

2ND EDITION

# FANTASY AGE

## CORE RULEBOOK



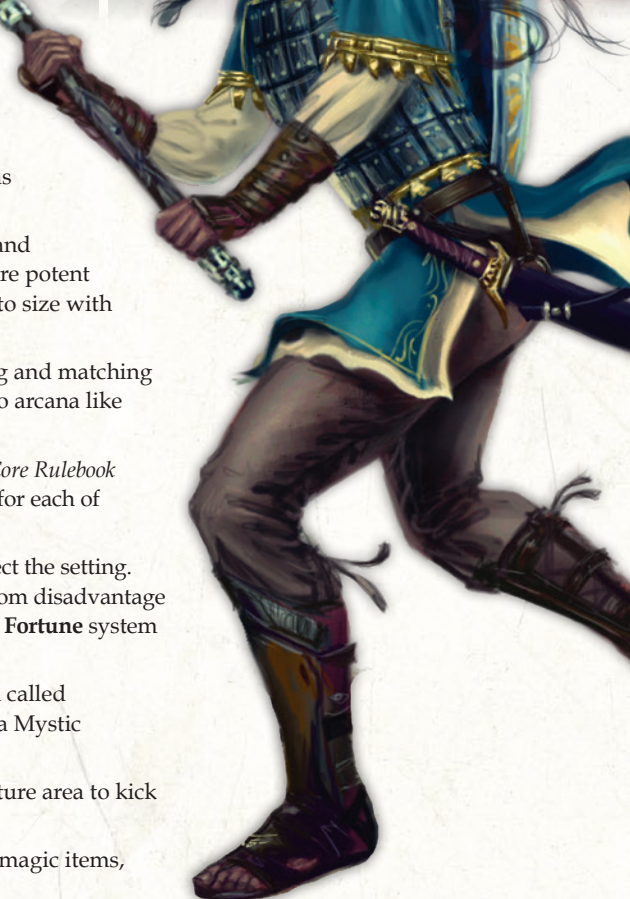
STEVE KENSON, CHRIS PRAMAS,  
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**L**eap into sword & sorcery RPG adventures with the *Fantasy AGE Core Rulebook*! Powered by the popular Adventure Game Engine, *Fantasy AGE 2nd Edition* is easy to learn, fun to play, and welcoming to new roleplayers. The *Fantasy AGE Core Rulebook* includes these features:

- **SIMPLE CHARACTER CREATION:** Pick an ancestry (such as draak, dwarf, goblin, or wildfolk), pick a class (envoy, mage, rogue, or warrior), pick a specialization (such as duelist, diplomat, pirate, and sword mage), and jump into the action.
- **HEROIC STUNTS:** The heart of the game is the stunt system, which brings dynamism and drama to the table. Roll doubles on 3d6 to pull off unexpected moves in combat, cast more potent spells, perform amazing feats of physical and mental prowess, or even cut a rival down to size with a few clever words.
- **MIGHTY MAGIC:** Spell casters learn arcana, which are themed groups of spells. Mixing and matching the 19 arcana gives the mage class a huge amount of flexibility. To get started, choose two arcana like Beast, Cold, Death, Earth, Fate, Fire, Healing, Protection, Mind, and Shadow.
- **GAME MASTER GUIDANCE:** If you are new to RPGs or have never GMed before, the *Core Rulebook* breaks it all down for you. Not just GM advice but practicalities as well. There's guidance for each of the GM's four roles: Game Planner, Game Host, Game Runner, and Game Moderator.
- **CUSTOMIZABLE RULES:** The GM can use optional rules for the campaign to better reflect the setting. Choices include the twin systems of **Peril** and **Daring**, which allow for dramatic swings from disadvantage to advantage as the tension builds. **Horror** rules can give the campaign a sinister turn. The **Fortune** system turns Health into a combination of resilience and luck that can influence outcomes.
- **THE STRANGER SHORES:** The *Core Rulebook* introduces a campaign setting of its own called **Stranger Shores**. Brave the Deeps, which have been the doom of many a ship. Sail with a Mystic Navigator to travel to distant lands.
- **BREAKWATER BAY:** Enter the Stranger Shores with **Breakwater Bay**, a starting adventure area to kick off your campaign. The book includes *Set Sail for Breakwater Bay*, a complete adventure.
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EDITION



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CREDITS.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
FOREWORD.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4

