

HOW TO PLAY FORTUNES WHEEL STEP BY STEP

PLAY STYLE

Determine which game style you will be using. Will you be playing with or without a referee or 'GM' (Games Master)? Will you be using a pre-created adventure or improvising one? Will you be playing in a group or solo?

- **Traditional GM – Requires 2 or more players.**
One player acts as neutral referee and the voice of all the minor characters – they describe situations, locations and non-player controlled character actions and events. They also do all the card draws for them.
- **Pre- prepared.**
Ideal for traditional GM style. The adventure has been created in advance (either by the GM or by someone else). It will usually have a back story, a goal and a setting with pre-created locations, characters and notes that the GM can refer to during play. It may also include events that will occur independently of the players at key points in the adventure. Cards are mostly drawn to resolve actions taken during play or to fill in missing details and respond to unforeseen events in the adventure.
If played without a GM players read the text of the adventure as they play. Not all pre-created adventures are suited for this – ideally they need to be ones where no prior reading of the text is required.
- **Improvised.**
Ideal for GMless play. The adventure is created as you play. Players ask questions as a group and collaboratively use card spreads to create any back story, goals, settings and characters. The cards supply both inspiration and yes/no answers. Interpreting the cards gives added details to flesh out an answer. Results also suggest other questions.
- **GMless – Requires 2 or more players.**
Players share the GM roll above between them, either splitting those tasks between them, or swapping who is acting as GM as players wish during the game. Swapping the GM role usually occurs when a player wishes to GM the results of a particular card draw or take it on for a specific area or set of characters.
- **Solo Play.**
Ideal for Improvised GMless play. The player takes on all the roles in the game, either playing through in their head or speaking it as they feel comfortable.

CHARACTER CREATION

If you are using a pre-created adventure that has characters already for players to use you can skip this step.

A character is normally the part or persona that each player will adopt and role-play in the game, but in Fortunes Wheel anything can be created as a character if you wish as everything shares the same four attributes.

Every character can be described using the four Elements, Fire, Earth, Water and Air. These also correspond to the four suits of the Minor Arcana in the Tarot, Wands, Coins, Cups and Swords.

These four Elements give the characters attributes as well as fleshing out any back-story for them.

- Fire for will power, aggression, creativity and the ego. Fire also relates to things that are obvious and clearly seen.
- Earth for the physical body and material well being of the character. Earth also relates to the ongoing and future as it grows out of the present.
- Water for emotional intelligence, subtlety and subconscious drives. Water also relates to hidden and secret things, the unknown or concealed.
- Air for mental perceptiveness and intelligence. Air also relates the past and how past decisions have brought a character to the present situation.

Each Element has a score from 1-10. The higher the score the closer to the ideal form of that Element you are and the easier the character will find it to perform tasks and actions in game using it. This also gives you the characters current Elemental Energy, which will go up and down as the character takes damage from attacks or heals it.

- Shuffle the deck, occasionally splitting the deck and rotating as you shuffle them back in.
- Draw one card for each Element in turn placing in them in the four cardinal points of the compass. Fire to the top (North), Earth to right (East), Water to the bottom (South) and Air to the left (West).
- If the card is a court card or Major Arcana, draw again until you get a pip card, placing each fresh card on top of the other. Keep the original card drawn and put the next card on top of it because you can use it to add to the characters back story.
- Make sure you keep the cards orientations – Right side up (Day) or inverted (Night).

You will have a numerical power of 1-10 now for each Element so you can see how close or far from the ideal for each Element the character is.

Read the cards to get an idea of the character. Traditional meanings for the cards can be found in the booklets that come with Tarot cards and at the back of the Fortunes Wheel core book. You can also freely interpret them based on what the card images suggest to you or what associations you see for both the card and the Element with other related things. For instance Cups in Earth might suggest parties or taverns so perhaps the character is a socialite or their parents ran a tavern.

Day cards suggest openness and the visible and Night cards secrecy and the hidden and have different meanings for each card – the regular (Day) meaning and one for inverted (Night) cards.

If a cards suit is the opposite Element to the one it is placed for it suggests a conflict – for instance Cups in Fire suggest an emotional struggle to create or assert ones will.

