

4 d4:  
QUICK  
START  
GUIDE



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4d4:

## QUICK START GUIDE

A Rolling4d4.com Product  
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4



4

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# Welcome to 4d4

## A Game for Gamers Who Think for Themselves

Tabletop RPGs used to be about creativity, not corporations. Now, the big names in gaming care more about selling you the next book than about helping you tell better stories. They want you addicted, not inspired—locked into a cycle of expansions, rule updates, and paywalls just to feel like you’re “really playing.”

### That’s not 4d4.

4d4 is an RPG built for players, by a player. A game that respects your intelligence, values your creativity, and is designed to be accessible without constant buy-ins. We don’t tell you what kind of stories to tell—we give you the tools to build them your way. Whether you’re a veteran GM or picking up dice for the first time, this game is meant to be yours to shape.

This Quick Start Guide will teach you the basics, but the Core Rulebook expands on the system with deeper mechanics, additional content, and more tools to help you craft your ideal campaign. Every book in the 4d4 system is designed to enhance, not gatekeep, your experience—offering more options, but never making them a requirement.

**You are a player to me.  
Not a wallet.**

## How 4d4 Stands Apart

- ▶ No Content Gated for Greed
  - No endless expansions just to “keep up.”
- ▶ A Framework
  - Not a Rulebook – The system adapts to you, not the other way around.
- ▶ DIY
  - Player-First Design – Inspired by the golden age of RPGs, not corporate trends.

If you’re tired of bloated rulesets, overpriced supplements, and companies telling you how to have fun—welcome to 4d4.

## THE DICE ARE IN YOUR HANDS.

### How 4d4 Uses AI—Because It's Just One Guy

Some companies hide their AI use.

**I don't.**

4d4 exists because of AI—because I'm one person doing what entire teams at corporate publishers do with millions in budget. AI helps format and refine, but the game design is 100% human.

If you're here, you want a game that respects your time and creativity—not a corporate content treadmill. Without AI-assisted tools, this project would be impossible to bring to you at this scale, quality, and price.

I get it—people fear AI because they've seen it used carelessly. But this isn't that. Without AI, 4d4 wouldn't exist. If you think independent creators shouldn't have access to the same efficiency as corporate giants, then maybe this isn't the game for you.

If, on the other hand, you believe that tabletop RPGs should be about creativity, freedom, and accessibility—then welcome to 4d4.

**Welcome Home.**




# The Four Axes System

## 1. THE FOUR AXES [CORE STATS]


Each character, item, or entity in 4d4 has four main directions that define their abilities:

 **NORTH (N) →  
POWER & COMMAND**

- ▶ Strength, magic, leadership, strategy
- ▶ Used for combat, raw force, and commanding others

 **SOUTH (S) →  
AGILITY & PRECISION**

- ▶ Speed, reflexes, dexterity, artistic ability
- ▶ Used for stealth, acrobatics, crafting, and finesse-based attacks

