

Riskbreaker

An abstracted engine

Dan Ravipinto/Peccable Productions (<http://www.peccable.com>) ["Total Rewrite" Version (0.0.2)]

Character Creation

All characters start with 4s in four stats: **Muscle**, **Agility**, **Wit**, and **Personality**, as well as 10 points.

To increase a stat, pay the amount you're increasing it to – so to go from 5 to 6 costs 6 points. Decreasing a stat gives you the amount of points it started at; thus going from 4 to 3 nets you 4 points.

Skills represent what you can do with your stats. A skill costs 1 point (or 2 points for anything unusual or 'magical').

Skills with an Area of Effect (AoE) cost an additional point (see below for details).

Each skill is associated with a stat. Some examples:

Muscle: *Fight with <Mêlée Weapon>, Knockdown, Push.*

Agility: *Fight with <Ranged Weapon>, Maneuver, 'Thief' skills such as: Sneak, Pick Lock, Disarm Trap.*

Wit: *All spells, including Fight with <Magical Spell>, Illusion, Heal, as well as Tactics, Set Trap, First Aid, Medicine.*

Personality: *All social skills: Charm, Intimidate, Distract, Inspire, as well as perception skills such as Observation.*

Some archtypical characters:

"Fighter"	"Thief"	"Mage"	"Ranger"
M5: <i>Sword, Knockdown, Push (AoE)</i>	M4: <i>Knife</i>	M3: <i>Staff</i>	M2
A4: <i>Bow, Move</i>	A5: <i>Move, Ambush, Pick Lock, Disarm Trap</i>	A4: <i>Move</i>	A5: <i>Bow, Move</i>
W3: <i>First Aid</i>	W3: <i>Set Trap</i>	W5: <i>Lightning*, Illusion*, Heal*</i>	W4: <i>Tactics, First Aid</i>
P4: <i>Intimidate</i>	P4: <i>Distract, Scout, Loot</i>	P4: <i>Observation</i>	P5: <i>Charm, Inspire, Observation</i>

* Asterisks represent *magical spells* which cost 2 points apiece.

Note: Characters should, at a minimum, have a form of Fight skill as well as Move if they have any intention of being able to fight and move about the battlefield.

Area of Effect

Skills which can effect large groups of enemies at once are called Area of Effect skills and cost an additional point. A fireball spell that explodes in the middle of a group of foes would cost 3 points (Skill + Magical + AoE). A horseman's Trample skill would cost 2 (Skill + AoE). A character who is strong enough to push boulders off cliff-sides onto groups of enemies below would have Push (AoE) at a cost of 2.

Skill References

Throughout the text, skills are referred to in the following manner <Stat><Rating, if available>: <Skill>.

Examples: *W:Lightning, P:Observation, M3:Sword, A6:Move.*

Maneuvers

All character actions are defined in terms of *Maneuvers*. A *Maneuver* is a template representing how a character can use specific skills in a specific situation, including possible outcomes based on success and failure.

The template for a *Maneuver* is as follows: **Name | Effect | Cost | Skills | Success | Failure**

A *Maneuver's* *Effect* is what it can accomplish; its *Cost* is how much *Advantage* (see below) must be paid to attempt the *Maneuver*; *Skills* lists possible skills that can be used to attempt the *Maneuver*; *Success* and *Failure* list the consequences of each.

A set of *Maneuver Cards* can be found at the end of the rules, listing all possible *Maneuvers*.

A character may not use the same *Maneuver* using the same skill twice in a row, with the exception of *Inflict Skill Damage* and *Inflict Kill Damage*.

Advantage

Every scenario has an ebb and flow to it, with the possibility of characters having the upper hand one moment and being flat on their backs the next. *Advantage* is a score associated with a specific situation: the current state of a battle, or how successfully a party of characters is making their way through a ruin. *Advantage*, by its nature, is liquid. Its current status is always temporary and the successes and failures of the characters can increase and decrease it.

