

# the dynasty

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A Game Chef Entry, 2006  
Ingredients: Steel, Law, Team  
Time Constraint: 3 x 3 hours  
For 3-6 players

## Table of contents

Table of contents .....	2
The game .....	3
Preparing for play .....	3
Session One .....	4
<i>Coronation</i> .....	4
<i>Character creation</i> .....	4
<i>Actual Play</i> .....	5
Story .....	5
Battle .....	6
<i>Endgame</i> .....	7
Session Two .....	8
<i>Character adjustment</i> .....	8
<i>Actual play</i> .....	8
<i>Endgame</i> .....	8
Session Three .....	9
<i>Character adjustment</i> .....	9
<i>Actual play</i> .....	9
<i>Endgame</i> .....	9
Example character – actual play, session one .....	10
Example character – actual play, session two .....	11

## The game

*The Dynasty* is a roleplaying game about the ruling family of an empire. This game is a storytelling game and a competitive game at the same time.

The game plays in three sessions, each of them three hours long. Each session is featuring a critical era of a ruler's domination, possibly ending with the fall of that ruler and coronation of another member of the family.

Players will control the members of this family. Their goal will be to take hold of the power over their country.

## Preparing for play

Before coming together for a session players should agree in a setting their game will be set into. Setting consists of at least one country or empire. Each of the players should have at least moderate knowledge of that setting.

Keeping the games length in the time limit should be significantly easier if all the players have some idea about the character they want to play. Try also to think about how you would play that character and what kind of a story you would want to narrate during play.

Players will need a pen and a sheet of paper to be able to play with *The Dynasty*. A pack of cards could help choosing the first ruler. The party can measure the time gone since the start of the session using a stopwatch.

Try not to waste your playtime: please read the rules before you play!

# Session One

## Coronation

Choosing the player whose character will hold possession of the throne is the first step in the game.

You have to mix a deck of cards first. One after the other, players should then draw a card from the deck. The first player who draws a King will be the ruler during session one.

If you have no cards at hand, you could draw straws or roll dice to select the first ruler. This part of the game shouldn't take longer than **1 minute**.

## Character creation

Creating characters is the second step. If you've prepared for the game, you should have at least some idea about how your character will look like. Write down the name of your character to the empty sheet of paper you've brought to the session. First thing you'll need to clarify is the kind of relationship between your character and the current ruler. This could be any kind of kinship you can imagine. All the characters should be the members of the same family.

If your character is the ruler through Session One, write "*Head of the Dynasty*", otherwise the kinship relating your character to the ruler, beneath your characters name.

From now on, treat your entire character sheet as a secret. Don't reveal any part of your character sheet to other players!

You should now assign three numbers to your characters style points: Steel, Law and Team. One of them should be 50, another 25 and the last one should equal 10. Every Battle (see the section Actual Play for rules about Battle) will have a style of play assigned to it from the three terms above. Your character will have the most chance to win a Battle for the throne using the style of play he has the most points of.

Now you should write down the number of your Authority points. By default "*Head of the Dynasty*" has 40 Authority points, all other characters have 30 Authority points.

Now is the time to clarify some facts about your character. A fact is one sentence containing one statement. One fact can't contain multiple statements. There is no predefined list of facts. Every player has the opportunity to create facts but the fact has to be a specific one, not universal. If you declare a fact that's obviously too universal, other players might decide not to take that fact into account thus making the fact useless.

**Example:** The fact "*Is good in everything*" is just plain stupid, too universal to have anything to do with a real character. Other players will not tolerate this kind of facts and will always decide it's irrelevant. "*Is good in mathematics and physics*" isn't one fact: it should be separated to "*Is good in mathematics*" and "*Is good in physics*".

Every fact has a number of points associated with it – the grade of the fact. This states how many Authority points you've spent to this fact. Subtract that number from your total Authority points after the declaration of every fact! Facts will help you spend less resource throughout the game, in the case they are chosen carefully.

**Example:** *In a Battle that's about two characters dueling with swords, you can add always 2 to your bid without spending additional Steel points, if you've got the fact "Is good in swordfights - 2points" on your character sheet.*

If your game seems to become really competitive, cut a blank sheet of paper into stripes and declare every fact about your character on a different strip of paper. You can then prove the existence of a fact by showing the piece of paper it's written on.

You can't spend all your Authority points to facts: at least 10 Authority points must remain in your possession at the beginning of play.

You'll find an example character at the end of this book.

Creating characters shouldn't take more than 14 minutes. This means character creation must be aborted after **15 minutes** from the start of the session.

## **Actual Play**

Your goal in actual play is to get the most Authority points after two and a half hours of play. To achieve this goal, you'll have two main tools: Story and Battle. Story is the main driving mechanism of the game while Battle takes place inside of a Story.

### **Story**

At the beginning of actual play every player has the chance of narrating a Story. Players who want to use this possibility apply for a Story.

Players will then bid Authority points for the control over narration. Whoever won the bid must subtract the winning bid from his Authority score, but gets the control over narration for the time of the Story. That's the only benefit from winning the bid, so be careful when bidding high values.

