

EMBERWIND Comprehensive Rules of Role-Playing

THE BASICS

STRUCTURED VS. FREEFORM ROLE-PLAY

EMBERWIND Campaigns and Vignettes are an example of structured role-play. The story's Encounters, Crossroads, and Paths are all written ahead of time so Storytellers can provide their players with a balanced, organized play experience.

For Storytellers who like to improvise or customize, we provide Departures as a feature of EMBERWIND Campaigns to provide moments where you can take the story in a new direction and embrace freeform role-play. As you come up with your own story, use Dice or the Deck of Fates to resolve Skill Checks, or employ Freeform Role-Play as needed (see "Alternate Role-Playing Systems").

TERMINOLOGY

Narrator: Narrators can only be used in Structured Role-Play (Campaigns, Vignettes, etc.). The Narrator is responsible for reading the story. Playing with a Narrator limits the optional content and story branches available to the party in favour of a more linear, straightforward experience. Playing in this mode does not preclude the Narrator from also playing a Hero at the same time.

- ◆ **Content Available: Combat Encounters, Combat Flairs, Crossroad Encounters, and Detours in Structured Role-Play**
- ◆ There are two styles of Narrator:
 - **Rotating Narrator:** Each player takes a turn narrating an Encounter (a scene) before passing the book to the player to the left whenever they see this icon . Whoever is narrating a Combat

Encounter will be responsible for controlling the Foes by using the included A.I. Hex Grids on the Foe Cards.

- **Dedicated Narrator:** One player takes the role of the Narrator for the entire Campaign. That player is also responsible for controlling the Foes by using the included A.I. Hex Grids on the Foe Cards.

Storyteller: Rather than play a Hero, one player can take the role of the Storyteller. The Storyteller replaces the Narrator, and can read aloud and follow the plot much like a Narrator does, or they can enhance the story, characters, and the game world as much as the playing group desires, allowing for a more free-form and customized role-playing and/or Combat experience. Like the Narrator, the Storyteller can control Foes by using the included A.I. Hex Grids on the Foe Cards. However, the Storyteller can elect to manually control Foes, or use gameplay enhancements, such as using Flow to adapt the tension and difficulty of the game as the Heroes progress through it, or deploying Veteran Foes (see the Comprehensive Rules of Combat module at emberwindgame.com/game/resources) to make Combat Encounters more challenging.

- ◆ **Content Available: Combat Encounters, Combat Flairs, Crossroad Encounters, Departures, Detours, Flow, Veteran Foes**

Encounter Types:

- ◆ **Crossroad Encounter:** In a Crossroad Encounter, the Heroes choose between competing courses of action called **Paths**, each of which leads to a different **Outcome**. The Narrator or Storyteller reads all of the text in the **Revealed** section for each Path, and then players vote on Paths to make choices for the Heroes. Cover the **Hidden** portion of the Crossroad, and only reveal it after a decision has been made.

TIP: The Crossroad system is intended to simplify the role-play experience to resemble the style of role-playing often found in video game RPGs. It can be replaced with custom content and standard roleplaying (using the Skill system) by a Storyteller for a more immersive experience.

- ◆ **Combat Encounter:** An Encounter in which Combatants do battle.

CROSSROAD ENCOUNTERS

TYPES OF CROSSROADS:

- ◆ **Decision Crossroad:** A Crossroad where the party chooses a single Path to advance the story. Once the decision is made, the players may not go back to make a different decision.
- ◆ **Discovery Crossroad:** A Crossroad where Heroes speak with a non-player Character to gather information or resources. The party votes on Paths to direct exploration. A group may take multiple Paths, selecting them in any order, until one of the Outcomes ends the Crossroad. A party cannot take the same Path more than once.
- ◆ **Discovery Crossroad:** A Crossroad where Heroes investigate their surroundings to gather information or resources. The party votes on Paths to direct exploration. A group may take multiple Paths, selecting them in any order, until one of the Outcomes ends the Crossroad. A party cannot take the same Path more than once.
- ◆ **Divergence Crossroad:** A Crossroad navigated by each individual player rather than by party vote. Each Hero chooses their own Path, and each Hero's Path is resolved in order, starting with A and proceeding to B, C, etc. Unless otherwise stated, do not read Outcomes for any unselected Path.

CROSSROAD ENCOUNTER FEATURES:

- ◆ **Detour:** An optional story branch that may or may not be related to the main Encounter. The Narrator or Storyteller reads the Revealed text, and the Heroes discuss and make a majority “yes” or “no” vote on whether or not to pursue the Detour. In the event of a tie, the Narrator or Storyteller makes the final decision.

- ◆ **Expanded Dialogue Crossroad:** An optional story branch that gives the Heroes the opportunity to interact with a specific Character. In each Crossroad, the Heroes can ask about a specified number of Dialogue Paths, which they select through a Standard Vote. The responses they receive are based on their level of Trust with the Character. For an example of an Expanded Dialogue Crossroad, see the Downloadable Support Pack for *The Songweave Tapestry* Campaign at emberwindgame.com/campaigns/songweave-tapestry.
- ◆ **Departure:** An optional story branch that has a major effect on the story, or leaves the current plot entirely. Players decide as a group if they want to embark on a Departure. If they do, it will be up to the Storyteller to create the story from that point on. In *EMBERWIND* Campaigns, Departures are listed in the Storyteller Section for each Encounter.
- ◆ **Path Challenge:** A Path Challenge requires one or more Heroes to overcome an obstacle to achieve a desired result. A Path Challenge in the Revealed section is read aloud to the party. Each Outcome specifies the number of Heroes who need to succeed at a Skill Check for the party to achieve it. Players attempt the Path Challenge after they choose a Path, making the appropriate rolls and reading the Outcome that matches the results.
- ⊠ **Skill Check:** Some Crossroads have a Path Challenge that requires a Skill Check. A Skill Check specifies the Skill used and the number of Heroes allowed to attempt it. Players decide among themselves who will attempt the Skill Check. To make a Skill Check, roll 1d20. You succeed if the result is less than or equal to your Hero's Skill Value for the relevant Skill.
- ⊠ **Difficult Circumstance:** Indicates increased difficulty on a Check, and is applied as a modifier to all Roll Results made while navigating a Path Challenge.
- ⊠ **Advantage and Disadvantage:** Sometimes a Hero has an edge on a Skill Check due to specialized knowledge, a pre-existing relationship with another character, or another reason tied to their backstory. This edge is called **Advantage**. When your Hero has Advantage, roll an additional 1d20 and select the better of the 2 Roll Results for your Skill Check. If your Hero has multiple Stacks of Advantage, roll that many additional d20 and select the best Roll Result. **Disadvantage** is the opposite of Advantage. If your Hero has Stacks of Disadvantage, roll that many additional d20 and take the worst Roll Result.
 - **Stacking Advantage and Disadvantage:** When multiple sources of Advantage and/or Disadvantage are applied to a Check, add all Stacks of Advantage before subtracting all Stacks of Disadvantage. If Anchors are listed under “Stacks of Advantage” on a Path, each Hero gains 1 Stack of Advantage for each listed Anchor they have. If the result is positive, you have that many Stacks of Advantage. If the result is negative, you have that many Stacks of Disadvantage. If the result is 0, the Stacks cancel out.
- ◆ **Path Restriction:** A Path Restriction marks a Path that can only be chosen if particular conditions are met.

- ◆ **Voting:** Crossroad Encounters include some form of vote. Votes are resolved by majority unless otherwise specified. All votes are treated equally, and your party reads the Hidden Outcome of the Path that received the greatest number of votes. In the event of a tie, the Narrator or the Storyteller selects one of the tied Paths as the party's final choice.
- α **Standard Vote:** In a Standard Vote, the party takes time to discuss their options. After deliberation, each player announces their vote for the Path they want the Heroes to take.
- α **Snap Vote:** In a Snap Vote, the Heroes have limited time to make a decision. As soon as the Narrator has finished reading the Paths, players vote simultaneously, and may not discuss their choices. All players vote by placing and covering a d6 on the table with the number of their vote facing up (1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, etc.).

DEPARTURES

Recommended for Storytellers only.

Sometimes players want to leave the beaten path of a scripted Campaign and pursue an unscripted story of their own making. They will need the services of a Storyteller to continue their adventure.

Departures are brief plot descriptions that provide a Storyteller with suggestions for story hooks and other content that will allow them to stay one step ahead of the party once they leave the Campaign behind. Departures are found in the Storyteller Section of each Campaign book and are only available in games with a Storyteller. The Storyteller can present the players with a possible Departure at any time, at which point it is up to the Heroes to decide whether or not they wish to pursue it.

Working a Departure into your current game is a challenge for any Storyteller, but it can also lead to the most incredible stories. Storytellers should make sure they are ready for this challenge before allowing the Heroes to depart from the main Campaign.

ALTERNATE ROLE-PLAYING SYSTEMS

Custom Content Only

If your playing group decides to leave behind the structured playing content, they may also use an **Alternate Role-Playing System** to customize their game experience.

- ◆ **[Semi-Structured] Skill Check System:** During a roleplaying encounter, the Storyteller specifies the Skill the Hero is using (and any relevant bonuses or penalties). The Hero must then make a Skill Check against their Skill Value using 1d20. They succeed if the result is less than or equal to their Hero's Skill Value.
- ◆ **[Semi-Structured] Deck of Fates System:** Instead of dice, this system uses a printable PDF deck of "Success" and "Failure" cards (or a standard 52-card deck of playing cards using black cards for "Success" and red cards for "Failure"). The Storyteller determines the Skill the Hero is using and counts a number of "Success" cards equal to their Skill Value. Then they add enough "Failure" cards to create a deck of 20 cards in total. For example, a Hero with 16 in Fast-Talk will have 16 "Success" cards and 4 "Failure" cards. The Storyteller and Hero role-play the scene, adding a "Success" card to the base deck each time the player's role-play supports their goal, or a "Failure" card each time their role-play does the opposite, until they reach a natural conclusion. The Storyteller then shuffles the deck and the Hero draws 1 card to determine whether the overall exchange was successful. For a printable PDF deck and more information, visit emberwindgame.com/game/resources.

- ◆ **[Free-Form] Free Role-Play:** A chanceless system that emphasizes role-playing by simply having the players say whatever they decide their Heroes do. While this technically isn't much of a "system," for a group of skilled role-players who just want to have fun telling an exciting group story without adding a lot of paperwork and dice rolling, it can still be an engaging, fun experience.
- ◆ **Other Modules:** Other systems to replace or complement those listed will continue to be made available at emberwindgame.com/resources.

PLAYING WITH HERO INJURIES

Significant injuries and scrapes with death can take a lasting toll on both mind and body. Parties may choose to reflect the experiences of their Heroes in their role-play and/or gameplay.

This is strictly optional, and should never be done without the consent of the full party. When approached respectfully, role-playing injury, trauma, and disability can deepen storytelling and interpersonal empathy, but a role-playing exercise can never fully capture the complexity of a real person's lived experience. It is easy to misrepresent real experiences with trauma and disability and players may cause harm in doing so. It is therefore recommended that players be conscientious, dedicate time to research the material they will be role-playing, and be aware of the comfort other players—especially those with relevant lived experience.

- ◆ **Role-Play Variant - Recording Injuries:** Every time a Hero's HP reaches 0 and they becomes **FALLEN** (see the Comprehensive Combat Rules module at emberwindgame.com/game/resources), they sustain a serious injury. Heroes may damage or even lose hands, feet, limbs, eyes, ears, or any other body part that might be targeted by their

Foes. ("Yeah, that blasted riftslip fox chewed my hand up good. Took me a while to get used to throwing knives with a finger missing.") The effects of an injury do not affect your Hero's statistics and modifiers, but may inform your physical description and your interactions with other characters or the game world.

- ◆ **Combat/Crossroad Mechanic Variant - Deep Wounds:** Whenever a Hero becomes **FALLEN**, they suffer a **Deep Wound**. Each Deep Wound temporarily reduces Max HP by 10%. Deep Wounds are removed when the Hero takes a long rest to recover. The length of a long rest is at the discretion of the Storyteller, and should be suited to the severity of the injury and the resources available for recovery. A long rest could range from a full overnight sleep under restful conditions to multiple days of convalescence.

PLAYING WITH HERO DEATH

In *EMBERWIND*, the **FALLEN** state allows Heroes to survive becoming incapacitated in Combat. Rather than dying and a player having to sit out and generate a new Hero, a **FALLEN** Hero rejoins the party at the end of a victorious Combat Encounter. However, for a more immersive experience, the Heroes and Storyteller can adopt alternate rules if all players discuss and agree to them:

- ◆ **Combat Mechanic Variant - Dying in Combat:** Heroes die permanently if they remain **FALLEN** for 3 consecutive Rounds of Combat or become **FALLEN** 3 times within the same Campaign.
- ◆ **General Mechanic Variant - Death Hazards:** While the rules state a Hero cannot be pushed off the Battlefield, you may choose to remove this rule and allow instant death hazards, like falling off

the Sparkstone Steps. Death hazards can occur during Crossroad Encounters as well.