

IRONSWORN

A TABLETOP RPG OF
PERILOUS QUESTS

BY SHAWN TOMKIN

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OF PERILOUS QUESTS

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For Terrie, and the vows we have fulfilled together.

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CHAPTER 1

THE BASICS

PLAYING IRONSWORN

In the *Ironsworn* tabletop roleplaying game, you are a hero sworn to undertake perilous quests in the dark fantasy setting of the Ironlands. You will explore untracked wilds, fight desperate battles, forge bonds with isolated communities, and reveal the secrets of this harsh land. Most importantly, you will swear iron vows and see them fulfilled—no matter the cost.

To play *Ironsworn*, you create your character, make some decisions about the world you inhabit, and set the story in motion. When you encounter something dangerous or uncertain, your choices and the dice determine the outcome.

Ironsworn supports three modes of play.

- **Guided:** One or more players take the role of their characters, the protagonists in your story, while a gamemaster (GM) moderates the session. The GM helps bring the world to life, portrays the people and creatures you encounter, and makes decisions about the outcome of your actions.
- **Cooperative (Co-Op):** You and one or more friends play together to overcome challenges and complete quests. A GM is not required. The *Ironsworn* game system will help you explore the dramatic stories of your characters and their fateful vows.
- **Solo:** As with cooperative play, no GM is necessary. You portray a lone heroic character in a dangerous world. Good luck!

Ironsworn is primarily intended for solo and small group play. One to four players (plus a GM in guided mode) is ideal. The characters portrayed by other players are referred to in these rules as your allies.

WHAT YOU NEED

If you're playing solo, just grab some materials and get started. A session can be as long as you like, from a few minutes to a few hours.

If you're playing with one or more friends—either guided or co-op—you probably want to dedicate enough time to make some progress in your quests. Plan on a couple of hours or more.

Make sure you have:

- Two ten-sided dice (d10) for each player. These are your **challenge dice**.
- One six-sided die (d6) for each player. This is your **action die**.
- Optionally, another pair of ten-sided dice to use as your **oracle dice**.
- A printed **character sheet** for each player and printed **asset cards** (available at ironswornrpg.com).
- Some counters for marking status tracks on your character sheet. You can use paper clips, beads, dice, coins, tokens from other games, or whatever is convenient.

Not required, but helpful: Printed reference sheets for moves, the blank Ironlands map, and other worksheets available at ironswornrpg.com.

MECHANICS AND THE FICTION

Ironsworn uses various **mechanics**, such as rolling dice and managing the stats and resources on your character sheet. As a player, you will often make decisions based on a desired mechanical outcome. For example, you might choose a particular action to get a bonus on your die roll. The basic mechanics of *Ironsworn* are introduced in this chapter.

Ironsworn is also heavily reliant on **the fiction**, which is the imagined characters, situations, and places within your game. You will play from the perspective of your character. You will interpret actions and events in a way that is consistent with the dramatic, fictional reality you have forged for your story and your world.

To learn more about how the mechanics and fiction interact, see page 203.

THE SETTING

The default setting for your adventures is the **Ironlands**. It is a rugged peninsula of isolated communities and untracked wilds on the frontier of the known world. You can learn more about the setting starting on page 111. For now, here's a summary of some default assumptions.

- Two generations ago, your people were driven to the Ironlands from their former homes in the Old World.
- The weather here is harsh. Winters are brutal. The rugged terrain makes travel and trade difficult and dangerous.

- There are no thriving cities. Instead, Ironlanders live in isolated villages or steadings. Their homes are modest buildings of wood, stone, and thatch.
- Many areas of the Ironlands are unexplored and uninhabited except by the firstborn—beings such as elves, giants, and the wolf-like varou.
- Coins have little value here. Most commerce is made through barter and favors.
- Some communities remain isolated and independent, while others trade in basic goods such as iron, grain, wood, livestock, wool, and coal.
- There is a diverse mix of peoples and cultures within the Ironlands, even within a single community. You can envision your character and those you interact with however you like, unbound by considerations of geography, lineage, sexual orientation, and gender.
- Communities sometimes band together under a powerful leader, but there are no kingdoms. Territorial lines are sketchily drawn, if at all.
- Large-scale warfare is unheard of, but raiding parties and skirmishes between communities are a constant menace. Some communities subsist entirely on raiding.
- Spear, axe, shield, and bow are the dominant weapons. Swords are rare and highly prized. Some warriors choose to wade into battle clad in iron, while others trust in their prowess or in the strength of their shields.
- Magic is subtle and mysterious. Mystics seek to ward away the darkness through the practice of magic, but often succumb to it. Rituals are performed as blessings and to gain insight.
- Supernatural creatures and beasts are rare, frightening, and dangerous.

You are encouraged to make *Ironsworn* your own, and to bend the setting to your liking. Your version of the Ironlands will be unique because you'll define aspects such as the history of your people, magic, mythic beasts, and more. The choices you make will help inspire the personal vows driving your character.

You can also ignore the Ironlands entirely and play in your own world, or explore a setting inspired by media, history, or another roleplaying game. The *Ironsworn* rules are flexible enough to accommodate many forms of gritty fantasy or historical fiction.

With a bit of work, you can even adapt these rules to different genres. See page 237 for more on hacking *Ironsworn*.

IRON VOWS

In the Ironlands, a **vow** is sacred. When you declare your solemn promise to serve or aid someone, or to complete a personal quest, your honor is bound to that vow. Abandoning or recanting an oath is the worst sort of failure.

When you swear a vow, you touch a piece of iron. It can be an iron coin, a weapon, or your armor. It's an old tradition. Some say the iron, a piece of the primal world, serves as a conduit to the old gods—so they may better hear your promise.

Vows are the core of playing *Ironsworn*. It is your vows that drive you. These goals create the context for your adventures and challenges. As you complete vows, you gain experience and new abilities.

When you create your character, you start with a **background vow**. When you setup your campaign, you envision or encounter an **inciting incident** which triggers a new vow. There are several prompts for vows associated with the details of the world in chapter 4 (page 111), and with foes and encounters in chapter 5 (page 133). You can select something which fits your vision for the world and your character's goals, or just come up with something yourself. If you are playing in co-op mode, you and your fellow players may have shared vows and personal vows.

To learn more about your first vows and starting your campaign, see page 193.

YOUR CHARACTER

You use your **character sheet** to track your stats, overall condition, and progress in your quests. You also have **assets** (page 21), which are abilities you choose when you create your character and when you gain experience. These components help you determine the outcome when things get dangerous or uncertain.

However, your character is more than these mechanical bits. You are the protagonist in a rich story. You have hopes and fears, virtues and failings. You have a history. You are, or were, part of a community. This is the fiction of your character. Consider a few of these details as you create your character, but don't sweat it. You'll evolve it through play. At the start of your game, put your character on stage to see what happens. Fill in the blanks—for your character and your world—as you go.

To learn more about creating your character and the components that make up your character, see page 31.

Your **vows** (page 35) are your sacred oaths to complete perilous quests. Each vow has a **rank** and is managed through a **progress track**.

You have five **stats** (page 33) which represent the core aspects of your character. These are often added as a bonus when you take action.

As you fulfill vows, you earn **experience** (page 44). You spend experience to gain new assets.

As you take action, you build or lose **momentum** (page 11). Positive momentum can help improve the result of an action. Negative momentum can undermine an otherwise successful action.

You suffer **debilities** (page 36) as you face harrowing challenges. Some debilities are temporary and easily mended; others are permanent.

You have status tracks for **health**, **spirit**, and **supply** (page 33). These represent your current condition and readiness.

MOVES

Moves are self-contained systems to resolve a specific action, scene or question. There is a move for most common situations you encounter in *Ironsworn*. They have specific **triggers**, phrased as “When you [blank].” When your character does that thing, or you encounter that situation, refer to the move to see what happens.

Moves are organized by activities.

- **Adventure moves (page 60)** cover a variety of dangers, conducting investigations, traveling, making camp, and healing.
- **Relationship moves (page 69)** involve persuading others to do something, building bonds with people and communities, resting and recuperating within a community, aiding your allies, and initiating duels.
- **Combat moves (page 78)** are used when fighting (but not exclusively; other moves may come into play as well).
- **Suffer moves (page 90)** occur when you endure hardship, such as suffering physical harm or facing a dispiriting challenge.
- **Quest moves (page 98)** encompass iron vows, making progress in a sworn quest, and improving your character.
- **Fate moves (page 104)** help you decide what happens in solo and co-op play, or support the GM’s decisions and brainstorming in guided play.

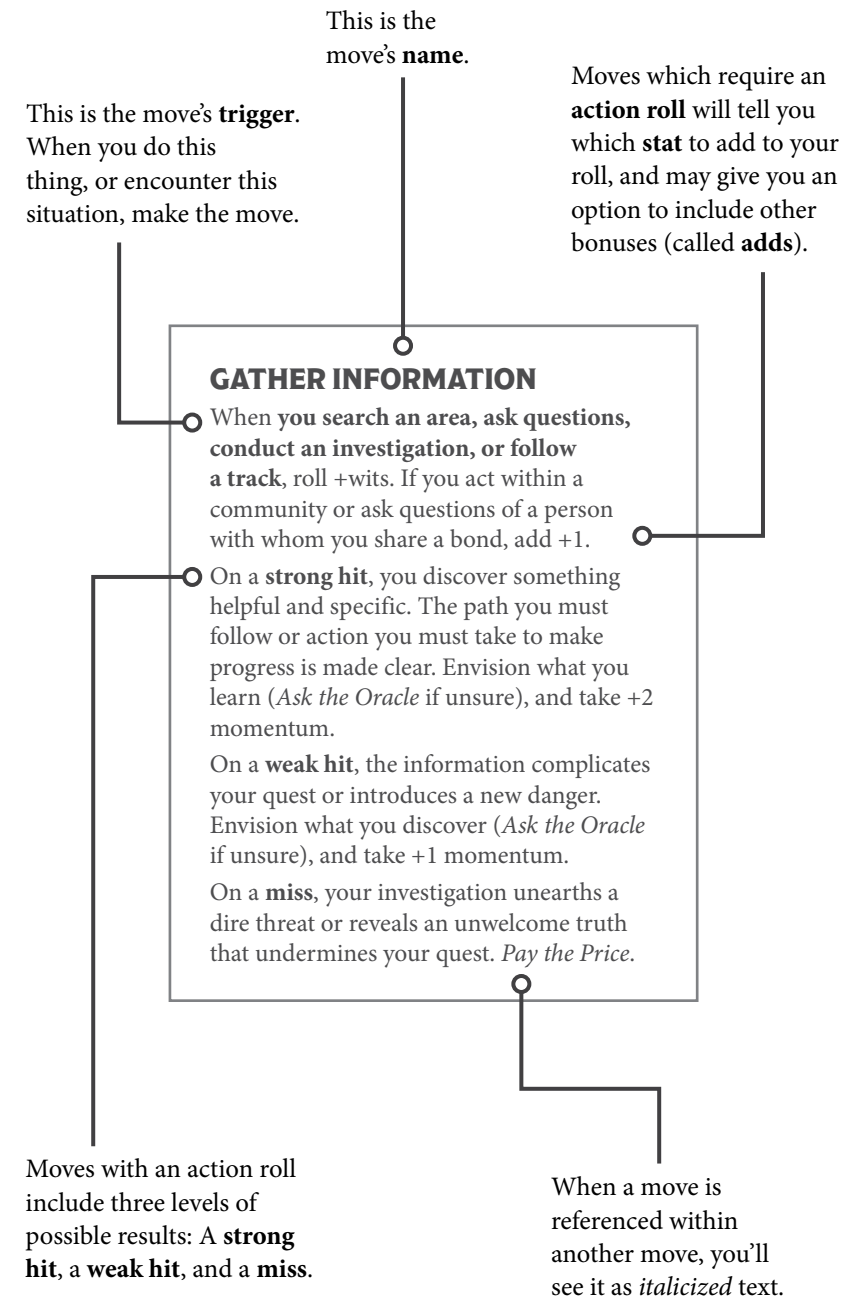
When a move’s name is referenced within these rules or by another move, you’ll see it as *italicized text*.

Most moves are based on risky actions you are taking. You are attacking with your sword, making a dangerous climb, or healing an ally. These moves use dice to determine the outcome. This is called an **action roll** (page 8).

Some moves measure your headway against an extended challenge, such as a journey or fight, using a **progress track** (page 14). When you are ready to resolve the challenge, you make a **progress roll** (page 18).

Other moves utilize a different kind of dice roll, called an **oracle roll** (page 22). These moves help determine the outcome of uncertain events out of your character’s control. If you’re playing solo or co-op, you can use the *Ask the Oracle* move (page 107) to answer questions about the world, resolve how other characters respond, or determine what happens next.

Some moves don’t require a roll. They might support or reference a separate move, or simply help you resolve a mechanical or narrative situation. Don’t roll dice unless a move tells you to. To learn more about moves, see page 49.



THE ACTION ROLL

When you make a move representing a risky or uncertain action, you roll three dice at once.

- **Challenge dice:** Two ten-sided dice (D10)
- **Action die:** A six-sided die (D6)



Add your relevant stat to your action die. The move will tell you which stat to add, or may give you a choice. Some moves will tell you to use one of your tracks, such as health or supply, in place of a stat. Based on the move or your character's assets, you may also have an opportunity to apply one or more bonuses called **adds**. The total of your action die, your stat, and any adds is your **action score**. Your action score is never greater than 10—anything over that is ignored.

$$\text{ACTION DIE (3)} + \text{STAT (2)} + \text{ADDS (1)} = \text{ACTION SCORE (6)}$$

To determine the outcome of your move, compare the action score to each of the challenge dice. You want it to be greater than the individual value of those dice.



There are three possible results for a move.



Strong Hit

Your action score is greater than both the challenge dice. You succeed at what you are trying to do.



Weak Hit

Your action score is greater than only one of the challenge dice. You probably succeeded, but with a lesser effect or cost.



Miss

Your action score isn't greater than either of the challenge dice. You failed, or need to make some serious concessions.

The move will tell you how to interpret the outcome of your action, or offer a choice. The result may include mechanical changes to your character's status and narrative changes to the current situation.

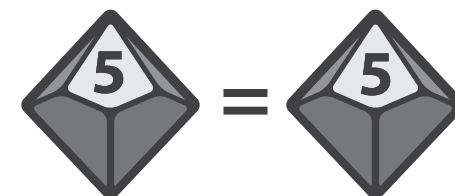
When you score a miss on a move, you'll usually see a prompt to *Pay the Price*. This is a special move that lets you pick a likely negative outcome or roll to see what happens. If you're playing with a GM, they may consult with this move, or just tell you the price.

The main thing to remember on a miss: Something always happens. The situation gets more complex, dramatic, or dangerous. To learn more about the *Pay the Price* move, see page 105.

Ties always go to the challenge dice. Your action score needs to exceed—not equal—the challenge dice to count as a hit.

MATCHES

When you roll for a move, you should be on the lookout for a **match** on the challenge dice. In cooperative and solo play, this is your trigger to add a twist, create a new complication, or otherwise mix things up. Something interesting, unexpected, or unusual happens. If you're unsure, you *Ask the Oracle*, which is a move you use to ask questions or check for inspiration. If you're playing with a GM, a match on the challenge dice can be their prompt to introduce a surprising turn of events.



The outcome of a match should be evaluated based on the result of your move.

- **Strong hit:** The match should represent a twist in the narrative, something interesting, or a new opportunity.
- **Miss:** The match should represent a heightened negative outcome, a complication, or new danger. Things get worse for you in an unexpected way.

You can also let the intensity of your success or failure frame how you interpret a match. Rolling matched 10's on your challenge dice should prompt you to introduce a harrowing turn of events or a dire failure. It's as bad as things get.

GM'S AND THE DICE

If you are playing as a GM, you can focus on guiding the game and responding to your player's questions and actions. Since NPCs don't make moves, you won't need to make action rolls. However, you might want to have a pair of D10's available for oracle rolls (page 22).

MOMENTUM

Momentum is a special mechanic which is central to playing *Ironsworn*. Your momentum value ranges from a -6 to +10 and represents how you are faring in your quests. Move results may tell you to increase or decrease momentum.

The **momentum track** is on the left side of your character sheet. You can use a paper clip or token to mark the current value.

When you have **positive momentum**, things are going your way. You have the advantage. You are in control. Your path is clear. You are properly positioned for success.

When you have **negative momentum**, the tide has turned against you. You face tough odds. You are outmatched. Your next steps are uncertain.

Momentum persists through scenes and between gaming sessions. When you finish a session, write down your current momentum value. Then, pick up where you left off when you return to the game.

GAINING MOMENTUM

You gain momentum as an outcome or option when making moves. This represents securing advantages, acquiring new insight, and making progress in your quests. If a move tells you to add momentum (phrased as "take +X momentum"), increase your momentum track by the value indicated. The choices you make in a move, or the assets you use to support the move, may modify the amount rewarded.

In general, taking +1 momentum represents a minor advantage. Taking +2 momentum (or more) represents a major advantage.

LOSING MOMENTUM

You can lose momentum as a choice when making moves, or as an outcome of a move—particularly on a weak hit or miss. If a move tells you to suffer a specific loss of momentum (phrased as "suffer -X momentum"), you reduce your momentum track by the value indicated. The options you choose in a move, or the assets you leverage, may alter this penalty.

If you lose momentum as a result of a narrative outcome without a defined value, such as when you make the *Pay the Price* move (page 105), you should suffer a reduction appropriate to the narrative circumstances.

- For a **minor disadvantage or complication**, suffer -1 momentum.
- For a **major disadvantage or complication**, suffer -2 momentum.

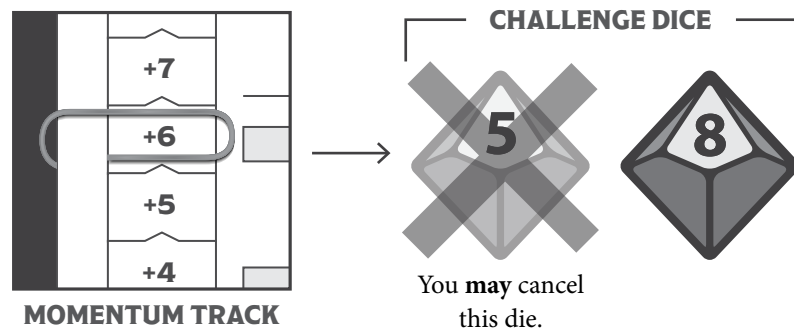
Some moves and assets give you the option to suffer a loss of momentum in exchange for temporary advantages. If you take this option, adjust your momentum track by the amount indicated.

BURNING MOMENTUM

Burning momentum is a powerful option to build on your success and deliver a decisive result or avoid dire failure. When you have positive momentum, after you roll your move, you may cancel any challenge dice that are less than your current momentum value. This gives you an automatic hit.

If both challenge dice are less than your momentum value, you may cancel them both for a strong hit. If you burn momentum when only one of the challenge dice is less than your momentum value, the result of the other die stands—giving you a weak hit.

For example, your momentum track is at +6 and your action score is 4. You roll a 5 and an 8 on your challenge dice. You may burn momentum to cancel the 5, but not the 8. This shifts your result from a miss to a weak hit.



Burning momentum is never required. Even if you score a miss on a move and have enough momentum to cancel the challenge dice, you can choose to suffer the failure and save your momentum for a more crucial moment.

After you burn momentum, you must **reset your momentum**. See the next page for how that works.

RESETTING MOMENTUM

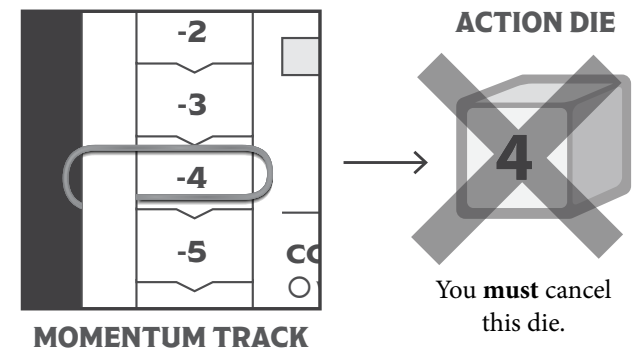
After you burn momentum, you must adjust your momentum track to your **momentum reset** value. The default reset is +2. This value may be lowered when your character suffers from a **debility** (page 36). Debilities are conditions such as wounded, shaken, or unprepared. They are marked on your character sheet as a result of a move or a narrative event.

- If you have **one debility marked**, your momentum reset is +1.
- If you have **more than one debility marked**, your momentum reset is 0.

There is a box below the momentum track where you can record your current momentum reset.

SUFFERING NEGATIVE MOMENTUM

When your momentum is less than 0, and it matches the value of your action die, you must cancel your action die. You still check the success of your move by comparing your stat plus your adds to the challenge dice, but you won't have your action die to help you.



MINIMUM MOMENTUM

Your momentum cannot drop lower than -6. This is your **minimum momentum**. If a move tells you to lower your momentum, and your momentum is already at its minimum, you will instead make the *Face a Setback* move (page 97). As a result of this move, you reduce your health, spirit, or supply (or some combination thereof) by that amount, or undermine your progress in a current quest, journey, or fight.

Make moves such as *Secure an Advantage* (page 61) to increase your momentum.

MAX MOMENTUM

Your **max momentum** starts at +10, and is reduced by 1 for every marked debility. There's a spot on your character sheet to record this value. You can't increase momentum over your max. If you are at your max and a move gives you an option to increase your momentum, you can't take that benefit.

PROGRESS TRACKS

A **progress track** is used to measure your pace and determine the outcome of a goal or challenge in specific situations.

- **When you Swear an Iron Vow (page 98)**, a progress track represents the challenges you overcome on your way to achieving your ultimate goal.
- **When you Undertake a Journey (page 65)**, a progress track represents how far you've gone and how favorable the travel has been.
- **When you Enter the Fray (page 78)**, a progress track represents your advantage as you weaken or wound your foes in combat.
- **When you establish a new relationship with a character in your world and Forge a Bond (page 74)**, you mark your bond on a progress track.

Progress tracks are drawn as a row of ten boxes which you fill in—or **mark**—as you make headway toward a goal. When you initiate a challenge, these boxes are empty.



Since making progress on your quests may stretch over many sessions, your character sheet includes progress tracks for vows. Your character sheet also includes a progress track for your bonds. For journeys and fights, you can sketch out your progress tracks on whatever is convenient, or use the challenge worksheets provided at ironswornrpg.com.

CHALLENGE RANKS

When you engage in a fight, initiate a journey, or swear a vow, you give your challenge a **rank**. In increasing order of difficulty, the ranks are **troublesome**, **dangerous**, **formidable**, **extreme**, and **epic**. You (or the GM) will choose a rank appropriate to the situation and how quickly or easily it should be resolved. Troublesome is used for simple challenges. A typical challenge is dangerous or formidable. Epic and extreme challenges require great effort and luck to overcome. Guidelines for foes are on page 134, and for journeys on

page 111. Give your vows a rank appropriate to the complexity of your quest and the amount of emphasis you want to give the vow in your story.

MARKING PROGRESS

You will perform specific moves to advance toward your goal. For example, as you travel across perilous lands, you *Undertake a Journey* and **mark progress** when you successfully reach waypoints in your travel.

UNDERTAKE A JOURNEY

When you **travel across hazardous or unfamiliar lands**, first determine the rank of your journey (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

- Troublesome journey: 3 progress per waypoint.
- Dangerous journey: 2 progress per waypoint.
- Formidable journey: 1 progress per waypoint.
- Extreme journey: 2 ticks per waypoint.
- Epic journey: 1 tick per waypoint.

Then, for each segment of your journey, roll +wits. If you are setting off from a community with which you share a bond, add +1 to your initial roll.

On a **strong hit**, you reach a waypoint. If the waypoint is unknown to you, envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, choose one.

- You make good use of your resources: Mark progress.
- You move at speed: Mark progress and take +1 momentum, but suffer -1 supply.

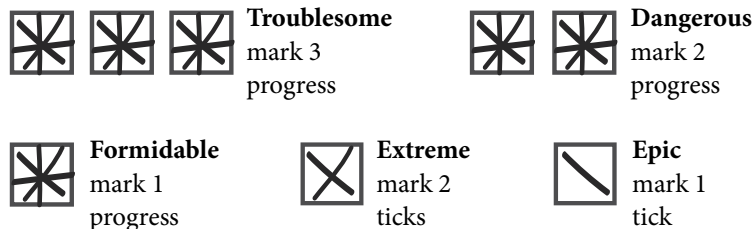
On a **weak hit**, you reach a waypoint and mark progress, but suffer -1 supply.

On a **miss**, you are waylaid by a perilous event. *Pay the Price*.

This move lets you mark progress on a strong or weak hit.

Similarly, when you fight, you *Strike* (page 79) or *Clash* (page 80) to inflict harm on your foe. To move forward in your quest, you use the *Reach a Milestone* move (page 100). These incremental moves let you amass advantages to have the best chance of success when you are ready to resolve your challenge.

Whenever you successfully move toward your goal, you partially or fully fill in a box on your progress track. You fill progress boxes with lines—called **ticks**. A full progress box consists of four ticks in a star-shaped pattern. When a move tells you to mark progress, fill in the appropriate number of ticks or progress boxes based on the rank of your challenge.



MARKING PROGRESS FOR BONDS

If you are marking progress on your bonds progress track, you always mark 1 tick unless a move tells you otherwise. Bonds are not given a challenge rank. To learn more about bonds, see page 24.



PROGRESS MOVES

There are four moves, called **progress moves**, which utilize progress tracks to resolve the outcome of a goal or challenge.

- To resolve a quest, **Fulfill Your Vow** (page 101).
- To end your journey, **Reach Your Destination** (page 68).
- To decide the outcome of combat, **End the Fight** (page 82).
- When you retire from your life as Ironsworn, **Write Your Epilogue** (page 77).

This label identifies this move as a progress move.

REACH YOUR DESTINATION

Progress Move

When your journey comes to an end, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. Momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, the situation at your destination favors you. Choose one.

- Make another move now and add +1.
- Take +1 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you arrive but face an unforeseen hazard or complication. Envision what you find (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss**, you have gone hopelessly astray, your objective is lost to you, or you were misled about your destination. If your journey continues, clear all but one filled progress, and raise the journey's rank by one (if not already epic).

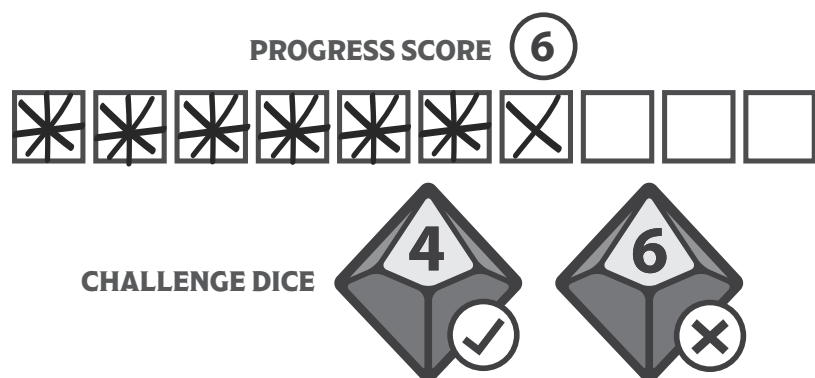
A progress move uses a **progress roll** instead of an action roll (see the next page for how it works).

PROGRESS ROLLS

You don't make an action roll when you make a progress move. Instead, you tally the number of fully filled progress boxes (those with four ticks). This is your **progress score**. Then, roll your challenge dice and compare your progress score to the value of the dice.

As with an action roll, if your progress score is greater than both challenge dice, it's a strong hit. If you beat one of the challenge dice, it's a weak hit. If you fail to beat either die, it's a miss. The progress move will tell you how to resolve the challenge based on the outcome of your roll. Also, keep an eye out for a match, which represents a surprising twist or unusual complication.

In the example below, you would compare your +6 progress score to your challenge dice when making your progress move. The seventh progress box is only partially filled in, and won't count toward the progress score.



When deciding whether to make your progress move, you need to weigh your chance of success against the risk of continuing to make preparatory moves. One thing to remember: It's not necessary to fill your progress track before making your progress move. In fact, a weak hit or miss on a progress roll can lead to exciting new story possibilities.

MOMENTUM AND PROGRESS ROLLS

Momentum is ignored when you make a progress move. You cannot burn momentum on a progress roll, and you do not suffer from negative momentum.

SHARING PROGRESS TRACKS WITH ALLIES

When you and your allies are working together to resolve a challenge—a quest, a journey, or a fight—you share a progress track and mark progress together. When you make a progress move, only one of you rolls the dice. The result will stand for the group.

HARM

Harm represents physical damage and fatigue. You inflict harm on your foes in combat, and you *Endure Harm* when you are attacked or fail to overcome a physical hazard or ordeal.

INFLECTING HARM

When you successfully attack a foe using the *Strike* (page 79) or *Clash* (page 80) moves, you inflict harm. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If you are unarmed or using an improvised or simple weapon (such as a shield, stick, club, staff, or rock), you inflict 1 harm. You may have an option to inflict additional harm through the choices you make in a move.

Each point of harm you inflict is marked as progress on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to their rank. For example, each point of harm equals 2 ticks when fighting an extreme enemy, or 2 full progress boxes when fighting a dangerous enemy.

ENDURING HARM

When you face physical injury or hardship, make the *Endure Harm* move (page 91). As part of that move, you reduce your health track by the amount of harm suffered. There are five ranks of harm.

- **Troublesome (1 harm):** An attack by a minor foe, a painful injury, or a tiring effort.
- **Dangerous (2 harm):** An attack by a skilled foe or deadly creature, a nasty injury, or a demanding effort.
- **Formidable (3 harm):** An attack by an exceptional foe or mighty creature, a serious injury, or an exhausting effort.
- **Extreme (4 harm):** An overwhelming attack by a monster or beast, a grievous injury, or a debilitating effort.
- **Epic (5 harm):** An attack by a legendary foe of mythic power, a horrific injury, or a consuming effort.

When you are fighting a foe, they inflict harm based on their rank. Sample foes are in chapter 5 (page 133).

If you are at 0 health, a miss on the *Endure Harm* move puts you at risk of suffering a debility or dying. You can recover health through rest and recuperation, using moves such as *Heal* (page 63), *Make Camp* (page 64), and *Sojourn* (page 71).

STRESS

Stress represents mental burdens and trauma. When you face mental shock or despair, make the *Endure Stress* move (page 95). As part of that move, you reduce your spirit track by the amount of stress suffered. There are five ranks of stress.

- **Troublesome (1 stress):** An unsettling incident or frustrating failure.
- **Dangerous (2 stress):** A distressing incident or upsetting failure.
- **Formidable (3 stress):** A horrifying incident or demoralizing failure.
- **Extreme (4 stress):** A heart-rending incident or traumatic failure.
- **Epic (5 stress):** A soul-shattering incident or the loss of all hope.

When you are opposing a foe, they can inflict stress (such as a terrifying visage or demoralizing taunt) based on their rank. Sample foes are in chapter 5 (page 133).

When you *Endure Stress*, you reduce your spirit track by the amount of stress suffered. If you are at 0 spirit, you are in danger of suffering a debility or falling into desolation.

You can recover spirit by relaxing when you *Make Camp* (page 64), finding fellowship when you *Sojourn* (page 71), or when you *Forge a Bond* (page 74).

Unlike harm, you do not inflict stress on others—at least not mechanically. If you attempt to frighten or demoralize another character, make an appropriate move to see what happens.



ASSETS

Assets are a key component of your character. They give you additional options and bonuses when making a move, and may include their own special moves. When you create your character (page 31), you select your starting assets. When you *Fulfill Your Vow* and gain experience (page 44), you can *Advance* to spend your experience on new assets or upgrade current assets.

To learn more about assets, see page 39.

You can mix-and-match assets however you like. There are no designated assets based on character classes or roles. However, you should avoid picking the same asset as another player.

Most assets include a default ability, represented by the filled-in circle. If it doesn't have a starting ability, you get to pick one.

Assets usually modify moves by giving you a bonus or allow you to use the move in a different way. Some assets include their own unique moves.

As you gain experience, you can purchase upgrades for your assets. When you purchase an upgrade, you fill in the circle to show that you now have that ability.

This is the asset type. When you pick an asset, you choose from **companions**, **paths**, **combat talents**, and **rituals**.

PATH



SLAYER

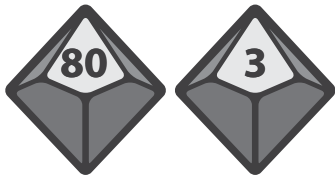
- When you *Gather Information* by tracking a beast or horror, or when you *Secure an Advantage* by readying yourself for a fight against them, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.
- When you *Swear an Iron Vow* to slay a beast or horror, you may reroll any dice. When you *Fulfill Your Vow* and mark experience, take +1 experience.
- When you slay a beast or horror (at least formidable), you may take a trophy and choose one.
 - Power a ritual: When you or an ally make a ritual move, reroll any dice (one time only).
 - Prove your worth: When you *Sojourn*, reroll any dice (one time only).

ORACLES

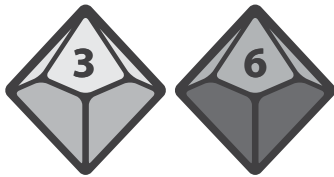
Some moves may prompt you to roll on a table to generate a result between 1 and 100. There are also a set of creative prompts in chapter 6 (page 165), which you can use to reveal details, trigger events, and guide the actions of other characters in your world. These **oracles** help answer questions in solo or co-op games, or provide inspiration for the GM in guided play.

ROLLING ORACLE DICE

Whenever you are prompted by a move or an oracle table to generate a result between 1 and 100, roll two ten-sided dice.



One of your oracle dice may include tens digits on its faces. If so, you'd read this result as 83.



You can also use two D10s of different colors, and decide before rolling which represents the tens digit and which is the units. You'd read this result as 36.

You might want to use a special set of dice for your oracle rolls, shared by everyone at the table. It'll make those dice feel special and unique.



SEEKING ANSWERS

If you are playing solo or co-op, you can *Ask the Oracle* to help guide your game session and trigger ideas when you need to know what happens next. Its most basic function is to answer a “yes” or “no” question. Combined with your own instincts and creativity, this move—and other random prompts—can push your story in surprising and exciting directions. To learn more about this move, see page 107.

ASK THE ORACLE

When you seek to resolve questions, discover details in the world, determine how other characters respond, or trigger encounters or events, you may...

- Draw a conclusion: Decide the answer based on the most interesting and obvious result.
- Ask a yes/no question: Decide the odds of a ‘yes’, and roll on the table below to check the answer.
- Pick two: Envision two options. Rate one as ‘likely’, and roll on the table below to see if it is true. If not, it is the other.
- Spark an idea: Brainstorm or use a random prompt.

Odds	The answer is ‘yes’ if you roll...
Almost Certain	11 or greater
Likely	26 or greater
50/50	51 or greater
Unlikely	76 or greater
Small Chance	91 or greater

On a match, an extreme result or twist has occurred.

Roll on this table using your oracle dice to generate a result between 1 and 100

If you are playing with a GM, they are the oracle. When you see a prompt to *Ask the Oracle*, turn to your GM. The GM is free to leverage random tools and creative prompts to come up with the answers.

Keep in mind that—even when playing with a GM—*Ironsworn* is about shared storytelling. Offer suggestions. Talk it out. The GM is the final arbiter of what happens next, but everyone at the table should participate in building the world and creating the narrative of your game.

MORE RANDOMNESS

You'll find a set of random tables in chapter 6 (page 165). These provide inspirational prompts and random results for common situations. You can also use whatever random generators you prefer, including those drawn from another game, online generators, or visual tools such as tarot cards.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

These random generators will never replace your own imagination and intuition. If it's interesting, dramatic, and pushes the story forward, make it happen. Too much reliance on random generators to answer questions about "what happens next" can kill the momentum of your game or make it feel disconnected and incoherent.

Keep it moving. Ask a question. If an answer leaps to mind, go with it. If you're not sure, *Ask the Oracle*. Then, play.

BONDS

As you explore your world and complete quests, you create bonds with people and communities by making the *Forge a Bond* move (page 74). Bonds give you advantages for specific moves when interacting with those you have bonded with. For example, if you attempt to *Compel* someone (page 69), and you share a bond with them, you add +1 to your action score. The moves tell you when having a bond provides this advantage.

Bonds also help determine your fate when you retire from your life as an adventurer. The more bonds you create, the more connections you have with people and communities, the better your chance to live out your days peacefully in the company of others.

Your character sheet has a special progress track for bonds. When you successfully *Forge a Bond*, mark 1 tick on this progress track. When your adventures are complete and you *Write Your Epilogue* (page 77), tally your bonds and make a progress roll (page 18) to wrap up your character's story.

OTHER CHARACTERS

The mechanics of *Ironsworn* are almost entirely character-facing—meaning they reference the capabilities and actions of your character. Other non-player characters and creatures (NPCs) don't have mechanical detail. In fact, they may only have a single stat—their rank—for tracking progress against them in a combat scene. Further, NPCs do not make moves. You won't roll dice for them to determine the outcome of their actions. When you attempt to

influence them, oppose them, resist them, or aid them, make moves as your character. If you have questions about an NPC's motivations or what they do next, *Ask the Oracle*. To learn more, see page 133.

ALLIES AND COMPANIONS

If you are playing a co-op or guided game with other players, their characters are referred to in these rules and in moves as your **allies**.

A **companion** is a special type of asset. Unlike normal NPCs, they can provide mechanical benefits through their abilities, and they have a health track to record harm. If the text of a move refers to a companion, it means a companion asset. To learn more about companions, see page 39.

EQUIPMENT

In *Ironsworn*, you won't worry too much about equipment. Your supply track (page 34) is an abstract representation of your general readiness, clothes, ammo, food, water, and mundane gear.

You are armed and armored as appropriate to your vision for your character. If you wield a weapon, you can inflict harm with it. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If you are unarmed or using an improvised or simple weapon (such as a shield, stick, club, staff, or rock), you inflict 1 harm.

Other equipment provides narrative benefit. It enables you to make moves where that gear is important, or perhaps allows you to avoid a move altogether.

For example, you need to make your way down a steep rock face. Without assistance, you'd make a *Face Danger* move to see what happens. If you had rope, the climb is not particularly risky or uncertain. In that case, you might skip the move and just narrate the result.

Specific assets (page 39) can make equipment more important and relevant to your character. For example, combat talent assets (page 40) represent your expertise in a particular weapon or fighting style. When you wield an appropriate weapon, you gain the benefit of the asset.

Apart from assets, you can make note of equipment at whatever level of detail you like, but don't fuss over it. If you're wondering whether you have a particular mundane item, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 107).

THE FLOW OF PLAY

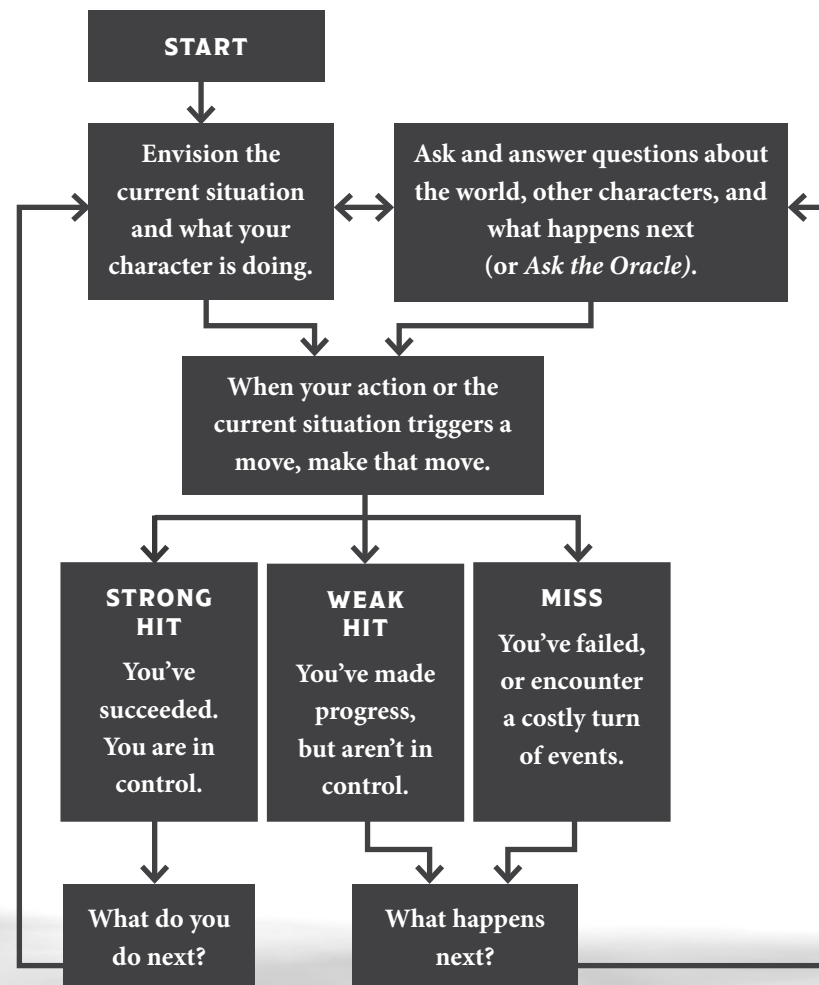
Like most roleplaying games, you play primarily from the perspective of your character. What are you doing? What are you trying to achieve? What opposition and challenges do you face? Your quests, and the characters and situations you encounter, will guide the fiction and the choices you make.

When you have questions about what you find, how other characters in your world respond, or what happens next, you can go with what feels right (if you're playing solo or co-op), or ask your GM. When you are seeking inspiration or want to put it in the hands of fate, you make the *Ask the Oracle* move (page 107). Use the yes/no questions and random prompts to generate interesting twists and new complications you might not have thought of on your own. Above all, if it's interesting, dramatic and fits the fiction, make it happen.

If you are doing something covered by a move, refer to the move to resolve your action. If it tells you to roll dice, do it.

Scoring a strong hit on a move means you are in control. You're driving the narrative. What do you do next?

A weak hit or a miss means you don't have control of the situation. Instead of acting, you react. What happens next? If you're playing with a GM, they'll determine how the world responds. Otherwise, you rely on your intuition and occasional oracle rolls to drive the narrative.



WHAT'S NEXT

That's the basics of playing *Ironsworn*. You'll see these concepts referenced and expanded throughout this rulebook, but it's not necessary to read or understand it all before playing. To get started:

- 1 Create your character (page 31).** Set your stats, select your assets, and consider your background and personality.
- 2 Build your world (page 111).** Take a tour of the Ironlands, create your unique vision of the setting, and find inspirational prompts for vows and quests. Or, start playing in your own world.
- 3 Review the moves (page 49).** It'll be helpful to get a basic understanding of the moves and how you resolve your character's actions and intent. You can start by printing out the move reference sheets, available at ironswornrpg.com. Then, refer to chapter 3 when you have a question or want further detail.
- 4 Review the example of play (page 241).** See *Ironsworn* in action to help understand the basic die roll mechanics, how to interpret moves and outcomes, and how to use creative prompts to drive your story forward.
- 5 Swear an Iron Vow (page 98).** Play to see what happens. When you have questions about moves, see page 49. When you need a foe or encounter, see page 133. When you seek answers from an oracle, see page 165.
- 6 Dig deeper (page 193).** When you're ready to explore campaign setup guides, additional gameplay options, and best practices, see chapter 7.

The mother asked the seer to divine her new baby's fate. The old mystic came and looked at the sleeping child. She tilted her head, closed her eyes. Then, she drew back, frowning. No need to ask the gods. No need to roll the stones.

"Ironsworn," the seer said.

She took her price in silver and blood, and left the mother alone with the baby.

That night, the mother wept, for she knew her child would grow to live apart from her. Whether consumed by duty or vengeance, wanderlust or love, it was all the same. The trackless wilds would call, the blade and shadow would whisper their secrets, and her child would leave.

She cried for the life her child would live, and she cried for the knowing of it.



CHAPTER 2

YOUR CHARACTER

YOU ARE IRONSWORN

Others live out their lives hardly venturing beyond the walls of their village or steading, but you are different. Your sworn vows will lead to a life of danger, heroism, and sacrifice at the edge of the known world.

ENVISION YOUR CHARACTER

Before you jump into the mechanics of your character, consider their motivations, interests, skills, personality, and weaknesses. It's fine to start with one or two ideas about your background and goals. You can flesh out your character as you play.

BE AWESOME

Your character is highly competent. You're smart, brave, and driven. You can hold your own in a fight. When you *Swear an Iron Vow*, you mean it.

You are not without your limitations. You'll face hardship. You'll make bad decisions. You will fail. Overcoming those failures, pushing on, is what makes you heroic.

BE WHO YOU WANT

The people of the Ironlands are diverse. Communities are formed through shared interests, mutual protection, or strong leadership. Respect is still paid to traditions of the Old World, but Ironlanders largely left behind their cultural divisions when they crossed the vast northern ocean. Even within a single community, you'll find a fusion of Old World and Ironland influences.

You can envision your character however you like—unbound by geography, lineage, sexual orientation, and gender. Your character can be inspired directly by a real-world or historical culture, or you might weave a blend of cultural influences into your concept.

The default setting is human-centric, and these rules do not include specific options to play fantasy races. However, you can adjust to your liking. The mechanics of your character are relatively light and can be themed to support several types of fantasy or historical fiction.

WHERE TO START?

You can build your world, build your character, or do both in tandem. If you have a clear idea for your character, start there and build your world around them, as if you're building a set to suit your actor. If you need inspiration, start with the world. Chapter 4 (page 111) includes prompts for situations and quests to help you envision your character and your place in the Ironlands.

MOMENTUM

NAME

STATS

EXPERIENCE

HEALTH

SPIRIT

SUPPLY

CHARACTER
EXPERIENCE

Asha Shadiya

●●●○○○○○○○○○○

+10	3	1	2	1	2
	EDGE	HEART	IRON	SHADOW	WITS

Find my sister

○ TROUBLESOME
○ DANGEROUS
○ FORMIDABLE
○ EXTREME
● EPIC

Guide the caravan safely through the mournwood

○ TROUBLESOME
○ DANGEROUS
● FORMIDABLE
○ EXTREME
○ EPIC

Kill the wyvern

○ TROUBLESOME
● DANGEROUS
○ FORMIDABLE

HEALTH

SPIRIT

SUPPLY

○ TROUBLESOME
○ DANGEROUS
○ FORMIDABLE
○ EXTREME
○ EPIC

○ TROUBLESOME
○ DANGEROUS
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SPIRIT

Spirit is your current mental state, ranked from 0 to +5. Spirit is reduced when you *Endure Stress* (page 95). It is increased when you find comfort in companionship, success, or relaxed moments through moves such as *Make Camp* (page 64) or *Forge a Bond* (page 74).

If you are at 0 spirit, scoring a miss when you *Endure Stress* puts you at risk of suffering a debility or falling into desolation.