Using certain *Maneuvers*, characters can attempt to convert *Advantage* into a more permanent form, such as *Inflict Damage* (utilizing *Advantage* to harm an enemy), *Find* (converting *Advantage* into a more permanent, portable form), or *Advance* (using *Advantage* to further their goals).

Skill Rolls

Stat	Roll	Chance of Success
1	1,2	20%
2	1,2	20%
3	1-3	30%
4	1-4	40%
5	1-5	50%
6	1-6	60%
7	1-7	70%
8	1-8	80%
9	1-9	90%
10	1-9	90%

Skill Rolls and Success Levels

When making a *Maneuver*, a character must make a *Skill Roll* to see if their character succeeds or fails in their attempt. Roll 1d10. 1s and 2s are always successes, 10s are always failures. If the roll is less than or equal to the character's associated stat, they succeed. If it's greater, they fail. The difference between the character's stat and the actual roll is called the action's *Success Level*.

Counter Rolls

Certain skills (such as A:*Sneak*, A:*Ambush*, W:*Set Trap*) leave open the opportunity for opponents to catch a character out of the corner of their eye or see right through a deadfall. In such cases, the character is allowed a *Counter Roll*. When making a *Counter Roll*, characters roll against an appropriate skill (usually P:*Observation*) to see if they are successful in seeing the ruse. If a *Counter Roll* is successful, compare the *Success Levels* of the two rolls. The larger one wins. In the case of a tie, re-roll the *Counter Roll*.

In the case of ruses that can last longer than the immediate *Maneuver* (such as traps) be sure to note the *Success Level* for when an enemy makes a *Counter Roll*.

Counter Roll Example:

The Thief attempts to set a trap in a box canyon that he knows his enemies will be crossing. He rolls against his W3: *Set Trap* skill and rolls a 1, a success! He notes on the map the trap's existence as well as its *Success Level* ($3 - 1 = 2$). His opponents enter the canyon, rolling against their P5: *Observation* skill. They roll a 4, succeeding, but only by a difference of 1. They fail to see the trap and fall right into the Thief's hands.

Combat Flow

1. Engagement

The Engagement phase represents everything that happens before a battle actually breaks out: scouting the immediate area, looking for advantageous terrain, establishing tactics, and setting traps and ambushes.

As soon as a group of characters is aware of the presence of a group of possible enemies, Engagement begins. Each character may declare one Maneuver they will attempt before combat starts. Available Maneuvers depend on the specific situation, but possible ones are: Discover, Tactics, Alter (using skills such as *W:Set Trap*), and Gain Advantage (using skills like *A:Hide*, *A:Ambush*, *A:Sneak*, *P:Distract*, *P:Inspire*).

For Maneuvers that the enemy could detect beforehand (such as traps, and ambushes), opponents make Counter Rolls to see if they do so.

2. Declare Fights

Engagement Maneuvers will generally generate Advantage for all sides. The side with the greatest Advantage initially has the upper hand and thus gets to set the stage for the battle. If both sides have the same Advantage (or neither has any), it's down to luck: each side rolls 1d10, with the lowest roll winning.

Every battle is broken down into individual Fights, which are made up of everyone close enough to hit one another and actively involved in same. The side winning the Engagement phase gets to declare the initial distribution of fights: how many there are and who is involved in each. Not all characters have to be actively involved in fighting, though if so they cannot be in the immediate area of a fight.

If there is a disagreement among the members of a side of how to distribute characters amongst Fights, the character with the highest Wit decides.

Advantage from the Engagement phase is then distributed to the initial Fights, with each side deciding as a team how it should be placed. Each side goes in order of decreasing Advantage. If a side cannot agree on how to distribute Advantage, than it is distributed as evenly as possible.

3. Calculate Advantage

Every round, each Fight is separately run, with each character involved making one Maneuver. In some cases characters make Maneuvers as groups (see below). Characters not involved in fights make their Maneuvers last.

When a fight is run, all characters declare what skill they're actively using to fight. The skill's associated stat is that character's *Skill Level*. The sum of skill levels of all the characters on one side is that side's skill level.