## PLAYER'S SECTION

<b>1: CHARACTER CREATION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
MAKING A CHARACTER	
IN 9 EASY STEPS.....	10
CHARACTER CONCEPT.....	11
ABILITIES.....	11
Determining Abilities.....	11
Ability Focuses.....	12
ANCESTRY.....	13
Ancestry Benefits.....	13
Draak.....	14
Dwarf.....	15
Elf.....	16
Gnome.....	17
Goblin.....	18
Halfling.....	19
Human.....	20
Orc.....	21
Wildfolk.....	22
BACKGROUNDS.....	24
Social Class Descriptions.....	24
Background Descriptions.....	25
CLASSES.....	28
Class Descriptions.....	28
Gaining Levels.....	28
Level Advancement.....	29
Envoy.....	30
Mage.....	32
Rogue.....	34
Warrior.....	36
EQUIPMENT.....	38
Starting Wealth.....	38
DEFENSE AND SPEED.....	38
NAMES.....	39
GOALS AND TIES.....	39
Goals.....	39
Ties.....	39
<b>2: BASIC RULES.....</b>	<b>40</b>
THE BASICS OF PLAY.....	40
Your Character Sheet	
and Other Essentials.....	40
Playing Adventures.....	41
Acting in Character.....	41
THE CORE SYSTEM: ABILITY TESTS.....	41
Types of Targets.....	42
Modifying Dice Rolls.....	44
Tests and Time.....	44
Degrees of Success.....	44
Types of Tests.....	44
MEASURING TIME.....	46
Working with Time.....	46
ACTION TIME.....	47
Actions.....	47
Major Actions.....	48
Minor Actions.....	49
Variable Actions.....	49
COMBAT.....	50
Movement.....	50
Making Attacks.....	51
Inflicting Damage.....	51
Using Defense.....	52
Using Cover.....	52

Attack Rolls & circumstance.....	52
Conditions.....	53
Common Conditions.....	54
Defeat and Death.....	56
Attacking Objects.....	57
Combat Stunts.....	57
SPECIAL SITUATIONS	
IN COMBAT.....	58
Grenades.....	58
Miniatures, Battle Maps, and	
Virtual tabletops.....	59
Vehicles, Mounts, & Combat.....	61
Flying Combatants.....	61
Minor Actions.....	62
Major Actions.....	62
Healing and Recovering.....	62
EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS.....	64
Investigations.....	64
SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS.....	66
Impressions and Attitudes.....	66
Interactions.....	67
<b>3: CHARACTER OPTIONS.....</b>	<b>69</b>
ABILITY FOCUSES.....	69
Double Focuses.....	71
Optional: Trade Focuses.....	71
TALENTS.....	72
Stacking Talent Benefits.....	72
Talent Entry Format.....	72
Talent Name.....	72
Alchemical Explosives.....	72
Animal Training.....	73
Arcane Training.....	73
Archery Style.....	73
Armor Training.....	73
Carousing.....	74
Chirurgy.....	74
Command.....	74
Contacts.....	74
Draak Secrets.....	74
Dual Weapon Style.....	74
Dwarven Secrets.....	75
Elven Secrets.....	75
Firearms Style.....	75
Gnome Secrets.....	75
Goblin Secrets.....	76
Great Endurance.....	76
Halfling Secrets.....	76
Horsemanship.....	76
Human Secrets.....	76
Inspire.....	76
Intrigue.....	77
Linguistics.....	77
Lore.....	77
Mighty Thews.....	78
Mixed Weapon Style.....	78
Mounted Combat Style.....	78
Observation.....	78
Oratory.....	78
Orc Secrets.....	79
Performance.....	79
Pole Weapon Style.....	79
Quick Reflexes.....	79
Scouting.....	79
Single Weapon Style.....	80
Thievery.....	80
Thrown Weapon Style.....	80
Two-Hander Style.....	80

