

By the Book

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Intro to TTRPGs

Wait. What's a TTRPG anyway?

Great question! Let me tell you a story...

TTRPG stands for Table-Top Role-Playing Game. Let's break that down.

- **Table-top (or tabletop)** means you can play this game without a screen. Often, all you need to play is paper, pencil, and some dice—and a few friends!
- **Role-playing (or roleplaying)** means you're pretending to be a character. You are taking on a role like an actor. Role play means using your imagination!
- **Game** is... well, you probably have an idea of what a game is! Games are all about playing together, and they have rules to give the playtime some structure.

I said I was going to tell you a story. But the truth is, TTRPGs are all about *you* telling a collaborative story—a working-together story.

This game, like all TTRPG adventures, is just the beginning of a story. It's the beginning of many stories.

The story you tell with your family won't be the same as the story I tell with my friends. The story you tell today won't be the same as the story you tell next week! Even if you use the same rules and start with the same idea.

TTRPGs are an invitation for you to make stories together. They're an introduction to imagination, with some rules to guide you.

This TTRPG only has a few rules. Some have hundreds of pages of rules. Different games for different people!

But aren't TTRPGs evil?

Well, I certainly don't think so!

TTRPGs are about being creative together, and they're no more evil or destructive than playing Tag or Telephone.

That being said, I would never presume to be your conscience, and if you have concerns about certain themes within this game (or any TTRPG), here are some ways you might be able to adapt things for your family.

If you aren't comfortable playing with magic, spells can become technology! A fire spell becomes a portable lighter or a flamethrower. Illusion magic turns into holograms, and magic runes or symbols become ancient hieroglyphics.

If you don't want to use fake deities in your games, you can remove magical characters that get their power from religious sources. Many religious characters in TTRPGs are healers, so you could turn them into magicians who specialize in caring for others or even just paramedics with advanced equipment!

If you don't want to encourage violence against people, you can make all of the "monsters" into robots or slimes or dinosaurs.

If you don't want to encourage violence at all, you can pick a game that doesn't involve fighting. There are whole TTRPGs designed as low-combat systems. These games focus more on the story than the epic battles.

TTRPGs are what you make of them. You don't need to violate your conscience to imagine a wonderful story together.

What Do I Need to Play?

- 2+ players (usually no more than 5 plus the Story Leader)
- 3 6-sided dice (d6s)
- character cards (included with this game)
- a deck of cards, Jokers included
- paper and pencils

What's the Goal Here?

Every TTRPG fits into a genre and has rules intended to encourage a specific style of gameplay.

Other Games

Dungeons & Dragons is (typically) a fantasy game about heroes who fight epic battles against terrible monsters.

Wanderhome is also fantasy, but with animal characters that give it more of a *Redwall* vibe as you wander the world towards... you guessed it! Home.

There are sci-fi games about exploration or domination. There are games about building the best robot or getting home for a cup of hot tea and so much more!

By the Book

This is a fantasy game. There are magical abilities, strange and wonderful creatures, and epic quests!

If you would prefer to use technology instead of magic, go right ahead! No one's going to stop you from playing the game your way.

It's also what is known as a **rules-lite** game. This means the rules aren't hundreds of pages long. It also means you'll have to use your imagination to fill in the details.

If you come across a question about the rules, feel free to [contact me](#) so I can clarify it in the future. You're also invited to talk it out with the other players at your table and make a choice that works for you.

What Are These Rules For?

Well, they're here for 2 reasons.

First, these rules are here to help you play a quest (or a series of them). Everything you need to enjoy a replayable storytelling adventure can be found here or is mentioned in the list above.

In this way, *By the Book* is a bit like a board game. It's predictable and familiar, but you add your own twists every time.

But that's not all!

You can use these rules to go on your own adventures! Write your own quests. Make up your own stories.

When played this way, *By the Book* becomes a **system**. Systems are more skeletons than anything else. They set up some ground rules and let you go from there!

However you play, this game is meant to be a story. Get creative! Laugh together. Be silly; be serious. Whatever you want.

Come join the adventure!