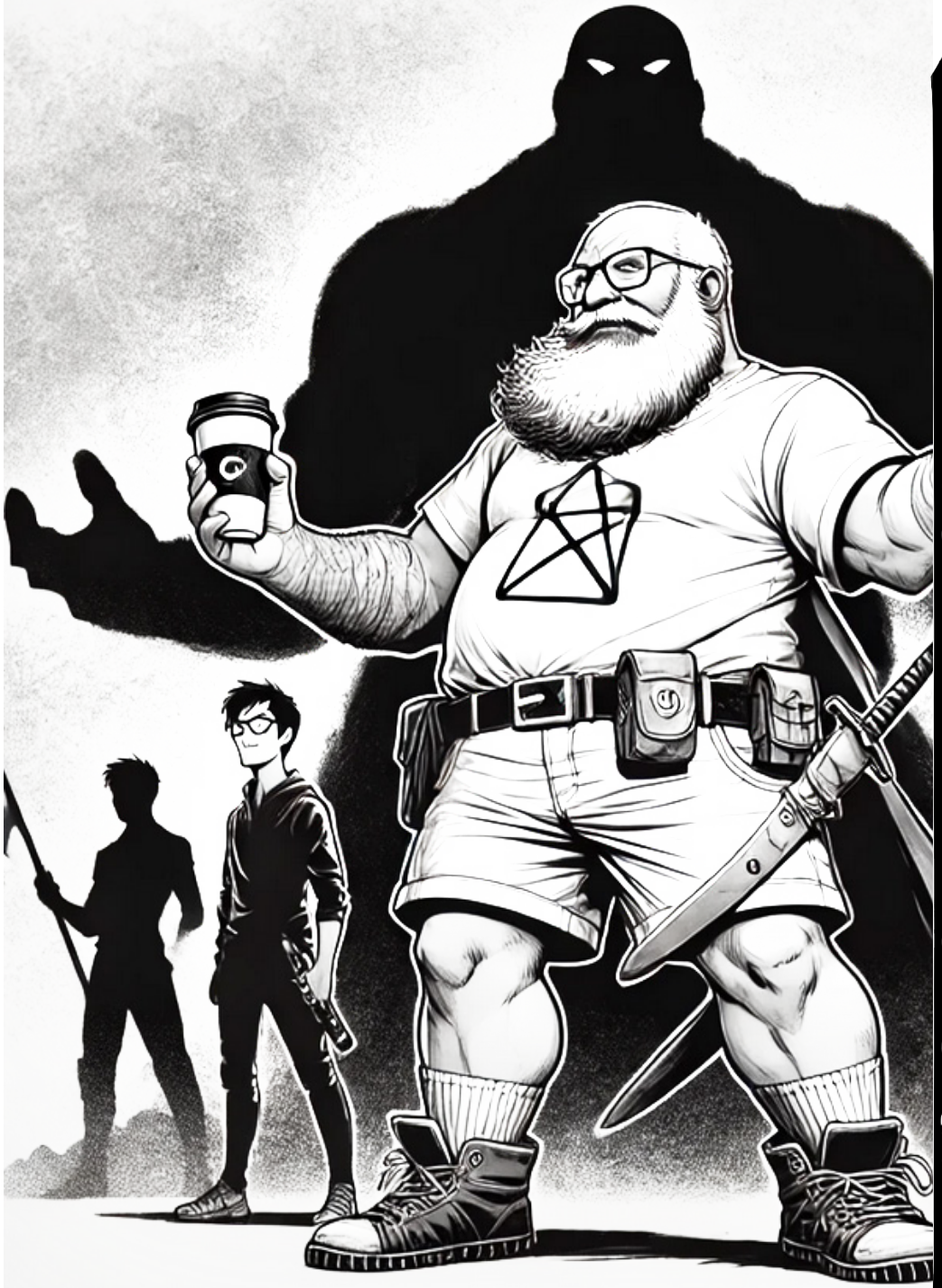
 **EAST (E)  
→ WISDOM &  
KNOWLEDGE**

- ▶ Intelligence, logic, research, intuition
- ▶ Used for academics, investigation, spellcasting, and planning

 **WEST (W) → EM-  
PATHY & CONNECTION**

- ▶ Social skills, diplomacy, healing, teamwork
- ▶ Used for persuasion, negotiation, support abilities, and leadership





**Key Concept:** These axes are flexible in interpretation but should stay thematically consistent within their structure. For example, “North” might represent fire-power for a battle mech but savagery for a zombie horde—both fitting within the theme of power and command.

## 2. ROUNDS & TURNS: HOW TIME WORKS IN 4D4

- ▶ A Round is when every player has taken one action.
- ▶ A Turn ends when all players have spent their dice.
- ▶ There can be multiple rounds in a turn before dice run out.
- ▶ A turn resets all dice pools at the start of the next turn.
- ▶ Dice changes happen immediately:
  - *If a character gains dice, they can use them immediately.*
  - *If a character loses dice, they are removed immediately from their pool.*
- ▶ Holding a round action costs 1 die, which you roll im-

mediately.

- If it rolls a 1 or 2, the die is lost
- If the result is a 3 or 4, it must be resolved as a Straggler according to the scenario rules (e.g., a clock moves forward, tension escalates).
  - SEE THE SECTION ON STRAGGLERS
- ▶ You may take your held action at any time before the ROUND ends.
  - *A player may hold one action at a time. If they delay again, the previous held action is lost.*

(REFER TO THE STRAGGLER SECTION FOR DETAILS ON HOW 3S AND 4S AFFECT THE SCENE.)

## EXAMPLE

### Rounds & Turns in Play

The party is fighting a group of raiders. Each player has 4 dice. The fight begins.



### ROUND 1

- ▶ Player A attacks, rolling 2 dice and forming a cluster.
- ▶ Player B moves to cover, rolling 1 die.
- ▶ Player C wants to hold their action. They spend 1 die to delay.

**THE RAIDERS ATTACK, ROLLING AGAINST THE PLAYERS' DEFENSE.**

Everyone has taken one action, so Round 1 ends.

### ROUND 2

- ▶ Player A attacks again, using 1 die.
- ▶ Player B fires from cover, using 2 dice.
- ▶ Player C now takes their delayed action, rolling 2 dice.

**THE RAIDERS RETALIATE, ROLLING AGAINST PLAYER B.**

Round 2 ends.

### ROUND 3

- ▶ Player A has 1 die left and makes a final attack.
- ▶ Player B uses their last die for a defensive roll.
- ▶ Player C uses their remaining dice for a final push.

**THE RAIDERS TAKE THEIR TURN.**

Turn Ends:

All players have spent their dice. The turn is over. All dice pools reset, and a new turn begins. Round is when every player has taken one action.

## 4. ROLLING & RESOLVING ACTIONS

### BUILDING THE DICE POOL

- ▶ Your total dice pool is the sum of all true directions (N, S, E, W).
- ▶ A direction determines how many dice you can roll from your pool.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT AXIS

- ▶ Skill or ability will call for a specific direction.  
(N,S,E,W)

If you don't have a specific skill or ability for what you're attempting, the action is considered untrained—you simply roll based on the direction that best fits your approach.

- ▶ For example:
  - Flexing to intimidate? Roll North (N) for raw power.
  - Flexing to impress with style? Roll East (E) for calculated charm.



## CONTESTED ROLLS

In a contest, the defender opposes the attack using the opposite direction of the attacker's roll unless a skill or power specifies otherwise.

The defender must use the opposite direction the attacker used. **More options exist inside the core rule book.**

## EXAMPLE:

If an attacker rolls North (N), the defender may choose to roll up to their East (E) value to defend.

The defender is not required to roll their full stat value—they may choose to roll fewer dice if they wish.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- ▶ Count how many clusters you have. The more clusters, the stronger your roll.
- ▶ If tied, whoever has the highest total face value wins.
- ▶ If STILL TIED: Each player selects 1 die to reroll.

**Some abilities/powers will look for specific cluster sizes, sequences, or patterns over time.**

## CLUSTERS

A cluster is any grouping of the same number, such as (1,1) or (3,3,3). Runs, like (1,2,3,4), do not form clusters.

In the Quick Start Guide, clusters determine success in contested rolls, but in the Core Rulebook, they play a larger role in advanced mechanics, unlocking special abilities, powering unique effects, and shaping more complex interactions in gameplay.