Unarmed Style.....	81
Weapon and Shield Style.....	81
Weapon Training.....	81
Wildfolk Secrets.....	81
SPECIALIZATIONS.....	82
Arcane Disciple.....	82
Arcane Scholar.....	82
Aristocrat.....	83
Aspect Warrior.....	83
Assassin.....	84
Bard.....	84
Berserker.....	84
Champion.....	85
Crime Lord.....	85
Diplomat.....	86
Duelist.....	86
Elementalist.....	86
Gladiator.....	87
Guardian.....	87
Heritage Specializations.....	88
Holy Warrior.....	90
Hunter.....	90
Knight.....	90
Mage Hunter.....	91
Mariner and Pirate.....	91
Marked.....	92
Miracle Worker.....	93
Mystic Navigator.....	93
Necromancer.....	94
Razor.....	94
Sharpshooter.....	95
Skald.....	95
Spy.....	96
Sword Mage.....	96
<b>4: EQUIPMENT.....</b>	<b>97</b>
CURRENCY.....	97
WEAPONS.....	97
ARMOR & SHIELDS.....	101
GRENADES.....	103
TRAVELING & ADVENTURING.....	103
CARRYING & STORAGE.....	105
TOOLS.....	106
CLOTHES & FASHION.....	108
TRADE GOODS &	
RAW MATERIALS.....	109
PROFESSIONAL GEAR.....	110
HOME & HEARTH.....	110
FOOD & LODGING.....	111
BEASTS, TACK, & HARNESS.....	112
<b>5: MAGIC.....</b>	<b>113</b>
ARCANA &	
SPELL TALENTS.....	113
Arcana Focuses.....	114
LEARNING SPELLS.....	114
Learning New Spells.....	114
MAGIC POINTS.....	114
CASTING SPELLS.....	114
Spellcasting in Detail.....	115
Spellpower.....	115
SPELL STUNTS.....	116
DIVINE MAGIC.....	116
Divine Disciples.....	116
Divine Stunts.....	116
Crisis of Faith.....	117
SPELL FORMAT.....	118
ARCANA & SPELLS.....	118
Air Arcana.....	118

Beast Arcana.....	119
Cold Arcana.....	121
Death Arcana.....	123
Divination Arcana.....	125
Earth Arcana.....	127
Enchantment Arcana.....	128
Fate Arcana.....	130
Fire Arcana.....	131
Healing Arcana.....	133
Heroic Arcana.....	134
Illusion Arcana.....	135
Lightning Arcana.....	137
Mind Arcana.....	138
Power Arcana.....	140
Protection Arcana.....	142
Shadow Arcana.....	143
Water Arcana.....	144
Wood Arcana.....	146
MINOR ARCANA.....	148
Learning Minor Arcana.....	148
Casting Minor Arcana.....	148
Sample Minor Arcana.....	148
<b>6: STUNTS.....</b>	<b>149</b>
GENERATING	
STUNT POINTS.....	149
Spending Stunt Points.....	149
Narrating Stunts.....	150
GENERAL	
STUNT SYSTEMS.....	151
Stunt Duration.....	151
Other Stunt Considerations.....	151
BASIC STUNTS.....	152
CLASS STUNTS.....	155
Envoy Stunts.....	155
Mage Stunts.....	156
Rogue Stunts.....	157
Warrior Stunts.....	158

## GAME MASTER'S SECTION

<b>7: THE GAME MASTER.....</b>	<b>160</b>
GAME PLANNER.....	160
GAME HOST.....	166
GAME RUNNER.....	169
GAME MODERATOR.....	175
PERSONAL CHALLENGES.....	175
Rewards.....	175
Challenges and Consent.....	176
Challenges in Play.....	176
RELATIONSHIPS.....	176
Relationship Ranks.....	176
Relationship Bond.....	177
Relationship Intensity.....	178
Relationship Stunt Points.....	178
Unusual Relationships.....	178
Changing Relationships.....	178
<b>8: MASTERING THE RULES.....</b>	<b>179</b>
INVOKING THE RULES.....	179
MASTERING ABILITY TESTS.....	180
Complex Tests.....	181
Cooperation.....	183
Using the Rules Together.....	184
SPECIAL SITUATIONS	
IN COMBAT.....	185
Major and Minor NPCs.....	185
Extras.....	185



# FOREWORD

Welcome to *Fantasy AGE 2nd Edition*! If you are new to the game, this *Core Rulebook* and three 6-sided dice are all you need to get started. With *Fantasy AGE*, you and your friends can embark on exciting roleplaying adventures on a myriad of worlds. From the beginning, *Fantasy AGE* was designed to be a flexible game that you could use with the setting of your choice, be it from your favorite novels, a published campaign setting, or a world of your own design. Green Ronin does offer settings and adventure material, like Breakwater Bay in this book and *Freeport: The City of Adventure*, but you and your friends can take your campaign anywhere you want to go.