To start, set your spirit track to +5.

SUPPLY

Supply is an abstract representation of your preparedness, including ammo, food, water, and general upkeep. It is ranked from 0 to +5. Instead of keeping track of a detailed inventory, you can consider most of your mundane gear as covered under supply.

Supply is decreased when you make the *Undertake a Journey* move (page 65). You might also reduce supply as a narrative cost when you face hardships as an outcome of other moves. For example, if you make the *Face Danger* move (page 60) to ford a wild river, you might lose some gear as a result of a weak hit or miss. Supply is increased when you gather provisions through moves such as *Resupply* (page 63).

The supply track represents the shared assets among your party. You and your allies use the same supply value while you travel together. If any of you make a move to increase supply, or suffer the result of a move that reduces your supply, each of you adjust your supply track accordingly.

When your supply falls to 0, all characters make the *Out of Supply* move (page 97). If you are at 0 supply and suffer additional -supply, you each must reduce your health, spirit, or momentum tracks by that amount.

To start, set your supply track to +5. You and your allies share the same supply value while you adventure together. When one of you makes a move that raises or lowers the supply track, each of you should make the adjustment on your character sheet.

MOMENTUM

Momentum represents how you are faring in your quests. It is gained and lost through moves. If you have positive momentum, you are building on your successes and ready to make decisive moves. If you have negative momentum, you have suffered setbacks and your quest is in jeopardy.

To learn more about momentum and how it helps and hinders your character, see page 11.

Use the momentum track on the left side of your character sheet to record your current momentum. Your character sheet also includes boxes to mark your max momentum and momentum reset.

- Your **max momentum** starts at +10, and is reduced by one for every marked debility.
- Your **momentum reset** starts at +2. If you have a one debility marked, your reset is +1. If you have more than one debility marked, your reset is 0.

To learn more about debilities, see page 36.

To start, set your current momentum to +2, your max momentum to +10, and your momentum reset to +2.

VOWS

When you *Swear an Iron Vow* (page 98), you give it a rank (troublesome, dangerous, formidable, extreme, or epic), and record it on your character sheet. You then use a vow progress track to mark when you *Reach a Milestone* (page 100).

You should start your first session with two vows: A long term goal (your background vow) and an immediate situation which must be dealt with (your inciting incident). You'll find quest starters in chapter 4 - 'Your World' (page 111) and chapter 5 - 'Foes and Encounters' (page 133).

To learn more about your starting vows, see page 195.

BONDS

As you build relationships and complete quests in the service of others, you create bonds by making the *Forge a Bond* move (page 74).

Bonds provide narrative texture to your world by fleshing out other characters and communities. They give you places to return to, and people to reconnect with, when your life as Ironsworn has taken its toll. Bonds also provide mechanical benefits when you act within a community or interact with someone with whom you share a bond. For example, the *Sojourn* move (page 71) gives you a bonus to your action roll if you have a bond with that community.

The bonds progress track on your character sheet represents the connections you have made. When you successfully *Forge a Bond*, you mark progress (one tick). When your time as Ironsworn is done, you *Write Your Epilogue* (page 77). When you make that move, you tally the number of filled boxes on your bonds progress track as your progress score. See page 14 to learn more about progress tracks and progress moves.

You should start your first session with up to three background bonds. Make a note of the people or communities you share bonds with, and mark up to three ticks on your bond progress track. To learn more about your first session and your starting bonds, see page 193.

DEBILITIES

As you suffer hardships and setbacks in your quests, you may need to mark debilities as a result of moves or narrative events. Moves will tell you which debility to mark, or give you a choice. Debilities represent temporary, long-term, and permanent disadvantages. Some can be easily cleared through an appropriate move. Others will forever become a part of your character.

Debilities should have a narrative impact on how you envision your character's actions and how others react to you. They also have a mechanical impact by reducing your momentum track.

- **Each marked debility** reduces your max momentum by 1.
- If you have **one marked debility**, your momentum reset is +1 instead of +2.
- If you have **more than one marked debility**, your momentum reset is 0.

CONDITIONS

- **Wounded** may be marked when you are at 0 health and fail to *Endure Harm* (page 91). You are severely injured and need treatment to recover.
- **Shaken** may be marked when you are at 0 spirit and fail to *Endure Stress* (page 95). You are despairing or distraught, and need comfort to recover.
- **Unprepared** is marked when you are at 0 supply and are *Out of Supply* (page 97). You and your allies share the same supply value, and will mark unprepared together.
- **Encumbered** is marked as appropriate to the circumstances when you are carrying excessive or cumbersome weight.

As with all debilities, conditions impact your max momentum and momentum reset. In addition, if you are wounded, shaken, or unprepared, you cannot increase the associated track.

- **If you are wounded**, you cannot increase health.
- **If you are shaken**, you cannot increase spirit.
- **If you are unprepared**, you cannot increase supply.

If a move gives you an opportunity to raise your health, spirit, or supply while the associated condition is marked, you can't take that option. You must clear the condition before improving the related status track.

Wounded, shaken, and unprepared can be cleared when you succeed on appropriate moves. For example, scoring a hit on the *Heal* move (page 63) can clear the wounded condition. The shaken and unprepared conditions can generally only be cleared as you find fellowship and gather provisions in a community through the *Sojourn* move (page 71). Once you clear a condition, you restore your max momentum and momentum reset, and you can once again increase the associated track through moves.

Unlike other conditions, encumbered is not specifically triggered or resolved by a move. Instead, it should be marked when appropriate to the circumstances. For example, you would mark encumbered if you are carrying an unconscious ally to safety in a perilous situation. Encumbered can also be triggered by the **Ironclad** asset, which allows you to gain an advantage for heavy armor in exchange for marking the condition. Encumbered is cleared when you lighten your load.

BANES

- **Maimed** may be marked when you are at 0 health and fail to *Endure Harm* (page 91). You have suffered a wound which causes you ongoing physical challenges, such as the loss of an eye or hand. Or, you bear horrific scars which serve as a constant reminder of your failures.
- **Corrupted** may be marked when you are at 0 spirit and fail to *Endure Stress* (page 95). Your experiences have left you emotionally scarred. You are at the threshold of losing yourself to darkness.

Banes are permanent. They forever impact your character through the momentum penalty and—more importantly—through the narrative impact of being maimed or corrupted. You should factor this debility into how you perform moves and how you interact with the world. You may have physical or emotional limitations you must cope with. Your outlook may change. Your goals and methods may change. How others behave toward you may change.

If you are maimed, envision the injury and make note of it. Consider how this impacts your approach when facing physical challenges, and weave it into your roleplaying and the narrative of your moves.

When you are corrupted, envision how this impacts your personality and motivations. You might struggle with a new compulsion, quirk, or fear. You might even bear a physical, supernatural sign of the corruption. If so, what is it?

BURDENS

- **Cursed** is marked when you *Face Death* (page 93) and return with a soul-bound quest. This burden can only be cleared by completing the quest.
- **Tormented** is marked when you *Face Desolation* (page 96) and undertake a quest to prevent a dire future.

Burdens are a result of life-changing experiences that leave you bound to quests. Clearing a burden can only be accomplished by resolving the quest.

When you are cursed or tormented, you should consider the physical or emotional manifestations of these conditions. You have walked the lands beyond death or suffered visions of your greatest fears. What signs do you bear? How do these experiences affect your relationships?

When you create your character, all debilities should be unmarked.

ASSETS

Assets represent your background, skills, and traits. They give you additional options and bonuses when making a move—or sometimes act as their own self-contained moves.

Assets provide both mechanical and narrative benefits. For example, if you are an **Herbalist**, you gain bonuses to your moves when treating injuries or sicknesses. You can envision your character identifying plants, diagnosing rare illnesses, and summoning up obscure facts about herbal remedies. Even when you aren't making moves, your role colors the interests and manner of your character. Also, your expertise might offer story possibilities and new quests as you interact with others in need of your services.

Ironsworn assets are formatted as printable cards, available for download at ironswornrpg.com. Put them alongside your character sheet for easy reference. Each asset card includes three **abilities**.

ASSET TYPES

There are four types of assets: **Companions**, **paths**, **combat talents**, and **rituals**. You can mix-and-match assets as you like—whatever fits your vision for your character and their experiences and goals.

COMPANION

HAWK

Name:

Your hawk can aid you when it is aloft.

○ **Far-seeing:** When you *Undertake a Journey*, or when you *Resupply* by hunting for small game, add +1.

○ **Fierce:** When you *Secure an Advantage* +edge using your hawk to harass and distract your foes, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

○ **Vigilant:** When you *Face Danger* +wits to detect an approaching threat, or when you *Enter the Fray* +wits against an ambush, add +2.

0

+1

+2

+3

COMPANIONS

Companions are your NPC helpers. When you acquire a companion, give them a name and envision their appearance and personality. If they don't have a starting ability, choose one. Upgrading a companion enables additional abilities.

Companions utilize a health track and may suffer harm as a result of one of your moves. When your companion takes damage, make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 94) to determine the outcome. See page 43 to learn more.

PATHS

Paths represent your background, interests, training, and skills. They provide mechanical and narrative advantages, but also reflect who you are and how you interact with the world. For example, a **Ritualist** would likely have a different outlook than a **Veteran**. Choosing both those paths can reflect an evolution of your character or an interesting background.

PATH



STORYWEAVER

- When you *Secure an Advantage*, *Compel*, or *Forge a Bond* by sharing an inspiring or enlightening song, poem, or tale, envision the story you tell. Then, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.
- When you *Make Camp* and choose the option to relax, you may share a story with your allies or compose a new story if alone. If you do, envision the story you tell and take +1 spirit or +1 momentum. Any allies who choose to relax in your company may also take +1 spirit or +1 momentum.
- When you *Sojourn* within a community with which you share a bond, add +2 (instead of +1).

COMBAT TALENT



SHIELD-BEARER

If you wield a shield...

- When you *Face Danger* using your shield as cover, add +1. When you *Clash* in close quarters, take +1 momentum on a strong hit.
- When you bear a shield painted with a meaningful symbol, and you *Endure Stress* as you face off against a fearsome foe, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.
- When forced to *Endure Harm* in a fight, you may instead sacrifice your shield and ignore all harm. If you do, your shield is destroyed or will require extensive repair; suffer -2 momentum.

COMBAT TALENTS

Ironsworn characters are assumed to be skilled fighters. Even without a combat talent, you can wield weapons and perform combat moves (page 78). A combat talent reflects a particular area of expertise, and gives you additional options and bonuses.

Combat talent assets typically require you to wield a specific weapon, as noted in the asset text. For example, if you are a **Shield-Bearer** and don't have a shield at the ready, you can't use the asset's abilities.

RITUALS

Magic in *Ironsworn* is cast through rituals which help support your actions or act as unique moves. Like all assets, rituals can be selected as you gain experience and can be upgraded over time to make them more flexible or powerful.

All rituals utilize a move as their default marked ability. You must make this move and the associated action roll to trigger the effect. Any secondary abilities you gain by upgrading the asset are dependent on performing the ritual described as the default ability.

RITUAL



COMMUNION

- When you surround the remains of a recently deceased intelligent creature with lit candles, and summon its spirit, roll +heart. Add +1 if you share a bond. On a strong hit, the spirit appears and you may converse for a few minutes. Make moves as appropriate (add +1). On a weak hit, as above, but the spirit also delivers troubling news unrelated to your purpose. Envision what it tells you (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) and *Endure Stress* (1 stress).
- As above, and you may also commune with the long-dead.
- When you perform this ritual, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

ACQUIRING ASSETS

You may select three assets when you create your character. Additional assets can be acquired with experience points when you *Advance* (page 103).

Some assets can only be obtained after you have fulfilled narrative or mechanical requirements. This is in addition to the experience point cost. The text of the assets will outline the requirements. For example:

- **Banner-Sworn** requires that you have marked a bond with a leader or faction. If you have an appropriate background bond, or have made the *Forge a Bond* move with a leader or faction, you may add the asset.
- **Battle-Scarred** requires that you are maimed (page 38). If you have marked the debility, you may add the asset.
- **Ritualist** requires that you *Fulfill Your Vow* in service to an elder mystic, and *Forge a Bond* to train with them. Once you've done that, you may add the asset.

For assets without a requirement, you should consider the narrative justification when you add it to your character. What have you done to gain these abilities? How have your goals changed to support this new focus? Make your selection meaningful in the context of your story.

UPGRADING ASSETS

When you spend experience (page 44) to upgrade an asset, you fill in the dot on your asset card to show you've acquired the ability. All assets include three abilities. The first will probably be filled in when you purchase the asset. If not, you get to choose one of the three abilities to start.

Upgrading an asset costs 2 experience. Abilities may be selected in any order. You don't have to activate the second ability to upgrade the third one.

ASSET ABILITIES

Assets provide one or more functions.

- They provide **bonuses (adds)** for specific moves.
- They allow you to **alter the outcome of a move** by rerolling dice.
- They provide **improved outcomes for successful moves**, such as taking +1 momentum on a hit.
- They give you an option to **exchange one resource for another**, such as trading momentum for inflicting additional harm.
- They allow you to **use moves in unusual circumstances**, such as using the **Scrying** ritual to *Gather Information* remotely.
- They allow you to **use a different stat** instead of the one normally required by a move.
- They provide **unique self-contained moves**.
- They **add narrative detail** and create situations where you can reveal more about your character or your world.

Follow the directions on the asset to apply its abilities to your current situation.

ABILITY REQUIREMENTS

Narrative circumstances and the outcome of failed moves may force you into situations where you can't leverage a key asset, making your adventure more challenging and dramatic.

For example, if you don't have a animal pelt, you can't perform the **Bind** ritual. If you *Undertake a Journey* without your **Horse** companion, you won't gain the bonus. If you are an **Archer** who's run out of arrows, you'll have to try something else. Before you make a move using an asset, take a moment to ensure you are properly positioned and equipped to use those abilities.

USING COMPANION ABILITIES

If you have a companion, leveraging their abilities is an option, not a requirement. Through the fiction, you can interact with your companion and have them perform tasks or assist you without using one of the asset abilities. For example, a **Horse** companion can put you in position to travel at speed or get away from danger.

When you leverage a companion's ability, you are inherently putting them at risk. **If you roll a 1 on your action die when aided by a companion, any negative outcome of the move should involve your companion.** Depending on the circumstances, they might suffer harm, be put in danger, become separated from you, or refuse your commands.

INFLECTING HARM ON COMPANIONS

When a companion suffers physical damage, you make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 94). When their health is at 0, they are in danger of being killed. Some moves, such as *Sojourn* (page 71) and *Make Camp* (page 64), offer options for your companion to recover health.

SLAIN COMPANIONS

If your companion is killed, give yourself 1 experience point for each marked ability. Then, remove the asset. If you acquire the same type of companion through the narrative of your quest and journeys, you can rebuy the asset at the normal cost.



FAILING AN ASSET MOVE

For the sake of brevity, moves within an asset do not usually describe the result of a miss. If an asset offers a self-contained move, and doesn't provide a specific consequence for a miss, you can leverage the miss result of the *Face Danger* move (page 60): "On a miss, you fail, or your progress is undermined by a dramatic and costly turn of events. *Pay the Price*." In short, make something negative happen as appropriate to the circumstances.

FAILED RITUALS

Dabbling in the mystic arts is dangerous, and the results can be unpredictable. If the ritual goes wrong, envision what sort of backlash might be possible, or *Ask the Oracle*. You'll also find a Mystic Backlash table on page 189.

Failing a ritual might also lead to an entirely mundane result. Perhaps you were ambushed in the midst of the ritual. Or, you waste time (suffer -momentum) or resources (suffer -supply). You might choose to save any overt supernatural backlash for special circumstances, such as when you roll a match.

USING ASSET CARDS

Booklets of asset cards are available for download at ironswornrpg.com. You can print and cut out individual cards, and each is sized for use with standard 3.5x2.5 in (88x63mm) card protectors.

Or, you can purchase decks of preprinted asset cards. Visit ironswornrpg.com to learn more.

To start, select three assets. Since this is a key aspect of your character, feel free to choose assets as the first step in character creation. You can let your assets guide your concept, or vice versa.

EXPERIENCE

When you *Fulfill Your Vow* (page 101), you gain **experience**. The amount of experience is based on the rank of the quest, and ranges from 1 to 5 points. Mark an 'X' on your character sheet for each point you've earned.

EXPERIENCE

X

X

X

X

When you *Advance* (page 103), you spend experience to purchase assets or upgrade an asset. Replace the 'X' for each point spent with a filled-in dot.

EXPERIENCE

X

Per the *Advance* move, you may:

- Add a new asset by spending 3 experience.
- Upgrade an asset by spending 2 experience.

To start, your experience is unmarked.

EQUIPMENT

Make note of any important equipment or items you start with. These are things that might impact the narrative and the moves you make, or provide texture to your character's background. They don't offer mechanical bonuses unless they are represented by an asset, such as a weapon used in a combat talent.

You can assume you are equipped for travel and adventure as represented by your supply track. Don't worry about managing rations or ammo or other mundane necessities.

There are no limitations by the rules, but envision your character's place in society and consider the availability of resources in your version of the Ironlands. By default, a fine sword or a set of quality armor is rare, and marks you as someone of note. It influences how others react to you in the fiction of your game.

If you want to begin your adventures as a typical Ironlander, envision yourself outfitted with cheap, mundane gear. A hand-me-down set of quilted armor. A ratty traveling cloak. A battered wooden shield. A spear and a worn knife. Improving your lot in life can be part of your narrative journey.

To start, make note of any items which have a narrative impact and equipment which relates to your assets. Keep it simple.

BECOMING IRONSWORN

In your first session, envision your current situation. Something has happened—or is about to happen—which puts you on the path of the Ironsworn. This is your **inciting incident**. Make it personal. Give it teeth. It's not a situation you can just walk away from. You must set things right.

If you need inspiration for this starting situation, have a look at the prompts for vows in chapter 4 - 'Your World' (page 111) and chapter 5 - 'Foes and Encounters' (page 133). Or, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 107) and interpret the meaning of the answer.

To learn more about starting your campaign, see page 193. Then, *Swear an Iron Vow* and play to see what happens.

CHARACTER CREATION SUMMARY

Work through the following steps in whatever order you prefer.

- 1 Envision your character (page 31).
- 2 Choose a **name** (page 33).
- 3 Set your **stats** by arranging these bonuses across edge, heart, iron, shadow, and wits in any order: 3, 2, 2, 1, 1 (page 33).
- 4 Set your **health**, **spirit**, and **supply** to +5 (page 33).
- 5 Set your **momentum** to +2, your **max momentum** to +10, and your **momentum reset** to +2 (page 35).
- 6 Mark up to three background bonds (page 36).
- 7 Pick three **assets** (page 39).
- 8 Make note of any important **equipment or items** (page 45).
- 9 Set a **background vow**, and give it a rank of extreme or epic. Then, envision your **inciting incident** and *Swear an Iron Vow*. For details on setting up your campaign, see page 193.

CHAPTER 3

MOVES



MAKING MOVES

Moves help you decide what happens when you do something risky or uncertain, and they resolve various fictional and mechanical situations. There is a move for most common actions and scenes you will portray in *Ironsworn*. When you do something or encounter a situation within the scope of a move, refer to the move and follow its instructions to see what happens.

When a move is referenced within this rulebook or within another move, the move's name will be *italicized*. When you see *italicized* text, it's your prompt to make that move.

The *Ironsworn* moves are also available as a printable reference at ironswornrpg.com. Refer to that handout during your session, and come back to this chapter when you need guidance or want more detail.

MOVE OUTCOMES

Most moves use an action roll (page 8) to resolve the outcome. Roll your action die and challenge dice, add the relevant stat to your action die along with any adds provided by the move or your assets, and check the result.

- **Strong hit:** When your action score is greater than both of the challenge dice, you succeed at what you are trying to do. Take any benefits as defined by the move. You are in control. Envision what you do next.
- **Weak hit:** When your action score is greater than only one of the challenge dice, it's a mixed result. You've probably succeeded, but with a lesser effect or a cost. The move will describe the outcome or choice you need to make. Control of the situation is slipping away. What happens next?
- **Miss:** When your action score isn't greater than either of the challenge dice, you failed or need to make a serious concession. The move will give you a specific result, or tell you to *Pay the Price* (page 105). You've lost control of the situation. What happens next?

A progress roll (page 18) is a variation of the action roll used to resolve an extended challenge. When you make a progress move, you won't roll your action die. Instead, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress track. Then, check the result for a strong hit, weak hit, or miss.

Other moves leverage an oracle roll (page 22) to help guide the fiction. You'll roll two ten-sided dice to generate a number between 1 and 100, and check your result against a table.

Some moves don't use dice at all; don't roll unless the move tells you to.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MOVES

FICTION FIRST, THEN MOVE

What are you trying to do? How are you doing it? What complications might you face? Envision it. If you're playing co-op or guided, talk it out. If—after thinking through the fiction—you decide you are doing something or encountering a situation that falls under a move, make the move.

Depending on the scale of the current action, you might be visualizing a montage of days (a journey, for example) or the passing of a mere second (an intense fight). Always think from the standpoint of the fiction—even if it's obvious what move you'll make. Then, translate the fiction into the mechanics of a move, and back to the fiction again as you play out the result.

To learn more about how fiction and mechanics interact, see page 203.

NOT EVERYTHING IS A MOVE

Don't let your session jump from move to move without any roleplay, worldbuilding, or storytelling. If you're doing something safe and certain, it's probably not a move. If you'd rather gloss over something, do it.

Many moves offer a potential benefit and cost, and it's ultimately your decision whether to risk the move to gain the reward. If you happen across a community in your travels, and decide to roleplay some low-key interactions with the locals, that's not necessarily a move. However, if you are wounded and low on supplies, *Sojourn* (page 71) gives you an opportunity to recover.

Moves are also used as a pacing mechanism. Moves leading immediately to other moves make the situation feel more intense and dangerous.

MAKE MOVES MATTER

Let your moves flow organically out of the narrative. Don't make moves purely for a mechanical benefit without some support in the fiction. Don't repeat a move trying to get your desired outcome. A move, hit or miss, should always result in a change to the current situation.

For example, you are trying to *Compel* (page 69) a clan leader to agree to an alliance. You roleplay how you attempt to reason with them. Then, you make the roll, and fail. They refused. Why? What else do you learn or what do they do to make your situation more complex or dangerous? Whatever happens, something happens. You shouldn't try to *Compel* them again unless you bring a new approach or leverage to bear.

However, there will be times when you make a move multiple times in sequence. In combat, you'll often *Strike* (page 79) or *Clash* (page 80) with

consecutive rolls. When you *Undertake a Journey* (page 65), you may make the roll several times to gain progress. That's fine as long as the rolls don't get too mechanical. Break up the flow of play with other actions, narrative beats, and events that cause you to rethink your approach. When in doubt, follow this guideline: If you've made the same move three times in a row, switch things up. Make something happen.

MAKING GROUP MOVES

When you are adventuring with allies (other player characters), you will often make moves to resolve a challenge for the group. This represents your character taking the lead in a particular scene. You might serve as the spokesperson as you *Compel* an enemy to negotiate a surrender. Or, you might guide your party through a dense wood as you *Undertake a Journey*. Unless a move specifically offers benefits for your allies, any mechanical bonus you gain from a hit is applied only to the character making the move. For example, if you represent your group as you *Swear an Iron Vow* (page 98) and score a strong hit, you take the mechanical reward (per the move, "take +2 momentum"). Everyone else benefits from the narrative success.

The exception are moves such as *Make Camp* and *Sojourn*, which provide specific options for your allies to improve their status tracks or clear debilities. Also, your supply track is shared when you travel together, and any change (positive or negative) affects everyone in the group.

Allies can contribute to your action by making the *Aid Your Ally* move (page 76). On a hit, you gain a bonus you can leverage to improve your chance of success. If more than one ally makes this move, bonuses can be stacked.

When you make a move for your group and face a negative outcome, you should apply mechanical and narrative costs as appropriate to the current situation.

MAKING PROGRESS MOVES

There are four progress moves: *Reach Your Destination* (page 68), *End the Fight* (page 82), *Fulfill Your Vow* (page 101), and *Write Your Epilogue* (page 77). These moves represent your attempt to act decisively and resolve a challenge or complete a narrative arc. When you make these moves, you won't roll your action die and add a stat. Instead, you tally your progress score by adding +1 for each fully filled progress box. Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve the move as directed. You cannot burn momentum when making a progress move, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

To learn more about progress tracks and progress moves, see page 14.

EQUIPMENT AND MOVES

Equipment and items can contribute to the fiction of how you make or avoid a move. What you wear or the items you carry might also affect how you envision your character. Otherwise, equipment is not especially important. To learn more about equipment for your character, see page 25 and page 45.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

In combat, the weapons you wield and armor you wear mainly provide narrative detail for the scene. When you envision how you fight, take your equipment into account.

Weapons have implied characteristics. Light axes, knives, or spears can be thrown. A bow is fired. A sword is a fine weapon balanced for attack and defense. When you wield a spear, you leverage its reach to hold your opponent at bay or attack with speed and precision. When you fight with a knife, you move inside your opponent's guard and slash and cut. When you hold a shield, you deflect blows, bash or shove your foe, or even block arrows at range.

Similarly, you can envision yourself relying on armor as you like. Do you wear crudely stitched hides for protection? Perhaps a fine shirt of mail handed down from your kin? Do you hide your face within a visored iron helm? How does your armor affect your combat stance and tactics?

You can lose a weapon, run out of ammo, or see your armor damaged as a result of a failed move.

This can be represented mechanically through a loss of momentum. Or, you might *Endure Stress* if an item of sentimental value is destroyed. Losing access to a weapon also limits your ability to inflict harm (1 harm instead of 2—see page 19). Always start with the fiction. What moves does this item allow you to make or avoid? What happens when you no longer have it?



If you have a combat talent asset (page 40), your weapon and armor may provide additional benefit through abilities. As long as you carry the item, you may use those abilities.

INITIATIVE

Initiative is a special mechanic in combat. It reflects who is in control. When you have initiative, you make proactive moves and have more options. When your foe has initiative against you, they are forcing you to react. Initiative shifts between you and your foes depending on the result of your moves. Some moves are inherently proactive or offensive and can only be made when you have initiative. Others are reactive or defensive and are made when your foe has initiative.

Combat moves (page 78) usually specify when you make the move (with or without initiative) and whether you take or lose initiative as part of the outcome. However, you will make moves which aren't specifically combat moves to take action or avoid dangers in a fight. To determine whether you have initiative, follow these guidelines (unless a move tells you otherwise):

- **When you score a strong hit**, you take or retain initiative.
- **When you score a weak hit or miss**, you lose initiative.

The ability to take initiative on a strong hit applies even to suffer moves (page 90). For example, if you score a miss when you *Clash* and your foe inflicts harm, you can still take back initiative with a strong hit on *Endure Harm*. This is your character shrugging off the hit and roaring back into the fight. To learn more about other moves in combat, see page 85.

NPCs do not make moves. When an NPC has initiative, they take actions in the fiction of the scene which force you to react. When you have initiative, you are in control and taking proactive actions to achieve your objectives.

INITIATIVE AND ALLIES

When you are playing with allies (other player characters), you each track your own initiative based on the outcome of your moves. You can shift the focus between characters and make moves as appropriate to the situation. A character with initiative makes proactive moves to inflict harm or setup an advantage. A character without initiative defends against attacks or tries to get back into the fight.

Keep in mind that initiative doesn't represent who goes next. Talk out what happens as if moving a virtual camera around your imagined scene. Bring the chaos of a melee to life. Use a dramatic moment to jump to a different character and leave everyone in suspense. Keep things moving to give everyone a chance in the spotlight.

EXAMPLE: INITIATIVE IN ACTION

Ash and Tayla are playing *Ironsworn* in co-op mode without a GM. They are helping defend a village against a raider attack. They come across two raiders in the longhouse.

Both of them make the *Enter the Fray* move (page 78). This is the move that triggers combat. Per the description of this move, the situation and their intent determines what stat to use for the roll. The raiders aren't aware of them yet, and Ash wants to use this to their advantage and get a shot or two off with his bow. He'll roll +shadow. Tayla, meanwhile, is eager to wade into the fight. She rolls with +heart, caution be damned.

Ash rolls a strong hit, and gains initiative. Tayla rolls a weak hit.

They think for a moment about how to manage the initial focus of the fight. Ash suggests, "Tayla, you are charging into battle, but these raiders are no greenhorns. They react quickly, readying their weapons, and one of them lunges with a spear."

This narration shows that Tayla does not have control of the situation. She'll have to react to the raider and try to gain back initiative.

However, Tayla wants to put the focus on Ash, who has initiative. This gives him an opportunity to intercede in the trouble Tayla is about to face.

"You've got a second before I'm in the thick of it," Tayla tells Ash. "What do you do?"

"Quick as I can, nock an arrow, pull back, and send it flying towards the guy with the spear. That's a *Strike*."

Ash rolls +edge for the *Strike* (page 79), and scores a weak hit. He can mark progress against the raider, but he has lost initiative.

"I was just a bit slow with that arrow shot," Ash says. "Let's inflict harm for it in a second. First, though, the raider thrusts the spear at you. What do you do?"

Ash and Tayla are essentially rewinding time for dramatic effect. The result of Ash's move, the arrow shot, hasn't occurred in the fiction yet. They'll use this as a technique to resolve the weak hit and give the raider an opportunity to act before getting hit with an arrow.

"I'm going to try to evade the attack and get inside his guard," Tayla says.

"*Clash?*" Ash asks. This move (page 80) lets Tayla to try to inflict harm on her foe.

"No. I just want to defend."

"Sounds like *Face Danger* then. Roll for it."

Tayla makes the *Face Danger* move (page 60). She gets a strong hit, and now has initiative.

"He thrusts with his spear," Tayla says, describing the outcome of her move, "but I knock it aside with my shield. I'm inside his guard, bringing back my sword for a swing..."

"And at that moment," Ash says, "thwack! An arrow slices right past you and into the guy's shoulder. He reels."

"Nice," Tayla tells Ash. "You probably don't have another clear shot now that I'm mixing it up with them. What do you do?"

"I'll drop the bow, draw my axe, and join the fight."

Ash doesn't have initiative, so the fiction needs to show him not in control of the situation. "As I move forward," he adds, "the raider on the left suddenly charges at me."

"Let's see what happens with me first," Tayla says.

"Sure. You're inside his guard. He's reeling from that arrow shot. What do you do?"

Tayla pantomimes a sword swing. "Right across his neck. *Strike*."

Tayla makes the roll. Another strong hit. She marks the harm as progress against the raider. He's at ten progress.

"I'll try to *End the Fight*," Tayla says, triggering the move that determines whether she's defeated this raider (page 82).

She makes the roll. A strong hit. The raider is out of this battle.

"Meanwhile," Tayla says, "you've got the other one bearing down on you. They're holding their shield out like a battering ram. What do you do?"

MOVE GLOSSARY

There are several common phrases, terms, and prompts you'll see as part of moves and assets. They are summarized here (in alphabetical order).

“ADD +X”

Add this number to your action die. This is in addition to any other bonuses you otherwise receive, such as your stat. Your action die + your stat + adds is your final action score. See page 8 for details.

“ALLIES / ALLY”

An ally (page 25) is a character controlled by another player.

“ASK THE ORACLE”

When you seek inspiration to decide the outcome of a move, resolve what happens next, or get details about your world, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 107). This move lets you ask questions to get a yes/no result or use random prompts for brainstorming. When you are playing with a GM, they are the oracle. Ask them what happens, or talk it out.

“COMPANION”

A companion (page 25) is an NPC asset.

“CHOOSE”

The move will provide a list of options and the number you may select. You may not select a single option more than once.

“ENDURE HARM (X HARM)”

Make the *Endure Harm* move (page 91), reducing your health track by the indicated amount of harm.

“ENDURE STRESS (X STRESS)”

Make the *Endure Stress* move (page 95), reducing your spirit track by the indicated amount of stress.

“IN EXCHANGE FOR”

Adjust the appropriate tracks by the amount indicated in the move. Typically, you will trade +1 in one track for -1 in another.

“INFLICT YOUR HARM”

When you inflict your harm (page 19), you mark progress against your foe. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If you are unarmed or using an improvised or simple weapon (such as a shield, stick, club, staff, or rock), you inflict 1 harm.

Each point of harm you inflict is marked as progress on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to their rank. For example, each point of harm equals 2 ticks when fighting an extreme enemy, or 2 full progress boxes when fighting a dangerous enemy.

“INFLICT +X HARM”

“Inflict +1 Harm” tells you to add 1 harm to your current attack. Some assets increase your harm in particular circumstances, or a move might give you an option to increase your harm. You must inflict harm as a result of your move to gain the bonus. Always add your harm and any bonus harm together, then apply it to your foe's progress track.

“ON A HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A HIT”

Act on these instructions if you score a weak or strong hit on a move (your move score beats one or both of the challenge dice).

“ON A WEAK HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A WEAK HIT”

Act on these instructions if your move score is greater than one challenge die, but less than or equal to the other.

“ON A STRONG HIT” / “IF YOU SCORE A STRONG HIT”

Act on these instructions if your move score is greater than both challenge dice.

“ON A MISS” / “IF YOU SCORE A MISS”

Act on these instructions if your move score does not beat either of the challenge dice.

“PAY THE PRICE”

When you roll a miss on a move, you'll usually see a prompt to *Pay the Price*. This move (page 105) helps you resolve the outcome of failure. If you're playing without a GM, you make the most obvious or interesting bad outcome happen based on the current circumstances, roll on the *Pay the Price* table to see what happens, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 107). If you're playing with a GM, they can decide what happens, ask you to roll on the table, or talk it with the group.

“PROGRESS MOVE”

This is a special type of move to resolve the outcome of a goal or challenge. When you make a progress move, tally the number of filled boxes on your progress track as your progress score. Only add fully filled boxes (those with four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit, or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

To learn more about progress tracks and progress moves, see page 14.

“REROLL ANY DICE”

After you roll your move, you may pick up and reroll your choice of any dice, including either or both of the challenge dice and your action die. Set aside the dice you intend to keep. You may only reroll once, using a single throw for all dice you choose to reroll. Choose carefully, because the new result for all dice must stand.

“ROLL +[STAT]”

Add the value of the indicated stat to your action die. This is the basic action roll (page 8). Most moves indicate the stat you should use, such as “roll +iron”. If it doesn’t, or gives you a choice, use the most appropriate stat.

“SUFFER -X”

Subtract this number from the indicated track. For example, “Suffer -1 supply” tells you to subtract 1 from your supply track. If a specific amount is open to interpretation, reduce the track as appropriate to the challenge faced.

Rank	Amount
Troublesome	-1
Dangerous	-2
Formidable	-3
Extreme	-4
Epic	-5

When you are fighting a foe, they inflict harm and stress based on their rank. For example, a formidable foe inflicts 3 harm or stress.

When in doubt about the amount you suffer, just assume it is a dangerous result and adjust the associated track by -2.

“TAKE +X”

Add this number to the indicated track. For example, “Take +2 momentum” tells you to add 2 to your current momentum track.

Some assets may offer additional bonuses. Unless stated otherwise, this bonus is added to anything else you gain as a result of your move. If you take +2 momentum as part of a move, and you are using an asset which gives you +1 momentum on the same move, you take +3 momentum total.

“WHEN YOU...”

This is the move trigger. When you do this thing, or encounter this situation, make the move. Only you, the character, makes moves. You or the GM don’t use moves for non-player characters or creatures. If you’re just checking to see if something happens or how someone acts, you can *Ask the Oracle* (page 105).



ADVENTURE MOVES

Adventure moves are used as you travel the Ironlands, investigate situations, and deal with threats.

FACE DANGER

When you attempt something risky or react to an imminent threat, envision your action and roll. If you act...

- With speed, agility, or precision: Roll +edge.
- With charm, loyalty, or courage: Roll +heart.
- With aggressive action, forceful defense, strength, or endurance: Roll +iron.
- With deception, stealth, or trickery: Roll +shadow.
- With expertise, insight, or observation: Roll +wits.

On a **strong hit**, you are successful. Take +1 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you succeed, but face a troublesome cost. Choose one.

- You are delayed, lose advantage, or face a new danger: Suffer -1 momentum.
- You are tired or hurt: *Endure Harm* (1 harm).
- You are dispirited or afraid: *Endure Stress* (1 stress).
- You sacrifice resources: Suffer -1 supply.

On a **miss**, you fail, or your progress is undermined by a dramatic and costly turn of events. *Pay the Price*.

The *Face Danger* move is a catch-all for risky, dramatic, or complex actions not covered by another move. If you're trying to overcome an obstacle or resist a threat, make this move to see what happens. You select which stat to roll based on how you address the challenge.

A strong hit means you succeed. You are in control. What do you do next?

A weak hit means you overcome the obstacle or avoid the threat, but not without cost. Choose an option and envision what happens next. You don't have complete control. Consider how the situation might escalate, perhaps forcing you to react with another move.

A miss means you are thwarted in your action, fail to oppose the threat, or make some progress but at great cost. You must *Pay the Price*.

SECURE AN ADVANTAGE

When you assess a situation, make preparations, or attempt to gain leverage, envision your action and roll. If you act...

- With speed, agility, or precision: Roll +edge.
- With charm, loyalty, or courage: Roll +heart.
- With aggressive action, forceful defense, strength, or endurance: Roll +iron.
- With deception, stealth, or trickery: Roll +shadow.
- With expertise, insight, or observation: Roll +wits.

On a **strong hit**, you gain advantage. Choose one.

- Take control: Make another move now (not a progress move); when you do, add +1.
- Prepare to act: Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, your advantage is short-lived. Take +1 momentum.

On a **miss**, you fail or your assumptions betray you. *Pay the Price*.

The structure of *Secure an Advantage* is similar to *Face Danger*. You envision your action and roll + your most relevant stat. This move, however, is proactive rather than reactive. You're evaluating the situation or strengthening your position.

This move gives you an opportunity to build your momentum or improve your chance of success on a subsequent move. It's a good move to make if you want to take a moment to size up the situation, or if you're acting to gain control. It will often encompass a moment in time—such as shoving your foe with your shield to setup an attack. Or, it can represent preparation or evaluation spanning minutes, hours, or even days, depending on the narrative circumstances.

A strong hit means you've identified an opportunity or gained the upper hand. You knocked your enemy down. You moved into position for an arrow shot. You built your trap. You scouted the best path through the mountains. Now it's time to build on your success.

A weak hit means your action has helped, but your advantage is fleeting or a new danger or complication is revealed. You pushed, and the world pushes back. What happens next?

A miss means your attempt to gain advantage has backfired. You acted too slowly, presumed too much, or were outwitted or outmatched. *Pay the Price*.

GATHER INFORMATION

When you **search an area**, **ask questions**, **conduct an investigation**, or **follow a track**, roll +wits. If you act within a community or ask questions of a person with whom you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you discover something helpful and specific. The path you must follow or action you must take to make progress is made clear. Envision what you learn (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, the information complicates your quest or introduces a new danger. Envision what you discover (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and take +1 momentum.

On a **miss**, your investigation unearths a dire threat or reveals an unwelcome truth that undermines your quest. *Pay the Price.*

Use this move when you're not sure of your next steps, when the trail has gone cold, when you make a careful search, or when you do fact-finding.

There's some overlap with other moves using +wits and involving knowledge, but each has their purpose. When you're forced to react with awareness or insight to deal with an immediate threat, that's *Face Danger*. When you size up your options or leverage your expertise and prepare to make a move, that's *Secure an Advantage*. When you're spending time searching, investigating, asking questions—especially related to a quest—that's when you *Gather Information*. Use whichever move is most appropriate to the circumstances and your intent.

A strong hit means you gain valuable new information. You know what you need to do next. Envision what you learn, or *Ask the Oracle*.

With a weak hit, you've learned something that makes your quest more complicated or dangerous. You know more about the situation, but it's unwelcome news. To move forward, you need to overcome new obstacles and see where the clues leads.

On a miss, some event or person acts against you, a dangerous new threat is revealed, or you learn of something which contradicts previous information or severely complicates your quest.

HEAL

When you **treat an injury or ailment**, roll +wits. If you are mending your own wounds, roll +wits or +iron, whichever is lower.

On a **strong hit**, your care is helpful. If you (or the ally under your care) have the wounded condition, you may clear it. Then, take or give up to +2 health.

On a **weak hit**, as above, but you must suffer -1 supply or -1 momentum (your choice).

On a **miss**, your aid is ineffective. *Pay the Price.*

When you tend to physical damage or sickness—for yourself, an ally, or an NPC—make this move. Healing might be represented by staunching bleeding, binding wounds, applying salves, or using herbs to brew a tonic. In the Ironlands, healing is not overtly magical, but some folk know how to treat even the most dire of injuries and illnesses.

Healing takes time. A few minutes for a quick treatment to get someone on their feet. Hours or perhaps days for more severe injuries. Use what seems appropriate to the circumstances, and consider how this downtime affects your quests and other things going on in your world.

A miss can mean you've caused harm rather than helping, or some perilous event interrupts your care.

NPCs who are not companions do not have a health track. When you attempt to *Heal* them, make this move and apply the result through the fiction. They will improve, or not, as appropriate to the move's outcome.

RESUPPLY

When you **hunt**, **forage**, or **scavenge**, roll +wits.

On a **strong hit**, you bolster your resources. Take +2 supply.

On a **weak hit**, take up to +2 supply, but suffer -1 momentum for each.

On a **miss**, you find nothing helpful. *Pay the Price.*

When you're in the field and need to bolster your supply track, make this move. Fictionally, this represents hunting and gathering. You might also search an area where supplies might be found, such as an abandoned camp or field of battle.

If you're adventuring with allies, you share the same supply value. When one of you makes this move, each of you adjust your supply track.

If you have the unprepared condition marked, you can't *resupply*. Instead, you need to find help in a community when you *Sojourn*.

MAKE CAMP

When you **rest and recover for several hours in the wild**, roll +supply.

On a **strong hit**, you and your allies may each choose two. On a **weak hit**, choose one.

- Recuperate: Take +1 health for you and any companions.
- Partake: Suffer -1 supply and take +1 health for you and any companions.
- Relax: Take +1 spirit.
- Focus: Take +1 momentum.
- Prepare: When you break camp, add +1 if you *Undertake a Journey*.

On a **miss**, you take no comfort. *Pay the Price*.

Making camp can be a purely narrative activity and can be abstracted or roleplayed as you like. However, if you need to recover from the struggle of your adventures while traveling through the wilds, make this move.

Unlike most moves, you will not roll + a stat. Instead, you roll +supply. This represents your access to provisions and gear. Huddling in your cloak on the cold ground is a different experience than a warm fire, good food, and a dry tent.

On a strong hit, choose two from the list. You may not select a single option more than once. On a weak hit, choose one. If you recuperate or partake, you can also apply those benefits to your companions (NPC assets—see page 39).

If you are traveling with allies, only one of you makes this roll for the group. Each of you may then choose your own benefits on a strong or weak hit.

On a miss, you gain no benefits of your downtime. Perhaps you suffered troubling dreams (*Endure Stress*). Poor weather may have left you weary and cold (*Endure Harm*). Or, you were attacked. If in doubt, roll on the *Pay the Price* table or *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. Depending on what you envision, you can play to see what happens, or jump to the next day as you continue on your journey the worse for wear.

UNDERTAKE A JOURNEY

When you **travel across hazardous or unfamiliar lands**, first set the rank of your journey.

- Troublesome journey: 3 progress per waypoint.
- Dangerous journey: 2 progress per waypoint.
- Formidable journey: 1 progress per waypoint.
- Extreme journey: 2 ticks per waypoint.
- Epic journey: 1 tick per waypoint.

Then, for each segment of your journey, roll +wits. If you are setting off from a community with which you share a bond, add +1 to your initial roll.

On a **strong hit**, you reach a waypoint. If the waypoint is unknown to you, envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, choose one.

- You make good use of your resources: Mark progress.
- You move at speed: Mark progress and take +1 momentum, but suffer -1 supply.

On a **weak hit**, you reach a waypoint and mark progress, but suffer -1 supply.

On a **miss**, you are waylaid by a perilous event. *Pay the Price*.

This is *Ironsworn's* travel move. When you set off or push on toward a destination, make this move.

First, give your journey a rank. Decide how far—and how hazardous—it is based on the established fiction. If you're unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. Most of your journeys should be troublesome or dangerous. Formidable or extreme journeys might require weeks within your narrative, with appropriate stops, side quests, and adventures along the way. An epic journey is one of months, or even years. It is the journey of a lifetime.

If the journey is mundane—a relatively short distance through safe territory,—don't make this move. Just narrate the trip and jump to what happens or what you do when you arrive.

ALONG FOR THE RIDE?

If you are part of a caravan or party of NPCs, and aren't an active participant in the planning or execution of the journey, you won't make this move or track progress. The journey will be resolved in the fiction. You can *Ask the Oracle* to determine what happens en route or when you arrive.

ALLIES AND JOURNEYS

If you are traveling with allies, one of you makes the *Undertake a Journey* roll for each segment, and you share a progress track. The responsibility for leading the journey can switch from segment to segment as you like.

Your fellow travelers can assist by making the *Aid Your Ally* move. Perhaps they are scouting ahead or sustaining you with a lively song. They can also *Resupply* to represent foraging or hunting for supplies en route. Everyone should offer narrative color for what they do and see on the journey, even if they are not making moves.

Only the character making the move takes the momentum bonus on a strong hit. But, because your supply track is shared, each of you mark -1 supply when the acting character makes that choice on a strong hit or when they suffer a weak hit.

WAYPOINTS

If you score a strong or weak hit on this move, you reach a waypoint. A waypoint is a feature of the landscape, a settlement, or a point-of-interest. Depending on the information you have or whether you have traveled this area before, a specific waypoint may be known to you. If it isn't, envision what you find. If you need inspiration, *Ask the Oracle*.

You will find random tables for waypoint features on page 176, but do not rely too heavily on these generators. Seek inspiration from your fiction and the landscape you envision around you. If it's interesting, wondrous, or creates new opportunities for drama and adventure, bring it to life.

Depending on the pace of your story and your current situation, you may choose to focus on this waypoint. A settlement can offer roleplay opportunities or provide a chance to recuperate and provision via the *Sojourn* move. In the wilds, you might make moves such as *Make Camp*, *Resupply*, or *Secure an Advantage*. Or, you can play out a scene not involving moves as you interact with your allies or the world. Mix it up. Some waypoints will pass as a cinematic montage (doubtlessly depicted in a soaring helicopter shot as you trudge over jagged hills). Other waypoints offer opportunities to zoom in, enriching your story and your world.

When you roll a match (page 9), take the opportunity to introduce something unexpected. This could be an encounter, a surprising or dramatic feature of the landscape, or a turn of events in your current quest.

MARKING PROGRESS

When you score a hit and reach a waypoint, you mark progress per the rank of the journey. For example, on a dangerous journey you mark 2 progress

(filling two boxes on your progress track) for each waypoint. When you feel you have accumulated enough progress and are ready to make a final push towards your destination, make the *Reach Your Destination* move. For more on progress tracks and progress moves, see page 14.

