ROLEPLAYING GAME SYSTEM

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For the list of all changes, see the website.

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A hero sheet can be found on the website as a separate download.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the ORBA Roleplaying Game System! We hope you have fun!

IS "ORBA" AN ACRONYM?
"ORBA" stands for "Oscillating Retro-Binocular Apparatus", or whatever else you want it to stand for. So anyway, yes, it's an acronym.

WHAT EXACTLY *IS* ORBA?
ORBA is a roleplaying game (RPG) system. An RPG system is a set of rules constructed for the purpose of playing RPGs.

More specifically, ORBA is a generic, universal RPG system, meaning it's not intended for use with any particular genre or setting. And if needed, it can be easily modified to suit your needs.

WHAT IS AN RPG?
A roleplaying game is essentially a way of playing "pretend" like you used to when you were a child. You pretended to be someone else at another time and place, perhaps even in a whole other world. You might've pretended to be a soldier, policeman, firefighter, professional athlete, knight, astronaut, or whatever else. You might've even pretended to be a specific person you wanted to emulate, someone who was a hero to you.

RPGs are a way of allowing you to continue such pretending despite being a teenager or adult. They serve as a more structured, predictable form of playing "pretend" more suited for teens and adults than children.

HOW DO YOU PLAY AN RPG?
In a standard RPG there is a gamemaster (GM) and one to four or five players. The players each create a player-character (PC) for them to play (or pretend to be, or roleplay) in the world provided and "run" by the GM.

The GM designs and writes an adventure for the PCs to go on, pretends to be (or roleplays) all the non-player-characters (NPCs), tells the players what happens when their PCs do things, and acts as an arbiter between the players.

Being a GM can be a lot of work, but someone has to do it, and it can still be lots of fun!

But those are just the very basics. Beyond them every RPG does things at least a little different. ORBA is just one way of playing an RPG.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO PLAY ORBA?
Firstly, to play ORBA you'll need at least two people: one to be the GM and one to be a player. Ideally, you'll want at least five players: one to be the GM and four to be the players.

Secondly, you'll need at least one six-sided die (d6), but you'll want more than that. The more the merrier.

Thirdly, you'll need some pens or pencils and some writing paper. These are for keeping track of what you'll need to remember while playing.

Fourthly, you'll need tokens to represent heroes, and at least eight tokens to represent NPCs.

Fifthly, you'll ideally need poster-sized sheets of paper or a fairly large dry-erase marker board upon which to draw a map. This isn't really needed but it makes ORBA easier and more fun.

As for the time needed to play, you'll need a minimum of about thirty minutes. However a typical RPG session (regardless of being ORBA or not) can run anywhere between two and six hours!

Welcome to the ORBA Roleplaying Game System! We hope you have fun!

CHAPTER 2 - HERO CREATION

In ORBA PCs are called heroes.

STEP 0 - THE HERO
Your PC is a hero because all PCs in ORBA are heroes. Heroes are champions of truth and justice even if they might have an outward reluctance to be such or have some nagging, troublesome personal flaws. Nevertheless, when the rubber meets the road, all ORBA PCs are heroes at heart.

STEP 1 - THE PERSON
Determine your hero's race as well as their sex, and then name them. The GM is free to put limits on your choice of race, and of course he's free to veto a name that is not taking the game as seriously as he would like.

In addition, develop of a brief (or not so brief) history of your hero and what some of their desires, dreams, or ambitions in life might be. These help to make your hero more believable and easy to roleplay.

STEP 2 - RACE
You chose a race for your hero in the last step, but now it's time to attach the mechanics of the chosen race to your hero. A race provides advantages and disadvantages in the form of Racial Adjustments (RAs), and potentially also Features (see Step 10, below).

Humans as we know them have no RAs, but other races might.

Single Race:
- A +2 bonus in one Peace Ability, or a +1 bonus to two Peace Abilities.
- A +1 bonus to one War Ability.
- A -2 penalty to one Peace Ability, or a -1 penalty to two Peace Abilities.
- A -1 penalty to one War Ability.

Hybrid Race (two races):
- A +1 bonus to one Peace Ability appropriate to one of the races.
- If desired, a +1 bonus to one War Ability appropriate to one of the races. But if this bonus is taken, the penalty below must also be taken.
- A -1 penalty to one Peace Ability appropriate to one of the races.
- If desired, a -1 penalty to one War Ability appropriate to one of the races. But if this bonus is taken, the bonus above must also be taken.

STEP 3 - DEVOTION
All characters, whether hero or NPC, have a trait called "Devotion". This is a numerical measure of their faith and dedication to overcome all challenges working to keep them from achieving their goals. The greater a character's Devotion the harder it is to bring them to a halt. Heroes begin an adventure

with a rank of 1 in Devotion, though in time it can increase to 10. Indeed, as heroes move forward in an adventure they reach new Chapters that increase their Devotion.

When an adventure is over, Devotion returns to 1. (But don't worry: your hero will still become more powerful through other means.)