The story of *Fantasy AGE* begins in 2008 with our licensed *Dragon Age RPG*. When we made that deal with BioWare, I thought it was a great opportunity to show video gamers the coolness of tabletop RPGs. With that in mind, I designed a new system that I hoped would be easy to learn and fun to play. We dubbed it the Adventure Game Engine (or AGE for short). *Dragon Age* was a big hit for Green Ronin and it didn't take long for folks to ask us if we were planning any more AGE RPGs. In particular, people wanted a more general fantasy game that wasn't tied to the world of Thedas. We released the *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook* in 2015 and that also proved a successful line for us. From there we developed a whole series of AGE games, modifying and adding to the system to better represent different genres and properties. Now, it's become our house system, powering *The Expanse*, *Blue Rose*, *Modern AGE*, *Cthulhu Awakens*, and *Fifth Season* RPGs.

When we started working on the *Fantasy AGE Core Rulebook*, our plan was to make more of a revised rulebook than a new edition. Combine the *Basic Rulebook* and the *Fantasy AGE Companion*, add some new material, and polish it up. Easy, right? Well, no. It was more reminiscent of Hercules trying to defeat the Lernaean Hydra. Cut off one head and two more grow in its place! Last year it became clear that the *Core Rulebook* was more than a revised edition so we officially dubbed it 2nd Edition. We haven't changed the core system (you can, for example, use NPC and monster stats blocks from 1st Edition books without difficulty), but we've expanded the game, added many new options, and tightened up the rules.

The last 15 years have been quite a journey for me, the AGE system, and Green Ronin. I hope the hard work of the creative team translates to fun times on your game table. I'd like to thank everyone who worked to make *Fantasy AGE 2nd Edition* a reality, with particular thanks to Malcolm Sheppard, Steve Kenson, Owen K.C. Stephens, and Ian Lemke for their design and development work. Now the game is yours. Have at it!

Chris Pramas  
March, 2023

Surprise .....	186	Fortune and Damage.....	198	Ogre.....	222	The Town and Its People .....	248
Morale .....	186	Fortune and Luck .....	199	Selkie .....	223	Places of Note .....	250
CHASES .....	186	Recovering Fortune.....	199	Serpentfolk .....	224	EXPLORING KASSA ISLE .....	252
Chase Tests .....	186	Fortune and NPCs.....	199	Spectre.....	225	Places of Note .....	252
Tracking the Chase.....	187	9: ADVERSARIES .....	200	Walking Corpses.....	226	BEYOND THE ISLE.....	256
Relative Speed .....	187	STATISTICS FORMAT .....	200	CUSTOMIZING CREATURES.....	226	The Companions.....	256
Complications.....	187	BEEFING UP ADVERSARIES .....	201	10: REWARDS.....	229	The Trade Ports .....	256
Planning a Chase .....	187	Other NPCs .....	202	LEVEL ADVANCEMENT.....	229	Inmyrk .....	257
Chase Stunts.....	188	Zeroes.....	202	Level Rewards.....	229	TALES FROM THE DRIFTWOOD.....	258
Crashes .....	188	Major NPCs,		Experience Points .....	230	SET SAIL FOR	
Collisions.....	189	Minor NPCs, and Extras ....	202	REPUTATION .....	232	BREAKWATER BAY! .....	259
HAZARDS .....	190	Folk .....	202	Honorifics .....	232	INTRODUCTION.....	259
HORROR.....	191	BEASTS .....	207	TREASURE .....	234	ADVENTURE SUMMARY .....	259
The Horror Test .....	191	MONSTERS.....	212	MAGIC ITEMS.....	234	PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION.....	261
Horror Test Results .....	192	Boneless One.....	212	Rarity of Magic Items .....	234	Scene 1: We're Going Away	
Lost to Horror .....	193	Burrower .....	213	Magic Item Benefits .....	234	to Leave You Now.....	261
PERIL.....	194	Demon, Soldier.....	214	Using Magic Items.....	236	Scene 2: Uninvited Guests ...	264
The Peril Pool.....	194	Dragon.....	214	Temporary Magic Items.....	236	Scene 3: Blow the Man Down	266
Activating Peril .....	194	Deepdread .....	214	Permanent Magic Items.....	238	Scene 4: Sugar in the Hold ...	269
Designing Your Own Effects	195	Elementals .....	216	ARTIFACTS.....	240	Conclusion.....	272
Picking & Describing Effects	195	Ghoul .....	218	Locked Artifacts.....	240	ALLIES & ADVERSARIES.....	273
The Story within the Peril ...	195	Giant .....	218	Tiered Artifacts.....	241	GLOSSARY .....	275
DARING.....	196	Giant Spider .....	218	Artifact Powers.....	241	INDEX .....	277
The Daring Pool .....	196	Gnarlwalker .....	220	Cursed Artifacts .....	244	PERIL & DARING	
Tracking Daring with Dice....	196	Griffon.....	221	Sample Artifacts.....	246	TRACKERS .....	283
Active Dice and		Knifhound .....	221	11: BREAKWATER BAY .....	247	INITIATIVE AND QUICK	
Using the Daring Pool.....	197	Manticore .....	222	SAILORS TO STRANGER SHORES...	247	REFERENCE CARDS .....	284
FORTUNE .....	198	Medusa .....	222	WELCOME TO BREAKWATER .....	248	CHARACTER SHEET .....	286
Fortune Advancements.....	198						





# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Fantasy AGE*, a roleplaying game that lets you be the hero in your own sword & sorcery adventures. In *Fantasy AGE* you and your friends take on the personas of warriors, mages, councilors, and rogues in a fantastical world and try to gain fame by overcoming sinister foes and deadly challenges. Facing down a murderous ogre in ancient cursed ruins, engaging in a duel of wits with a haughty noble, or uncovering the secrets of lost civilizations are all possible. Your character may win renown or you may die alone in the trackless wilderness. Whatever your fate, your story is your own to tell. In *Fantasy AGE*, you make the choices and try to survive the consequences.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

*Fantasy AGE* is what's known as a tabletop roleplaying game (RPG), so named because you usually play while sitting around a table with your friends (though it's also possible to play online with a virtual tabletop or just using your preferred voice chat option). The action is similar to computer roleplaying games. You will play a character who goes on exciting and dangerous adventures in a fantasy world. The difference is that you do it all with your imagination instead of a computer deciding what you can attempt and how those efforts turn out.

One person takes the role of Game Master (GM). The GM presents the story and acts as a referee. Those remaining are the players. Each player makes a character and roleplays them in the ensuing adventures. This relationship should not be adversarial, the GM and players work together to create an enjoyable experience for everyone. If you don't grasp how this works, don't worry. Keep reading, and by the time you finish the introduction, you should understand the basics of tabletop roleplaying and the *Fantasy AGE* RPG.

## GETTING STARTED

The first thing you need is a group of friends to play with, and one of you must take on the role of Game Master, or GM. While you can play with as small a group as one GM and one player, the game works best with one GM and three to five players. It is possible to play with more players, but that can slow down the pace of the game.

The GM has a key position, so try to make sure that he or she really wants the job. Running a game is fun, but it's a different experience than playing. The second half of this book (starting with **CHAPTER 7: THE GAME MASTER**), explains the GM's role in detail. The GM (and only the GM) should read that part of the book. If you are a player, you should only read the first half of the book (Chapters 1–6).

Once you've settled on a GM, everyone else needs to make characters, known as PCs or Player Characters. In *Fantasy AGE*, your character has the potential to become a great hero, but begins as just another hungry adventurer scrabbling for glory. You do not get to start play as a renowned knight or master mage. Those are positions that must be earned, and that's what playing the game is all about.



## WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN FANTASY AGE 2ND EDITION?

Experienced *Fantasy AGE* players and GMs will be wondering what is different between 1st Edition (the *Basic Rulebook* and its supplements) and 2nd edition. There are many small changes throughout, but here are the notable ones.

- In 1st edition, you could play a mage, rogue, or warrior. Now you have a fourth option, the envoy, whose expertise is social situations and group dynamics.
- Player Characters can now take their first Specialization at level 1 instead of level 4.
- Class advancement has been revised to allow Defense improvements and increased damage output as characters gain levels.
- New ancestry talents and heritage specializations let you further define your character's origins.
- The game now includes conditions, such as Fatigued and Stunned, that standardize certain rules effects. Some of these are called Defeat Conditions. Now, when a character or creature drops to 0 Health, the victor can choose what happens to their opponent. They can be knocked unconscious, captured, rendered helpless, etc., so not every fight is lethal.
- Each class now has its own stunt list, and you gain these stunts individually as you go up in level. Basic stunts are those anyone can use.
- Mages can now "push" a spell on a failed spellcasting test to successfully cast it anyway, and only lose half their Magic Points should they opt to have the spell fizzle out regardless.
- In talents and specializations, the Journeyman degree is now called Expert, so the three degrees are Novice, Expert, and Master.
- Rules subsystems we developed for other AGE games have been revised for *Fantasy AGE* and offered as options. You can use the Fortune system from *The Expanse* instead of Health, for example. The Churn from *The Expanse* is offered as Daring here, and it's complemented by a new Peril system. There are also optional horror rules.
- The following talents and specializations have been renamed: Alchemy is now Alchemical Explosives, Arcane Dabbler is now Arcane Disciple, and Totem Warrior is now Aspect Warrior.
- The Drinking focus is now Tolerance. Slings was added as a focus because it's also a new weapon group.