TRAVEL TIME

Travel time can largely be abstracted. The time between waypoints might be hours or days, depending on the terrain and the distance. If it's important, make a judgment call based on what you know of your journey, or *Ask the Oracle*.

MOUNTS AND TRANSPORT

Horses, mules, and transport (such as boats) influence the fiction of your journey—the logistics of travel and how long it takes. They do not provide a mechanical benefit unless you have an asset which gives you a bonus (such as a **Horse** companion).

MANAGING RESOURCES

You can intersperse *Resupply* or *Make Camp* moves during your journey to manage your health, spirit and supply, or to create new scenes as diversions. Don't be concerned with using the *Make Camp* move as an automatic capstone to a day of travel. You can be assumed to rest and camp as appropriate without making the move, and you can roleplay out those scenes or gloss over them as you like. When you want the mechanical benefit of the *Make Camp* move, or you're interested in playing the move out through the fiction, then do it.

ON A MISS...

You do not mark progress on a miss. Instead, you encounter a new danger. You might face hazards through the weather, the terrain, encounters with creatures or people, attacks from your enemies, strange discoveries, or supernatural events. Decide what happens based on your current circumstances and surroundings, roll on the *Pay the Price* table, or *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. Depending on your desired narrative pace, you can then play out the event to see what happens, or summarize and apply the consequences immediately.

For example, you roll a miss and decide you encounter a broad, wild river which must be crossed to continue on your journey. If you want to focus on how you deal with the situation, play to see what happens by making moves. You might *Secure an Advantage* by exploring upriver for a ford and then *Face Danger* to cross. Or, if want to quickly push the story forward, you could fast-forward to a perilous outcome such as losing some provisions during the crossing (suffer -supply). Mix things up, especially on long journeys.

REACH YOUR DESTINATION

Progress Move

When **your journey comes to an end**, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. Momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, the situation at your destination favors you. Choose one.

- Make another move now (not a progress move), and add +1.
- Take +1 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you arrive but face an unforeseen hazard or complication. Envision what you find (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss**, you have gone hopelessly astray, your objective is lost to you, or you were misled about your destination. If your journey continues, clear all but one filled progress, and raise the journey's rank by one (if not already epic).

When you have made progress on your journey progress track and are ready to complete your expedition, make this move. Since this is a progress move, you tally the number of filled boxes on your progress track. This is your progress score. Only add fully filled boxes (those with four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit, or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

When you score a strong hit, you arrive at your destination and are well-positioned for success. This should be reflected in the mechanical benefit offered by the move, but also in how you envision your arrival. If this has been a long, arduous journey, make this moment feel rewarding.

On a weak hit, something complicates your arrival or your next steps. Things are not what you expected, or a new danger reveals itself. Perhaps the village is occupied by a raiding party, or the mystic whose council you sought is initially hostile to you. Envision what you find and play to see what happens.

On a miss, something has gone horribly wrong. You realize you are off-course, you had bad information about your destination, or you face a turn of events undermining your purpose here. Depending on the circumstances, this might mean your journey ends in failure, or that you must push on while clearing all but one of your filled progress and raising the journey's rank.

If you are traveling with allies, one of you makes this move. Each of you benefit (or suffer) from the narrative outcome of the roll. Only the character making the move gets the mechanical benefit of a strong hit.

RELATIONSHIP MOVES

Relationship moves are made as you interact with others in the world, fight duels, form bonds, support your allies, and determine the ultimate fate of your character.

COMPEL

When **you attempt to persuade someone to do something**, envision your approach and roll. If you...

- Charm, pacify, barter, or convince: Roll +heart (add +1 if you share a bond).
- Threaten or incite: Roll +iron.
- Lie or swindle: Roll +shadow.

On a **strong hit**, they'll do what you want or share what they know. Take +1 momentum. If you use this exchange to *Gather Information*, make that move now and add +1.

On a **weak hit**, as above, but they ask something of you in return. Envision what they want (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss**, they refuse or make a demand which costs you greatly. *Pay the Price*.

When you act to persuade someone to do as you ask, or give you something, make this move. It might be through bargaining, or intimidation, charm, diplomacy, or trickery. Use the appropriate stat based on your approach, and roll to see what happens.

This move doesn't give you free rein to control the actions of other characters in your world. Remember: Fiction first. Consider their motivations. What is your leverage over them? What do they stand to gain or avoid? Do you have an existing relationship? If your argument has no merit, or your threat or promise carries no weight, you can't make this move. You can't intimidate your way out of a situation where you are at a clear disadvantage. You can't barter when you have nothing of value to offer. If you are unsure, *Ask the Oracle*, "Would they consider this?" If the answer is yes, make the move.

On the other hand, if their positive response is all but guaranteed—you are acting obviously in their best interest or offering a trade of fair value—don't make this move. Just make it happen. Save the move for times when the situation is uncertain and dramatic.

On a weak hit, success is hinged on their counter-proposal. Again, look to the fiction. What would they want? What would satisfy their concerns or motivate them to comply? If you accept their offer, you gain ground. If not, you've encountered an obstacle in your quest and need to find another path forward.

If you promise them something as part of this move, but then fail to do as you promised, they should respond accordingly. Perhaps it means a rude welcome when next you return to this community. If they are powerful, they may even act against you. If you share a bond, you would most certainly *Test Your Bond*. Your actions, good or bad, should have ramifications for your story beyond the scope of the move.

On a miss, they are insulted, angered, inflexible, see through your lies, or demand something of you which costs you dearly. Their response should introduce new dangers or complications.

Compel may also be used to bring combat to a non-violent conclusion. Your approach dictates the stat you use—typically +iron when you threaten with further violence, +heart when you attempt to surrender or reason with them, and +shadow when you use trickery. Your foe must have a reason to be open to your approach. If unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. To learn more, see page 88.



SOJOURN

When you **spend time in a community seeking assistance**, roll +heart. If you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you and your allies may each choose two from within the categories below. On a **weak hit**, choose one. If you share a bond, choose one more.

On a hit, you and your allies may each focus on one of your chosen recover actions and roll +heart again. If you share a bond, add +1. On a strong hit, take +2 more for that action. On a weak hit, take +1 more. On a miss, it goes badly and you lose all benefits for that action.

Clear a Condition

- Mend: Clear a wounded debility and take +1 health.
- Hearten: Clear a shaken debility and take +1 spirit.
- Equip: Clear an unprepared debility and take +1 supply.

Recover

- Recuperate: Take +2 health for yourself and any companions.
- Consort: Take +2 spirit.
- Provision: Take +2 supply.
- Plan: Take +2 momentum.

Provide Aid

- Take a quest: Envision what this community needs, or what trouble it is facing (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). If you chose to help, *Swear an Iron Vow* and add +1.

On a **miss**, you find no help here. *Pay the Price*.

Communities stand as an oasis within the perilous wilds of the Ironlands. They are a source of protection, trade, and fellowship. However, there are no grand cities like those that stood in the Old World. Life here is too harsh. Resources too few.

When you rest, replenish, and share fellowship within a community, make this move. Depending on your level of success, you can choose one or more debilities to clear or tracks to increase. If you share a bond with this community and score a hit, you may select one more.

You may select an option only once. If you recuperate, you can also apply those benefits to your companions (NPC assets—see page 39). If you *Sojourn* with

allies, only one of you makes this move, but all of you can make your own choices on a strong or weak hit.

Your *Sojourn* should require several hours or several days, depending on your current circumstances and level of aid and recovery required. Make this move only once when visiting a community, unless the situation changes.

On a hit, this move also includes an option to roll again for one of your selected recover actions. The second roll either provides a bonus to that activity (on a hit), or causes you to lose all benefits for your recovery. For example, if you are suffering from low spirit, you might choose to focus on the consort action, representing time in the mead hall or intimacy with a lover. Roll +heart again, and take the bonus if you score a hit.

You should envision what makes this community and its people unique. Give every community at least one memorable characteristic. If you need inspiration, *Ask the Oracle*. You will find creative prompts, along with generators for community names and troubles in chapter 6 (page 165).

Narratively, you can imagine much of the time in this community passing as a montage. If you choose to focus on a recovery action, zoom into that scene and envision what happens. You might be in the healer's house, at the market, dancing at a festival, or speaking with the clan leader and making plans. Envision how this scene begins, make your roll, and then narrate the conclusion of the scene—good or bad—based on the result of your focus roll.

You can also perform additional moves while in the community. If you need to *Gather Information*, *Compel* someone, or *Draw the Circle* to resolve a feud, zoom into those scenes and play to see what happens. *Sojourn* is an overarching move that sets the tone for your stay and defines the mechanics of your recovery. It is not the only move you can make.

On a miss, something goes wrong. You are not welcomed. The citizens are hostile to you. Your dark mood alienates you. A perilous event threatens you all. Envision what happens based on your current circumstances, or *Ask the Oracle*.

DRAW THE CIRCLE

When you **challenge someone to a formal duel, or accept a challenge**, roll +heart. If you share a bond with this community, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, take +1 momentum. You may also choose up to three boasts and take +1 momentum for each.

On a **weak hit**, you may choose one boast in exchange for +1 momentum.

- Grant first strike: Your foe has initiative.
- Bare yourself: Take no benefit of armor or shield; your foe's harm is +1.
- Hold no iron: Take no benefit of weapons; your harm is 1.
- Bloody yourself: *Endure Harm* (1 harm).
- To the death: One way or another, this fight must end with death.

On a **miss**, you begin the duel at a disadvantage. Your foe has initiative. *Pay the Price*.

Then, make moves to resolve the fight. If you are the victor, you may make a lawful demand, and your opponent must comply or forfeit their honor and standing. If you refuse the challenge, surrender, or are defeated, they make a demand of you.

Ritualized duels are a common way of dealing with disputes among Ironlanders. When you challenge someone or accept a challenge, you each trace one-half of the outline of a circle into the ground with the point of an iron blade. Then, you face each other in the center of the circle and fight.

You setup your foe's progress track per the *Enter the Fray* move, but use this move instead of *Enter the Fray* to begin the fight. You have initiative at the start of combat unless you score a miss or choose the option to grant first strike.

Duels are usually stopped when one of the duelists surrenders or is clearly defeated. The victor may then make a demand which the loser must abide by. Not complying with this demand means ostracism and shame. If you lose a duel, envision what your opponent demands of you. If you're unsure, *Ask the Oracle*. Then, do it or face the narrative cost of your dishonor.

Duels may also be to the death. If one of the combatants declares their intent to fight to the death, the other must agree or forfeit.

FORGE A BOND

When you spend significant time with a person or community, stand together to face hardships, or make sacrifices for their cause, you can attempt to create a bond. When you do, roll +heart. If you make this move after you successfully *Fulfill Your Vow* to their benefit, you may reroll any dice.

On a **strong hit**, make note of the bond, mark a tick on your bond progress track, and choose one.

- Take +1 spirit.
- Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, they ask something more of you first. Envision what it is (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), do it (or *Swear an Iron Vow*), and mark the bond. If you decline or fail, *Pay the Price*.

On a **miss**, you are refused. *Pay the Price*.

Bonds connect you to the people of the Ironlands. They provide a story benefit by enriching your interactions and creating connections with a recurring cast of characters and familiar places. They also provide mechanical benefits by giving you adds when you make moves such as *Sojourn* or *Compel*. And, perhaps most importantly, your bonds help determine your ultimate fate when you retire from adventuring and *Write Your Epilogue*.

Bonds can be created through narrative circumstances or through sworn vows. If you've established a strong relationship with a person or community, you may *Forge a Bond* to give it significance. If you make this move after you successfully *Fulfill Your Vow* in service to them, you have proven yourself worthy and may reroll any dice.

When you *Forge a Bond* and score a strong hit, mark a tick on your bond progress track (page 36) and make note of your bond.

On a weak hit, they ask more of you. It might be a task, an item, a concession, or even a vow. Envision what they need, or *Ask the Oracle*. If you do it, or *Swear an Iron Vow*, you can mark the bond.

On a miss, they have refused you. Why? The answer should introduce new complications or dangers.

BONDS AND THE FICTION

In the fiction of your world, bonds can be ceremonial. If your bond is with a person, perhaps you trade gifts. When you form a bond with a community,

they may honor you in their own way. Envision what these ceremonies look like to add color and texture to the setting.

Also, respect the narrative weight of a bond. Don't declare a bond with everyone in sight to add more ticks to your bond progress track. Your bonds represent true, deep connections.

BONDS AND ALLIES

If you and your allies act together to *Forge a Bond* with an NPC or community, only one of you makes the move. Others can *Aid Your Ally* to provide support. If you are successful, each of you may mark a tick on your bond progress track. Only the character making the move takes the mechanical benefits of a strong hit (+1 spirit or +2 momentum).

Bonds can also be made between allies. One of you makes the move, and both of you may mark the bond on a hit. If you score a weak hit, your ally may decide what they ask of you. On a miss, something still stands between you. What is it? What must you do to form a deeper connection?

TEST YOUR BOND

When your bond is tested through conflict, betrayal, or circumstance, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, this test has strengthened your bond. Choose one.

- Take +1 spirit.
- Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, your bond is fragile and you must prove your loyalty. Envision what they ask of you (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and do it (or *Swear an Iron Vow*). If you decline or fail, clear the bond and *Pay the Price*.

On a **miss**, or if you have no interest in maintaining this relationship, clear the bond and *Pay the Price*.

Bonds are not necessarily everlasting. Events in your story may cause your bond to be tested. How strong is your commitment? If you seek to maintain this bond, at what cost? When you are forced to act against a community or person you share a bond with, fail in a crucial task for them, or they break faith with you, make this move.

You should *Test Your Bond* within the community or in the company of the person with whom you share the bond. If an incident forces this test, but you aren't in a position to resolve it, make a note. Then, make this move when you

next come in contact. If extended time passes without making the test (days, weeks, or months, depending on the circumstance), clear the bond and be done with it.

If you and your allies share a bond with an NPC or community, and you act together to *Test Your Bond*, only one of you makes this move.

AID YOUR ALLY

When you *Secure an Advantage* in direct support of an ally, and score a hit, they (instead of you) can take the benefits of the move. If you are in combat and score a strong hit, you and your ally have initiative.

When you take an action to aid an ally (another player's character) through the *Secure an Advantage* move, you can hand over the benefits of that move to your ally. This represents setting your ally up for success through a supporting action. You might be distracting a foe in combat, scouting ahead on a journey, or giving them encouragement as you stand against a dire threat.

If you score a strong hit when you *Secure an Advantage*, your ally makes the choice between +2 momentum or making an immediate move with a +1 add. If you have an asset which gives you any additional benefits on the outcome of a *Secure an Advantage* move, your ally also takes those benefits (instead of you).

In combat, this is a proactive move, made when you have initiative. If you score a strong hit, you and your ally both take or retain initiative.

On a weak hit when you *Secure an Advantage*, your ally takes +1 momentum. But, this advantage is fleeting or your situation becomes more complicated or dangerous. If you are in combat, you both lose initiative.

On a miss, one or both of you should *Pay the Price* as appropriate to the circumstances and your intent when making the move. If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*. As with a weak hit, you both lose initiative when in combat.

If multiple characters make this move to contribute to an ally action, all *Secure an Advantage* bonuses will stack. As long as someone scores a strong hit, the target character can take or retain initiative.

Don't ping pong this move back and forth between two characters in an attempt to build momentum. Envision what you are doing to *Aid Your Ally*, make the *Secure an Advantage* move, resolve it, and hand the reins over to your ally as they leverage the advantage. Keep it moving. Make things happen.

WRITE YOUR EPILOGUE

Progress Move

When you *retire from your life as Ironsworn*, envision two things: What you hope for, and what you fear. Then, roll the challenge dice and compare to your bonds. Momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, things come to pass as you hoped.

On a **weak hit**, your life takes an unexpected turn, but not necessarily for the worse. You find yourself spending your days with someone or in a place you did not foresee. Envision it (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **miss**, your fears are realized.

You make this move only once—when all your vows are fulfilled or forsaken and you choose to end your character's adventuring life. For better or worse, the bonds you've made will echo through your days. How have you left your mark? Where are you welcomed and where are you shunned? What remains of you when your quests are at an end?

This is a progress move. Tally the number of filled boxes on your bonds progress track as your progress score. Only add fully filled boxes (those with four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit, or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

Based on the result of this move, envision how you spend the remainder of your days.



COMBAT MOVES

When there are no other options, when the sword slips free of its sheath, when the arrow is nocked, when the shield is brought to bear, make these moves.

ENTER THE FRAY

When **you enter into combat**, first set the rank of each of your foes.

- Troublesome foe: 3 progress per harm; inflicts 1 harm.
- Dangerous foe: 2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm.
- Formidable foe: 1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm.
- Extreme foe: 2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm.
- Epic foe: 1 tick per harm; inflicts 5 harm.

Then, roll to determine who is in control. If you are...

- Facing off against your foe: Roll +heart.
- Moving into position against an unaware foe, or striking without warning: Roll +shadow.
- Ambushed: Roll +wits.

On a **strong hit**, take +2 momentum. You have initiative.

On a **weak hit**, choose one.

- Bolster your position: Take +2 momentum.
- Prepare to act: Take initiative.

On a **miss**, combat begins with you at a disadvantage. *Pay the Price*. Your foe has initiative.

Make this move when combat is joined. Set up your progress tracks for your foes and roll to see who is initially in control. Then, play to see what happens.

If you are fighting with allies, each of you make your own move to *Enter the Fray*. The outcome determines your initial positioning and readiness. You and the other players then envision the scene and make moves as appropriate. If you have initiative, you are positioned to make proactive moves. If not, you make moves to defend against attacks or get into position. If you and your allies are fighting against common enemies, you share progress tracks and mark the harm you each inflict.

If you are fighting a group of troublesome or dangerous foes, you can combine them into a single progress track. This is called a **pack**. Managing your progress against a pack is easier than tracking them as individuals, and will make combat go a bit faster. For a small pack (about 3 to 5), increase the rank

by one. For a large pack (about 6 to 10) increase the rank by two. If you are facing more than 10 troublesome or dangerous foes, group them into smaller packs and associated progress tracks as appropriate.

For more about the foes you might face in the Ironlands, see page 133.

STRIKE

When **you have initiative and attack in close quarters**, roll +iron

When **you have initiative and attack at range**, roll +edge.

On a **strong hit**, inflict +1 harm. You retain initiative.

On a **weak hit**, inflict your harm and lose initiative.

On a **miss**, your attack fails and you must *Pay the Price*. Your foe has initiative.

Make this move when you have initiative and act to inflict harm on your foe. Narratively, this move might represent a focused moment in time—a single sweep of your axe or the flight of an arrow. Or, it can depict a flurry of attacks as you put your opponent on the defensive.

On a strong hit, you strike true. By default you inflict 2 harm if you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), and 1 harm if not. A strong hit on this move gives you an additional +1 harm (so, 3 harm with a deadly weapon). You may also have additional bonuses provided by assets.

Each point of harm you inflict is marked as progress on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to their rank. For example, each point of harm equals 2 ticks when fighting an extreme enemy, or 2 full progress boxes when fighting a dangerous enemy. See page 134 for more on NPC ranks and inflicting harm.

Narratively, a strong hit represents wounding your enemy or wearing them down. You have initiative and can make your next move. If this attack was intended as a decisive blow, you can attempt to *End the Fight*.

On a weak hit, you've done some damage but have overextended or your foe counters. You mark your harm, and your foe has initiative. What do they do next?

On a miss, you must *Pay the Price*. Your opponent strikes back and you *Endure Harm*. You lose position or advantage and suffer -momentum. You face a new or intensified danger. A companion or ally is put in harm's way. Your weapon is dropped or broken. Let the outcome flow out of the fiction, or roll on the *Pay the Price* table to see what happens.

CLASH

When **your foe has initiative and you fight with them in close quarters**, roll +iron. **When you exchange a volley at range, or shoot at an advancing foe**, roll +edge.

On a **strong hit**, inflict your harm and choose one. You have the initiative.

- You bolster your position: Take +1 momentum.
- You find an opening: Inflict +1 harm.

On a **weak hit**, inflict your harm, but then *Pay the Price*. Your foe has initiative.

On a **miss**, you are outmatched and must *Pay the Price*. Your foe has initiative.

When your foe has initiative and attacks, and you choose to fight back, make this move.

First, envision your action and the fiction of the exchange. Is this a focused, dramatic moment where you each seek an opening? Or is it a flurry of attacks and parries, advances and retreats? The outcome of the *Clash* determines if your foe presses their advantage, or if you take control of the fight.

On a strong hit, you inflict your harm and steal back initiative. On a weak hit, you manage to inflict harm, but your foe retains initiative and you must *Pay the Price*. The price might be that you *Endure Harm* as your foe counters. Or, you may face some other dramatic outcome as appropriate to the current situation and your foe's intent.

On a miss, you fail to inflict harm and must *Pay the Price*. This fight is turning against you.

As with the *Strike* move, each point of harm you inflict is marked on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to their rank (page 134).

If you aren't actively fighting back—you're just trying to avoid the attack or seeking cover—you should *Face Danger* instead of *Clash*. Using that move gives you more flexibility to bring a favored stat into play, and you suffer a relatively minor cost on a weak hit. Unfortunately, you also give up the opportunity to inflict harm on your foe. See page 85 for more about using *Face Danger* in a fight.

If you ever respond to an attack by just taking the hit, that's not a move. The outcome isn't in much doubt. *Pay the Price*.

TURN THE TIDE

Once per fight, when **you risk it all**, you may steal initiative from your foe to make a move (not a progress move). When you do, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

If you fail to score a hit on that move, you must suffer a dire outcome. *Pay the Price*.

This move represents a last ditch effort to recover control of the fight. It is that moment when all seems lost, but the hero somehow rallies.

Turn the Tide lets you take initiative and make a move. The move can be whatever is appropriate under the circumstance—likely *Strike* or *Secure an Advantage*. Roll the move (add +1), and act on the results. If you've scored a hit, you may take an additional +1 momentum. Then, play to see what happens. Hopefully this bold action is a turning point for the fight.

Here's the catch: If you score a miss when you make your move, you should add extra severity to the consequences. You might face additional harm. Your weapon is broken. Your companion is grievously wounded. Consider the result of your failure and give it teeth. If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

Narratively, this is a dramatic moment. Focus on it. Envision your character's action. You struggle to your feet and raise your sword, your eyes hardening with determination. You spur your mount into a desperate charge. You grab your opponent's blade in your bare hand. You pull the dagger from your boot and lunge. Or, perhaps you state your name, lament the killing of your father, and tell your foe to prepare for death.



END THE FIGHT

Progress Move

When you **make a move to take decisive action**, and score a strong hit, you may resolve the outcome of this fight. If you do, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. Momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, this foe is no longer in the fight. They are killed, out of action, flee, or surrender as appropriate to the situation and your intent (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure).

On a **weak hit**, as above, but you must also choose one.

- It's worse than you thought: *Endure Harm*.
- You are overcome: *Endure Stress*.
- Your victory is short-lived: A new danger or foe appears, or an existing danger worsens.
- You suffer collateral damage: Something of value is lost or broken, or someone important must pay the cost.
- You'll pay for it: An objective falls out of reach.
- Others won't forget: You are marked for vengeance.

On a **miss**, you have lost this fight. *Pay the Price*.

End the Fight fulfills your previous moves and the progress you have made in this scene. This is the all-or-nothing moment where the fight is decided. Is your foe defeated? Is your victory a pyrrhic one, and tastes of ash? Does your foe suddenly turn your assumed advantage against you?

Since this is a progress move, you add the number of filled boxes on your progress track for this foe, whether it's a single enemy or a pack. This is your progress score. Only add fully filled boxes (those with four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit, or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

You can *End the Fight* only after you score a strong hit on a preceding move. Your setup move can be any action, but should be framed as a decisive maneuver or response, intended to bring the fight to a close.

If you find yourself struggling against a tide of weak hits and misses, unable to make this move, consider building and then burning momentum to get back control. Use your favored stats and assets to improve your chances. However, keep in mind that *End the Fight* is not the only way to resolve a combat scene. You can flee. You can give up. You can negotiate or force a surrender. *End the*

Fight represents the conclusion of a bloody, desperate combat, with both sides committed to see it through.

On a strong hit, envision how this foe is defeated. If you still face other foes (using separate progress tracks), you have initiative and the fight continues.

If you score a weak hit, your victory comes at a cost. Choose a listed outcome as appropriate to the circumstances. Then, consider the narrative implications of your choice and how it impacts what happens next.

On a miss, you should face a dramatic and dire consequence. Are you captured? Mortally wounded and left for dead? Is someone under your protection killed? Is an important objective or vow now lost to you? Make a choice as appropriate to the situation and the intent of your foe, or roll on the *Pay the Price* table and interpret the result as severe. Make it hurt.

When you and your allies are fighting against a common foe, you share a progress track. Any of you may attempt to *End the Fight*. If you then score a weak hit or miss, consider how your choice impacts the group and who suffers the cost as appropriate to the situation.



BATTLE

When **you fight a battle**, and it happens in a blur, envision your objective and roll. If you primarily...

- Fight at range, or using your speed and the terrain to your advantage: Roll +edge.
- Fight depending on your courage, allies, or companions: Roll +heart.
- Fight in close to overpower your opponents: Roll +iron.
- Fight using trickery to befuddle your opponents: Roll +shadow.
- Fight using careful tactics to outsmart your opponents: Roll +wits.

On a **strong hit**, you achieve your objective unconditionally. Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you achieve your objective, but not without cost. *Pay the Price.*

On a **miss**, you are defeated and the objective is lost to you. *Pay the Price.*

This move is used as an alternative to a detailed combat scene. When you want to zoom out and resolve a fight in a single roll, make this move.

First, consider your objective. Are you trying to defeat your foes? Hold them off until reinforcements arrive? Defend a person or place? Reach a position? Envision the situation, your strategy, and what you intend to gain or avoid.

Then, roll and envision the outcome. A strong hit is unconditional success. Your foes are defeated, surrender, flee, or give up their objectives as appropriate to the situation and your goals for the fight.

A weak hit means you've achieved your overall objective, but at some cost. Since this is the resolution of an extended scene, the price you pay should be dramatic and meaningful. This can include suffering a significant amount of harm, failing to achieve a secondary goal, or encountering a new danger or complication. If in doubt, roll on the *Pay the Price* table, or you may pick from the weak hit options in the *End the Fight* move.

A miss on the *Battle* move should have dire ramifications on your character and your quest. This objective is lost to you. What does that mean? Are you captured? Gravely wounded? Have you failed to save a loved one? Is the settlement overrun by raiders? Must you *Forsake Your Vow*? Consider the situation and the intent of your foe, and *Pay the Price*. Make it hurt.

Use the *Battle* move as you like. If your story doesn't emphasize fighting, or you'd rather generally abstract combat encounters, you can use this move exclusively. You can also drop it into some portion of a larger scene. Perhaps you *Battle* to quickly deal with lesser foes, then handle the fight against their leader with standard combat moves. The mix of *Battle* moves and more detailed fight scenes can help you pace your gaming sessions and let you focus on what is interesting or important.

BATTLING ALONGSIDE ALLIES

When you and your allies fight together, only one of you makes the move. Others can make the *Aid Your Ally* move, using stats as detailed in *Battle*. Resolve those moves first, and then *Battle*.

On a strong hit, all of you benefit from the narrative success, but only the character making the move gains the momentum bonus. On a weak hit or miss, all of you suffer an outcome as appropriate to the situation. When in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

OTHER MOVES IN COMBAT

You won't rely solely on combat moves in a fight. Make other moves as appropriate to the situation, your intent, and the actions of your foes.

FACE DANGER (PAGE 60)

Make this move when you seek to avoid or overcome an obstacle in combat, or when you choose to focus on defense.

- You leap over a gully as you ride into battle. *Face Danger* +edge.
- The massive elder bear roars, spittle flying. Will you muster your courage against this terrifying beast? *Face Danger* +heart.
- You bring up your shield as the raider presses their attack, standing your ground against the withering axe blows. *Face Danger* +iron.

If this is a proactive move—you are overcoming an obstacle—make it when you have initiative. If this is a reactive move—you are trying to avoid an immediate threat—your foe likely has the initiative.

When would you *Face Danger* instead of *Clash* against an attack? If you are fighting back, that's probably *Clash*. If you focusing on defense, getting out of the way, ducking behind your shield, or taking cover, that's *Face Danger*. It's less risky, since you can leverage a favored stat and the penalty on a weak hit is relatively mild. Unlike *Clash*, you won't have an opportunity to inflict immediate harm on a hit, but a strong hit with *Face Danger* can put you in good position for a follow-up move.

You'll also likely *Face Danger* if your foe is trying to gain advantage through an action other than a direct attack. They move to the trees to get a shot at you from cover. Or they taunt you, trying to provoke you into a reckless response. Perhaps they shove at you, putting you off-balance for a follow-up attack. What do you do? Envision it, then make the move. If you fail to score a hit, you likely suffer a loss of momentum to represent this setback. Your foe has initiative and will try to press their advantage.

Face Danger might also be used to flee combat altogether. If you have a path and means to escape, make this move to see if you get away.

Finally, in cases where an enemy represents a minor obstacle, *Face Danger* can be used to avoid combat or as a means of resolving your action against a mundane foe. For example, you can *Face Danger* to sneak past an enemy or run away from a potential fight. If you are dealing with a minor foe from a position of clear advantage, such as firing an arrow from hiding, you can *Face Danger* to see what happens. In either case, a miss on this move might force you to *Enter the Fray*.

SECURE AN ADVANTAGE (PAGE 61)

This move is made in combat when you try to gain some leverage, improve your position, or setup another move. For example:

- You take careful aim before shooting. *Secure an Advantage* +wits.
- You perform a sly feint, trying to put your opponent off balance and create an opening. *Secure an Advantage* +shadow.
- You attempt to dishearten your foe with an intimidating roar as you charge. *Secure an Advantage* +iron.

Secure an Advantage can be used whenever you have initiative, or as a means of establishing a favorable position prior to the fight. Mechanically, it's a powerful move for building your momentum track toward a decisive action. Narratively, it's a great way to bring cinematic action into the scene.

When you want to *Secure an Advantage*, picture the situation. Consider the terrain, your weapons, your position, and your fighting style and approach. Consider your enemy, and their tactics and readiness. Where is there an opportunity? Envision your action, then make the move.

COMPEL (PAGE 69)

Compel can be used as a shortcut to ending a combat. You don't have to make the *End the Fight* move to surrender or negotiate a truce. *End the Fight* is the outcome of a desperate, probably bloody, skirmish. If you or your foe have other objectives, give *Compel* a try.

- You attempt to force your foe to surrender. *Compel* +iron.
- You try to surrender, reason or negotiate. *Compel* +heart.
- You trick your foe into giving up the fight. *Compel* +shadow.

Compel needs to be supported by the fiction. What is your foe's intent? How do they feel about you? Are you a hated enemy? A potential meal? What are they willing to risk to end you? Has the fight gone in their favor or against them? What leverage do you have? If there's no upside for them, you can't make this move. If you aren't sure, *Ask the Oracle* before you *Compel*.

Compel might be used proactively (when you have initiative) or reactively (when your foe has it) depending on the circumstances. Offering to surrender is a reactive response, and can be done when you don't have initiative. Attempting to *Compel* your foe to give up the fight is a proactive move made when you are in control.

AID YOUR ALLY (PAGE 76)

This move is an obvious choice when you want to bolster your ally's actions. Envision what you do to help them, make the *Secure an Advantage* move, and let them take the benefits of the outcome.

You should have initiative before you attempt to *Aid Your Ally*. On a strong hit, both of you then take or retain initiative. This is a huge advantage for your ally if they were having a difficult time making progress against their foe. On a weak hit or miss, you both lose initiative.

SUFFER MOVES (PAGE 90)

Make Suffer moves as appropriate when you face the outcome of your actions within a combat scene.

If you make a suffer move and score a strong hit, you may take or retain initiative—even if you scored a weak hit or miss on the preceding move. However, this opportunity does not overrule the fiction of the moment. If you are out of action and *Face Death*, you aren't likely to come springing back into the fight. If you do score a strong hit on a suffer move, consider what happens next and the moves you may make in the context of the situation.

PAY THE PRICE (PAGE 105)

Being forced to make the *Endure Harm* move is the obvious result when you must *Pay the Price* in a fight, but there's much more that can happen in a dynamic combat situation. You lose your footing. You drop your weapon. Your shield is shattered. A goal is lost to you. A companion or ally is injured. You are put in a perilous position. A new threat reveals itself.

Mix it up. Make combat exciting and cinematic. Whatever happens, make the outcome one you wish you had avoided. If in doubt, roll on the *Pay the Price* table or *Ask the Oracle*.

ASK THE ORACLE (PAGE 107)

In solo and co-op play, you can *Ask the Oracle* about your foe's objectives, tactics, and specific actions. The oracle can also help determine the outcome of events or introduce new twists.

Use this move sparingly. For the most part, trust your instincts. Your actions trigger reactions. Who are you fighting? What do they want? What do they do next? Your first impulse is often the right one.

Chapter 6 includes the Combat Action oracle (page 188) which you can use to prompt an NPC action or response in a fight. You can also leverage the description of your foe's tactics in chapter 5 (page 133) to guide their behavior.

Be mindful of your surroundings and other characters. Ask questions. "Can I take cover here?", "Is the river shallow enough to cross?", "Do the villagers flee?" Consider your foe's actions and your opportunities in the context of the environment.

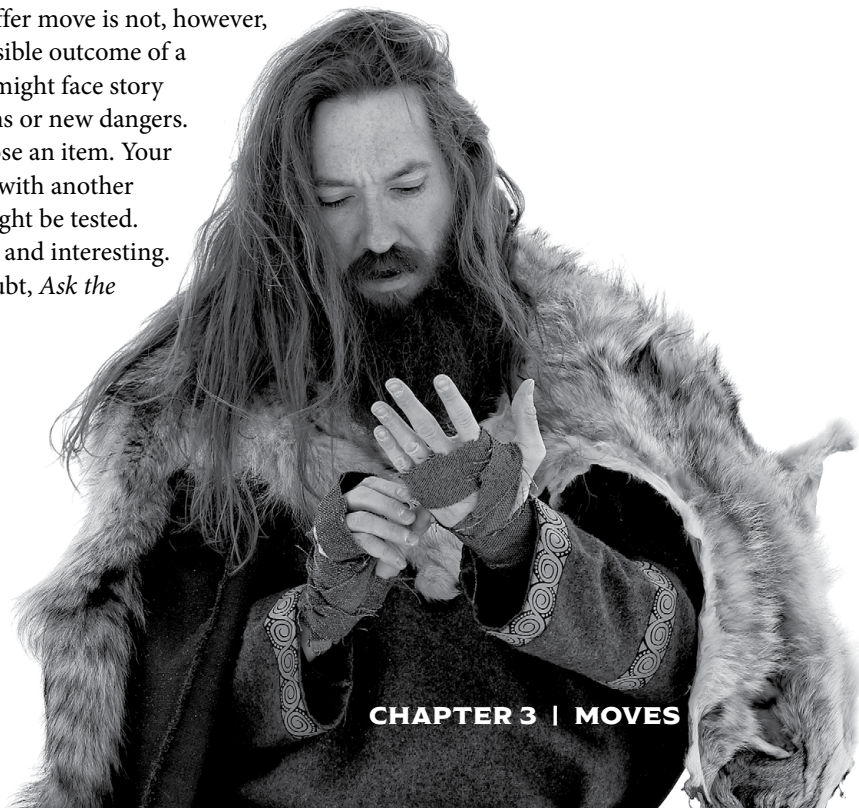
In guided play, the GM is your oracle. When you have questions about what happens next, look to them, or talk it out at the table. Your GM is free to use the *Ask the Oracle* move to answer questions.

SUFFER MOVES

These moves are made as a result of a perilous event or bad outcome on other moves. They represent what happens to you, and how you hold up against the trauma.

- **When you face physical damage**, make the *Endure Harm* move (page 91).
- **When you score a miss on the Endure Harm move, and your health is at 0**, you may need to *Face Death* (page 93).
- **When your companion is exposed to harm**, make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 94).
- **When you are demoralized, afraid, or acting against your best intentions**, make the *Endure Stress* move (page 95).
- **When you score a miss on the Endure Stress move, and your spirit is at 0**, you may need to *Face Desolation* (page 96).
- **When your supply falls to 0**, all characters make the *Out of Supply* move (page 97). If you are at 0 supply and suffer additional -supply, you each need to reduce your health, spirit, or momentum tracks by that amount.
- **When your momentum track is at its minimum (-6), and you suffer additional -momentum**, make the *Face a Setback* (page 97) move.

Making a suffer move is not, however, the only possible outcome of a failure. You might face story complications or new dangers. You might lose an item. Your relationship with another character might be tested. Keep it fresh and interesting. When in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.



ENDURE HARM

When **you face physical damage**, suffer -health equal to your foe's rank or as appropriate to the situation. If your health is 0, suffer -momentum equal to any remaining -health.

Then, roll +health or +iron, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, choose one.

- **Shake it off:** If your health is greater than 0, suffer -1 momentum in exchange for +1 health.
- **Embrace the pain:** Take +1 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you press on.

On a **miss**, also suffer -1 momentum. If you are at 0 health, you must mark wounded or maimed (if currently unmarked) or roll on the following table.

Roll	Result
1-10	The harm is mortal. <i>Face Death</i> .
11-20	You are dying. You need to <i>Heal</i> within an hour or two, or <i>Face Death</i> .
21-35	You are unconscious and out of action. If left alone, you come back to your senses in an hour or two. If you are vulnerable to a foe not inclined to show mercy, <i>Face Death</i> .
36-50	You are reeling and fighting to stay conscious. If you engage in any vigorous activity (such as running or fighting) before taking a breather for a few minutes, roll on this table again (before resolving the other move).
51-00	You are battered but still standing.

If you fail to defend against an attack, suffer an injury, are stricken with disease or sickness, or bear the brunt of an arduous action, make this move.

When you are forced to *Pay the Price*, you should *Endure Harm* if physical damage is an obvious and dramatic outcome of the current situation. Also, some moves and assets will direct you to *Endure Harm* as a cost or concession, and may indicate a specific amount of harm to suffer.

If you face an attack by an NPC foe, you use their rank (page 134) to determine the amount of harm dealt. If the amount of harm is not indicated or obvious, use the following guidelines.

- **Troublesome (1 harm):** An attack by a minor foe, a painful injury, or a tiring effort.
- **Dangerous (2 harm):** An attack by a skilled foe or deadly creature, a nasty injury, or a demanding effort.
- **Formidable (3 harm):** An attack by an exceptional foe or mighty creature, a serious injury, or an exhausting effort.
- **Extreme (4 harm):** An overwhelming attack by a monster or beast, a grievous injury, or a debilitating effort.
- **Epic (5 harm):** An attack by a legendary foe of mythic power, a horrific injury, or a consuming effort.

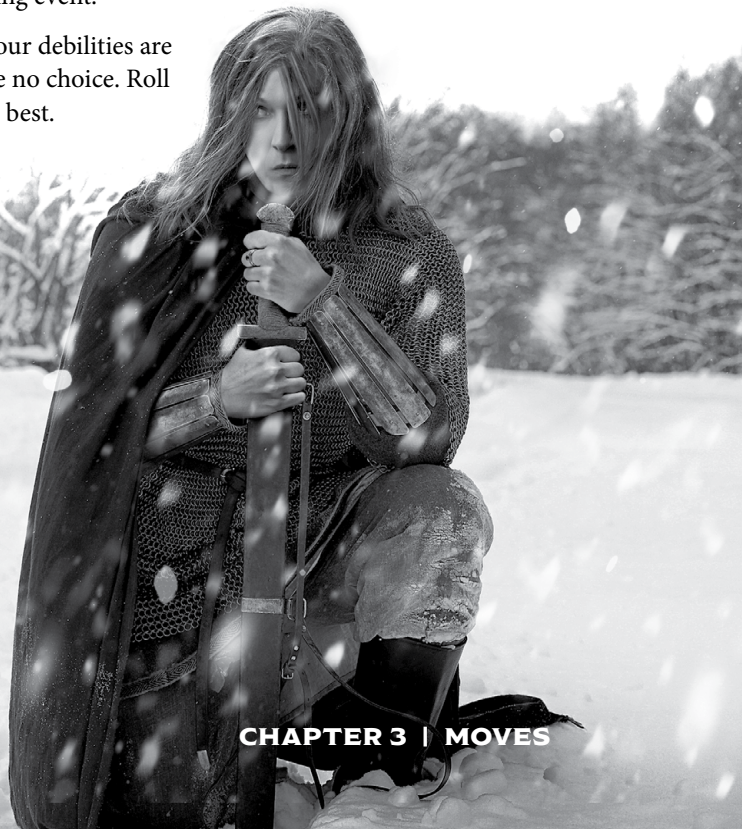
If in doubt, make it dangerous (2 harm).

Next, reduce your health track by the amount suffered. If your health is at 0, apply any remaining -health to your momentum track. Then, roll.

On a strong hit, you are undaunted. You can regain 1 health or take +1 momentum. On a weak hit, you are battered but manage to persevere.

When you score a miss with 0 health, you need to make an important decision. Do you risk the potential for death by rolling on the oracle table, or mark a debility? The wounded debility (page 37) is temporary and can be dealt with through the *Heal* or *Sojourn* moves, but becoming maimed (page 38) is a permanent, life-altering event.

If you score a miss and your debilities are already marked, you have no choice. Roll the dice and hope for the best.



FACE DEATH

When you are brought to the brink of death, and glimpse the world beyond, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, death rejects you. You are cast back into the mortal world.

On a **weak hit**, choose one.

- You die, but not before making a noble sacrifice. Envision your final moments.
- Death desires something of you in exchange for your life. Envision what it wants (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and *Swear an Iron Vow* (formidable or extreme) to complete that quest. If you fail to score a hit when you *Swear an Iron Vow*, or refuse the quest, you are dead. Otherwise, you return to the mortal world and are now cursed. You may only clear the cursed debility by completing the quest.

On a **miss**, you are dead.

You make this move when forced to *Face Death* as a result of a miss on the *Endure Harm* move, or when you face a physical trauma so horrific that death is the only reasonable outcome. This move is (hopefully) rarely made and a chance for storytelling and for enriching your world and its myths. Make it dramatic and personal.

When you first make this move, you should envision how the afterlife is represented in your version of the Ironlands, or specifically to your character. What do you see and experience? Is it only blackness and void? Do you see iron gates parting before you? Does a ferryman guide you across a blood-red river? Do you hear the songs of your kin calling you to the feast hall? On a strong hit, you might only catch glimpses of what lay beyond. Does your experience support your beliefs or call them into question? If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

There is also the personage of death to consider. Does death take form, or is it nameless and unknowable? Is it beautiful and welcoming? Sly and full of guile? As grim as the coldest night? On a weak hit, you may decide what death asks of you, which leads to a new quest and the cursed debility (page 38) as you return to the mortal world.

On a miss, you are dead. Envision what awaits you. You may begin again with a new character in a new version of the Ironlands, or explore your current world and storyline from a new perspective. Perhaps your kin will avenge you?

COMPANION ENDURE HARM

When **your companion faces physical damage**, they suffer -health equal to the amount of harm inflicted. If your companion's health is 0, exchange any leftover -health for -momentum.

Then, roll +heart or +your companion's health, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, your companion rallies. Give them +1 health.

On a **weak hit**, your companion is battered. If their health is 0, they cannot assist you until they gain at least +1 health.

On a **miss**, also suffer -1 momentum. If your companion's health is 0, they are gravely wounded and out of action. Without aid, they die in an hour or two.

If you roll a miss with a 1 on your action die, and your companion's health is 0, they are now dead. Take 1 experience for each marked ability on your companion asset, and remove it.

A companion (page 39) is an NPC asset which complements your abilities and can help support your actions. When you leverage a companion on a move, you are inherently putting them at risk. If you roll a 1 on your action die when using a companion ability, you should make the companion the focus of any negative outcome for that move. Depending on the fiction of the current situation, this might include harm.

Inflicting harm on your companion might also happen as a reasonable outcome of any move, or through a roll on the *Pay the Price* table.

Your companion asset has a health track which functions the same as your own. If they face physical damage, reduce the health track as appropriate to the circumstances or the rank of your foe, and take any leftover as -momentum. Then, roll this move.

When your companion's health is at 0 and you score a weak hit or miss, you cannot use their abilities until they gain at least +1 health. To aid your companion, make an appropriate move, such as *Heal*, *Make Camp*, or *Sojourn*.

If your companion is killed, give yourself 1 experience point for each marked ability. Then, remove the asset. If you acquire the same type of companion through the narrative of your quest and journeys, you are free to rebuy the asset at the normal cost.

You should also *Endure Stress* and suffer -spirit as appropriate to the fiction when your companion is wounded or dies.

ENDURE STRESS

When **you face mental shock or despair**, suffer -spirit equal to your foe's rank or as appropriate to the situation. If your spirit is 0, suffer -momentum equal to any remaining -spirit.

Then, roll +heart or +spirit, whichever is higher.

On a **strong hit**, choose one.

- **Shake it off:** If your spirit is greater than 0, suffer -1 momentum in exchange for +1 spirit
- **Embrace the darkness:** Take +1 momentum

On a **weak hit**, you press on.

On a **miss**, also suffer -1 momentum. If you are at 0 spirit, you must mark shaken or corrupted (if currently unmarked) or roll on the following table.

Roll	Result
1-10	You are overwhelmed. <i>Face Desolation</i> .
11-25	You give up. <i>Forsake Your Vow</i> (if possible, one relevant to your current crisis).
26-50	You give in to a fear or compulsion, and act against your better instincts.
51-00	You persevere.

Make this move when your courage fails you, when you are unnerved or disheartened, or when you act against your best intentions.

When you are forced to *Pay the Price*, you should *Endure Stress* if mental hardship is an obvious and dramatic outcome of the current situation. Also, some moves and assets will direct you to *Endure Stress* as a cost or concession, and may indicate a specific amount of stress to suffer.

If you are demoralized or frightened by an NPC foe, you can use their rank (page 134) to determine amount of stress you must suffer. If the amount of stress is not provided or obvious, use the following guidelines.

- **Troublesome (1 stress):** An unsettling incident or a frustrating failure.
- **Dangerous (2 stress):** A distressing incident or an upsetting failure.
- **Formidable (3 stress):** A horrifying incident or a demoralizing failure.
- **Extreme (4 stress):** A heart-rending incident or traumatic failure.
- **Epic (5 stress):** A soul-shattering incident or the loss of all hope.

If in doubt, make it dangerous (2 stress).

Next, reduce your spirit track by the amount suffered. If your spirit is at 0, apply any remaining -spirit to your momentum track. Then, roll.

On a strong hit, you are unfazed. You can suffer 1 less spirit or take +1 momentum. On a weak hit, you are rattled but carry on.

When you score a miss with 0 spirit, you need to make an important decision. Do you risk the potential for desolation by rolling on the oracle table, or mark a debility? The shaken debility (page 37) is temporary and can be dealt with through the *Sojourn* move, but becoming corrupted (page 38) is a permanent, life-altering event.