### EXAMPLE 1

#### A CLEAR WINNER

- ▶ The warrior rolls 4 dice for North and gets (2,2,3,3)
- ▶ Two clusters: (2,2) & (3,3). The guard rolls 3 dice for South and gets (1,1,4)
- ▶ One cluster: (1,1).
- ▶ The warrior wins! The attack lands.

### EXAMPLE 2

#### A TIE, RESOLVED BY FACE VALUE

- ▶ The rogue rolls 3 dice for South and gets (1,1,2) → One cluster: (1,1).

- ▶ The mage rolls 3 dice for East and gets (1,1,3)
- ▶ One cluster: (1,1).
- ▶ Both have one cluster, but the mage has a higher total face value (1+1+3 = 5) compared to the rogue (1+1+2 = 4).
- ▶ The mage wins!

### EXAMPLE 3

#### A TIE, RESOLVED BY REROLL

- ▶ The fighter rolls 3 dice for North and gets (2,2,4) → One cluster: (2,2).
- ▶ The ranger rolls 3 dice for South and gets (2,2,3) → One cluster: (2,2).
- ▶ Both have one cluster, and both have a total face value of 8.
- ▶ Since it's still a tie, both players select one die to reroll.
- ▶ The fighter rerolls a 4 and gets a 2 (new result: 2,2,2 → Two clusters!).
- ▶ The ranger rerolls a 3 and gets a 1 (new result: 2,2,1 → One cluster!).
- ▶ The fighter wins!

## 4. STRAGGLERS

Stragglers are any single, ungrouped dice left over from your roll.

- ▶ 1's and 2's may be kept and spent anytime before the end of the TURN.
- ▶ 3's and 4's must be resolved immediately when rolled—impacting the scene directly.
- ▶ A 1 or 2 may be held and spent at any time before the TURN ends. If not used, they are lost.

**REMINDER: IF A PLAYER DELAYS THEIR ACTION, THEY MUST ROLL 1 DIE IMMEDIATELY.**

**IF IT ROLLS A 3 OR 4, IT AFFECTS THE SCENE AS A STRAGGLER.**

Die value to Straggler

- ▶ 1: Give yourself a (4,4) cluster at any time before the turn ends.
- ▶ 2: Give another player a (4,4) cluster at any time before the turn ends.
- ▶ 3: Something Bad happens. (scene-dependent interactions).
- ▶ 4: Something Good happens (scene-dependent interactions).

GMs should determine Straggler effects before the roll, so players know how 3s and 4s will impact the scene.

**Stragglers should feel**

12

**natural to the scenario, not arbitrary surprises.**

## EXAMPLE

### 3's & 4's :: AKA - SCENE SPECIFIC STRAGGLERS

- ▶ A volcanic eruption threatens the area. The GM rules that:
  - Rolling a 3 increases the lava flow.
  - Rolling a 4 reduces the lava flow.
- ▶ If the lava flow reaches +4, the volcano erupts.
- ▶ If the lava flow reaches -4, the volcano goes dormant.



## EXAMPLE:

### HAGGLING AT THE MARKET

- ▶ The players negotiate the price of a valuable item. The GM rules that:
  - *Rolling a 3 increases the price by 10%.*
  - *Rolling a 4 decreases the price by 10%.*
- ▶ If the price reaches +40%, the merchant refuses to sell to the players.
- ▶ If the price reaches -40%, the merchant offers a rare discount or bonus item.

## EXAMPLE:

### NAVIGATING A STORM AT SEA

- ▶ A violent storm threatens the players' ship. The GM rules that:
  - Rolling a 3 worsens the storm, making conditions more dangerous.
  - Rolling a 4 calms the weather slightly.
- ▶ If the storm reaches +4, the ship is wrecked.
- ▶ If the storm reaches -4, the skies clear and the danger passes.

## 5. SKILLS AND POWERS

Skills and Powers may require sequences to happen in order to activate or be successful. Skills and Powers are how you interact with Status Effects. Status Effects are how you interact with the world.

### Active Skills:

These are actions you declare before rolling. If you meet the required conditions, the skill activates.

## EXAMPLE:

A shooting skill may require rolling (1,1) in addition to winning a contested roll, if applicable.



## Passive Powers:

These trigger automatically when their conditions are met, no matter whose roll it is.

### EXAMPLE:

Regeneration triggers whenever (1,2,3)

- Appears in any roll, healing 1 **WOUNDED STATUS EFFECT**.

A skill or power grouping is considered a cluster when determining roll success or failure.

- ▶ Wound Dice (WND) – Represents sustained damage and long-term effects.
- ▶ Power Dice (POW) – Used for activating abilities and special moves.
- ▶ Synergy Dice (SYN) – Influences teamwork mechanics and cooperative actions.
- ▶ Armor Dice (ARM) – Mitigates damage and determines defensive success.

Each of these dice types plays a role in shaping the strategic choices available to players. The Core Rulebook will explore how they interact, when to use them, and how they can be leveraged to deepen the gameplay experience.

## 6. DICE TYPES

The Quick Start Guide keeps things streamlined by focusing on the fundamental mechanics of play. The Core Rulebook will introduce specialized dice types—*Wound*, *Power*, *Synergy*, and *Armor*—each designed to expand tactical options and strategic depth. These additional mechanics are not covered here but will be explored in full detail in the Core Rulebook.

### REPLENISHING DICE

All dice replenish at the start of the next **TURN (NOT ROUND)**.



## 7. STATUS EFFECTS: QUICK OVERVIEW

### HOW STATUS EFFECTS WORK

Status effects represent temporary conditions that impact a character's abilities. Instead of taking effect immediately, all status effects resolve at the end of the **ROUND**—meaning actions taken during the round can influence what happens when they take effect.