STEP 4 - FOCUS

All heroes and NPCs have something called "Focus". A character's Focus reflects the strength of their ability to remain willful and concentrated in a battle or other stressful situation. A loss of Focus represents either something that has damaged the character's will to win or survive, or that has damaged their ability to concentrate and stay on task. Either way, total loss of Focus means uselessness and helplessness!

It is important to remember that loss of Focus doesn't equate to suffering a crippling injury, or perhaps any physical wounding at all, but just means the subject has less will, concentration, clarity of perception, etc. Crippling wounds are covered by different rules that will be presented later. Indeed, loss of Focus may reflect no change in physical condition at all, but may reflect something emotional such as fear or despair.

All heroes begin with a maximum Focus of 3 and can have no more than that amount until they reach a certain rank of Devotion. Of course, heroes begin their careers and all individual adventures with a full Focus.

STEP 5 - PEACE ABILITIES

All heroes have seven Peace Abilities that are used only outside of battle. Each Peace Ability has a rank that serves as an overall measurement of its effectiveness.

- **Strength** ~ The hero's ability to apply brute physical force.
- **Agility** ~ The hero's ability to move quickly or in an otherwise effective manner.
- **Dexterity** ~ The hero's ability to work with their hands (or equivalent), and to aim well.
- **Endurance** ~ The hero's ability to endure physical pain and other physical hardship.
- **Mind** ~ The hero's intellect and ingenuity.
- **Persuasion** ~ The hero's ability to persuade NPCs and change their minds one way or another.
- **Resolve** ~ As Endurance but for the mind and emotions. Used whenever the heroes are facing usually frightening or otherwise trying circumstances. Failure results in a negative outcome defined by the GM.

At Devotion 1, players may distribute 4 ranks as desired to one or two of these Abilities, but the limit on a single Ability is 2. The other Abilities will begin at rank 0, which represents average ability.

The maximum possible rank for a Peace Ability is 7.

STEP 6 - WAR ABILITIES

All characters (hero and NPC) have three War Abilities. Each Battle Ability has a rank that serves as an overall measurement of its effectiveness.

- **Attack** ~ The hero's ability to bring down an enemy's Focus, one way or another, on account of their Peace Abilities, Skills, or Features (aside from animal companions or NPC followers), or on account of training and battle experience, or some combination of any of these things.
- **Defense** ~ The hero's ability to retain Focus, one way or another (as above), from enemy attempts to decrease it.
- **Battlemind** ~ The hero's ability, one way or another, to see the lay of the land and react quickly in the heat of battle.

Characters even at a rank of 0 in a War Ability are assumed to already be decently trained or otherwise quite competent when it comes to keeping their own on a battlefield. However, while an increase in Devotion will increase the potency of a rank, *it doesn't represent an actual increase in proficiency.* It reflects only the dogged will to win and the faith that it's possible. It's only by completing enough Chapters that a hero's actual proficiency increases.

Your hero begins an adventure with a rank of 1 in any War Ability, as befitting a Devotion of 1. The two Abilities not chosen begin with a rank 0.

The maximum possible rank for a War Ability is 7.

STEP 7 - WAR FORMS
Attack and Defense, though having only one rank apiece, are broken down into different "War Forms" of each. There are Attack Forms and Defense Forms. Every character has a grade for each of the Forms measuring their individual effectiveness.

The Attack Forms

> **Power** ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of draining their foes' Focus through brute force, whether that force be physical or a superpower of some kind. Power is countered with Fortitude (see below).

> **Speed** ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of draining their foes' Focus through being too fast for them, and striking them before they can react. Speed can be natural or a superpower of some kind. Speed is countered with Reflexes (see below).

> **Deception** ~ This Form measure the character's mastery of draining their foes' Focus through deceptive and confusing tactics such as feints and spells of illusion. Deception is countered with Discernment (see below).

> **Annoyance** ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of draining their foes' Focus through frustrating and angering them into making stupid mistakes. Tactics of dickery can be physical or super in origin. Annoyance is countered with Patience (see below).

> **Resourcefulness** ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of draining their foes' Focus through using the surrounding environment in some way against them, even perhaps other combatants. Resourcefulness is countered with Awareness (see below).

The Defense Forms

Fortitude ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of resisting the Power Attack Form. They're tough as nails, not easy to bring down.

Reflexes ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of resisting the Speed Attack Form. Quick thinking and/or reflexes are the natural answers to those who would take advantage of the slow.

Discernment ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of resisting the Deception Attack Form. Keeping their head during battle, they remain clear-minded and rational and thus hard to fool.

Patience ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of resisting the Annoyance Attack Form. Having disciplined battle minds, they have too much patience to lose their cool.

Awareness ~ This Form measures the character's mastery of resisting the Resourcefulness Attack Form. They're too aware of their surroundings to allow themselves to be made vulnerable.

Each Form has a grade: S, A, B, C, D, or F. The grade of "S" is the best, "F" is the worst.

At the beginning of an adventure players may choose one Attack Form and one Defense Form to be graded "A", and it doesn't have to be the same one as the last adventure. These are the character's two primary Forms.

Form grades can be raised as Devotion raises.

