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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *RuneQuest II*!

What you hold is a fully revised and updated edition of the classic game system, originally released in 1978 and republished by Mongoose Publishing in 2006. *RuneQuest* is a complete roleplaying game, enabling adventures in fantasy landscapes but not limited to them. The rules presented in this volume can be tailored to a wide variety of settings and genres although the focus is primarily on gritty fantasy with a heroic feel.

RuneQuest has traditionally been associated with the world of *Glorantha*, Greg Stafford's epic masterpiece of mythic world creation that has been steadily developed and expanded since 1966. Greg created *Glorantha* as a way of exploring myth and heroism, along with the consequences of both, but *Glorantha* has become something far more than that. It is one of the most extensive and detailed roleplaying worlds ever devised and that tradition continues with the support of *RuneQuest* in this latest edition.

Yet *RuneQuest* is not confined to just one world: the rules are characterised by flexibility and intuition, permitting Games Masters, players and their Adventurers to explore just about any milieu they care to. The game focuses on characters and their capabilities, grounding everything from an adventuring perspective. Using *RuneQuest* as the basis, many different settings and worlds are possible – all it takes is imagination.

NEW TO ROLEPLAYING?

Although *RuneQuest* is by no means an overly complex game, it is assumed that those reading this book have played a roleplaying game before and understand the key concepts: players control characters and a Referee or Games Master articulates the story, the action and adjudicates the results. So, whilst advice for both players and Games Masters is included throughout these rules, in the form of examples, clearly explained rules and so forth, it is written from the standpoint of a certain degree of roleplaying familiarity and experience.

NEW TO RUNEQUEST?

It is expected that many old hands will be reading this book but, if you are new to *RuneQuest* as a system, then welcome indeed. *RuneQuest*'s concepts and rules are easy to understand and implement with a series of unified mechanics underpinning the separate elements of character creation, combat and magic. Most character actions are based around a percentile skill or ability with a roll equal to, or below, the value indicating success. Of course different rules and circumstances add a certain degree of sophistication and complexity but at its heart *RuneQuest* is a very simple, logical system that can be grasped from a glance at the character sheet and a scan through these rules.

The game's design also incorporates new thinking that complements many tried and tested mechanics. This approach offers players a vast degree of control over what their characters do and how they do it. Many of the choices and possibilities are subtle: players and Games Masters will find that, with a little thought and creativity, all manner of wonderful opportunities and complexities present themselves whilst still being supported by the rules framework. *RuneQuest* is completely adaptable and its intuitive rules mean that creating new rules or changing existing ones, whether to support an individual style of play or a particular setting, is easy to do and accommodate.

YOUR RUNEQUEST WILL VARY

These rules offer a detailed roleplaying framework and most players and Games Masters will use them as presented. However, nothing is cast in stone. If a rule does not suit you, change or ignore it. Your game is paramount. It is impossible, when designing a game, to take into account every situation, notion or idea that will present itself during play. However, the framework is here to support informed decision making and to allow you to make *RuneQuest* your own, unique rules set.

Experiment, improvise and adapt – that is the *RuneQuest* way!





COMMON SKILLS

Every Adventurer has a range of Common skills allowing him to perform a variety of actions with varying degrees of expertise. These are detailed more fully in the Skills chapter. At this point of Adventurer creation, players will only need to know the base values of each Common skill.

The basic score of each Common skill is determined by the sum of two characteristics or a multiple of a single characteristic. The value represents the Adventurer's innate competence in a given area, along with any training he has received as part of his formative years.

The Common Skills table shows how the basic values are calculated. The score represents the percentage chance of success for a skill; so, an Athletics score of 25 is expressed as 25%. How skill percentages work, and each Common Skill's full description, is given in the Skills chapter.

Common Skills

Common Skills	Basic Percentage
Athletics	STR+DEX
Brawn	STR+SIZ
Culture (Own)	INT x2
Dance	DEX+CHA
Drive	DEX+POW
Evade	DEX x2
Evaluate	INT+CHA
First Aid	INT+DEX
Influence	CHA x2
Insight	INT+POW
Lore (Regional)	INT x2
Perception	INT+POW
Persistence	POW x2
Resilience	CON x2
Ride	DEX+POW
Sing	CHA+POW
Sleight	DEX+CHA
Stealth	DEX+INT
Swim	STR+CON
Unarmed	STR+DEX

Every Adventurer possesses the skills listed in the Common Skills table; however there are three other categories of skills that, whilst considered to be Common, are not automatically listed: Close Combat styles, Ranged Combat styles and Common Magic. These skills, and their basic values, are defined in the following table but they do not automatically appear in the Common Skills section of the *RuneQuest* Adventurer Sheet.