- ▶ Each status effect has a Pip value (e.g., Burn (1)).
- ▶ Pips fade over time, reducing by 1 each **ROUND** unless otherwise stated.
- ▶ If a status effect does not state a specific fade rule, it is assumed to fade by 1 per **ROUND**.
- ▶ Status effects do not immediately apply when inflicted. Instead, they trigger at the end of the **ROUND**, meaning players can act before the effect takes hold.
- ▶ Some require a reaction roll to remove.

### EXAMPLE:

#### BURN (1)

**EFFECT:** Target loses 1 die from their dice pool at the start of each round.

**FADE:** Burns fade by 1 per round unless refreshed.

Player A attacks with fire and wins the contested roll.

Player B receives Burn (1), reducing their max dice pool by 1 in addition to any damage.

Burn fades over time unless refreshed.



**Distracted**

**Distracted (1)** → -1 to current dice pool until the end of the round.

**Fade:** Ends at the end of the round unless refreshed.

**Knocked Down (1)** → **Must use 1 die to stand up before taking actions.**

**Fade:** Ends immediately after standing up.

**Poisoned (1)** → Lose 1 die at the start of each round until healed.

**Fade:** Fades by 1 per round unless healed or neutralized.

For more advanced effects and customization, see the Core Rulebook.

## 8. DAMAGE & KNOCKOUT

In 4d4, damage affects a character's ability to act by reducing their **Current Dice Pool (CDP)**, their **Mitigation Dice Pool (MDP)**, or their

**Total Dice Pool (TDP)** depending on the type of damage taken.

### HOW DAMAGE WORKS

- ▶ Non-Lethal Damage reduces CDP—your active dice for this turn, limiting what you can do immediately.
- ▶ Mitigation Damage (MDP) reduces your ability to recover CDP between turns.
- ▶ If your MDP reaches 0, further MDP damage converts into TDP damage instead.
- ▶ Lethal Damage reduces TDP—your long-term endurance.
  - *If your TDP reaches 0, you are KO'd and require medical care.*





## CALCULATING DAMAGE

- ▶ Damage is determined by Clusters.
- ▶ Each extra cluster you have over the defender removes 1 CDP, 1 MDP, or 1 TDP, depending on the attack type.
- ▶ If the attacker and defender roll the same number of clusters, the attack connects but deals no base damage. However, any skill or ability that activates on a successful hit still applies, including those that directly modify CDP, MDP, or TDP.

### EXAMPLE:

#### NON-LETHAL ATTACK (CDP DAMAGE ONLY)

- ▶ Player A punches Player B (Non-Lethal).
- ▶ Player A rolls 2 clusters.
- ▶ Player B defends with 1 cluster.
- ▶ Player A wins by 1 extra cluster, so Player B loses 1 CDP.

**IMPACT: PLAYER B HAS FEWER DICE TO ACT THIS TURN BUT WILL RECOVER CDP FULLY NEXT TURN.**

#### SUSTAINED NON- LETHAL (MDP DAMAGE)

- ▶ Player A lands multiple non-lethal hits, but Player B keeps recovering full CDP.
- ▶ Player A uses an ability that specifically targets MDP, dealing 1 damage to MDP.
- ▶ Player B's MDP is reduced, meaning next turn they won't recover full CDP.

**IMPACT: MDP DAMAGE WEAKENS LONG-TERM RECOVERY, MAKING CDP REDUCTIONS PERSIST ACROSS TURNS.**

#### LETHAL ATTACK (TDP DAMAGE)

- ▶ Player A shoots Player B (Lethal).
- ▶ Player A rolls 3 clusters.
- ▶ Player B defends with 2 clusters.
- ▶ Player A wins by 1 extra cluster, so Player B loses 1 TDP.

**IMPACT: PLAYER B'S MAXIMUM DICE POOL IS PERMANENTLY REDUCED UNTIL HEALED, MAKING THEM MORE VULNERABLE IN THE LONG RUN.**

## CONVERTING MDP

### DAMAGE TO TDP

- ▶ Player B has 1 MDP left and takes 2 MDP damage.
- ▶ 1 damage reduces MDP to 0.
- ▶ The extra point of MDP damage converts into 1 TDP damage.
- ▶ Excess MDP damage convert to TDP damage immediately.

**IMPACT: MDP ACTS AS A BUFFER. ONCE IT'S GONE, NON-LETHAL DAMAGE STARTS TURNING LETHAL.**

### RECOVERY

- ▶ **CDP** recovers fully at the start of each turn.
- ▶ **MDP** recovers by 1 per turn, but skills, rest, and powers may increase this rate.
- ▶ **TDP** recovers at a rate of 1 per day unless healed through advanced means.

The Core Rulebook includes advanced healing, regeneration, and injury rules for deeper customization.

## 7. MOVEMENT & INITIATIVE

### INITIATIVE SYSTEM

Initiative in 4d4 is based on the dominant direction (N, S, E, W) of the encounter.

- ▶ Players compare their stat values in that direction; the highest acts first.
- ▶ If tied, players roll a d4 or agree on an order.
- ▶ Initiative may shift mid-encounter based on the scene (e.g., a brawl favoring N shifts to a chase favoring S).
- ▶ The GM may shift initiative once per encounter based on a significant change in scene flow.