Being the most skillful, as well as outnumbering your opponents, gains you Advantage every round.

After declaring skills, sum up each side's skill level. If a side outnumbers all other sides, add +1 to its skill level for each additional member. The side with the highest skill level gains an amount of Advantage equal to the difference between its skill level and the next-lowest skill level.

4a. Maneuvers

In decreasing order of skill level, each character involved in a fight may make a Maneuver. Ties between characters on different side are resolved with the side with less Advantage going first. Ties between characters on the same side are resolved with the character with the highest Agility going first. In the case of further ties, simply roll 1d10 with the lowest roll going first.

On their turn, characters declare a Maneuver from the available Maneuver Cards. Maneuvers allow a variety of effects, but fall into broad categories: increasing your own side's Advantage, lowering the Advantage of the other side, turning Advantage into useful effects (such as damage to the other side) or modifying the current situation in some way.

Combat Flow

1. Engagement
 2. Declare Fights
 3. Calculate Advantage
 4. In order of fight rating, characters:
 - a. Choose a Maneuver
 - b. Establish Risk
 - c. Pay Cost
 - d. Roll and Resolve
 - e. Consequences
 5. Mark combat counters/damage
- Repeat 3, 4, 5 until combat ends

Calculating Advantage Example:

A fight between one side with a fighter using (M5: Sword) against another side of two fighters using (M2: Pike) results in neither side gaining Advantage (2 + 2 for the pike fighters + 1 for outnumbering the other side by one). If another Pike fighter joined the mêlée, the Pike fighters would gain 3 Advantage each round (8 - 5 = 3).

Maneuver Cards list their effect, as well as what skill is required to perform them. If a character does not have the proper skill, he or she may not make that Maneuver, unless they have an Item that allows them to do so (see Consequences below). Further, if the GM may veto the use of a Maneuver.

4b. Establish Risk

Every choice characters make carries risk, usually in the form of placing them in a worse position than they started in. After a character chooses a Maneuver, they must decide how much they're willing to risk on the action. Risk is defined in terms of *Risk points*. Risk points differ depending on how a character is acting:

- If acting **as an individual**, Risk may be established as:
 - 1 point: smaller, subtler, less effective maneuvers.
 - 2 points: bigger actions with the subsequent chance of bigger risk if they fail.
 - 3 points: big, flashy moves that can swing a battle one way or the other.
- If acting as **a group or as the leader of a group**, Risk caps as a multiplier. The maximum amount of Risk the player may place upon the Maneuver is 3 times (3x) the number of characters in the group. The larger the pool of points, the bigger (or more desperate) the action.
- If **utilizing an Area of Effect skill in an appropriate situation**, there is no limit on Risk points.

Establishing *Risk* allows characters to tailor how much they're willing to chance in return for how much they can get back. Damage and Advantage gains and losses are bounded by Risk.

4e. Pay Cost

Some Maneuvers have a Cost associated with them, usually based on Risk. Cost is paid by lowering the character's side's Advantage by the indicated amount. **If the side does not have sufficient Advantage to pay the Cost, either the established Risk must be lowered until it matches the available Advantage or another Maneuver must be chosen.**

4d. Roll and Resolve

Once a Maneuver and the amount of Risk has been chosen, the character may now roll against the appropriate skill, as noted on the Maneuver card, along with any appropriate Counter Rolls, to see whether the attempt succeeds or fails.

4e. Consequences

Once success or failure has been established, the appropriate heading on the Card is followed to establish consequences. All Maneuvers have one or more of the following consequences:

Gain Advantage: The listed side immediately gains Advantage equal to the indicated amount.

Lose Advantage: The listed side immediately loses Advantage equal to the indicated amount.

Inflict Kill Damage: Kill Damage represents wounds that move a character closer to being taken out of the fight.

Characters may take an amount of Kill Damage equal to the permanent skill level they are currently fighting with (unaffected by Skill Damage, see below). Thus, taking too much Kill Damage may prevent you from using certain weapons, while switching to a weapon you're better with will allow you to stay in the fight longer.