Use the main card you drew along with any that were drawn and set aside to give you a feel for the background of that Element. As an example, Air could give you an idea of the characters educational background, people who played a key part in it and their struggles and successes academically. This way you do not just have numbers, but stories about those numbers. Why is the character so good in this Element? Who has mentored or hindered them along the way? Have they benefited or been held back by being born with a silver spoon in their mouth or starting from the bottom with no advantages of birth?

Court cards and Major Arcana will often suggest people and events that have played an important part in the characters development of that Element.

What if you don't like the result? You could always abandon the character and create another one, but you can also adjust the one you have just drawn cards for using one of these methods:

- Gifted but unlucky. This adds a point to an Element at a permanent cost of 10 points from the characters maximum Fortune. You can do this for as many Elements as you wish so long as it does not take the maximum Fortune to zero. Remember this will change the cards meaning.
- Strong but clumsy. Each Element is a 'catch-all' for a particular attribute in basic play. Earth is physical and would take into account a mix of physical abilities such as strength, manual dexterity, speed and agility and so on. Normally the assumption used is that someone with a high Earth score would be good at all those things. Let's say you drew a 5 for earth but really want your character to be exceptionally strong. You could add points to strength and take them off agility or speed by simply noting the character has, say +4 to strength but -4 to agility or speed. When they try to do anything related to those aspects of the Element they use the changed score not the one you drew. For anything else they use the score drawn.
- A rotation – Rotate the scores round to the next element The score for Fire would become the Score for Earth, the one for Earth Water and so on until you have a result you are happy with. You could do this a maximum of three times before they all come right back to where you started. Rotate cards clockwise or anti-clockwise on the wheel as desired. This will also affect the meaning of each card as they relate to each Element.

You can add greater detail for a character using spreads of cards to answer questions about their past, goals, relationships and so on. You already have a card spread in front of you having laid out the cards at the four compass points – the Wheel spread. It shows the known at the top, the future at the right, the hidden at the bottom and the past at the left. You can always draw more cards just to add greater detail to the character. Doing this at this point would not change the card you drew already for each Element or its score, it just adds more flavour and detail to the characters personal story.

- Record the results for each Element's score on the character sheet. Record the cards drawn, their orientation and the interpretation you decided on under notes.
- Decide on an occupation or role for the character (are they are a doctor, a child, a student and so on). The cards you have drawn may already suggest what this could be (a character

with very low Earth might be a child for instance, or someone who is an invalid, not just someone who is very weak). Give them a name and describe them.

- Choose some skills. Every skill has a range of 1 to 4 points. Each Elements score gives you points to divide up amongst skills. If you have an Earth of 8 it would give you 8 points to divide. Divide an Elements score between whatever broad skill types you think your character would have studied or be experienced in using. For instance Computing, Medicine, Business, Science and so on. The Element you associate them with determines their focus. Fire means it has a creative, innovative focus, Earth means it is a practical skill, Water means it is related to people (perhaps teaching it) and Air means it is theoretical. You can have the same skill in more than one Element. Having science in both Air and Earth would mean the character is well versed in theory but also does practical science experiments.
- Allocate the characters Fortune Points (FP). The starting fortune for any character is the value of their combined Elements + a card draw. Fortune points have a ceiling level or upper limit. Unless a player has limited it when creating a character it is normally 100 FP. You will use to influence events in the game. You can also read the card to get a sense of some more detail about the characters starting Fortune.
- Shuffle and draw a hand of four cards for each player's character.

At this point the character is ready to play. You can also create characters for important people or places in their life if you wish and some edges for the character. Common items a character might be carrying such as a weapon count as edges. You can either create them from scratch or declare the character has any that would be logical for them to be carrying to hand. Record any items or equipment the character has on them or in any transport they are using in the adventure before you start. They may also pick items up that they find when playing.

CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

Malcolm Fears

Fire - 3 Cups (night) - weak willed, a complainer. Water in Fire saps his will and makes him listless.

Earth - 8 Cups - strong family ties. Very focused on the material world, the presence of Water with Earth makes his world fertile and productive.