Players are encouraged to define what exactly their hero does in battle to warrant a grade higher than "F". For example, in a less serious game a hero might be worthy of their "S" rank in Annoyance because they constantly play particularly dreadful kazoos throughout a battle. As for a Resourceful hero, maybe they're good at finding structural weaknesses and causing one thing or another to come crashing down on their foes.

If a certain attack or Defense Form requires the presence of a certain tool, weapon, or piece of armor, the hero is assumed by default to always have it. Likewise, if a certain Attack or even Defense Form requires ammo of some kind, or perhaps material components for a spell, the hero is assumed to be able to procure such things when needed and therefore, in terms of gameplay, has an infinite amount of them.

Lastly, the War Forms could change depending on the setting. Special Forms can be created to replace some or all of the default ones.

STEP 8 - SKILLS
All heroes, and perhaps important NPCs, have three Skills that have nothing to do with battle. They are purely for use in Trials that occur during an adventure.

A character might, for example, be good at "Security", "Stealth", and "Acrobatics". Note one of the commonalities between these example Skills: they all have a pretty good chance at coming in handy during an adventure. Character Skills are all like that, leaving Skills like "Dancing" and "Knitting" to roleplaying and choosing more adventure-worthy Skills to record for the purposes of this step. (However, the more broad Skills of "Performance" and "Crafting" might still be appropriate.)

Skills can be something learned or in-born, being the result of training or talent. Furthermore, GMs shouldn't worry too much about Skills being too broad, unless of course a player is really pushing it with Skills like "Mega Genius" which could more or less make them amazing at everything they did.

GMs should freely assume that heroes have any Skills that would be common in the setting for their race and homeland. For example, a hero shouldn't have to include their native language on the Skills list, or in modern settings a "Driving" skill, etc. These would be considered free Skills, and should only be written down if the player has any intent to increase them.

The GM has the final say on what is acceptable as a Skill and what isn't.

Your hero's Skills are assumed to already be quite adequate, indeed competent, even with a rank of 0. Therefore whatever it is that your hero is skilled at, they begin their first adventure already rather good at it, being better at it than someone without such a Skill. *Also, as with Abilities, an increase in Skill rank doesn't actually reflect a permanent increase in proficiency.* Instead it represents intensity of concentration and clarity of thought in the face of stress and other pressure. Only by completing enough Chapters does capability permanently increase.

Choose three Skills for your hero, and remember that each has nothing to do with battle. Each begins with a rank of 0, then add 1 rank to whichever Skill you'd like.

The maximum possible rank for a Skill is 7.

STEP 9 - TECHNIQUES
Techniques, or "Techs", are special and unusually powerful or effective attacks used in battle. All heroes and many other NPCs (including enemies) have Techs. Heroes specifically can have five of them.

Note that Techs are not so much like mastered skills as they are acts of extreme passion and desperation to overcome all odds and defeat the threat of enemies.

Techs do not depend on Attack Form grades, though each might make use of a certain Form in style. Any Tech can use any Attack Form and will be fully effective despite that Form's grade. Attack Form grades are not considered at all when using Techs.

Characters gain use of Techs at a Devotion rank of 2, and Techs can have a rank ranging from 0 to 4.

Now decide five different ways that your hero can be especially effective in battle. Maybe one of their Techs is a certain form of deadly strike, or a sudden burst of speed and precision that affords an

inability to miss. Maybe one Tech is a particularly nasty spell or other superpower.

The GM has the final say on what is acceptable as a Tech.

STEP 10 - FEATURES
Heroes might have additional traits, whether they be advantages or disadvantages, that lie outside of constant expression through other traits. These are called Features, and they can be Positive or Negative. Positive Features provide an advantage, and Negative Features provide a disadvantage.

Each Feature has one of three degrees: Minor, Moderate, or Major. Degrees measures how much a Feature would affect gameplay if it were commonly used. Each degree is associated with a number: 1, 2, or 3 (Minor to Major).

Keep in mind that some things might be a huge advantage in real life, but not so much in a game like ORBA. For example, a Positive Feature such as "Unaging" or "Forever Young" would be a great boon in real life, but unless a chronicle of adventures is going to take place over a long period of time, it wouldn't really be anything but a minor advantage... if even enough to be considered worth recording as a Feature.

If desired, a Feature might temporarily provide a bonus or penalty to a Peace Ability or Skill. But this modifier cannot be constant. It can only appear in certain circumstances.

A Feature can have one or more effects. All that really matters is that the rank applied to the Feature is a generally accurate measurement. You might find that some Features with the same rank aren't precisely balanced, given that there are only three possible ranks, but this is acceptable. The purpose of the ranks isn't to create perfect balance, but simply to make sure each character is in the same general realm of "point worth". Honestly, it's impossible to make balance perfect, and it just becomes a headache to all but those who are obsessive about it.

Before adding a Feature, players should be sure that it's needed at all. Players should be certain that the desired effect can't simply be coming from the normal traits of the character.

Furthermore, remember that in ORBA things like wealth and organizational ties should not affect gameplay, so they shouldn't be reflected as Features. Review that section below if you need to.

Note, a Feature **can** have both positive and negative ranks!

By default, heroes have no Features unless their race requires them.

