BITE-SIZED FATE

Text by TheMouse, November 2010
First public presentation at RPGNet
   <http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=548438>
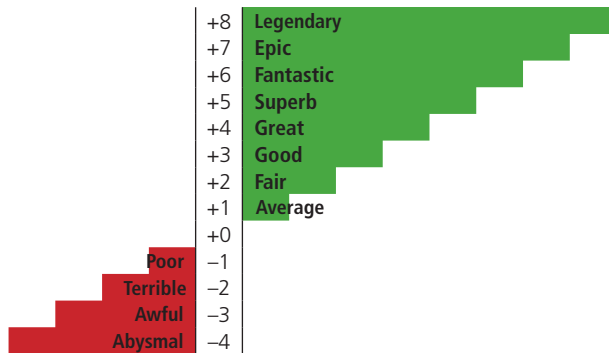Layout (& minor text modifications) by Adam Jury <http://adamjury.com>
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Regarding compatability, TheMouse says: "I made some decisions when I was writing this that significantly cut down on complexity, time to resolve actions, and space rules take up. It wasn't even vaguely a goal to have this be a trimmed down version of any particular iteration of Fate."

This document is a bite-sized version of the Fate rules. In order to get it that way, I made some decisions that I think don't match any currently published version of the rules. I am willing to risk a little bit of confusion down the line in order to get a version of the game that's easy to approach."

FATE LADDER

+8	**Legendary**	
+7	**Epic**	
+6	**Fantastic**	
+5	**Superb**	
+4	**Great**	
+3	**Good**	
+2	**Fair**	
+1	**Average**	
+0		
Poor	−1	
Terrible	−2	
Awful	−3	
Abysmal	−4	

TIME INCREMENTS TABLE

- instant
- a few moments
- half a minute
- a minute
- a few minutes
- 15 minutes
- half an hour
- an hour
- a few hours
- an afternoon
- a day
- a few days
- a week
- a few weeks
- a month
- a few months
- a season
- half a year
- a year
- a few years
- a decade
- a generation
- a mortal lifetime
- several mortal lifetimes
… etc.

SKILLS

Skills are how Fate measures a character's ability to affect the narrative and the world. Skills are rated on the Fate ladder (see below). Unrated Skills are treated as +0.

To use a Skill, roll 4 Fudge dice (4dF) and add your Skill versus a difficulty or resisted roll. If the acting player (the one whose turn it is) met or exceeded the target number, the action is successful. Otherwise the action has failed.

When an action is resisted by another character, the roll is said to be contested. The difficulty of the action is the Skill of the defending character.

Success is measured in "shifts." Subtract the target number from the roll to generate the number of shifts. 0 shifts constitutes a marginal success. More shifts represent a higher degree of success, which is measured in two ways: quality and speed. (For conflicts, see the detailed rules below.)

Quality represents durability. Rolls to undo the success increase their difficulty by the quality.

Speed makes things faster or longer-lasting. Each shift moves the duration up or down the *Time Increments Table*.

SKILL STRUCTURES

There are two general Skill structures: Column and pyramid.

When Skills are in a column structure, each Skill must be supported by one or more Skills at the level beneath it. So in order to have two Skills rated at +3, the character must have at least two Skills rated +2, and at least as many Skills at +1 as were at +2.

A pyramid Skill structure is similar, except that each Skill must be supported by a greater number of Skills below it.

ASPECTS

An Aspect is a short phrase that describes a narrative **truth** about something. Aspects can be used to describe people, places, and things. They are generally both good and bad.

Aspects interact with a resource called Fate Points, or FPs. Players begin each session with 5 FPs.

Example Aspects include:

- Strong as an ox
- A girl in every port
- I always pay my due
- Finest swordsman in France

USING ASPECTS

Invocations—Spend a FP to Invoke an Aspect. The Aspect may belong to the acting character, the defending character, the scene, or an object involved in the action.

Invocations have one of two results. The active player gets +2 to the roll or may reroll the dice and keep the new result. FPs are spent after the roll is made, and each Aspect may be Invoked only once per action.

On unrolled actions, Invocations simply add +2 to the Skill's rating.

When Invoking an Aspect belonging to another character, any FPs go to the player of that character once the action resolves.

Declarations—The player spends a FP to make some narrative detail related to the Aspect a fact. The GM has the final say on what is and isn't allowed, but players should be able to make moderate alterations to the story this way.

Declarations do not involve any sort of roll.

Compels—The third thing about Aspects is that they can be disadvantageous. This is in the form of a Compel. Compels dictate some constraint to behaviour. When one is made, the GM offers a FP. If you accept it, you accept the constraints. If not, you must turn down the offered FP **and** spend one of your own.

Locked Aspects (Optional Rule)—Players may choose to "lock" one or more Aspects for the duration of a story or longer.

Locked Aspects produce a particular effect at no cost. They can produce a specific Invocation to a particular Skill or a specific Declaration any time they apply, for no cost.

