

Wheel of Exalted Fate

1. INTRODUCTION

Wheel of Exalted Fate is a rules-light version of FATE. It requires use of the Wheel of Fate rules and the Stuntless .pdf rules.

Dice Conventions: Dice are either SCARLET or EBON. Scarlet dice come from Traits, Aspect Invocation, Charms, or Special Pools or Powers. Ebon dice come from bonus or penalty assessments.

A valid action must employ at least one Scarlet die. In a roll, the values of Scarlet dice are totaled and compared to a target number. If the total equals or exceeds the target number, the roll succeeds.

Ebon dice provide either bonus or penalty dice to the roll. In a roll including bonus dice, subtract a number of dice with the lowest results equal to the number of bonus dice before summing the total. With penalty dice, remove the highest value dice equal to the number of penalty dice before summing the total. Bonus and penalty dice cancel one another.

Traits: Traits are the main engine of your character, and provide the Scarlet dice necessary to make an action roll.

Pools: Action Pools, Expert Pools, and Special Pools reflect your character's specialized talents. Action and Expert Pools provide bonus dice. Special Pools are more about unique powers and can provide Scarlet or Ebon dice or other abilities.

Charms: Charms provide Scarlet dice that add to Action Pool Rolls.

Theme Dice: There are two theme dice, the STUNT DIE and the DECADENCE DIE.

2. TRAITS

Characters have three (3) traits to reflect their innate potential and training. These are:

- **Body:** Strength, endurance, and agility. All physical tests or actions require use of Body. A zero score in Body means someone is incapacitated.
- **Mind:** Reason, perception, and will. All mental tests or actions require use of Mind. A zero score in Mind means someone is unresponsive or in a coma.
- **Spirit:** Intuition, presence, spiritual energy. All tests of intuition, social acumen, or courage require use of Spirit. A zero score in Spirit means someone is incoherent.

Traits provide Scarlet Dice. Chosen characters divide ten (10) dice among their Traits. Generally, 1d in a Trait is below average, 2d is average, 3d is superior, 4d and 5d are exceptional, and 6d is either Bruce Lee, Albert Einstein, or Mother Teresa.

3. ACTION POOLS

Five Action Pools represent your training as a Prince of the Earth. Place 1 die in the pool that matches your element. Divide seven (7) dice among the remaining Pools. You may not place more than three (3) dice in any pool.

- **Assassin (water)** Black (disguise, stealth, poisons, thrown, ambushes, daggers, burglary & larceny, traps, climbing, acrobatics, underworld connections)
- **Courtier (earth)** White (etiquette, style, oratory, poetry & art, intrigue, dancing, dueling, socializing, innuendo, bureaucracy, spying, gossip, politics, political connections)
- **Emissary (wood)** Green (sailing, riding, foreign languages & customs, survival, diplomacy, alertness, exotic

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foreign secrets, economics, ciphers, diplomatic/trade connections)

- **Scholar (air)**

Blue (lore, occult, investigation, research, medicine, law, craft, engineering, religious doctrine, philosophy, history, scholarly connections)

- **Soldier (fire)**

Red (tactics, athletics, leadership, discipline, weaponry, war, endurance, riding, military connections)

Action Pools provide Ebon bonus dice. They do not stack with each other. If you are using Courtier on a roll, you cannot use Soldier.

Options:

0-0-2-3-3 0-1-2-2-3
0-1-1-3-3 0-2-2-2-2
1-1-2-2-2 1-1-1-2-3

4. ADVANTAGES

Expert Dice: Expert Dice represent special talent or training inaccessible to most Dragon-Blooded. These dice function as bonus dice. One may be used to add additional bonus dice to an Action Pool. Each character has three (3) Expert dice. As with Action Pools, the description must be in the form of a Profession, e.g., Horsewoman, Merchant, Monk, Demimonde, Courtesan, Thief.

Specialties: Specialties are very particular concentrations of skill, talent, or knowledge that add +2 to overall roll. Specialties do stack, so if three apply, the total to the roll is +6. As a rule, Specialties must be narrow.

Aspects: Aspects are invoked with the expenditure of a FATE point. Invocation provides one of the following benefits:

- +1 Scarlet Die to the roll.
- Declare a fact or coincidence related to the roll.
- Dramatic Invocation from the **Stuntless** rules.