Water - 9 Swords - a weak and fearful follower, air stirs up water and with it his emotions. He over thinks things and ends up worrying. In his emotional life the presence of the Judgement card suggests he feels he has had a rebirth though - but the Hermit (night) implies he has found it through others and really is consumed by self pity.

Air - 2 Cups (night) - desire and lust cloud his thinking. The Hanged Man (night) suggests idleness and powerlessness.

I gave him some athletic skills from his 8 Earth - 3 for athletics, 3 for unarmed fighting and 2 for psychology.

For his 9 Water I gave him psychology 3, business 3 (he sells used cars by manipulating people's emotions and desires) and communication 3 (he is a talker).

For Air I gave him business 2 and for Fire I gave him an interest in art at 1 as it covers creativity (he thinks he is better than he is) and 2 in psychology.

Psychology is his main skill area – he uses it creatively on people (Fire) and manipulates their emotions (Water) to get practical gains (Earth). He is instinctively good at it – with no psychology skill under Air he has never studied the theory.

He has 22 + a card draw of 6 cups (Night) for 28 starting Fortune Points. The card implies he is burdened by past failures in his fortunes at the moment but may stumble on a gift from the past during play.

Not the greatest of heroes, but perhaps an interesting character to watch develop in a crisis.

Because family is important to him it might also make sense to create characters for his family as well, perhaps a wife, Melissa and two children Mikey and Mary? These could be being controlled by other players, a GM, or the player controlling Malcolm if playing solo.

EDGES AND DISTRACTIONS

Edges and distractions modify results when resolving a task or conflict.

- An edge is anything that can be used to give you a greater chance of success in a task. This could be a weapon or armour used in physical combat, a set of lock picks, a piece of incriminating evidence, a book of spells or even something abstract like a piece of information or a memory. Edges can be found, bought, won or created.
- You create edges in the same way as characters but the elements need to be tied to properties such as speed (Water), power (Fire), durability (Earth) and range (Air) as appropriate for the edge.
- Speed is added to your Initiative if you need to find out who acts first. Power is added to any attack, durability is its defence if the item is attacked and range is how far away it can affect anything.
- Distraction values can be assigned or determined by a card draw.

EDGES AND DISTRACTIONS EXAMPLES

Edges

A sword found in a medieval armoury might be given Water/Speed 1, Fire/Power 4, Earth/durability 6 and Air/range 1. When you hit someone with it the edge added would be its power of 4.

- A distraction is anything that is making a task harder. They give a negative modifier to any task resolution.

Distractions

Strong winds give archery a -4 to any results.

CREATING AND EXPLORING SCENES

In a pre-prepared adventure the GM outlines any back story and objectives to the players and indicates where they begin play in the setting.

In an improvised game players draw cards either singly or using the Wheel spread and read them for inspiration, collaborating on interpreting the result. You can do this as a series of simple yes/no questions with day meaning yes and night meaning no and the card meanings adding extra detail or you can ask open questions. You can also allocate features of the plot and setting to positions on the Wheel and read the cards as a card spread. In effect you have created the setting as a character.

- North what is known about the location, East the location itself (its size, condition etc), South and secrets it holds and West the locations history.

This method can be used to create a pre-prepared adventure. More detail can also be added as and when needed.

If you are planning to allow magic or let players alter a scene of card result by enchanting the narrative you will also need to establish any dampening effect for the setting.

The dampening effect is a distraction applied to all uses of magic in a setting based on how conducive to magic it is. It can be assigned or determined with a card draw. Create one for the game world as a whole. Individual areas can sometimes vary – drawing another card for a specific place where you have reason to think it could be stronger or weaker you take the result off the distraction. If the result is higher than the distraction any excess becomes an amplification effect (an edge).

CREATING AND EXPLORING SCENES - EXAMPLE

What kind of adventure is this going to be? Card result the Moon (Day) – a journey with a strange encounter and mystery.

Is this encounter magical? Card result The Devil (Day) – yes. It involves a succubus (a sensual demon) attacking and enslaving people.

Where does this happen? 3 of Coins (Night) A run down illegal strip club.