If any Features are added, even from race, all characters should be balanced, having the same degree sums in Positive and Negative Features.

CHAPTERS COMPLETED
It is important for players to keep track of how many Chapters their heroes have completed as it affects

their growth.

PROFICIENCY ADJUSTMENTS

It is possible for heroes (or NPCs for that matter) to have greater or lesser competency in their individual Abilities or Skills than the default presented in these rules. This is represented in the rules by a Proficiency Adjustment (PA). A positive PA reflects characters who are more powerful than the norm while a negative PA reflects characters who are weaker than the norm.

For each +1 PA on an individual Ability or Skill a character gains a +1 bonus to any use of that trait.

A negative PA works in the opposite manner of positive ones: for each -1 PA the affected trait suffers a -1 penalty to any use of that trait.

No character may have a PA greater than +7 or less than -2 on a single trait.

PAs and RAs stack.

INFIRMITY ADJUSTMENTS

Characters, including heroes, can receive what are called Infirmity Adjustments (IA) from injury or illness. They function in a roll just like a negative PA or RA. They are, however, solely for dramatic purposes and are meant to get healed eventually in the adventure.

IAs are not given to specific traits, but apply to any appropriate rolls.

IAs and negative PAs and RAs unfortunately stack. This means that a hero could potentially suffer a -6 penalty (or more), and therefore rolling is pointless.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

In no official manner do characters equip weapons or armor. It is assumed that characters have whatever sort of offensive and defensive tools are necessary to make due on the battlefield as their traits suggest.

INVENTORY

The heroes as a group are considered to have (within some measure of reason) all the inventory space they would ever need. Furthermore, it's assumed that the ability to transport everything in their inventory goes along with them where ever they go, and with easy access to it. Only for temporary, dramatic reasons is inventory space ever limited or access to inventory cut off.

WEALTH

Heroes are assumed (within some measure of reason) to be able to somehow get whatever they truly need regardless of how much money they have. Because of this, money isn't measured in any sort of

precise manner. There is no need to ever record income or spending.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS AND NPC FOLLOWERS

Animal companions and NPC followers should be considered a Feature... if the GM allows them at all. If permitted, a full character sheet needs to be made for each such companion or follower. Note that, overall, they ought to be much weaker than the heroes.

CHAPTER 3 - ADVENTURES

Adventures are quests or missions that your heroes embark upon.

NUMBER OF HEROES
Every standard adventure is designed for four heroes. If there are less than four players then one or more players need to play more than one hero.

HERO TOKENS
Every player has a token that represents their hero.

AREAS
Adventures are made up of interconnected Areas. To progress through the adventure the heroes move through one Area to the next and sometimes even need to go back to previous Areas. Sometimes the heroes need to do something in an Area before they can proceed to another Area, while sometimes they don't.

Heroes are free to move to whatever location they would like so long as they are able to do so.

All Areas have a description that must be given by the GM when the heroes first enter them. Areas might also have things the heroes can examine more closely with descriptions of their own, and they might contain people to talk to or objects to interact with.

When a hero arrives in an Area they place their hero token in it on the map.

THE MAP
Every Area to which the heroes have been is placed on a map. The size of the Area on the map must at least be big enough to hold all four hero tokens.

Areas that are connected to one another have a line between them. An Area can have any number of other Areas connected to it.

TRAVEL TIME
When heroes travel from one Area to the next a certain amount of time can be said to have passed. This time depends on the distance between the Areas. However, the GM is free to not keep track of time at all if it's not important.

ITEMS
Some Areas might contain special adventure-related Items for the heroes to find and carry. These are always Items that matter to the adventure in some way, such as perhaps being integral to the plot.

EVENTS

Some or many Areas have Events in them. Events are what drives an adventure forward. There are five kinds of events: Happenings, Dialogues, Plot Forks, Trials, and Battles. Each is triggered in some way, perhaps even by simply arriving in their Area. The adventure will describe how Events are triggered.

When an Event is triggered the GM tells the players what has happened. Until that time players are free to roleplay in an Area as they desire.

EVENT: HAPPENINGS

These are "catch all", miscellaneous Events that aren't any of the other kinds.

EVENT: DIALOGUES

These are Events in the which the heroes have a conversation, or exchange some kind of communication, with NPCs. But if any traits are tested and dice are needed, then the Event is not technically a Dialogue but a Trial. However, many Trials are immediately preceded by a Dialogue, and might lead to another Dialogue.

EVENT: PLOT FORKS

When the players can decide or otherwise affect the outcome of the story in some way, that's a Plot Fork, and it will change the course of the adventure.

A good adventure usually has a decent number of Forks since they allow the players to put their personal stamp on the experience.

When players encounter a Fork they should be told by the GM that this has occurred, and they should also be told in some way what all their potential choices are.

EVENT: TRIALS

Some Areas have Trials in them. These are challenges that test the heroes, and involve dice. They might be something like walking a tight rope across a ravine, or trying to engage in diplomatic relations for the sake of persuasion. There are any number of different kinds of Trials! They work as described in the "Resolving Trials" section below.

