

# The MC: Player Actions

## Special Rules for:

- Arriving *MC-1*
- Attacking Someone *MC-2*
- Moving Into Position *MC-3*
- Getting to Work *MC-4*
- Discovering a Problem *MC-4*
- Using Their Wealth & The Marketplace *MC-5*

## Arrive:

The players have a series of questions for you to answer. Here's how to answer them.

## Your Principles:

- *Choose someplace you can imagine vividly and with confidence.*
- *Choose someplace with hidden depths.*
- *Choose a situation that you personally find interesting.*
- *Care about the people you've invented.*

Always choose thoughtfully, following your principles and your own imagination.

## Their Questions:

- **Where have we arrived?**

Choose 1 of the following:

- *A city-state.*
- *A settlement.*
- *A caravan.*
- *An outpost.*
- *A stronghold.*
- *An oasis.*
- *A countryside.*
- *A ship.*
- *A ruin.*
- *A temple.*
- *A crossing-point.*
- *An ancient crashed space ship.*
- *An underground civilization.*
- *An observatory of the stars.*
- *A battlefield.*
- *A place of your own.*

- **What are the first things we see and hear? What do we notice?**

In order to answer this question, you'll need to decide what's happening here overall:

- *A turf battle.*
- *A celebration, favoring the powerful over the powerless.*
- *An invasion.*
- *A predator, hunting.*
- *A tyrant trying to seize rule.*
- *A religious cult grabbing power.*
- *An unpopular trial for a popular outlaw.*
- *Worrying mysterious disappearances.*
- *Rule passing, but not smoothly, to a new king, queen, regent, or governor.*
- *A fad or fashion in music or imbibation.*
- *Dangerous tremors in the structure of the world.*
- *A new crossing-point beginning to open.*
- *An uprising of the downtrodden against the powerful.*
- *A small mystical order with warnings of doom.*
- *A situation of your own.*

Begin to plan challenges, threats and dangers now too. What are the sides? Who are their advocates, stalwarts, agents, guardians, warriors? What threats or challenges will they exploit?

Given what's going on, what do the characters notice when they arrive?

Then, establish precisely where they are. Imagine a concrete location: a road before a gate, a busy dockyard, a lonely desert way, a forbidding tower. Describe it.

- **Who's here? How do they greet us?**

Choose one side or another. Choose a person or a group of people. Describe them.

What do they want and need from the characters? What do they hope the characters represent in the developing situation here?

Accordingly, how do they greet them?

- **How did we come to be here?**

On foot? On beastback? On a ship? In a caravan or on their own?

If you already know the answer, reiterate it. If you don't, make one up.

- **Which of us are known here?**

Choose 1:

- *None of you. You're all strangers here.*
- *Good question. Are any of you known here?*
- *Name a character or characters, of your choice.*

If any are known here, follow the rules in the action to develop their relationships with the people here.

## Beginning play:

Answer their questions. Ask them questions of your own. Describe as much as you want.

When you're ready: *Who wants to read the situation?*

Now play's underway.

## Attack Someone:

The player describes what they're trying to do and tells you their roll. It's your job to tell them if they can do it, and what happens as a result. Here's how.

### 1. Make sure you're on the same page.

If you have any questions, ask the player. You're not here to play gotcha, so be sure you've honestly told the player exactly what's going on and asked them your honest questions.

Consider their attack from every angle. You might know things about the situation that the players don't.

**If their attack's impossible**, tell them so, and let them go back and make a different attack or choose another action.

**If their attack can't miss** — maybe nothing can stop them, or nobody's trying to, or maybe their enemy's particularly vulnerable to this attack — then don't worry about their roll. Treat it as the best possible, like a 14+.

### 2. What are they up against?

Count up the following factors. You can stop counting when you reach 4.

- *Is their enemy on guard against this attack?*
- *Does their enemy have an advantage over them — size, speed, weaponry, number, intent, or any other?*
- *Does their enemy have not only an advantage, but a significant advantage?*
- *Does their enemy have, in fact, an overwhelming advantage?*

What about their enemy's allies?