First Things First

To play a TTRPG, you need a character! This character, also called a PC (for player character), will be how you interact with the world of the game.

In a TTRPG, you don't play as yourself. It's similar to *Clue*, where you play as one of the predetermined characters.

But characters in TTRPGs are different in two big ways:

- Each character has their own unique mix of abilities.
- Each player can design their own character.

You'll use the character sheets included with this game to create your character.

Your character sheet is roughly split into three sections. Grab a character sheet so you can follow along as you read about each section.

Character Name

First part is simple! Give your character a name.

Not feeling creative? Your character can have your name, or use the Character Name Table to choose or roll a name.

To use the table, roll 2 six-sided dice. Add them together and compare the results to the table. You can also just choose a name you like!

Character Name Table

<i>Dice Total</i>	<i>Name</i>
2	Elephos/Elephine
3	Relazil
4	Mystaril
5	Terra
6	Zip
7	Hesaphed
8	Quicklit
9	Jelamine
10	Aphid
11	Oak/Oakley
12	Wisterwill

Character Skills

Choosing your character's skills is one of the biggest parts of making the character. These skills will give you bonuses when the Story Leader asks you to roll to see if you succeed on something. (We'll get to that in a bit.)

Skills Overview

This game has 6 skills. Each skill represents strengths and weaknesses of the game's heroes.

Wisdom

A wise character is one who understands other people and who thinks about the consequences of their actions.

Having a high Wisdom bonus means your character thinks through their choices, even if they need to do so quickly.

Health

A healthy character is one who doesn't get hurt easily. They might even be immune to certain poisons or diseases.

Having a high Health bonus means your character has handled some tough challenges. They might have a few scars, but they're stronger because of it.

Imagination

An imaginative character is one who comes up with creative solutions and sees a more wonderful world than most people do.

Having a high Imagination score means you might be able to surprise opponents and solve problems that seem unsolvable at first.

You don't have to be good at coming up with solutions during the game to play a character with a high Imagination score!

If you don't have an idea but you want to try your skill, ask your Story Leader if you can roll Imagination to find a creative solution or clue.

Speed

A speedy character is one who can move quickly and react to sudden changes.

Having a high Speed score means you might get to go first when reacting to a challenge. You also are better at dodging dangers.

Power

A powerful character is one who can lift heavy objects or break big obstacles.

Having a high Power score means you might be able to smash a fallen tree blocking your path or carry an injured animal or friend to safety.

Reason

A reasoning character is one who knows a lot about the world and its history.

Having a high Reason score means you know hundreds of facts. You might know the history of a strange object or find a hidden detail in a room.

Assign Skills

Now that you know a little bit about each of the Skills, you need to decide which ones your character is good at, and which ones are a little trickier.

Everyone is good at some Skills and struggles with others.

Apply these bonuses to your Skills in any order you choose: **-2, -1, +0, +1, +2, +3.**

You may only use each bonus once, and every Skill must have a bonus listed.

Sample Skills: Tough Guy

A tough character who handles physical challenges easily might split their scores like this:

Wisdom: -1

Health: +2

Imagination: +0

Speed: +1

Power: +3

Reason: -2

Draw Your Character

In the white space in the center of your character sheet, draw your character!

Here are some things to think about:

- Is your character human, or some other creature?
- What color are your character's hair and eyes? What skin tone do they have?
- Does your character wear something unique, like a fancy scarf?
- Does your character use something to help them get around, like a wheelchair, crutches, or a skateboard?
- Does your character have equipment that helps them navigate the world, like hearing aids or headphones to muffle loud noises?
- Does your character have a companion like a service animal or a plushie that helps them with scary situations?

If you feel nervous about your drawing skills, you can always draw a stick figure and make notes about what makes your character unique!

Fantastic Creatures

Many TTRPGs encourage you to play creatures other than humans. If you want to try another sort of creature, use this list to spark your imagination, or describe your own fantastic creature that you want to play!