### EXAMPLE:

**If the fight starts as a bar brawl (N), but turns into a chase through the city, the GM can shift initiative to (S). The player with the highest (S) now acts first.**

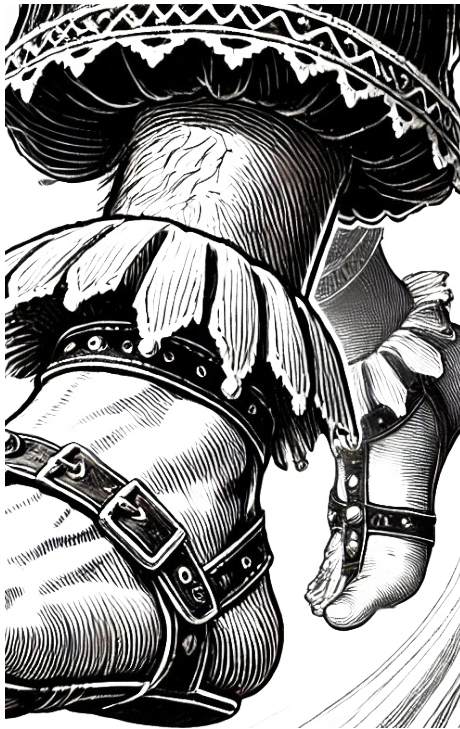
## MOVEMENT

Players spend 1 die to move in a significant way.

Movement can be handled narratively or with grid-based tactics (10' square).

It is suggested to handle movement narratively in the Quick Start Guide, but tactical options are covered in the **Core Rulebook**.

Want advanced movement, cover, and terrain rules? Get the **Core Rulebook!**



## EXAMPLE:

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

#### Scenario: The City Gate Standoff ||

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Your group arrives at the gates of a heavily guarded city. The guards refuse entry unless you have proper documentation. The players discuss how they want to handle the situation. After hearing their plan, the GM determines which stat will govern the encounter and announces initiative.

#### Step 1: Initiative

The GM rules that this is a social encounter, making **West (W)** the governing stat. Players compare their **W** values, and the highest acts first. If tied, they roll a d4 to determine order.

## Step 2: 3's and 4's

The GM declares a scene-specific mechanic.

### A NEARBY WATCH-TOWER SIGNAL CAN BE INFLUENCED BY STRAGGLERS.

- ▶ Rolling a 3 increases suspicion.
- ▶ Rolling a 4 lowers suspicion.

**IF SUSPICION REACHES +4, REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE!**

## Step 3: Player Actions & Rolls

Each player acts in turn, deciding how they want to resolve the situation.

### Player A (The Diplomat)

- ▶ Tries to persuade the guards
- ▶ Rolling 4 dice for West (W)
- ▶ Gets (2,2,3,4)
- ▶ One cluster: (2,2)

The GM notes that the 3 and 4 cancel each other out in the scene mechanic, leaving no additional effect.

### The Guard Captain

- ▶ Rolls 3 dice for East (E) (the opposite stat)
- ▶ Gets (1,4,4)
- ▶ One cluster: (4,4).
- ▶ The 1 is a Straggler, which grants an additional (4,4) cluster
- ▶ This gives the Guard Captain two clusters total.

The Guard Captain has more clusters, so the persuasion fails! The guards remain firm.

### Player B (the Rogue)

- ▶ Attempts to sneak past while Player A keeps the guards distracted.
- ▶ They roll 3 dice for South (S)
- ▶ Gets (1,1,4)
- ▶ One cluster: (1,1).
- ▶ The 4 is a Straggler, lowering the suspicion level of the watchtower.

### A Guard on Watch

- ▶ Rolls 3 dice for North (N)
- ▶ Gets (2,2,3)
- ▶ One cluster: (2,2).
- ▶ The 3 is a Straggler, increasing the suspicion level of the watchtower, returning suspicion to neutral.

The Guard's cluster is stronger, so Player B is spotted!



**The guards demand an explanation!**

Player C (the Fighter)

- ▶ Decides to create a diversion, toppling a nearby cart to startle the guards.
- ▶ Roll 5 dice for North (N)
- ▶ Get (2,2,4,4,2).

**Cluster Decision!**

Player C chooses between:

- ▶ Using all three 2s for a (2,2,2) cluster, increasing their roll strength.
- ▶ Saving one 2 as a Straggler, keeping a (4,4) cluster to give to another player later.

Player C chooses to hold the Straggler (2) for the next round. However, they must spend it before the turn ends (when all players are out of dice).

The GM rules that the guards must contest with South (S)

- ▶ Rolling 3 dice and getting (1,1,3)
- ▶ One cluster: (1,1).
- ▶ The 3 is a Straggler, lowering the suspicion level of the watchtower.
- ▶ Since Player C has more clusters, they succeed!

**THE GUARDS ARE  
MOMENTARILY DIS-  
TRACTED.**

The guards are momentarily distracted and gain the Distracted status effect (-1 to their CURRENT dice pool).

**This takes effect immediately, reducing their available dice for the next round.**

**Step 4: Round End**

Any Status effects Fade as per their description.

Next Round: The held Straggler (2) can be spent to give another player a (4,4) cluster, adding tactical flexibility.

**Step 5: Turn**

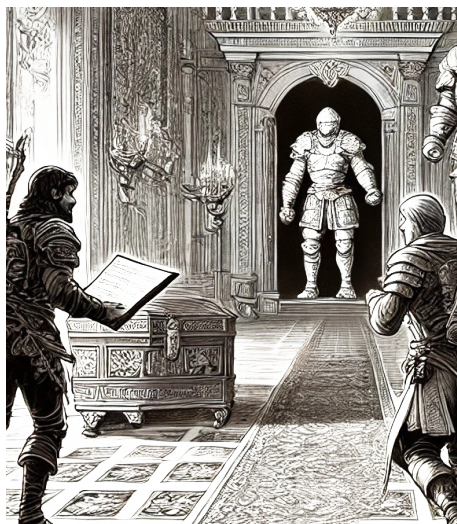
**Completion & Dice  
Reset**

Once the last player has spent their final die, the turn ends. All dice are replenished at the start of the next turn.