- *Does their enemy have allies who can step in? Are they on guard?*
- *Do they have an advantage over the PC(s)?*
- *Do they have a significant advantage?*
- *Do they have an overwhelming advantage?*

### 3. How good is their roll, really?

Your Count		Their Roll	
0	2–6	7–8	9+
1	2–6	7–9	10+
2	2–6	7–10	11+
3	2–6	7–11	12+
4	2–6	7–12	13+
The Outcome:	Say how they misjudge, misstep, or are interrupted.	Say how their enemy blocks, dodges, or shrugs it off.	Say how their enemy succumbs or survives.

Note that to roll 13+, they must push themselves, or someone else must help them.

### 4. Choose the outcome.

I know that you're already considering the attack from every angle. Choose the outcome thoughtfully, making the best individual choice you can in every unique situation.

#### • They misjudge or misstep:

Say what they've misjudged or how they misstep, and how things go wrong as a result.

If you don't have an idea that you like better, consider having their misjudgment or misstep cost them their position. Now they're exposed, they have their enemy's attention, or they've given up their advantage.

#### • They're interrupted:

Say what or who interrupts them, preventing them from carrying out their action, and how things go wrong as a result.

If you don't have an idea that you like better, consider cornering them. Whatever interrupted them, now they have to deal with it instead.

#### • Their enemy blocks their attack:

Say how their enemy catches their attack and keeps it from landing; or...

#### • Their enemy dodges their attack:

Say how their enemy gets out of the way of it before it lands; or...

#### • Their enemy shrugs off the attack:

Say how the attack lands, but why their enemy can shrug it off.

Nothing necessarily goes wrong as a result. Follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

#### • The attack lands and their enemy succumbs:

Say how the blow lands and how their enemy succumbs. They're dead or dying.

If the fight or the action continues in any form, follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

#### • The attack lands, but their enemy survives:

Say how the blow lands and how their enemy survives.

Choose 1:

- *Their enemy tries to flee.*
- *Their enemy submits, hoping to end the fight with no further danger.*
- *Their enemy fights on even more desperately.*
- *Their enemy takes pause, backing off or backing down to consider the facts.*
- *Their enemy shrugs the attack off entirely. Explain how.*
- *Their enemy sheds its damaged form and rejoins the fight transformed. Explain how.*

Follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

### 5. Counterattack?

The initiative rules allow you to interject whenever you want. Counterattacking isn't an exception: if you want to interject with an enemy attack, or with any other enemy action, you can. Choose thoughtfully, case by case.

Move Into Position:

The player explains the position they're trying to get into and how they're going about it, and tells you their roll. It's your job to tell them how close they can get. Here's how.

1. Make sure you're on the same page.

If you have any questions, ask the player. You're not here to play gotcha, so be sure you've honestly told the player exactly what's going on and asked them your honest questions.

Consider their approach from every angle. You might know things about the situation that the players don't.

Imagine a character who's looking for a friend in an enemy city. This action is for getting inside the wall — crossing the first barrier into the unknown — not for getting into the city and finding their friend in one action. If they're trying to go too far, tell them so. Let them go back and try for a different, closer, position, or choose another action.

If they're trying to go somewhere impossible, tell them so. Let them go back and try for a different, possible, position, or choose another action.

If there's no chance they'll be caught out or stymied, don't make them take this action. Just tell them they're there, and let them take action from their new position.

2. What are they up against?

Count up the following factors. You can stop counting when you reach 4.

- Is someone watching for intruders?
- Do they employ dogs or other guard animals with better senses than people?
- Are enemies watching for the PC(s) personally, in particular?
- Will they have to navigate dangerous or difficult terrain?
- Will they have to navigate a space where they're plainly exposed to view?
- Will they have to get past physical barriers, like bolted doors, walls, or barred windows?
- Will they have to get past social or psychological barriers, like lying about their identity, or hiding silently for a long time?

3. How good is their roll, really?

Your Count	Their Roll		
0	2–6	7–8	9+
1	2–6	7–9	10+
2	2–6	7–10	11+
3	2–6	7–11	12+
4	2–6	7–12	13+
The Outcome:	Say how they're caught out or stymied.	Say how they're challenged or brought short.	Say how they move into position.