At the beginning of a Trial the GM describes it and its goal, states what Ability is being tested, and the Trial's Difficulty.

EVENT: BATTLES

Sometimes heroes can get into trouble, and the only way out is a fight. See Chapter 4: Battles for rules on how to resolve them.

RESOLVING TRIALS

By default, Trials only involve one hero, and the difficulty descriptions found below reflect this. (But also see "Trial Teamwork" below.)

To resolve a Trial:

1. The GM and acting player each roll 1d6.
2. The GM adds a bonus to their roll based on the difficulty of the Trial:

Difficulty	Modifier
Very Easy	-3 to -4
Easy	-1 to -2
Moderate	0
Hard	+1 to +2
Very Hard	+3 to +4
Extreme	+5 to +6
Insane	+7

   (This table does not take into account PA and IA. To find the equivalent difficulty for a character with positive or negative ranks in these, add or subtract the PA and/or IA from the numbers on the table.)

3. The player adds their appropriate Ability rank to their roll. (And also any PA and/or IA rank they might have.)
4. If the player rolls equal to or higher than the GM, the Trial succeeds.

It might be possible to lose Focus during a Trial, but any lost Focus is always restored at the end of the Trial.

If Focus drops to 0 or lower during a Trial, the Trial is considered failed.

Failing a Trial in a standard ORBA adventure does not usually bring the adventure grinding to a halt, but in certain instances it might. In these cases the Trial must simply be tried again until it succeeds. In all other cases the penalty for failing the Trial occurs in-game. For example, failing a Trial might cause heroes to not gain a certain useful Item, not get to fight a special battle (or have to fight one), or can even act as a Plot Fork and somehow change the course of an adventure. (Therefore the failure of one hero might affect all of them.)

UNSKILLED TRIALS

That GM may rule that some Trials cannot be attempted by someone without an appropriate Skill. After all, for example, what would your chances be at performing successful brain surgery with no training at all?

OPTION: TRIAL STAGES

In certain circumstances the GM might consider splitting Trials into different stages, with each stage essentially being a Trial in itself. Individual stages don't have to be the same difficulty, of course, and

neither do they even need to test the same Ability. All stages must be successful for the whole Trial to be successful.

TRIAL TEAMWORK
If the GM allows it (and it could be reasonably done), two or more heroes can attempt the same a Trial to increase the chance of success. In this case all the heroes add their rolls and bonuses together against the GM's single sum.

At other times the GM may declare that a Trial cannot be successful unless two or more heroes are involved. In this case the GM has each hero involved take the same Trial, and they all must succeed for the Trial to be successful.

USING SKILLS
If a hero has a Skill that could reasonably help in a Trial they're about to undergo, they might gain a great advantage! Using a Skill might cause a Trial (or Trial stage) to become much easier.

At the beginning of a Trial (or the beginning of each Trial stage), roll 1d6 and consult the following table for the bonus received toward success in the Trial (or stage).

Roll	Bonus
1	Skill rank -2 (minimum 0)
2-3	Skill rank -1 (minimum 0)
4-5	Skill rank
6	Skill rank +1

SPONTANEOUS TRIALS
Sometimes a Trial seems fun or even necessary despite it not having been originally intended by the adventure's author. The GM should feel free to allow such Trials, within reason. However, the GM should also be very wary about the adventure "derailing" on account of such Trials.

TRIALS IN PUBLISHED ADVENTURES
Adventures designed for general audiences, and not for specific heroes, are likely to contain Trials that may or may not test the Skills held by the heroes. That can take a lot of the fun out of the game! GMs are encouraged to custom-tailor published adventures for their heroes, making each Trial have generally the same goal as the publisher intended but testing Skills held by the heroes.

Remember, however, that Trials in published adventures labeled "Unskilled" are meant to be done without any Skills.

OPTION: THE LUCK DIE
Roll an extra 1d6 whenever making a roll for Abilities or Skills. If a 6 is rolled on that die, a Luck Point (LP) is gained. It can be used to give *any* roll a +2 bonus. (But only +2. Two LPs do not, for example, give a +4.) LPs accumulate for a Chapter, but do not pass onto the next Chapter. A player must declare their use before making a roll. New LPs cannot be earned on a roll in which LP is used.

DEATH

A hero can die only on account of a lost battle, and only if *all* the heroes arrive at 0 Focus. See the next chapter for more information. (Heroes can of course also die elsewhere if their players wish them to do so, or allow it, but that's different.)

CHAPTERS AND HERO ADVANCEMENT

Adventures begin on Chapter one and at a certain point the heroes reach a new Chapter. Adventures can have *up to* (but not requiring) ten Chapters in them. Each chapter should take around two hours to complete.

Beginning with an adventure's second chapter, when the heroes start a new Chapter their Devotion increases by 1. At Devotion 2, and at new Devotion increase from that point forward, heroes receive the following:

> +2 Peace Ability ranks
> +1 War Ability rank
> +1 Attack Form grade
> +1 Defense Form grade
> +1 Skill rank

In addition, every even Devotion (2, 4, 6, 8, and 10), a hero gains a new Tech at rank 0. And at every odd Devotion (3, 5, 7, and 9), a hero gains +1 maximum Focus.

