

52 FATES

A card-based medieval fantasy role-playing game of dangerous magic & combat
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Welcome!

The adventures of **52 Fates** take place in the world of **Vreazh**, a low-magic, dangerous world full of strange creatures and fantastical locations.

The whole known world regressed considerably after the **Titan Wars** a few hundred years ago. There are still no truly large cities, and the biggest of the existing cities and domains live in relative isolation, minding their own business and avoiding the troubles that brought destruction and despair hundreds of years ago.

Running an adventure

You can easily adapt almost any adventure module from another RPG system to **52 Fates**. The main task for this would be to “convert” to this system the creatures and monsters in an adventure. Guidelines for that are found in the *Monsters* section.

Game mechanics

Setup

The game requires **one full, regular 52-card deck** that is shared between all players and the **Fate Dealer (FD)**, who is in charge of running the game. Make sure that the deck is well-shuffled before the start of the game, and discard the joker cards.

Combat

At the start of combat, each player will get a hand of cards from the draw deck equal to their **character level + 2** (for example, a 1st level character will have 3 cards). Information about levels is found in the *Player characters* section.

Each player must keep their hand secret from everyone else. The FD will get a hand equal to the **highest player character level**, and will also keep their hand secret. After everyone gets their initial hand, the remaining draw card stack will be placed face down as usual on the table.

Initiative

Each player will draw an **additional card** from the draw deck and place it face up on the table. All players count as a **single group**, which means that the **highest player card** sets their initiative. The Fate Dealer will do the same for each monster group.

Whichever group draws the **highest card** (2 as the lowest value, up to aces counting as the highest) gets to go first, and the order continues in descending order all the way to the group with the lowest card.

In the case of a draw between players and the FD, the **players go first**. Players can change their action order on every combat round if they wish to do so.

Attacks

Combat works by using **opposed card draws**. Both attacker and defender draw cards, regardless of the type of attack (melee, missile, or magic). The **attacker plays their cards first**, then the defender.

If the attacker's total card value is **higher** than the defender's card, the attack is **successful** and the defender receives damage and effects immediately.

CARD VALUES

Card values correspond to their numerical value from 2 to 10. All **face cards count as 15**, and aces don't have a set value as they **automatically trump any other card** except another ace. An ace makes an attack or defense **automatically successful**, and they never get added to any other card.

Right after playing their cards and determining resolution, each participant must place their used cards in the discard deck, face up, and pick up enough cards from the draw deck to replace the cards that were played.

Damage

The damage done by an attack is determined by the value of the **highest card** used by the attacker on that action.

NUMBER CARDS

Attacks performed with these cards do **1 point** of damage. An attack performed only with a 2 automatically fails.

FACE CARDS

These cards works as a superior attack, inflicting **2 points** of damage to the victim.

ACES

An attack with an ace card causes the target to lose **half their current hit points**, rounding up, but up to a minimum of **3 hit points**. Ace cards **never stack up**.

When an ace is drawn on defense, it causes the **attacker to fumble**. The attacker must draw one card from the draw deck and will take damage based on the value of the card as explained above.

Hit points

Each character has a number of hit points **equal to their maximum card hand count**, which is in turn based on their level as explained in the *Combat* section.

Every time a character loses a hit point, **their maximum card hand count is also reduced** by the same amount, which represents fatigue and effects of combat damage. When a player character reaches **zero hit points**, they have no cards left to play, and are dying.

DEATH

At this point, the player needs to draw a card on **each round** from the draw deck. If the player pulls out any **hearts card**, the character has stabilized and is **not dying** anymore, but is still unconscious.

If the hearts card pulled is a **face card**, the character will immediately come back to life with **1 hit point**. If the card drawn is an **ace**, they **recover half** their maximum hit points. The player's current hand maximum increases accordingly in both cases.

If the player draws three cards, and none of those cards is hearts, that **player character has died**.

Combat actions

MOVE

An entity can move **before or after** performing a physical attack or casting a spell. A player character moves **30 feet** per round. Some monsters might move shorter or greater distances.

PHYSICAL ATTACK

An attack is performed by an entity by using a **melee or missile weapon**.

CAST A SPELL

A spellcasting entity can cast a spell, or a warrior can use a magical device.

Conditions

Combat, magic, and other situations can cause entities to fall under certain conditions that might affect them negatively.

CONTINUOUS DAMAGE

This includes things like poison, fire, or other elements that can cause lingering effects. The effect will have a strength **from 2 to 10**. To get rid of the effect, the player needs to use their action to draw a card from their hand that is **higher than the strength score** to stop the damage, otherwise they will take **1 point of damage** per round.

INCAPACITATED (PARTIAL & FULL)

The entity is awake and alert but **unable to move** due to being tied, trapped under a heavy object, under some illness, unconscious, or anything else that prevents them from reacting properly and moving freely.

The FD has to determine if the incapacitation is partial or full. If it's partial, **any character** attacking can **add an extra card** to their physical attack.

If the entity is fully incapacitated, all attacks **are automatically successful**. Note that the attacker still needs to draw a card to determine the damage inflicted.

In the case that the entity is incapacitated due to unconsciousness, the player can draw **one cards** from the draw deck on each combat round and compare it against a number from 2 to 10, as set by the FD. If the drawn card is higher, the entity wakes up.

Skill checks

When the player characters (PCs) are out of combat and adventuring, there are difficult or specialized actions that might require the player to draw cards to see if their action was successful.

To check these actions, the FD will assign a difficulty value from **2 to 10**, with 2 being the easiest and 10 being the most difficult.

The player draws **one card** from the draw deck. If the drawn card is **greater than** the set difficulty value, the task is **successful**.

Running out of cards

If the draw deck runs out of cards, the discard deck is shuffled, placed face down, and becomes the draw deck.