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| - elf | - animal-folk |
| - dwarf | - pixie/fairy |
| - goblin | - merman/mermaid |
| - half-dragon | - elemental creature |
| - half-giant | - gorgon |
| - troll | - demigod |

Abilities and Equipment

Every character starts with 2 special abilities or pieces of equipment. You write these abilities in the gray box on the right-hand side of your character sheet.

Abilities can come from who your character is, the equipment they carry, or a magical blessing they received. Or from anywhere you like, really!

Since this is a rules-lite game, there aren't specific rules for how every special ability works. You can talk about how they work at your table and in your house.

These rules do include some suggestions though! Check out the ideas below and include them in your game if you'd like.

Movement

Your character can move in some special way.

Perhaps you have wings and can fly, or you have a diving helmet that lets you swim for long distances underwater.

Special Senses

Your character has really good hearing, sight, or maybe even magical senses.

A half-giant's big ears might pick up tiny sounds, or a character's thick glasses could have night-vision mode.

Cool Trick

Your character can do something most people can't.

A half-dragon might be able to breathe fire or ice. Maybe a character's communication device allows them to talk to animals or plants too!

Ability Bonus

Your character gets a +1 additional bonus to a specific ability.

Maybe a goblin has a super-creative mind for a bonus to Imagination, or your wheelchair gives you a boost to Speed with its all-terrain tires.

Defenses

Your character is immune to one dangerous thing, or they get an extra bonus to overcoming a certain type of challenge.

Maybe a mermaid isn't harmed by jellyfish stings, or your plushie gives you a boost of courage when facing challenges in the dark.

How to Play

You've got a character.

What's next? Let's find a quest and learn to play.

By the Book is a storytelling game, also known as a roleplaying game. And it's a game that needs a Story Leader, or someone to guide the adventures you're heading out to find.

The Story Leader's job is to describe what you find, react to the characters' choices, and determine how difficult an action might be.

Once everyone has a character, the Story Leader will guide the group through the adventure using this How to Play guide and the resources in the For the Story Leader's Eyes ONLY section.

You'll play your characters through an adventure using the format outlined here.

Game Outline

Determine the Quest

Using a deck of cards, the group randomizes certain elements of the adventure and determines the quest you'll be attempting to complete.

Tackle Challenges

The Story Leader will present events and Challenges to the group. Together, the other players decide how they want to interact with these prompts.

Rolling dice to determine your success, the group builds a story with the Story Leader.

This section takes up the bulk of the game.

Complete the Quest

When the final Joker is drawn, the characters encounter their Opponent.

In one final scene, you must complete your quest, achieving your goal, or return home in shame.

Describe the Resolution

Together, you describe what happens when you return home. The Story Leader plays the role of any people you encounter when you return.

The rules to this game are designed to lead your group through a unique quest, which can be played in one sitting.

If you want a longer story, you can play multiple sessions, trying a new quest with the same characters each time.

Rolling Dice

Whenever something is uncertain or randomized, a player rolls dice to determine the outcome.

These rules apply to any rolls needed during gameplay.

Choosing Difficulty

Every roll needs a difficulty level. This number represents how hard it is for the player to accomplish a given task.

Difficulty ranges from 2 to 18. It is possible to roll outside of that range, but difficulties shouldn't be set higher than 18 or lower than 2.

A difficulty lower than 2 represents something almost anyone could do and doesn't require a roll.

A difficulty of 18 represents something nearly impossible. Anything with a difficulty higher than that should be considered unachievable. The Story Leader will tell the players that the action doesn't work and help them find another solution.

Sample Difficulties

Asking a friendly animal to do a simple task might be a difficulty of 5 (lower if the character can speak to animals).

Digging through the rubble of a building to find a treasure might be a difficulty of 10.

Leaping across a wide chasm might be nearly impossible; if so, it should have a difficulty of 18. It can't be done without adding a third die to the roll somehow.