Skills	Basic Percentage
Each Close Combat style	STR+DEX
Each Ranged Combat style	DEX x2
Common Magic	POW+CHA

Whilst all Gloranthan Adventurers have some magic, other *RuneQuest* settings may not grant or use Common Magic or it may be restricted to certain professions.

Edric's Saga

Edric's basic scores in each of the Common skills are as follows:

Athletics 25%, Brawn 26%, Common Magic 24%, Culture (Own) 32%, Dance 23%, Driving 27%, Evade 26%, Evaluate 26%, First Aid 29%, Influence 20%, Insight 30%, Lore (Regional) 32%, Perception 30%, Persistence 28%, Ranged Combat 26%, Resilience 14%, Ride 27%, Sing 24%, Sleight 23%, Stealth 29%, Swim 19%, Unarmed 25%.

Bear in mind that these are Edric's starting skill values reflecting his natural abilities and competencies: many of these areas will improve as the Adventurer Creation process continues.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

The next stage of creating an Adventurer is to determine the character's previous experience. Each Adventurer starts the game between the ages of 17 and 20, and he or she was most likely considered an adult at age 14 or 15, depending on the culture. Therefore the Adventurer has already had many years-worth of learning and experience that needs to be reflected in his skills: this includes skills developed within the Adventurer's culture and those skills developed as part of professional training.

Previous experience therefore has three steps. First the player must pick the Adventurer's **cultural background**, which is a reflection of the kind of cultural upbringing the Adventurer has had. This provides certain starting skill bonuses reflecting this upbringing.

Second, the player must pick a **profession** and gain further skills and skill bonuses associated with that profession. The list of professions provided is considered appropriate to an Adventurer, however, it is entirely possible that an Adventurer might be a tailor, rather than a sailor and the appropriate skills for that kind of profession will have to be determined between the player and Games Master.



This section is a collection of outfits and special clothing that are available from place to place. Unlike common goods, many of these items are very self-explanatory. The way someone is dressed can modify influence rolls in certain situations. Being well dressed may offer a bonus when trying to convince poorer folk, or may bring a penalty when negotiating your way past bandits.

Article of Clothing	Description	Cost
Apron, crafter's	This is a heavy leather apron worn by smiths, glass blowers and other professionals who must withstand direct and oppressive heat. Its special design makes it heavy (2 ENC) but it can shield the wearer's chest, abdomen and upper legs from up to 10 points of heat-based damage per minute. It is awkward to move around in and imposes a –10% Evade penalty because of its stiffness.	4 SP
Baldric	A belt or sash worn over one shoulder that is typically used to carry a weapon (usually a sword) or another item such as a musical instrument or a drum.	2 SP
Belt, leather	Any functional, no-nonsense leather belt.	6 CP
Belt, fancy	As above but dyed, with an ornate buckle or decorative patterns stamped into the leather.	2 SP
Boots, Common	Typically calf-high and made of sturdy leather.	6 SP
Boots, high	Typically thigh-high and made from a more supple leather than a common boot, for comfort.	8 SP
Boots, riding	Typically knee-high and made of sturdy leather with reinforcement in the soul and the inside of the calf to withstand the rigours of stirrup and saddle.	10 SP
Breeches, common	Common, full or three-quarter length trousers in a variety of fabrics and cuts.	1 SP
Breeches, fancy	As for common breeches but cut or decorated to the latest fashion.	3 SP
Cape	A sleeveless, hoodless garment worn around the shoulders. A cape usually covers just the wearer's back.	3 SP

CHAPTER 5:

COMBAT

Combat is an inevitable part of *RuneQuest*. Violence, whether it is a squabble descending into fisticuffs between childhood rivals, a drunken bar-room brawl, or a duel to the death between mortal enemies, is handled using these rules.