Ranks may be distributed as desired within the appropriate category. For example, +2 Peace Ability means +1 can be put into two Peace Abilities, or +2 can be put into one.

See also "Tech Ranks" below for more advancement information regarding Techs.

Remember, Devotion increases are not permanent! They do not represent actual increases is proficiency, but an increase of faith and zeal toward completing the adventure.

TECH RANKS

Old Techs gain ranks as new Techs are discovered or learned. When a hero gains their second Tech, the first Tech gains a rank and is now rank 1. When the hero gains their third Tech, their first Tech goes to rank 2 and their second Tech goes to rank 1, and so forth.

Higher ranked Techs have a greater chance at being successfully used.

DEVOTION SPIKES

Certain Events in an adventure might be taken very personally by a hero. These cause Devotion spikes: Devotion temporarily increases by +1 or more!

PERMANENT ADVANCEMENT

If and when a hero has completed ten Chapters (whether in one adventure or between more than one) the following occurs:

+1 Proficiency Adjustment (PA) on one Peace Ability.
+1 Proficiency Adjustment (PA) on another Peace Ability, or the same one.
+1 PA on one War Ability.
+1 PA on one Skill.

No PA may ever exceed +7 on a single trait.

The player should determine what exactly has made the hero permanently more proficient: perhaps heavy training, a new weapon, a new tool, a new power, etc.

THE END

Every adventure comes to an end. When the end comes, Devotion returns to 1, and heroes consequently return to all the limits of that rank (aside from whatever PAs or IAs they have gained). Players may opt to choose different starting ranks for their hero's Abilities, Skills, and Forms. In addition, new Techs may be created for use if desired.

REGARDING LOOT

ORBA is not a game about acquiring loot. If an object is not predefined as being important to the adventure then picking it up should not be able to have any real effect on the adventure. Players are free to pick up miscellaneous objects and carry them as an act of roleplaying but not for any other purpose.

NEW EQUIPMENT

Heroes might get new equipment during an adventure but it does not affect their Abilities, Skills, or Techs. It is purely plot-related or just for fun or roleplaying purposes.

OPTION: SPECIAL DUNGEON CRAWLING RULES

Many roleplayers love a good "dungeon crawl", meaning they enjoy exploring a relatively large and dangerous area full of many rooms and corridors, i.e. a "dungeon". In a dungeon crawl story and roleplaying take a backseat to exploration, combat, surviving traps, and most of all: finding loot. But seeing as ORBA deliberately avoids a traditional collection and use of loot, something would have to be done about that. What follows is a suggestion encompassing much more than loot:

If desired, ORBA can be made into a more interesting dungeon crawler by scoring/grading the group of heroes by how well they explored and otherwise completed a dungeon's content. See the following categories:

- Rooms, shafts, and corridors entered

- "Elite" or "Boss" enemies defeated
- Non-elite enemies defeated
- Secrets found
- Traps disarmed before being set off
- Quests completed (that began in the dungeon itself)
- Special achievements completed
- [Anything else that could be done aside from escaping the dungeon or completing the quest(s) that brought them into the dungeon]

And last but not least:
- Loot found

Yes, loot! If ORBA is being played as a dungeon crawler, heroes can find generic "loot" here and there. This loot, however, is never defined. It's simply "loot", and exists for the sole purpose of being found so that the players can get a higher score/grade upon finishing the dungeon.

Final note: in a dungeon crawler ORBA game, each dungeon represents a Chapter.

OPTION: SANDBOX GAMEPLAY

In a "sandbox" style game there is no pre-made adventure. The entire setting is open to the heroes at any time, and the GM's goal is to provide suitable - but largely improvised - adventures for the players based on their choices. This presents not only a challenge to the GM in terms of their workload, but also to ORBA itself, as its Devotion/Chapter system is not inherently compatible with sandbox roleplaying.

Nevertheless, the system can be tweaked slightly to allow for a sandbox experience. In a sandbox game, the GM takes note of whatever adventure-like goal the heroes are presently pursuing. Chapters pass based on progress toward that goal, and success or failure regarding it should come in no more than ten Chapters.

Abandoning a goal means resetting Devotion to 0. However, if the players ever return to an abandoned goal, they might be able to take up some measure of their former Devotion for it. The level of Devotion that can once again be taken up depends on how many Chapters were spent pursuing one or more other unrelated goals in the meantime. For every Chapter spent pursing another goal, an older goal's potential Devotion drops by 1.

Note, with no goal Devotion never increases.

From here, the GM and players must consider two sub-styles of sandbox roleplaying. Do the players want a dangerous, unforgiving sandbox that might be too much for them to handle, or do they want the game's sandbox to never present a challenge too great for them? It's up to the GM and the players to decide.

CHAPTER 4 - BATTLES

Sometimes you have to fight it out!

ANIMAL COMPANIONS AND NPC FOLLOWERS IN BATTLE

Any animal companions and/or NPC followers are able to take part in battles like a hero or enemy would.