The players decide the mystery is the identity of the succubus and the location of the strip club and that they will start the adventure on arriving in town. They decide to flesh out the town a little asking more questions as before. Is the town large? Temperance (Night) No, it is also full of tensions especially over business. Is it prosperous? 3 of Cups (Day) Yes, people are doing well and mostly happy. What is law enforcement in the town like? The World (Night) strong but stuck in its ways and lacking vision. They decide to call the town Pleasantville.

The GM or a player announces where they begin – The characters are on a road into Pleasantville – players start to ask questions and answers either come from the pre-prepared adventure or more card draws. What do I see ahead? Knight of Swords (Day) a street leading up to the Town Hall. Is there a bar in town we can go to that's open? 8 Swords (Night) No – it there is one but the owner has closed it (due to an unforeseen tragedy) What time of day is it? King of Pentacles (Night) It's late at night and people are coming home from somewhere rather drunk. Where are they coming from? 4 Swords (Night) since the bar is closed they stored up some drink and had a private party somewhere

Do our characters know yet what is going on and if so how? 4 Wands (Night) No, they think everything is peaceful and are just visiting. Who are they visiting? 2 Swords (Night) they have come to confront a disloyal person. If we use our sample character Malcolm Fears perhaps he is there to chase up someone who backed out on a deal without paying? If his family are with him perhaps they are passing through and he is fitting it in along the way or he has lied to them and they think it's just a short vacation. It seems obvious at this point that Malcolm is going to try and leave his family somewhere (a hotel or motel) and go visit the creditor. Maybe it is the owner of the bar and the reason they backed out is down to that tragedy...and the tragedy involves the main plot concerning the succubus.

Sooner or later they will find themselves needing to do something to resolve a conflict or determine the result of any actions they declare their characters are doing. It might start with simply searching for somewhere to spend the night, then Malcolm trying to sneak off to visit his creditor and a confrontation between them. At some point we know he is also going to come across the succubus and knowing Malcolm it's highly likely to be because he is about to be its next victim... perhaps his creditor is going to introduce him to it. The tragedy could be that it is trying to use his bar to meet victims and he resisted but she is now threatening his loved ones unless he gets her victims...

RESOLVING ACTIONS, TASKS AND CONFLICTS

Need to open a locked door? Want to hit someone? Searching for something hidden?

Characters can use any skills they have to resolve something.

- Each player has a hand of four cards and you can use a card from the left for every point of skill you have.
Someone with a skill of one can use the first card in their hand from the left and can see what that card is, someone with a skill of two has a choice of two cards, a skill of three gives a choice of three cards and one of four allows you to use any of them.
When a card is used it is discarded and replaced to the right in the hand, moving all the cards left one place.

If they do not have any relevant skill they cannot use a card from their hand and have to draw blind from the deck.

Any Element can be used as appropriate – Fire would indicate a conflict of will, Earth a physical fight, Water an emotional or social struggle and Air a battle of wits. It can be a conflict between two characters, and internal conflict with the self or a character struggling against an object or force.

One is the active initiating force or character the other a reacting or defending one. You do not have to always draw or play a card. A single 'attack' is called an action.

Current Elemental Energy + Card drawn or played from hand + (edges - distractions)

vs.

Current Elemental Energy + Card drawn or played from hand + (edges - distractions)

- Highest result wins. Any excess is applied as damage to the appropriate Elements Energy if damage would occur.
- Cards drawn are placed on a discard pile.
- If multiple characters are involved, the character with the highest Element being used goes first.
- Shrug off any damage using available FP if desired.
- Continue with exchanges until Elemental Energy is reduced to zero or below and cannot be shrugged off with FP. The character is incapacitated and has lost the struggle and the other character has won. If both parties wish it can also stop at any point before being incapacitated.
- A simple task may only involve one action. More complex ones like a physical fight can take several. Tasks can also involve multiple actions over a long period of time – these are called extended tasks.
- Once the scene ends, shuffle the discard pile back into the deck.

Once a conflict is resolved or a task completed players can try and heal up any outstanding damage using an appropriate skill (which is itself resolved as above) or with remaining FP.

Characters gain or lose FP depending on if they won or lost.

EXTENDED TASKS

You can make things in the game as an extended task.

