



Theatre of the Dice is the *Character-Leaning Prep & Play TTRPG Ruleset* built for games that thrive on imagination, personality, and narrative immersion. The system rewards creativity and character over mathematics and tactical balance. It's best suited for adventures emphasizing roleplay, interpersonal relationships, mystery, or performance, such as character-driven journeys and improvisational storytelling. Consider using an adventure created with Jeri Shepherd's "*Create Your Own 1-Page RPG*" workshop or one of her *Domainian Dungeons*, but the flexible structure allows it to support any adventure type or setting, from lighthearted fantasy to deep space opera, to terrorizing horror. Storytelling and collaboration take center stage. *Theatre Of The Dice* comes in the full polyhedral dice set and the D20-only single die variants.



The Prep

Players

SURVIVAL



Description: This is the overall health as it begins, diminishes, and heals throughout the adventure. Survival is not guaranteed.

- **Starting Health:** Roll 1d20, 2d12, or 3d8. The gamemaster may choose or allow players to choose.
- **Wear:** Players could experience a wear to their starting health through injury, exposure, or exertion.
- **Recovery:** Short rests last 1–2 rounds, long rests last 3–4 rounds, per gamemaster discretion.
 - Short Rest = regain 1d4 Health.
 - Long Rest = regain full Health.

ACTION



Description: Players are able to think, move, do, and speak in each round of play on their turn. Doing means to specifically engage the player's collection (of skills, gear, or weaponry).

- **Thinking:** 
 - Choose one mental *Focus* to define your character's reasoning or expression style.
 - *Insight* (perception, reading emotion, creative intuition)
 - *Reason* (logic, deduction, calculation)
 - *Presence* (charisma, influence, conviction)
 - When a player's action align with a chosen focus, the player can roll with +2 for a Skill used during the Doing phase of Action.
- **Moving:** 
 - All characters can move freely unless encumbered.
 - They are either near (melee) to something or far (ranged) from it.
 - The gamemaster may require 1 round of play to close the distance for Doing.
 - **Encumbrance:** Roll with Burden (roll twice, take the lower result) when encumbered.
- **Doing:** 
 - When performing a task or attack, roll the die the gamemaster assigns based on difficulty. Add bonuses where applicable.

COLLECTION



Description: In any given turn, besides thinking, moving, and speaking, a player can choose to use one aspect of the collection (skills, gear, or weaponry).

- **Skills:** 
 - Choose two areas of capability. Rolls for these use a larger die (for example, d12 instead of d10).
- **Gear:** 
 - Begin with one item tied to your background or personal story. Its use may provide a Benefit roll.
- **Weaponry:** 
 - Begin with one weapon. Inflicted harm is determined by weapon die (for example: dagger = d4, sword = d6, bow = d8, heavy = d10+).

Gamemasters

PARAMETERS



Mindset: Like your players, you'll have to get imaginative in Theatre of the Dice. Here is a suggested framework to help you along the way.

- Consider preparing three encounters:
 - One roleplay
 - One environmental
 - One combat
- Assign Target Numbers according to importance or tension:
 - Easy = 8+
 - Moderate = 12+
 - Hard = 16+
 - Epic = 20+
- Encourage a "describe first, roll second" approach to play.
- Reward creative or cinematic storytelling with Benefit... or impede the journey with Burden when the backstory works against the player.



IT'S ABOUT THE THEATRICALS!

Theatre of the Dice is a the Character-Leaning Prep & Play TTRPG Ruleset. It encourages playfulness and imagination more than a strict set of tactics or mathematics.

Player's should not ask "Can I do something?" Instead, they should describe how they plan to do something and the gamemaster determines what's needed to accomplish it.

Add additional theatrics in the following ways!

- **Flavor:** 
 - Players choose three words that capture tone, mood, or persona related to their characters.
- **Fun:** 
 - Any imaginative action is rollable if the table and gamemaster agree it fits the character concept.
- **Flair:** 
 - Once per session, allow players to narrate a flourish or dramatic moment to gain Benefit (roll twice, take the better result).