TURNS AND ROUNDS

Battles begin on round one. Each combatant takes a turn to act (see below for how). Then round two begins, and so forth. There is no fixed amount of time passing per turn or round. The GM is free to determine the amount of time passing as dramatically appropriate.

Where tokens are placed at the start of battle is discussed below.

THE SURPRISE ROUND

If one side of the conflict is surprised (or ambushed) by the other, they get a round of their own to act before round one begins. This is the Surprise Round. It doesn't matter what order it is in which each combatant acts, as the surprised party cannot attack during this round.

Whether or not surprise occurs depends on the adventure, not random chance. However, the adventure itself may decide to determine it by random chance.

COMBATANT TOKENS

Each combatant in the battle is represented by a token located in one of the Battle Arena's zones. (See below.)

STARTING PLACEMENT

If no one is surprised, then the GM and players may place their combatants anywhere they like in the Battle Arena (see below), in any order. Battle doesn't initiate until the GM and all the players indicate that they're ready.

If a problem arises in everyone placing their combatants at the same time, resolve disputes by rolling to see who places first.

If a side is surprised, they place their combatants first.

BATTLE INITIATIVE

After placement, it's important to know who moves first in a battle. Each combatant, both hero and enemy, need to roll for Battle Initiative, as this determines the order. This is how it's done:

Each combatant rolls 2d6 and adds their Battlemind rank. (With any modifiers as appropriate.)
The highest roller moves first, then the next highest, etc.
If two or more combatants tie, reroll between them until there is no longer a tie.

By default, Initiative is only determined for round one of battle, and the same order kept for the rest of the conflict. Optionally, Initiative can be predetermined every round.

BASE DEFENSE

After determining Initiative, at the beginning of each round, every combatant makes a roll that defines their Base Defense for the duration of the round. See the rules for attacks, below, for what these do. A combatant's Base Defense should be recorded on their sheet.

To decrease the GM's rolling load for this, they may opt to roll just once for each enemy type, or perhaps all enemies, or all enemies in a specific Arena zone, etc.
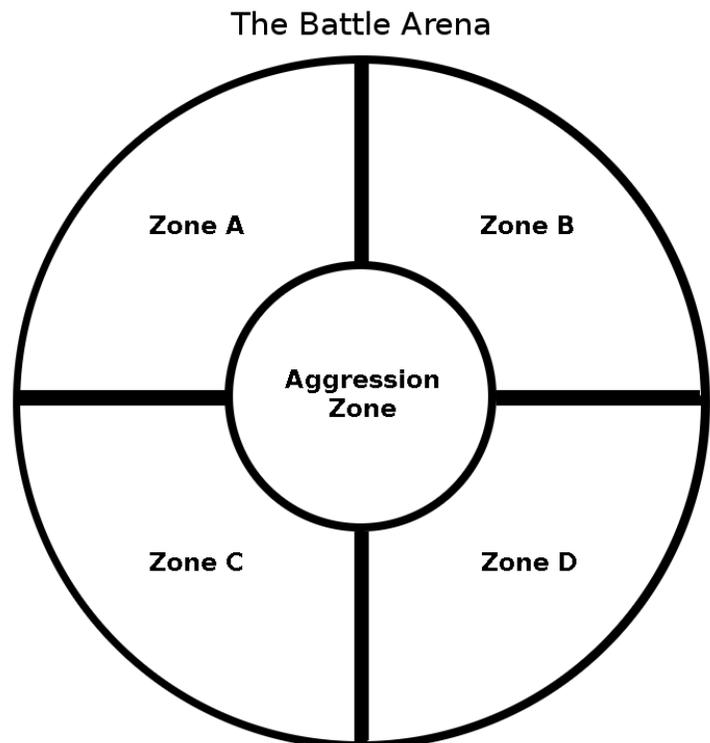
THE ARENA

All battles take place in the Battle Arena. The Arena has five zones on it: Zone A (upper-left), Zone B (upper-right), Zone C (lower-left), Zone D (lower-right), and the center zone which is called the Aggression Zone.

These zones do not represent actual, literal locations in the battle. They are purely an abstraction. Even movement on the Arena doesn't even necessarily have to reflect movement on the actual battlefield. All the combatants in a zone are simply focusing their attention on one another at the expense of those in other zones.

Combatants may only move to adjacent zones. Zones are considered adjacent to each other if they share a border. The Aggression Zone (which is in the center) is adjacent to all zones. Zone A is adjacent Zone B and Zone C, and so forth.

The Battle Arena

Combatants may not make attacks outside of their zone unless they are within the Aggression Zone or

are attacking into it from outside. If they are in the Aggression Zone they may attack any combatant regardless of zone. And again, all other combatants may attack targets in their own zone or in the Aggression Zone.

THE AGGRESSION ZONE

The Arena's Aggression Zone has an effect on those combatants within it. Any combatant within the Aggression Zone receives a +1 to all Attack rolls and a -1 to all Defense (to a minimum of 0). This is called an aggression modifier.

If a combatant remains in the Aggression Zone for a second round, they get +2 to Attack rolls but -2 to Defense (to a min of 0). A third round increases it to +3/-3. But the bonus/penalty doesn't increase after that. If the combatant returns to the Aggression Zone after leaving it for a round the bonus is reset to +1/-1.