RuneQuest combat has certain hallmarks that are worth bearing in mind; these are as follows:

- * Combat is a *deadly* business, irrespective of an Adventurer's level of skill. A well-placed blow can take down the toughest or best armoured character.
- * Combat is *tactical*: good tactical decisions or choices can greatly influence the outcome of a battle. The combat rules are designed to support tactical options.
- * Combat should be fun. Although it deals with violence – and does so seriously – there is little like a good, well orchestrated melee to get the pulse racing and the adrenalin flowing.
- * *RuneQuest* combat aims to be cinematic. What is meant here is that melees and ranged combat can emulate the feats seen in television and movies – be they dashing, swashbuckling duels; gritty, bloody one-on-one combats, or large-scale, epic stand-offs between heroes. The combat rules are designed to handle all such confrontations.

COMPONENTS OF COMBAT

Most combats consist of very similar components using very similar timeframes. These components are as follows:

Combat Skills and Styles

Combat skills are purchased as *styles*. Learning the style “Broadsword and Shield” costs the same skill points as learning “Greataxe”, thus avoiding the necessity of having to train each weapon in a combination separately. Edric, for example, has the combat style ‘Spear and Shield’; this combat style combines the techniques

Edric's Saga

Edric, Thrace and Lilina have penetrated the underground layer of the troll-wife Illsa Skessa, the troll Edric believes was responsible for his father's murder. The three adventurers want vengeance on Illsa Skessa's Battle Champion, Illsa Skarga. Creeping through the narrow tunnels of the underground complex the three companions emerge into a large cavern which, the frail light of their torches shows, is filled with debris, discarded bones from eagerly devoured troll-meals and, over in a corner, slowly roasting something they've captured, a group of trollkin guards. The trollkin look up and squint as torch-light falls over them; hands fall to nearby weapons. Edric, Thrace and Lilina are in no mood to run but are eager for a fight.

Combat is about to commence...

of spear attack and shield defence but does not cost Edric two separate skills to gain – they are trained together.

There is a myriad range of different combat styles and Adventurers can create their own combinations to mirror personal preferences, cultural fighting styles or professional requirements. Some typical examples are:

Sword and Shield (any one-handed sword and any shield type); Mace and Shield; Sword and Dagger (any one-handed sword coupled with a dagger which is used for parrying but may also be used for attack); Two-Handed Sword (a large sword requiring two hands to stabilise but inflicting greater damage).

In situations where the user of a ‘two weapon’ or a ‘weapon and shield’ combat style is unable, for whatever reason, to utilise part of the combination, then the wielder's skill is unchanged but he

does lose the advantage of having two weapons or the defensive capabilities of his shield.

Adventurers trying to decide what sort of combat style to select should consider the following:

- * Two handed weapons normally grant an advantage in both inflicting and parrying damage and give the user a greater reach (see *Weapon Reach*).
- * Shields allow the user an extra Combat Action per round, as well as protecting against missile attacks – which most other weapons cannot parry.
- * Using two weapons simultaneously also permits the wielder an extra Combat Action per round and maintains their effectiveness if one weapon is pinned, entangled or dropped. Secondary off hand weapons must be one size category smaller than the main weapon, unless both are small.
- * Unarmed combat styles have few direct benefits save that the user is always able to fight and protect themselves when lacking a weapon and can freely combine unarmed attacks with any other combat style at no penalty (as long as the opponent is within reach). An unarmed attack can be made with any part of the body, except for the torso. Thus limbs, wings, tails and even the head can be used.

Combat Rounds

Since fights in *RuneQuest* often involve a large number of skill rolls for attacks, parries and such like, combat is divided into rounds to ease book keeping. As introduced on page 48 of the Game System chapter, each round represents a period of five seconds during which time Adventurers can perform their full number of Combat Actions.

Each Combat Round begins with the participant (Adventurer, adversary or monster) with the highest initiative acting first, spending one of his Combat Actions. This is followed by whoever has the next highest initiative and so forth until the participant with the lowest initiative has acted. Then, if anyone still has any Combat Actions remaining, the cycle repeats until all available Combat Actions for all available participants have been spent. At this point the round ends. If the participants are prepared to continue fighting, a new round begins; if they withdraw from combat or cannot continue to fight, actions revert to Local Time and the combat is over.