Your character is your primary responsibility as a player in an RPG. This is your alter ego in the fantasy world where your adventures takes place. Over the course of many game sessions, your character grows and changes, but every hero needs a starting point. That is exactly what **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION** provides, walking you through creating not only game stats—the abilities and corresponding numbers that tell you what your character is good at—but also a character concept, starting goals, and ties to other Player Characters. Once play begins, the portrayal and development of your character is all up to you. Playing your character, achieving goals, and navigating the perils of a fantasy world—this is the fun of playing an RPG.

## PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

Here are some basics on playing tabletop roleplaying games.

### "WHAT DO YOU DO?"

When playing an RPG, that's the question you must ask yourself all the time. The Game Master will describes a situation, framing a scene for one or more of the Player Characters. It is then up to you to decide what your character does and why. You tell the GM what you want to do, as do the other players, and then you all work out what happens. Sometimes, you use dice to resolve actions. Other times, you simply interact with the other players and the characters portrayed by the GM, which are known as Non-Player Characters, or NPCs.

### "WHO ARE YOU?"

This is the question to keep in mind when making decisions. When you create your character, you decide on some traits and goals as a starting point. You can then flesh out your PC, and there are two basic approaches to this. The first is to paint your character in a few broad strokes and then jump right in to playing. The intention here is to come up with details about your character during play, often by using the springboard of the current adventure to create touchstones to your character's past. This is a common storytelling technique and a perfectly valid approach if you don't want to spend a lot of time working on your character before starting play. The second approach is to come up with a lot of details and role-playing ideas before the first session. If you can come to the table with a good idea of who your character is before the first die is rolled, that can help get the game going.

However you approach your character, playing the game helps you refine your ideas. After you have played your character for a while, you should have a strong sense of personality and an intuitive sense of what your character would do in a particular situation. Of course, not all situations present easy choices. It is from difficult choices that tension and drama emerge.

## ADVENTURE, CAMPAIGN, AND SETTING

An adventure is a discrete story and scenario in an RPG. You can think of it as a single novel or an episode of a TV show.



There may be several plot threads, but in the end it tells one story. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that you have authorship. The decisions made by you and your fellow players drive the story to its exciting conclusion.

A campaign is a series of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a novel or TV show, a campaign is a series or a season. Some adventures may have self-contained plots, while others merge together to tell a larger story. During a campaign, the characters of the adventuring group earn experience points and gain levels. Over time they gain more powers and abilities, face greater challenges, and perhaps gain renown for their deeds. A full *Fantasy AGE* campaign will take characters from levels 1 through 20, and provide hundreds of hours of game-play and entertainment.

The game takes place in a fantasy world, though which one is up to your group. There are many worlds to choose from, or you can have the fun of making up your own. Since the world is where your campaign takes place, it is known in RPG parlance as a “campaign setting” or just setting for short. The GM can find out more about them in **CHAPTER 11: The Campaign Setting**.

## EXAMPLE OF PLAY

What follows is an example of play with four characters. This should give you an idea of what a game of *Fantasy AGE* is like. You’ll note various points where the example refers to dice rolling and its results. You don’t need to worry about the particulars of that right now. Just follow along with the action and see how the GM uses the rolls to test the skill of the characters.

In this example Malcolm is the Game Master (GM). Kate is playing an elf Rogue named Najah, Nicole is playing a human Warrior named Brigitte, Troy is playing a draak Envoy named Hraz, and Chris is playing a gnome Mage named Varuker.