When an Aspect is locked the player loses access to non-locked Invocations or Declarations with that Aspect. Compels and Invocations by other players proceed as normal.

CONFLICTS

Conflicts are when one character attempts to perform an action involving another character, and that character tries to stop them. This could be a fight, a seduction, a political campaign, or any other conceptually similar action.

First determine the scope of the conflict. Is it a seduction attempt? A fight to the death? etc. This will determine the Skills that you use and which stress track to use and what appropriate Consequences are.

Once the scale of the conflict is determined, you need to figure out who goes when. Choose one Skill to use as a standard to resolve this. Select a secondary Skill to break ties. Compare the primary Skill and then break ties with the secondary Skill; ties after the breaker result in simultaneous actions.

When it is there turn, players choose what sort of action to take. They have the following choices.

Maneuver—This is a catch-all term used to represent what might otherwise be represented as use of tactics, higher ground, positioning, etc. Instead, players roll to apply Aspects to their target, then take advantage of it.

Choose a Skill with which to place the Aspect. Locations and objects default to a difficulty of +0. Individuals get to contest the Maneuver.

Achieving 0 or 1 shifts results in a "fragile" Aspect that goes away after being Invoked once. "Sticky" Aspects last for the rest of the scene.

Anyone may make a Maneuver of their own against the number of shifts of a successful Maneuver to the Aspect.

Some Aspects don't make sense if they linger. For example, an Aspect like "In my sights" used to aim doesn't make sense if the shooter puts down the rifle at some point. These are removed when it makes sense to do so.

Whenever a Maneuver successfully inflicts an Aspect on a target, the player that initiated the Maneuver may Invoke the Aspect without cost or pass off the free Invocation to another player. As no FPs were spent, the victim receives none in compensation.

Attack—This action is an attempt to harm another character in some way, based on the nature of the conflict.

Roll attacks using an appropriate Skill. Defenders contest. If the attack succeeds, the defender takes Stress equal to the number of shifts.

Characters receiving Stress check off that number of boxes of the appropriate Stress track. Physical damage, illness, and weariness damage the Health track. Emotional trauma, psychic shock, and mental strain damage Composure. Stress tracks clear at the end of the conflict.

If a Stress track fills up, the character is "taken out." Such characters are removed from the conflict in a way that fits with the conflict. Players may prevent this by suffering Consequences to reduce Stress.

Consequences are special Aspects (defined by the player of the character receiving them) that are used to reduce incoming Stress. They have a rating, a number of points by which they reduce Stress, and how long they take to heal:

• Minor (2/ scene)
• Moderate (4/ session)
• Significant (6/ story)

The player of a character that inflicts a Consequence gets to Invoke it once for free.

Defend—Defensive actions get a +2 bonus for the round, at the cost of all actions.

Block—One character acts to prevent another character from performing a specific action. Generally this is worded as using one Skill to stop an action performed with another Skill.

The initiating player rolls the stated Skill. Then anyone else attempting to use the named Skill to perform the specified action uses that roll as a difficulty if it is higher than the normal difficulty of the action.

Move—There are two options for moving: walking and running.

Walking does not take up the character's action for the turn, instead imposing a –1 penalty to the primary action and moving 1 zone (see below).

Running takes a character's full action and moves a number of zones equal to the appropriate Skill rating, to a minimum of 1.

Zones are areas in which combat happens. A room in a typical house is one zone. A basketball court is likely 4. The area of a zone corresponds with some logical division of an area.

Characters that are unarmed or wielding close combat weapons can generally only target things inside the same zone. Thrown weapons have a range of 1 zone, firearms have a range of 3.

Zones can be separated by borders. These add to the number of effective zones a character needs to move before crossing into the next zone. A barrier of 1 is rough terrain, while a 3 is likely a fence. Characters unable to move wholly from one zone to the next can accumulate partial movement over multiple subsequent turns moving.

CHARACTER CREATION

First, the GM must create a Skill list, decide on the Skill structure, then select the starting level for the game. The following list includes the number of Skill points and the Skill cap:

• novice—20 (+4)
• veteran—25 (+4)
• hero—30 (+5)
• legend—35 (+5)
• superhero—40 (+6)

Players then build characters.

Select Aspects for characters. One should cover the central concept of the character. A second should link them to some sort of problems. A third should connect them with another PC. Two more round out a character, and the GM must decide whether they need to fit any particular criteria.

A Skill costs a number of points equal to its rating. Remember to purchase supporting Skills to fit the campaign structure.

Finally, create Stress tracks. Each should be associated with some Skill that increases their length. The size of a Stress track is the Skill cap plus 1/2 (round up) the rating of the associated Skill.

ADVANCEMENT

Characters grow and change throughout play.

Players may alter one Aspect per session. This alteration should reflect some change that occurred in play.

They can add 1 Skill point per story (roughly every 3 sessions). The Skill cap goes up when the total number of Skill points increases to a starting campaign level with a higher cap. For example, at 30 points, the cap rises from +4 to +5.