Note that to roll 13+, they must push themselves, or someone else must help them.

4. Choose the outcome.

I know that you're already considering their approach from every angle. Choose the outcome thoughtfully, making the best individual choice you can in every unique situation.

• They're caught out:

Say what who catches them out, and where, and how things go wrong as a result.

If they're caught out by an enemy, does the enemy attack at once or try to hold them at bay?

If they're caught out by a stranger, are they suspicious, belligerent, polite, punctilious, or outgoing?

• They're stymied:

Say where they're blocked, by what, and how things go wrong as a result.

What will they have to do to get through?

• They're challenged:

Say who challenges them, and where, and what's the nature of the challenge.

Nothing necessarily goes wrong as a result. Follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

• They're brought short:

Say where they are, and what obstacle's brought them short.

Nothing necessarily goes wrong as a result. Follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

• They move into position:

Say where they are now, what they see, and what they hear.

Follow the rules for initiative and keep playing.

## Get To Work:

The player explains what they're trying to do and how they're going to accomplish it. It's your job to tell them what they can accomplish on a 10+ hit, and what they can accomplish on a 7–9 hit. Here's how.

### 1. Make sure you're on the same page.

If you have any questions, ask the player. You're not here to play gotcha, so be sure you've honestly told the player exactly what's going on and asked them your honest questions.

Consider their undertaking from every angle. You might know things about the situation that the players don't.

If they're trying to do something impossible, tell them so. Let them go back and try for a different, possible, accomplishment, or choose another action.

If they're trying to accomplish something trivially easy, don't make them take this action. Just tell them they've done it, no problem, and ask them what they'd like to do now.

### 2. The baseline answers.

I know that you're already considering their undertaking from every angle. Choose the outcome thoughtfully, making the best individual choice you can in every unique situation.

Tell them that on a 10+ hit, they can accomplish pretty much exactly what they're trying to do.

Tell them that on a 7–9 hit, they'll have to choose. Give them 2 or 3 of the following options:

- *It'll be unfinished when the day ends [or etc].*
- *It may be serviceable, but it'll be ugly.*
- *It won't hold up to serious scrutiny / pressure / use / etc.*
- *It'll take longer than they expect.*
- *It'll cost more than they expect.*
- *It'll leave them exhausted and spent.*
- *It'll leave them shaken, stressed, frightened, or troubled.*
- *An option or options of your own.*

### 3. Unusual circumstances

Under some circumstances, **even a 10+ hit won't be enough**. Tell them that to accomplish everything they want to accomplish, they'll need more than a 10+ hit. Tell them they'll need a 12+, a 13+, or even a 14+. (Don't go above 14+.)

*Note that to roll 13+, they must push themselves, or someone else must help them.*

Treat a roll that falls short — a 10 or 11, for instance — as a 7–9 hit instead.

Under some circumstances, **a 7–9 hit will be plenty**. If you can think of a bonus or additional accomplishment to give them on a 10+, do. Otherwise, just tell them that on a 7–9 hit OR a 10+ hit they can accomplish what they're trying to do.

Under some circumstances, **on a 7–9 hit, they won't have a choice**. Don't give them one, just tell them how they'll fall short.

## Discover a Problem:

Throughout the session, whenever the PCs discover a problem, be it a challenge, an enemy, a threat, or danger, it's your job to tell them how much experience they gain. Here's how.

### 1. Problems & experience.

The players get experience when they initially discover the problem, not when they solve or defeat it.

They spend their experience for various bonuses and benefits during their adventures.

Once they've gotten and spent 12 experience, they gain a new level. They erase their experience and start again.