Essence is a pool equal to a roll of Mind+Spirit (+5 for each Breeding-related Aspect if Dramatically Invoked and Locked). Essence may be used for Charms or Sorcery. Roll Essence at each refreshment interval, most often at the beginning of a session, possibly in-game from time to time.

Charms cost 1 or more Essence per use and perform one (1) special effect per Essence spent, up to a maximum expenditure of three (3) Essence. Players should read the Charm descriptions in the Dragon-Blooded book and choose Charms to reflect their special interests or skills. Detailed rules for Charms appear later in these rules. Players should note what their particular Charm does. Players may select seven

(7) starting Charms, unless he or she is a sorcerer, in which case only three (3) may be Chosen.

Special Abilities: Each Dragon-Blooded receives a School Ability for the secondary school he or she attended, and an Anima Power for the Chosen's elemental Aspect.

Stunt Die: The STUNT DIE is an orange d6 that reflects a special risk taken by a character. When a character engages in a Stunt, she should describe a higher-risk gambit with increased stakes, then name a setback related to those stakes. If the Stunt Die

comes up "1," the setback occurs even if the overall roll succeeds. The Stunt Die is a Scarlet die immune to Ebon dice (it can't be put aside), and it explodes (i.e., rolls of "6" reroll and add to the total).

Decadence Die: The DECADENCE DIE is a d4 that reflects the jaded culture of the Dragon-Blooded. It does not explode, but can only be invoked once per round, competitively, to the player who adds the most decadent narrative detail about Dragon-Blooded culture to the current action. Making it about the player's own decadent behavior or attitude adds +1 to the roll.

MECHANICS SUMMARY:

- **Select Trait (1) in SCARLET dice + appropriate Pools and in EBON dice.**
- **Add bonus or penalty dice (2) and Expert Pools (3) and invoke Aspects.**
- **Roll and ADD dice results for TOTAL, adjusting for Ebon dice.**
- **Add +2 for each Specialty (4) used.**
- **Invoke Aspects (5) for rerolls.**
- **If TOTAL equals Target #, you succeed; every 5 points over the Target = a WHAMMY.**

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5. SPECIAL ABILITIES

Special Abilities give rise to special pools and powers. The ones available to the Dragon-Blooded come from their Anima Powers and their education.

ANIMA POWERS: These require the Dragon-Blooded to spend five (5) Essence to dramatically invoke for the scene.

- **Air:**
The Dragon-Blooded may make prodigious, soaring leaps of up to five times normal (multiply Body results by 5) and takes no damage from falls.
- **Earth:**
Add +5 to the Dragon-Blooded's die result AFTER the rolls have been compared to determine victory. This does not change who won the contest, but will reduce Stress and can even negate or lessen the victory. This bonus applies in any situation where the Dragon-Blooded is resisting physical damage or being moved.
- **Fire:**
Add +5 to the Dragon-Blooded's die result in close combat AFTER the rolls have been compared to determine victory. All things being equal, this should add a Whammy. The Dragon-Blooded may ignite flammable materials with close contact, and is immune to normal fires and resistant to magical ones (see Earth Aspect for rules on resistance to magical fire).
- **Water:**
The Dragon-Blooded may breathe water, is immune to pressure, and may move underwater as though it were air.
- **Wood:**
The Dragon-Blooded may add a Scarlet or Ebon die (not cumulative) each round for the scene.

SCHOOL ABILITIES: These represent the Dragon-Blooded education and intensive training. The schools themselves are Aspects, but the school abilities are separate collections of stunt-like powers.

Cloister of Wisdom (Immaculate Training):

- Player must take at least one die in the Special Pool of Immaculate Monk; this pool functions as an Action Pool for martial arts, meditation, and other monkish activities; it MUST be used as the bonus pool for Immaculate Arts. This Pool does NOT stack with Action Pools, but may have Expert Dice stacked with it.
- **1d (Initiate):** Martial arts combat rolls explode (Scarlet dice only).
- **2d (Disciple):** Spend a FATE point to allow martial arts to be used in place of other skills. Exploding applies.
- **3d (Vermilion Master):** May invoke Monk Pool for an extra Scarlet die once per session per die in Monk Pool. Mastery of one Immaculate style.
- **4d (Ebon Master):** Ebon BONUS dice explode as well as Scarlet. Mastery of two styles.
- **5d (Jade Master):** Spend a FATE point to attack one's own stress and thus remove it. Target is Stress dice roll+10. Mastery of three styles.
- **6d (Scaled Master):** May dramatically invoke Monk Pool as an Aspect a number of times per session equal to rank in Monk Pool. Mastery of four styles.
- **7d (Grand Master of Dragons):** Double effect of Immaculate Charms. Mastery of all five Elemental Dragon styles.
- Automatic specialization (+2 to roll) and bonus die in elemental style or weapon invoked - Air (leaping, chakrams), Earth (standing ground, tetsubo), Fire (inflicting pain, twin blades), Water (avoidance, claws), and Wood (mesmerizing movement, archery).