If you've scored a miss and your debilities are both marked, you must roll on the table to determine your fate.

FACE DESOLATION

When **you are brought to the brink of desolation**, roll +heart.

On a **strong hit**, you resist and press on.

On a **weak hit**, choose one.

- Your spirit or sanity breaks, but not before you make a noble sacrifice. Envision your final moments.
- You see a vision of a dreaded event coming to pass. Envision that dark future (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and *Swear an Iron Vow* (formidable or extreme) to prevent it. If you fail to score a hit when you *Swear an Iron Vow*, or refuse the quest, you are lost. Otherwise, you return to your senses and are now tormented. You may only clear the tormented debility by completing the quest.

On a **miss**, you succumb to despair or horror and are lost.

Make this move when forced to *Face Desolation* as a result of a miss on the *Endure Stress* move. This represents the potential breaking point for your character. Do you push on in spite of all you have seen, all you have done, or do you fall into darkness?

Choosing the option to become tormented (page 38) on a weak hit creates interesting story possibilities. What is your greatest fear? Preventing that dire outcome can steer your story in a compelling new direction.

On a miss, you are broken. There is no recovery possible. This is the end of your character's story.

OUT OF SUPPLY

When **your supply is exhausted** (reduced to 0), mark unprepared. If you suffer additional -supply while unprepared, you must exchange each additional -supply for any combination of -health, -spirit or -momentum as appropriate to the circumstances.

When you and your allies reduce your supply to 0 (through a choice or result of another move), you each mark unprepared. The unprepared debility (page 37) can be cleared when you score a hit on the *Sojourn* move and choose the equip option.

While you are unprepared, you cannot increase your supply track. If you suffer additional -supply while unprepared, you and your allies must exchange each -supply for some combination of -momentum, -health, or -spirit. Select an option appropriate to the situation. A lack of provisions can have an obvious impact on your fitness, morale, and readiness for challenges.

FACE A SETBACK

When **your momentum is at its minimum** (-6), and you suffer additional -momentum, choose one.

- Exchange each additional -momentum for any combination of -health, -spirit, or -supply as appropriate to the circumstances.
- Envision an event or discovery (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure) which undermines your progress in a current quest, journey, or fight. Then, for each additional -momentum, clear 1 unit of progress on that track per its rank (troublesome=clear 3 progress; dangerous=clear 2 progress; formidable=clear 1 progress; extreme=clear 2 ticks; epic=clear 1 tick).

When you suffer -momentum while your momentum track is already at its lowest possible point (-6), the leftover -momentum must be traded for an equal value in -health, -spirit or -supply, or it must be accounted for as lost progress in a relevant progress track. Make a choice appropriate to your character's status and the current situation. Don't just shift points around. Envision how your choice is reflected in the fiction.

If your health, spirit, and supply are all at 0, you have no choice. You must clear progress on a related progress track. You should use the quest, journey, or fight which is most relevant to the current situation.

QUEST MOVES

Making and fulfilling vows is central to your character's motivations. These oaths drive your story and give you the means to gain experience and acquire new abilities. When you embark upon a quest, manage your progress on a quest, seek to complete a quest, or gain the rewards of a quest, make these moves.

SWEAR AN IRON VOW

When you **swear upon iron to complete a quest**, write your vow and give the quest a rank. Then, roll +heart. If you make this vow to a person or community with whom you share a bond, add +1.

On a **strong hit**, you are emboldened and it is clear what you must do next (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Take +2 momentum.

On a **weak hit**, you are determined but begin your quest with more questions than answers. Take +1 momentum, and envision what you do to find a path forward.

On a **miss**, you face a significant obstacle before you can begin your quest. Envision what stands in your way (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and choose one.

- You press on: Suffer -2 momentum, and do what you must to overcome this obstacle.
- You give up: *Forsake Your Vow*.

When you encounter a wrong that must be made right, seek to fulfill a personal ambition, or give your word to serve someone, make this move.

Fictionally, an iron vow is ceremonial. You touch a piece of iron and speak your vow. Don't just make the move. Envision how your character enacts the ceremony. What do you do? What do you say? Is this a moment of grudging acceptance or one of fiery determination?

Set the rank of your quest based on what you know of the challenges you will face, or *Ask the Oracle*. Higher ranked quests require more effort (both in your narrative and through session-time and focus), but offer greater experience rewards. An epic quest could be the endeavor of a lifetime, while a troublesome quest might be resolved in a few scenes.

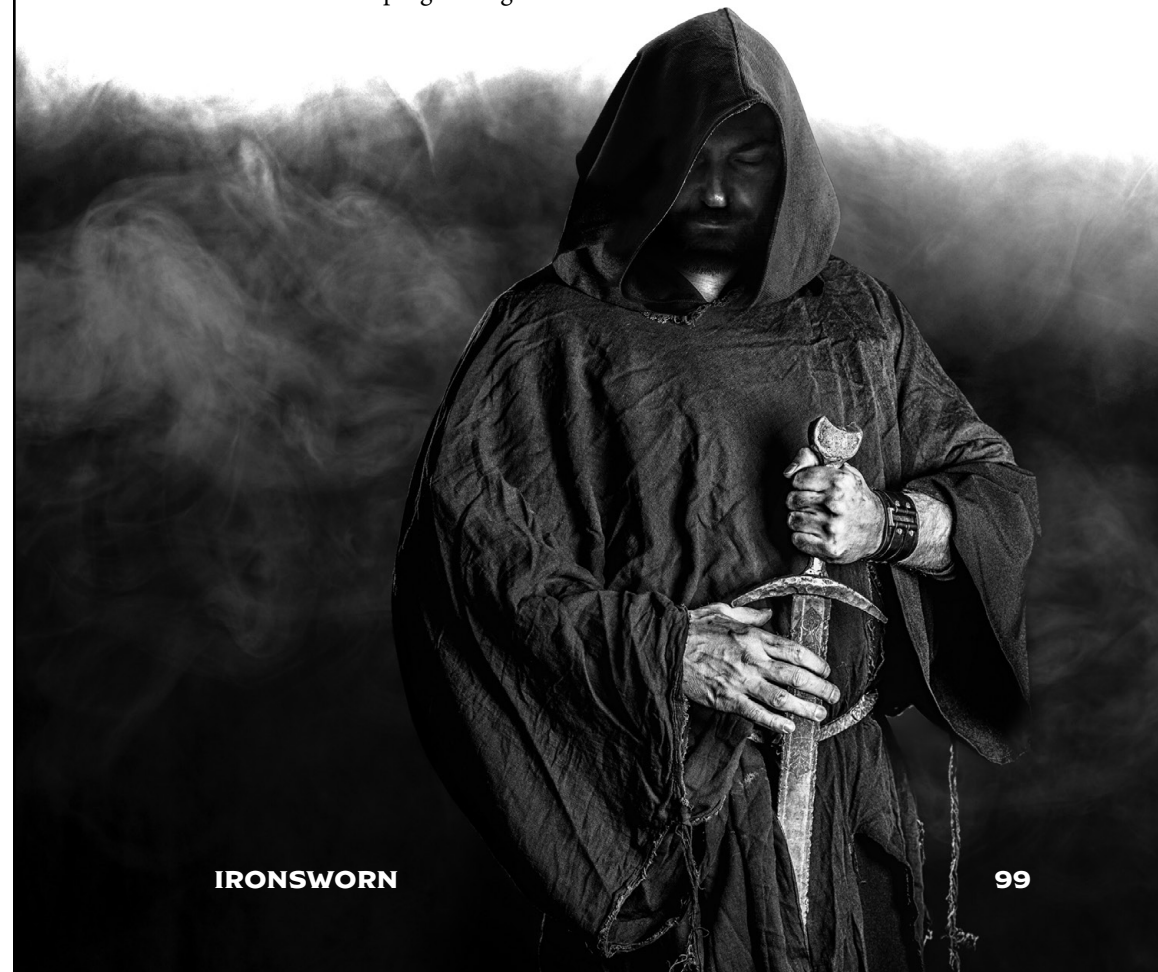
It is not necessary to resolve one vow before swearing another. In fact, the intent of these rules is for your character to run afoul of new situations and get side-tracked with new vows even while attempting to complete a separate quest. This is the life of the Ironsworn.

Based on the results of this move, your path may be clear (a strong hit), or more investigation may be required to identify your next steps (a weak hit).

On a miss, you face a serious obstacle at the very start which prevents you from undertaking this quest. It might be a sudden event, someone working against you or refusing your aid, or a personal conviction which must be overcome. When in doubt about what happens, *Ask the Oracle*. It should be significant and not easily dealt with. Also, when you resolve this obstacle, you won't *Reach a Milestone* for your quest. You aren't actually able to make progress on the vow until you overcome this initial challenge.

You also have the option, on a miss, to come to the realization that your vow was made impulsively or without support, and you may simply give up. If you do, *Forsake Your Vow*.

When allies join together to *Swear an Iron Vow*, one of you speaks for the group and makes the move. The others can commit to the cause with the *Aid Your Ally* move. If you score a hit and take +momentum, or score a miss and choose to suffer -momentum, only the character making the move adjusts their momentum track. Once your quest is underway, you share a progress track and mark progress together.



REACH A MILESTONE

When **you make significant progress in your quest** by overcoming a critical obstacle, completing a perilous journey, solving a complex mystery, defeating a powerful threat, gaining vital support, or acquiring a crucial item, you may mark progress.

- Troublesome quest: Mark 3 progress.
- Dangerous quest: Mark 2 progress.
- Formidable quest: Mark 1 progress.
- Extreme quest: Mark 2 ticks.
- Epic quest: Mark 1 tick.

You will face obstacles as you strive to complete quests. Some of these obstacles arise naturally out of the fiction of the situation. Overcoming one challenge leads naturally to the next. Others represent narrative twists introduced when you interpret the result of a move, or when you *Ask the Oracle* for inspiration. When you overcome one of these obstacles, and it was a notable challenge, make this move and mark progress on your quest.

Not every step on this path is worthy of a milestone. Did it put you in great danger? Did it cost you something significant? Did you unravel a complex web of clues and motivations? Was it dramatic and narratively interesting? Most importantly, was it directly related to your quest, and not a random or unconnected event?

How you define milestones determines the pace of your game. You need to overcome challenges to *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress. You can't (with confidence) *Fulfill Your Vow* unless you've marked progress. You don't gain experience unless you *Fulfill Your Vow*. You can't add new assets to your character unless you gain experience. That's the broad flow of how quests drive gameplay and character improvement, the tempo of which is determined by you and others at your table. If you come up against relatively simple obstacles and call them milestones, you'll mark progress and move quickly toward completing the quest. But, if you do, you'll miss out on storytelling opportunities and the satisfaction earned when you prevail against a worthy challenge.

Not sure if something is worthy as a milestone? If you're playing co-op or guided, talk it out at the table. If you're playing solo, trust your instincts and the type of play experience you want to create. In the end, it's your game.

To learn more about milestones, see page 213.

FULFILL YOUR VOW

Progress Move

When **you achieve what you believe to be the fulfillment of your vow**, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress. Momentum is ignored on this roll.

On a **strong hit**, your quest is complete. Mark experience (troublesome=1; dangerous=2; formidable=3; extreme=4; epic=5).

On a **weak hit**, there is more to be done or you realize the truth of your quest. Envision what you discover (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure). Then, mark experience (troublesome=0; dangerous=1; formidable=2; extreme=3; epic=4). You may *Swear an Iron Vow* to set things right. If you do, add +1.

On a **miss**, your quest is undone. Envision what happens (*Ask the Oracle* if unsure), and choose one.

- You recommit: Clear all but one filled progress, and raise the quest's rank by one (if not already epic).
- You give up: *Forsake Your Vow*

Your path leads here. Your foe is defeated. The relic is found. Your training is complete. The village is saved. The beast is killed. The murder is avenged. Your family's honor is restored. You are triumphant.

Or are you? Make this move to find out.

Since this is a progress move, you tally the number of filled boxes on your progress track for this quest. This is your progress score. Only add fully filled boxes (those with four ticks). Then, roll your challenge dice, compare to your progress score, and resolve a strong hit, weak hit, or miss as normal. You may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.

When you and your allies are working to fulfill a common vow, you share a progress track. When it is time to see the vow done, one of you represents the group and make the *Fulfill a Vow* move. The outcome affects everyone involved.

On a strong hit, your vow is fulfilled. Mark your experience, clear the vow, and decide what you do next. Do other quests call you into the wilds? Or, do you *Write Your Epilogue*, never again to return to your life as Ironsworn?

On a weak hit, you discover or realize something which leaves your quest unfinished or undermines your success. Envision what you learn (or *Ask the*

Oracle), make your choice, and play to see what happens. Whether you leave this behind or take on a new quest should be driven by the fiction and your choices as the character. Have you defeated your foe in a bloody fight, but they use their dying breath to say your true enemy still lives? You might *Swear an Iron Vow* to hunt them down. Have you helped return the clan chief to power, only to learn their promises were lies? You can *Swear an Iron Vow* to usurp this deceiver, or simply leave this place, promising never to return.

On a miss, a turn of events finds you defeated or your true goal is suddenly beyond reach. The band of raiders were a diversion, and a more dangerous force has stolen away with the winter stores. The crown of kings is found, but it is a forgery. You've hunted and defeated the wyvern, but discover it was only one of a large flock of beasts. If you choose to press on, the nature of your quest remains the same—protect the village, find the crown, stop the ravages of the wyverns—but most of your progress is undone through this dramatic realization.

FORSAKE YOUR VOW

When you renounce your quest, betray your promise, or the goal is lost to you, clear the vow and *Endure Stress*. You suffer -spirit equal to the rank of your quest (troublesome=1; dangerous=2; formidable=3; extreme=4; epic=5).

Make this move when you decide to abandon a quest, or if circumstances leave your goal seemingly unobtainable.

For an Ironsworn, realizing you must *Forsake Your Vow* is a dramatic and disheartening decision. Tradition says the item upon which you swore your vow—your sword, your armor, the iron coin—is discarded. Some clans even believe you must cast away all of your weapons and armor and bear no iron until you redeem yourself.

Mechanically, you *Endure Stress*, reducing your spirit track by an amount equal to the rank of your quest (troublesome=1; dangerous=2; formidable=3; extreme=4; epic=5). Narratively, you should consider how your failure affects your story and what you do to put yourself back on the proper path. Did you swear this vow in service to others? How does this impact your relationship with them? If your vow was a personal quest, how does this failure force you to rethink the path your life has taken? Where do you go from here?

If you have abandoned a quest which is central to your character's motivations, you may decide your life as an Ironsworn is done. If so, *Write Your Epilogue* to determine your fate.

ADVANCE

When you focus on your skills, receive training, find inspiration, earn a reward, or gain a companion, you may spend 3 experience to add a new asset, or 2 experience to upgrade an asset.

Make this move when you spend experience to add an asset or upgrade an existing asset.

Narratively, you should consider how your recent experiences and fulfilled vows have led to these new abilities. Was your horse a reward from the thankful chief of a highland clan? Did you train under a powerful mystic? Has your time spent trekking across the wilds made you adept at woodcraft or navigation? Let your choice of assets flow naturally from the fiction.

To learn more about spending experience and gaining assets, see page 222.



FATE MOVES

In solo and co-op play, the fate moves mediate the result of other moves or serve as inspirational prompts for your story. When you face the outcome of a move, want to know what happens next, or have a question about people, places and events external to your character, the fate moves help you discover an answer.

In guided mode, your GM represents the whims of fate. They can reference these moves as they like, but they can also decide the outcome or direct the question back to you.

There are three key aspects of using the fate moves:

- **Instinct:** If an answer to a question or the result of a situation is obvious, interesting and dramatic, make it happen.
- **Randomness:** You can roll on random tables to generate a result or answer a question.
- **Inspiration:** You can use creative prompts, such as those included in the oracles chapter (page 165) to guide your story.



PAY THE PRICE

When you suffer the outcome of a move, choose one.

- Make the most obvious negative outcome happen.
- Envision two negative outcomes. Rate one as ‘likely’, and *Ask the Oracle* using the yes/no table. On a ‘yes’, make that outcome happen. Otherwise, make it the other.
- Roll on the following table. If you have difficulty interpreting the result to fit the current situation, roll again.

Roll	Result
1-2	Roll again and apply that result but make it worse. If you roll this result yet again, think of something dreadful that changes the course of your quest (<i>Ask the Oracle</i> if unsure) and make it happen.
3-5	A person or community you trusted loses faith in you, or acts against you.
6-9	A person or community you care about is exposed to danger.
10-16	You are separated from something or someone.
17-23	Your action has an unintended effect.
24-32	Something of value is lost or destroyed.
33-41	The current situation worsens.
42-50	A new danger or foe is revealed.
51-59	It causes a delay or puts you at a disadvantage.
60-68	It is harmful.
69-77	It is stressful.
78-85	A surprising development complicates your quest.
86-90	It wastes resources.
91-94	It forces you to act against your best intentions.
95-98	A friend, companion, or ally is put in harm’s way (or you are, if alone).
99-00	Roll twice more on this table. Both results occur. If they are the same result, make it worse.

This is one of the most common moves in *Ironsworn*. Make this move when directed to by the outcome of another move, or when the current situation naturally leads to a cost through your choices or actions.

First, **choose an option as described in the move**. You may determine the outcome yourself, *Ask the Oracle* to decide between two options, or roll on the table. In guided play, you look to your GM for a ruling. Whatever choice you make, always follow the fiction. If a dramatic outcome springs to mind immediately, go with it.

Next, **envision the outcome**. What happens? How does it impact the current situation and your character? Apply the outcome to the fiction of your scene before you determine any mechanical impact. Focusing on the narrative cost leads to deeper, more dramatic stories.

Finally, **apply any appropriate mechanical penalty**:

- If you face a physical hardship or injury, *Endure Harm* and suffer -health.
- If you are disheartened or frightened, *Endure Stress* and suffer -spirit.
- If you lose equipment or exhaust resources, suffer -supply.
- If you waste precious moments or are put in an unfavorable position, suffer -momentum.
- If an ally or companion is put in harm's way, apply the cost to them.

See page 58 for guidelines on mechanical costs. When in doubt, suffer -2 from the appropriate track.

Most situations can impact both the narrative situation and your mechanical status. But, a result might also be purely narrative without an immediate mechanical cost. An initial failure might introduce a complication or force a reactive move (such as *Face Danger*). A failure on a subsequent move can then introduce a mechanical penalty. In this way, failures build on each other, and the situation gets riskier and more intense.

The narrative and mechanical costs you endure should be appropriate to the circumstances and the move you are making. Scoring a miss on *End the Fight* implies a greater cost than if you fail to *Clash* within that scene. For dramatic moments and decisive moves, up the stakes.

Once you've resolved the outcome, **envision what happens next** and how you react. You are not in control. The situation is more complex and dangerous. You may need to respond with another move to restore your advantage and avoid further cost.

ROLLING MATCHES

If you rolled a match on a move (page 9), and the outcome of that move tells you to *Pay the Price*, you can consider rolling on the table instead of just choosing an outcome. This fulfills the promise of the match by introducing a result you might otherwise not have considered. When in doubt about what

a result on the table might represent (for example, “a new danger or foe is revealed”), you can *Ask the Oracle*. However, rolling a match on the *Pay the Price* table itself doesn't have any special significance.

ASK THE ORACLE

When **you seek to resolve questions, discover details in the world, determine how other characters respond, or trigger encounters or events**, you may...

- Draw a conclusion: Decide the answer based on the most interesting and obvious result.
- Ask a yes/no question: Decide the odds of a 'yes,' and roll on the table below to check the answer.
- Pick two: Envision two options. Rate one as 'likely,' and roll on the table below to see if it is true. If not, it is the other.
- Spark an idea: Brainstorm or use a random prompt.

Odds	The answer is 'yes' if you roll...
Almost Certain	11 or greater
Likely	26 or greater
50/50	51 or greater
Unlikely	76 or greater
Small Chance	91 or greater

On a match, an extreme result or twist has occurred.

In solo or co-op play, use this move when you have a question or want to reveal details about your world. In guided play, the GM may use this move to answer their own questions or inspire the story of your game session.

DRAW A CONCLUSION

The most basic use of this move is to simply decide the answer. Think it over for a moment (or talk it out with others at your table), and go with what seems most appropriate to the current situation and introduces the most potential for drama and excitement.

Your first instinct is often the right one. If it leapt to mind, it's probably a good fit for the current situation. But, if your initial impulse doesn't really excite or interest you, give it more thought. Wait for an “aha” moment.

If you're still not sure of the answer, or want to put things in the hand of fate, you have some other options...

ASK A YES/NO QUESTION

You can ask a binary yes/no question and leave the answer open to fate.

- “Is this steading inhabited?”
- “Do I drop my sword?”
- “Is there somewhere I can hide?”
- “Do I know the way?”
- “Would they consider this trade?”

Decide the likeliness of a ‘yes’ answer, and roll your oracle dice to get the result. For example, if you rate the chance of a ‘yes’ as ‘unlikely’, you must roll 76-100 for a yes. Otherwise, the answer is no.

PICK TWO

The next option is to ask a question and pick two viable results.

- “Do I drop my sword or my shield?”
- “Is it in the forest or the hills?”
- “Does the elder bear try to pin me down, or does it bite?”
- “Am I attacked by a horror, or a beast?”
- “Is this a formidable foe, or a dangerous one?”

You rate one of those as ‘likely’, and roll on the table. If it’s a ‘yes’, the answer is your likely pick. If not, it’s the other. Use this approach when the answer is more open-ended, but you have a couple of options in mind.

SPARK AN IDEA

The final option is to seek inspiration through an open-ended question.

- “What happens next?”
- “What do they want?”
- “What’s this place look like?”
- “What do I find?”
- “Who or what attacks?”

If you’re in a game with other players, you can talk it out. Brainstorming together will lead you to interesting answers you might not have thought of on your own.

You can also use random generators to help inspire an answer. See chapter 6 (page 165) for creative prompts and random results. Or, use your preferred tools, such as an online generator for interesting names, or a set of tarot cards or rune stones for visual inspiration. When asking an open-ended question, use tools which offer a spark of inspiration instead of a definitive response. Your creative mind will lead you naturally from an abstract concept to a relevant answer, adding exciting and surprising dimension to your story.

Within the oracles worksheet (available at ironswornrpg.com) you will find a set of blank tables to create your own oracles. If you are setting off on a journey, you might fill a table with things you expect to encounter. When you want to trigger an event, roll on that table.

QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS

You can come back to the yes/no table and ask a follow-up question to clarify or affirm a result. However, you should avoid leaning too heavily on asking questions (or this move in general). Don’t let one question snowball into a series of more specific questions. Even when playing solo, oracles should be the spice of your game, not the main course. Ask a question or two, decide what it means, and move on. When in doubt, follow your gut. Your first instinct is probably the right one. Go with it.

ROLLING A MATCH

A match on your oracle dice when rolling on the yes/no table should trigger an extreme result or narrative twist. This can mean an all-caps “HELL YES!” or “HELL NO!”, or a yes or no but with an interesting or dramatic complication.

When you’re unsure what a match might mean, you can roll on another oracle table (page 167) for inspiration. If you’re still left scratching your head, just move on. Resolving a match is not a requirement. It’s just a way to introduce narrative turning points that lead you along unexpected paths. Head down the rabbit hole, but don’t get stuck in it.

ORACLES AND GUIDED PLAY

In guided play, your GM is the oracle. You won’t make this move unless you are talking things out and need a random result or a bit of inspiration. Your GM can use this move (or ask you to make it) to help guide the story.



CHAPTER 4

YOUR WORLD

WELCOME TO THE IRONLANDS

The Ironlands is a vast peninsula in the northern ocean. The people who now refer to themselves as Ironlanders settled here two generations ago, cast out of their homelands by a catastrophic event. Since that time, they have survived but not prospered. The Ironlands are a harsh, dangerous place. The winters are long and brutal. Harvests are uncertain. Depending on the choices you make as you create your version of the Ironlands, monstrous beasts and dreaded horrors may be a constant threat.

This chapter includes a brief summary for each major region of the Ironlands. It also includes a section where you define the characteristics, dangers, and mythology of your own Ironlands, creating a setting customized to your vision and preferences.

The detail here is intentionally light. Consider it a sketch on a canvas, ready to be adorned with the vibrant colors and details of your story.

TRAVEL IN THE IRONLANDS

When traveling through dangerous or unknown areas, make the *Undertake a Journey* move (page 65). You will set the rank of the journey as appropriate to the fictional circumstances—the distance, region, terrain, threats, and your character's readiness. You should also consider its importance in your quest. A higher rank means more storyline dedicated to the journey. If you want to move quicker to your destination, give it a lower rank. If this journey represents an important aspect of your character's story, or you want to create opportunities for interesting events and side quests, give it a higher rank.

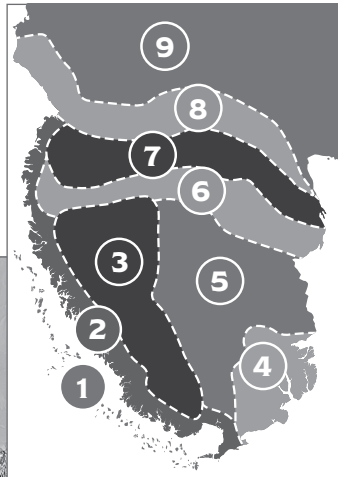
When in doubt, refer to the following for general guidelines, or *Ask the Oracle*.

- Traveling a moderate distance within a single region is **Troublesome**.
- Traveling a long distance within a single region, or across rough terrain, is **Dangerous**.
- Traveling from one region to another, or across especially challenging terrain, is **Formidable**.
- Traveling through multiple regions is **Extreme**.
- Traveling from one end of the Ironlands to another, or to a separate land, is **Epic**.

Generally, don't sweat it. Travel should move at the speed of your story. Don't worry about exact measurements for distance or time. Give your journey a rank appropriate to the circumstances and your story, and make the move to see what happens.

REGIONS OF THE IRONLANDS

- 1 - Barrier Islands
- 2 - Ragged Coast
- 3 - Deep Wilds
- 4 - Flooded Lands
- 5 - Havens
- 6 - Hinterlands
- 7 - Tempest Hills
- 8 - Veiled Mountains
- 9 - Shattered Wastes



BARRIER ISLANDS

Features:

- Crashing waves and treacherous currents
- Jagged rocks hidden just beneath the surface
- Snow-dappled cliffs jutting out of the sea
- Low clouds and curling mists
- Ferocious winds
- Gliding seabirds
- Decaying wrecks of wooden ships
- Fisher-folk braving the wild sea
- Lurking seaborne raiders

This long string of islands parallels the Ragged Coast. They are beautiful, but imposing. The slate-gray cliffs rise dramatically out of the water, topped by treeless moors. Waterfalls, fed by persistent rains, plunge over these cliffs into the raging sea. The winds are fierce and ever-present. In the winter, sleet, snow, and ocean mist can cut visibility to the length of one's arm.

The islands are sparsely populated by Ironlanders, mostly fisher-folk who brave the surrounding waters. Their settlements cling to narrow, rock-strewn shores or lie on high overlooks. At night, the dim lights of their fires and torches glimmer pitifully against the wild, storm-tossed sea.

Quest Starter: The spectral maiden appears at the bow of your ship, offering to guide you safely through the storm—for a price. What does she demand of you?



RAGGED COAST

Features:

- Narrow fjords
- Settlements built on rocky shores
- Trade ships flying colorful sails
- Shipbuilders hammering at wooden hulls
- Raiders sounding the drums of war
- Schools of orca gliding through the waves
- Monstrous serpents rising from unfathomable depths

This coast is marked by massive fjords. It is a rugged land of snow-capped cliffs overlooking blue waters.

Ironlander settlements are located at the head of the fjords in the shelter of narrow valleys. From there, both fisher-folk and raiders set sail. Their kin gather to see them off, laying wreaths of spruce in their wake.

In the center of each settlement, at the front of the longhouse, a stack of rune-marked river stones memorialize those who did not return—one stone for each of the lost.

Quest Starter: A ship which set off from a coastal settlement is found washed up on shore. It is empty. This ship carried something of great importance, now lost. What was it, and why do you swear to recover it?

DEEP WILDS

Features:

- Unbroken woodland
- A thick canopy casts the forest floor in shadow
- Lingering fog
- Constant rains
- Elves, ever watchful
- Ancient trees hung with moss
- Streams winding their way through rough terrain
- Skittering and growls from out of the mist

The Deep Wilds are a vast swath of ancient forest. The ground is a lush carpet of ferns and lichens. The gnarled branches are cloaked in hanging moss. The air is almost perpetually misty and wet. Unlike the bordering regions, heavy snow is rare here. Instead, there is the ceaseless patter of rain dripping from high boughs and the rush of river over rock. The air carries the earthy smells of damp and decay.

A few Ironlanders live along the fringes of the Deep Wilds, taking advantage of the relatively temperate climate and abundant game. However, most avoid this region. This is a land of the firstborn, of monstrous beasts, of horrors that defy description. This is the world before humans.

Quest Starter: An Ironlander has sided with an enemy in the heart of the Wilds, and is leading attacks against Ironlander settlements. Who is this person? Who have they joined forces with? What will you do to stop these attacks?

FLOODED LANDS

Features:

- Fetid wetlands
- Dead trees poisoned by salt water
- Networks of sluggish rivers
- Ponds and lakes shrouded in clinging mist
- Beguiling ghostlights, drawn to the warmth of the living
- Biting insects
- Creatures, just beneath the surface, laying in wait

This is a low-lying region of bogs, swamps, lakes, and slow-moving rivers. Near the coast, the water is salty and riddled with dead trees. Further north, the morass of forested wetlands and bogs is interspersed with rare patches of higher ground. Through it all, twisting rivers make their sluggish journey to the sea. The smell of these lands is rotten and dank. It is the smell of slow death.

A few hardy Ironlanders live here in small settlements built atop hillocks, or in homes standing on stilts over the wetlands. Most fish and forage, making their way among the waterways on flat-bottomed boats propelled by long poles. Some dig through peat for bog iron—a cold, wet, grueling task.

Travel is precarious here. One step has you on solid ground. The next sends you plunging through a thin layer of peat into a murky bog. Then, bony hands reach out to you, grasping, pulling. “Stay with me,” a voice whispers. “Stay with me here in the dark.”

Quest Starter: Rising flood waters threaten to overwhelm an Ironlander settlement. Escape by boat is the only option, but there are few boats and many people. What’s more, there is something hungry in the water, waiting to feed.

HAVENS

Features:

- Rolling hills and rocky bluffs
- Pockets of dense wood, thick with shadow
- Walled settlements
- Verdant heaths
- Wide rivers navigated by wary boatmen
- Long, harsh winters

This is an expansive region of forests, rivers, shrubland, and low hills. After an arduous journey, after untold losses, the first Ironlander settlers looked upon the Havens as a fresh start—a relative oasis in a fierce, uncaring land. It gave them hope.

Years later, that hope is fading. Even within the Havens, there is little rest or safety. The winters are long. The harvests are never enough. Raiders strike without mercy. The thick woods, deep rivers and dark nights hold secrets and lurking horrors. Some say the Ironlands is a living thing, a malevolent spirit, intent on ridding itself of the human invaders. Slowly, season by season, year by year, it is succeeding.

The Ironlander settlements in this region typically stand on hills or at the confluence of rivers. The buildings are made of wood, or sometimes stone, with roofs covered in turf. The central homes and communal structures are protected by an outer palisade fashioned from earth and wood. Outside these walls, from spring through autumn, farmers work the meager fields. In winter, the settlements are smothered by deep snow and oppressive gray clouds.

Quest Starter: A settlement has fallen under the unjust rule of a cruel leader. What leverage do they hold over these people? What is your connection to the community? What can be done to overthrow this tyrant?

HINTERLANDS

Features:

- Dense forests nestled against rugged terrain
- Hunter camps and remote settlements
- Birdsong interspersed with sudden, unsettling stillness
- Ironlanders, foraging and hunting game
- Hungry beasts, stalking
- Varou bands, howling their war song

This high terrain consists of a long string of forested hills.

Isolated Ironlander settlements in this region serve primarily as bases for hunters and trappers. A few farmers do the best they can with the rocky soil, but the people depend mostly on meat, mushrooms, berries, and other bounties from the forest to sustain them during the long winters.

Those winters are bitter and harsh. Snow gathers as deep as an Ironlander is tall, or more. Hunters, cloaked in heavy furs, wear snowshoes to navigate across the rough terrain. At night, they make camp. They drink and tell stories. They try to ward away the encroaching darkness with a blazing fire. They cast nervous glances at sounds just beyond the light.

In the spring and summer, the melting snow feeds tumultuous rivers. The forests burst with rich life. But, always there is a chill in the air. Always there is a reminder of the coming winter.

Quest Starter: A group of Ironlanders have been forced out of their Hinterland settlement. What caused them to leave? With winter coming, and food in short supply, will you attempt to reclaim their settlement or convince someone to take them in?

TEMPEST HILLS

Features:

- Stunted forests
- Howling winds
- Mist-shrouded waterfalls
- Mining settlements
- Nomad encampments on high plateaus
- Ironlander caravans hauling bounties of ore
- Wary giants keeping their distance
- Mammoths grazing in alpine meadows

These highlands are defined by rugged hills and low mountains, thin conifer woods, and wide, grassy plateaus, leading up to the heights of the Veiled Mountains. Through most seasons, the constant ill-winds break against the sides of the hills, screeching and moaning. In the dead of winter, some say these winds carry the names of those fated to die during the long cold season.

Nomadic Ironlanders live among the hills, herding livestock. In the spring and summer they move among high pastures. In the winter, they find some relief from the brutal weather in sheltered valleys.

Others live in mining settlements, drawing iron ore from riverbeds and shallow digs. Their furnaces, sending up plumes of black smoke, convert the ore into wrought iron, which is sent south for trade with the Havens.

Quest Starter: You have come across or learned of a rich source of unclaimed iron and silver among these hills. What hazards must be overcome before a mine can be established? What force opposes you or attempts to establish its own claim?

VEILED MOUNTAINS

Features:

- Massive peaks shrouded in roiling clouds
- Howling beasts
- Endless snows
- Precarious mountain trails
- Stone cairns, marking the dead
- Abandoned settlements
- Circling wyverns

Commonly referred to as the Veils, these great mountains mark the northern bounds of the settled lands. They are almost perpetually shrouded in cloud, snow, and mist. On the rare day they are visible to those Ironlanders far south in the Havens, the sight of the towering peaks is enough to inspire a mix of fear and awe.

For a few, that feeling is a call rather than a warning. The Ironlanders who dwell here are mostly members of small mining communities. They seek fortunes in iron or silver, but often find only death in the endless, brutal cold. Even those who manage to eke out some sort of life among the Veils are sure to head south before the onset of winter. Before the long dark takes hold.

Quest Starter: As winter fast approaches, there is no sign of the Ironlanders who live in a small mining community on the flanks of the Veils. They should have been off the mountain weeks ago. Time is running out.

SHATTERED WASTES

Features:

- Vast fields of broken ice
- Discomforting stillness
- Deep crevasses, plunging into darkness
- Piercing cold
- Unnatural horrors breaking through the ice

To the north of the Veiled Mountains lies the Shattered Wastes, a plain of jagged, broken ice.

No one knows the bounds of this land or what lies beyond. No Ironlanders dwell here, and only a handful have explored the passage into the Wastes through the Veils. Those who survived the journey returned with stories of unimaginable cold and *things* moving beneath the ice.

Quest Starter: The traveler returned from his journey into the Shattered Wastes with dead, frostbitten hands and extraordinary stories. The others scoff at him, but you believe. Why? What does he tell you? What compels you to see for yourself?

YOUR TRUTHS

For each category in this section, choose one of the three options and make it true for your version of the Ironlands. Your choices set the background and tone of your campaign, and may inspire vows through the quest starters listed with each option.

Not happy with any of the choices? You can also make your own truth.

Some choices in one category may contradict a choice you make in another, but you're free to bend and twist these options to fit your unique version of the Ironlands. If you find a particular choice to be evocative or interesting, make it work in the setting implied by your other choices. You can even select multiple choices within a single category. There are no rules here. Seeming contradictions can be the foundation of interesting stories.

Your choices may impact your characters and the assets you might reasonably select. For example, if magic is rare or unknown in your world, rituals can be ignored or themed in such a way as to make them more about superstition and subtlety. Feel free to build your world around your characters, or let the world influence or limit your options.

Don't get mired in building the detail of your setting before you start playing. Leave room for inspiration and surprises. As you play, fill in the blanks to further deepen your narrative and world. You may even discover that some of the choices you make here—which reflect the common knowledge of the people—aren't the actual truth after all.

The following section is available as a separate workbook at ironswornrpg.com, making it easy to print and mark your choices. If you are playing co-op or guided, do this as a group as part of your first session to give everyone input into your setting. See page 193 for more on starting your campaign.

THE OLD WORLD

- The savage clans called the Skulde invaded the kingdoms of the Old World. Our armies fell. Most were killed or taken into slavery. Those who escaped set sail aboard anything that would float. After an arduous months-long voyage, the survivors made landfall upon the Ironlands.

Quest Starter: You are a descendant of the Skulde. Because of your heritage, your family has long borne the distrust of your fellow Ironlanders. Now, a small force of Skulde have landed on our shores. Are they the harbinger of an invasion? Where do your loyalties lie?

- The sickness moved like a horrible wave across the Old World, killing all in its path. Thousands fled aboard ships. However, the plague could not be outrun. On many ships, the disease was contained through ruthless measures—tossing overboard any who exhibited the slightest symptom. Other ships were forever lost. In the end, those who survived found the Ironlands and made it their new home. Some say we will forever be cursed by those we left behind.

Quest Starter: A settlement is stricken by disease. Though this sickness bears some similarities to the Old World plague, it doesn't kill its victims. Instead, it changes them. How does this disease manifest? Why do you swear to seek out a cure?

- The Old World could no longer sustain us. We were too large in number. We had felled the forests. Our crops withered in the barren ground. The cities and villages overflowed with desperate, hungry people. Petty kings battled for scraps. We cast our fate to the sea and found the Ironlands. A new world. A fresh start.

Quest Starter: Decades ago, the exodus ended. Since then, no ships have sailed here from the Old World. Until now. Word comes of a single ship, newly arrived across the vast ocean, grounded on the rocks of the Barrier Islands. When you hear the name of this ship, you swear to uncover the fate of its passengers. Why is it so important to you?

IRON

- The imposing hills and mountains of the Ironlands are rich in iron ore. Most prized of all is the star-forged black iron.

Quest Starter: The caravan, bound for the distant southlands, left the mining settlement last season but never arrived at its destination. It carried a bounty of black iron. Why is finding this lost caravan so important to you?

- The weather is bleak. Rain and wind sweep in from the ocean. The winters are long and bitter. One of the first settlers complained, “Only those made of iron dare live in this foul place”—and thus our land was named.

Quest Starter: The harvest fell short. The unrelenting snows left the village isolated. The food is running out. What will you do to see these people through this harsh season?

- Inscrutable metal pillars are found throughout the land. They are iron gray, and smooth as river stone. No one knows their purpose. Some say they are as old as the world. Some, such as the Iron Priests, worship them and swear vows upon them. Most make the warding sign and hurry along their way when they happen across one. The pillars do not tarnish, and even the sharpest blade cannot mark them.

Quest Starter: Your dreams are haunted by visions of a pillar which stands in an unfamiliar landscape. What do you see? Why are you sworn to seek it out?

LEGACIES

- We are the first humans to walk these lands.

Quest Starter: In the writings of one of the first settlers, there is a description of a glade in the heart of the Deep Wilds. The spirits of this place are said to grant a miraculous blessing. What boon does it bestow?

- Other humans sailed here from the Old World untold years ago, but all that is left of them is a savage, feral people we call the broken. Is their fate to become our own?

Quest Starter: You find a child—one of the broken. It is wounded, and hunted by others of its kind. Do you protect it, even at the risk of inviting the wrath of the broken tribes?

- Before the Ironlanders, before even the firstborn, another people lived here. Their ancient ruins are found throughout the Ironlands.

Quest starter: Miners uncovered an underground ruin. Thereafter, the people of the settlement are haunted by strange dreams. The ruins call to them, they say. Several have disappeared in that dark, ancient place—including someone important to you.

COMMUNITIES

- We are few in number in this accursed land. Most rarely have contact with anyone outside our own small steading or village, and strangers are viewed with deep suspicion.

Quest Starter: In the dead of winter, a desperate man arrives at a snowbound steading. He is wounded, hungry, and nearly frozen to death. His family has been taken. By whom? Will you brave the merciless winter to save them?

- We live in communities called circles. These are settlements ranging in size from a steading with a few families to a village of several hundred. Some circles belong to nomadic folk. Some powerful circles might include a cluster of settlements. We trade (and sometimes feud) with other circles.

Quest Starter: A decades-long feud between two circles has flared into open conflict. What is the cause of this dispute? Do you join in the fight, or swear to put a stop to it?

- We have forged the Ironlands into a home. Villages within the Havens are connected by well-trod roads. Trade caravans travel between settlements in the Havens and those in outlying regions. Even so, much of this land is untamed.

Quest Starter: Caravans are forced to pay for passage along a trade road. This payment, one-quarter of the goods carried, leaves several communities without sufficient winter stores. Who is making these demands? How will you set things right?

LEADERS

- Leadership is as varied as the people. Some communities are governed by the head of a powerful family. Or, they have a council of elders who make decisions and settle disputes. In others, the priests hold sway. For some, it is duels in the circle that decide.

Quest Starter: You have vivid reoccurring dreams of an Ironlands city. It has strong stone walls, bustling markets, and a keep on a high hill. And so many people! Nowhere in the Ironlands does such a city exist. In your dreams, you are the ruler of this city. Somehow, no matter how long it takes, you must make this vision a reality.

- Each of our communities has its own leader, called an overseer. Every seventh spring, the people affirm their current overseer or choose a new one. Some overseers wear the iron circlet reluctantly, while others thirst for power and gain it through schemes or threats.

Quest Starter: An overseer has fallen ill. She is sure to die without help, and the illness is unknown to the village healer. Poison, or perhaps even foul magic, is suspected. The families in the community are now at each other's throats as they position their preferred candidates to take up the iron circlet. Will you discover the truth of the overseer's illness and restore her to health?

- Numerous clan-chiefs rule over petty domains. Most are intent on becoming the one true king. Their squabbles will be our undoing.

Quest Starter: You secretly possess one-half of the True Crown, an Old World relic. Centuries ago, this crown was broken in two when an assassin's axe split the head of the supreme ruler. You are descended from that lineage. Who gave you this relic? Will you find the other half of the broken crown and attempt to unite the clans under your rule? Or, do you see another use for it?

DEFENSE

- Here in the Ironlands, supplies are too precious, and the lands are too sparsely populated, to support organized fighting forces. When a community is threatened, the people stand together to protect their own.

Quest Starter: A settlement is unable, or unwilling, to defend itself against an imminent threat. Why? What peril do they face? What will you do to protect them?

- The wardens are our soldiers, guards, and militia. They serve their communities by standing sentry, patrolling surrounding lands, and organizing defenses in times of crisis. Most have strong ties to their community. Others, called free wardens, are wandering mercenaries who hire on to serve a community or protect caravans.

Quest Starter: You come upon a dying warden. She tells you of an important mission, and charges you with its completion. "Swear to me," she says, reaching out with a bloodied hand to give you an object crucial to the quest. What is it?

- Our warbands are rallied to strike at our enemies or defend our holdings. Though not nearly as impressive as the armies that once marched across the Old World, these forces are as well-trained and equipped as their communities can manage. The banners of the warbands are adorned with depictions of their Old World history and Ironland victories.

Quest Starter: A warband was wiped out in a battle against an overwhelming enemy. What is your connection to this band? Who defeated them? Will you carry their banner on a quest for vengeance, or do you vow to see it brought home to a place of honor?

MYSTICISM

- Some still find comfort in the old ways. They call on mystics to divine the fortune of their newborn, or ask them to perform rituals to invoke a bountiful harvest. Others act out of fear against those who they suspect of having power. However, most folk believe true magic—if it ever existed—is lost to us now.

Quest Starter: Someone close to you is accused of cursing a settlement, causing fields to go fallow and cattle to become sick. What is the evidence of this? Will you defend this person and uncover the true cause of the settlement's troubles?

- Magic is rare and dangerous, but those few who wield the power are truly gifted.

Quest Starter: You have heard stories of someone who wields true power. They live in an isolated settlement far away. Who told you of this mystic? Are they feared or respected? Why do you swear to seek them out?

- Magic courses through this land as the rivers flow through the hills. The power is there for those who choose to harness it, and even the common folk often know a helpful ritual or two.

Quest Starter: Someone you love walked the paths of power, and succumbed to it. Who are they? Why did they fall into darkness? Where are they now? Do you seek to save them or defeat them?

RELIGION

- A few Ironlanders still make signs or mumble prayers out of habit or tradition, but most believe the gods long ago abandoned us.

Quest Starter: A charismatic Ironlander, encouraging her followers to renounce the vestiges of Old World religions, proposes a new path for this new world. What doctrine does she teach? What does she seek to achieve? Are you sworn to aid or stop her?

- The people honor old gods and new. In this harsh land, a prayer is a simple but powerful comfort.

Quest Starter: An Ironlander is determined to make a pilgrimage into dangerous lands. What holy place do they seek? Why do you swear to aid them on this journey? Who seeks to stop them and why?

- Our gods are many. They make themselves known through manifestations and miracles. Some say they even secretly walk among us. The priests convey the will of the gods and hold sway over many communities.

Quest Starter: You bear the mark of a god. What is it? The priests declare this as a sign you are chosen to fulfill a destiny. Do you accept this fate, and swear to see it through, or are you determined to see it undone? What force opposes you?

FIRSTBORN

- The firstborn have passed into legend. Some say the remnants of the old tribes still dwell in deep forests or high mountains. Most believe they were never anything more than myth.

Quest Starter: Someone obsessed with the firstborn wants to find evidence of their existence. This will require an expedition into the far reaches of the Ironlands. What is your role in this mission?

- The firstborn live in isolation and are fiercely protective of their own lands.

Quest Starter: The elf, outcast from his kind, lives with Ironlanders. Over time, he became a part of the community. Now, he is dying. He yearns to return to his people before he passes. Does he seek absolution or justice? Why do you swear to help him? What force opposes his return?

- The firstborn hold sway in the Ironlands. The elves of the deep forests and the giants of the hills tolerate us and even trade with us—for now. Ironlanders fear the day they decide we are no longer welcome here.

Quest Starter: Humans and giants are on the brink of war. What has happened? Who do you side with? Can anything be done to defuse the situation?

BEASTS

- The beasts of old are nothing but legend. A few who travel into the deep forests and high mountains return with wild tales of monstrous creatures, but they are obviously delusional. No such things exist.