Narrating a Story can only be profitable if the narrator's character is involved in many Battles during the Story! Winning Battles is the only way to recover the Authority points the player spent on becoming a narrator. As a bonus, taking part in Battles is the only way a player can be the winner of the campaign.

There are some rules about narrating a Story:

- The Story must be formed in a way that ensures all player characters are involved. Leaving out a player character from a Story puts the player at a disadvantage and is therefore not acceptable.
- Player characters are still always controlled by the appropriate player.
- Conflicts between characters can't be narrated. These events are Battles and have their own rules.
- The Story can't by-pass the profit of a Battle. Never.
- The Story can't take away control of the country from the ruling player character.

A Story can't last longer than one hour. If the narrator wants to continue narrating, he has to bid for the control again. He can also continue if no one wants to bid for narration.

## Battle

During a Story there will be some points where characters are getting into conflicts. The winners of these conflicts are determined by Battles. The investments of the participants are style points – Steel, Law or Team. The winner will gain Authority points and can influence the flow of the current Story.

Every player has the right to initiate a Battle between his and at least one other player character anytime during a Story. If a player doesn't want to get involved in the conflict, he simply doesn't bid during the Battle.

First step is to determine the style of the Battle: Steel, Law or Team. Usually conflicts about some physical action are considered Battles of Steel, conflicts about intelligence and knowledge are Battles of Law. Battles of Team are most of the time about gaining the support or goodwill of non player characters, the crowd, a guild or some other association. Players not involved in the conflict should come to an agreement about the style of Battle pretty quickly. Players who take part in the conflict have no voice in determining the style. Battles can have only one style associated to them.

Next step is to determine the profit of the winner. The profit is determined with an agreement between players. Every player can take part in this discussion. The profit could be any nonnegative number of Authority points and a positive outcome for the winner. The positive outcome part of the profit is an event which can influence the flow of the Story in favor of the winner. This can be totally different for all participating players. Winning a Battle is the only way a player other than the narrator can influence the flow of a Story. Try not to be too demanding though when defining your profit. A good way to make a profit acceptable for the party is to drop the Authority point part of the profit. You should notice that 0 Authority points and an event defined by the winner is a possible profit according to the rules.

Once the style and the profit are defined bidding takes place. Participants can bid style points – Steel, Law or Team points, determined by the style of Battle – to win the profit. Players can use facts about their character to reduce the number of style points they have to bid to win the Battle. The player must reveal the fact and the grade of the fact to the party if he wishes to use it during the Battle. Players not participating in the Battle will decide if the fact is relevant or irrelevant in that Battle. They have the right to declare a fact irrelevant if it's too universal! If a fact about a character is considered relevant in the outcome of a Battle, the sum of the fact's grade and the style points he wishes to spend on the Battle is considered his current bid.

**Example:** Peter wants to use the fact "Strong man – 5 points" during a swordfight. Players not participating in the Battle decide however the fact is irrelevant in this Battle, as swordfights don't have too much to do with muscles in the renaissance setting they are playing in. They assure him he can use the fact in a fistfight though.

So every bid has two components: style points and relevant facts' grades. Every bid must contain at least one style point. Players don't have to bid, but no one wins the profit if there is no bidder.

At the end of bidding the player with the high bid receives the profit – the points of Authority and the outcome of the Battle the players agreed on. The winner loses the style point component of his high bid. Other participants lose the style point component of their starting bid.

You should keep track of the style points you've spent during the session – each type of them separated. This will get important in the endgame.

## Endgame

**15 minutes** before the session's end endgame begins. Every player makes the number of his Authority points public. Don't reveal other parts of your character sheet!

If the player controlling the "*Head of the Dynasty*" has the most Authority points and the player with the second most Authority points spent more Team points than Steel or Law points during actual play, players can choose to hand over some Authority points to this character thus overthrowing the "*Head of the Dynasty*". The number of Authority points the players can borrow to the player with the second most Authority points equals the number of Team style points they spent during the session. These Authority points are returned to the original owner after the fall of the ruler.

The player with the most Authority points will become ruler in the next session. He now gets total control of the game. If the "*Head of the Dynasty*" has the most Authority points he can narrate the end of the character with the second most Authority points. Otherwise the winner can narrate the end of the "*Head of the Dynasty*".

The player with the most Authority points should now reveal which kind of style points he spent most of during actual play. This session will feature an end of that style. The winner must now narrate the end of the losing character. The narrator should always consider the style of the session's end while narrating the fall of a character.

As an option the party can agree that the losing player should narrate the end of his character and rise of the winner. Players should decide this at the beginning of the campaign.

**Example:** *Peter's character won session one with 47 Authority points. He has spent most of the time Law points to fight Battles. His character was "Head of the Dynasty" during this session. Katie's character, Dehria has the second most Authority points: 39. Peter could now narrate the end of Dehria through Law, but Katie reveals she spent 44 Team points, 3 Steel points and only 2 Law points during actual play. This means other players can borrow her some points to overthrow Peter's character.*

*Andrew has collected 37 Authority points through winning Battles. He is 11 points behind the "Head of the Dynasty" but only 2 points away from Katie's character. He decides he will borrow some Authority points to Dehria. He spent 7 Team points during play, so he will now borrow the maximal value of 7 Authority points to Katie's character. The team of Katie and Andrew has now 46 Authority points against the 47 points of Peter. If they want to overthrow the "Head of the Dynasty", they need to convince Susan to borrow 2 points to Dehria. Otherwise Peter can narrate the end of Dehria through Law.*

The character whose end is narrated will not participate in the next session. The affected player will have to create a new character.