House of Bells (Art of War):

- Must take 1 die in Soldier.
- +1 Soldier when leading troops into battle or appraising a scene for tactical insight.
- Automatic speciality in some part of military life.

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- At no cost, may reconnoiter and declare one (1) Tactical Aspect for a scene appropriate to scale of group player leads.
- For a FATE point, may declare a Tactical Aspect as above, and attach it either to the opponent, one's troops, or to the scene. Aspect may be brief (three free tags only) or indefinite (scene-long, normal tagging rules).

The Heptagram (Sorcery):

- Must take Sorcerer/Sorceress pool of 1 Scarlet.
- Can cast spells, using Mind+Sorcerer+Scholar.
- **1d (Ivory-class Adept):** Sorcery. May cast Sorcery spells and cantrips.
- **2d (Scarlet-class Adept):** Scarlet Invocation. Spend FATE point to cause Scarlet dice to explode in character's Sorcery rolls for one round. This effect does not work for Essence refreshes.
- **3d (Hazard-class Adept):** Words of Power. May invoke Sorcerer Pool to double Mind for one round. Doing so causes a Stress die for Mind equal to the number of times already used +1 for that session. For example, Mnemon Ash uses Words of Power for the second time in a session. She has already suffered 1 Stress from the first time. Now she takes 2 additional Stress to her Mind Pool.
- **4d (High Adept):** Essential Breath. Spend FATE point to dramatically invoke Sorcerer Pool to refresh Essence equal to number of dice in Mind+Spirit.
- **5d (Magister):** Manifesto of Draconic Will. Invoke Sorcerer Pool to declare a magical Aspect as fact of Scene, e.g., obscure calendar, spiritual energy, etc. May do so number of times equal to dice in pool.
- **6d (High Magister):** Irresistible Commentary. Spend 5 Essence and 1 FATE point to reduce magical resistance of target by number of Ebon dice equal to Sorcerer's pool.

Dragon-Blooded cannot exceed 6d in Sorcery without the assistance of Artifacts.

The Spiral Academy (Pulse of Empire):

- Must take 1 die in either Courtier or Emissary.
- Automatic specialities in part of Bureaucracy and in Ciphers.
- May spend FATE to remember a "secret" Aspect about a setting, an individual, or political situation. No limit per scene.
- May spend FATE to dramatically invoke Pulse of Empire to establish an individual rivalry or an alliance, but this is not generally secret.
- A number of times per session equal to either Courtier or Emissary, may dramatically invoke Pulse of Empire for particular piece of knowledge that must appear in a record or a message intercepted and read by the character.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER WRITE-UPS

Sesus Reth-Te

Body 3 Mind 3 Spirit 4

Assassin 3, Courtier 2, Emissary 2

Demimonde 1, Silver-tongue 1, Poisoner 1

Essence 3*4

Cathak Agni

Body 6 Mind 2 Spirit 2

Assassin 1, Emissary 2, Soldier 3, Scholar 1

Monk 3

Essence 2*2

Tepet Cloud

Body 3 Mind 4 Spirit 3

Courtier 1, Emissary 3, Scholar 1, Soldier 2

Horsewoman 1, Writer 1, Merchant 1

Essence 4*3

Mnemon Ash

Body 2 Mind 5 Spirit 3

Courtier 2, Emissary 1, Scholar 3, Soldier 1

Lorekeeper 1, Linguist 1, Abolitionist 1

Essence 5*3

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CHARMS

Charms are magical effects that generally make skill use more effective. Occasionally, they grant the ability to do something like breathe fire, but mostly they increase the user's skill level to supernatural levels.