Difficulty Table

<i>Difficulty Number</i>	<i>Difficulty Level</i>	<i>Example Action</i>
2	Commonplace	Tying a basic knot, recalling common knowledge
3-5	Simple	Hitting a stationary target, prying up a loose floor tile
6-8	Moderately Hard	Climbing a rope, reading someone's mood
9-13	Strenuous	Noticing a hidden door, detecting a lie
14-17	Exacting	Swimming against the current, solving a complex code
18	Practically Impossible	Scaling a sheer rock face, knowing about a rare item

Standard Rolls

Every roll is associated with a certain skill. The Story Leader should follow these steps to guide a roll.

1. Choose a difficulty for the roll.
2. Ask the player to roll 2 six-sided dice.
3. Name the Skill associated with the roll. The Skills are listed below and on the character sheets.
4. Have the player add their bonus for that Skill to the total of their roll.

The Skills you can choose from are Wisdom, Health, Imagination, Speed, Power, and Reason.

Increasing the Odds

In certain cases, a player may be allowed to roll 3 six-sided dice instead of 2.

Dice Limitations

A player may never roll more than a total of 3 dice for one action, even if circumstances would give them another die.

However, whenever a player would have earned a 4th die but cannot use it due to this limitation, they may instead reroll the lowest of the 3 dice they rolled. They must use the new roll.

Creative Thinking

This game rewards creativity! If a player comes up with a creative solution, they earn an extra die for this roll.

Aid an Ally

Teamwork is key! If one character helps another, give an extra die to the player who is making this roll.

Success and Failure

Success is determined by meeting or exceeding the number that the Story Leader assigns as the difficulty for a given task.

Failure occurs when the roll total is less than the number assigned as the difficulty.

Determine the Quest

Remove the Jokers from the deck, and have a player shuffle the remaining cards. This can be the Story Leader or any other player.

Pass the deck around, having 3 players each choose a card. These 3 cards will determine your quest.

Have the 3 players reveal their cards. These cards can be placed in any order to fill in the blanks in the Quest Sentence.

Use the Quest Table on the next page to determine what the cards mean.

Using the Cards

Each card can fill one of three options: the Verb, the Target, or the Opponent. Not all combinations will make sense.

Rearrange the cards until the sentence you create describes a quest that the players (including the Story Leader) agree on.

Write your Quest Sentence on a piece of paper. It should follow the format below. Adjust as you need for readability:

Quest: [Verb] the [Target] from a [Opponent].

Starting the Adventure

When the Quest Sentence is determined, the Story Leader should read or paraphrase the following text to start the story:

Once upon a time, there was a group of heroes who sought justice and beauty in all that they did.

They were guided by a great book, which told them of the evil they must fight and the creatures and items they must defend.

On this day, they opened the book to find that it had a new quest for them.

Then a player reads the quest, and the adventure begins!

Quest Table

<i>Card</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Opponent</i>
Red Ace	rescue	prince/princess	dragon
Red 2	defend	magical book	magician
Red 3	find	dragon egg	army
Red 4	recover	ancient tree	king/queen
Red 5	destroy (objects only)	magical flower	robots
Red 6	hide	prophet	skeletons
Red 7	learn from/learn about	villagers	rising ocean
Red 8	investigate	knight's shield	wildfire
Red 9	explore	mysterious cave	giant octopus
Red 10	question	powerful wand	flying horse
Red Jack	reassure	forgotten shrine	ogres
Red Queen	inspire	crumbling castle	tangle of thorns
Red King	retrieve	group of children	ghosts
Black Ace	empower	grain fields	sea monster
Black 2	equip	unicorn	moving mountain
Black 3	recruit	legendary sword	biting pixies
Black 4	escort	talking tome	wild magic
Black 5	speak with	weaponsmith	slime monster
Black 6	demand	famed scholar	giant spider
Black 7	advise	theater troupe	trapped tomb
Black 8	attract	bandits	magical maze
Black 9	draw	giant	giant
Black 10	search for	monarch's crown	animated tower
Black Jack	accept	fauns	enchancing poet
Black Queen	impress	court of fairies	living weapon
Black King	guide	rare gemstone	quick-creeping moss

For the Story Leader's Eyes ONLY

Your job, as the Story Leader, is to keep the story going. Describe the world the characters are in, define the Challenges they face, and encourage the players to try creative solutions.