***Conclusion***

The players' choices determined the outcome—persuasion failed, sneaking failed, but a distraction worked. This example illustrates how initiative, contested rolls, Stragglers, and scene-based effects come together dynamically in play.

**For more advanced tactics, movement, and combat rules, check out the Core Rulebook!**



# Characters

## Scenario Hook

The trio has infiltrated an opulent estate to steal a valuable ledger containing secrets that could topple a corrupt noble. However, the mansion's security is tight, the guards are unpredictable, and the noble's personal bodyguard is a formidable opponent.



# 1. THE ROGUE - SILAS

## "SHADOW" VALE

### CONCEPT:

A master thief who moves like a whisper in the dark, Silas is a professional burglar with quick hands and a quicker wit.

### DIRECTIONS:

North (N): 2 (Basic combat ability, but not his strong suit)

South (S): 4 (Peak agility, stealth, and acrobatics)

East (E): 3 (Good tactical awareness, skilled in locks and traps)

West (W): 3 (Can talk his way out of trouble but prefers shadows)



### SKILLS & POWERS:

#### SHADOW STEP [ACTIVE SKILL]

- Roll: (S) Must roll a (1,1) or (2,2) to activate.
- ▶ Effect: Silas becomes **UNSEEN(2)**
- ▶ Guard conteste with (E)

#### QUICK HANDS [PASSIVE POWER]

- Roll: Any (4,4,4,4)
- ▶ Effect: **PICKPOCKET(1)** or **DISARM(1)** an enemy automatically.

**Pickpocket:** Get 1 random item from enemies possession.

**Disarm:** Cannot inflict lethal damage.  
**Fade(1)** - Spend a die to pick up weapon.

**Unseen:** Move undetected for the round or until an action breaks stealth.



# VAN PHEEL

MASTER THIEF



## SILAS "SHADOW" VALE

## 2. THE FIGHTER - MORGAN "IRONFIST" GRAYE

### CONCEPT:

A relentless brawler who smashes through obstacles with brute force. Morgan doesn't hesitate to take a hit if it means getting the job done.

### DIRECTIONS:

North (N): 4 (Heavy hitter, unmovable in combat)

South (S): 3 (Quick enough to react but not evasive)

East (E): 2 (Prefers action over planning)

West (W): 3 (Surprisingly charismatic for a fist-first problem solver)



### SKILLS & POWERS:

#### CRUSHING BLOW [ACTIVE SKILL]

- Roll: (N) vs. Target's (S)
- ▶ Effect: Deals **LETHAL** damage (2) and inflicts **STAGGER** (1).

#### SHIELD STANCE (PASSIVE POWER, COST: 12)

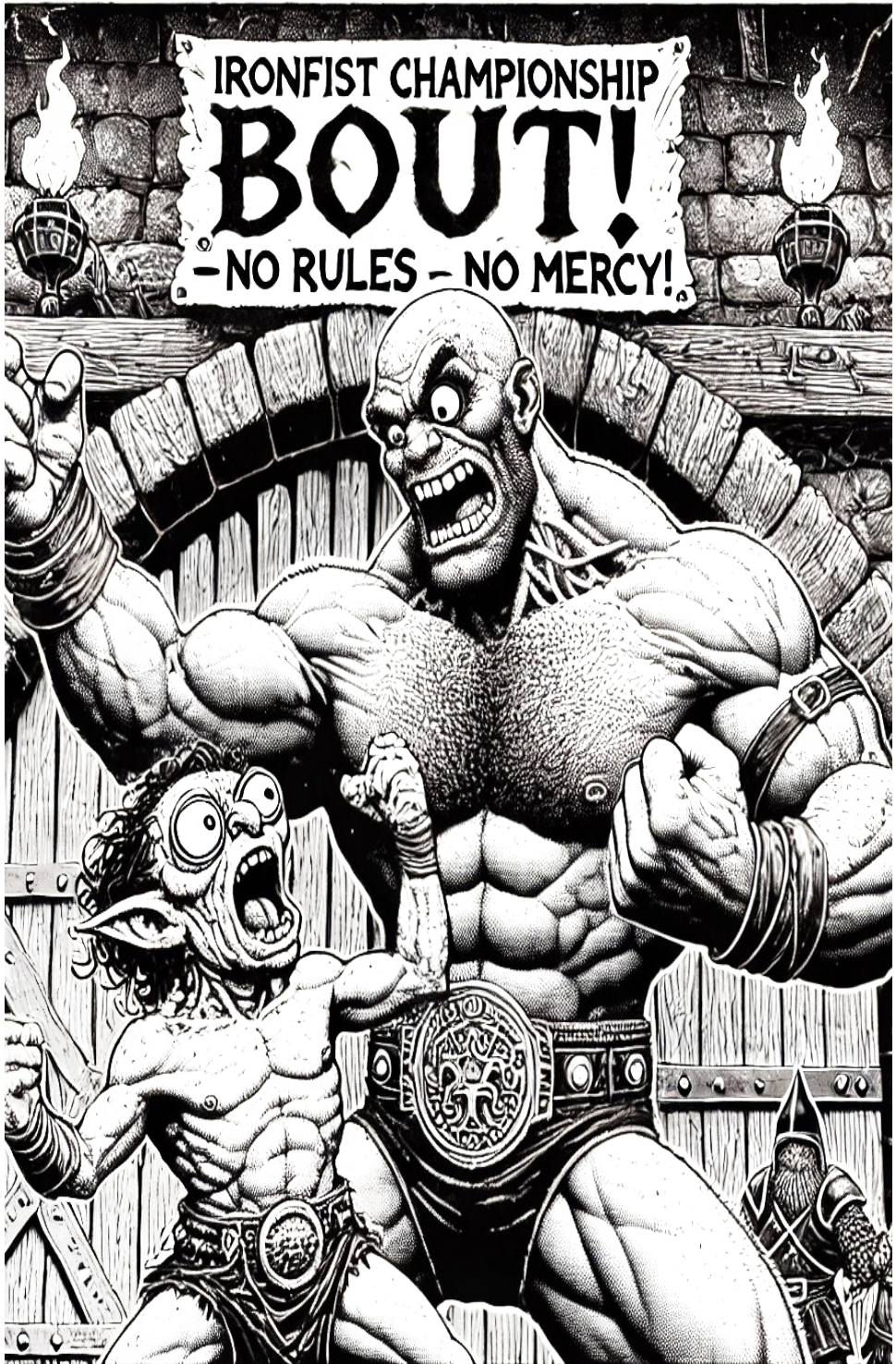
- Roll: any (1,1) on N or S defense
- ▶ Effect: he takes **half damage**.