Charms cost one to three Essence per use. For each Essence spent, they grant one of the following effects:

- **CONFER:** Allows the user to grant one of the effects below to others. In the case of a Confer, the user must spend the Essence for the effect desired, and then spend one additional Essence per person to whom the effect is granted.
- **HEIGHTENED BONUS:** Permit a scene-long Ebon die per Essence spent.
- **AMPLIFY:** Amplify a skill (+1 Scarlet or Ebon bonus die/Essence spent up to 3 Essence) for one round.
- **RANGE:** Allow a skill to be used at range (e.g., punch a guy off his horse 100' away).
- **MIRACLE:** Conjure a miraculous effect, i.e., break a rule of physics (e.g., run across water, snatch a weapon out of thin air, sense weak point in bureaucracy, detect lies, see ghosts).
- **SWAP:** Permit other Ebon pools to be used, such as Courtier instead of Soldier in combat.

The mnemonic CHARMS may help players remember Charm effects. Remember that Charms may generally only add to character skill rolls. They cannot be used to summon spirits or transmute matter, for example.

Within each category, the effect is scalable, meaning the user may spend one to three Essence. If a Charm mixes effects, up to three may be chosen, but at an additional cost of one Essence. Confer Charms are expensive, since they require the cost of the effect plus additional Essence per person affected.

Charms each have their quirks. One Chosen's version of a Charm may vary from another's.

Charms may be combined into Combos. A Combo allows two or more Charms to be used at once. Each Combo must be listed as a separate Charm and named accordingly. Combos are less flexible; if invoked, all Charms in the combo must be used.

SORCERY

Sorcery consists of the scholarly practice of powerful magic, cast in the forms of cantrips and spells.

Cantrips are weak minor effects that require a minimal Essence cost. Spells are extremely powerful effects that cost enormous amounts of Essence. A Dragon-Blooded may only practice Sorcery if he or she has attended the Heptagram.

CANTRIPS are minor effects that cost one (1) Essence per use, and let the character accomplish some minor effect in his or her personal range, i.e., no farther than about five feet.

SPELLS are major effects that cost 10 to 20 Essence or more at the Terrestrial level. Spells cause Aspects and Effects. When converting a spell, use this process:

1. **Read the spell.** Look it up in the appropriate source and write down the Essence cost.
2. **Note the effect.** This is what the spell does in simplest terms. For example: causes damage, paralyzes anyone around, tangles someone up, lets the user climb sheer surfaces, etc.
3. **Come up with Aspects.** These are the sorts of Aspects the spell imposes on the environment or on any targets affected by the spell. Generally, the spell provides one basic Aspect at 10 points, two at 15, and three at 20. The spell also imposes an Extra Aspect for each Whammy on the Sorcery roll. Not all possible Aspects must be selected at the outset, but the Sorcerer should have a good idea of the kind of Aspects imposed by the Spell.

When casting, the level of effect is determined by the final total of the roll minus the resistance roll of the target. A spell usually targets either Body, Mind, or Spirit in some wise. If it is a conjuring effect, the minimum resistance is 3d. Some entities such as Demons may require additional Mind rolls to bind.

Spells cost a lot of Essence, but skilled Sorcerers may reduce the spell power after the roll to recapture some of the Essence used (trade down two success points to retain 1 Essence).

Spells and Cantrips may not be combined with Charms.

Sorcery rolls are based on Mind. Period. The basic roll is **Mind+Sorcery**, with the Bonus Pool of Scholar.

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EXPERIENCE

Experience works like this: every session, each character may write down something he or she accomplished that session, and that event earns an Experience Point. That XP becomes a Held Bonus die that can be checked off any time the character is in a situation where that particular bit of experience seems relevant.

XP can be spent to increase attributes or pools. Once spent, an experience point no longer works like a Held Die.

- **ATTRIBUTE:** Current Level in XP for +1 pip, e.g., a Body of 2d becomes 2d+1. After +3 pips, the next jump adds a die and erases the extra pips, so 2d+3 becomes 3d. You can never increase an attribute more than one die per century of a character's life. Increases may not total an amount larger than double the character's original rating.
- **ACTION POOL:** Increasing the broad skills of an action pool or special pool costs Current Level x 4.
- **ASPECTS:** Entirely via roleplaying, these may be increased in number to a max of whatever fits on the character sheet, and may be altered to increase the scope of the Aspect.