	3	Melee (close), 1H	
Axe	2	Melee (close), 2H	
Meteor Hammer	2	Melee (mid-range), cannot block melee attacks	
Staff	2*	Melee (mid-range), 2H	
Dao	3	Melee (close), 1H, 2H	Medium (2 item slots)
Bow	1	Long range (projectile), 2H	One hand (1H): 1d8 Two hand (2H): 1d10
Spear	3	Melee (mid-range), 1H, 2H	50 Coins
Zhanmadao	3	Melee (mid-range), 2H	Heavy (3 item slots)
Greataxe	4	Melee (close), 2H	One hand (1H): 1d10 Two hand (2H): 2d6
Trident		Melee (mid-range), 2H	100 Coins
Crossbow	1*	Long range (projectile), 2H, can only attack once per turn	

\*Using this weapon to guard renders it **destroyed**.

**Concealable** weapons can be hidden by rolling a succeeding an Agility or Intellect check.

## ARMOUR

Various types of armour have the following qualities:

- **Weight category** - an armour's weight category determines how many item slots it takes up in a character's carrying capacity. There are three armour weight categories: **Light** (1 item slot), **Medium** (2 item slots), and **Heavy** (4 item slots).
- **Guard value** - each type of armour has a fixed guard value (GV) that represents a pool of d6s that can be expended in combat to reduce the total of incoming attack rolls. Once an armour's total guard value has been expended, it cannot be restored until they take a long rest or visit an armorer.
- **Special features** (optional) - some types of armour also have special features.

### ARMOUR TABLE

Name	Cost (coins)	Weight	Guard Value	Special Feature(s)
Padded	10	Light	2	N/A
Leather	150	Medium	4	Speed penalty (5 ft)
Lamellar Iron	300	Heavy	6	Speed penalty (10 feet), checks related to stealth are hindered
Shield	50	Medium	3	-1 damage taken while equipped, but unable to wield heavy weapons  Can wield alongside light and medium weapons



## **IMPROVISED WEAPONS & ARMOUR**

Mundane items/***improvised weapons*** have damage values associated with their weight, but attacks made with them are hindered (unless otherwise stated).

Mundane item guard values:

- Small objects (ex. book, vase, bucket, etc.) - 1 guard value
- Medium sized objects (ex. chairs) - 2 guard value
- Large objects (ex. tables) - 4 guard value

If you are ever uncertain about the guard value of an everyday item, the GM can decide.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## EQUIPMENT KIT TABLE

Name	Contains	Weight
Scholar's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, flame stick, 2 days rations, set of books and scrolls, set of writing materials, regional map, compass, and small magnifying glass	3
Apothecary Kit	Backpack, bedroll, flame stick, 2 days rations, bandages, salves, gourd water bottle, bag of dried medicinal plants, grinding and mixing tools, small set of containers, and reference books on medicinal plants	4
Traveller's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, flame stick, torch, walking stick, heavy cloak, compass, gourd water bottle, 5 days rations, rope (30'), regional map, and dagger	5
Warrior's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, flame stick, torch, compass, gourd water bottle, 3 days rations, whistle, dagger, whetstone, and regional map	5
Thief's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, gourd water bottle, 2 days rations, flame stick, set of dice, grappling hook, rope (60'), dark cloak, lock picks, vial of oil, and makeup for disguises	4
Merchant's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, gourd water bottle, 3 days rations, lamp and oil, fire striker, personal seal and ink, set of writing materials, and a fine piece of jewellery	4
Artisan's Kit	Backpack, bedroll, gourd water bottle, 1 days rations, lamp and oil, fire striker, and either a musical instrument or set of brushes, ink, and paper	3
Potion Case	A case for potions. Each case has 3 slots for potions. A Potion Case has a Guard rating equal to the number of full potion vials contained within it, and if used to guard the case, along with all potions are destroyed and anybody in close range is hit by all potions and receives their topical effect.	1

# 4

# QI

## QI IN CHINESE CULTURE

**Qi** is a fundamental component of Chinese culture with significance in the realms of spirituality, medicine, martial arts, ethics, and philosophy. Understandings of qi are incredibly nuanced and fluid, having evolved throughout the course of China's long history. Within the context of wuxia, xianxia, and xuanhuan, qi is portrayed as the vital energy that exists in all things.

## QI POINTS

Each character has a pool of **qi points** that represent their inner discipline and ability to use their martial arts and esoteric techniques. A character's **qi pool** is determined by their Focus bonus plus any bonus qi points provided by their class.

Characters use qi points for techniques and **qi abilities**. Unless otherwise stated, qi abilities can only be used in combat on your turn. You may only use one qi ability per combat round and it does not count as an action. Qi points can be restored when healing. During a short rest, a number of qi points restored is equal to a character's Focus bonus. During a long rest, a character's qi pool is fully restored.