#### BRAWLER'S INSTINCT [ACTIVE SKILL]

- Roll: (N) vs. Target's (W)
- ▶ Effect: Intimidate a guard, causing them to **HESITATE** (1).

**Stagger: Lose 3 dice**

**Hesitate: -1 cluster  
when rolling S**



### 3. THE CON MAN

## - ELIAS "SILVER-TONGUE" DELANO

#### CONCEPT:

A charming trickster who never fights when he can talk his way out. Elias is the mastermind behind the heist, always two steps ahead.

#### DIRECTIONS:

North (N): 2 (Prefers words over weapons)

South (S): 3 (Quick on his feet when necessary)

East (E): 4 (Master manipulator, reads people like books)

West (W): 4 (Effortlessly persuasive and likable)



#### SKILLS & POWERS:

##### SILVER TONGUE [ACTIVE SKILL]

- Roll: (W) vs. Target's (E)
- ▶ Effect: If successful, Elias inflicts 1 MDP damage, representing the mental strain of persuasion, manipulation, or psychological pressure.

##### FORGED CREDENTIALS [PASSIVE POWER]

- ▶ Roll: Any (4,4)
- ▶ Effect: He can produce a convincing fake document for the round.

##### QUICK ESCAPE [ACTIVE SKILL]

- Roll: (S + W) vs. Opponent's (S)
- ▶ Effect: Elias slips away from a grapple or restraint.



JURROOONNFFTHRRIRGROAADIARRIFOR



## Scenario 1:

### THE GUARDED GATE

#### PREMISE:

The party arrives at Ironbridge Keep, where they must convince a group of bored but skeptical guards to let them through without proper documentation. They can attempt to bluff, bribe, intimidate, or distract their way inside.

#### GUARD CAPTAIN & SOLDIERS

#### DIRECTIONS:

North (N) - 3 (Strong, but not easily rattled)

South (S) - 2 (Not quick-witted, but disciplined)

East (E) - 3 (Knows protocol but isn't a genius)

West (W) - 4 (Highly social, trained to detect deception)

#### INITIATIVE DIRECTION SUGGESTION:

West (W) (The Captain controls the conversation flow.)

TDP (Total Dice Pool):  
25

#### STRAGGLER EFFECTS:

3's: Suspicion +1 (If suspicion reaches threshold, guards refuse entry.)

4's: Guards relax (-1 Suspicion).

#### THRESHOLD:

Suspicion 4

If Suspicion reaches 4, the guards lock down the gate and call reinforcements.

## WHAT HAPPENS AT THRESHOLD?

- ▶ Players must either flee, bribe heavily, or fight.

## ***Powers & Skills (For the Guards)***

### POWERS:

#### INTERROGATION TACTICS

- Roll: (W) vs. (E) of the target
- ▶ **On Hit** Target takes 1 MDP damage, representing mental fatigue under interrogation.
- ▶ **On Hit** Target becomes SUSPECTED (1)

### SCRUTINY

- **PASSIVE Roll:** any (4,4) while holding forged documents.
- **ACTIVE Roll:** May roll to inspect documents (roll W AND E, needs 3 clusters)
- ▶ Effect: The Captain marks a target as SUSPECTED (2).
- ▶ Destroys fake documents.

### SKILLS:

#### STABBY!

- **Roll:** (N) vs (S)
- ▶ Effect: Character takes Lethal damage (2) and becomes Suspected (4)





## DRILL SERGEANT

► Effect: Gives Self/Group  
**READY FOR ANYTHING!(2)**

### *Unique Status Effects:*

**Suspected:** Any rolled 3's increase scenario suspicion by 2.

**Ready For Anything!:** May roll (pips) more dice when defending or contesting.

### *Unique Rules:*

#### **BRIBERY (VARIABLE):**

► Players may use gold or trade goods to remove Suspicion at a 1:1 ratio.

## FLAVOR TEXT FOR THE PLAYERS:

As you approach the massive iron gate, two guards stand lazily at their post, leaning on their spears. Their captain, a broad-shouldered man with a scarred lip, watches you carefully.

"Papers?" he asks, tapping his boot impatiently. "Or a damn good reason to let you in."



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE 4CASTER (GM):

**Start by setting the scene - Describe the guards' body language, the presence of others nearby, and the general mood.**

**Let the players present their plan - Are they bluffing, bribing, intimidating, or distracting?**

**Roll contested checks (Players' W vs. Guards' W/E)**

- ◊ **If the players win, the guards believe them.**
- ◊ **If the guards win, suspicion increases.**

**Use the Straggler system - Track how 3s and 4s modify Suspicion.**

**If the threshold is hit (Suspicion 4), escalate the situation into a lockdown.**

## RUNNING A 4D4 GAME

4d4 is built on creativity and curiosity, two qualities essential for intelligence -and memorable storytelling. When your game encourages these traits in your players, you're not just running a session—you're fostering a world that inspires, challenges, and engages.