Quest Starter: You were witness to an attack by what you thought was an animal of monstrous proportions. No one believes you. In fact, you are accused of the murder you blame on this beast. How can you prove your innocence? Can you even trust your own memories of the event?

- Monstrous beasts stalk the wild areas of the Ironlands.

Quest Starter: A prominent Ironlander is consumed with the need to bring vengeance upon a specific beast. What makes this creature distinctive? How did it earn the wrath of this Ironlander? Do you aid this person in their quest, or act to prevent their blind hate from destroying more than just the beast?

- Beasts of all sorts roam the Ironlands. They dwell primarily in the reaches, but range into the settled lands to hunt. There, they often prey on cattle, but attacks on travelers, caravans, or even settlements are not uncommon.

Quest Starter: Professional slayers earn their keep by killing beasts. This particular slayer, famed throughout the Ironlands for her numerous kills, has gone missing on a hunt. Did she finally meet her match, or is something more nefarious at play. What is your connection to her?

HORRORS

- Nothing but stories to frighten children.

Quest Starter: The murders began last season. Local gossip suggests they are the work of a vengeful horror, but there may be more mundane forces at work. What is your connection to these killings? What will you do to stop them?

- We are wary of dark forests and deep waterways, for monsters lurk in those places. In the depths of the long-night, when all is wreathed in darkness, only fools venture beyond their homes.

Quest Starter: You bear the scars of an attack by a horror. What was it? Are those scars physical, emotional, or both? How do you seek to make yourself whole again?

- The dead do not rest in the Ironlands. At night we light torches, scatter salt, and post sentries at the gate. It is not enough. They are coming.

Quest Starter: A group of Ironlanders establish a settlement in a territory cursed by a malevolent horror. What evil plagues this land? Why are the Ironlanders so intent on settling here? Will you aid them, or attempt to force them to give up this foolish undertaking?

MAPPING YOUR JOURNEYS

To keep track of the details of your world, download the blank Ironlands map at ironswornrpg.com. Then, use a separate sheet, index cards, or a journal to create a key for the locations on your map.

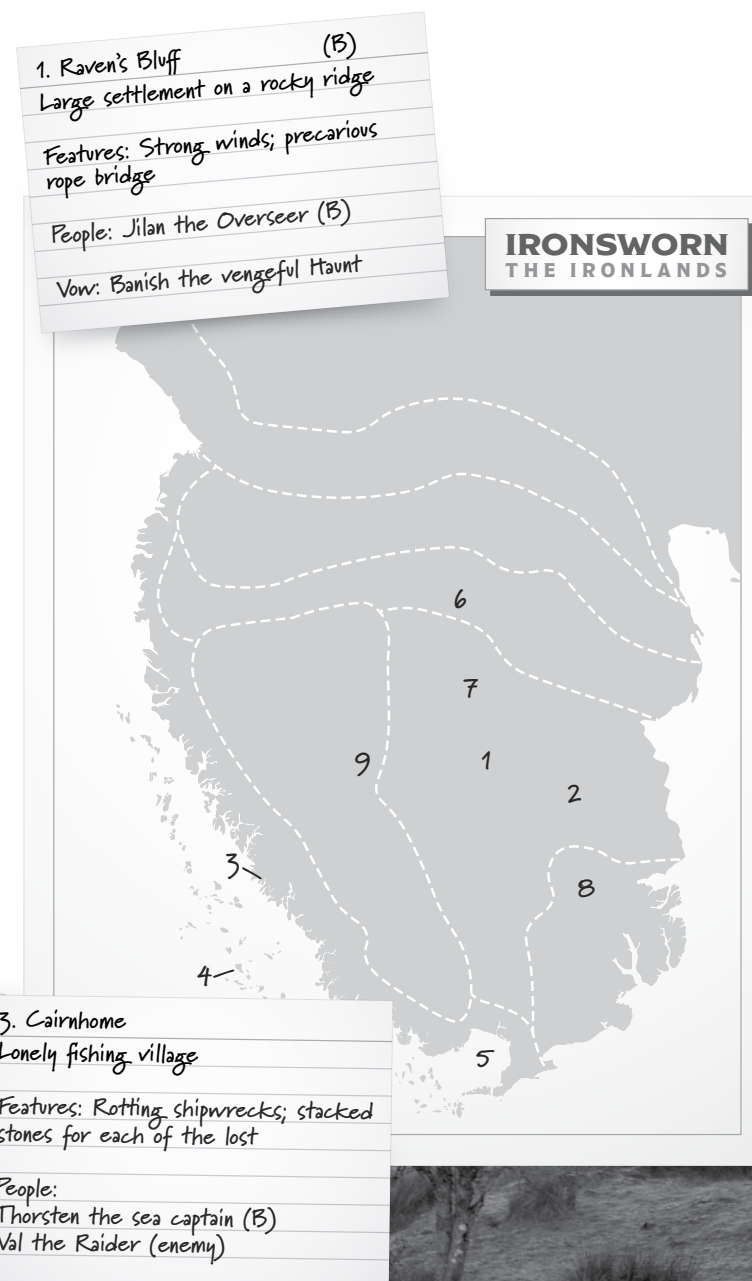
Index cards work great. They give you space for a reasonable amount of information for a region or location, and it's quick and easy to dig through them to find details on-demand. Just mark the index card with a number, and mark that same number in the proper location on your Ironlands map. If you store your index cards in order, clipped to your map, it'll take all of a couple of seconds to remind yourself, "What was the name of that village in the Hinterlands?"

You can even use these index cards for random events. Need to know where the raiders are headed? Shuffle your index cards, turn them face down, and draw one.

Don't worry about the details here. Not everything you encounter needs to be marked on the map or recorded. Focus on the people and places important to your story. Don't fuss with distances or exact positioning. There are no extra points awarded for neatness. That said, if you really enjoy detailed maps and recording your journeys, feel free to do so in whatever form works best for you.

If you're using your own map for the Ironlands or playing in a different setting altogether, you can manage the details however you like.

When you record the details of a community, include a note for any bonds you share. In the example below, (B) is used to signify a bond. The index cards can also be used to keep track of related quests.



CHAPTER 5

FOES AND ENCOUNTERS



NPCs IN THE IRONLANDS

An NPC (non-player character/creature) is anyone who inhabits your version of the Ironlands other than your character and those portrayed by your fellow players. They can be a person, being or creature. You will roleplay your interactions with NPCs, and make moves when you attempt to influence them, aid them, gain their help, or act against them.

This chapter includes a variety of sample NPCs, organized by category.

- The **Ironlanders** are the humans who have settled these lands.
- The **Firstborn** are beings who walked the Ironlands uncountable years before humans arrived.
- **Animals** are common creatures.
- **Beasts** are monstrous creatures of unusual size and cunning.
- **Horrors** are supernatural beings.

These NPCs are a starting place. Use what fits your version of the Ironlands, keeping in mind the choices you made when you defined the characteristics of your setting in the previous chapter. If your world is entirely human-centric, ignore any fantastical NPCs. If you want to boost the fantasy in your campaign, you can emphasize the unreal or monstrous.

Use what you like. Discard what you don't. Create what is missing. It's your world.

COMPONENTS OF AN NPC

Because gameplay in *Ironsworn* is centered on the abilities and actions of your character, NPCs are primarily represented through your fiction rather than mechanics. They don't have stats, assets, or tracks. Instead, the sample NPCs in this chapter include some broad details to help guide their actions and the threat they pose in combat.

When you interact with an NPC, envision their personality and motivations. A brutish character leverages their strength, or attempts to bully and intimidate. A sly character acts through manipulation or trickery. A noble character behaves according to their sense of honor. An animal, depending on its disposition, may attack when threatened or may run away. A supernatural being may act with mindless malice and hate for the living, or may have more complex needs. When you are unsure of an NPC's traits or next action, *Ask the Oracle*. Then, envision what they do and make moves to aid or oppose them as appropriate.

RANK

NPCs have a single mechanical attribute, their rank. From this, their ability to resist and inflict harm (page 19) in combat is derived, as follows:

Rank	Type	Progress	Harm
Troublesome	Common enemies	3 progress per harm	Inflicts 1 harm
Dangerous	Capable fighters and deadly creatures	2 progress per harm	Inflicts 2 harm
Formidable	Exceptional fighters and mighty creatures	1 progress per harm	Inflicts 3 harm
Extreme	Foes of overwhelming skill or power	2 ticks per harm	Inflicts 4 harm
Epic	Legendary foes of mythic power	1 tick per harm	Inflicts 5 harm

When you engage a foe in combat, give them a standard progress track (10 boxes). When you *Strike* or *Clash* and inflict harm, mark progress for each point of harm based on the foe’s rank. For example, you mark 2 ticks for each point of harm inflicted on an extreme foe, and 2 progress (2 full boxes) for each point of harm against a dangerous foe.

When you fail to defend against a foe’s attack and face physical harm, you make the *Endure Harm* move (page 91). As part of that move, you reduce your health track by the amount of harm your foe inflicts, per their rank.

If appropriate to the NPC, they can also inflict stress (page 20) equal to their rank when you fail to resist an action which frightens, demoralizes, or rattles you.

Use the *End the Fight* move (page 82), adding your progress against this foe, when you attempt to resolve the combat. To learn more about progress, see page 14.

The ranks for the sample NPCs in this chapter represent a typical individual of that type. For unusually powerful NPCs, increase their rank by one (to a maximum of epic). For less powerful foes, decrease their rank by one (to a minimum of troublesome). You can also adjust the rank of a foe when circumstances give you significant narrative disadvantage or advantage before the fight. See page 208 for more on adjusting challenge ranks.

FEATURES

These are the typical characteristics of appearance and personality for an NPC. They are not universally true, especially within diverse societies such as Ironlanders and the firstborn, but can provide some common impressions as a starting point.

DRIVES

Drives reflect the motivations and instincts of an NPC. For creatures, these are relatively simple: Hunt, eat, defend territory. For intelligent beings, drives are the typical goals and beliefs of their society, but do not represent the complex range of motivations you will encounter. Drives are a starting place, giving you the rough outline of a typical NPC to be fleshed out (or contradicted) appropriate to their role in the fiction.

NPCs who are prominent in your campaign will have more detail. Depending on their role in your story, their drives may support—or conflict with—your own goals. As you discover details about an important NPC, make note of it. Look for opportunities to introduce interesting and surprising backstories and motivations for these characters.

TACTICS

Tactics provide a reference for how an NPC might act in combat. These give you a sense of typical maneuvers, but do not represent the possibilities of a complex and dramatic combat scene. You should let NPC actions flow out of the fiction. What is the situation? What is their goal? What will add to the excitement and danger of this moment? Make it happen. When in doubt, *Ask the Oracle*.

Your foes should do more than simply try to inflict harm. A fearsome roar or demoralizing boast might cause you to *Endure Stress*. Tactical maneuvers reduce your momentum. Fictional complications—the appearance of new foes, putting companions or allies at risk, or a realization that undermines your quest—will heighten the drama of the scene.

QUEST STARTER

All NPCs include a quest starter, which can serve as inspiration for one of your vows.

YOUR TRUTH

Some NPCs include a question for you to answer. This is an opportunity to customize the NPC to your vision of the Ironlands. You can do this as you define your world or discover through play. Truths may represent an absolute fact, or merely something the people of your world believe.

NPC PACKS

When you fight a group of **troublesome** or **dangerous** foes, you may combine them into a single progress track. This is called a **pack**. It's more convenient than tracking progress for each individual foe, and the scene will move faster.

When you group foes into a pack, increase their rank to represent their combined ability to inflict and resist harm. For a small pack (about 3 to 5), increase the rank by one. For a large pack (about 6 to 10) increase the rank by two. For example, a pack of 4 troublesome foes are treated as a single dangerous foe. If you are facing more than 10 troublesome or dangerous foes, you can group them into smaller packs and associated progress tracks.

When you inflict harm on the pack, you can envision it as appropriate to the fiction. You might wound them, put one or more of them out of action, or drive some back. When you successfully *End the Fight*, you have defeated the last of them, or broken their fighting spirit.

Formidable, extreme, and epic foes may not be grouped into a pack. Each must have its own progress track.

JOINING FORCES WITH NPCs

If your story leads you to cooperating with helper NPCs to overcome challenges, you need to consider how they impact the fiction and your moves. NPCs—unless they are a companion asset (page 39)—won't give you mechanical bonuses on your moves. They also won't make moves of their own. They are simply a part of your story, perhaps impacting the moves you make, the results of those moves, and the rank of your challenges. Gaining the aid of an important NPC might also allow you to *Reach a Milestone* (page 100).

For example:

- If you are charged with protecting NPCs, they might be placed in danger or suffer losses as a result of your failures on moves.
- If you are fighting alongside NPCs, you can reduce the rank of your foes. For example, battling alone against a large pack of raiders might be an extreme challenge. If you are aided by a stalwart band of villagers, you could shift the enemies' rank to formidable.
- If you are being led by an experienced scout, you might choose to skip the *Undertake a Journey* move, or reduce the rank of the journey.

- If an NPC leader agrees to support your quest by allowing passage through contested lands, you might *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress.

As with any NPC, you can *Ask the Oracle* to see how a helper NPC responds, how they fare in a challenge, or what they do next. You can make moves to influence them, such as *Compel*. If you develop a strong relationship through your story, or if you *Fulfill Your Vow* in their service, you can choose to *Forge a Bond*.

In short, make them characters, not numbers. Give them personalities. Give them quirks and motivations. Let them impact your story and your quests, for better or worse, but always keep the focus on your character and your allies.

CREATING NPCs

You should create NPCs that fit your version of the Ironlands, enhance your story, and enrich your character's adventures. Use the sample NPCs as a starting place, or start from scratch. Because NPCs don't have mechanical detail, it's easy to bring them to life without advance preparation.

If you face an NPC in combat, give them a rank. If you like, you can also make note of their drives and tactics. Otherwise, their motivations, abilities, and actions are entirely part of your fiction. They may ignore you, aid you, or oppose you. Make moves to resolve your intentions with them as appropriate. Springboard off those moves with new details and complications to flesh out these characters.

For reoccurring NPCs, make note of what you learn of them over time. If you share a bond, mark it down.



IRONLANDERS

Ironlanders are the human inhabitants of these lands. Unless your story emphasizes adventures well outside of the settled regions, the majority of your interactions will be with fellow Ironlanders.

This section covers a few broad categories of Ironlanders. They are not representative of the variety of people and cultures in these lands. When you are forced to fight an Ironlander and need to determine their rank, you can *Ask the Oracle*, or follow these guidelines:

- A common citizen or brute is **troublesome**.
- A trained warrior is **dangerous**.
- A powerful or veteran warrior is **formidable**.

BROKEN

Rank: Troublesome (3 progress per harm; inflicts 1 harm)

- Features:**
- Crazy eyes
 - Painted skin
 - Feral screams
 - Scavenged clothing and weapons

- Drives:**
- Show my power
 - Share my pain

- Tactics:**
- Spring from hiding
 - Ferocious attacks

Another people sailed to the Ironlands from the Old World long before our kin settled here. Something happened. Something changed them. Whether it was the long struggle in a harsh land, the ravages of war, or the corruption of some dark force, they left their humanity behind and became what we call the broken. Now, they exist only to kill, to destroy.

We fear the broken for their savagery. But, more than this, we fear them as a dark portent of what we might one day become.

Quest Starter: Years ago, an Ironlander child was taken by a broken tribe. Now they are seen living among them. What is your connection to this person? Can they be brought home, or are they forever lost?

COMMON FOLK

Rank: Troublesome (3 progress per harm; inflicts 1 harm)

- Traits:**
- Diverse looks
 - Weary and worried
 - Suspicious of strangers

- Drives:**
- Prepare for the winter
 - Protect family

- Tactics:**
- Desperate defense
 - Stand together

Most of us in the Ironlands are common folk. We are farmers, laborers, crafters, sailors, and traders. When trouble comes, we know which way the pointy end goes, and we stand together to protect our homes and kin.

Quest Starter: Two prominent families are at odds. What is the source of the conflict? What is your relationship to them? What danger threatens to destroy their community if they can't put aside their petty squabble?

HUNTER

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

- Traits:**
- Wearing hides and furs to ward away the cold
 - Steely gaze
 - At home in the woodlands

- Drives:**
- A clean kill
 - Survive the hunt

- Tactics:**
- Set traps
 - Keep to the shadows
 - Deadly shot

Hunters face brutal weather, difficult terrain, dangerous animals, and worse. Many never return from their hunts. Others return, but are forever changed.

Quest Starter: A hunter returns to her village, panic-stricken and pleading for help. The rest of her party is still out there. What happened to them?

MYSTIC

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Features:

- Knowing eyes
- Tattooed skin

Drives:

- Respect the old ways
- Seek the paths of power

Tactics:

- Foresee the intent of my enemies
- Prepare rituals
- Use trickery

Some say you can tell a mystic by looking them in the eye. They walk in two worlds, and their eyes shimmer with that dark reflection of realms beyond our own. We call it the sight. Some hold that darkness in check. Others are consumed by it.

Quest Starter: A mystic returns to their home after a years-long journey. They are changed. What new power or knowledge do now they wield? What do they seek to do with it? Why do you oppose them?

RAIDER

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Features:

- Geared for war
- Battle fervor

Drives:

- What is theirs will be ours
- Stand with my kin
- Die a glorious death

Tactics:

- Intimidate
- Shield wall
- Burn it down

Raiders survive by seizing what they need from others. Our grain. Our meat. Our animals. Our iron. They'll take it all, and leave us facing the long winter with nothing to sustain us but prayers to indifferent gods.

Quest Starter: You were raised as a raider, born to battle, but long ago left that life. Troubled by your past, you vow to wipe this powerful clan from the Ironlands. How can you defeat them? What will happen when you must face your former shield-kin?

YOUR TRUTH

A large raider clan is known and feared throughout the Ironlands. What is it called? Who leads it?

WARRIOR

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Traits:

- Battle-hardened
- Scarred

Drives:

- The thrill of the fight
- Protect those in my charge
- Survive another day

Tactics:

- Maneuver for advantage
- Find an opening

Some Ironlanders, through strength of arms, set themselves apart from the common rabble. They are trained to fight, or simply born to it. For them, a sword, spear, or axe is as natural a tool as any hammer or spade.

Quest Starter: A legendary warrior, now well past their prime, swears to face a daunting foe in one final battle. What help do they ask of you and why? Who is their enemy?

YOUR TRUTH

Warrior's shields are often emblazoned with meaningful symbols. What are they? Family crests? Animal totems? Mystical sigils? Motifs honoring the nations of the Old World? If you carry a shield, what is painted on yours?

FIRSTBORN

The firstborn lived here long before the humans landed on these shores. The humans, in their arrogance, named this peninsula the Ironlands and called themselves Ironlanders—but the firstborn gave it names of their own in a time beyond the reach of memory.

To determine the role of the firstborn in your setting, see page 128.

ELF

Rank:	Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large, luminous eyes seen through a wooden mask• Gray-green skin the texture of dry leaves• Sonorous voice• Wielding bow and spear
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect the wilds• Drive out trespassers, or see them pay
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strike from shadow• Force their surrender• Turn the forest against them

Elves are strange beings of the forest, seldom seen beyond the ancient woods of the Deep Wilds. They are fiercely protective of their lands and suspicious of humans. Their scouts patrol the borderlands, riding the fearsome mounts we call gaunts (page 148). Others of their kind watch us from the shadow of the deep woods, spears and bow at the ready. Some say elven mystics can bind the animals and beasts of the forest to aid in the defense of the Wilds.

A few warn that the elves are biding their time, readying the attack which will drive us from these lands.

Quest Starter: The leader of an Ironlander community seeks an audience with the elves. For what purpose? Why are you compelled to help?

YOUR TRUTH

Elves conceal their faces behind ornate wooden masks. What do these masks signify?

GIANT

Rank:	Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dark hair and ruddy skin• Twice the size of a tall human, or more• Wearing layers of wool, hide, and furs• Stoic and observant
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survive the winter• Protect the herd
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fight as a last resort• Sweeping strike• Make them flee

Giants dwell in the Tempest Hills and Veiled Mountains. They live a nomadic life alone or in small family units, herding oxen, mountain goats, and sheep. In their own language they are called the Jokul.

Many Ironlanders misinterpret their quiet nature for dullness, but giants are keenly intelligent and observant. They have a great respect for life, even for our kind, and use trickery and negotiation to avoid fights. When they are left without other options, an enraged giant is a devastating, relentless force.

Quest Starter: A pair of giants are raiding human settlements, stealing supplies and livestock. With winter coming, the survival of those settlements is threatened. What is driving the giants down from the hills?

YOUR TRUTH

Every fifth spring, the giant clans meet for a gathering. There, the memory-keepers sing of a great giant hero, revered by all. Who is this hero?

PRIMORDIAL

Rank:	Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personification of the natural world• Turbulent, changing visage• Vaguely human-like or animal-like form
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embody chaos• Cling to vestiges of power
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Control the elements• Destroy with primal rage

The primordial, said to be the vestigial spirits of long-forgotten gods, are the most ancient of the firstborn. Each embodies some aspect of the natural world, bound in a crude mimicry of a human or large animal. A river primordial is a mass of rock, gravel, and flowing water. A forest primordial is formed of wood, earth, rocks, and plants. A mountain primordial is a lumbering being of glacier stone and ice. A fire primordial, depending on its mood, might take form as embers, ash, and smoke—or as a raging pyre.

They range in size from the height of an Ironlander to half-again as tall as a giant. Rumors persist of primordials who dwell in the deepest parts of the Wilds, or high in the ranges of the Veiled Mountains, who are as tall as an ancient tree. Beyond, some suggest, in the Shattered Wastes, live primordials who tower into the clouds. Is the sound of distant thunder sometimes the footfalls of mountain-sized primordials who dwell beyond the edge of the known world?

Primordials are solitary beings as unpredictable as the natural forces they personify. They might ignore you. They might lurk at a distance, as if observing you. Or, they might attack. They do not speak in any language we can understand. Some suggest they have no intelligence, and are merely a manifestation of the natural world, no different than a winter storm.

How do you kill a primordial? Most scoff at the idea. You are just as likely to kill the rain or the sea. A mystic might tell you to use a weapon imbued with elemental power. Don't trust them. If you see a primordial, keep your distance. Better yet, run.

Quest Starter: In the dead of winter, a fire primordial is razing homes and burning a nearby wood. At night, orange flames light the sky. What can be done to stop this destruction?

TROLL

Rank:	Formidable (1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long limbs• Sunken, beady eyes• Translucent skin camouflaged to the environment• Keen sense of smell• Speaks in gibberish
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find pretty things• Keep it secret
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be sneaky• Bite and claw• Run and hide

Trolls mostly live in the Flooded Land, but it's not unusual to encounter one in the Hinterlands or even in the southern reaches of the Havens. They are solitary creatures, wary of contact with Ironlanders but likely to attack if scared or provoked.

They move with their back hunched, often skulking on all four gangly limbs. When they stand straight they are much taller than humans—nearly as tall as a giant. Their skin is a sickly pale gray, but they can camouflage themselves by changing it to match their environment.

Trolls collect objects of all sorts, and particularly value Ironlander trinkets. They are tormented by the fear of others stealing their hoard, and are constantly seeking out new, better hiding places. The items are mostly junk to anyone but a troll, but occasionally an object of real value finds its way into the dregs.

Quest Starter: The villagers tolerate the troll who lives nearby because its presence serves to dissuade a greater threat. They even donate items for its hoard, and put up with its occasional thievery. But now, the troll is missing. What is the looming threat the troll helped avert?

VAROU

Rank:	Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Yellow eyes shining in moonlightPointed ears and snout-like face
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Take their landDefend my kinKeep the bloodcall at bay
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strike at nightLeap into combatLet loose the bloodcall

The varou are humanoid beings who dwell within the Deep Wilds and in the woods of the Hinterlands. Their features are fierce and wolf-like. They are broad-shouldered and a head taller than the average Ironlander. Their long hair is ornately groomed and decorated with beads and other trinkets.

The varou value territory above all things. They often war amongst themselves and against the elves to gain or defend holdings. They mark their claims by carving clan symbols into trees. Only the foolish ignore the warning of these border signs. Several of our settlements—built too close to varou territory—are now abandoned ruins bearing the mark of a victorious varou clan.

Quest Starter: A varou clan has carved their mark into the trees surrounding an Ironlander community, claiming it as their territory. An attack is surely imminent. What will you do to prevent it?

YOUR TRUTH

A young varou receives their keth—a curved dagger—before undergoing a rite of passage. What must they do to take their place among the adults of the clan?

ANIMALS

Animals are the mundane creatures which dwell in the Ironlands. Some animals are native to these lands; others were also common in the Old World.

Most wild animals are skittish and do not pose a threat to humans. Those creatures have no rank, and can be attacked or interacted with using appropriate moves. For example, *Resupply* (page 63) can represent hunting for deer or small game.

A few notable exceptions—predators, aggressive creatures, and animals trained to fight—are noted here.

BEAR

Rank:	Formidable (1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fearsome teeth and clawsThick hide
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Find foodDefend cubs
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">RoarPin downMaul with savage force

Most bears are not aggressive. They avoid Ironlanders and are unlikely to attack unless they see you as a threat.

There are exceptions. The silver bears of the Veiled Mountains, which sometimes range as far south as the Tempest Hills, are territorial, powerful, and aggressive. Likewise, the ash bear, encountered in woodlands throughout the Ironlands, is known for its ferocity and cunning. If either catch your scent, they are likely to hunt you down and attack.

Quest Starter: A group of hunters felled a large ash bear with several arrows. It tumbled into a river and was swept away. Unfortunately, the bear they thought dead is now stalking the group as they make their way back home.

BOAR

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Features:

- Wiry coat
- Long tusks
- Vicious

Drives:

- Forage
- Protect territory
- Defend sows

Tactics:

- Charge and gore
- Circle and attack again

In the Old World, wild boars were belligerent and dangerous animals. Here in the Ironlands? They are even bigger and meaner. They attack without warning or provocation. They will run you down, gore you, bite you, and circle around to do it all again. And again. And again.

Quest Starter: A boar hunt ends in tragedy when an Ironlander is gored and grievously wounded. How do you know this person? What terrible truth do they reveal as they lay dying?

GAUNT

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Features:

- Horse-like creature with a lean, skeletal frame
- Ghostly pale eyes
- Black, scaled hide

Drives:

- Run like the wind

Tactics:

- Rear up
- Charge
- Trample

A gaunt is a creature unique to the Ironlands. They maneuver across the rough, dense terrain of the Deep Wilds and Hinterlands with uncanny speed and grace. This makes them ideal as mounts for the elves (page 142), who breed and train them.

A gaunt will not usually act aggressively without provocation, but they are as deadly as the fiercest warhorse under the command of a talented rider.

Quest Starter: Villages in the Hinterlands have fallen prey to a large band of gaunt-riding elves. They attack with sudden and violent force, and are gone before any sort of defense can be mustered. Their leader, a warrior of unmatched skill, rides a distinctive white gaunt. What has driven these elves to strike out against the Ironlanders?

YOUR TRUTH

Some gaunts live in wild herds. They once roamed the wilds in countless numbers, but few now remain. What has happened to thin these herds so dramatically?

MARSH RAT

Rank: Troublesome (3 progress per harm; inflicts 1 harm)

Features:

- Beady eyes
- Long tail

Drives:

- Eat everything
- Breed

Tactics:

- Swarm and bite

The marsh rat is a rodent of unusual size. They are all-too-common in the Flooded Lands or in wetlands within the Hinterlands and Deep Wilds.

They eat almost anything, including carrion and waste. Our grain stores and pantries are an easy target for marsh rats, who dig tunnels or chew through walls to get at the food. They will also try to make a meal out of living prey—deer, cattle, or even an unlucky Ironlander. A pack of marsh rats can kill a horse and reduce it to bone in a matter of hours.

Quest Starter: Marsh rats raided the stores of an isolated settlement. How will you ensure the Ironlanders have enough food to survive the coming winter?

WOLF

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

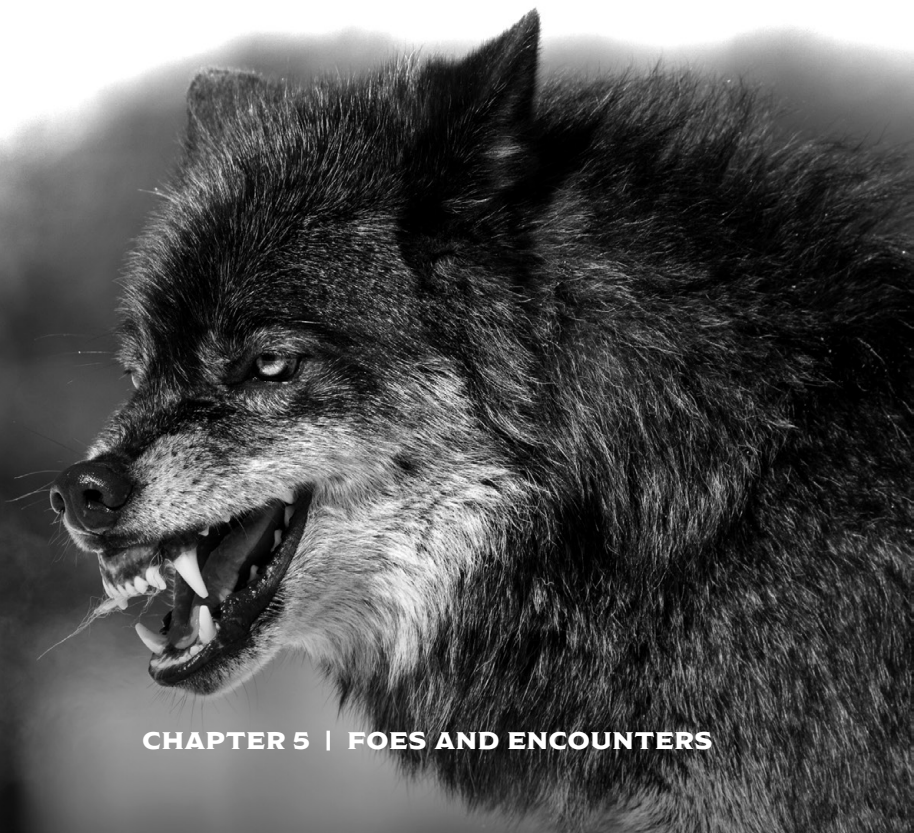
Features: • Keen senses

Drives: • Fight rivals
• Mark territory
• Run with the pack

Tactics: • Stalk
• Pack rush
• Drag to the ground

The Ironlands are home to several breeds of wolves. Most are not aggressive and stay clear of settlements and travelers. Despite that, attacks against Ironlanders are not unknown. A harsh winter and insufficient prey can drive a pack to hunt livestock or even an unwary Ironlander. As night falls we hear their howls, and hope they are well fed.

Quest Starter: You find the grisly remains of a pack of wolves. All are dead, even the cubs. What caused this? Why is it a harbinger of a greater danger?



BEASTS

Beasts are monstrous creatures of great size and power. They are natural beings—not supernatural entities—but were unknown in the Old World.

To determine the role of beasts in your version of the Ironlands, see page 128.

BASILISK

Rank: Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)

Features: • Giant snake
• Dull yellow-brown skin
• Vibrant yellow eyes

Drives: • Devour

Tactics: • Lay in wait
• Mesmerizing gaze
• Sudden bite
• Crush

Basilisks dwell in the Flooded Lands, lurking in the murky waters of the swamps or within marshy thickets. There, they wait patiently for prey. They regularly feed on marsh rats or deer, but will eagerly make a meal out of a passing Ironlander.

Quest Starter: The adventurer set out to slay a basilisk, only to become its next meal. Because the serpent digests its prey slowly, the remains of the adventurer are still undoubtedly within the beast—along with the heirloom sword he wielded. What is your relationship to this person? Why is recovering the sword so important to you?

YOUR TRUTH

Some piece of a basilisk anatomy is prized by the Ironlanders. What is it? How is it used?

ELDER BEAST

Rank: Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)

Features: • Twice the size of their common kin, or more

Drives: • Dominate
• Protect territory

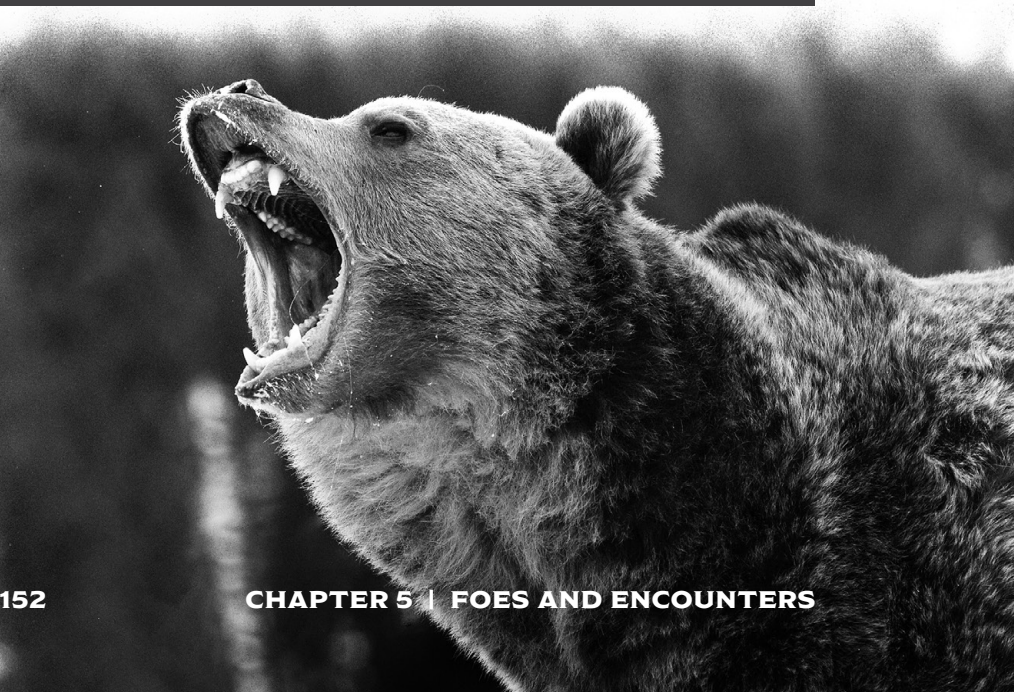
Tactics: • Intimidating display
• Overwhelming attack

Elder beasts—including wolves, bears, and boars—are huge, monstrous versions of their common kin. They are primarily solitary creatures, though elder wolves have been known to lead a pack of normal wolves. Some call them guardians, avatars of the land itself, and say they are as long-lived as the oldest trees.

Quest Starter: An elder wolf, white as snow, appears to you in a dream. When you wake, the memory of its piercing gaze lingers. Is the vision a dark portent or a promise? Why are you compelled to seek this beast out?

YOUR TRUTH

What people of the Ironlands revere and protect the elder beasts?
What group hunts them and why?



HARROW SPIDER

Rank: Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)

Features: • Massive fangs
• Long legs and bloated body
• Eight iridescent black eyes

Drives: • Lurk
• Feed

Tactics: • Drop atop prey
• Bite with pincers
• Trap in webbing

These gigantic creatures are a menace in woodlands throughout the Ironlands. Despite their size, they move through high branches with uncanny grace, dropping suddenly to grapple their prey and entomb them in webbing.

Quest Starter: A brood of harrow spiders attacked a contingent of Ironlanders. The single survivor tells of the horrifying encounter and the monstrous brood mother—a harrow spider larger and stronger than a warhorse. What was this group’s mission? What important item are you sworn to recover from one of the victims?



LEVIATHAN

Rank:	Epic (1 tick per harm; inflicts 5 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Massive bulk• Flesh as tough as iron• Cold black eyes• Sinuous grace
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slumber in the depths• Destroy those who trespass
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rise from the depths• Ram and swamp ships• Devour prey whole

These massive sea beasts lurk in the darkness of the deepest fjords and in the abyssal depths beyond the Barrier Islands. They sometimes surface to hunt within shallower waters. They will indiscriminately destroy any Ironlander vessel which strays too close to their hunting grounds.

Watchful sailors might catch sight of a leviathan circling their boat, studying them, in the moments before it attacks. Their dagger-shaped head is as tough and destructive as any battering ram, able to shatter a ship in a single blow.

Quest Starter: A leviathan lurks off the coast, preying on fishing boats and trade ships. Among the dead is someone important to you. Who is it? You have vowed to send this beast back to the depths, but doing so will require a mythic weapon—The Abyssal Harpoon, an Old World artifact said to be carved from the bones of a long-dead sea god. Where is this weapon rumored to be held?

YOUR TRUTH

Some coastal people believe leviathans are a manifestation of an ancient spirit. What is it?

MAMMOTH

Rank:	Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Woolly fur• Large head and curved tusks• Prehensile trunk
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Migrate to fertile ground• Forage for food• Protect the young of the herd
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form a protective circle• Charge• Trample• Gore

These beasts resemble the elephants of the Old World’s southern realms, but are larger and covered in a coat of thick fur. They travel in herds among the Tempest Hills, migrating south with the winter and north with the spring. They are not aggressive creatures, but are fearless and will fight to the death to protect their young.

A herd of mammoths is an amazing and humbling sight, but smart Ironlanders keep their distance and stay downwind.

Quest Starter: A mammoth calf wanders alone into an Ironlander settlement. Why do you swear to reunite it with its herd?



WYVERN

Rank:	Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Huge, bat-like wings• Rows of knife-sized teeth• Thick hide with a metallic sheen• Long tail
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch for prey from high above• Feed
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swoop down• Snap up prey• Fearsome roar• Bash with tail

There are several breeds of wyverns in the Ironlands. To the west, tawny wyverns nest in the cliffs of the Barrier Islands and Ragged Coast, diving for fish in the surrounding waters. Inland, the verdant wyverns dwell in forested regions. The largest and most fearsome breed, the iron wyverns, hunt among the Tempest Hills and along the flanks of the Veiled Mountains.

All wyverns have wolfish heads with wide jaws, thick bodies, and sinuous tails. They have short hind limbs and elongated forelimbs which extend along their wings. In flight, they are a terrifying but awe-inspiring creature. On the ground, they lumber heavily on all four limbs, their wings folded back, jaws agape, gaze fixed on their prey. They are the grim cruelty of the Ironlands given form. They are death.

Quest Starter: Ancient cave paintings in the Tempest Hills show humanoids riding atop wyverns. Perhaps these beasts can be tamed. Why are you obsessed with this possibility?

YOUR TRUTH

Rumors persist of a wyvern graveyard where wyverns instinctively go when their death is near. Where is this supposedly located? In what way do Ironlanders make use of wyvern bones?

HORRORS

Horrors are supernatural entities. In the Old World, they were superstition and legend. Here, they are nightmares made real. The Ironlands is fertile ground for darkness and evil to take hold, spawning these undead beings of pure vengeance or mindless hate.

Many horrors can be temporarily defeated through physical attacks, but cannot be killed. They are beyond death.

To determine the role of horrors in your setting, see page 129.

BONEWALKER

Rank:	Dangerous (2 progress per harm; inflicts 2 harm)
Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skeletal corpse• Yellowed bones• Tattered remains of clothing and armor
Drives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Destroy life
Tactics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rush with unexpected speed• Attack with the weapons they bore in life• Grasp and claw

Bonewalkers are human remains given unnatural life. The source of the dark energy animating them is a mystery. Some say it is the will of dark gods. Others say an ancient evil permeates this land and seeps into porous bones of the dead. Or, perhaps it is the work of corrupt mystics.

Bonewalkers usually roam the location of their final resting place—a burial site, a cursed battlefield, or a settlement blighted by disease or violence. Nothing remains of their previous selves. They are soulless monsters driven only to destroy the living.

Quest Starter: A horde of bonewalkers marches relentlessly towards the Havens. What dark force has gathered this army of the undead? How will you stop them?

CHIMERA

Rank: Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)

Features:

- Shambling mass of dead creatures and offal
- Rotting stench

Drives:

- Insatiable hunger

Tactics:

- Horrifying wail
- Relentless assault
- Claw, bite and rend

A chimera is the corrupted form of dead animal flesh given horrible life. Its body is a collection of various creatures, fused together into a twisted, massive entity which knows only pain and hunger. When a dozen blood-tinged eyes focus on you, when its gibbering mouths open at once to scream, your only hope is a quick death.

Quest Starter: Multiple chimera have spawned from the heart of a deep wood. What evil is at work there?

FROSTBOUND

Rank: Formidable (1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm)

Features:

- Mummified, desiccated flesh
- Frozen blue eyes
- A sorrowful, hollow scream

Drives:

- Absorb the warmth of the living

Tactics:

- Sense heat
- Life-draining grasp

Some who fall prey to the long winters or the wild storms of the northern regions are given a horrible new life as the frostbound. These animated corpses are cursed to forever seek out the warmth their death took from them.

Quest Starter: A group of frostbound lurk along a mountain trail. This path is the only safe route to the lowlands from a mining village.

YOUR TRUTH

Can creatures other than Ironlanders become frostbound? If so, undeath gives them uncanny strength. Make them one rank higher than their living form.

HAUNT

Rank: Formidable (1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm)

Features:

- Subtle, unsettling manifestations
- Appear as they did in life
- Lay bare the ravages of death
- Stench of the grave

Drives:

- Torment the living
- Find rest

Tactics:

- Vanish and reappear
- Horrifying visage
- Unleash chaos

Haunts are restless spirits bound to this world by a traumatic or unjust death. They may be tied to a location, an object, or even a person.

A haunt who manifests as a physical being can be dispelled by overcoming them in a fight, but only temporarily. They will only be at peace when their death is avenged or resolved. Some say a haunt can be banished through a ritual, but few possess the knowledge.

Quest Starter: You are plagued by a haunt. Who is it? What do they want of you?

YOUR TRUTH

When someone dies a violent death, or at the hand of another, they are often laid to rest using a specific, ceremonial rite. This, it is believed, prevents them from returning as a haunt. What is this ritual? What rare material is required?

HOLLOW

Rank: Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)

Features:

- Vaguely humanoid shape formed of earth, plants, and insects
- Empty black eyes behind an elven mask
- Smells of wet soil and dead things

Drives:

- See justice done

Tactics:

- Bash with savage strength
- Draw in a whirlwind of materials to reform and enlarge
- Envelop and suffocate

It is said that elves who die an unjust death or have cause to seek retribution can rise as a hollow. Their form is a rippling mass of dead leaves, plants, soil, carrion, and insects. They move with a nightmarish, shambling gait. Their face is the wooden mask they wore in life. Their voice is the rattle of the wind through dry leaves.

As with haunts, they can be temporarily defeated but cannot be killed by physical means. They are a relentless force, bound to this world by a singular motivation—vengeance.

Quest Starter: A hollow terrorizes an Ironlander village. What does it seek? What will you do to stop it?

YOUR TRUTH

How do elven communities view a risen hollow? Are they seen as spirits of righteous vengeance or as dangerous aberrations?

IRON REVENANT

Rank: Extreme (2 ticks per harm; inflicts 4 harm)

Features:

- Empty, patchwork shell of armor and other hunks of metal
- Wielding iron weapons
- A low, reverberating voice

Drives:

- Fulfill the vow
- Destroy any who stand in their way

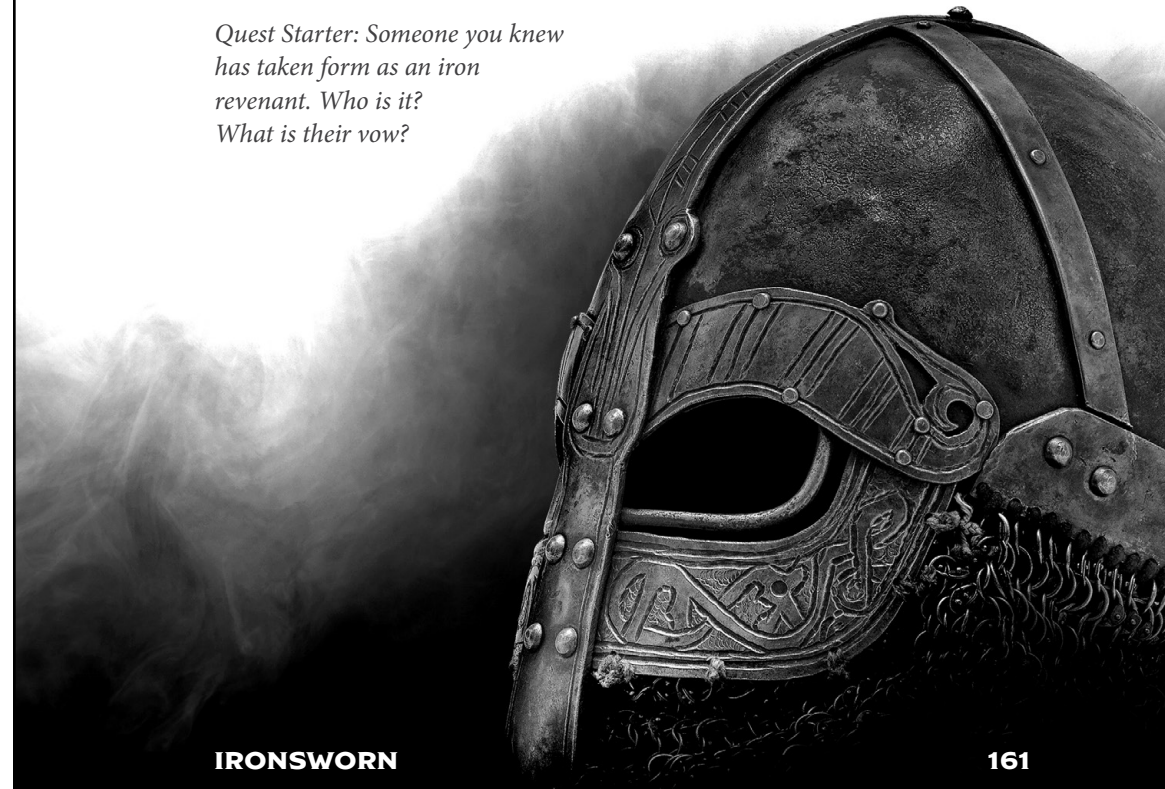
Tactics:

- Steadfast attacks
- Pull in iron with an unyielding, magnetic force

Some vows are held so fiercely that they survive even after death. An iron revenant is an incorporeal force of furious resolve, the unfinished vow of an Ironsworn given horrible form as a construct of metal.

Attacks may slow them down or temporarily break apart their armored form, but they have no flesh to pierce and cannot be killed. An iron revenant won't stop until their vow is fulfilled.

Quest Starter: Someone you knew has taken form as an iron revenant. Who is it? What is their vow?



SODDEN

Rank: Formidable (1 progress per harm; inflicts 3 harm)

Features:

- Milky eyes
- Mottled flesh

Drives:

- Drown the living

Tactics:

- Draw victims to the water
- Grab and scratch with jagged claws
- Chilling embrace
- Drag into the depths

A sodden is the restless spirit of someone who drowned or was put to rest in water. They can appear in seas, rivers, lakes, ponds, or marshes. Their loneliness and grief compels them to draw living victims into their watery lairs.