## QI ABILITY TABLE

Qi Ability	Qi Cost	Effect
Deadly Intentions	1	Reroll all damage dice for an attack and keep the new total.
Intense Focus	1	Amplify your next d20 roll.
Visualization	1	Automatically succeed on a saving throw.
Essence of the World	1	In collaboration with the GM, a friendly NPC from your character's past joins a narrative scene.
Meditative Healing	1	Spend 1 qi point to regain hit points equal to a roll of your class hit point dice.
Counter Attack	1	After you successfully guard an opponent's attack, immediately make a free attack action against them.
Push the Pace	2	Take an extra Action during your turn.
Escoteric Guard	Variable	Spend 1d6 per qi point to guard against an incoming attack. This can be used during an ambush.

# 5 CHECKS & SAVES

## ROLLING & DIFFICULTY

When a character attempts to do something where the outcome is risky or uncertain, they attempt a **Check** by **rolling 1d20** and adding a **relevant Attribute bonus**. To succeed, the roll must be equal to or greater than the **difficulty** of the roll. If the Check is opposed by a character or NPC, success is based on whoever has the highest roll. **Saves** are a type of Check used to avoid bad outcomes brought on by risky situations. Difficulty is determined by the GM.

Here are some recommended difficulty scores:

- Moderate - Difficulty 12
- Challenging - Difficulty 15
- Difficult - Difficulty 18
- Futile - Difficulty 20

## AMPLIFIED & HINDERED ROLLS

Martial arts techniques, qi abilities, and even narrative situations can provide favourable or unfavourable die rolls for players and NPCs. When a situation calls for a roll to be more effective, it is **amplified**. For example, attacking a prone character or empowering a strike with qi. When a roll is amplified, the player receives a **+5 bonus**. This bonus cannot be applied multiple times to a single roll.

On the contrary, in a situation that calls for a die roll to be less effective, such as attacking someone shrouded by smoke, it is **hindered**. A hindered roll receives a **-5 penalty**.

If ever a situation is unclear, the GM is always able to collaborate with the players to determine if a roll should be amplified or hindered.

# 6

# COMBAT

## COMBAT BREAKDOWN

1. Resolve ambushes
2. Determine Initiative
3. Determine Fast and Slow Turns
4. Resolve Fast Actions
  - Action
  - Guard
  - NPC morale
5. Resolve Slow Actions
  - Actions
  - Guard
  - NPC morale
6. Repeat steps 4 to 5

### INITIATIVE

If it is narratively unclear who acts first in combat, an **initiative roll** is used to determine whether the party acts before the GM, or vice versa. Each player and the GM roll 1d20 and add their Agility bonus. If there are multiple adversaries, the GM makes a single Initiative Roll using the highest Agility bonus available. If any of the players rolls higher than the GM, the entire party goes first.

### AMBUSHES

During an ambush, before initiative is rolled, targets are unable to use Guard from items and equipment to reduce incoming Attack rolls. Qi abilities can be used to react to an ambush. Once the attacks from the ambush are resolved, initiative is rolled to determine the turn order.

## ROUNDS & TURNS

In combat, a round consists of many turns - one for every combatant. After initiative is determined, each combatant involved in the encounter decides if they want to take a **Fast Turn** or **Slow Turn**. This is decided in secret and then revealed at the same time.

In a round of combat, Fast Turns happen first. Combatants on the winning side of the initiative roll go first in any order they'd like. They may take 1 **action** (Move, Attack, or Technique).

Slow Turns happen last. Combatants on the winning side of the initiative roll go first in any order they'd like, but may take 2 actions (Move, Attack, or Technique).

## ACTIONS

When a character tries to do something in combat, they take action. Moving, attacking, or using a technique count as actions. Note that only 1 qi ability can be used per round. They do not count as actions.

## RANGE & MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

In combat, a character can use a move action to move a distance up to their speed.

## ENGAGEMENT ZONES

Engagement zones help organize every character's relative positioning within an encounter. There are three engagement zones:

- **Close range:** close proximity between combatants - within arm's reach or the range of close combat weapons like swords.
- **Mid-range:** moderate proximity between combatants - within the range of reach weapons such as spears and staves, or thrown weapons like knives. Between 10 to 15 feet.
- **Long range:** long distance between combatants - beyond the reach of melee and most thrown weapons. Examples of weapons used in long range combat include bows and crossbows. Refers to ranges greater than 30 feet.

## TECHNIQUES IN COMBAT

Unless otherwise stated, a character can only use one Combat, Support, or Esoteric Technique per turn in addition to one Reactive Technique.

### ATTACKING

When a character attempts to inflict harm upon another, they make an **attack action**. This commonly involves striking with a melee weapon, using a ranged weapon, making an unarmed attack\*, or even using improvised weapons\*\*.

\*Anyone can make an unarmed attack. Unless otherwise stated, unarmed attacks deal 1d2 damage.

\*\*Anyone can attack with improvised and makeshift weapons. Unless otherwise stated, the damage of an improvised weapon reflects its weight category, but one step lower.