There's a lot on your plate, and it can feel overwhelming at first. Don't worry! The following pages are here to guide you.

All of the challenges are already written. You just need to adapt them to the Opponent the characters are facing. A dragon might live in a mountain cave, but a sea creature is going to be found underwater.

You'll also need to determine how difficult something is to accomplish. There are guidelines for doing so in the Rolling Dice section. If in doubt, choose a difficulty that sounds like the most fun, and prepare to make failure funny if need be.

Make sure to read *all* of these rules before running the game. Everything is organized mostly in order of gameplay, but you'll want the whole picture to help you make the most of what you have.

Tackle Challenges

For most of the game time, players will be tackling Challenges that you set before them.

To keep you from having to invent Challenges for the entirety of game night, this game comes with rules for randomizing and playing out Challenges until the Opponent appears!

Randomize Challenges

If you would prefer, you can use the printable Challenge Cards for these steps, instead of a standard deck. Where the rules mention Joker cards, use the cards marked "Opponent."

Once the Quest has been determined, ask a player to shuffle all the cards. If you are using a standard deck, this includes the cards used to determine the quest. Keep the Jokers removed.

After shuffling, draw the first 18 cards from the deck. Do not look at the cards. Add the Jokers to the 18 cards that were drawn and shuffle one last time.

Set the other cards aside.

Shorter Attention Spans?

If you have wiggly players or just want a quick game, you can reduce the number of cards drawn.

For a super short game, play with only 1 Joker and 9 other cards.

Remove cards in pairs so that you always have an even number in your deck.

Set the Scene

The bulk of this game is about overcoming obstacles on your way to the Opponent.

As the Story Leader, you'll present those obstacles and guide the players to determine success in their endeavors.

Find the Challenge

Draw cards 2 at a time. Each card represents a Challenge, which can be found on the Challenge Prompts table.

When you draw the cards, look at the Challenge Prompts and decide if the players will face one, the other, or both.

Describe the Scene

If the players are only facing one Challenge, the prompt for that card gives the essence of the event. Add some detail to make the world feel more alive.

The prompts are intentionally generalized. They should fit into almost any setting, or you can adjust them to make them work best with your story.

Your role, as Story Leader, is to customize the prompts and improvise the connections. But don't be afraid to ask your players for their ideas!

If you read a prompt and have no inspiration for how to connect it to what has already happened, ask the other players how they think they stumbled across this strange event.

Play Things Out

Once you've set the scene, it's the players' turn to figure things out. They get to brainstorm and discuss how they want to tackle a specific Challenge.

Ask and Answer

Ask the players what they would like to do. Be prepared for them to ask questions about the environment.

Some questions you can answer simply. If they ask if it's raining or what color a visible object is, just give them the answer.

However, some questions are a little more complicated.

Maybe a character wants to know if they recognize a type of plant. Or they're trying to find out how a creature they've found is feeling.

Questions like those might require a roll.

If that's the case, refer to the Rolling Dice section for more details.

Test the Solution

Once players have played out the scene and asked whatever questions they might have had, they should present a solution to the Challenge you've given them.

It might be as simple as, "Character B tries to build a raft," or they might narrate a solution that involves more than one character or action.

Your job, as the Story Leader, is to determine what Skills should be rolled and how difficult each task is.

Refer to the Rolling Dice section for more details.

Overcoming the Challenge

If the group's solution succeeds, wrap up the scene and send them on to the next challenge.

On a particularly creative solution or a high roll, you may give the players a bonus, clue, or other benefit on their next Challenge.

Only offer those benefits as a reward for particularly impressive moments so that they don't lose their impact.

Suffering a Failure

A failure doesn't mean the players have to repeat a Challenge. It might ruin the fun if you just keep rolling and rolling but not succeeding.

Instead, on a failed roll for a solution to a Challenge, describe the consequences of the failure. Perhaps someone suffers an injury (lowering their Health) or a creature they encountered warns other evil creatures that heroes are coming.

Should it be necessary, help players come up with a solution to the new situation. They can roll for it if they would like, but you can decide to allow them to automatically succeed.

