

FORRS

Free-form Open Role-playing Rules

By Per Fischer

Introduction

It would be a lie to state that the world needs yet another role-playing game system. There are lots of excellent systems out there, some of the better ones even free of charge, and I still love to delve into a new game system to see how things are done, and which thoughts are behind.

But it seems like I am looking for simplicity when I play role-playing games nowadays, both in character generation and action resolution. Especially when I play with newbies or children. I don't like explaining rules, dice and role-playing conventions for six hours before we can start. I used to, but not anymore. Another thing I dislike is always to be the one to set target numbers or success rates or whatever they are called. I needed a system where the player rolled dice, and the outcome told him directly how he performed, and left me, the GM or Narrator, to handle the storytelling.

FORRS owes all to four existing free role-playing games: The Window, Plate Glass RPG, FABLE and FUDGE.

The Window because of its approach, and for being one of the very few systems out there that has precepts built into its core rules. Unfortunately the Window's resolution mechanics are flawed.

Plate Glass RPG because it's only two pages long! PGRPG defines a character from a list of traits, and doesn't differentiate between attributes and skills, etc. The way PGRPG distinguishes between trait types has found its way directly into FORRS. PGRPG doesn't state how damage is handled, and its FUDGE-like trait levels ladder is a bit too extensive for my taste.

FABLE because it's a wonderful system, almost perfect, much like the Window. Elegant damage system, but FABLE features the use of many different die types, as the Window, and the GM has to determine the difficulty for each unopposed action.

FUDGE for its plethora of game options, its trait levels and its use of six-sided dice. You could probably argue that FORRS was just modified FUDGE. The 4d6 dice method used in FORRS was originally proposed in the FUDGE rules, and so were the trait and damage scales.

Mechanics

The FORRS rules use a simple resolution system. The main thing to remember is that in FORRS dice are rolled for dramatic purposes, to provide a random and unforeseen element in the mutual storytelling. You need four six-sided dice, two of each colour. One colour is the negative dice; the other colour is the positive.

When something has to be tested, the player/narrator decide which trait would be appropriate. The player then rolls 4d6 and picks the lowest. The number on the die is then added or subtracted from the trait in question, and the result is compared to the scale below:

Level of Success	Rolled Result
Superb	+3
Great	+2
Good	+1
Fair	0
Mediocre	-1
Poor	-2
Terrible	-3

Results greater or lesser than +/- 3 are treated as +/- 3 (except when determining damage in combat).

If all four dice show the same, treat the result as 0.

If two dice of the same colour show the lowest number, treat that as the result.

If two dice of different colours show the lowest number, treat it as 0.

In opposed tests the highest level of success wins. If the loser of an opposed test score a Fair or better success, the Narrator and players in role-playing the result should reflect this.

Success Levels

It is up to the Narrator and the players to role-play the situations and the outcome of attempted actions. It is the players' responsibility to play their roles dramatically, to help create an interesting and challenging story in accordance with the game world and playing style.

A Fair success is the lowest possible success. The action just barely succeeds.

A Good success is a comfortable success. The action succeeds easily.

A Great success is just that: great. The action succeeds better than expected.

A Superb success is a rare occurrence, and should accomplish extraordinary results.

A Mediocre success is a failure. The action only just fails.

A Poor success is a grave failure. The action fails considerably, even disastrously.

A Terrible success is when everything goes wrong.

Auto Defence

Every player character has an instinctive trait that makes him or her able to attempt to avoid being hit, shot or otherwise attacked, even against explosives. This Auto Defence is a Fair level trait, and is rolled as an opposed test versus the attack. If the Auto Defence loses, damage kicks in, and the more it fails the more serious is the damage.

The Narrator may choose to raise or lower Auto Defence due to armour or cover or the lack of those. Examples: Lying down +1; behind wall +2; completely covered +3; Short range -1; Point Blank -2; Tied, blindfolded -3.

Damage and Wounds

Damage is simply sustained by comparing the auto defence success level form to the attack success level. The difference in "steps" is the damage result.

Examples

Attack: Good Handgun rolls success level Great (+1); auto defence rolls success level Mediocre. Result = 3: the character is hurt and the corresponding wound level is crossed out.

Attack: Fair Brawl rolls success level Fair (0); auto defence rolls Fair. Result = 0, and no damage.

The fourth Scratch is level Hurt. The third Hurt is level Very Hurt. If a character receives 5 or 6 points of damage, and is Very Hurt, the Wound level rises to Incapacitated and so on, even if there are empty boxes in the lower wound levels. This means a Scratch might still kill a character if he is already Nearly Dead.

Wound Level	Damage Result	Number of wounds before next level	Success Modifier
Undamaged	0		
Scratch	1-2		
Hurt	3-4		-1
Very Hurt	5-6		-2
Incapacitated	7,8		
Nearly Dead	9+		
Dead			

Note that Hurt and Very Hurt modifies the level of success negatively.

Traits

The idea of FORRS is only to mention those traits that distinguish the player character from everyone else. Traits can be everything from attributes, skills, abilities, faults, gifts, whatever.

Which traits are general, experience and special depends on the individual game setting and perhaps narrator/player preferences.

General Traits

These are traits that every player character possesses because of physique, upbringing and culture. General traits are always Fair level unless otherwise stated. Therefore it is not necessary to list all these, just assume the player character has them. Only write those traits who are lower or higher than Fair.

Experience Traits

These are traits that depend on training, practice and study. Unless anything else is stated, every player character can attempt to test experience traits at Poor level.

Special Traits

These are traits that need special training. Only if the trait is mentioned on the character sheet, the character can actually use it.

Trait Ratings

Traits are rated against the same scale as success levels, from Terrible (-3) to Superb (+3).

Character Creation

Creating a player character in FORRS is a very creative and subjective process. The narrator and the player have to work closely together to create a character that is interesting and challenging to play, and fits into the game setting, the player group's playing style and the needs of the story.

Character Concept

This is the most important step of the character creation process. Describe your character in as many or as few words as you think are necessary. Begin with the character's externals and gradually work into his mind, beliefs and feelings. When you think you have a clear outline of an interesting character, try to sum up the character in a paragraph. Then show it to the Narrator.

Traits

Which traits set your character aside from other characters in your game world? Is he exceptionally strong, brave, adept with a gun, well educated? Is your character a wimp, dishonest or afraid of furry animals?

Try to come up with a list of possible traits, and sort them into General, Experience and Special traits. Remember that it's only necessary to mention

General trait above or below Fair, and Experience traits above or below Poor.
All special traits the character possesses must be written down.