### ATTACK ORDER OF OPERATIONS

When either the GM or a PC makes an attack action, follow these steps:

1. Roll 1d20 + applicable attribute bonus (Strength or Agility)
2. Compare to the target's dodge (hits only succeed when they are greater than the target's dodge)
3. Target applies Guard (optional)
4. Apply damage to the target's hit points
5. Apply wounds

### DUAL WIELDING WEAPONS

When wielding two weapons in either hand, you may make two attacks per action. However, each attack roll is hindered.

#### Optional Rule: Lethal Damage

If you want combat to feel more lethal, damage dice can "explode". This means that when a damage die is rolled and lands on its maximum value, it is rolled again, adding the new value to the maximum value. If the die again lands on its maximum value, it explodes a second time. This happens until the die rolls a value other than its maximum.



## GUARD

Each character then has a **guard pool** of d6s granted by their equipment and objects in their inventory.

When an attack roll is equal to or higher than a character's dodge, they have the option to spend dice from their guard pool to lower the total attack roll (i.e. to parry the blow). To do this, the player rolls as many d6s as they'd like from one source of guard per attack (qi, technique, weapon, armour, or misc item) and subtracts the value from the incoming attack roll.

Once a d6 is used from equipment (weapons or armour), it is considered **broken** and out of the guard pool until a character takes a **long rest**. During a long rest, a player can attempt to restore their guard pool by rolling the appropriate amount of broken d6s for each weapon and armour piece. If a player rolls above the GV for a piece of equipment, they succeed in restoring the d6 to their guard pool. If the roll fails, the d6 is permanently broken until it is properly restored by a craftsman. If all of the d6s associated with a piece of equipment are permanently broken, the item is destroyed.

When an inanimate object is used to guard against an attack, it is immediately destroyed.

## MORALE

The state of a combat encounter dictates whether NPCs will surrender or run away. Allied and adversarial NPCs or creatures have a listed **morale score** between 2 and 12.

In combat, a **morale roll** is triggered when **more than half of the NPCs have been killed**, if the **leader is defeated**, or at the GMs discretion (such as when an NPC leader receives a horrible wound). When this happens, the GM rolls 2d6 and compares the result to an NPC's morale score. If the result is higher than their morale score, the NPC will attempt to retreat, surrender, or negotiate on their next turn.

# 7 DEATH, WOUNDS, & HEALING

## WOUNDS

If the hit points of a player character (PC) or non-player character (NPC) "Leader" are reduced to 0 (or beyond), they are **compromised** and can receive **wounds**. Any damage beyond 0 hit points results in a wound. The severity of a wound is based on the amount of damage taken. If a character has more than 0 hit points, but they take damage from a single attack that would reduce their HP below 0, the excess damage is counted when determining a wound.

- If a combatant receives a wound that they already have or one that does not make narrative sense, they receive the next wound option.
- For every wound a character or NPC has, they take that much extra damage from successive attacks made against them.
- Some wounds will also temporarily or permanently reduce a character's carrying capacity, potentially causing a character to drop equipment. An NPC "follower" is instantly killed when they are reduced to 0 Hit Points and does not receive wounds.
- If a character is **on death's door**, they will die in a number of rounds equal to their Focus bonus unless they receive medical aid.

## HEALING

Hit points are replenished during **short** and **long rests**. If you are interrupted during either type of rest, no healing is received.

A short rest consists of a quick break that allows you to roll a single hit die to recover hit points. You also recover qi points equal to your Focus bonus.

During a long rest, your hit points and qi points are fully restored. You may reduce the amount of hit point and qi restoration you would receive by half to cure a non-permanent wound. A long rest takes 8 hours and thus can be performed 3 times in a day.

## PHYSICAL WOUND TABLE

Physical Damage Past 0 HP	Wound	Effect
1	Flesh wound	-
2	Damaged item	A random item in your inventory is damaged or destroyed.
3	Deep wound (heavy bleeding)	Maximum Hit Points reduced by 2.
4	Damaged arm or hand	Unable to use Strength bonus for Checks or Saves. Carrying capacity -1.
5	Damaged leg or foot	Unable to use Agility bonus for Checks or Saves. Speed reduced by half in combat. Unable to run outside of combat. Carrying capacity -1.
6	Damaged eye	Loss of eye. <b>PERMANENT.</b>
7	Destroyed hand or foot	Unable to use Medium or Heavy weapons (hand). Speed reduced to 0 (foot). <b>PERMANENT.</b> Carrying capacity -2.
8	Destroyed arm	Unable to use weapons. Difficult Strength saving throw required to stay conscious. <b>PERMANENT.</b> Carrying capacity -3.
9	Destroyed leg	Speed reduced to 0. Difficult Strength saving throw required to stay conscious. <b>PERMANENT.</b> Carrying capacity -3.
10	Cracked skull	Immediately fall unconscious. <b>On death's door.</b>
11	Disembowelled or horrible internal damage	Immediately fall unconscious. Maximum Hit Points reduced to 1. On death's door. Carrying capacity -4.
12	Killing blow	Instant death

## **THAT'S IT (FOR NOW)!**

More *Wandering Blades* playtest material will be released on Patreon over the next few months. The *Chronicles of Spring & Autumn: Land of Blades* campaign setting will be integrated into this game!

- Daniel