When Kill Damage is applied to a side, the acting character may decide which opponents take what portions of the listed damage. As soon as damage equal to the opponent's skill rating is dealt, it is removed from the battle.

Kill Damage Example:

The Fighter has M5: Sword and A4: Bow. Fighting with the bow allows him to hit from a distance, but he can only take 4 Killing Damage before being knocked out of the fight. After taking 3 Killing Damage, he switches to his sword so as to stay in the battle longer.

Inflict Skill Damage: Skill Damage represents wounds that reduces an enemy's fighting ability without removing them from the fight. Skill Damage temporarily lowers stats such that it is more difficult to succeed at future rolls. Skill Damage can be recovered through a Recover consequence (see below). When applying Skill Damage, the acting character first chooses the stat being lowered, then the opponents and what portion of the Damage they take.

Alter Battleground: Alterations to the battleground cover several scenarios: setting traps, finding advantageous terrain for later use, or blocking part of a passage to slow down opponents. The Risk established equals Kill Damage done by the trap (opponents are allowed a Personality-based Counter Roll), the number of turns characters are delayed in crossing an element (anyone crossing is allowed an Agility-based Counter Roll), or how much damage use of the

element can do (for example, using *P:Scout* to find a particularly large boulder to roll down a canyon as an AoE attack).

W:Tactics rolls may be used to alter the battleground to temporarily move a number of characters equal to the established Risk out of a fight (by manipulating the battle such that they can't get at you). Any character moved in such a way takes their turn as if they were not in the fight (and thus can make Recover, Gain Advantage and other Maneuvers, but may not Inflict Damage) but start the next round back in the fight.

Item Risk	
Effect	Risk
<i>Allows use of a skill not normally permitted</i>	+1
<i>Allows use of such skill in unlikely situations</i>	+3
<i>Allows use of such skill in impossible situations</i>	+5
<i>Can be used more than once</i>	+1/use
<i>Can be used unlimited times</i>	+5
<i>Adds +1 to Stat on roll to use</i>	+3
<i>Adds +2 to Stat on roll to use</i>	+5
<i>Use acts as Area of Effect attack</i>	+3

Move: The acting character successfully moves, either to a specific location, or away or towards specific enemies.

Recover Skill Damage: Given a chance to pull away from combat and catch their breath, the character naturally recovers the indicated amount of Skill Damage. They may apply it to any number of stats they wish.

Recover Kill Damage: Given appropriate treatment, the character recovers the indicated amount of Kill Damage.

Gain Item: Acquiring items is a way to convert temporary Advantage into a slightly more permanent form. Skills such as *P:Loot*, or (in social situations), *W:Barter* or *P:Use Connections*, a character can find equipment and objects they can use later.

Finding an item has a basic Risk cost of 1, plus a cost for each additional effect (see chart for specifics). Finding items, as a *Non-Combat Maneuver*, does not have a Risk cap – any amount of available Advantage can be spent.

Whether the roll succeeds or fails, the object is added to the character's inventory. Failure indicates that the acquisition brings as many problems as blessings, gaining the party's enemies (the dungeon they're exploring, the city they're trying to gain control of) the Advantage indicated.

Advance Goal: In addition to acquiring assets, players can actively further their goals (finding a lost treasure, convincing a king) as part of an extended conflict. The Advance consequence moves a group closer to gaining what they seek. The GM should set a Goal Level – a number of Advantage points that must be invested before the goal can be completed. The character's action happens regardless of the roll and the points are invested towards the goal, but a failure indicates that the outcome is problematic – gaining an opposing side the indicated Advantage.

5. Mark combat counters/damage

At the end of every round of combat, every character who fought marks a combat counter on their sheet. When all three are filled, that character immediately takes one point of Skill damage. Then all three counters are cleared.