A sodden is not confined to its resting place. In fact, some believe that surviving an encounter with a sodden leaves you vulnerable around any body of water until the spirit finishes its work.

Quest Starter: Someone you know died and appears to you as a sodden. Who are they? Can anything be done to put them to rest?

YOUR TRUTH

Many Ironlanders habitually perform a quick ritual when near a body of water, believing it keeps any lurking sodden at bay. What do they do? Is there any truth to this custom?



CHAPTER 6

ORACLES



SEEKING INSPIRATION

In *Ironsworn*, an oracle is anything which generates random results to help determine the outcome of a move, a detail in your world, an NPC action, or a narrative event.

Among the choices provided in the *Ask the Oracle* move is “spark an idea” (page 108). You can use this option (instead of or in addition to the yes/no table) to answer open-ended questions or inspire new situations.

Rolling a match on a move (page 9) can also trigger opportunities to introduce narrative complications and surprises through random prompts.

This chapter includes a series of random prompts in the form of tables. You can use these oracle tables to answer questions about your world, drive the narrative, and inspire dramatic events and revelations. Some oracles are for specific, mundane questions to streamline play (“What is the healer’s name?”). Others provide more abstract results which you interpret based on the current situation (“What happens next?”).

ORACLES IN SOLO AND CO-OP PLAY

Ironsworn oracles don’t function as a GM simulator. Instead, they leverage the power of your creative interpretation. Ask your question, roll on a table, and consider the answer in the context of your current situation and story. What comes to mind first? Did you think of something which reinforces a dramatic narrative or takes things in an interesting and surprising direction? Does it feel right? If so, make it happen.

If you follow your instincts while staying open to twists and turns, you will find your game offering many of the same narrative rewards as if you were playing with a GM. In fact, you’ll be surprised how often a seemingly random result seems to feed directly into your character’s story and the world you’ve established through play. This is the power of creative interpretation at work.

You score a miss on your *Undertake a Journey* move, and roll “A new danger or foe is revealed” on the *Pay the Price* table (page 105). You’re not sure what this means in the context of your current journey, and decide to spark an idea to see what happens. You roll on the Action and Theme tables (page 174), and the oracle answers, “Bolster vengeance.” Playing off this prompt, you decide it would be interesting to bring back a particular enemy, one who holds a grudge against you. They’ve gathered allies and are tracking you on your journey.

ORACLES IN GUIDED PLAY

GM's can use oracles for support during play and to supplement their narrative decision-making. Mundane oracles, such as names (page 184), are helpful to quickly flesh out details. Interpretative oracles, such as the Action and Theme tables (page 174), can be used to spark new ideas.

When the characters *Sojourn* at a small settlement deep in the Flooded Lands, they roll a match. Everyone is interested in using that match to drive a new quest. The GM rolls on the Settlement Trouble table (page 181). The oracle answers, "Production halts."

The GM interprets this result. "This settlement relies on a steady harvest of a rare medicinal plant found in the depths of the swamp", she tells her players. "But, a huge basilisk they call 'one-eye' lurks there. A group of able hunters set out last week to kill the beast. They did not return."

You can also use oracles as a prompt for sharing control of the narrative with your players. Not sure what happens next? Not sure how to answer a character's question? Roll on an appropriate table, or have a player make the roll, and talk it out with everyone at the table.



IRONLAND ORACLES

HOW TO USE THE TABLES



Ask your question and choose an appropriate oracle table.



Roll your oracle dice (page 22) to generate a number from 1-100.



Check your roll against the table. The oracle will reveal its answer.



Consider the answer in the context of your question and the current situation. Is the result a good fit? Does it trigger a spark of inspiration?



If the answer is difficult to interpret for your situation, you can check up or down one row from your original answer, or reverse the digits (37=73).



If you've got your answer, you're all set! Play to see what happens. If you want further detail, you can talk it out with other players or roll on another oracle table.



If you're having trouble, you can roll again, try a different table, or just fall back to your instincts and decide what happens next.

WHEN ANSWERS LEAD TO MORE QUESTIONS

You aren't limited to a single roll on a single oracle table when asking a question. If you like, you can let the result from one table inform your interpretation of the result on another. You can even refer back to the *Ask the Oracle* table (page 107) to clarify an answer with a yes/no question.

However, use caution with this technique. Too many questions and too many rolls makes your session feel like an exercise in randomness. Lead with your instincts. Leverage the oracles to fill in the gaps. Keep it moving.

You use the Character Goal oracle (page 182) to identify an NPC's primary motivation. The answer is "Avenge a wrong." You don't have any immediate ideas on how this relates to this character, so you roll on the Theme table (page 175) for more detail. "Land", the oracle answers. You decide the NPC's home and farm was taken by a rival. This is the wrong she seeks to put right.

ORACLE TABLES AND MATCHES

Matches don't have special significance when rolling on these oracle tables. They can be ignored.

INTRO TO THE ORACLES

This chapter includes a variety of oracle tables. Use them in whatever way best fits your preferences and the needs of your story, but here's some basic recommendations.

ORACLE 1: ACTION (PAGE 174)

Use this table to inspire a discovery, event, character goal, or situation. A roll on this table can be combined with a Theme (see below) to provide an action and a subject. Then, interpret the result based on the context of the question and your current situation.

ORACLE 2: THEME (PAGE 175)

As with the Action oracle, this is an interpretative table which you can use to answer questions or generate new situations. Combined, the Action and Theme tables provide creative prompts suitable for most situations and questions. In fact, with some creative interpretations, it's entirely possible to play with only these two tables.

You are sworn to recover a stolen artifact which is sacred to a community. In your search for suspects, you make a *Gather Information* move as you question the village leader.

You roll a strong hit, but where do the clues lead? You *Ask the Oracle* and, roll against the Action and Theme tables. "Leave mysticism," the oracle responds.

Interpreting this result, you decide the likely suspect is a traveling mystic who left shortly before the theft was discovered.

ORACLE 3: REGION (PAGE 176)

Use this oracle when you want to randomly select a region with the Ironlands.

ORACLE 4: LOCATION (PAGE 176)

Use this oracle when traveling to generate a point-of-interest or to answer a question about a place where someone or something can be found.

Your roll may generate a place or geographical feature which doesn't make sense in the context of your current location. If so, follow the guidelines on page 167 to generate a different result (look at adjacent rows or reverse the digits). Or, play off the original answer to introduce something unexpected.

You ask, "Where was the traveling mystic bound?"

The Location oracle answers, "River." You decide she traveled south from the village aboard a merchant's boat.



ORACLE 5: COASTAL WATERS LOCATION (PAGE 176)

Use this oracle to identify a point-of-interest or destination when you are traveling by ship or boat along the coast.

ORACLE 6: LOCATION DESCRIPTION (PAGE 177)

Use this oracle to add detail to the Location or Coastal Waters Location oracles, or by itself to generate a description of a location. Roll more than once for extra detail.

You travel downriver on a hired boat. You want to add a bit of color to your journey, so you use the Location Description oracle for some detail. It answers, “Inaccessible.”

You interpret this result to mean segments of the river are shallow, forcing the crew to portage the boat along the shore. This sounds like a perfect opportunity for an ambush...

ORACLE 7: SETTLEMENT NAME (PAGE 178)

Ask this oracle for a thematic name for an Ironlander settlement. Roll once for the category, and again to pick from the examples. Alternatively, just roll for the category and come up with a name that fits the theme. In either case, consider the meaning of the name and how it impacts this settlement’s surroundings, livelihood, culture, or history. This may, in turn, inspire narrative hooks and opportunities for new quests.

ORACLE 8: QUICK SETTLEMENT NAME GENERATOR (PAGE 180)

Use this oracle as a simpler alternative for settlement names. Roll once for the prefix, and once for the suffix. If the combination doesn’t quite work, look at adjacent rows or reverse the digits. Once you have your answer, envision what feature, person, or event inspired the name.

ORACLE 9: SETTLEMENT TROUBLE (PAGE 181)

Use this table to generate a narrative hook for a problem faced by a community. This oracle can help inspire a vow for your character or serve as a prompt for a trouble you encounter when you interact with a settlement. Use other oracles, as appropriate, to help flesh out the answer.

You were attacked by raiders while portaging the boat around some shallows, and barely managed to fend off the attack. Now, you seek out healing, rest, and supplies at a nearby village.

First, you generate a name for the settlement. You use the Ironlander Settlement Name oracle and roll “A historical event” as the category, and “Firstmeet” from the examples. You decide this village sits on the site of the first encounter between elves and humans.

You roll a match on your *Sojourn* move, and opt to trigger a new narrative hook. You ask, “What’s the problem here?” and roll on the Settlement Trouble table.

The oracle answers, “Debt comes due.”

Perhaps the band of raiders you encountered along the river have also been making demands of Firstmeet to supply them with food. The raiders are due to return soon, but the villagers won’t survive the winter without the meager provisions they have left. You *Swear an Iron Vow* to help them.

ORACLE 10: CHARACTER ROLE (PAGE 182)

Use this oracle to define the background for a character, or to generate a random encounter.

ORACLE 11: CHARACTER GOAL (PAGE 182)

Use this oracle to define the primary motivation of an NPC or a faction. It can also be used to kick-off a personal quest for your own character.

ORACLE 12: CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR (PAGE 183)

Use this oracle to help flesh out a character’s personality or physical characteristics. Roll more than once to add additional detail. You can combine all three character oracles (10, 11 and 12), plus a roll on an appropriate name table, to build an outline of an NPC.

ORACLE 13: IRONLANDER NAMES (PAGE 184)

Use this oracle to quickly generate a name for an Ironlander character. Roll on either table. Surnames are not used in the Ironlands and names are often gender-neutral. If a name doesn't fit a character, or you don't like the sound of it, look up or down a row for your answer, or reverse the digits.

You can also ignore this oracle and use your own preferred naming conventions or name generators for your Ironland characters.

What do the villagers know of the raider chief? You roll on the character oracles to learn more about him. The Role oracle tells you his background is a "Leader." The Character Goal oracle tells you his mission is to "Fulfill a duty." Then, you ask what makes him distinctive by rolling on the Descriptor table, and the oracle answers, "Obsessed."

Putting these pieces together, you decide the bandit chief was once the leader of a settlement to the north. He and his allies were exiled following a coup. He is sworn to protect his followers and see them through their life as outcasts, but he is also obsessed with someday reclaiming his home.

With a few rolls and a bit of interpretation, you've added a fair bit of texture and pathos to what might otherwise be a stock villain character. You roll for his name and the oracle tells you, "Khulan."

ORACLE 14: ELF NAMES (PAGE 186)

Use this oracle to generate a name for an elf character. To learn more about elves in the Ironlands, see page 142.

ORACLE 15: OTHER NAMES (PAGE 187)

Use this oracle for other firstborn characters, including giants, varou, and trolls.

ORACLE 16: COMBAT ACTION (PAGE 188)

Use this oracle to help inspire an action for an NPC in combat. When you're not sure what your foe does next, particularly when they have initiative, roll on this table and interpret the result as appropriate to your foe and the situation.

You face off against Khulan, the leader of the raiding party. You charge at him, sword swinging. He easily parries the blow, and takes initiative. What does he do next? You roll on the Combat Action table. The oracle answers, "Provoke a reckless response."

Khulan laughs at you, slamming the haft of his axe against his shield. "C'mon!" he yells, goading you into a hasty attack. "You can do better than that."

You *Face Danger* to try to resist the taunt...

ORACLE 17: MYSTIC BACKLASH (PAGE 189)

Those who deal in magic may find themselves at the mercy of chaos. This oracle can supplement, or replace, the *Pay the Price* table (page 105) when resolving the outcome of a failed ritual or other negative interaction with mystical forces. Use this oracle in dramatic moments, or to introduce an unexpected outcome triggered by a match.

ORACLE 18: MAJOR PLOT TWIST (PAGE 190)

Use this oracle to introduce a narrative surprise or revelation. Most of these results have a negative implication, and can be used to resolve a match at a crucial moment in your story. In particular, this is an effective tool to leverage when you make a move with matched 10's on the challenge dice.

This oracle offers similar results to the *Pay the Price* table (page 105), but is more focused on dramatic events tied to your current quests.

Khulan has been defeated, but you roll a miss with matched 10's when you *Fulfill Your Vow*. Perhaps these raiders are part of a larger force? The village is still in danger, leaving your vow unfulfilled. To get some more detail and resolve the match, you check the Major Plot Twist oracle. The oracle responds, "Two seemingly unrelated situations are shown to be connected."

Based on that answer, you decide to connect this encounter to your original quest. The raider and his clan all bear branded scars in the shape of the stolen relic. What does it mean? Play to find out.

ORACLE 19: CHALLENGE RANK (PAGE 190)

Use this oracle when you want to randomly determine the challenge rank of a quest, journey, or fight.

ORACLE 1: ACTION

1	Scheme	35	Falter	69	Advance
2	Clash	36	Suppress	70	Command
3	Weaken	37	Hunt	71	Refuse
4	Initiate	38	Share	72	Find
5	Create	39	Destroy	73	Deliver
6	Swear	40	Avoid	74	Hide
7	Avenge	41	Reject	75	Fortify
8	Guard	42	Demand	76	Betray
9	Defeat	43	Explore	77	Secure
10	Control	44	Bolster	78	Arrive
11	Break	45	Seize	79	Affect
12	Risk	46	Mourn	80	Change
13	Surrender	47	Reveal	81	Defend
14	Inspect	48	Gather	82	Debate
15	Raid	49	Defy	83	Support
16	Evade	50	Transform	84	Follow
17	Assault	51	Persevere	85	Construct
18	Deflect	52	Serve	86	Locate
19	Threaten	53	Begin	87	Endure
20	Attack	54	Move	88	Release
21	Leave	55	Coordinate	89	Lose
22	Preserve	56	Resist	90	Reduce
23	Manipulate	57	Await	91	Escalate
24	Remove	58	Impress	92	Distract
25	Eliminate	59	Take	93	Journey
26	Withdraw	60	Oppose	94	Escort
27	Abandon	61	Capture	95	Learn
28	Investigate	62	Overwhelm	96	Communicate
29	Hold	63	Challenge	97	Depart
30	Focus	64	Acquire	98	Search
31	Uncover	65	Protect	99	Charge
32	Breach	66	Finish	00	Summon
33	Aid	67	Strengthen		
34	Uphold	68	Restore		

ORACLE 2: THEME

1	Risk	35	History	69	Prize
2	Ability	36	World	70	Destiny
3	Price	37	Vow	71	Momentum
4	Ally	38	Protection	72	Power
5	Battle	39	Nature	73	Memory
6	Safety	40	Opinion	74	Ruin
7	Survival	41	Burden	75	Mysticism
8	Weapon	42	Vengeance	76	Rival
9	Wound	43	Opportunity	77	Problem
10	Shelter	44	Faction	78	Idea
11	Leader	45	Danger	79	Revenge
12	Fear	46	Corruption	80	Health
13	Time	47	Freedom	81	Fellowship
14	Duty	48	Debt	82	Enemy
15	Secret	49	Hate	83	Religion
16	Innocence	50	Possession	84	Spirit
17	Renown	51	Stranger	85	Fame
18	Direction	52	Passage	86	Desolation
19	Death	53	Land	87	Strength
20	Honor	54	Creature	88	Knowledge
21	Labor	55	Disease	89	Truth
22	Solution	56	Advantage	90	Quest
23	Tool	57	Blood	91	Pride
24	Balance	58	Language	92	Loss
25	Love	59	Rumor	93	Law
26	Barrier	60	Weakness	94	Path
27	Creation	61	Greed	95	Warning
28	Decay	62	Family	96	Relationship
29	Trade	63	Resource	97	Wealth
30	Bond	64	Structure	98	Home
31	Hope	65	Dream	99	Strategy
32	Superstition	66	Community	00	Supply
33	Peace	67	War		
34	Deception	68	Portent		

ORACLE 3: REGION

1-12	Barrier Islands	61-72	Hinterlands
13-24	Ragged Coast	73-84	Tempest Hills
25-34	Deep Wilds	85-94	Veiled Mountains
35-46	Flooded Lands	95-99	Shattered Wastes
47-60	Havens	00	Elsewhere

ORACLE 4: LOCATION

1	Hideout	19-20	Waterfall	53-54	Cliff
2	Ruin	21-22	Cave	55-56	Grove
3	Mine	23-24	Swamp	57-58	Village
4	Waste	25-26	Fen	59-60	Moor
5	Mystical Site	27-28	Ravine	61-62	Thicket
6	Path	29-30	Road	63-64	River Ford
7	Outpost	31-32	Tree	65-66	Valley
8	Wall	33-34	Pond	67-68	Bay/Fjord
9	Battlefield	35-36	Fields	69-70	Foothills
10	Hovel	37-38	Marsh	71-72	Lake
11	Spring	39-40	Steading	73-75	River
12	Lair	41-42	Rapids	76-79	Forest
13	Fort	43-44	Pass	80-83	Coast
14	Bridge	45-46	Trail	84-88	Hill
15	Camp	47-48	Glade	89-93	Mountain
16	Cairn/Grave	49-50	Plain	94-99	Woods
17-18	Caravan	51-52	Ridge	00	Anomaly

ORACLE 5: COASTAL WATERS LOCATION

1	Fleet	11-15	Harbor	55-62	Bay
2	Sargassum	16-23	Ship	63-70	Ice
3	Flotsam	24-30	Rocks	71-85	Island
4	Mystical Site	31-38	Fjord	86-99	Open Water
5	Lair	39-46	Estuary	00	Anomaly
6-10	Wreck	47-54	Cove		

ORACLE 6: LOCATION DESCRIPTOR

1-2	High	35-36	Occupied	69-70	Low
3-4	Remote	37-38	Rich	71-72	Beautiful
5-6	Exposed	39-40	Big	73-74	Abundant
7-8	Small	41-42	Savage	75-76	Lush
9-10	Broken	43-44	Defended	77-78	Flooded
11-12	Diverse	45-46	Withered	79-80	Empty
13-14	Rough	47-48	Mystical	81-82	Strange
15-16	Dark	49-50	Inaccessible	83-84	Corrupted
17-18	Shadowy	51-52	Protected	85-86	Peaceful
19-20	Contested	53-54	Abandoned	87-88	Forgotten
21-22	Grim	55-56	Wide	89-90	Expansive
23-24	Wild	57-58	Foul	91-92	Settled
25-26	Fertile	59-60	Dead	93-94	Dense
27-28	Blocked	61-62	Ruined	95-96	Civilized
29-30	Ancient	63-64	Barren	97-98	Desolate
31-32	Perilous	65-66	Cold	99-00	Isolated
33-34	Hidden	67-68	Blighted		



ORACLE 7: SETTLEMENT NAME

- 01-15 **A feature of the landscape.** Envision what it is. What makes it unusual or distinctive?

Examples:

1-10	Highmount	51-60	Stoneford
11-20	Brackwater	61-70	Deepwater
21-30	Frostwood	71-80	Whitefall
31-40	Redcrest	81-90	Graycliff
41-50	Grimtree	91-00	Three Rivers

- 16-30 **A manmade edifice.** What is it? Why is it important to this settlement's history?

Examples:

1-10	Whitebridge	51-60	Timberwall
11-20	Lonefort	61-70	Stonetower
21-30	Highcairn	71-80	Thornhall
31-40	Redhall	81-90	Cinderhome
41-50	Darkwell	91-00	Fallowfield

- 31-45 **A creature.** Why have the people of this settlement chosen this creature as their totem? How is it represented in art or rituals?

Examples:

1-10	Ravencliff	51-60	Boarwood
11-20	Bearmark	61-70	Foxhollow
21-30	Wolfcrag	71-80	Elderwatch
31-40	Eaglespire	81-90	Elkfield
41-50	Wyvern's Rest	91-00	Dragonshadow

- 46-60 **A historical event.** What happened here? What place or practice commemorates this event?

Examples:

1-10	Swordbreak	51-60	Olgar's Stand
11-20	Fool's Fall	61-70	Lostwater
21-30	Firstmeet	71-80	Rojirra's Lament
31-40	Brokenhelm	81-90	Lastmarch
41-50	Mournhaunt	91-00	Rockfall

- 61-75 **A word in an Old World language.** What culture is represented by this word? What does it translate to?

Examples:

1-10	Abon	51-60	Kazeera
11-20	Daveza	61-70	Khazu
21-30	Damula	71-80	Sova
31-40	Essus	81-90	Nabuma
41-50	Sina	91-00	Tiza

- 76-90 **A season or environmental aspect.** What influence does the weather have on this settlement?

Examples:

1-10	Winterhome	51-60	Duskmoor
11-20	Windhaven	61-70	Frostcrag
21-30	Stormrest	71-80	Springbrook
31-40	Bleakfrost	81-90	Icebreak
41-50	Springtide	91-00	Summersong

- 91-100 **Something Else....**

Examples:

1-10	A trade good (Ironhome)
11-20	An Old World city (New Arkesh)
21-30	A founder or famous settler (Kei's Hall)
31-40	A god (Elisora)
41-50	A historical item (Blackhelm)
51-60	A firstborn race (Elfbrook)
61-70	An elvish word or name (Nessana)
71-80	A mythic belief or event (Ghostwalk)
81-90	A positive term (Hope)
91-00	A negative term (Forsaken)

ORACLE 8: QUICK SETTLEMENT NAME GENERATOR

	Prefix	Suffix
1-4	Bleak-	-moor
5-8	Green-	-ford
9-12	Wolf-	-crag
13-16	Raven-	-watch
17-20	Gray-	-hope
21-24	Red-	-wood
25-28	Axe-	-ridge
29-32	Great-	-stone
33-36	Wood-	-haven
37-40	Low-	-fall(s)
41-44	White-	-river
45-48	Storm-	-field
49-52	Black-	-hill
53-56	Mourn-	-bridge
57-60	New-	-mark
61-64	Stone-	-cairn
65-68	Grim-	-land
69-72	Lost-	-hall
73-76	High-	-mount
77-80	Rock-	-rock
81-84	Shield-	-brook
85-88	Sword-	-barrow
89-92	Frost-	-stead
93-96	Thorn-	-home
97-00	Long-	-wick

ORACLE 9: SETTLEMENT TROUBLE

1-2	Outsiders rejected	49-50	Provisions are scarce
3-4	Dangerous discovery	51-52	Sickness run amok
5-6	Dreadful omens	53-54	Allies become enemies
7-8	Natural disaster	55-56	Attack is imminent
9-10	Old wounds reopened	57-58	Lost caravan
11-12	Important object is lost	59-60	Dark secret revealed
13-14	Someone is captured	61-62	Urgent expedition
15-16	Mysterious phenomenon	63-64	A leader falls
17-18	Revolt against a leader	65-66	Families in conflict
19-20	Vengeful outcast	67-68	Incompetent leadership
21-22	Rival settlement	69-70	Reckless warmongering
23-24	Nature strikes back	71-72	Beast on the hunt
25-26	Someone is missing	73-74	Betrayed from within
27-28	Production halts	75-76	Broken truce
29-30	Mysterious murders	77-78	Wrathful haunt
31-32	Debt comes due	79-80	Conflict with firstborn
33-34	Unjust leadership	81-82	Trade route blocked
35-36	Disastrous accident	83-84	In the crossfire
37-38	In league with the enemy	85-86	Stranger causes discord
39-40	Raiders prey on the weak	87-88	Important event threatened
41-42	Cursed past	89-90	Dangerous tradition
43-44	An innocent is accused	91-00	Roll twice
45-46	Corrupted by dark magic		
47-48	Isolated by brutal weather		

ORACLE 10: CHARACTER ROLE

1-2	Criminal	28-30	Traveler	59-62	Artisan
3-4	Healer	31-33	Mystic	63-66	Scout
5-6	Bandit	34-36	Priest	67-70	Herder
7-9	Guide	37-39	Sailor	71-74	Fisher
10-12	Performer	40-42	Pilgrim	75-79	Warrior
13-15	Miner	43-45	Thief	80-84	Hunter
16-18	Mercenary	46-48	Adventurer	85-89	Raider
19-21	Outcast	49-51	Forager	90-94	Trader
22-24	Vagrant	52-54	Leader	95-99	Farmer
25-27	Forester	55-58	Guard	00	Unusual role

ORACLE 11: CHARACTER GOAL

1-3	Obtain an object	52-54	Collect a debt
4-6	Make an agreement	55-57	Protect a secret
7-9	Build a relationship	58-60	Spread faith
10-12	Undermine a relationship	61-63	Enrich themselves
13-15	Seek a truth	64-66	Protect a person
16-18	Pay a debt	67-69	Protect the status quo
19-21	Refute a falsehood	70-72	Advance status
22-24	Harm a rival	73-75	Defend a place
25-27	Cure an ill	76-78	Avenge a wrong
28-30	Find a person	79-81	Fulfill a duty
31-33	Find a home	82-84	Gain knowledge
34-36	Seize power	85-87	Prove worthiness
37-39	Restore a relationship	88-90	Find redemption
40-42	Create an item	91-92	Escape from something
43-45	Travel to a place	93-95	Resolve a dispute
46-48	Secure provisions	96-00	Roll twice
49-51	Rebel against power		

ORACLE 12: CHARACTER DESCRIPTOR

1	Stoic	35	Dangerous	69	Manipulative
2	Attractive	36	Quirky	70	Relaxed
3	Passive	37	Cheery	71	Stealthy
4	Aloof	38	Disfigured	72	Confident
5	Affectionate	39	Intolerant	73	Weak
6	Generous	40	Skilled	74	Friendly
7	Smug	41	Stingy	75	Wise
8	Armed	42	Timid	76	Influential
9	Clever	43	Insensitive	77	Young
10	Brave	44	Wild	78	Adventurous
11	Ugly	45	Bitter	79	Oppressed
12	Sociable	46	Cunning	80	Vengeful
13	Doomed	47	Remorseful	81	Cooperative
14	Connected	48	Kind	82	Armored
15	Bold	49	Charming	83	Apathetic
16	Jealous	50	Oblivious	84	Determined
17	Angry	51	Critical	85	Loyal
18	Active	52	Cautious	86	Sick
19	Suspicious	53	Resourceful	87	Religious
20	Hostile	54	Weary	88	Selfish
21	Hardhearted	55	Wounded	89	Old
22	Successful	56	Anxious	90	Fervent
23	Talented	57	Powerful	91	Violent
24	Experienced	58	Athletic	92	Agreeable
25	Deceitful	59	Driven	93	Hot-tempered
26	Ambitious	60	Cruel	94	Stubborn
27	Aggressive	61	Quiet	95	Incompetent
28	Conceited	62	Honest	96	Greedy
29	Proud	63	Infamous	97	Cowardly
30	Stern	64	Dying	98	Obsessed
31	Dependent	65	Reclusive	99	Careless
32	Wary	66	Artistic	00	Ironsworn
33	Strong	67	Disabled		
34	Insightful	68	Confused		

ORACLE 13: IRONLANDER NAMES

1	Solana	35	Tessa	69	Masias
2	Keelan	36	Sibila	70	Kanno
3	Cadigan	37	Morien	71	Razeena
4	Sola	38	Mona	72	Mira
5	Kodroth	39	Padma	73	Perella
6	Kione	40	Avella	74	Myrick
7	Katja	41	Naila	75	Qamar
8	Tio	42	Lio	76	Kormak
9	Artiga	43	Cera	77	Zura
10	Eos	44	Ithela	78	Zanita
11	Bastien	45	Zhan	79	Brynn
12	Elli	46	Kaivan	80	Tegan
13	Maura	47	Valeri	81	Pendry
14	Haleema	48	Hirsham	82	Quinn
15	Abella	49	Pemba	83	Fanir
16	Morter	50	Edda	84	Glain
17	Wulan	51	Lestara	85	Emelyn
18	Mai	52	Lago	86	Kendi
19	Farina	53	Elstan	87	Althus
20	Pearce	54	Saskia	88	Leela
21	Wynne	55	Kabeera	89	Ishana
22	Haf	56	Caldas	90	Flint
23	Aeddon	57	Nisus	91	Delkash
24	Khinara	58	Serene	92	Nia
25	Milla	59	Chenda	93	Nan
26	Nakata	60	Themon	94	Keeara
27	Kynan	61	Erin	95	Katania
28	Kiah	62	Alban	96	Morell
29	Jaggar	63	Parcell	97	Temir
30	Beca	64	Jelma	98	Bas
31	Ikram	65	Willa	99	Sabine
32	Melia	66	Nadira	00	Tallus
33	Sidan	67	Gwen		
34	Deshi	68	Amara		

1	Segura	35	Vigo	69	Sarda
2	Gethin	36	Sadia	70	Shona
3	Bataar	37	Malik	71	Kalidas
4	Basira	38	Dag	72	Wena
5	Joa	39	Kuno	73	Sendra
6	Glynn	40	Reva	74	Kori
7	Toran	41	Kai	75	Setara
8	Arasen	42	Kalina	76	Lucia
9	Kuron	43	Jihan	77	Maya
10	Griff	44	Hennion	78	Reema
11	Owena	45	Abram	79	Yorath
12	Adda	46	Aida	80	Rhoddri
13	Euros	47	Myrtle	81	Shekhar
14	Kova	48	Nekun	82	Servan
15	Kara	49	Menna	83	Reese
16	Morgan	50	Tahir	84	Kenrick
17	Nanda	51	Sarria	85	Indirra
18	Tamara	52	Nakura	86	Giliana
19	Asha	53	Akiya	87	Jebran
20	Delos	54	Talan	88	Kotama
21	Torgan	55	Mattick	89	Fara
22	Makari	56	Okoth	90	Katrin
23	Selva	57	Khulan	91	Namba
24	Kimura	58	Verena	92	Lona
25	Rhian	59	Beltran	93	Taylah
26	Tristan	60	Del	94	Kato
27	Siorra	61	Ranna	95	Esra
28	Sayer	62	Alina	96	Eleri
29	Cortina	63	Muna	97	Irsia
30	Vesna	64	Mura	98	Kayu
31	Kataka	65	Torrens	99	Bevan
32	Keyshia	66	Yuda	00	Chandra
33	Mila	67	Nazmi		
34	Lili	68	Ghalen		

ORACLE 14: ELF NAMES

1-2	Arsula	35-36	Ukames	69-70	Anatu
3-4	Naidita	37-38	Ahmeshki	71-72	Aralu
5-6	Belesunna	39-40	Ilsit	73-74	Arakhi
7-8	Vidarna	41-42	Mayatanay	75-76	Ibrahem
9-10	Ninsunu	43-44	Etana	77-78	Sinosu
11-12	Balathu	45-46	Gamanna	79-80	Jemshida
13-14	Dorosi	47-48	Nessana	81-82	Visapni
15-16	Gezera	49-50	Uralar	83-84	Hullata
17-18	Zursan	51-52	Tishetu	85-86	Sidura
19-20	Seleeku	53-54	Leucia	87-88	Kerihu
21-22	Utamara	55-56	Sutahe	89-90	Ereshki
23-24	Nebakay	57-58	Dotani	91-92	Cybelā
25-26	Dismashk	59-60	Uktannu	93-94	Anunna
27-28	Mitunu	61-62	Retenay	95-96	Otani
29-30	Atani	63-64	Kendalanu	97-98	Ditani
31-32	Kinzura	65-66	Tahuta	99-00	Faraza
33-34	Sumula	67-68	Mattissa		

ORACLE 15: OTHER NAMES

	Giants	Varou	Trolls
1-4	Chony	Vata	Rattle
5-8	Banda	Zora	Scratch
9-12	Jochu	Jasna	Wallow
13-16	Kira	Charna	Groak
17-20	Khatir	Tana	Gimble
21-24	Chaidu	Soveen	Scar
25-28	Atan	Radka	Cratch
29-32	Buandu	Zlata	Creech
33-36	Javyn	Leesla	Shush
37-40	Khashin	Byna	Glush
41-44	Bayara	Meeka	Slar
45-48	Temura	Iskra	Gnash
49-52	Kidha	Jarek	Stoad
53-56	Kathos	Darva	Grig
57-60	Tanua	Neda	Bleat
61-64	Bashtu	Keha	Chortle
65-68	Jaran	Zhivka	Cluck
69-72	Othos	Kvata	Slith
73-76	Khutan	Staysa	Mongo
77-80	Otaan	Evka	Creak
81-84	Martu	Vuksha	Burple
85-88	Baku	Muko	Vrusk
89-92	Tuban	Dreko	Snuffle
93-96	Qudan	Aleko	Leech
97-00	Denua	Vojan	Herk

ORACLE 16: COMBAT ACTION

1-3	Compel a surrender.
4-6	Coordinate with allies.
7-9	Gather reinforcements.
10-13	Seize something or someone.
14-17	Provoke a reckless response.
18-21	Intimidate or frighten.
22-25	Reveal a surprising truth.
26-29	Shift focus to someone or something else.
30-33	Destroy something, or render it useless.
34-39	Take a decisive action.
40-45	Reinforce defenses.
46-52	Ready an action.
53-60	Use the terrain to gain advantage.
61-68	Leverage the advantage of a weapon or ability.
69-78	Create an opportunity.
79-89	Attack with precision.
90-99	Attack with power.
00	Take a completely unexpected action.

ORACLE 17: MYSTIC BACKLASH

1-4	Your ritual has the opposite affect.
5-8	You are sapped of strength.
9-12	Your friend, ally, or companion is adversely affected.
13-16	You destroy an important object.
17-20	You inadvertently summon a horror.
21-24	You collapse, and drift into a troubled sleep.
25-28	You undergo a physical torment which leaves its mark upon you.
29-32	You hear ghostly voices whispering of dark portents.
33-36	You are lost in shadow, and find yourself in another place without memory of how you got there.
37-40	You alert someone or something to your presence.
41-44	You are not yourself, and act against a friend, ally, or companion.
45-48	You affect or damage your surroundings, causing a disturbance or potential harm.
49-52	You waste resources.
53-56	You suffer the loss of a sense for several hours.
57-60	You lose your connection to magic for a day or so, and cannot perform rituals.
61-64	Your ritual affects the target in an unexpected and problematic way.
65-68	Your ritual reveals a surprising and troubling truth.
69-72	You are tempted by dark powers.
73-76	You see a troubling vision of your future.
77-80	You can't perform this ritual again until you acquire an important component.
81-84	You develop a strange fear or compulsion.
85-88	Your ritual causes creatures to exhibit strange or aggressive behavior.
89-92	You are tormented by an apparition from your past.
93-96	You are wracked with sudden sickness.
97-00	Roll twice more on this table. Both results occur. If they are the same result, make it worse.

ORACLE 18: MAJOR PLOT TWIST

1-5	It was all a diversion.
6-10	A dark secret is revealed.
11-15	A trap is sprung.
16-20	An assumption is revealed to be false.
21-25	A secret alliance is revealed.
26-30	Your actions benefit an enemy.
31-35	Someone returns unexpectedly.
36-40	A more dangerous foe is revealed.
41-45	You and an enemy share a common goal.
46-50	A true identity is revealed.
51-55	You are betrayed by someone who was trusted.
56-60	You are too late.
61-65	The true enemy is revealed.
66-70	The enemy gains new allies.
71-75	A new danger appears.
76-80	Someone or something goes missing.
81-85	The truth of a relationship is revealed.
86-90	Two seemingly unrelated situations are shown to be connected.
91-95	Unexpected powers or abilities are revealed.
96-00	Roll twice more on this table. Both results occur. If they are the same result, make it more dramatic.

ORACLE 19: CHALLENGE RANK

1-20	Troublesome
21-55	Dangerous
56-80	Formidable
81-93	Extreme
94-00	Epic

MORE ORACLES

Roleplaying games have a long tradition of using random generators as a play aid. If you're an avid collector of RPG's, you may wish to leverage oracles from other systems. You can also find a limitless supply of random generators and tables online—names, people, creatures, places, plot hooks, and much more.

Physical randomizers can also be helpful. You can purchase dice with various icons that can be interpreted to resolve questions and trigger new situations. Or, you can play with tarot cards or rune stones.

Whatever aids you use, don't let randomness overwhelm your narrative. Your own story instincts are the most powerful tool in your gaming kit.

CREATING YOUR OWN ORACLES

You will find a blank worksheet at ironswornrpg.com to create your own oracle tables. You can make tables which better fit your preferences or support the tone of your game.

You can also create specific tables for certain narrative situations. Heading out for a dangerous journey into the mountains? Create a table of things you might encounter. Then, roll on the table when you want to introduce an encounter or event.



CHAPTER 7

GAMEPLAY IN DEPTH



STARTING YOUR CAMPAIGN

An *Ironsworn* campaign is a series of connected game sessions. You will explore your world and the life of your character as you swear vows and struggle to see them fulfilled. You will journey across the Ironlands, run afoul of troubles, fight fearsome foes, and form bonds with people and communities. Through it all, you make decisions as your character and explore what it means to be Ironsworn in a harsh land.

To get started on your campaign, follow the steps described in this section.

CREATE YOUR CHARACTER

Refer to the character creation summary on page 47. Envision your character, considering their motivations, skills, background, appearance, personality, and connections to the world. Set your stats and pick your assets in whatever order you prefer. Give your character a name.

If you are playing co-op or guided, talk over your character with the other players and establish your connections to each other. You can shorthand your ideas for now, and flesh them out in play.

Feel free to intermix world creation and character creation. The choices you make about your setting may determine the options available to your character. Is magic unknown in this world? If so, you may want to ignore the ritual assets.

You envision your character. Your family was part of a raider clan. You were born to battle, but left that life behind long ago. Now, you live as a farmer. Your sword, long unused, hangs above the mantle in your modest home. Your armor is stored in a chest at the foot of your bed. Only those closest to you are aware of your former life among the raiders. Others know you for your loyalty to the village and your stubborn determination to help see them through the unforgiving winters. In quiet moments, your dark mood betrays the shadows of your past.

You set your stats. Your iron is 3, representing your strength, prowess in battle, and fierce resolve. Then, 2 for heart and wits, and 1 for edge and shadow. For your assets, you choose **Shield-Bearer** and **Veteran**. You're not sure about your third asset, so you decide to pick it once you are further along in creating your world and starting situation.

Finally, you give your character a name: Saskia

CREATE YOUR WORLD

If you are playing in the Ironlands or a similar setting, work through the ‘Your Truths’ exercise starting on page 122. Review the options and make selections. Keep an eye out for quest starters which trigger an idea for a background vow (page 195) or an inciting incident (page 196).

Next, choose where your story begins. Have a look at the regions on page 112. Where are your characters located? Are they part of a community, or wandering the wilderness? Talk it out with other players and envision the setting. Mark the location on your map.

You envision some basic characteristics of your home village. It is a small settlement along the southern fringes of the Havens. It is surrounded by fields and sits astride a wide river.

You roll on the Settlement Name table (page 178), and the oracle answers, “Cinderhome.” You envision the burnt ruins of the former longhouse. It is a place haunted by a long-dead overseer who died in the fire.

You mark Cinderhome on your map. This is where Saskia’s adventures begin.

If you prefer, you can just spend a few moments defining some basic facts for your world. Jump in and discover the rest in play.

If you are using your own setting or one drawn from another source (such as an RPG, book, or film), you can leverage the information on that setting to determine your character’s situation and the troubles you may encounter.

COLLABORATING TO BUILD YOUR WORLD

If you are playing a co-op or guided campaign, you should work through the initial process of worldbuilding with the other players. Depending on your preferences, you can spend a few minutes quickly roughing out the basics of your setting, or you can dive deep for an hour or two of collaborative creation. Talk it over with the other players to ensure you have the same expectations for your initial session. Even if you give this initial activity some focus, leave open questions and blank spaces to fill in through play.

If you are the GM, you should facilitate discussion and contribute to the worldbuilding. Take cues from the players and make suggestions to help formulate potential quests and adversaries.

MARK YOUR BACKGROUND BONDS

Give yourself up to three bonds (page 36). These bonds may be to a community or an individual. You do not need to make the *Forge a Bond* move for these starting bonds. Mark a tick for each bond on your character sheet (1 tick per bond), and make note of them.

If you are playing guided or co-op, you can use these starting bonds as your connection to other player characters. Otherwise, you may establish bonds with those characters through play.

If you’d rather jump right into play, you can flesh out the details of your background bonds later. Consider these bonds held in reserve until you decide to bring them into your narrative. If you later introduce a background bond for a character or community, mark the bond. Then, envision how this bond was previously established and how this relationship impacts your story.

You mark one bond for your home village. You also envision an NPC, the clan overseer, who is a good and loyal friend. She is one of the few who knows of your former life as a raider, but does not hold it against you. “We can remake ourselves,” she once told you. “Like a broken sword reforged.” You give her a name and mark the bond.

You don’t have any ideas for your third bond, so you keep it in reserve. You can allocate it as you explore your starting situation.

You decide the background bond with the overseer fulfills the requirement of the **Banner-Sworn** asset (“When you mark a bond with a leader or faction”). You take it as your third and final asset.

WRITE YOUR BACKGROUND VOW

When you create your character, you give yourself a background vow to represent a primary motivation or ultimate goal. This vow is part of your character’s backstory. It may be a vow sworn years ago, or one which is a reaction to some recent, major event.

Write down this vow and give it a rank of extreme or epic. You don’t need to make the *Swear an Iron Vow* move for this quest.

Fulfilling this vow will not be easy. In story-time, it might require months, years, or even decades to see this vow fulfilled or forsaken. You may even decide your background vow isn’t something you make significant progress on in your narrative. Instead, it just helps establish some roleplaying detail for your character and fleshes out your world.

Your backstory involves your former life as a raider. Haunted by your past, you have sworn to see this raider clan defeated. However, there are complications. The clan is powerful, and you couldn't possibly hope to defeat them without an army at your back. Also, the clan is led by your own mother. It'll take a special sort of courage to face her again.

You envision the clan's name: "Red Moon." Their shields are decorated with a blood-red circle.

For now, this vow is a glowing ember, a promise not yet sparked to flame. You mark the vow as "Defeat the Red Moon clan", giving it a rank of extreme.

ENVISION YOUR INCITING INCIDENT

An inciting incident is the problem which arrives at the beginning of a story, propelling the protagonist into action. Everything up to that point is backstory—the normal world to which your character has become accustomed. In *Ironsworn*, the inciting incident is the tipping point which forces you to undertake a life of perilous quests and adventure.

To start your character's story, envision an imminent threat or compelling need. You can use a quest starter from this book (see chapters 4 and 5), talk it out at the table, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 107). This problem dictates what drives your first session and sets your character's story in motion.

What makes a good inciting incident?

- **Make it personal.** Why is this important to your character? Envision how this connects to your background and motivations. Also, consider how you can leverage story themes which are interesting to you as the player.
- **Make it a problem that won't go away on its own.** The threats or forces at the heart of this situation will see it through, even if you ignore them.
- **Give it a ticking clock.** The problem won't wait for you. If you don't act or encounter delays, things will get worse.
- **Make it universal.** If you are playing with allies, make this a shared vow—important to each of you. This creates an opportunity to work together. If you are playing solo, make it a threat which impacts other people you care about.

- **Up the stakes.** Envision complications which make your inciting incident even more dire for you, your family, or your community.
- **Limit the scope.** Unlike your background vow, this is a problem which you can (and must!) deal with now. In gameplay turns, you *Swear an Iron Vow* and mark it as a troublesome, dangerous, or formidable quest. If all goes well, it might be resolved in a session or two. If you don't act, things will get worse.

These suggestions can apply to any vow, but are especially relevant for an inciting incident. Even if the details are not clear to you, envision how the problem can lend itself to a rich narrative full of drama, conflict, and surprises.

A mysterious sickness has struck Cinderhome's overseer. The village healer brewed draughts, but none offered any relief. The priest prayed, but the gods did not listen. The mystic performed divinations, but the shadows did not divulge their secrets.

The overseer, your friend, is fading. Without help, she will surely die.

To add a bit more drama and stakes, the families in your community are now at each other's throats as they start to position their preferred candidate to take up the iron circlet. If the overseer dies, open conflict may break out. The community will be weakened and may not survive the coming winter.

You pile on the stakes until it feels like an imperative. You *must* take on this quest.



SET THE SCENE

You have two options for starting play: You can begin with the **normal world**, or **in media res**.

THE NORMAL WORLD

Envision a prologue involving your character which helps to flesh out who you are and how you interact with your world. If you have allies, this is an opportunity to roleplay your relationships and introduce your personality and backgrounds. Your inciting incident can then serve as an event or threat which you encounter in play during your first session.

You want to spend a bit of time exploring your character and your world before you kick things off with your overseer's sudden illness. Your village is celebrating the spring festival, and you are taking part in a boar hunting competition. You roleplay scenes and make moves as you interact with other hunters, track your quarry, and attempt to bring down a particularly large and vicious boar. When you return to the village, you learn that the overseer has fallen ill.

If you are having trouble coming up with your initial quest, you can use the prologue to jump in and discover a dramatic situation through play. Ask questions about the characters, your world, and the current situation. Draw conclusions to those questions or *Ask the Oracle*. Look for opportunities in the fiction to trigger a vow.

IN MEDIA RES

In media res is a Latin term meaning “in the middle of things.” You start your story at a crucial point. Your inciting incident is happening now, or is something you are fully aware of and must react to. The raiders are attacking. The usurper claims the iron circlet. The marauding beast appears.

You can begin with a tense, action-oriented scene as you encounter the problem. Or, you might frame a scene where you *Swear an Iron Vow*, letting the result of that move trigger what happens next.

You envision a scene in the longhouse as you visit your stricken overseer. She lies in bed, her features as pale as death, her breathing ragged. There are others here: The village healer, the overseer's wife, and a rival who feigns concern. Ignoring them, you stride forward. You draw your sword...

SWEAR AN IRON VOW

To set your quest in motion, as a response to the inciting incident, make this move (page 98). But first, start with the fiction. Envision the scene. Describe what you say and how you perform the ceremony. This is an important moment for your character.

What was the result of your move?

- **Did you score a strong hit?** Envision your first steps. Do you *Undertake a Journey*? Do you *Compel* someone into action? Play to see what happens next, and make moves as appropriate.
- **Did you score a weak hit?** Your next steps are unclear. This may typically lead to new scenes and new moves. Perhaps you *Gather Information* (page 62) as you try to identify a path forward.
- **Did you score a miss?** An unexpected danger or obstacle stands in your way. Envision what it is, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 107). Then, play to see what happens as you attempt to overcome this stumbling block.

For an inciting incident, give your new vow a rank of troublesome, dangerous, or formidable.

You envision the scene as you kneel before your overseer. You curl your hands tight around the iron blade of your sword—so tight that you open a cut in your palm. You pay the wound no mind. The blood fuels the promise. “I will see you healed,” you say. “I swear it.”

You roll the dice. Because you have the **Banner-Sworn** asset and serve the overseer, you may reroll any dice. It's a strong hit. A good omen. You write your vow on your character sheet and give it a rank of dangerous. Per the move outcome, “you are emboldened and it is clear what you must do next.” What do you know about this disease? What's your likely path forward? Envision the answer, talk it out, or *Ask the Oracle* (page 107).