- Build each element in turn.
- Set the highest strength you want for each element of the finished item. This becomes the difficulty level for the task for building that element. Each element can have a different strength and difficulty level.
- Add the current strength of that element (so it will get harder as you go) to the difficulty level rather than drawing/playing a card for it.
- You can continue building the element until you reach the predetermined strength/difficulty level or until you fail in resolving the task. If you succeed you add the amount over to the Element you are building, if you fail you subtract it.
- If success brings you to the strength you were aiming for or above, that Element is completed.
- If any failures bring it to zero it is broken and you have to start all over again for the entire object (including any other Elements that were completed). If you need to know how long it takes, each draw takes one of whatever unit of time you have decided the task will take (usually hours).

Use the same method as you would for resolving something, but with the following modification

Element + Draw (or card from hand if using skill) + any edges

Vs

Element Aimed at + Current Element + any distractions

- When an element is built, move on to the next element and repeat the process until the item is finished.
- At this point you can opt to 'fix' the item by expending fortune equal to the strength of the element to be fixed. This will make the strength of the element fixed permanent. If left unfixed, each use of that element of the object reduces it by one until it is repaired/recharged or fully used. Fixed items are either 'magical', have a significant role or are the product of superior skill or technology.

RESOLVING ACTIONS, TASKS AND CONFLICTS EXAMPLES

Malcolm wants to find a motel:

He uses his experience of towns (Earth) unskilled against the Towns size which we are getting from a card drawn when creating the setting in answer to how large it is. Mikey is complaining and making concentrating while driving hard and he also needs to be careful of the drunken pedestrians so we decide he has a distraction penalty of 3

8 Earth + a card draw 2 Cups – 3 = 7

The town had a draw of Temperance for size, value 14. It really isn't 'resisting' so we leave it at that with no card draw. The 2 Cups implies issues to do with affinity – perhaps he failed because he just doesn't know Pleasantville at all. It's obvious he has not been able to find a motel, the experience has disheartened him and he has taken 7 damage to his Water of 9 leaving him with 2.

Malcolm spends 7 of his 28 FP to shrug the damage off leaving him with 21 FP and no energy loss.

He decides to ask someone instead – one of the drunken pedestrians as they seem to be the only people around at the moment and it is late. He gets out of the car so the distractions no longer apply.

Malcolm decides to use his psychology to get the drunk feeling friendly enough to tell him where a motel is. He is skilled in it so he looks at his hand: 1 Pentacles (Night), 8 Swords (Night) The Chariot (Night) Wheel of Fortune (Day)

His skill is 3 so he can use any card except his best one, The Wheel. The 8 of Swords looks tempting but implies opposition deception and unforeseen tragedy. With his Water of 9 that gives him a 17 though. He decides to risk it and we draw a card for the drunk to give us his resisting Element. Fire seems a likely one and we give it a distraction of 4 because he is drunk. We get the 10 Swords (Day) which suggests he is troubled man who has been suffering a lot - perhaps another victim of the succubus? Drawing the second card as he is resisting (he just wants to go home, not talk) we get 2 Swords – $10+2 = 12$ and with the distraction of 4 the result is 8. Malcolm wins by 9. The man is at first belligerent and doesn't want to help, but gives in as Malcolm makes him awful for not helping a stranger and tells him (drunkenly) where the motel is. We now have a choice based on the card Malcolm used – has the drunk told him correctly or will there be a tragedy? Perhaps if it is a tragedy the drunk will be hit by a passing car as he steps out into the road to point out the right direction. The GM or players if playing GMless decide on the outcome of that.

Malcolm has gained 9 FP bringing him up to 30 FP. He discards the card he used and replaces it to the right with the Magician (Day). So his hand is now 1 Pentacles (Night), The Chariot (Night), Wheel of Fortune (Day) and Magician (Day).

We could give the drunk more detail and some FP and have them shrug off the emotional damage Malcolm has done to him – perhaps that will decide if he is so distracted by feeling guilty he doesn't notice that passing car... if the damage to his feelings was enough to get him to zero he would still answer but then sink into a stupor of drunken emotional turmoil. He would probably eventually sleep and recover slowly over night with some lingering bad feelings the next day. The tragedy could then strike later, perhaps if Malcolm encounters him again?