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You’ve been traveling for several hours under the hot midday sun. The road passes through a small forest and for a few minutes at least you find some respite in the shade the trees provide. As you emerge on the other side of the forest, you see a caravan up ahead. It is not moving, but neither has it set up camp.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *Do I see any guards around the caravan?*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Make a Perception (Seeing) test and tell me your result.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *[Rolls dice] I got a 13.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Good roll. Your eyes quickly adjust to the sunlight and you scan the caravan. You see many carts and wagons but no people. The only things moving are the draft animals and they seem restless.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *This doesn’t look good. I want to take a closer look.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Just you, or are you all going?*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *Let’s all go. If this is a trap, better to be together than separated.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *Why don’t you three go straight up the road and I’ll swing around the right side and approach from there. I’ll try to move quietly, crouched down with my bow out.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *My two-handed axe is at the ready and I’m heading straight up the road.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *I stay behind the warrior and keep an eye on the woods as we advance. We don’t need any surprises from that direction.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *And I stay behind the mage, and keep an eye out behind us.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You approach the caravan and no threats emerge. When you get close, you see the bodies. There are at least six corpses spread out around the carts. They look like a group of draak and dwarves.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *That seems strange.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *Not really. Stories of draak and dwarves being at odds are greatly overstated. They often work together to buy and sell all over.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *How did they die? Do I see any arrows sticking from the corpses?*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *Or signs of fire or other magic attacks?*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You can try to figure that out with a Perception (Seeing) test or an Intelligence (Healing) test.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *I have Healing, so I’ll try that... but with my famously bad luck I got a total of 9. Not a great roll.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *I’m better at Perception so I’ll stick with that. [Rolls dice] Ha, I got a 15 this time.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You approach one of the corpses and look it over. The wounds were not made by weapons. The way the clothing and armor are torn, you’d guess claws. Big claws.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *Do the corpses smell?*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Now that you are closer, yes, they do. The hot sun makes it worse by the minute, too.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *So they’ve been dead for a while, which probably means the attack ended some time ago.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *I don’t see any creatures with claws in the area, so I’m going to move into the caravan and search for survivors.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *I’m going to climb on the one of the carts and use the vantage point to keep an eye on things.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Roll a Perception (Searching) test, Chris.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *[Rolls dice] I got a 9. Not a great roll.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *No, not great. You find more bodies but no survivors.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *Maybe some of the merchants ran away. If I watched my friends get torn open like that, I might hoof it.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *You could be right. I’ll look for tracks. That’s a Perception (Tracking) roll, right?*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *That’s correct.*



**KATE (ROGUE):** *I rolled an 11.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *The tracks are confusing around the caravan. You can see many sets of prints, some dwarf and some from larger bipeds.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *Bipeds with large claws. I don't like the sound of that.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You do find one set of dwarf prints leaving the scene though. Whoever it was seems to have been wounded, as there are drops of blood every few feet. The trail leads off the road and back toward the forest.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *Let's follow it.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *Agreed. I will lead the way.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You follow the trail back into the woods. Maybe 30 feet from the edge you find a dwarf under a fallen log. He looks unconscious and wounded, but alive.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *No time to mess around. I approach the dwarf and cast my Healing Touch spell. I'm using 2 magic points.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *Make your casting roll. As I recall, Heal has a Target Number of 10.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *It does indeed. [Rolls dice] And I got a 12. [Rolls dice again] He gets back 7 Health from the spell.*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *You touch the prone dwarf and the healing magic spreads from your hands. He's lost a lot of blood but the spell revitalizes him and he wakes up with a start.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *I move up to stand by our mage, and say "Easy, friend. You're safe now."*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *The dwarf relaxes a bit and regards the four of you. "Thank you for helping me. Where are the rest of my kin? Or our guards?"*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *You are the only one we've found alive I'm afraid.*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *Can you tell us what happened?*

**MALCOLM (GM):** *"It was the damn caravan master," says the dwarf. "He thought we could save time if we pulled up camp in the middle of the night. I argued with him but he wouldn't listen. I was worried when we passed into those woods but thought we were all right once we made it through. Then they came at us from the shadows—big brutes with claws as big as my head. After I saw three of the guards go down, I made a run for it. One of them caught me in the shoulder with a claw but I kept running. I made it to the woods and hid. After some time the screams and sounds of battle faded, then I passed out. Next thing I saw was you."*

**NICOLE (WARRIOR):** *The size makes me think ogres but that doesn't seem quite right.*

**CHRIS (MAGE):** *No, it doesn't. Ogres are not stealthy and they usually attack with weapons, not claws.*

**TROY (ENVOY):** *Monstrous bears, perhaps? But they wouldn't normally leave bipedal tracks. We've got a mystery on our hands.*

**KATE (ROGUE):** *As usual! So much for a sunny day of easy travel.*

## THE GROUP DYNAMIC

Much of this book is focused on teaching you the rules and how to make a character. It is important to remember that roleplaying is a group activity. There are two aspects to this: the adventuring group and the player group.

Your character is one member of the adventuring group (also known as a party). Each character in the group has individual goals, but there are also larger group goals. The characters may have their disagreements and even feuds, but for the game to go on they must remain together. The adventures themselves often assure this by their plot and structure, but a good group dynamic can help. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea, for example, to make sure you have at least one character of each class in the group. When working out ties and goals amongst the PCs, you can build in reasons for the characters to adventure together.