SHARING YOUR VOW WITH ALLIES

If you are playing with allies, only one of you will make the *Swear an Iron Vow* move. Other players can make the *Aid your Ally* move (page 76) as a way of representing their own commitment to this vow. If you share this quest with your allies, each of you write the vow and any progress is marked by all players.

NEXT STEPS

Depending on the result of your *Swear an Iron Vow* move, your character may have a clear path forward, may have more questions than answers, or may need to overcome an immediate obstacle or threat before they can undertake their quest. You, as the player or GM, interpret what this result means. Not sure where to begin? *Ask the Oracle*.

You've sworn your vow and scored a strong hit, which means the next steps—from your character's perspective—are clear. As the player you don't know where to begin. Are there any clues to the source of the sickness? You *Ask the Oracle* by rolling on the Action and Theme tables (page 174).

The oracle answers, "Leave" and "Trade." What does it mean? Your first instinct is to interpret this answer as having something to do with a trade caravan. Perhaps one left your village on the same day the overseer fell ill? There must be a connection.

With your immediate goal in sight, you can roleplay your preparations and *Undertake a Journey* (page 65) to set off after the caravan.

CREATING A QUEST OUTLINE

If you find it helpful, you can envision and write down the main narrative steps in your quest. What journeys must you undertake? Which enemies will oppose you? What information must be found? Who do you need help from?

Your outline should give you ideas for the scenes and challenges which can be part of your quest, with each major step an opportunity to make the *Reach a Milestone* move (page 100). However, you should consider it a sketchy, unreliable plan at best. It is like an ancient map with "here there be monsters" written in blank spaces.

If you are a GM and have some ideas for challenges and events in the quest, make note of them. However, don't get locked into a specific path which must be followed. Whether you are a GM or a player, leave yourself open to surprises, new ideas, input from others at your table, and the whims of fate. Be prepared to toss even the mostly loosely defined plan out the window.

Put simply, play to see what happens.

You consider the steps you'll take to *Fulfill Your Vow*. You need to find the caravan, identify the cause of the illness, locate a cure, and return back to Cinderhome to heal the Overseer. You write the milestones down.

In your outline, you include a note about a healer in the Tanglewood forest. You like the idea of a woodland adventure and a mysterious old herbalist who may want something in exchange for a cure. Your story might not lead in that direction, but it gives you an interesting potential narrative checkpoint.

That's four milestones, which is about right for a dangerous quest (two progress per milestone). But, these may change depending on where the story takes you. At the moment, much is unknown.

Save the Overseer

- 1) Find the trade caravan
- 2) Discover what caused the sickness
- 3) Find a cure
(get help from the herbalist who lives deep in the Tanglewood?)
- 4) Return home and deliver the cure



CAMPAIGN SETUP SUMMARY

- 1 Create your character (page 193).** Envision your character. Choose your name, set your stats, and select your assets. Refer to chapter 2 (page 31) for details. If you prefer, you can start by creating your world (below).
- 2 Create your world (page 194).** If you are playing in the Ironlands, refer to chapter 4 (page 111) and the ‘Your Truths’ exercise (page 122). Otherwise, establish the basic truths of your own world. Envision where your story will begin and mark it on your map.
- 3 Create your background bonds (page 195).** Mark up to three bonds to represent your connections to home, friends, family, or other loyalties. Make note of these bonds, and mark a tick for each.
- 4 Write your background vow (page 195).** Create a sworn quest as backstory for your character. Write down this vow and give it a rank of extreme or epic. You don’t need to make the *Swear an Iron Vow* move for this quest.
- 5 Envision your inciting incident (page 196).** Come up with the problem that drives your character into action.
- 6 Set the Scene (page 198).** Decide whether you want to start with a prologue (the normal world), or in the midst of the problem (in media res). Envision the scene and begin play.
- 7 Swear an Iron Vow (page 199).** Make the move and write down your vow. Give it a rank of troublesome, dangerous, or formidable.
- 8 Take your next steps (page 200).** Based on the outcome of your *Swear an Iron Vow* move, envision what you do or what happens next. If you like, you may outline the milestones of your adventure. Then, play to see what happens.

THE MECHANICS AND THE FICTION

Ironsworn is a game. As such, it uses various **mechanics** to resolve situations and challenges. You make moves and roll dice. Your character uses stats, tracks, and assets as a representation of their abilities and readiness. The outcome of a move may have a mechanical impact, such as increasing your momentum track or reducing your health track. Managing your resources and making decisions based on a desired mechanical result is part of the challenge and fun of the game.

The **fiction** helps you define and understand your setting and your character. It guides your character’s background, personality, and motivations. It provides a framework for the situations you face, the world you inhabit, and the people and creatures you encounter. As you play, you take actions through the imagined perspective of your character. The fiction helps inform what happens next.

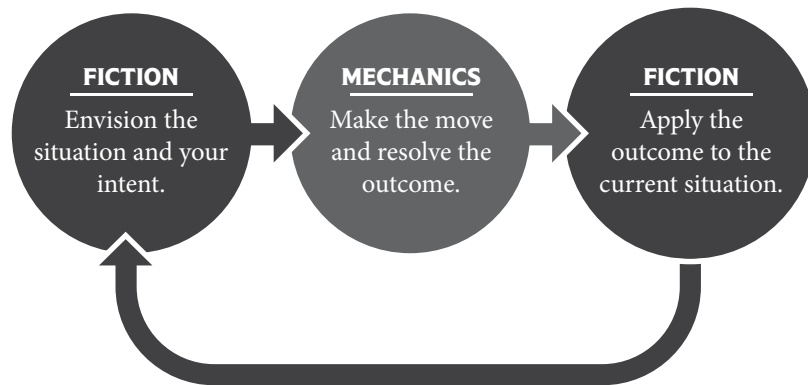
The intersection of fiction and mechanics is what makes the roleplaying experience vibrant and compelling. Think of the mechanics as your needle and the fiction as your thread. Using them both, you will weave the tapestry of your *Ironsworn* story.

LEADING AND FOLLOWING WITH THE FICTION

Without story, the game is an exercise in rolling dice. Without mechanics, your story lacks choices, consequences and surprises. An ideal session of *Ironsworn* leverages both the mechanics and the fiction, but leads and follows with the fiction.

What does that mean? Consider the fiction as the bookends to your moves. You start by picturing the situation. What is happening? What are you trying to do? How are you doing it? What opposes you? What complications might you face? If you are playing solo, envision it. If you are playing co-op, talk it out. If you are the GM, set the scene for your players and work with them to clarify any details.

Does the fiction trigger a move? If so, make it. Roll the dice. Deal with the mechanical outcome within the context of the current situation. If one of your status tracks—health, spirit, supply, or momentum—is adjusted as a result of a move, envision how this looks in the fiction. Don't just move the numbers around. Picture what it means for your character's readiness and well-being. Then, translate the result of your move back to the fiction. How does the situation change? What happens next?



FINDING YOUR BALANCE

The level of emphasis you give to the fiction varies by the situation and the desired pace of play. You can explore entire scenes—such as interactions with your allies and other characters—entirely through the fiction without engaging in moves. Other times, you may quickly gloss over the fiction to get on with things. That's fine. Use the mechanics of moves to portray the inherent drama and uncertainty of character intent and obstacles, but always look for opportunities to add texture and vibrancy to your world through the fiction.

You envision a quick scene as you return home and gather your gear. There's no move triggered here. You pack your supplies and don your armor. The mail shirt is heavier than you remember, as if weighed down by dark memories.

You stand at the door for a moment. Your hand rests on the hilt of your sword. "A blade never bloodied is a waste of iron," your mother once told you. You remember her words now, and say a quick prayer that your sword will not be drawn. It has seen enough blood.

Time is short. You must begin your quest.

FICTIONAL FRAMING

Ironsworn does not emphasize situational mechanics. Instead, the details are often abstracted within your moves and are reliant on **fictional framing**.

Think of it like moving a chess piece. Is it a pawn or a queen? What square is it on? What other pieces are on the board? What is the state of the game? All of these considerations impact the move you make and what happens next. There are rules. You can't simply decide to move a pawn three spaces or sweep the enemy pieces off the board.

Gameplay within *Ironsworn* is much less constrained than in chess, but is still framed by the rules of your narrative reality. Your actions and the events in your story need to make sense for the characters, the setting, and the fiction you have established through play. Your character's background, skills, beliefs, goals, and equipment all contribute to the actions you can take and how you envision those actions—even when those elements aren't defined by a stat or asset. NPCs don't have detailed mechanical attributes, but are portrayed as appropriate to the characteristics and intent you've established through play.

Fictional framing is your polestar. It helps create a character, a world, and situations which feel authentic and consequential.

How does fictional framing impact play?

- **It adds texture to your story.** Adding detail enriches your narrative, creates opportunities for new challenges and quests, and helps you visualize your character and your world.
- **It determines the moves you cannot make.** If you are not properly equipped or positioned to make a move, you can't do it. Without a very strong incentive, you can't *Compel* a hated enemy to help you.
- **It determines the moves you must make, or those you can avoid.** If you are unarmed and want to *Strike* a spear-wielding foe, you should *Face Danger* or *Secure an Advantage* to get in close. If you need information from someone and already have their trust and cooperation, you won't need to *Compel* them before you can *Gather Information*.
- **It guides the outcomes of your moves.** Look to the fiction when you have a question about the outcome of a move, especially when you *Pay the Price*. Do you suffer a mechanical result such as harm? Do you face a new narrative complication? If in doubt, *Ask the Oracle* and apply the context of your fictional framing to interpret the answer.
- **It helps determine the rank of your challenges.** The rank you give to your quests, journeys, and fights is influenced by the scope of the challenge within the fiction.

For example, imagine you are caught within a snow storm while traveling. Winter in the Ironlands can be brutal. How does this storm and your character's readiness impact your story? Establishing facts through your fiction, whether as an outcome of a move or simply as a narrative flourish, helps frame the challenges you face.

The narrative texture of your story.

If you encounter a harsh winter storm in your travels, the driving snow and biting wind adds evocative details to your journey.

The moves you cannot make.

If you are exiled from a community, you can't *Sojourn* there to seek shelter from the storm.

The moves you must make (or can avoid).

If you are caught in the storm without a heavy cloak and furs, you'll need to *Face Danger* to withstand the brutal cold.

The outcome of your moves.

If you score a miss as you *Face Danger* to endure against the storm, you will likely suffer harm, stress, or a loss of supply. Or, perhaps you encounter a threat even greater than the storm.

The rank of your challenges.

The frostbound emerges from the blinding snow, its dead eyes flaring with a cold light. You grip your sword, your hands shaking and numb, and *Enter the Fray*. You decide the frostbound would be mystically empowered by the winter storm, so you set its rank one higher. This makes it an extreme foe.

In co-op and guided modes, you collaborate to create a shared understanding of the current situation. If something is unclear or at odds with the assumptions of another player, take a moment to talk it out until everyone has a clear picture of the situation. When playing solo, you are the arbiter of this fictional reality. Either way, find opportunities to increase the stakes and introduce dramatic new challenges and conflicts. Bend the fiction, but don't break it. Push your characters. Subvert your expectations.

You must set off in pursuit of the trade caravan, but traveling on foot doesn't make sense within the established fiction. They have a lead of more than a day. Catching up with them requires a horse.

The characteristics of a horse aren't defined within the *Ironsworn* rules. We're not concerned with how much a horse costs, its travel distance per day, how fast it can run, or how much it eats. The **Horse** companion would give Saskia a mechanical bonus in some situations, but you don't have that asset as part of your character.

The function of a horse, then, is to add narrative texture to your travels and influence the moves you can make and their outcome. For now, traveling on horseback gives you the fictional framing you need to *Undertake a Journey* in pursuit of the trade caravan.

Does Saskia own a riding horse? You decide to *Ask the Oracle*, and give it 50/50 odds.

"No," the oracle answers. So, where do you go from here?

It's reasonable to assume the overseer's wife would lend you a horse. This is part of the fictional framing you have established through your campaign setup and initial play. You are attempting to help the overseer, who is a friend. You have sworn an iron vow to do so. Borrowing a horse from her wife doesn't sound like a situation which is uncertain or risky, and thus wouldn't require a *Compel* move.

You envision this horse, one of the overseer's mares. It has a buckskin-colored hide and a black mane. You give it a name, Nakata, and write it down.

To flesh out a bit of detail for this animal, you roll on the Character Descriptor table, and the oracle responds, "Wary." You make note of that as well. This horse will be skittish. If you find yourself in a perilous situation, you may need to *Face Danger* to control it. A horse can also be injured or killed as part of the narrative outcome of a failed move.

For now, you've got your horse. Time to go.

REPRESENTING DIFFICULTY

You might be familiar with roleplaying games that give various tasks a difficulty rating or modifier. The flexibility to make each toss of the dice contextual, to adjust the chance to succeed based on the situation, creates an experience which helps simulate your imagined reality.

However, the *Ironsworn* rules do not utilize fine-grained mechanics for the difficulty of a particular challenge or the abilities a foe can bring to bear. Instead, the requirements to overcome challenges in your world are primarily represented through your fictional framing.

FROM HELL'S HEART, I STAB AT THEE

A leviathan is an ancient sea beast (page 154). It's tough to kill because of its epic rank, and it inflicts epic harm, but it doesn't have any other mechanical characteristics. If we look to the fiction of the leviathan's, description, we see "flesh as tough as iron." But, rolling a *Strike* against a leviathan is the same as against a common thug. In either case, it's your action die, plus your stat and adds compared to the challenge dice. Your chances to score a strong hit, weak hit, or miss are the same.

So how do you give the leviathan its due as a terrifying, seemingly invulnerable foe? You do it through the fiction.

If you have sworn a vow to defeat a leviathan, are you armed with a suitable weapon? Punching it won't work. Even a deadly weapon such as a spear would barely get its attention. Perhaps you undertook a quest to find the Abyssal Harpoon, an artifact from the Old World, carved from the bones of a long-dead sea god. This mythic weapon gives you the fictional framing you need to confront the monster, and finding it can count as a milestone on your vow to destroy this beast.

Even with your weapon at the ready, can you overcome your fears as you stand on the prow of your boat, the water surging beneath you, the gaping maw of the beast just below the surface? *Face Danger* with +heart to find out.

The outcome of your move will incorporate the leviathan's devastating power. Did you score a miss? The beast smashes your boat to kindling. It tries to drag you into the depths. Want to *Face Danger* by swimming away? You can't outswim a leviathan. You'll have to try something else.

Remember the concepts behind fictional framing. Your readiness and the nature of your challenge may force you to overcome greater dangers and make additional moves. Once you've rolled the dice, your fictional framing provides context for the outcome of those moves.

ADJUSTING CHALLENGE RANKS

When you *Undertake a Journey*, *Enter the Fray*, or *Swear an Iron Vow*, consider the fictional framing as you set the rank of the challenge. For example:

- Does your voyage to the leviathan's hunting ground take you over rough seas and near mist-shrouded rocks? That sounds like it's worth notching up the rank when you *Undertake a Journey*.
- Have you negotiated with a clan overseer to gain the aid of his fleet? When you *Enter the Fray* against the leviathan alongside these NPCs, you can reasonably reduce its rank by a step or two. This alliance might also allow you to *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress on your quest.

The rank can reflect your desired pace of play. Adjust the fiction and set the rank as appropriate to the amount of focus you want to give this challenge in your story. But, don't go easy on your character. Prevailing or failing against overwhelming odds is the stuff of great stories. Be epic. Or die trying.



ZOOMING IN AND OUT

As the writer, director, and editor of your story (or collaborating as such with others at your table), you have control over how you manage scenes within the visualized fictional space you create.

Imagine you are in a desperate battle. Your opponent is one of the firstborn, a giant, wielding a brutal-looking axe. He's an outcast of his own clan, and is warring against the Ironlanders. He's nine feet tall. Scary as hell.

You fight with a spear and shield. You *Face Danger*, ducking under a wild swing of the axe. A strong hit. You have initiative. Next, you *Strike*, lunging with the spear, and roll a weak hit. You slam the spear into the giant's leg. That's 2 harm. Mark the progress. Unfortunately, your foe has the initiative.

What happens next?

Imagine time frozen. Picture the scene. Morning mist hangs above the ground. The sun is low, casting long shadows. Specks of blood are suspended in the air. Your expression is a mix of determination and fear as your eyes focus on the point of the spear, embedded in the giant's massive leg. He is reacting to the hit, head back, mouth agape. His massive axe is held high.

This is a moment of high drama. Linger on it for a moment. Imagine what the giant does next. Does he attack with the axe? Does he kick at you? Does he try to grab your spear and snap it in half? Look to the fiction. If you're unsure, or want to leave it open to fate, *Ask the Oracle*.

Time moves again. The frantic battle continues. The giant acts. You react. Roll for it, and interpret the result. Remember: It's fiction first, then the move, then back to the fiction as you resolve the outcome. If it's interesting, supports your fictional framing, and compounds the tension, make it happen.

Even in a situation where seconds count, such as combat, you can shift the focus and flow of time. A *Strike* might be a single, decisive blow. Or, it might represent a flurry of attacks and blocks leading to a pivotal moment. Don't treat a fight as a series of discrete rounds. Mix it up. There's even a special move for combat, *Battle* (page 84), which lets you zoom out and abstract an entire engagement in a single roll.

Later, after you've defeated the giant, you continue on your quest. You're making your way into the mountains. You roll to *Undertake a Journey* and score a weak hit. You imagine it as a montage. You are moving from dense forest into jagged hills. You rest only once, pausing to eat alongside the banks of a surging river. Your eyes are narrowed and your expression wearied as you scan the difficult terrain ahead.

Time is compressed. An entire day passes. If your roll had failed, something went wrong. What happened? Find out, then slow down and zoom in if appropriate.

This is the ebb and flow of play. Time is fluid. The moves help dictate this flow, but you also have control. If it's interesting to you, if it impacts your story, focus on it. If not, abstract it.

You set off on your quest. You envision looking back one last time at your village, muttering a prayer to the old gods to keep the overseer alive until you return.

You make the *Undertake a Journey* move, giving your journey a rank of dangerous, and roll a strong hit. You mark progress, and take the option to preserve your supply. You zoom out to envision a good first day of travel. You head south along the trade road, which is little more than a muddy path meandering through the low hills. The weather is fair. You catch a nice fat rabbit for dinner.

You *Ask the Oracle* for guidance on your first waypoint by rolling on the Location (page 176) and Location Descriptor (page 177) tables. The oracle answers, "Mystic site" and "Beautiful."

You interpret this answer as a set of standing stones the locals call 'The Three Maidens'. Looking for a bit more detail, you roll on the Action and Theme tables. The oracle responds, "Communicate Dreams."

That night, as you sleep, three spectral women appear and speak to you urgently in a language you don't understand. Do these spirits offer a blessing or a curse? You make note of this enigmatic vision. It could be an interesting narrative hook to explore later.

You *Undertake a Journey* three more times, rolling hits and marking progress. You mostly stay zoomed out, picturing Saskia keeping a resolute pace in pursuit of the caravan. Then, you *Make Camp*, but score a miss. You envision a troubled and anxious night, plagued by bad dreams, and *Endure Stress*.

On the next segment of your journey, you also score a miss. Per the move, you are "waylaid by a perilous event." Your roll is a match, which means you have an opportunity to introduce a dramatic twist.

It's time to zoom in...

MANAGING YOUR QUESTS

Sworn quests are the narrative engine of your *Ironsworn* adventures. When you start your campaign, your character has two vows: Your background vow (page 195), and a vow triggered by an inciting incident (page 196).

Making progress in these quests requires you to face and surmount obstacles. You will undertake perilous journeys, uncover information, gain the support of NPCs, recover important items, and defeat powerful foes. Your character will struggle to overcome their own limitations and find their preconceptions and loyalties challenged.

Putting these obstacles in your path isn't just for dramatic purposes. Succeeding against these trials, finding your way forward, enables you to reach milestones and mark progress on your quests.

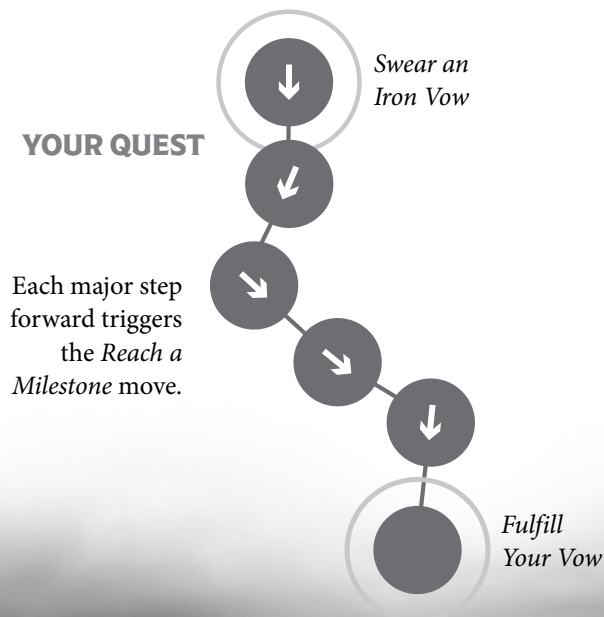
In the fiction, an iron vow is a significant, deeply held promise. If a situation is not dramatic and relevant to your character's goals and principles, it's probably not worthy of a vow. It might be a milestone for a quest, or simply a narrative diversion as an opportunity for roleplaying or worldbuilding.

If you want to take on an Ironsworn quest, but the problem in front of you doesn't seem meaningful enough, punch it up. Give it context. Up the stakes.

REACHING MILESTONES

Imagine your *Ironsworn* quest as a path of stones leading across the water. Each stone marks a major step forward—a milestone—triggering the *Reach a Milestone* move.

You might plan some of your quest milestones in advance (page 200). Others will emerge naturally from the fiction. The outcome of your moves or creative prompts may send your quest in unexpected directions, leading to new milestones and perhaps even new vows.



WHAT'S WORTHY OF A MILESTONE?

The text of the *Reach a Milestone* move states:

When **you make significant progress in your quest** by overcoming a critical obstacle, completing a perilous journey, solving a complex mystery, defeating a powerful threat, gaining critical support, or acquiring a crucial item, you may mark progress.

The pace of your quest will be largely defined by what you decide is “significant progress.” A milestone should accomplish two things:

- **It should relate directly to your quest.** A milestone should be meaningful to your character and your vow. An unrelated challenge which you deal with as you undertake your quest is probably not a milestone.
- **It should represent a turning point or major step forward in your quest.** Achieving a milestone requires effort and sacrifice for your character. A minor discovery or easy success is probably not a milestone, especially for a higher ranked quest. Not every step you take is a milestone.

MARKING PROGRESS

Your vows utilize a standard progress track (page 14) to measure how far you have come in your quest. This progress track is a mechanical representation of the likelihood of being successful when you *Fulfill Your Vow* (page 101). More filled boxes means a better chance of a hit on that move. The progress track also shows how much story potential you have fulfilled in your quest. Higher ranked vows require more focus in your story and more effort and sacrifice for your character.

When you *Reach a Milestone* (page 100), mark progress per the rank of your vow.

- **Troublesome quest:** Mark 3 progress.
- **Dangerous quest:** Mark 2 progress.
- **Formidable quest:** Mark 1 progress.
- **Extreme quest:** Mark 2 ticks.
- **Epic quest:** Mark 1 tick.

You’ve scored a miss for Saskia on *Undertake a Journey*, and the move outcome says you are “waylaid by a perilous event.” Plus, you’ve rolled a match, which gives you an opportunity to introduce an unexpected complication or twist.

You *Ask the Oracle* for guidance, rolling on the Action and Theme tables (page 174). The oracle answers, “Surrender vow.”

You consider the meaning of this response. “Surrender” makes you think of someone ambushing you and demanding your surrender. But what about “vow”? You currently have two vows: “Defeat the Red Moon Clan” and “Save the Overseer.” What if this is an opportunity to tie them together as a way to fulfill the match you’ve rolled?

Perhaps you stumble across Blood Moon clan raiders, war-kin from your former life, and they have something to do with the plot against the overseer.

You set the scene. A band of raiders step out from the woods alongside the trail, blocking your path. They have spears and bows at the ready. You envision Saskia spotting their distinctive painted shields. Her breath catches in her throat.

But, you have no interest in parlaying with these raiders. You step down from your horse. You walk toward them, hands raised. You *Secure an Advantage* by feigning compliance, putting them at ease, and roll a strong hit. The archers relax their aim.

You *Ask the Oracle*: “Do any of them recognize me?” You were the clan leader’s daughter and were well known. You set the odds as likely.

“No,” the oracle answers.

Good. They are younger raiders. Inexperienced. Left here for some mundane task. Perhaps they are serving as some sort of rear guard to watch for anyone who might go after the trade caravan.

An idea occurs to you. You want to weave together these seemingly unconnected narrative threads. You have eight progress marked on your journey. Perhaps catching up with the trade caravan doesn’t need to be your destination. What if the answers you need are right here?

You make the *Reach Your Destination* move and score a strong hit. This perilous journey is at an end. You *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress.

Back to the scene, you envision Saskia moving closer to the raiders, then drawing her sword in a flash. You *Enter the Fray*...

UNDERTAKING NEW QUESTS

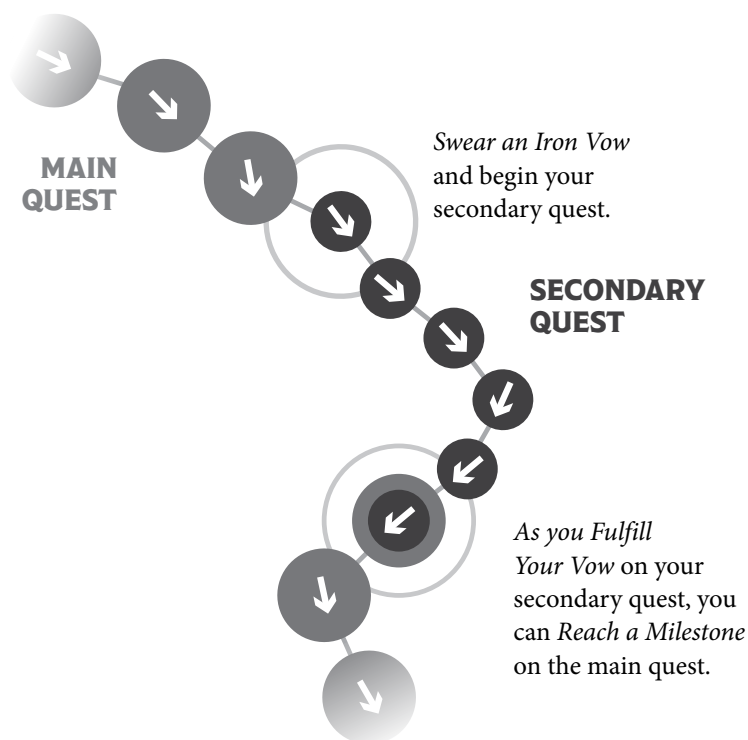
In the midst of a quest, you will encounter situations which introduce opportunities for additional vows. These new vows may be related to existing quests, or they can spring from unconnected problems.

SECONDARY QUESTS

As you undertake a quest, you may make a promise or work to overcome an obstacle which is worthy of its own vow. Imagine this as a gap in your path, bridged by a set of milestones. This shorter path is your secondary quest. You will *Swear an Iron Vow*, give it a rank, and mark progress as you work to resolve this new vow.

You won't mark progress on your main quest until you *Fulfill Your Vow* on the secondary quest. When the two paths converge, when your secondary quest is complete, you can *Reach a Milestone* on your main quest and continue along your path.

When is an obstacle its own quest instead of just a milestone? Look to the fiction. Is it a significant, self-contained challenge? Is it meaningful to your character? Does it create opportunities for new drama and conflict? If so, it's probably worthy of a vow.



You defeat the raiders, but it's a hard-won victory. You are wounded and your shield was shattered. Luckily, you are able to interrogate one of the surviving raiders. You play out the scene as you *Gather Information* to learn how the Blood Moon clan is involved in the overseer's illness.

Through a hit on that move and some questions to the oracle, you discover the raiders are indeed at the heart of this problem. An assassin traveling with the trade caravan is poisoning the leaders of Ironlander villages. The resulting strife will weaken those villages and make them ripe for the picking. Come winter, the raiders will sweep across this region like a dark tide.

You also learn the nature of the poison. It is extracted from a rare plant found only in the heart of the Deep Wilds. Your mother's schemes have grown more elaborate since you last fought beside her.

These discoveries are worth another milestone. You *Reach a Milestone* and mark progress. This gives you a total of four progress on your dangerous vow.

What next? You look back at your quest outline and are reminded of your story prompt: "Get help from the herbalist who lives deep in the Tanglewood." Seeking out a reclusive herbalist—who can hopefully provide an antidote for the poison—sounds like a good fit for the story.

You decide to gloss over the expedition into the Tanglewood and forgo the *Undertake a Journey* move. You'll just put the forest nearby for the purposes of your narrative. You're familiar with this herbalist, you decide, because she occasionally visits your village to trade.

You roleplay a scene as you arrive at her ramshackle hut and try to convince her to concoct an antidote for the poison. You envision her as a cantankerous, eccentric woman, unconcerned with your quest. You try to *Compel* her. Unfortunately, you score a miss. Not willing to let your narrative hit a dead end, you decide she will—per the move—"make a demand which costs you greatly" Being forced to commit to a secondary quest sounds about right. For good measure, you *Pay the Price* and suffer -2 momentum to reflect the lost time.

"A nest of harrow spiders is scuttling about," she says. "Kill the brood mother, and bring me her fangs. I'll need them for the antidote anyway."

She hands you an iron coin. "Swear it, or be gone. Your choice."

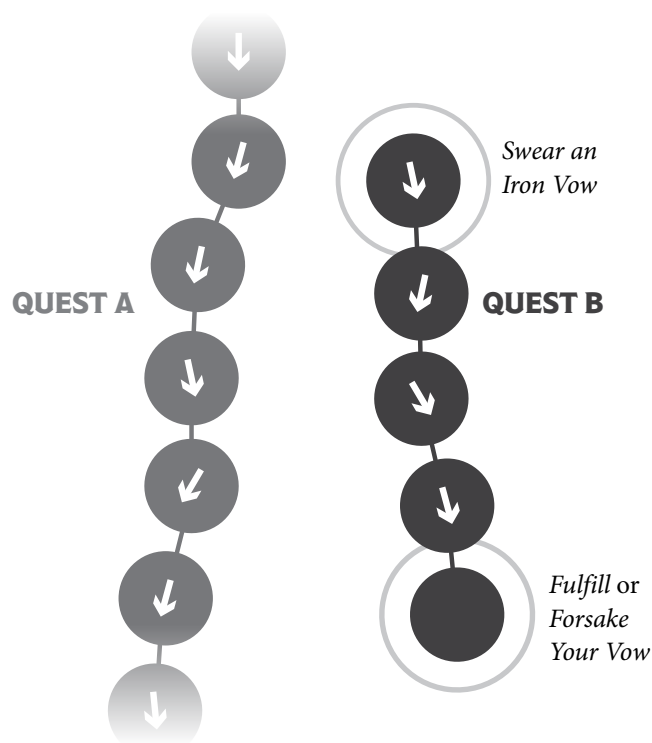
You *Swear an Iron Vow*. There is work to be done...

UNRELATED QUESTS

You may encounter situations—unrelated to your current vows—which your character is driven to set right. This may happen organically through the fiction, via oracle prompts, or as introduced by your GM in guided play.

If you ever find yourself without a vow, are having difficulty envisioning the next steps in a current quest, or you want to explore a new narrative, make something happen. Introduce a problem. You can use quest starters in this book, or *Ask the Oracle* and interpret the answer.

Several moves explicitly provide opportunities to undertake new quests as part of their outcomes. For example, if you *Sojourn* and choose the option to take a quest, you can introduce a trouble which this community is facing. Or, when you *Forge a Bond* or *Compel* and roll a weak hit, the NPC demands something of you. If appropriate to the fiction, this demand may require a sworn vow.

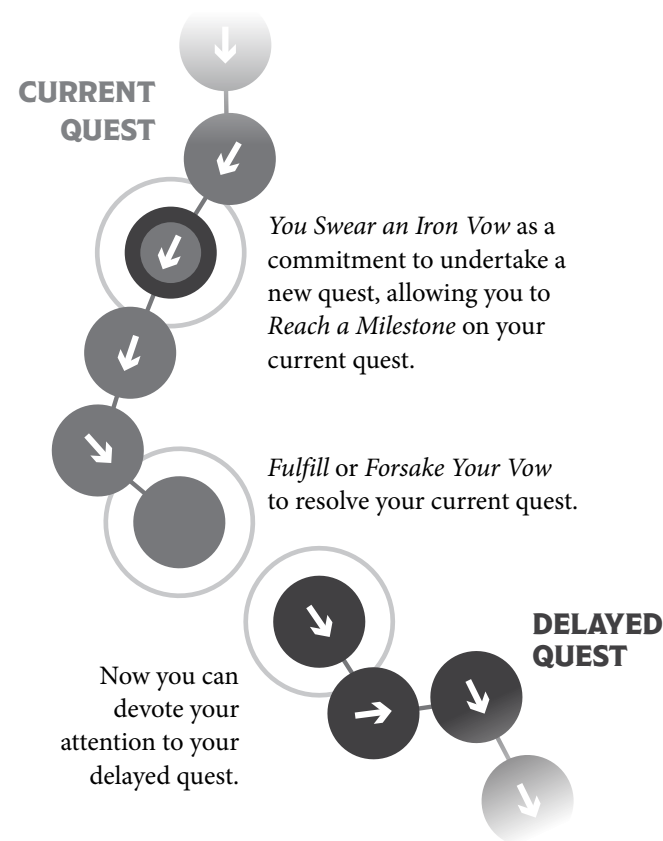


DELAYED QUESTS

A quest may require you to gain something from an NPC. It might be information, an item, or aid of some other sort. However, as the outcome of a move or through the fiction, an NPC might have their own demands. They may even want you to *Swear an Iron Vow* as your promise to see it done.

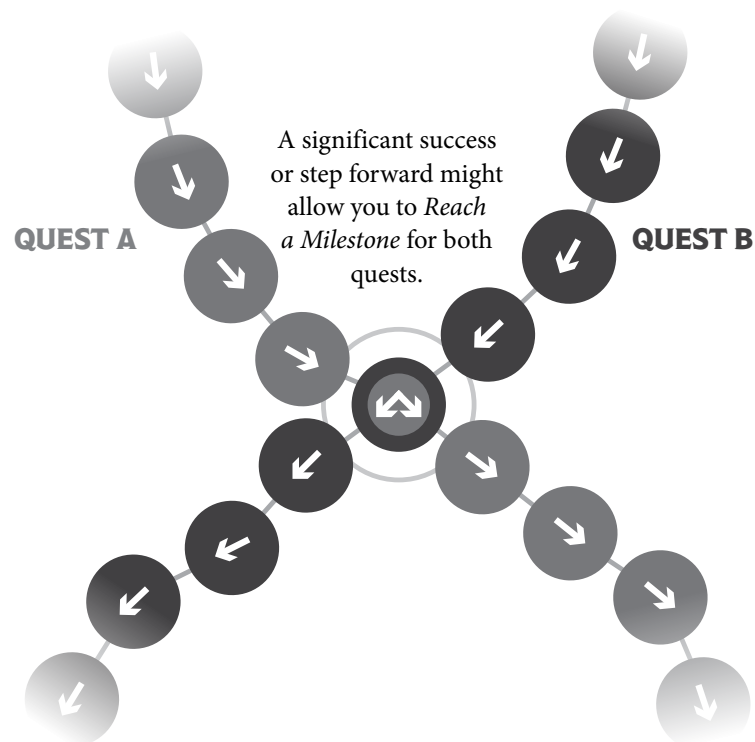
If you do so, and the NPC is satisfied with the promise itself (for now), you can continue on your current quest. You will deal with this new vow later. If the aid of the NPC is a significant step forward on your current quest, you should *Reach a Milestone*.

Keep in mind that swearing an iron vow is a sacred promise. NPCs, particularly powerful ones, will hold you to it. Ignoring it means you *Forsake Your Vow*, which should have dramatic implications within your narrative. You've made an enemy, or ruined your reputation. How will others take your vows seriously in the future? How will you?



INTERSECTING QUESTS

If you have undertaken two related quests, you may encounter a situation where a milestone allows you to mark progress on both vows at once. However, this should be a rare event. The two quests are not overlapping paths, with every step a milestone for each. Instead, imagine these paths intersecting at key moments.



FULFILLING YOUR VOW

The fiction driving your quest and the mechanical progress represented by your progress track converges in the decisive moment when you believe your quest is at an end. This is when you make the *Fulfill Your Vow* move (page 101).

Managing your mechanical progress and the fiction to reach this moment requires a bit of stagecraft. It's the end of the third act. Your actors need to be in position. Your sets and props need to be in place. The lights come up for the final scene...

Progress tracks can help you set the pace. If your progress track is filling up well ahead of your story, slow down the pace and focus on key objectives and turning points as milestones. If you find your story moving to a resolution well ahead of your progress track, envision some complications or twists which alter your path and create new opportunities for milestones.

However, keep in mind it's not necessary to fill your vow's progress track before you *Fulfill Your Vow*. Has the fiction led you to a moment when your quest seems complete, but your progress track is not even half full? Go with it. A weak hit or miss on the *Fulfill Your Vow* move can create interesting stories and reveal opportunities for new vows.

Playing as Saskia, you have killed the harrow spiders at the behest of the herbalist. You *Fulfill Your Vow* for the "Kill the Brood Mother" quest. This also allows you to *Reach a Milestone* on your "Save the Overseer" quest as the herbalist concocts an antidote.

You *Undertake a Journey* back to Cinderhome. Since this is a return trip, and you don't want to give it much story focus, you set it as merely troublesome. You are waylaid by a tense encounter with a protective ash bear and her cub, but eventually *Reach Your Destination*. This final journey also serves as a milestone on your quest. You now have eight boxes marked on your progress track.

You envision the scene as you rush to the overseer's bedside. She is as pale as death, her breathing so shallow it can barely be detected. Are you too late? Was this all for nothing? You make the *Fulfill Your Vow* move to find out.

You roll the challenge dice. It's a strong hit. You envision the overseer slowly improving. The color returns to her face. After a time, she wakes.

Your vow is fulfilled. You earn 2 experience for the dangerous quest, and 1 bonus experience because of your **Banner-Sworn** asset.

FORGING NEW BONDS

As you pursue your quests, the relationships you form and the hardships you endure with other characters can be given fictional and mechanical significance through the *Forge a Bond* move (page 74).

A new bond can be a natural outcome of a successful quest. When you successfully *Fulfill Your Vow* in service to a person or community, you may reroll any dice if you *Forge a Bond* with them.

You envision the overseer's wife cutting a braid from her hair and giving it to Saskia, a token of appreciation and respect. You kneel, and apologize that you have nothing to give but your continued service to Cinderhome and the overseer.

You make the *Forge a Bond* move, and roll a miss. Luckily, your successful quest lets you reroll any dice. You roll again, score a strong hit, and mark the bond on your character sheet.

ADVANCING YOUR CHARACTER

When you successfully *Fulfill Your Vow*, you earn experience points. This experience is spent to purchase or upgrade assets through the *Advance* move (page 103).

When you focus on your skills, receive training, find inspiration, earn a reward, or gain a companion, you may spend 3 experience to add a new asset, or 2 experience to upgrade an asset.

You can spend your experience points when they are earned, or save them up for future use. Either way, you should look to the fiction to give context and justification for your new abilities. You can guide your story toward an asset you would like to purchase or upgrade, or let your selection of assets flow naturally from your character's goals and the situations you encounter.

Assets can even serve as the focus of a new vow, giving you a tangible objective or reward for undertaking a quest. If you *Swear an Iron Vow* to become a skilled **Swordmaster**, you can make progress in that quest by seeking out training, demonstrating your prowess, and commissioning the crafting of a fine blade. When you *Fulfill Your Vow* and spend experience on the **Swordmaster** asset, it will be a satisfying and rewarding resolution of your quest.

Some more examples of connecting assets to your story and vows:

- You *Swear an Iron Vow* to guard a trading caravan. The trader promises you a fine set of armor in payment. When you *Fulfill Your Vow*, you take your reward and are **Ironclad**.
- You find an abandoned village in your travels and discover a forgotten, malnourished **Hound**. You nurse it back to health and it becomes a loyal companion.
- Each night at camp, you spar with your ally. When you *Advance*, you upgrade your **Skirmisher** asset.
- You travel far in your quest, through deep woodland and over high hills, and become a **Wayfinder**.
- After you *Face Death*, you return to the world to find a **Raven** perched in a branch above you. It looks at you with knowing eyes.
- You witness a priest perform a miracle, and become a **Devotant**.
- You paint your family's emblem on your shield, singing the songs of your ancestors, and add a new **Shield-Bearer** ability.
- You defeat a powerful warrior in ritual combat, and word spreads of your skill as a **Duelist**.
- You have reoccurring dreams of flying high above the Ironlands, seeing the world through the sharp eyes of your hawk companion. These dreams grant you the insight to upgrade your **Totem** ritual.
- You swear to recover your family's ancestral sword from a notorious raider. When you do, you are **Blade-Bound**.
- You were maimed in battle, but choose to persevere as one of the **Battle-Scarred**.
- You have witnessed death and brought it upon others. You have stood at the edge of the shadow lands and seen what lies beyond. This dark knowledge allows you to perform the **Communion** ritual.
- You swear loyalty to an ambitious overseer, and become **Banner-Sworn**.
- You vow to become a master of the mystic arts, and undertake a quest to train under an elder mystic. When you complete your training, you are a **Ritualist**.

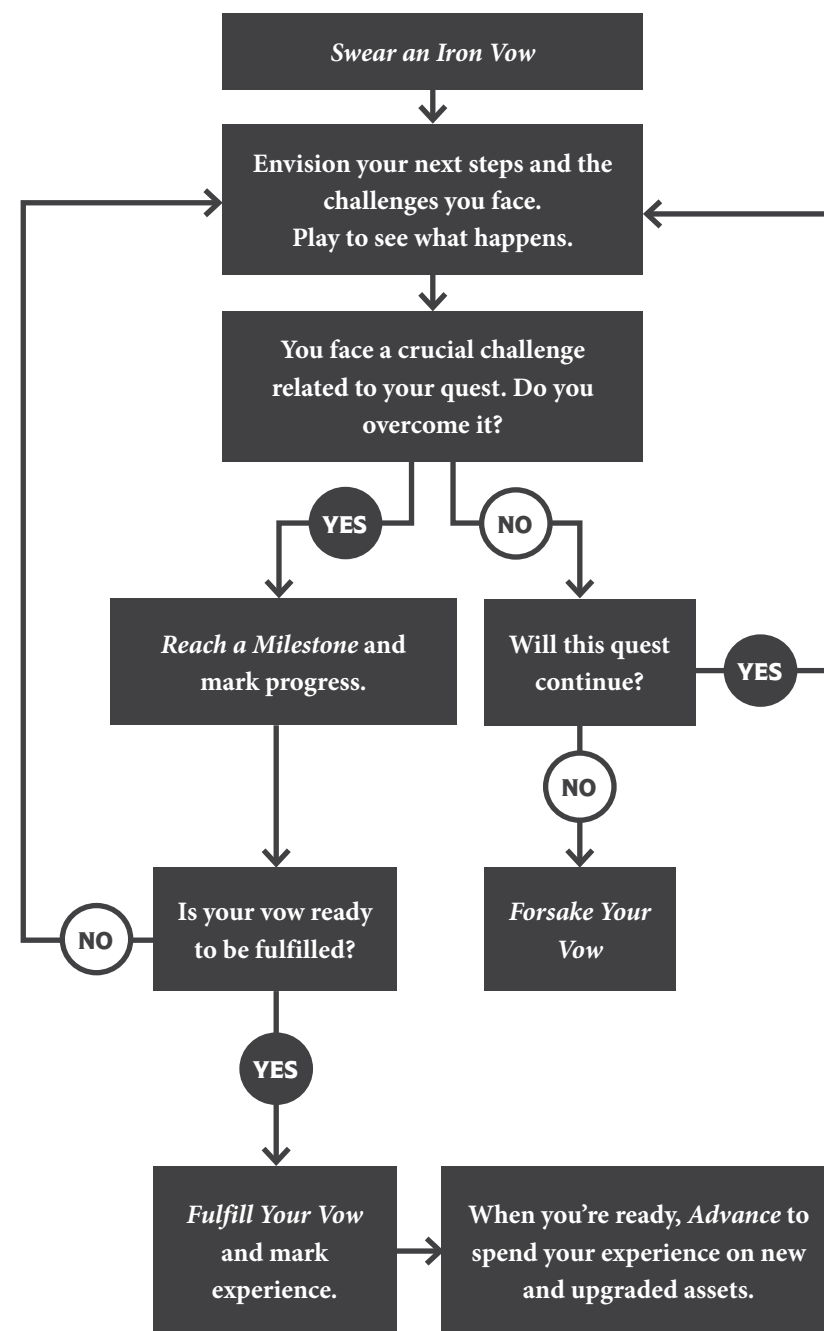
Envisioning how your new abilities connect to your sworn quests and experiences gives them additional significance and context. They will be a reminder of the paths taken and not taken, the challenges overcome, and the bonds formed.

You earned 3 experience on your quest to save the overseer, enough to purchase a new asset. You *Advance*, and buy a **Horse** companion. You envision the overseer and her wife giving you Nakata, the horse who saw you through your perilous journeys.

Nakata will serve you well. You would like to go back to your simple life as a farmer, but the raider's plot must be stopped.

It's time to face your past.

QUEST FLOW CHART



PRINCIPLES

These principles are your guideposts for managing your *Ironsworn* sessions. Much of this is redundant to the best practices discussed elsewhere in this rulebook. They are collected here to summarize core techniques, but you can adjust to your liking. It's your game. Start here, and find the path that leads you to awesome stories.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

SWEAR IRON VOWS, AND SEE THEM FULFILLED OR FORSAKEN

Your sworn vows are the narrative framework of your *Ironsworn* stories. You will introduce an urgent problem or personal quest, *Swear an Iron Vow* to set things right, and play to see what happens. As you pursue your quest, you may encounter situations which take your vow in surprising directions or inspire new vows.

PORTRAY A HEROIC CHARACTER IN A HARSH LAND

The default tone of *Ironsworn* is heroic but grounded. Your character is exceptional, but you aren't a superhero or mythic figure. Add depth to your character by portraying them as a complete and imperfect person. You are flesh and blood. You will fail. You will get hurt. You will make mistakes. You will lose faith. You will act against your better instincts. Make decisions through the flawed perspective of this character.

You will also paint your world in shades of gray. The weather is hostile. Terrors lurk in dark nights and deep forests. Too often, Ironlanders fight and scheme amongst themselves instead of standing together against greater threats. But, there is beauty here. There is love and kinship. The people persevere.

Most of all, there is hope. The act of swearing a vow is an expression of that hope. Seeing it through—no matter the cost—is what makes you a hero.