Being in the Aggression Zone does not affect Tech rolls.

TURN OPTIONS

When a combatant's turn begins they may do one of the following. Aside from doing nothing, each turn option has a section below to describe it.

- Do nothing.
- Delay turn.
- Move.
- Try to escape.
- Recover Focus.
- Revive a KO'd ally.
- Attack an enemy.

TURN OPTION: DELAY TURN

A combatant can opt to delay their turn in order to interrupt (i.e. move immediately before) any combatant of lower Initiative.

TURN OPTION: MOVE

The combatant may move from their current zone into one adjacent zone.

TURN OPTION: TRY TO ESCAPE

Escaping a battle is not possible unless the GM permits it. If it's possible, the GM may allow the heroes to escape when the NPCs are sufficiently harmed, or have sufficiently harmed the heroes, according to the GM's desires.

TURN OPTION: RECOVER FOCUS

As an act of strong-willed faith and desperation, the combatant's player rolls 1d6 to refresh some amount of their Focus:

Roll	Effect
1-3	+1 Focus (up to max)
4-5	+2 Focus (up to max)
6	+3 Focus (up to max)

TURN OPTION: REVIVE A KO'D ALLY

The combatant spends their turn attempting to revive a knocked-out ally in the same focus zone. 1d6 is rolled, and a 4 or higher succeeds in revival.

A successful revival gives the formerly KO'd hero 1 Focus and they can act again as normal next round.

TURN OPTION: ATTACK AN ENEMY

A combatant may attack an enemy target in the same zone or in the Aggression Zone. If the combatant is in the Aggression Zone they may attack any enemy target anywhere in the Arena. A combatant can only attack one target at a time.

Here's how an attack works, assuming no Techs are used:

One combatant is designated the attacker and the other the defender. The one who began the confrontation is the attacker.

1. The attacker chooses an Attack Form and notes their grade in it. They also note the grade of the defender's opposing Defense Form. For example, if the attacker chooses their Power Form, they note its rank of "A" and they also note the rank of the defender's Endurance Form (which is "C").

2. The attacker rolls 1d6, adding the result to their Attack rank. (Also adding PAs and/or IAs if appropriate.)

3. The defender adds their Base Defense to their Defense rank. (Also adding PAs and/or IAs if appropriate.)

4. The Attack and Defense Forms being employed are compared. For every grade that one Form is higher than the other, the combatant with that Form gains an additional +1 bonus to their sum. For example, the attacker with a Power Form of "A" gets a +2 bonus over the defender with an Endurance Form of "C". If both Forms have the same rank there is no bonus to either combatant.

5. The sum roll of the attacker (1d6 + Attack + Form), called their attack roll, is compared to the sum roll of the defender (Base Defense + Defense + Form), called their defense roll. On a tie there is a stalemate for that phase. If one combatant has rolled higher than the other then they are considered victorious in that phase.

6. The losing combatant loses 1 Focus and the attack is over.

USING TECHS

Techs are used during attacks. They might allow a combatant to harm the defender with an additional -1 Focus.

An attacking player can declare at any time during an attack that they desire to use a Tech, even before they or the defender have rolled.

When a combatant uses a Tech, they roll 1d6 to see if the Tech was successful. They must roll a certain number or higher. The *minimum* number they need to roll depends on the rank of the Tech:

Tech Rank	Need to Roll (or higher)
0	5
1	4
2	3
3	2
4	automatic success

If they roll a success the Tech removes 1 Focus immediately from the target. If the target's Focus drops to 0 the attack is immediately over and the enemy is defeated.

Each Tech can only be used twice per battle, and only once per attack. When attempted, a Tech use is wasted even if it doesn't succeed in doing any harm.

Attack Form grades are not considered when using Techs.

The aggression zone does not affect Tech use.

TECH COMBOS

Once a Tech is successfully used in an attack, and the attacker has one or more Techs left to use, they may opt to immediately attempt a second Tech, creating a combo. If they manage to roll a 4 or more on a 1d6, they can attempt a second Tech just as with the first.

However, should this second Tech fail, the attacker loses -1 Focus themselves!

No more than two Techs can be in a combo.

DEFEATED COMBATANTS

When a hero combatant has 0 Focus they are simply considered KO'd. Their combat token remains on the Arena but is put on its side or turned over to indicate a KO.

When an non-hero combatant is felled by a hero, the hero decides whether or not to immediately kill

them. (If killed, they cannot be revived by allies.)

VICTORY FOR THE HEROES

The heroes have won a battle when all the enemies are defeated and at least one hero has 1 Focus.

Upon victory any KO'd heroes automatically revive and all heroes regain all their Focus.

Under special conditions the heroes might win the battle if only certain enemies are defeated.

ALL HEROES KO'D

If all the heroes have 0 Focus, having been KO'd, the enemies win the battle. One of two things occurs, depending on the adventure's design:

The players must start the battle over, and with full Focus. Or, the adventure continues and all the heroes regain their Focus, but suffer a consequence of loss.