Sample Rolls

If you're not sure which Skill a player should use with their roll, use these ideas to guide you.

Wisdom: understanding someone's feelings, looking for hidden creatures or objects, thinking through the consequences of a plan or action

Health: resisting dangerous effects like poison, sensing traps involving poison, slime, or acid, determining if a plant is safe to eat

Imagination: finding unusual solutions, uncovering unconventional clues, determining if a strange idea might work

Speed: dodging danger, finding the quickest route through a crowded area

Power: finding the weak point in an object, lifting something heavy

Reason: knowing where something came from, recognizing important details

Challenge Prompts

	<i>Clubs</i>	<i>Diamonds</i>	<i>Hearts</i>	<i>Spades</i>
Ace	A talking squirrel (or other small creature) follows you, chattering nonstop.	A small bag of silver coins drops out of the sky.	Three children dart through a patch of poison ivy as they play tag.	A figure with a shovel is digging a trench across the road.
2	Stinging fireflies, native to this environment, descend on your group.	A peddler is selling healing kits for a high price.	A young dragon whines with pain and limps towards you.	A whittler whistles as they carve an ornate wooden stick.
3	A tangle of thorns blocks the way forward.	Something shimmers in the knot of a tree.	A peddler with a broken cart shouts at passersby.	A locked door or gate stands in your way.
4	A raven swoops down and squawks a warning to one of you. The riddle of its words is difficult to decipher.	Someone offers you a free night's stay at the inn in exchange for work cleaning the other rooms.	A religious or harvest festival clogs the city streets.	A jeweler breaks one of their tools while trying to make a necklace for an impatient customer. The argument catches your ear as it spills into the street.
5	Thick fog rolls through the valley, making it almost impossible to find your way.	A pastry vendor offers you a sweet treat. [At the Story Leader's discretion, the treat may be dangerous or beneficial in some way.]	A baker kneads dough with a vengeance while glaring at a customer.	A troll-hunter is mending their chainmail net by a campfire when an angry troll leaps out and attacks.
6	The bridge you need to cross is flooded; a water spirit stands guard over the river.	Someone wants to join your group. Are they up to the task?	Bubblegum floss harvesters are tangled in the bushes.	A magical book promises to give you some help... if you tell a good joke first.
7	Driving rain threatens to wash out the path from beneath your feet.	A fairy godmother appears but insists she's all out of wishes. [Characters need to improve her mood to succeed on this Challenge.]	Goblin miners scramble out of a collapsing mine.	A glowing slime creature slurps toward you, tools and weapons floating within its jelly-like form.
8	Icy winds blast across open terrain, leaving you vulnerable to the cold if you don't find shelter soon.	A unicorn offers you a braid from its mane if you can do it a favor.	A pod of mermaids and mermen are beached and need help getting back to the ocean.	An elaborate machine lurches forward, snapping at turtles (or other slow-moving prey).
9	Dinosaurs (or other predators) roar in the distance as you are setting up camp for the night.	A theater troupe challenges your party to a dance competition. Winner gets a golden crown.	A noble in fancy clothes storms out of a restaurant, shouting that there was a hair in their soup.	A mirror shows you a glimpse of what is coming next... if you can guess the secret password.
<i>[table continues on next page]</i>				

	<i>Clubs</i>	<i>Diamonds</i>	<i>Hearts</i>	<i>Spades</i>
<i>10</i>	From above, a rockslide slams down the slope, hurtling toward you.	A huge hiccupping frog bounces past. Something is caught on its sticky tongue.	Nocturnal giants are having a birthday party. They're waking human children nearby.	A thief has stolen a key that opens any door, and the king has asked you to retrieve it.
<i>Jack</i>	Intense heat beats down on you, and water is running low.	A field of dancing mushrooms parades around you, whispering a secret.	A sphinx is refusing to let anyone walk past without answering a pair of riddles.	A magician has turned the town well into lemonade, but it's way too sour.
<i>Queen</i>	Sulfur vents suddenly bubble up with lava. The dusty field ahead of you glows with ribbons of molten rock.	Flying silverware flings itself at customers in a silversmith's shop.	Three weavers are winding thread around a house, trapping a family inside.	The town guards had their armor eaten by a metal monster, and they're shivering in their thin t-shirts and shorts.
<i>King</i>	Gusting winds whip up, rapidly turning into a tornado that bears down on a nearby village.	A wealthy benefactor offers you one treasure to aid in your quest. What do you ask for? [Failed rolls mean the heroes offended the benefactor.]	A hunting party of elves and dwarves asks if you've seen the elusive five-eyed badger-worm.	A fisherman bobs on his boat, inviting heroes to help him catch the world's largest acid eel, who is corrupting the sea.