This represents the wounds characters are taking while fighting and puts an upper limit on how long a character can last in battle. Mooks (with a Stat of 1 in their Fight skill) can only last three turns before being knocked out of battle. Masters (at Stat 10) could theoretically last for 30 turns, though it's much more likely that they'll take Kill damage or take so much Skill damage that they can no longer effectively fight back.

At the start of the next round, all characters declare their fight skills and the process continues until one group flees, surrenders, or receive full Kill damage.

Spending Non-Combat Advantage

Failed Non-Combat Maneuvers made by the players produces Advantage for the GM to use to create obstacles and interesting opponents working counter to their interests. The more the opposition's Advantage grows, the more force can be brought to bear.

Gain Item Example:

The Thief loots the corpses of his enemies, hoping to find something useful. He declares that he wishes to find a vial of oil that he can use with his A:Ambush skill, setting his enemies ablaze before they know he's there. Ambush normally gains Advantage, rather than inflicting Damage, and this attack could affect a large number of enemies, so the cost is 1 (Item) + 1 (Use of skill not normally permitted) + 3 (Area of Effect) for a total of 4 Risk. If he wanted the item to give him a +1 to his Agility roll it would cost 3 more Risk.

[Like all of the non-combat rules in this version, this part of the rules is vague – specifics on costs need to be established, as well as what can and cannot be produced by spending Advantage.]

Inspirations

Altonomy (the stats, percentage dice, and success level as the difference of skill and roll), **The Cheap and Cheesy Fantasy Game** (small pieces of paper with all the rules), **Donjon** (the basic concept behind the Advance and Find Maneuvers), **Heroquest** (the concept of abstracted advantage), **Moldvay Edition Red Box** (the initial spark), **Red Box Hack** and **This Game Currently Has No Name** (abstracted combat, weapons and locations), **Over the Edge** (descriptions as skills), **Vagrant Story** (the title)

Intentions

Having tried Moldvay's Red Box with my Gamist-oriented friends, I found I really enjoyed the idea of a boardgame-like RPG with quick character creation and hack-and-slash action, but found that I didn't really enjoy the "Rock-Em Sock-Em Robots" approach to combat. Roll, miss, roll, miss, roll, hit, damage.

We tried RBH and found that while it was definitely a step in the right direction, perhaps it wasn't *quite* abstract enough.

Hence this attempt.

The idea (inspired by Heroquest's concept of advantage) was to pull back the metaphorical camera to the point where individual blows weren't taken into account unless they were particularly dramatic. Everything else would be the parts of combat we found more interesting – tactics, diversions, knockdowns and set ups for coups de grâce.

Special Thanks

This version would not exist were it not for the great feedback I got on Story-Games, particularly from Mike Holmes.

My thanks to everyone who responded!

Gain Advantage

Effect: Increase your side's Advantage

Cost: None

Skills: Any appropriate skill whose use would put your party in a better position.
(Examples: *M:Knockdown*, *P:Inspire*)

Decrease Advantage

Effect: Decrease an opponent's Advantage

Cost: None

Skills: Any appropriate skill whose use would be detrimental to your opponent's position.
(Examples: *P:Distract*, *P:Intimidate*)

Inflict Skill Damage

Effect: Decrease your opponent's Stats, making them less effective.

Cost: The established Risk

Skills: The Fight skill you are currently using in the conflict.
(Examples: *M:Sword*, *A:Bow*, *W:Lightning*)

Inflict Kill Damage

Effect: Push your opponent closer to being removed from a conflict.

Cost: The established Risk

Skills: The Fight skill you are currently using in the conflict.
(Examples: *M:Sword*, *A:Bow*, *W:Lightning*)

Recover

Effect: Gain back Skill Damage when not actively involved in conflict.

Cost: None

Skills: Wit and Personality skills (in supplementary manner, see reverse).

This Maneuver is only usable when you are not currently involved in conflict (which may require a successful Move Maneuver to establish).

Rescue

Effect: Heal a comrade's Kill Damage.

Cost: None

Skills: Skills applicable to the damage healed, such as *W:First Aid*, *W:Medicine*, and spells such as *W:Heal*.