Edric's Saga

The trollkin guards are some metres distant from Edric, Thrace and Lilana but it is clear that a fight is likely. 'What are you going to do?' The Games Master asks each player. 'We ready our weapons and prepare to fight,' Edric's player says and the others agree. 'Okay,' the Games Master replies and reaches for a sheet of paper to start recording initiative, hits, damage and other combat information, 'we're moving to Combat Rounds; five second bursts measured by Combat Actions. Everybody ready? Good... Initiative rolls please...'

Initiative

Who acts first and the order of action is crucial in combat. Initiative is the method of determining in which order the participants act. Initiative is measured in Strike Ranks and rolled at the start of a fight, remaining in play unless something occurs to *force* Initiative to be re-rolled. This is up to the Games Master to decide but at the very minimum an Initiative roll lasts for an entire Combat Round.

Calculating Initiative

To calculate Initiative, each participant rolls 1D10 and adds his Strike Rank. The highest result acts first, followed by the next highest and so on. If two participants tie scores, then they act simultaneously. If both are attacking simultaneously, a weapon being used to strike cannot also be used to parry a simultaneous blow.

Armour Penalty

Strike Rank Penalty = (Totalled Armour Points worn on all locations) divided by five.

Armour has a negative impact on Initiative; the heavier the protection worn, the bigger the hindrance to moving and reacting quickly. An Adventurer's Strike Rank is reduced by one fifth of the totalled value of AP worn on all locations (rounded up).

For example a full suit of chainmail armour with a closed helm (36 points in total) creates a -8 Strike Rank penalty.

Combat Actions

Combat Actions (CA), calculated during Adventurer Creation, are used when attempting any kind of activity during a combat; for example, to attack, defend, change engagement distance, cast spells and so forth.

When a Combat Action is spent, it is gone; Adventurers therefore need to assess *how* they use CA according to the nature of the opponent and the odds being faced.

How an Adventurer's Combat Actions are used is completely up to the player, who may be as aggressive or defensive as he wishes. When combined with Initiative, CA take on a dynamic nature; since how they are used can depend on the order of when one acts in the round.

For example, Edric is forced into a fight. He has 3 CA and has rolled a better Initiative than his opponent. Going first he decides to attack and the foe succeeds in parrying. Both have used one CA for that round. Then it is the opponent's turn and he counter-attacks, forcing Edric to parry. Now both have used two CAs. Since the lowest Initiative has been reached but both combatants still have a Combat Action remaining; the GM cycles back to the highest Initiative again – allowing Edric to attack a second time that round. His opponent again parries the blow and the round ends, since both foes have no



Elemental or Primal Runes

The components of all creation. Most worlds contain all these runes in different combinations of strength but some worlds may be devoid of a certain rune. A world made without the water rune, or where the water rune is weak, would have no seas, rivers, lakes or even rainfall. It would be a dreadfully arid, probably lifeless place. In a world where the darkness rune is strongest, perpetual night would shroud the place. Thus the strength and combination of runes determines the conditions of the world. Most worlds have the runes in a certain balance, thereby promoting life and the conditions under which life thrives.

The Elemental Runes are: *Air, Darkness, Earth, Fire, Moon and Water.*

Form Runes

The Form Runes describe the elements of life and the shape it takes. Usually a single form of life – such as man – is associated with a single rune but sometimes a form of life is a combination of two or more runes. A combination of the runes of Man and Beast, for example, might create a form of life such as a centaur or an intelligent, bipedal

cat, or perhaps a man with the intellect, nature and abilities of a particular beast. Much depends on how the runes are mixed by the gods. Of the Form runes, Chaos is the most feared, because it preys on the nature of the other Form runes and denies them consistency. The Chaos rune imposes constant, unremitting change for its own sake. In some worlds the Chaos rune is excluded and guarded against with utmost vigilance. In others it is rampant and causes untold misery whilst the gods watch with glee at the unleashed havoc. Such is the way of gods.

The Form Runes are: *Beast, Chaos, Dragon, Dragonewt (where dragonewts exist, in Glorantha, for instance), Man, Spirit and Plant.*

Power Runes

The Runes of Power are arranged in diametrically opposed pairs. They characterise the chief motivations of gods and so are invested in whatever they create. They derive from, and are influenced by, the Elemental Runes and influence the Form Runes. They are typically manifestations of a specific type of power derived from a primal source. Most cults are therefore invested with those runes characterising the god or gods they worship and consider

