

# OKKAM

by Skip Rainsmyth - v24.3.23a

*'It is vain to do with more what can be done with fewer.'* - William of Occam  
*'No, no, the adventures first! Explanations take such a dreadful time.'* - Lewis Carroll

**SETUP:** Get a handful of six-sided dice, pencils, and paper. Sticky notes and small counters are helpful but optional. Write a **Story Map:** When and where does your story take place? Who are the main characters? Why are they together? What are their goals, and what challenges will they face? How do the rules of the game world's hazards, technology, powers, politics, etc. work? Use a familiar world from media, or use elements of other works to create your own. Edit the Story Map regularly as your adventure unfolds.

Most players will create and control a **Player Character (PC)**. These are the main characters of the story. Choose someone to be the **Guide**, who will create and control the game world and its inhabitants, moderate the rules, and narrate the story.

**CREATING PCS:** PCs start with a Name, 3 current and 3 maximum **Resolve**, and 5 **Descriptors**: these can be broad traits (*charming, sneaky, Orcish*), specific skills (*linguistics, cooking, Wall of Flame*), personal codes (*help those in need, get rich or die trying, always accept a challenge*), or connections (*ex-military, member of the Guild, mentor in Thebes*). Supernatural powers should be limited to one specific effect and have limits and/or costs (*expend Items, incur Conditions, spend Resolve*) depending on effect). PCs also start with 10 slots for **Items**: tools, resources, treasures, etc. Small or expendable Items (*toolkits, first aid, reagents, ammo, rations, light sources*) can be bundled: 5 uses per slot. If your story uses currency, any amount takes up 1 slot. PCs may start with as many of their slots filled as they wish, but starting Items must be reasonable. PCs can pick up and hold objects without writing them down, but as soon as an object is stored, it takes up an Item slot. As the story progresses, you can store Items elsewhere and note their location to free up slots. Items may be gained, lost, broken, or stolen. Limit starting Descriptors and Items to fit your story. Only the PC's player may add, change, or remove Descriptors.

**GAMEPLAY:** The Guide describes the game world, makes things happen around or to the PCs, and asks their players "*what do you do?*". PCs must be given a chance to react to anything that would harm or hinder them. Other players ask clarifying questions, make plans, and describe what the PCs say and do to overcome challenges and pursue their goals. There are no turns - speak or act in any order. The Guide can make hazards or creatures act whenever they want, but they have an obligation to keep the spotlight moving fairly. PCs have common knowledge and are experts on their Descriptors. Other knowledge must be discovered in the story.

The Guide also decides the outcome of PC actions. Most things should be handled using common sense. If a PC is skilled and prepared, and there are no obvious risks, they just succeed. Some actions are impossible without the right Descriptors or Items. If an action is impossible or has no effect, the Guide says why. If an action has a cost, prerequisite, or something that must be done first, the Guide describes it. Some challenges may have details, defenses, hazards, minions, multiple steps, etc. that must be dealt with before they can finally be overcome. If an action is possible but has obvious risks, or when a PC responds to a risk, the Guide asks the PC's player to roll dice to see what happens. Players should understand the stakes and likely outcomes of success or failure before rolling. Discussion and negotiation is encouraged.

When asked to roll dice, the PC's player takes 2 dice, plus one die for each helpful Descriptor or Condition. They may add 1 die for **Advantage** due to position, preparation, or helpful environmental details. Other characters may offer 1 **Help** die if they have a relevant Descriptor, and/or let one PC take the lead and roll for the whole group - however, it must make sense, and the other PCs are exposed to the risks of failure. Finally, the player may spend 1 Resolve to add 1 die to the pool (max 3). Remove 1 die for each hindering Descriptor or Condition. The Guide may subtract up to 3 dice for **Disadvantage** due to higher than normal difficulty, complexity, opposition, desired effect (*duration, power, area*), or hazardous environmental details (*weather, darkness*): -1 for Hard, -2 for Extreme, or -3 for Legendary. If you have less than 1 die, the action fails automatically.

Roll the dice. If any 6s show, the action succeeds. Multiple 6s indicate additional effects or advantages. If there are any 1s but no 6s, it fails: something worse happens, and there is a consequence. If you roll no 6s or 1s, it succeeds, but with a consequence. The Guide describes the outcome and any consequences, which may include new or exacerbated harmful Conditions, loss of Items, a lesser effect, story complications, etc. The player may reroll the dice once by either permanently sacrificing an Item or taking a Minor Condition of the player's choice, but it must make sense.

**CONDITIONS: Conditions** are temporary effects like *Dazed*, *Invisible*, *Cursed*, *Enhanced Senses*, or *Broken Leg*. They affect dice, and can make actions succeed or fail automatically when relevant. The Guide gives PCs Conditions after a failed roll, when the PC uses certain Items, or any other time that makes sense. The Guide also determines their type: Minor, Moderate, or Major. Minor Conditions end after 1 roll. Moderate Conditions end when the PC rests. The Guide decides what events or actions will end Major Conditions (medical attention, quests, etc.). Too many harmful Conditions can debilitate a PC. Conditions can become Descriptors if it makes sense.