Player characters

It is assumed that **all player characters (PC) are human**. However, the world is a fully-integrated one, as the horrors of the past has become a unifying thread for all civilized cultures.

This system is open enough to **allow any race** to be played, as long as it is **somewhat similar to a human** in terms of size, features, and capabilities. Note that playing a different race does not convey any game mechanic advantages.

Classes

Warrior

This class focuses on **melee and missile combat**. As experts of the battlefield, they get advantages on weapon combat for both attack and defense. Therefore, starting off at 1st level they have the option of **drawing two cards** when attacking or defending in physical combat. The number of cards that can be drawn increases as the character levels up.

Wizard

A wizard wields the mysterious powers of magic, and as such they can **use the diverse powers** set by the different card suits by **casting spells**. For more details about how magic works and the spells available, please see the *Magic* section below.

Skills

In addition to the basic class features, players can choose **three additional skills** for their characters. When using these skills, it allows the players to optionally draw **two cards** when performing these checks and add them up.

Here are some sample skills you can use for player characters. Feel free to create your own to add flavor to the characters and the world.

- **Acrobatics:** The character is nimble and knows how to tumble, jump from high places, and move quickly.
- **Animal handling:** They know how to control, upkeep and, where applicable, ride beasts.
- **Hunter:** The character is proficient at hunting, tracking and surviving in the wild.
- **Locksmith:** The character is proficient at understanding and opening locks of all kinds.
- **Pickpocket:** The character is good at stealing from people without being noticed.
- **Sailor:** They are proficient at boating, know the procedures, and are able to maintain the vessel properly.
- **Scholar:** The character is versed in the history of the world.
- **Stealth:** The character is proficient at moving undetected, taking into account all senses.
- **Trapper:** The character knows how to set up traps properly, and also how to disarm them.

Levels

As a character progresses while adventuring, they become more and more proficient as adventurers. All characters begin at **1st level**.

Levels are gained at the rate of **one level per every 5 encounters** that a character **participated in and survived**, even if the character was at zero hit points at some point in the encounter.

Note that encounters **don't necessarily mean a fight**, or in the case of a fight, winning it; there's some leeway for the FD to adjudicate an encounter to count as a level-worthy event.

Level advancement gains

For every level gained, a character gets **one more card** for their hand, and their **maximum hit point count goes up** accordingly.

For **every 5 levels** gained, PCs can **use one additional card** on any of their **actions and skills checks** if they choose so. For example, that means that a 5th level warrior can use up to three cards when performing a weapon attack, and a wizard can cast spells with two cards. Note that for spells, **all cards** must belong to the **same suit**.

Magic

Spells work similarly to weapon combat, with an **opposed card check**. The **card suit** determines the

kind of spell being cast. If a spell is cast with more than one card, all the cards must belong to the same suit. This does not apply when using a magical device; in that case the player can use any card suit from their hand. All spells are either **immediate** or last a maximum of **one combat round**.

Note that spells **are only affected** by line-of-sight blockage and range. Spells have a **maximum** effect range of **60 feet**. If the **spellcaster can see** their target within that distance, even partially, the spell can be cast and resolution is carried out as normal.

Clubs (Destruct)

Clubs represent the **Destruct** spell. It tears down barriers and lower a target's protection. When a Destruction spell is cast on a target, the **spell card's value** is added to the **next attack** performed **against** them. Note that the damage inflicted will still be determined by the attacker's highest value card.

The Destruct spell is opposite to the **Protect** spell. If a wizard wants to cancel a Protection spell, they must cast a Destruct spell of a value **equal to or higher** than the Protect spell.

If the spell is cast with the **Ace of Clubs**, the target of the spell will **automatically receive damage** from all attacks made at them for **one round**.

Diamond (Protect)

The **Protect** spell takes care of putting up a magical barrier that lower the chance of receiving damage. When a Protect spell is cast, the spell's card is **added to the defender's card draw** the next time they're the target of an attack.

This spell is opposite to the **Destruct** spell. If a wizard wants to cancel a Destruct spell, they must cast Protect with a value **equal to or higher** than the Destruct spell.

If this spell is cast with the Ace of Diamonds, the recipient will be **invulnerable to damage** for one round.

Hearts (Heal)

The **Heal** spell, as the name implies, heals damage on creatures and objects. If cast with cards from **2-10**, it heals **1** point of damage. Casting it with **Jack, Queen, or King** heals **2 points**. Casting with the **Ace of Hearts** heals **all damage**.

Spades (Harm)

The magic from spade cards is the **Harm** spell, which applies to creatures and objects, causing internal damage by tearing apart organic tissue and inorganic materials.

The damage done with Harm varies depending on the card drawn. If cast with cards from **2-10**, it inflicts **1 point** of damage. Using the **Jack, Queen, or King** cards inflicts **2 points**. Casting Harm with the **Ace of Spades** will bring the victim's **hit points to zero**.

Monsters

Hit points

A 1st level player character starts with **3 hit points**; use this as a guideline when establishing how much damage a monster can take as a basis for the monster's power level.

Combat actions

There are slight differences between PCs and monsters in respect to combat attack card draws.

- **2-10:** This is the monster's basic attack. This would usually deal one point of damage, or have a non-crippling effect on the victim.
- **Jack, Queen, & King:** This would be a more **serious damage level**, usually inflicting two points of damage, or a special effect that has a more severe implication for the victim.
- **Aces:** This is the creature's **ultimate strike**. You can use the regular rules where the attack takes half of the victims hit points, or you can make up a particularly nasty special effect on the attack.

This should give a nice spread of powers and capabilities to provide a diverse amount of unique, interesting opponents for the players.

Let me know what you think! Find me on Twitter as @jkercao, or visit my Patreon at <https://www.patreon.com/kerca>