But to make that world come alive, you have to let your players play. That means replacing "No" with "Yes, and..." or "Yes, but..." whenever possible.

- ▶ "Yes, and..." builds momentum, encouraging players to expand on their ideas.
- ▶ "Yes, but..." adds tension, providing challenges without shutting down creativity.
- ▶ Avoid "No" unless absolutely necessary—restrictions should come from the world itself, not from arbitrary GM fiat.

## GM TIP:

### BUILDING SCENARIOS AS A SINGLE DICE POOL

In 4d4, a scene is the challenge—not each individual guard, trap, or minor NPC. Instead of rolling separately for every opponent, merge them into one large dice pool that represents the collective threat or obstacle. This method keeps the game:

- ▶ Streamlined: You won't get bogged down juggling multiple small dice pools for every guard or creature.
- ▶ Dynamic: As the scene's dice are spent, the entire threat shifts in power or stance, reflecting how the group as a whole is doing.
- ▶ Engaging: Players face the scenario itself—like an entire squad of guards or a collapsing bridge—rather than being forced to micromanage each unit.

By thinking of a scene as a single, evolving entity, you free up mental space to focus on the story, the tension, and the players' choices. This is the essence of 4d4: a game about collaborative, creative problem-solving rather than static battles with countless NPCs.



## JOIN THE 4D4 REVOLUTION!

**ZOMG!** Aron Pence here—CEO, designer, and sole coffee-fueled goblin behind Roll4d4 LLC. You made it. You read the whole book! That means a lot. Seriously.

Thank you.

But this isn't just my game anymore—*it's yours too*. If something doesn't make sense, if you've got a killer house rule, or if you just want to share your epic dice rolls, hit me up!

### Feedback? Questions? Wild ideas?

Find me at [Roll4d4.com](http://Roll4d4.com) or  
scream into the void at X ([@roll4d4](https://twitter.com/roll4d4)).

I built 4d4 because, like so many battle-hardened gamers before me, I once stepped on a d4.

And I wanted to share that pain

—no, that *experience*—

with a whole new **generation**.

**Welcome to 4d4.**

The **dice** are in your hands.

## CORE STATS (N, S, E, W)

- ▶ North (N): Power & Command (combat, raw force, leadership)
- ▶ South (S): Agility & Precision (stealth, dexterity, finesse attacks)
- ▶ East (E): Wisdom & Knowledge (academics, logic, spellcasting)
- ▶ West (W): Empathy & Connection (social skills, diplomacy, healing)
- **Dice Pool:** *Sum of N + S + E + W.*

## ROUNDS & TURNS

- ▶ Round: Each player takes one action.
- ▶ Turn: Ends when all players have spent their dice.
  - Dice pools reset at the start of a new turn.
- ▶ Holding an Action: Costs 1 die; roll it immediately.
  - If 1 or 2 lost die.
  - If 3 or 4 treat as a Straggler (see below).

## ROLLING ACTIONS

- ▶ Declare the Axis: Choose the stat (N, S, E, W) relevant to the action.
- ▶ Build Dice Pool: Use up to that stat's value in dice.
- ▶ Contested Rolls: Defender typically uses the opposite stat (N↔E, S↔W) unless a skill/power says otherwise.
- ▶ Clusters: Any group of identical dice faces (e.g., (2,2) or (3,3,3)).
  - More clusters = stronger roll.
  - If tied in clusters, compare total face value.
  - Still tied? Each rerolls 1 die.

## 4. STRAGGLERS (3's & 4's)

- ▶ 1 or 2: Keep until end of **TURN**; spend to give a (4,4) cluster (1 for self, 2 for ally).
- ▶ 3 or 4: Immediately triggers a scene-specific effect (e.g., raise or lower a tension meter).
  - *GM pre-defines what 3's and 4's do in the scenario.*

# Quick Reference Guide!

## 5. STATUS EFFECTS (QUICK OVERVIEW)

- ▶ Trigger at end of the Round (allowing players to act before they apply).
- ▶ Fade: Most effects lose 1 pip each Round unless stated otherwise.

## 6. DAMAGE & DICE POOLS

- ▶ CDP (Current Dice Pool): Reduced for immediate turn impact (non-lethal).
- ▶ MDP (Mitigation Dice Pool): Reduces how many dice are recovered between turns.
- ▶ TDP (Total Dice Pool): Long-term capacity (lethal damage).
- ▶ Non-Lethal: Lowers CDP.
- ▶ MDP Damage: Reduces recovery of CDP. If MDP hits 0, overflow damage becomes TDP damage.
- ▶ Lethal: Reduces TDP. If TDP hits 0, character is KO'd.

## 7. INITIATIVE

- ▶ Dominant Stat of the scene (N, S, E, W) determines who acts first.
- ▶ Compare that stat among players; highest goes first. Tie? Roll a d4.
- ▶ GM can shift initiative if the scene's nature changes (e.g., brawl to chase).

## 8. SKILLS & POWERS

- ▶ **Active Skills:** Declare before rolling; require specific conditions (e.g., rolling (1,1) + winning the contest).
- ▶ **Passive Powers:** Trigger automatically when their condition is met (e.g., Regeneration on certain dice combos).



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Dedicated, as always, to my Mother and Father.  
Dedicated to the Nerds and Gamers i knew while growing up.