## Session Two

### ***Character adjustment***

At the beginning of session two every player has the opportunity to adjust his character.

The player whose character's end was narrated in session one, can create a new character like described in the chapter *Session One* with the following differences:

- The new character will have the numbers 50, 20 and 5 divided between style points, where 5 will be assigned to the style point matching the style of the previous session's end.
- The Authority points of the new character equal the Authority points of the character with the least Authority points + 5. You should use the extra points buying facts. (That's not a rule just a suggestion though.)
- The new character receives a new attribute: Revenge. Revenge can be used against the character who won the previous session. Whenever a Battle takes place between the character with the Revenge attribute and the subject of Revenge, the character with the Revenge attribute gets 3 bonus points added to his bid. A bid still has to contain at least one style point though.

Other players will get 15 bonus points to the style points which don't match the style of the previous session's end.

Additionally they have the opportunity to spend Authority points on new facts or raise the grade of their existing facts – one grade for one Authority point.

The new ruler should have “*Head of the Dynasty*” written on the character sheet and other players should correct description of their kinship according to this.

This part should take **15 minutes**.

### ***Actual play***

Actual play goes the same way as described in the chapter *Session One*. You should start counting style points spent from 0 again.

### ***Endgame***

Endgame takes place the same way as described in the chapter *Session One*.



## Session Three

### ***Character adjustment***

At the beginning of session three every player has the opportunity to adjust his character.

The player whose character's end was narrated in session two, can create a new character like described in the chapter *Session One* with the following differences:

- The new character will have the numbers 45, 5 and 5 divided between style points, where 45 can only be assigned to a style that hasn't been featured in a session's end.
- The Authority points of the new character equal the Authority points of the character with the least Authority points + 10. You should use the extra points buying facts. (That's not a rule just a suggestion though.)
- The new character receives a new attribute: Revenge. Revenge can be used against the character who won the previous session. Whenever a Battle takes place between the character with the Revenge attribute and the subject of Revenge, the character with the Revenge attribute gets 3 bonus points added to his bid. A bid still has to contain at least one style point though.

Other players will get 30 bonus points to the style points which don't match the style of session one's and session two's end.

Additionally they have the opportunity to spend Authority points on new facts or raise the grade of their existing facts – one grade for one Authority point.

The new ruler should have “*Head of the Dynasty*” written on the character sheet and other players should correct description of their kinship according to this.

This part should take **15 minutes**.

### ***Actual play***

Actual play goes the same way as described in the chapter *Session One*. You should start counting style points spent from 0 again.

### ***Endgame***

The winner of the session is defined the same way as described in the chapter *Session One*.

The player who fought the fiercest Battles is the winner of the campaign, because he controlled the most memorable characters during this era of the country. History will remember these characters even after hundreds of years.

Players should sum now the number of style points spent during the campaign. Whoever has spent the most style points won the campaign.

## Example character – actual play, session one

Dehria

Sister

NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER

Stylepoints

Steel: 10

Law: 25

Team: 50

STARTING VALUES DISTRIBUTED BETWEEN STYLEPOINTS

POINTS SPENT ON FACTS

Authority: ~~30~~ 28 25 23

INITIAL AUTHORITY POINTS

Facts:

"Is beloved in the court" – 2 points

"Beautiful" – 3 points

"Is known in foreign countries" – 2 points

GRADE OF THE FACT

Stylepoints spent

Session One

Steel:

Law:

Team:

## Example character – actual play, session two

Dehria

~~Sister~~ Head of the Dynasty

DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER CORRIGATED AT CHARACTER ADJUSTMENT

Stylepoints

Steel: ~~10~~ 8 7 22

Law: ~~25~~ 23 38

Team: ~~50~~ 41 38 ~~30~~ 26 21 16 12 6

POINTS SPENT ON BATTLES

POINTS SPENT ON WINNING A BID FOR NARRATION

Authority: ~~30~~ 28 25 23 ~~19~~ 23 26 28 32 35 ~~39~~ 38 36

POINTS WON IN BATTLES

Facts:

"Is beloved in the court" - ~~2 points~~ 3 points

"Beautiful" - 3 points

"Is known in foreign countries" - 2 points

"Is an expert at using daggers" - 2 points

FACT DECLARED AT CHARACTER ADJUSTMENT

GRADE CHANGED AT CHARACTER ADJUSTMENT

Stylepoints spent

Session One

Steel:  $2+1 = 3$

Law:  $2 = 2$

Team:  $9+3+8+4+5+5+4+6 = 44$

SUM OF STYLEPOINTS SPENT DURING SESSION ONE

Session Two

Steel:

Law:

Team: