# Tango RPG System

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## WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A role-playing game, or RPG, is a shared storytelling experience. You and your friends get together and create an open-ended story, more like a television series than a movie. One person becomes the narrator, setting the stage and creating challenges for the players. Everyone else creates characters, heroes who go on adventures.

## WHAT IS AN RPG SYSTEM?

An RPG system is the set of rules the game uses to build characters, set challenges, and otherwise govern the world. Players can choose what their characters are going to be like, their strengths and weaknesses, and the narrator uses the same rules to determine the difficulty of various tasks that come up during the story. One player might decide to make a very strong character, which means they are more likely to climb a sheer cliff the narrator has determined is very difficult to get up.

## WHAT IS TANGO?

Tango is a very simple role-playing system that can be adapted to any genre. It has a modular design that allows for just about any degree of customization. It's intended to be light and quick, allowing narrators to easily generate adventures and letting players whip up characters in just a few minutes so they can get right to the action.

## WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

Tango uses all the classic gaming dice: four (**d4**), six (**d6**), eight (**d8**), ten (**d10**), twelve (**d12**), and twenty-sided (**d20**). If you don't have the proper dice, you can use a random number generating system or a smartphone dice app. For character sheets, you really just need a scrap of paper.

## ATTRIBUTES

Your character has four attributes: **strength**, **dexterity**, **intelligence**, and **charisma**. They are rated from **d4** to **d12**. This is the die you roll when you attempt a challenge related to that attribute. For example, if you wanted to jump across a pit, you would roll your **strength** die, as that attribute governs athletics. The narrator could also decide that **dexterity** is appropriate for jumping over pits, too.

> **Strength** is the measure of a character's physical might and athleticism as well as their durability and stamina. It's important for melee weapons as well as resisting damage.
>
> **Dexterity** includes hand-eye coordination, balance, reflexes, and agility. It's important for ranged weapons, initiative, and avoiding attacks.
>
> **Intelligence** covers everything from reason and memory to perception and willpower. It's important for healing, repairing, initiative, and researching adventures.
>
> **Charisma** determines how well a character is able to deceive, intimidate, persuade, or seduce others. It's important for rallying your team, taunting or misdirecting enemies, and negotiating with others.

## ADVANCEMENT

You begin with one attribute at **d8**, one at **d6**, and two at **d4**. After completing an adventure, you may raise one attribute by a die value, up to a maximum of **d12**.

## CHALLENGES

Whenever a character attempts to overcome a challenge, they must roll the appropriate attribute against the difficulty set by the narrator. Unlike traditional RPGs, the difficulty of a task is always rolled by the narrator instead of being a static number. Difficulties can be as low as **d4** or as high as **d20**.

- If you roll higher than the narrator, you succeed, but if you roll lower, you fail.

- If you roll a natural **1** and fail, you might also suffer some extra drawback or penalty, such as dropping your weapon, losing your footing, or running out of ammunition.

- If you match the narrator's roll, you achieve partial success or success with some drawback. For example, you might succeed, but it takes longer than it normally would, makes a lot of noise, breaks a piece of equipment, or causes disadvantage on a subsequent roll. The exact effects of partial success are up to the narrator and could include difficult choices for you.

- If you roll the maximum on your die, you may trade the result to roll the next higher die, though you must accept whatever that result is, even if it's lower than your original roll.

## ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

If you have an advantage, you roll two dice and take the higher result. If you have disadvantage, you roll two dice and take the lower result. Advantages and disadvantages do not stack, but they do cancel each other out.

## HELPING

You may attempt to help an ally on a challenge by making the same roll they're attempting. If you roll an **even** number, you provide them with a **+1** bonus on their roll; however, if you roll a natural **1**, you subtract **-1** from their roll.

## INITIATIVE

When combat begins, you roll **dexterity** or **intelligence** against the enemies; the highest roll determines which side goes first. Thereafter, the sides take turns acting together. If one side surprises the other, they have advantage on their initiative rolls. If you have time to prepare for an upcoming battle, you can roll **charisma** against the enemies to give your side advantage on initiative rolls.

## ACTIONS

Each combatant gets one action per turn, which could be an attack, move, using equipment, or just about anything else. You can move and make a melee attack with one action.

During battle, you can spend your action to help an ally with their melee attack or defense against a melee attack by using your action to assist them. You must be close to your ally to accomplish this. The one exception to this is **charisma**, which can be used to help any nearby ally.

You can roll **charisma** to taunt an enemy, forcing it to attack you until another character attacks it, or misdirect it, preventing it from attacking you until you attack it. If your team outnumbers all remaining minions, you can roll **charisma** against them to intimidate them into fleeing if they're able or surrendering if not.

## WEAPONS

Melee weapon attacks use **strength** to attack and cause wounds. Ranged weapon attacks use **dexterity** to attack and cause wounds, but throwing weapons use **dexterity** to attack and **strength** to cause wounds.

Two-handed melee weapons give advantage on **strength** rolls to cause wounds.

Using two one-handed melee weapons gives advantage on attack rolls.

Throwing weapons can hit close or nearby targets and only require one hand to use. A throwing weapon can be used as a melee weapon, but has disadvantage when doing so.

Ranged weapons can hit close, nearby, or far away targets, but have disadvantage against close targets. You must spend an action to reload a ranged weapon, though each genre or setting's weapons will have different clip sizes, which determines how often they must be reloaded. Most ranged weapons require two hands to properly use, though some settings include one-handed ranged weapons, such as pistols that can only be used to attack nearby targets.

Unarmed attacks have disadvantage on attacking and causing wounds, but can use either **strength** or **dexterity**.

Using a weapon in a way other than its intended purpose, or using an improvised weapon, gives disadvantage on attack and damage rolls.

## ARMOR

Armor gives advantage on **strength** rolls to avoid wounds, but gives disadvantage on all **dexterity** rolls.

Shields give advantage on **dexterity** rolls to avoid attacks, but require one hand to use.

Some attacks and the wounds they cause ignore armor and cannot be avoided using a shield, such as mind-affecting spells, poison gas, siege weaponry, or fire.

## ENHANCED WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Depending on the genre and setting, enhanced weapons and armor could take the form of prototype science fiction technology to magical fantasy armaments. While this equipment is better than normal items, it never manifests in numerical bonuses or advantage on dice rolls. Instead, enhanced weapons and armor

provides new abilities, like a suit of sealed power armor that can also function as an EVA suit or an enchanted sword that can harm undead who are immune to normal weapons. A good rule of thumb to follow is this: If an enhanced weapon or armor would only give a small numerical bonus on rolls using it, it doesn't need to be an enhanced item.

## WOUNDS

Whenever you get hit by an enemy or anything else that could harm you, roll **strength** against it to determine if you are wounded.

Each wound causes an attribute of your choice to gain disadvantage. When all your attributes have disadvantage, you are unconscious. If your whole team is unconscious, they are defeated and at the mercy of whatever enemies or hazards bested them. After each battle, unconscious characters wake up, but unless they receive healing, a single wound will immediately knock them unconscious again.

You may avoid taking a wound by allowing your armor or shield to become broken and nonfunctional.

## HEALING

Once per scene, **intelligence** against **d6** can be rolled once per character to heal a wound, but you have disadvantage on the roll if you attempt to heal yourself. You always heal one wound every day after resting.

## RANGES

There are three relative ranges: close, near, and far. Think of these as distances between important places in the battle, not the actual number of units between participants. Changing your range to a target might require a roll as part of the action, such as using **strength** to climb up a wall, **dexterity** to squeeze through a narrow opening, **intelligence** to navigate a hedge maze, or **charisma** to weave through a crowd.

Close range means that characters can touch one another and engage in melee combat. Everyone in an elevator would be considered close to one another.

Being near others means you can attack with short range weapons or approach them with one action, changing your range to close. Everyone in a tavern would be considered near each other, while two people behind the bar would be close to each other.

Characters that are far away from each other require multiple actions to approach and can only be targeted by ranged weapons. Characters on the other side of a river would be considered far from each other, while all the people on one of the shores would be near each other, and the people in a rowboat making its way across would be close to each other.

## MOVEMENT

You can move one range increment as an action and might require a roll, such as climbing a steep hill, jumping between rooftops, or squeezing through a narrow crevice. You can also move and make a melee attack as one action, so long as you don't need to make a roll during your movement.

Having cover gives you advantage on **dexterity** rolls to avoid ranged or throwing weapon attacks.

## ENEMIES

Enemies and other hazards are ranked from **d4** to **d20**. Minor enemies are defeated by a single wound, but major enemies can suffer multiple wounds, degrading by a die size with each one. For example, a **d4** goblin would be defeated by the first wound it suffers, but a **d10** ogre could endure four wounds, its die being reduced to **d8**, then **d6**, and finally **d4**, with the last wound defeating it. Elite enemies are even stronger, able to endure several wounds without their die being reduced after each one.

Some enemies have advantage or disadvantage on certain rolls. For example, an armored ogre might have advantage when resisting wounds, while a hunting dog might have advantage when tracking by scent. Similarly, some enemies could have disadvantage on rolls, like an iron golem trying to swim or an illiterate guard trying to identify forged documents.

In some cases, enemies could have special abilities, such as flight, invisibility, or fiery breath. The specific rules for each of these powers should be determined by the narrator for each enemy, though you could learn about an enemy's special powers before encountering them with an **intelligence** roll (see Adventures and Rewards).

## DEFENSES

When an enemy attacks you, roll **dexterity** to avoid it. If you get hit, roll **strength** to avoid taking a wound. When you attack an enemy, roll your **strength** or **dexterity** against its defense. If you hit, roll the relevant attribute to determine if you cause a wound.

Some situations might also call for rolling other attributes as defenses, such as **charisma** to resist fear, **intelligence** to avoid misdirection.

## EQUIPMENT

You begin with three pieces of equipment, including weapons, armor, and kits. You may carry up to five pieces of equipment.

Ranged and throwing weapons usually do not require ammunition, though some settings benefit from strictly tracking it, such as post-apocalyptic eras.

Kits give advantage on rolls for non-combat challenges, such as using a rope for **strength** rolls to climb, lockpicks for **dexterity** rolls to unlock doors, lore books for **intelligence** rolls to identify monsters, or fine clothing for **charisma** rolls to influence nobles.

Broken equipment can be repaired in the field by rolling **intelligence** against **d8**, or at a settlement for **1** wealth if that roll fails. Attempting to repair broken equipment without the proper tools or materials gives disadvantage on the roll.

## WEALTH

Your team begins with a wealth value of **1**. Small increases or decreases in wealth are not tracked, so finding a handful of coppers on some dead goblins or tipping a few credits at the space station bar don't affect it.

Different genres and settings with have varying costs for equipment, determined by the narrator. For example, guns might be common and cheap in a contemporary setting, common but expensive in a science fiction world, and very rare and only available for barter in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Some genres and settings might not even use traditional wealth, instead relying on a "scrap" system (for post-apocalyptic wastelands) or "rank" (for space explorers).

## ADVENTURES

You increase your attributes and earn wealth by completing adventures, which usually begin in settlements. Rolling **intelligence** against **d8** reveals some detail about the adventure, such as what type of enemies you might face or what kits could be useful. Rolling **charisma** against **d8** increases the wealth reward by **1**. Each character may attempt each of these rolls once per adventure.

## REWARDS

A successful adventure always increases your team's wealth by at least **1**. You could earn a variety of other, less-tangible rewards, too, things like allies, fame, or titles. Of course, you could also find new equipment depending on what types of challenges and enemies you faced during the adventure.

## VEHICLES

Vehicles have four attributes: maneuverability, speed, armor, and weaponry, rated from **d4** to **d12**. Whenever a character makes a roll using a vehicle, they roll both their relevant attribute as well as the vehicle's and take the highest result. For example, a character driving a race car would roll their **dexterity** and the car's speed, and their final result would be the highest of both.

Vehicles use weaponry to make attacks, maneuverability to avoid them, armor to resist damage, and speed to adjust range. They can usually only attack close targets via ramming, unless modified with ranged weapons. Some special types of vehicles might not have certain attributes at all. For example, a train has no maneuverability and a jetpack might not have armor or weaponry.

A vehicle can be damaged four times, each time causing one of its attributes disadvantage until repaired. When all four of a vehicle's attributes are damaged, it is disabled. If it suffers damage while disabled, it is completely destroyed. Vehicles with fewer than four attributes could have other damage thresholds. A train might have one or two per car, while a jetpack could not have any at all (with all hits being applied to the pilot).

## UPGRADES

A vehicle can be upgraded by increasing its attributes or by adding modifications that give it special abilities. A modification gives a vehicle advantage on one attribute in a specific situation, such as spikes to improve armor against boarders or a warp drive to improve speed during interplanetary travel. The cost of each upgrade, modification, and attribute repair is determined by the setting.

## GENRES

Tango is adaptable to just about any genre, though some minor alterations to the game are suggested. For example, you might want to revise the list of skills to be appropriate to science fiction, high fantasy, post-apocalyptic, crime noir, superheroes, or pulp adventure. The terminology the system uses can easily match the genre, with "adventures" becoming "missions," "ranged weapons" becoming "guns," "settlements" become "space stations," or "kits" becoming "cybernetics."

## SETTINGS

Your game's setting will also influence how the system works and what terms are used. One high fantasy setting might include dragons as vehicles while another could add custom races other than human for players to choose from. The equipment available to players will vary as well, and not just the list of options; some settings might call for fragile gear that's difficult to repair, while another might add consumable potions that heal wounds.

## OPTIONAL RULE: Talents

When you advance, you can choose one of the following talents instead of raising an attribute. The narrator might also allow each character to choose one talent at the start of the game.

**Burly**: You don't have disadvantage on **dexterity** rolls to avoid attacks while wearing armor.

**Calm**: You don't have disadvantage when using a ranged weapon to attack a close target.

**Courageous**: You can roll **charisma** to gain advantage on initiative rolls even when surprised.

**Deft**: You can use **dexterity** for attack rolls with one-handed weapons.

**Gentle**: If you succeed on an **intelligence** roll to heal wounds with an even number, you heal two wounds.

**Handy**: You only need to roll **intelligence** against **d6** to repair broken equipment.

**Hasty**: You can reload a ranged weapon without using an action.

**Helpful**: You don't subtract **-1** from an ally's roll when you roll a natural **1** while helping.

**Nimble**: You can move and make a ranged or throwing weapon attack as one action.

**Precise**: You can help a nearby ally in combat with a ranged or throwing weapon.

**Rugged**: You don't have disadvantage when healing your own wounds.

**Shrewd**: You can roll **charisma** twice to increase the wealth reward for an adventure by up to **2**.

**Studious**: You can roll **intelligence** up to three times to learn as many details about an adventure.

**Tireless**: You can carry up to seven pieces of equipment.

**Trained**: You don't have disadvantage with unarmed attacks. If you gain advantage with an unarmed attack, you don't have disadvantage on damage rolls, either.

**Wily**: You don't have disadvantage when using a throwing weapon as a melee weapon. You can use either **strength** or **dexterity** for attack and damage rolls with throwing weapons.

## OPTIONAL RULE: SKILLS

Whenever you try to overcome a challenge, you roll the relevant attribute and skill dice, taking the highest result. You begin the game with one skill at **d6** and three at **d4**. Note that some genres and settings could have very different skill lists.

**Contemporary**: academics, acrobatics, animals, athletics, deception, drive, endurance, intimidation, larceny, mechanics, medicine, performance, persuasion, stealth, strategy, streetwise, survival

**Science Fiction**: academics, acrobatics, athletics, deception, endurance, intimidation, medicine, navigation, performance, persuasion, planetology, security, stealth, strategy, streetwise, technology, xenobiology

**Fantasy**: academics, acrobatics, alchemy, animals, athletics, deception, endurance, herbalism, intimidation, nature, performance, persuasion, spellcraft, stealth, strategy, streetwise, thievery