The people gaming with you make up the player group and that too has a dynamic. You and your friends are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who fundamentally get along. Roleplaying is meant to be fun for everyone, so be aware of tension around the table. Some players try to make the game all about them, hogging the spotlight and trying to insert themselves in every scene. Don't act that way; everyone deserves a chance to shine, so be ready to take a step back when someone has a good idea or is pursuing something important for their character.

If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions, so it doesn't happen again.

A common problem is a player who is unhappy with their character. Maybe the character doesn't fit into the group well, or maybe the player finds another class preferable after some play experience. This doesn't have to be a problem. It's perfectly fine for a player to make a new character of the same level and retire the old character. It is preferable to do that than to make a player continue to play a character they aren't having fun with.

## BASIC GAME CONCEPTS

Before you delve into the rest of the book, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about all of these things as you read on.

## CHARACTERS

In the *Fantasy AGE* RPG you make a character who may be very much like you, or could be extremely different. In the creation process, you make choices that help define who and what that character is. You can play a human, or someone with a very different ancestry, such as such as draak, dwarf, elf, gnome, goblin, halfling, orc, or wildfolk. Your other most important choice is to pick one of four classes: Envoy, Mage, Rogue, or Warrior. The nine easy steps for creating a character are detailed on page 10, in **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**.



## THE ADVENTURE GAME ENGINE

*Fantasy AGE's* rules system is known as the Adventure Game Engine (or AGE). It was originally designed for the *Dragon Age* RPG, also by Green Ronin Publishing. The AGE System now includes the multi-genre Modern AGE roleplaying game, *Blue Rose: The AGE Roleplaying Game of Romantic Fantasy*, the Mythos horror RPG *Cthulhu Awakens*, *The Expanse* roleplaying game, based on the novels by James S. A. Corey, and the *Fifth Season* RPG, based on the novels by N.K. Jemisin. If you learn *Fantasy AGE*, you can easily learn other AGE games, and even transfer rules and character options between them.



Your class defines the core of your character and determines the powers at your command. Your character begins at level 1 as an inexperienced adventurer. By surviving encounters and overcoming challenges, your PC gains experience points and rises in level. Your character may eventually make it to level 20 and become one of the mightiest heroes of the campaign setting. It won't be easy, though.

### ABILITIES

Your character has nine abilities, such as Intelligence and Strength, and each one has a numeric rating, with 1 being average. When your character wants to do something, the GM may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, you simply roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

$$\text{TEST RESULT} = 3\text{D}6 + \text{ABILITY}$$

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of special expertise. Once you determine your test result, the GM will let you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens.

Your character also has a Health rating. When damage is inflicted, this reduces Health. If it reaches 0, your character may die.

### STUNTS

In an encounter, your character can perform stunts. When doubles are rolled on a successful attack roll or ability test, this generates "stunt points." You can then use these points to pull off a number of special maneuvers or actions. Stunts are common enough to help keep combat dynamic and fun. There are also exploration stunts, which impact groups traveling (especially through the unknown, ruins, or wilderness); social stunts, which come into play when interacting primarily through conversation and discussion; and spell stunts, which let Mages enhance their spells. Many stunts are available to any character, while other stunts are available for characters to select from their character class as they gain levels.

### GAME DICE

*Fantasy AGE* only uses one type of dice: the six-sided die, also known as the d6. This is the most common die and it can be found in many classic boardgames if you need to scrounge for some. In general, dice are rolled four different ways in *Fantasy AGE*:

- **1d3:** Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1–3. In that case you roll a d6 but halve the result, so a roll of 1–2 = 1, a roll of 3–4 = 2, and a roll of 5–6 = 3.
- **1d6:** You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, such as "1d6 + 3." In that case, just add the modifier to the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of 3 to get a result of 5.
- **2d6:** As above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.
- **3d6:** As above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an ability test, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color. That third die is known as the Stunt Die, and it's important. The result of the Stunt Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.

### WHERE NEXT?

If you are a player, CHAPTERS 1–6 are for you. They provide the key information you need to know about the game. When you are ready to make a character, go to CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION. That will explain the process and get you going. If you are the Game Master, you should familiarize yourself with these chapters as well, as they contain the core rules of the game. You should then move on to CHAPTERS 7–12. They explain your unique and important role in a tabletop RPG and give you valuable advice and resources.

You are now ready to enter the world of *Fantasy AGE*. Game on and may fate protect you!

## ADVENTURE AWAITS!