Complete the Quest

There are 2 cards in the deck that override any other cards drawn: the Jokers.

The Jokers are the cards that directly relate to the opponent. They do not have prompts and require the most creativity on your part as the Story Leader.

The First Joker represents a close encounter with the Opponent.

The Second Joker marks the end of the quest as the characters face the Opponent in a final Challenge.

First Joker

When the first Joker is drawn, ignore the other card drawn for that Challenge.

Describe to the players what they find. Maybe it's the entrance to the Opponent's hideout, or a major clue to finding the Target.

If you're having trouble coming up with something, ask your players some questions and create this encounter together!

Try some of these to get started:

- What does the Opponent's hideout or lair look like?
- Does the Opponent have any spies or minions who look for heroes?
- What clues might the Target have left behind?

Players do not need to roll against a Challenge for this card.

They may roll to gain information or learn more about the scene, but since they cannot defeat the Opponent at this stage, there is a Challenge to solve here.

Second Joker

When the second Joker is drawn, ignore the other card drawn for this Challenge.

The characters have discovered the Opponent; their target is in sight.

Describe the Scene

Describe the scene to the players. Make it as dramatic and exciting as the players will enjoy.

The Opponent should be present, along with the Target. Think about what the characters can see, hear, and feel as they enter the hideout.

Define the Challenge

You get to decide what the final Challenge is. Think about what the players would find the most interesting.

Do they want to solve a tricky riddle? Would they prefer an amazing superhero fight? Is it more fun to try to sneak their way to the end of the quest?

Present the Challenge with the scene and let them come up with the solution.

Determine Success

Unlike a regular Challenge, facing the Opponent is a little more difficult. Every player must make a roll representing how their character helps complete the quest.

More than half of the characters must succeed on their rolls in order for the group to complete the quest.

Describe the Resolution

The heroes have made it to the end of the quest!

Whether they succeeded or failed, it's time to wrap up the story.

If the characters succeeded in their final Challenge against the Opponent, use the Joy of Victory section to finish the story.

If the characters failed in their struggle against the Opponent, use the Sting of Defeat section to bind up their wounds and end on a note of hope.

Joy of Victory

Success is rewarded! Describe the victory feast and add a special ability or piece of equipment to your character sheet.

If you play as the same characters on a quest in the future, you may use this ability in addition to those you already have.

If you create new characters for a quest in the future, you may gift this ability to a new character as one of their 2 beginning abilities.

Sting of Defeat

Failing your quest may sting, but you've learned some valuable lessons.

Describe the loss and the weary heroes returning home. Encourage the players to narrate the aftermath of the confrontation for their own characters.

Write "Sting of Defeat" on your character sheet. This is a one-time use ability that allows you to automatically add a third die to a roll that you would otherwise fail.

If you play as the same characters on a quest in the future, you may use this ability in addition to the permanent abilities you have.

If you create new characters for a quest in the future, you may gift this ability to a new character in addition to the permanent abilities they have.

Thank You, Credits, and Other Notes

Designing a game, much like any hero's quest, is hard work that should not be attempted in a vacuum. *By the Book* came to be thanks to a party of heroes who embarked on their adventure many months ago.

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All art assets come from Canva, except for the box borders and the line art bracketing the read-aloud text on page 7. Those assets are from [Ramona](#) and are used with permission.

Social Media Links and More

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