**RESOLVE, REST, & ADVANCEMENT:** Spend 1 Resolve to add 1 die to a roll, up to 3 total. Replenish 1 spent Resolve by resting, up to the PC's max. A **Rest** is a decent night's sleep or equivalent. After PCs undergo a formative experience (achieving a significant goal, a crushing defeat, a long period of practice and reflection, a profound change in power or renown) and have Rest or Downtime, add 1 max Resolve, 1 Item slot, or 1 Descriptor to reflect how they've grown or changed. New Descriptors, Items, allies, and renown may also be gained from story events.

**PVP:** If PCs oppose each other, all players involved roll dice as normal. The player with the best result gets what they want, and the GM decides the fate of the losers. Reroll ties.

**DIE OF FATE:** To leave something completely to chance, roll a single **Die of Fate**. A higher result is more favorable for the PCs.

**DOWNTIME:** Keep track of what the PCs are doing in their downtime ("*learning a language*", "*target practice*", "*building a ship*"). The GM determines the time or steps required. Update Downtime activities at each Rest. When you finish, update your Bio or Gear accordingly.

**DEATH:** Your group should decide if PCs can be removed from the story due to death, exile, insanity, etc. as a consequence of failure. PCs can also leave the story voluntarily at any time; just describe how it happens.

**ABSENT PLAYERS:** If a player is absent, their PC takes a background role. They cannot act, help, or be targeted directly. However, they still earn advancements and are subject to story events as if they were there.

**GUIDE LIMITATIONS:** The Guide never rolls dice and never dictates what a PC says, feels, or does without their player's consent.

**PLAYING A PC:** Act like the main characters! Describe the actions you take to overcome challenges, pursue your goals, and make your mark on the world of the story. - Interact with the world as if it were a real place. Some ideas are dangerous, actions have consequences, and characters do not forget how they are treated. How would your PC really react to danger or drama? Where would they go for help or information? What would they do to increase their power or effectiveness? - Get engaged! Take notes, make maps, and ask questions to keep track of the story so far.

**PLAYING THE GUIDE:** Design your story's fictional world, and bring it to life by describing what the PCs see, hear, smell, and feel. Describe what happens around or to the PCs, and tell them what happens when they speak or act. Put obstacles between them and their goals, and use their flaws to create tension in the story. Populate the world with potential friends, enemies, mentors, challenges, and rewards. Play the role of any supporting characters in the story. Moderate the conversation and the game rules. Make rulings when there is confusion or disagreement. Make the world seem real - play to find out what happens - make stuff happen - "what are you trying to do? How are you doing that? What do you do next / what is everyone else doing while?"

**BE NICE AND HAVE FUN.**

# OKKAM

<b>Player Name:</b>	<b>Portrait/Description/Sigil/Quote:</b>
<b>Character Name:</b>	
<b>Resolve:</b> /	
<b>Descriptors:</b>	

<b>Items:</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>		
<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>		

<b>Conditions/Notes/Etc.:</b>
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## Design Notes/Qs:

- 'It must make sense' vs. 'the Guide must agree'?
- Give examples for everything in the actual rules text!
- Booklet, not trifold - w/ Story Modules/Maps, references, charsheets, stickers, tips, etc!
- Whenever possible, say 'yes' or 'yes but'... 'no, but..' can also be ok.
- ON A ROLL, NOTHING NEVER HAPPENS! Only roll for real decision points, where success or failure could take the story in different directions! Either it happens, it sort of happens or happens with a complication, or something worse happens instead.
- Roleplaying - problem solving. Players should be looking at the things on their sheets - skills, resources, gear, notes - for how to solve problems. Dice rolling should only occur when there are risks, and risks should be avoided if possible.
- Dont roll to search or deceive - do it! And if theres no risk and youre skilled, it happens automatically. If you ask, the guide should tell you.

## Playtest:

- # of starting Descriptors
- Rest - restore 1 or all Resolve?
- # of starting Item slots
- Dice loss factors - just 1 for opposition/etc?
- Bundles - ammo, first aid - 3 or 5 uses?

Some actions are impossible without the right Gear or skills (*speaking French, magic, climbing a cliff, picking a lock*). The Guide determines the requirements of PC actions (*the ritual needs a vial of rare ink and takes an afternoon; to damage the ship, you'll have to find a weak point; the candy bar costs two dollars*), as well as the outcome. The Guide can also break an action into smaller steps or offer a lesser effect (*to reach the mayor, you'll have to get past the mob, climb the platform, and distract the guards; you can't kill the slime in one hit, but you can do some harm*). Most actions should be decided with common sense. If it's likely to succeed, it does. If it's impossible or has no effect, describe why. When PCs act under pressure or act to avoid a risk, roll dice to see what happens.

Make challenges dangerous by:

- making them act more (forcing the PCs to react)
- Giving them minions, defenses, hazards, skills, etc. that must be dealt with first (you can't even hurt a dragon with a normal sword, you have to have the Blade of Slaying or an Arrow of Piercing; even then, you'd have to find its weak spot, get it to reveal the weak spot, and chip off the armor, all while dodging its flames and claws while it zips around the sky too fast to track destroying homes and businesses) (to warn the mayor, you'll have to navigate the angry mob, distract security, climb up the tall platform)
- Dishing out more serious Conditions and consequences on fails and partial successes.