Available as a Single Die Variant (d20)

Visit: www.RedWritesBooks.com



The Play

SUMMARY OF DICE USE

- Uses the full Polyhedral set (d4–d100).
- Gamemaster assigns die type by difficulty.
- Rolls are often modified by Benefit (roll twice, take higher) or Burden (roll twice, take lower).



ROUNDS IN PLAY

In each round, on a player's turn, players may: Think, Move, Do, and Speak in any order they choose.

- **Player Order:** At the start of an encounter, all players roll 1d20; highest acts first each round.



- Gamemasters can determine if one player order roll is made for the full adventure, or a new roll is made before each major encounter.

- **Thinking:**



- Use Insight, Reason, or Presence for cognitive or persuasive actions.

- **Moving:**



- Players change between near and far range.
- Gamemasters may require a player to close the distance in order to save their Doing for a successive round.

- **Doing:**



- Players can use ONE element of Collection (skill, gear, or weapon). Roll 1d20 + any relevant bonuses to resolve based on a gamemaster-determined difficulty rating.

- **Speaking:**



- Dialogue with fellow players and verbal reactions to the unfolding scenario are always allowed.

Gamemasters may, at their own discretion and for any logical narrative reason given, remove a player's ability to Think, Move, Do, or Speak for the following durations:

- Permanently
- For a determined or rolled-for number of rounds
- Until a specific recovery is achieved or rolled-for

COLLECTION IN PLAY

Players may use only one aspect of their Collection (skill, gear, or weapon) in each round. Skills, Gear, and Weapons should remain the same as those chosen during The Prep, but it is up to the gamemaster whether they must be communicated ahead of time or only tracked by the players.

- Skills



- May provide Benefit (roll twice, take higher).

- Gear



- Expended after 3 uses.

- Weapons



- Deal die-based harm and, on maximum rolls, players may cause additional harm based on gamemaster discretion.

SURVIVAL IN PLAY

Wear to a player's starting health could occur in combat, when encountering a hazard, or at the gamemaster's discretion as fits the narrative. Defensive actions could prevent some Wear.

- When attacked, roll defense using any relevant Skill or Focus.
 - Use narrative to describe how the skill is relevant to the defense.
 - Gamemaster approval or general table consensus (at gamemaster discretion) determines whether the argument is worthy of the Skill or Focus application.
 - A player may also use Moving as part of defense, but then cannot move during the next round.
- Injuries, Illness, and Incurred Harm will continue to reduce Health until it is at 0, or unless a player rests to recover some or all of the original Starting Health.
 - Number of rounds required for a short rest (restore 1d4 of health) or a long rest (restore all health) are determined by the gamemaster.
 - At 0 Health, the player narrates their final moment unless an ally uses a round of play to stabilize Health at 1 by rolling a 12 or higher on 1d20.



REMEMBER THE THEATRICALS!

Theatre Of The Dice is character-leaning, so LEAN IN!

- Flavor: 
 - Stay true to the three character-defining words in both success and failure.
- Fun: 
 - Keep the world playful; imagination drives every roll.
- Flair: 
 - Once per session, a player may seize brief narrative control of the scene for dramatic effect, and possibly earn Benefit, based on gamemaster discretion.

Prep & Play Rulesets are minimalist systems designed for maximum imagination and accessibility. Each uses a simple two-page format: Page 1 (The Prep) helps players and gamemasters build characters and set expectations; Page 2 (The Play) guides how the adventure unfolds at the table. There are rulesets for your preferred method of play including: character-leaning for those who love roleplay; world-leaning for those who pay more mind to their settings than the rules by which they will play through them; and rule-leaning for the min/max players who enjoy digging into the mechanics to find tactical advantages. Every ruleset can be played with the full polyhedral dice set or a single die variant. While each ruleset is adaptable to any genre, tone, or story imaginable, consider using an adventure created with Jeri Red Shepherd's "Create Your Own 1-Page RPG" workshop or featured in her *Domainian Dungeons*! See her site for more info!

Get Them All At:

WRITES Red BOOKS



WWW.REDWRITESBOOKS.COM

Be Gloriously Human