This Maneuver is only usable when both you and the character you are rescuing are not currently involved in conflict (which may require a Move Maneuver to establish).

Move

Effect: Move towards or away from opponents in a conflict.

Cost: None

Skills: Agility-based movement skills such as *A:Move*, *A:Sneak*.

Risk is based on the distance moved. Risk 1 is easily accessible, Risk 2 less so, Risk 3 covers far or difficult distances.

Alter Battleground

Effect: Create opportunities by adding useful elements to a battleground.

Cost: The established Risk

Skills: Any skill applicable to the situation:
P:Observation, *P:Scout*, and skills such as *W:Set Trap*, *W:Tactics*.

Risk equals how useful the element turns out to be and is directly translated to Advantage or Damage when the element is used (see reverse).

Gain Advantage

Success: Increase **your own** Advantage by the established Risk.

Failure: Increase Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Decrease Advantage

Success: Decrease the Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Failure: Decrease **your own** Advantage by the established Risk.

Inflict Skill Damage

For Skill Damage attacks, each point of established Risk adds +1 to your effective Stat for the roll, up to a maximum of +3.

Success: Inflict Skill Damage equal to the established Risk, all in one Stat, **amongst any number of opponents in the same conflict.**

Failure: Increase Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Inflict Kill Damage

Success: Inflict Kill Damage equal to the established Risk **amongst any number of opponents in the same conflict.**

Failure: Increase Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Recover

Regain 2 lost Skill Damage, spread among your stats as you see fit. When making a Recover Maneuver, you may either make a supplementary Gain Advantage or Decrease Advantage Maneuver using **only Wit or Personality Skills** or regain an additional 1 Skill Damage.

Rescue

Success: Heal Kill Damage of the targeted character equal to the established Risk.

Failure: As **Success**, but in addition, increase Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Move

Opponents currently in conflict with you may make Agility Counter Rolls. You succeed if you beat all of them, otherwise you fail.

Success: You successfully move to the location or towards or away from the conflict you indicated.

Failure: As **Success**, except all opponents who Countered arrive with you and their side gains Advantage equal to the established Risk.

Alter Battleground

Success: The element is added. Damage done by traps, delay produced (in rounds), and number of enemies moved equals the established Risk.

Failure: As above, but the element somehow works against you, increasing Advantage of **an opposing side in the same conflict** by the established Risk.

Advance

(Non-Combat Maneuver)

Effect: Further your goals by spending your Advantage.

Cost: The established Risk

Skills: Any skills whose use would further the goals your group is working towards.

Risk should be commensurate with the action. Bigger actions with bigger effects require greater Risk.

Find

(Non-Combat Maneuver)

Effect: Invest Advantage into useful items that can enhance your performance.

Cost: The established Risk

Skills: Skills applicable to finding items such as *P:Loot*, and, depending on the situation, skills such as *W:Barter*, *P:Use Connections*.

See the Gain Item rules for establishing Risk.

Advance

(Non-Combat Maneuver)

Advance Maneuvers further the larger goals of the party: making the way through a dungeon towards a treasure, defeating an army, convincing a town to join your cause.

Success: Narrate how your successful skill use furthered your goals.

Failure: Your attempt is successful, but the outcome has unforeseen consequences. **An opposing side** gains Advantage equal to the established Risk.

Find

(Non-Combat Maneuver)

Success: You successfully acquire the Item.

Failure: As above, but the outcome has complications. **An opposing side** gains Advantage equal to the established Risk.

Name:

Stat	Rating -	Skill Damage	=Effective Skill	Skills
Might				
Agility				
Wit				
Personality				

Kill Damage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat Counter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							

Name:

Stat	Rating -	Skill Damage	=Effective Skill	Skills
Might				
Agility				
Wit				
Personality				

Kill Damage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat Counter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							

Name:

Stat	Rating -	Skill Damage	=Effective Skill	Skills
Might				
Agility				
Wit				
Personality				

Kill Damage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat Counter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							