USING MAGIC

- Spells are created much like characters.
- Any spell consists of a description of its base effect, its Elemental Drain (Water), its power (Fire), duration (Earth) and range (Air).
- Choose one Element to be the spells 'Master Element' that sets the overall nature of the spell and another to be the spells target Element.
- The Elemental Drain is a number subtracted from 11 to get the number of points of the Master Element's energy you will spend in casting
- They are usually made as an extended task. Players can also find or be given spells in the game.

- Magical spells can be memorised or 'rote' spells, recorded in spell tomes, or cast from scrolls.
- You can memorise any spell with a power that is equal to or less than your Earth.
- You can have a number of spells memorised equal to the spell casters Air Element.
- A memorised spell can be cast as a single action. Any other spell has to be read from a spell book or scroll and casting will take one action per point of its power.
- A cast spell uses the spells Fire Element in any attack as the attacking Element and the target Element as the defending one. Resolve it like you would any other action. Success applies damage to the targeted Elemental energy like any other attack with the excess as damage.

ENCHANTING THE NARRATIVE

Enchanting the narrative enables you to change aspects of a scene.

- If you need something but it is not in the scene you can enchant the narrative to put it there. This costs you 2FP per point of each of its four elements and 5 FP to 'fix' it.
- You can also spend Fortune in game after a card is drawn to change its numerical power and Element. It costs the current numerical value of the card in FP to modify a card result plus the amount you want to modify it by (up or down) or 2 x the current numerical value of the card in FP to change a card's Element/suit to the next one on the wheel (adjacent in either direction) or change its orientation.
You can also do this with any card drawn in the game but you cannot do it with cards played from a hand or when creating a character.

ENCHANTING THE NARRATIVE EXAMPLE

- Finding a sword that is Water/Speed 1, Fire/Power 4, Earth/durability 6 and Air/range 1 would cost 24 FP and 5 FP to 'fix' it; otherwise you will just drop it and forget it when you are done using it. In a somewhere with a strong dampening effect of 7 it would cost 36 FP.
- To change the 6 of cups to the 8 of swords would cost 8 FP to change the number and another 6 FP to change it to either Air or Earth and then another 6 FP to change that to Swords, for a total of 20 FP. If you wanted to flip the orientation as well it would come to a total of 26 FP.

FORTUNE

Fortune goes up:

- 1 FP each time you gain a significant story goal
- 1 FP for taking a real risk or gambling on something
- 1 FP for inventiveness that surprises or impresses the group
- 1 FP each time you reintegrate a story feature
- 2 FP if the reintegration is pivotal to the story
- 3 FP if the reintegration is unexpectedly clever or witty
- 5 FP for completing a story
- 1 FP per point of excess to any number needed to succeed at something

Fortune goes down:

- 1 FP each time you fail a significant story goal
- 1 FP per point of each Element when you make something
- 1 FP per point you failed something by (Only use this if you want a more challenging game).
- 5 FP to 'fix' a narrative enchantment or the effects of something you have made
- 2 FP per point of Elemental energy restored.
- 1 FP per point of Elements current strength in +10 to advance an Element
- 5 FP to change a card orientation or suit when advancing an Element

Enchanting the Narrative

Fortune goes down:

- 2 FP per point of each Element to find an edge
- 1 FP per point of final Card value when enchanting the narrative
- 1 FP per dampening effect of setting
- 1 FP per point of card to change a card Element to an adjacent one on the Wheel
- 1 FP per point of card to change a cards orientation
- 5 FP to 'fix' a narrative enchantment or the effects of something you have made

Magic

Fortune goes up:

- 1 FP per point of edge from a Dampening Effect
- 1 FP per point of damage to a blood sacrifices Earth energy

Fortune goes down:

- 1 FP per point of distraction caused by a Dampening Effect
- 1 FP per point of each Element in spell cast
- 1 FP per point of each Element when you make something
- 2 FP per point to restore an Element that has been drained
- 5 FP to 'Fix' a spell in a book or item
- 5 FP per point added to an Element when enchanting an edge