BEGIN AND END WITH THE FICTION

Set every scene and action within the fiction. What is happening? What are you doing? What does it look like? If a move is triggered, make it. Then, look to the fiction to resolve the move and decide what happens next. Keep things moving forward, bookending the mechanics of your moves with the fiction.

Ironsworn rules, moves, and assets often use the term “envision.” This word is your reminder to visualize the scene or the action. Don't rush through your moves with a focus on the mechanical outcomes. Let your story breathe. Go

beyond the surface details. Ask questions (or *Ask the Oracle*), and build on the answers.

When playing with others, describing your character's intent and actions is part of the conversation you share at your table. When playing solo, take the time to imagine the scene and take note of important details.

To learn more about the fiction and fictional framing, see page 205.

GROUP PLAY

FORGE A STORY THROUGH CONVERSATION

When you begin your campaign, your characters are actors on an empty stage. At first, everything is hidden in shadow. Gradually, the stage is assembled. The lights come up, showing texture and details. Your characters reveal themselves through action and dialogue. Other characters—some important, some unimportant—are introduced. Elements that seemed little more than stage dressing become a focus of the story.

Because roleplaying doesn't have the luxury of lights, sets, props, and actors, you use the conversation at the table to build your story and your world. The deeper the conversation, the more you reveal of what is happening onstage, the more opportunities you will find to take your story in interesting new directions. Ask questions of each other to help create a coherent, shared picture of what is happening in the fiction. Deepen your setting and your characters by adding evocative details. You'll be surprised how often an offhand suggestion can snowball into exciting story possibilities.

When something is uncertain, you can *Ask the Oracle* and work together to interpret the answer. When playing with a GM, they are your oracle.

SHARE THE SPOTLIGHT

Be a generous, collaborative player. Within scenes, work to keep each character visible and each player engaged. Remember to use the *Aid your Ally* move to interact with the moves other players are making. Use the conversation to give everyone input into the narrative.

For your broader campaign, don't let one character's vow drive your story through every session. Mix it up. Give each character opportunities to explore their own motivations and quests, and find ways to give everyone a personal stake in your sworn vows.

SOLO PLAY

CHRONICLE YOUR ADVENTURES

When you play *Ironsworn* with other players, the shared conversation helps create a story that lives beyond the game table. As a solo player, your character and your world exist only for you. This can make your story feel a bit fleeting and unimportant.

To help ground your session, keep a record at whatever level of detail you prefer. This can be a few bullet points in a text file, a journal filled with sketches and notes, or even a detailed play report you share on a forum or blog. There's no wrong answer here. Use whatever approach works for you and is an enjoyable aspect of your play.

Creating a record also makes it easier to pick up where you left off when you return to the Ironlands.

ASK THE ORACLE, BUT TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Oracles are a valuable tool for solo play, but don't let them replace your own storytelling instincts. If it's dramatic, fits the fiction, and pushes your story forward, make it happen. Use oracles when you don't have an immediate answer to a question, or when triggered by a match.

The *Pay the Price* random table (page 105), in particular, isn't something you should roll on for every failure. Note the first option in this move: "Make the most obvious negative outcome happen." Let the result of your failed moves flow from the fiction. Make the occasional oracle roll for added uncertainty and surprise.

LET IT ALL FALL APART

As a solo player, you have control over the challenges you face and the outcomes of your actions. Don't let this control keep you from missing out on dramatic opportunities. A great story requires adversity. Failure makes success meaningful. When in doubt, err on the side of the dramatic, even (and especially) when it turns your character's life upside down or takes your story in an unplanned direction.

When you fail in a critical moment, make it hurt. Consider ways to represent this failure beyond shifting the value of one of your tracks. Take away something you cherish. Find yourself betrayed by someone you trusted. See your plans crumble. Narrative cost is a powerful storytelling tool.

PLAYING AS THE GM

DELIVER ANSWERS, OR TURN QUESTIONS BACK TO THE PLAYERS

If you are the GM, the players will look to you to answer questions about the world and help determine the outcome of moves. When they do, you can answer their question, keeping in mind the fictional framing you've established through play. If you see a chance to surprise or delight your players, take it.

You should also look for opportunities to facilitate conversations at your table. Encourage your players to add details and ground every move in the fiction. Answer a question by asking questions. Work to create a shared world and narrative which everyone has stake in. If a conversation hits a dead end or drags on, take the question back, deliver an answer (or *Ask the Oracle*), and move on.

FACILITATE, DON'T IMPOSE

You are the guide for your players as they explore the world and the story of their characters. You set the scenes and portray the creatures and characters they encounter. When the narrative hits a lull, you make something happen. But, you are a guide with a vague map and an unreliable compass. Let the players choose their path. Moderate the conversation without dominating it.

For campaign play, you facilitate character creation and worldbuilding to create the framework for your shared story. For a one-shot session (page 231), you can come prepared with a quest outline (page 200) to make the most of the limited time available. No matter what the format of your session, don't resist when everything goes completely and gloriously off-course.

EMBRACE CHAOS

Don't overprepare for your session. Feel free to come to the table with absolutely nothing planned. The character-driven quests help you and your players build a story together. Anything that is not a player character or move has very little mechanical detail, and can be introduced on the fly.

Letting go of your plans leaves you open to the unexpected. Cheer for surprising successes. Seize the story possibilities of dramatic failures. Listen to the players and let their suggestions inspire you.

You can also leverage the oracles for answers and inspiration. Ask a yes/no question through the *Ask the Oracle* move (page 107), or interpret an response from the oracle tables (page 167). You can even collaborate with your players to interpret an oracle's answer.

GAMEPLAY OPTIONS

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Ironsworn is intended primary for small group play. One to four players (plus a GM in guided play) is about right. The examples in this book primarily default to solo play, but the rules are the same for more players and guided play.

For combat scenes with three or more player characters, consider a couple of factors:

- **Don't rely on initiative to manage the spotlight.** Even if a player is on a roll with strong hits, jump to someone else and keep it moving around the table. Use transitions from player to player at key moments as a way to heighten the drama and allow others to react to what just happened or is about to happen.
- **Since every character can inflict harm and mark progress on a shared progress track, enemies will be easier to take down.** To offset this, increase the rank or number of your foes. You can divide multiple foes among the characters instead of grouping those foes into packs.

ADJUSTING THE IMPACT OF MATCHES

More players tend to add more rolls to your session. This creates more matches, which can be challenging to interpret or start to feel routine.

If you want to make matches feel more unusual and special, use this option: **Resolve the impact of a match only when your challenge dice come up as an even number (2, 4, 6, 8, or 10).**

ONE-SHOT PLAY

If you want to run a single, self-contained session of *Ironsworn*, here's what to do. This process is a simplification of the campaign setup on page 202.

- 1 Introduce the world.** If you are the GM or are facilitating the session, briefly describe the setting. You can play in the Ironlands (page 111), or introduce your own setting. Don't worry about the details. You can flesh it out in play.
- 2 Create characters.** Each player creates their character by setting stats and picking assets. Give your character a name, and consider some basic aspects of their look and personality. You can ignore background vows and bonds. Work together to decide how your characters are connected.
- 3 Introduce the inciting incident.** If you are the GM or facilitator, you can come prepared with an inciting incident (page 196) and quest outline (page 200). Otherwise, you can work together to envision a story problem (or *Ask the Oracle*). You might consider introducing the inciting incident as part of character creation to help determine the relationship between the characters.
- 4 Set the scene.** Decide where your adventure starts, and begin play in media res (page 198).
- 5 Swear an Iron Vow.** Give your quest a rank of troublesome (for a session of an hour or two) or dangerous (for a session of three to four hours).

To give your story a satisfying conclusion, your target for the session is to resolve the quest and see the vow fulfilled or forsaken. Adjust the pace of your milestones and the detail of your scenes as appropriate for the time you have available. Focus on what is interesting, and zoom out or abstract what is unimportant. Use the *Battle* move to quickly resolve combat with secondary NPCs, saving detailed combat for climactic fights.

OPPOSING AN ALLY

An ally is a character controlled by another player. *Ironsworn* moves are not intended to provoke or reinforce conflict between allies. Instead, the focus is on the drama and challenges of perilous quests in a harsh world. You and your allies will stand together against the forces which would see your vows unfulfilled. You are working towards shared (or at least complementary) goals.

That said, situations within the fiction may put you and an ally at odds. Your characters are not perfect. They may try to act rashly in a tense situation. They might stubbornly cling to a self-defeating approach or point of view. They might pursue their own vows at the cost of their relationships. Making non-optimal choices as your character, creating more trouble for yourself, is part of dramatic storytelling.

CONFLICT WITHOUT MOVES

Disagreements between characters can often be handled through roleplaying without engaging in moves. Talk it out, as your characters. Take care to not let this fictional conflict carry over into the real world.

If things get heated or uncomfortable, take a break. Discuss your approaches out-of-character, agree on next steps, and step back into the world to resolve the situation.

CONFLICT USING MOVES

If you are taking an action in opposition to an ally and want to resolve this conflict through a move, you can use this process:

- You both describe what you are doing to act against or resist your ally, and *Face Danger* (page 60) using an appropriate stat.
- If at least one of you scores a hit, determine who gains control of the outcome by comparing your level of success (strong hit > weak hit > miss). If you both have the same level of success, use your action score (you action die + stat + any adds) as a tie-breaker. If you are still tied, envision how your actions lead to a complete stalemate.
- Whoever gains control of the outcome decides which of the two moves should be resolved. The result of the other move is ignored.
- If neither of you scored a hit, resolve the miss for both moves. Each of you must *Pay the Price*.

The opposed *Face Danger* move provides a simple, fast mechanic for resolving conflicts between player characters. You can use a single exchange to decide the outcome of a quick action or an entire scene.

Use this process sparingly, and be considerate of not taking away control of another player's character. Work together to interpret the outcome of the scene, with each player describing their character's intent and reaction.

Having helped repel a raider attack, Tayla and Ash are attending a feast in the village longhouse. They sit across the table from each other, surrounded by drunken Ironlanders. Neither of them is feeling particularly celebratory.

A man named Themon stands to make a toast. Ash and Tayla suspect he conspired with the raiders, but have little evidence. They grit their teeth as Themon raises his drink and praises the defenders of the village.

Ash's eyes narrow, and his expression grows hard as iron. "I can't take any more of his lies. I'll *Draw the Circle* and deal with this bastard."

"No," Tayla says. "It's not the right time. Themon has too many friends here. We need proof."

Ash is not convinced. "You see my hand going to my sword. Do you want to try to stop me?"

"I want to try to calm you down," Tayla says. "I'll put my hand on your shoulder and see if I can talk some sense into you. Roll for it? I'll *Face Danger* with heart."

"Let's do it. I'll roll iron as I try to shove your hand away. I want to stand up and challenge this guy."

They both make the move and roll the dice.

Ash rolls a weak hit. Tayla rolls a strong hit, which gives her control of the outcome. She chooses to let her move stand. She is successful and takes +1 momentum.

"I'll take that strong hit," Tayla says. "I've got my hand on your shoulder. I look you straight in the eyes and shake my head. I tell you that we'll have our chance."

"My hand drifts away from my blade. I'll let it be. For now."

SCENE CHALLENGES

A **scene challenge** is an optional approach you can use to resolve an extended challenge against an obstacle or NPCs. Examples of scene challenges include a chase on horseback, an archery contest, a formal debate before a council of elders, and leading an army into battle.

SETTING UP YOUR SCENE CHALLENGE

First, envision your goal for the scene and decide the rank of your challenge using the standard rank system: Troublesome, dangerous, formidable, extreme, or epic. A typical challenge is dangerous. Make it formidable if you are at a disadvantage, or troublesome if you have clear advantage. An extreme challenge is very tough to overcome, and an epic challenge is nearly hopeless.

Next, create a standard **progress track** with 10 boxes. When you mark progress, you fill in a standard number of boxes or ticks based on the rank of your challenge (page 14).



Then, create a separate track with only 4 boxes. This is your **countdown track**. When you mark the countdown track, you completely fill in a single box.



MAKING MOVES

Envision your action, and *Face Danger* or *Secure an Advantage* using whatever stat is most appropriate to the situation and your approach.

If you *Face Danger*:

- On a **strong hit**, you are successful. Mark progress per the rank of your challenge.
- On a **weak hit**, you are successful and mark progress. But, you also encounter a minor complication or delay. Envision what happens, and mark a countdown box to represent this setback.
- On a **miss**, you fail, or encounter a dramatic turn of events. Mark a countdown box and *Pay the Price*.

If you *Secure an Advantage*:

- On a **strong hit** or **weak hit**, apply the outcome as per the move.
- On a **miss**, mark a countdown box and *Pay the Price*.

RESOLVING THE SCENE CHALLENGE

Continue to make moves, each time envisioning your approach, until either your countdown track is full (all 4 boxes are marked), or you decide you're ready to resolve the scene. In either case, roll the challenge dice and compare to your progress track. **As with standard progress moves, you may not burn momentum on this roll, and you are not affected by negative momentum.**

- On a **strong hit**, you achieve your goal unconditionally.
- On a **weak hit**, you succeed, but not without cost. You must *Pay the Price*. Make this a minor cost relative to the scope of the scene.
- On a **miss**, you fail, or your progress is undermined by a dramatic and costly turn of events. *Pay the Price*. Make it hurt.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH ALLIES

Guided by the fiction, you can take turns making moves to give everyone a chance to participate in the challenge. Any allies involved in the scene can make the *Face Danger* or *Secure an Advantage* move. When they do, resolve the outcome of their move and mark progress and countdown boxes as appropriate. Any player can also make the *Aid Your Ally* move to contribute to a move another character is about to make.

LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR

If you are leading a large force of NPCs into battle, you can use a scene challenge to resolve the outcome. First, consider the makeup of the units on the field and give the challenge a rank.

- If you have a **clear advantage**, make it a troublesome challenge.
- If the forces are **evenly matched and positioned**, make it a dangerous challenge.
- If you are facing a **superior force or are badly positioned**, make it a formidable challenge.
- If you are facing **overwhelming odds**, make it an extreme or epic challenge.

Then, envision your approach as you lead your warband into battle. *Face Danger* or *Secure an Advantage* as appropriate, choosing a stat which represents the current situation and your tactics. Resolve the outcome of each move and mark the progress track and countdown track as normal.

During the battle, you can zoom in and resolve a fight against an important NPC or pack using combat moves. If you defeat this foe, mark progress on your scene progress track. If you lose the fight, mark a countdown box.

SEMI-RANDOM CAMPAIGN SETUP

To give fate a heavier hand in your character and starting situation, do the following:

1

Roll on the following table, and assign the +3 value to the result. Then, distribute the remaining stats (+2, +2, +1, +1) as you like.

1-20 You are nimble, fast, and precise: Edge

21-40 You are willful, courageous, and sociable: Heart

41-60 You are strong, forceful, and imposing: Iron

61-80 You cunning, deceptive, and sneaky: Shadow

81-00 You are smart, knowledgeable, and resourceful: Wits

2

Gather the asset cards and organize them into decks by type (companion, path, combat talent, and ritual). Exclude any cards that don't fit your vision for the setting (such as rituals if you aren't including magic). Shuffle the individual decks and put them face down.

3

Choose a card from any deck. Don't look at it. Pass the draw to the next player. Continue taking turns drawing a single asset from any deck until you have five in your hand.

4

Reveal your cards and choose two of them to discard. The remaining three cards are your character's assets.

5

Ask the Oracle: "What is my background vow?" Then, spark an idea using the Character Goal oracle (page 182). Interpret the result, or roll on additional oracle tables to clarify as you like. Mark your background vow and give it a rank of extreme or epic.

6

Ask the Oracle: "Who do I share a bond with?" Then, roll once on the Character Role oracle (page 182) and twice on the Character Descriptor oracle (page 183). Envision this NPC, give them a name, and mark a bond. You may do this for your two remaining starting bonds, or come up with other bonds from scratch.

7

Together with the other players, *Ask the Oracle:* "What is our inciting incident?" Then, roll on the Settlement Trouble oracle (page 181). Interpret this answer to define your starting situation.

HACKING IRONSWORN

PLAYING IN OTHER WORLDS

If you want to play in a different setting—but one that is similar to the Ironlands in tone—you can jump right in. *Ironsworn* characters, moves, and assets can make the transition to similar gritty fantasy or historical settings with very few changes, if any.

When you create your character, you can omit any assets which aren't a good fit for your setting. For example, rituals might be left out or limited if there is no magic in your world.

Ironsworn works best when portraying driven heroes undertaking perilous quests. Vows, milestones, and progress tracks are core to the game, and should not be left behind when you explore other settings and genres. If iron vows and sworn quests don't fit your world, you can change how they are represented in the fiction. A solemn promise can take many forms.

HIGH-MAGIC SETTINGS

A bigger shift in tone may require more work. If you play in a setting where mystic forces are more powerful, you'll need to consider how to handle magic for your character. The easiest option is to simply create a character without magic capabilities and depict the magic of the setting and NPCs through the fiction. Your story gains the potential advantage of showing your mundane character standing against overwhelming supernatural forces.

For magic-wielding characters, ritual assets can be envisioned with overt magical effects in high-magic settings. For example, instead of simply wearing an animal pelt using the **Bind** ritual, you can actually shape-change into the creature. The mechanical outcomes can stay the same, but the fictional framing changes dramatically. Rituals might also be envisioned to require less time to prepare or perform, functioning more like the quick-fire spells of heroic fantasy roleplaying games.

If your setting or character concept don't work within the confines of existing assets, you have some options to consider on the next page.

EXPLORING OTHER GENRES

Ironsworn characters and moves are intentionally only lightly themed for the default setting and tone, and they work just fine across a variety of heroic fiction genres. *Undertake a Journey* can be envisioned as faster-than-light travel aboard a spaceship, or as nitrous-fueled journeys on the ruined highways of a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

Assets are designed to reflect *Ironsworn*'s default world, and require more work to ignore, transition or replace for dramatically different settings and genres. Some options follow.

TWEAKING ASSETS

PLAYING WITHOUT ASSETS

Playing without assets limits the options for your character, but simplifies things if you prefer less mechanical detail. It also makes it much easier to quickly reskin *Ironsworn* for other settings or genres.

If you do play without assets, you should give your character additional depth through roleplaying and description. Envision your character's background and skills to help define the fictional framing of your actions.

For anything other than a very short campaign or one-shot, you need an alternate reward when you spend experience. Here's a suggestion:

When playing without assets, you may spend 6 experience to increase a single stat by +1. No stat can exceed +4.

USING ROLES INSTEAD OF ASSETS

If you aren't using assets but want to add a bit more detail to your character, you can use a simplified representation of assets called a **role**. Here's how it works:

- Name a role for your character based on their expertise or background. In the Ironlands or a similar setting, you might be a **leader**, **scout**, **mystic**, or **healer**. If you are hacking *Ironsworn* for a different setting or genre, use roles which fit the world. If you chose a combat-oriented role, make it narrow enough that it isn't usable for every potential action in a fight.
- Your role gives you the fictional framing to act using that role in your story. If you are a **scout**, you are skilled at finding your way in the wilds and observing the enemy from hiding. If you are a **mystic**, you can perform rituals. If you are a **leader**, you can command others. You make moves as normal, but the fictional framing might give you permission to make or avoid specific moves, and affect how you envision your actions.

- If you like, give your role greater story potential and specificity with an evocative label. You are not just a **priest**, you are a **Wayward Disciple of the Forgotten One**. You are not just a **hunter**, you are a **Sharp-Eyed Hunter of the Hinterlands**.
- When you make a move (not a progress move) and envision how your role contributes to this action, choose one before rolling: **Add +2, or add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.**
- **For every 6 experience points, you may buy an additional role.** Name it, and write it down. Bonuses from multiple roles may not be combined for a single move. If your roles overlap for a particular action, envision which role provides the most influence over your intent and outcome.

RESKINNING ASSETS

Because many of the assets represent the typical tropes of heroic characters, they can often be reimagined for different settings and genres with minimal changes. Use the existing assets as a starting place, and adjust the labels and specific abilities to better fit your imagined world.

COMBAT TALENT



ARCHER

If you wield a bow...

- When you *Secure an Advantage* +wits by taking a moment to aim, envision where you intend to land your shot. Then, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.
- Once per fight, when you *Strike* or *Clash*, you may take extra shots and suffer -1 supply. When you do, reroll any dice. On a hit, inflict +2 harm and take +1 momentum.
- When you *Resupply* by hunting, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

- Are you a 17th century pirate who is a crack shot with your musket? Rename **Archer** to **Marksman**, and change the condition to "If you wield a musket..."
- Are you playing a cyborg in a future dystopia? Rename **Archer** to **Gunner**, and change the condition to "If you wield a cybernetic blaster..." Then, swap out the last ability with something that better fits the theme.

CREATING ASSETS AND ABILITIES

If you want to create new assets or update an existing asset to better fit your theme, look to the existing abilities as your model. Assets provide several types of mechanical benefits, including:

- They grant a moderate benefit, such as “add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit”, for a relatively common action you expect to perform a few times each session.
- They grant a strong benefit, such as “reroll any dice”, for less common actions or abilities which have a limit (“one time only”). You can also grant strong benefits for abilities which require setup moves or strict fictional framing. For example, to use the **Slayer’s** “reroll any dice” ability, you must first kill a formidable beast.
- They give you an option to exchange one resource for another, such as “suffer -1 momentum and inflict +1 harm on a hit.”
- They provide the fictional framing to make a move in unusual circumstances. For example, you can use the **Communion** ritual to *Gather Information* from the dead.
- They allow you to use a different stat instead of the one normally required by a move.

You will find various permutations of these rewards across the default assets, along with many other less common abilities and self-contained moves which are specific to an asset.

One technique you can use when creating a new asset is to mix-and-match abilities from other assets. Whatever you want to portray in the fiction can probably be cobbled together, with some mild tweaking, from abilities which already exist.

A final word: *Ironsworn* is not particularly concerned with strict mechanical balance between assets. You aren't going to break anything by experimenting. If it adds to your fun, it's working.

Of course, the easiest way to play *Ironsworn* in different worlds is to let someone else do the work. Visit ironswornrpg.com for updates on official expansions and community-created content.

EXTENDED EXAMPLE OF PLAY

This example demonstrates the use of moves, oracles, and storytelling within a typical session of *Ironsworn*. This is a solo session, but the basic gameplay concepts are applicable to guided and co-op play. It includes commentary as I make decisions about my character's moves, interpret oracles, and resolve events and actions within the fiction of the scene.

KUNO TAKES THE STAGE

Kuno is a scout. She's most comfortable by herself, stalking the untracked wilderness well beyond the settled lands. At this moment, however, she's leading a group of Ironlanders who have fled their own village in the wake of a raider attack. They are bound for a settlement called Mournwood to the north, on the borders of the Hinterlands. There, they hope to find help and shelter. Kuno has sworn a vow to see them safely to their new home.

CHARACTER		EXPERIENCE	
Kuno		●●●●●●●●○○○○○○○○ ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○	
+10	3 EDGE	2 HEART	2 IRON
+9	BONDS		
+8	☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		
+7	VOWS		
+6	Avenge my brother		
+5	<input type="radio"/> TROUBLESOME <input type="radio"/> DANGEROUS <input type="radio"/> FORMIDABLE <input type="radio"/> EXTREME <input checked="" type="radio"/> EPIC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		
+4	Find a new home for the refugees		
+3	<input type="radio"/> TROUBLESOME <input checked="" type="radio"/> DANGEROUS <input type="radio"/> FORMIDABLE <input type="radio"/> EXTREME <input type="radio"/> EPIC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ☒☒☒☒☐☐☐☐☐☐		
+2			
+1	<input type="radio"/> TROUBLESOME <input type="radio"/> DANGEROUS <input type="radio"/> FORMIDABLE <input type="radio"/> EXTREME <input type="radio"/> EPIC ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		
0			
-1	<input type="radio"/> TROUBLESOME <input type="radio"/> DANGEROUS <input type="radio"/> FORMIDABLE <input type="radio"/> EXTREME <input type="radio"/> EPIC ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		
-2			
-3	<input type="radio"/> TROUBLESOME <input type="radio"/> DANGEROUS <input type="radio"/> FORMIDABLE <input type="radio"/> EXTREME <input type="radio"/> EPIC ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐		
-4	DISEASES		
-5	CONDITIONS	BANS	
-6	<input type="radio"/> WOUNDED <input type="radio"/> SHAKEN <input type="radio"/> UNPREPARED <input type="radio"/> ENCUMBERED	<input type="radio"/> MAIMED <input type="radio"/> CORRUPTED BURDENS <input type="radio"/> CURSED <input type="radio"/> TORMENTED	
MAX 10			
RESET 2	IRONSWORN		
MOMENTUM	STATUS		
		HEALTH	
		+5	
		+4	
		+3	
		+2	
		+1	
		0	
		SPRIT	
		+5	
		+4	
		+3	
		+2	
		+1	
		0	
		SUPPLY	
		+5	
		+4	
		+3	
		+2	
		+1	
		0	

A JOURNEY INTERRUPTED

I envision Kuno riding ahead of the pack of refugees, keeping her eyes on the thick woods along their path. She has a **Horse** companion, Etana, to aid her on the journey.

She ignores the nervous chatter of the refugees behind her. These are dangerous lands, and she'll remain wary until this band is safely within the walls of Mournwood. Once they've arrived, her vow will be fulfilled and she'll be free of them.

She gives Etana an encouraging click of the tongue, and picks up her pace.

I make the *Undertake a Journey* move (page 65) for this segment of travel. Leveraging my companion's **Swift** ability gives me a +1 add.

COMPANION

HORSE

Name: Etana

You and your horse ride as one.

● **Swift:** When you *Face Danger* +edge using your horse's speed and grace, or when you *Undertake a Journey*, add +1.

● **Fearless:** When you *Enter the Fray* or *Secure an Advantage* +heart by charging into combat, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

○ **Mighty:** When you *Strike* or *Clash* at close range while mounted, add +1 and inflict +1 harm on a hit.

0

+1

+2

+3

+4

+5

3

WITS

+

1

ADDS

+

1

=

5

5

7

That's a miss. The outcome for *Undertake a Journey* tells me: "you are waylaid by a perilous event." I don't have anything in mind, so let's see what the oracles have to say. I roll on the Action/Theme tables (page 174).

"Reveal creature," the oracle says.

After a moment's thought, I decide it would be exciting to encounter something truly frightening and wild out here. A wyvern comes to mind. Kuno has never fought one, but she's heard stories and is eager to test her mettle against one of the fearsome beasts.

However, I want to do a bit more than just bring a wyvern onto stage. I want to ramp up the stakes and drive Kuno into action. I envision what happens.

242 CHAPTER 7 | GAMEPLAY IN DEPTH

Suddenly, Kuno hears frantic screams from up ahead.

She spurs her horse on, and rides to the top of a low hill. Before her is a terrifying scene. A wyvern is pawing at an overturned wagon. A horse lies dead beside it. The screams are coming from beneath the wagon, where a woman and a young girl are cowering.

The wyvern has a muscled body three times the size of a horse, covered in a leathery iron-gray hide. Its claws rend along the side of the wagon.

So, what now? The first order of business is to sort out whether my traveling companions will be of any help. I haven't established much detail for this group of refugees, so I'll leave it to chance. "Are there any able warriors with them?" I ask. I give it a 50/50 chance and roll on the yes/no table.

The oracle answers, "Yes."

But can I manage to put them to use? A wyvern is a horrific foe, and not something this group has dealt with before. The first step is to order them to join me in this fight.

"To me!" Kuno yells, summoning the mounted warriors to her side. The men and women ride up, but stop short as they catch sight of the fearsome beast. Their eyes go wide, and they mutter quick prayers. Their horses neigh and stomp their hooves in distress.

"Courage," Kuno says. "These people need our help."

I make the *Compel* move (page 69) to resolve what happens when I rally these warriors to aid me. We'll roll with heart for this action. Per the move, "If you charm, pacify, barter, or convince: Roll +heart."

5

HEART

+

2

ADDS

+

0

=

7

3

5

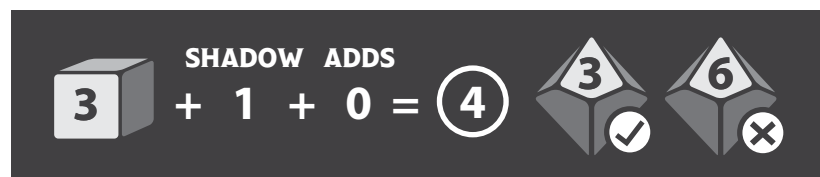
A strong hit and a lucky break. A wyvern is normally an extreme foe. With the help from the Ironlanders, I'll rule that I can knock it down to a formidable challenge. Still not an easy fight, but there's hope.

Plus, *Compel* gives me +1 momentum on a strong hit. I started the scene with my momentum track at +2, so it's now at +3.

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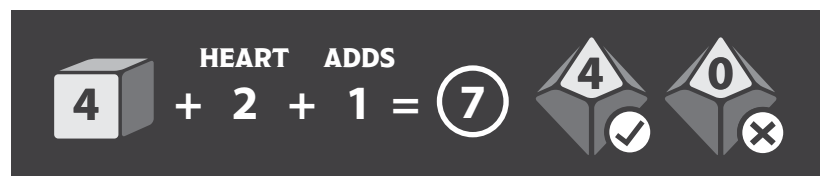
INTO THE FIGHT

I'll make the *Enter the Fray* move (page 78) as Kuno rides toward the wyvern. Since the beast is focused on its prey, and hasn't taken note of Kuno, we'll be using shadow for this roll. Per the move, "If you are moving into position against an unaware foe, or striking without warning: Roll +shadow."



That's a weak hit. According to *Enter the Fray*, I must choose between taking initiative or +2 momentum. I choose initiative, which means I'll put the focus on Kuno taking proactive actions as I wade into the fight.

I'll use the initiative to *Secure an Advantage* (page 61). I envision this as an opportunity to leverage Kuno's fierce determination and her bond with the horse as they charge into battle together. My companion's **Fearless** ability will also help me here. Per the asset, "When you *Enter the Fray* or *Secure an Advantage* with +heart by charging into combat, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit."



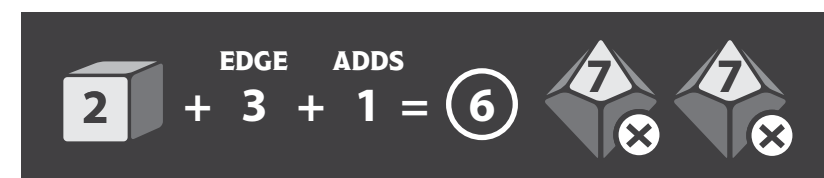
The weak hit on *Secure an Advantage* gives me +1 momentum, and another +1 for the **Fearless** bonus. My momentum is now +5. But, things turn against me. I envision this as the wyvern spotting us and moving to attack.

Kuno's horse, heedless of the danger, charges toward the beast. Kuno leans low and draws her sword. She is vaguely aware of the others following behind, but her attention is focused on her target. If she can just manage to strike the wyvern before it's aware of them...

But the wyvern catches their scent and fixes its gaze on them. It roars, a crown of horns flaring on its thick, wolfish head. No longer concerned with the trapped Ironlanders, it clambers over the top of the wagon and moves fast to meet their charge. Its wings flex as it lunges.

I think a moment about my options here. Kuno, despite her courage, would be unnerved by the sight of this beast leaping towards them. Also, her first concern is the safety of her horse. I could *Clash* (page 80), but I want to play it a bit safe this early in the fight. If I *Clash* and score only a weak hit, I'd have to suffer the full harm or some other dramatic result. *Face Danger* (page 60), on the other hand, gives me only a minor cost on a weak hit. Also, my companion has the **Swift** ability, which allows me to make that move with a bonus. Per the asset, "When you *Face Danger* with +edge using your horse's speed and grace, or when you *Undertake a Journey*, add +1."

I won't be able to inflict harm in the exchange, but hopefully I'll build some more momentum and get back initiative. I'll envision this as Kuno and Etana trying to evade the wyvern's attack.



It's a miss. The *Face Danger* result tells me, "On a miss, you fail, or your progress is undermined by a dramatic and costly turn of events. *Pay the Price*."

I have also rolled a match on the challenge dice, which indicates something unexpected (page 9). I'll use some oracles to help resolve the match. First, I roll on the *Pay the Price* table.

The answer is, "It is stressful."

No surprise there. Facing off against a wyvern is stressful. I want more to go on. I'll roll on the Combat Action oracle (page 188) to see what the wyvern does as part of this outcome.

The oracle responds, "Shift focus to someone or something else."

This is an opportunity to bring the other warriors into the scene. They won't provide further mechanical benefit, but I should include their actions in the fiction. In this case, they'll also help me depict the wyvern as a fearsome, deadly foe.

Weaving together the move outcome and the oracles, I envision what happens next.

The wyvern leaps. Kuno shouts a word of encouragement to her horse and pulls the reins hard to the right. The wyvern lands, jaws snapping, but Etana deftly avoids the bite as they circle to one side.

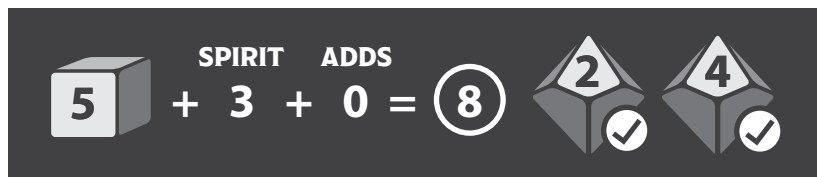
Kuno rides away from the wyvern, readying another charge. An arrow, then another, lance into the side of the beast as mounted archers take up the fight. Other warriors, armed with spear and shield, move forward to harass it.

As sudden as a lightning strike, the wyvern lunges at one of the fighters, bites down with a horrible crunch, and lifts him off his horse. Then, it whips its head around, opens its mouth, and sends the lifeless body flying. The mauled corpse lands in the dirt near the wagon with a splash of blood.

The girl hiding beneath the wagon screams at the sight of the body. The wyvern, as if remembering its original intent, turns suddenly and clambers toward her.

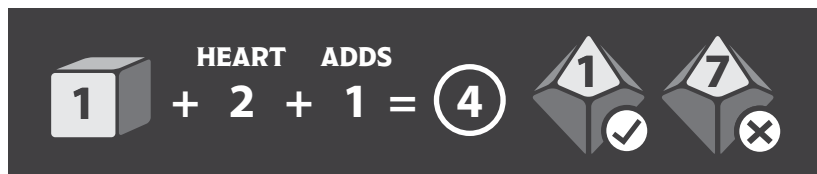
The mother, shakily, eases out from cover and raises a small knife in their defense.

That gives me what I need to resolve the original “It is stressful” outcome of the *Face Danger* move. I *Endure Stress* (page 95) and suffer -2 spirit as a result of seeing the warrior killed. Per the move, I “roll +heart or +spirit, whichever is higher.” Since my heart is 2 and my spirit track is now at +3, I’ll roll with spirit.



That’s a strong hit, which means I can take back initiative. I choose the *Endure Stress* option to “embrace the darkness”, and take +1 momentum (now +6). Kuno is determined to wreak vengeance upon this beast.

She also wants to stop the wyvern from getting at the girl and her brave mother, so I’ll leverage my initiative to *Secure an Advantage* with another charge.



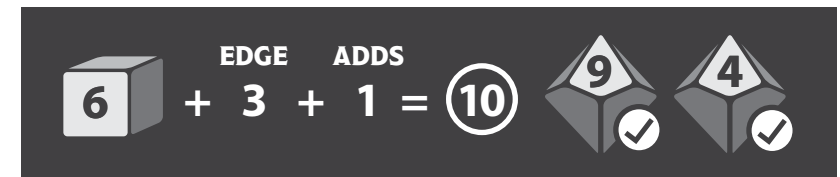
The weak hit is bad enough, but I’ve also rolled a 1 on the action die while leveraging one of my companion’s abilities. That means I need to involve my horse in the move’s outcome (page 43).

The good news is I’ve gained another bit of momentum (up to +7). I envision what happens next.

Kuno urges her horse back into a charge. She screams, partly out of determination, partly to get the wyvern’s attention away from the woman and girl. The beast turns to look at her, amber eyes narrowing. Its whip-like tail lashes out...

I’m framing this as a danger to my horse companion. Etana is quick and agile, so we’ll try to dodge the wyvern’s attack. I’ll *Face Danger* to see what happens.

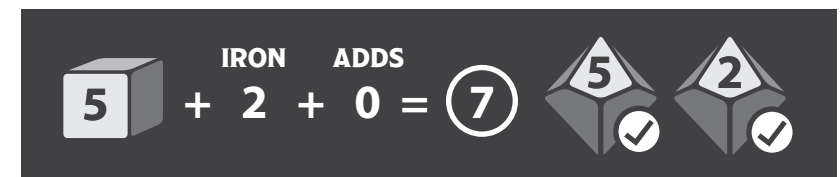
As before, I’ll leverage my companion’s **Swift** ability to gain a +1 add.



A strong hit, which means I’ve overcome the danger, take +1 momentum (now +8), and have initiative again.

The wyvern’s tail lashes along the ground like a scythe. Kuno pulls up hard on the reins, and Etana jumps over the tail as quick and graceful as a cat.

I envision Kuno raising her sword and readying an attack. This seems like the right time to *Strike* (page 79).

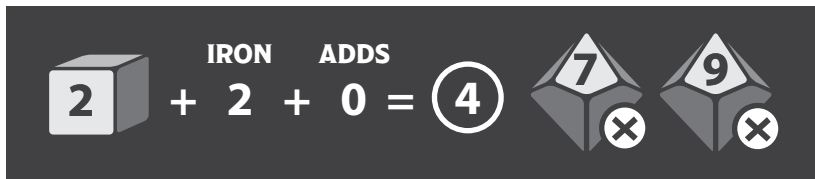


The strong hit with *Strike* allows me to inflict +1 harm. I mark 3 harm on the wyvern’s progress track. For a formidable foe, that’s 3 progress.

Leveraging the momentum of the charge, Kuno swings her sword as they pass by the beast’s neck. The blade digs deep, leaving a crimson gash in its wake.

Kuno lets loose a fierce laugh. She’s bloodied it. Despite the stories, it can be killed. She draws back her sword, pulling on the reins with her other hand, bringing Etana around for another attack.

I roll to *Strike* again, hoping to build on my success and add more progress against this foe.



That's a miss. I could burn my +8 momentum to cancel one challenge die and shift the result to a weak hit, but I'd prefer to save it for a more dramatic opportunity.

Now I must *Pay the Price* (page 105). Suffering direct harm for me or my horse is an obvious choice, but I'm interested in leaving it to fate. I roll on the *Pay the Price* table to see what happens.

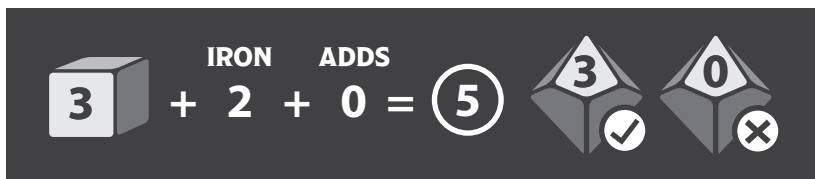
The answer is, "You are separated from something or someone."

I interpret this as an attack which separates me from Etana.

Kuno readies another slash, but too late. The wyvern's massive head slams into her and Etana, sending them both sprawling. Kuno hits the ground hard. For a moment, blackness fills her vision.

It seems reasonable to also apply harm to this outcome. I'll split the wyvern's 3 harm between myself and my horse—2 for me, 1 for Etana. This requires suffer moves for both of us.

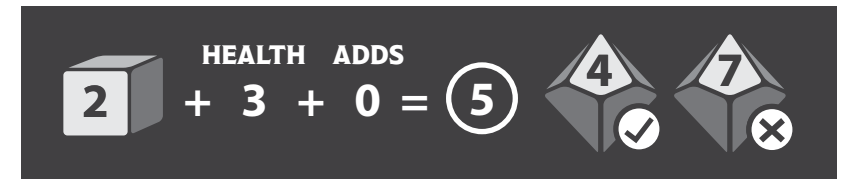
First, I make the *Endure Harm* move (page 91), subtracting 2 from my health track. Per the move, I "roll +health or +iron, whichever is higher." My health track is at +2, and my iron is 2, so it's a wash.



That's a weak hit. Kuno suffers her harm and presses on.

Kuno stands. Pain flares through her ribs. She pushes the pain aside, concerned only with her horse.

Now to check on how Etana has fared. I make the *Companion Endure Harm* move (page 94). First, I lower her health track by 1. Then, per the move, I "roll +heart or +your companion's health, whichever is higher." Etana's health track is at +3 and my heart is 2, so we'll roll + her health.



Another weak hit. Etana is still in the fight, but Kuno wants her out of harm's way. I'll handle that in the fiction.

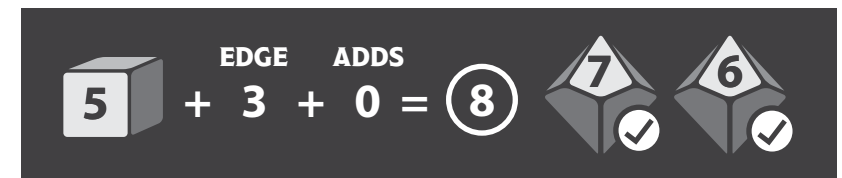
Etana gets to her feet, shaken but okay.

"Go!" Kuno yells at her, then scrambles to pick up her sword. Beside it lay the shield of the fallen warrior. She grabs that as well, and turns back to the Wyvern.

The Ironlanders stab at the beast ineffectually with their spears, distracting it for a moment but not wounding it. Another arrow flies, landing true in the thing's snout.

Paying this fresh wound no mind, the wyvern refocuses its attention on Kuno. It lumbers forward, wings bent in a bat-like crawl.

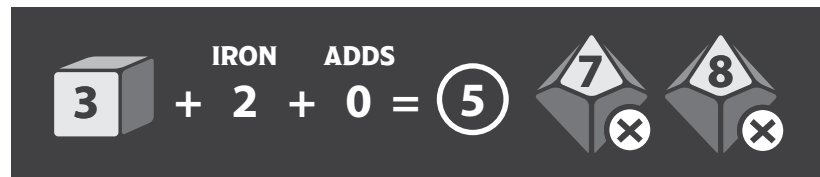
Kuno's instinct is to dodge, hoping to get in a better position to attack. I'll *Face Danger* with +edge instead of clashing. This uses my favored stat, improving my chances.



That's a strong hit and another +1 momentum (+9 total).

Kuno waits for the beast, then leaps aside at the last moment. The wyvern's teeth clamp down on the space she stood only a moment before. Its great head spins around, powerful jaws opening for another bite...

Next, Kuno will *Strike*.

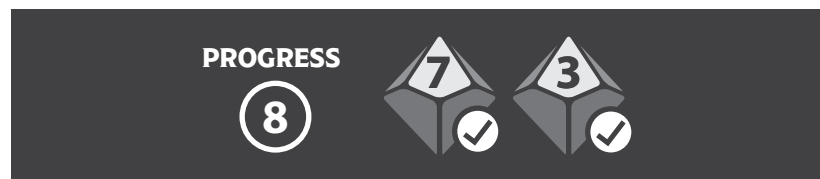


A miss. With my +9 momentum, this is a perfect opportunity to burn momentum (page 12). I do so, and cancel both challenge dice, elevating the outcome to a strong hit.

I'll also leverage my **Swordmaster** ability, which lets me inflict +2 harm when burning momentum on a *Strike* or *Clash*. That's an impressive amount of harm on this attack: +2 for the sword, +1 for the strong hit, and +2 for **Swordmaster**, giving me 5 harm total. This takes the wyvern to 8 filled progress.

Kuno springs forward, stabbing with all her might through the roof of the beast's mouth. The sword bites deep into the soft flesh. Warm blood spills over her arms.

This feels like the proper resolution of this battle. Time to *End the Fight* (page 82). I tally my progress (8), roll the challenge dice, and compare.



It's a strong hit. This battle is done.

The great beast heaves a strangled sigh and collapses with an earth-shaking thud. Kuno sinks to one knee. She watches as the life fades from the wyvern's eyes. She feels a moment of pity for it, and rests her bloodied hand on its snout.

"Go easily into the shadow lands," she whispers.

AFTERMATH

The defeat of the wyvern, while notable, isn't relevant to my current quest and doesn't seem worthy of a milestone. However, it has introduced an opportunity for a new narrative hook. Who is this woman and her child? Why are they here? I envision the scene.

Kuno wrests her sword from the beasts mouth, and surveys the cost of the battle. One of their band lies dead. The other warriors gather spent arrows and spears. None appear hurt.

She moves to the wagon, hobbling a bit as pain flares through her ribs. The mother is standing there, knife raised in a trembling hand. She is looking past Kuno, at the wyvern.

"Are either of them obviously injured?" I *Ask the Oracle*, and set the odds as unlikely.

"No," the oracle answers.

"Be easy," Kuno says to the woman. "This beast is dead."

The mother blinks. Then, she gives Kuno and the others a quick, sharp glance. Kuno imagines her wondering, "Have I leapt from the frying pan into the fire?"

"We mean you no harm," Kuno says, "but these are dangerous lands. Where is your home?"

I don't have the answer to that question, so it's an opportunity to *Ask the Oracle*. This time, I decide to leverage the *Settlement Trouble* oracle (page 181). It's primarily intended for introducing a problem within a community, but works here as a way of establishing what has driven this woman and her child so far into the wilds.

I roll, and the oracle tells me, "Roll twice." I do so, and am told, "Someone is captured" and "Dangerous tradition."

Looking for a bit more detail, I also roll on the *Action* oracle (page 174). It tells me, "Hunt."

“Who is captured”, I *Ask the Oracle*. “Another child?” I give it a 50/50 chance.

“Yes,” the Oracle responds.

Some Ironlanders cling to superstition and dark rites as protection against these harsh lands. What if this woman’s child was taken as part of such a ceremony? I envision how these prompts come together, and how they might connect to my current quest.

The woman kneels, and coaxes her child out from under the wagon. She gives the girl a hug and a few soft words. Then, she turns back to Kuno.

“We live in a steading south of here,” she says. “Sova.”

Kuno shrugs. She hasn’t heard of it.

“They raided our home. Took my boy. Took the other men.”

“Who?”

“His name is Kenrick,” the woman says. She curses in an Old World tongue and spits on the ground. “It’s him that’s making them do it. He’s gone mad.”

“Making them do what?”

“They call it the hunt.” Tears well in the woman’s eyes, but she brushes them away with the back of her hand. Her expression hardens with determination. “They’ll kill my boy. I’ve got to stop them.”

“Who is Kenrick?” Kuno asks.

“The overseer of Mournwood.”

Kuno sighs. Out of the frying pan and into the fire, indeed.

“We are bound for Mournwood,” Kuno says.

Snow begins to fall. It’s the first snow of winter, a portent of the grim, cold months ahead.

Kuno brings her hand to the iron ring which hangs from a silver chain around her neck. The metal thrums with expectant energy.

Such is the life of the Ironsworn.



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