### 2. What category of problem?

Depending on their levels, the players might ask you if the problem fits into a certain category. Tell them if it does:

- **Deprivation:** hunger, cold, exposure, drowning, sleep deprivation, etc.
- **Diplomatic challenges:** both sides have grievances, but neither wants violence.
- **Enemy tacticians:** organized, intentional enemies.
- **Enemy warriors:** violent, competent enemies.
- **Environmental dangers:** falling rocks, quicksand, flash floods, shifting ground, volcanism, etc.
- **Magical threats:** dangers from the unseen world.
- **Monsters:** unnatural enemy creatures or kertwk.
- **Mysteries:** Dangerous situations with intentionally concealed factors.
- **Threats from the dead.**
- **Threats to your community.**
- **Wild animals:** natural dangerous creatures.

### 3. How much experience?

- If they've encountered this exact same problem before, they get 1 experience.

*Examples: They encounter again the same outrider guard they had to get past before.*

- If they've encountered, not this exact same problem, but a different one of the exact same kind, they get 2 experience.

*Examples: They encounter another outrider guard, not the same one again.*

- If they haven't encountered this problem before, they get 2–6 experience. Count up the following factors:
  - *Is it an intelligent living (or unliving) thing?*
  - *Is it their enemy, personally?*
  - *Is it potentially deadly?*
  - *Is it actively, intentionally violent?*
  - *Does it have a substantial or overwhelming advantage over them in size, number, capabilities, or secure position?*
  - *Is it from the World of Death or the Unseen World, or is it a kertwk?*
  - *Is it invulnerable to any common modes of attack?*

Your Count:	0–2	3–4	5	6	7+
Experience:	2	3	4	5	6



## Using Their Wealth:

Don't make or expect the players to track their living expenses or routine income or anything like that. This isn't a game about balancing your checkbook.

Spending experience to use their wealth represents making larger purchases with coin they've saved, working unpaid for others' good, resting on their laurels or their good name, or exploiting their reputations.

The silver lunum is the most common unit of currency in the Unnamed World: a large round silver coin struck with a stylized moon on one side, and a city's emblem, goddess' face, coiner's warrant, or other signifier on the reverse. Each 1 experience they spend gives them the benefit of, effectively, 1 silver lunum in wealth.

You can certainly create situations where the players have to spend experience to use their wealth, or else create problems for themselves. Examples:

- *"A stay in the travelers'-house will cost you 1 experience's wealth. If you don't have 1 experience to spend, or don't want to, you'll have to find another warm place to sleep."*
- *"There's a ship setting sail for your destination in the morning, but all its poor bunkage is taken. If you want to travel on it, you'll need to spend 2 experience among you to reserve its best cabin. Otherwise, you could wait for another ship or try to find another way to the island."*
- *"The guards won't just allow you into the presence of the city's Goddess-Queen, not dressed in your traveling clothes. If you want to pass yourselves off as visiting dignitaries, you'll need to spend experience to better your outfits. If you can't or don't want to, you'll need to find another way to meet her."*
- *"It becomes quickly clear that, as far as the priests are concerned, your accepting their words of advice has obliged you to make a donation of gifts to their order. You can spend experience to do that, or you can perhaps make them a different offer."*
- *"The grateful community wants to throw an enormous feast in your honor, with an abundant quantity of food and all their clans in attendance. You'll have to spend 3 experience each, or else deny them and see how they take it."*

### Is it available?

When a player wants to use their wealth to buy something, they must check with you to confirm that it's available and how much experience it'll actually cost. If you've already established the answer for yourself — if you happen to know that the item in question is common in this area, for instance, or unheard of — simply tell them.

If you haven't established the answer, though, instead of deciding it for yourself, use the Marketplace rules to establish it.

## The Marketplace:

Hold three things in your mind. First, **the item in question**. Second, **what you've established to be true**. Third, **what's possible here**.

Recall that you're following these Marketplace rules because *it's possible* that the item in question is available here, but *it's unestablished* whether it's available in fact.

If this isn't the case, you already know whether the item's available here. Tell the player and play on.

### 1. Common knowledge:

If the item were, in fact, available here, wouldn't it be common knowledge? Wouldn't you have already established it? Wouldn't people have been bragging about it or warning the PCs away or whispering it to everyone they meet?

**If so:** No, it's not available here. You would have heard about it already if it were.

*Example: "I'd like to buy a new spell. Are any available?" "No, if there were a wizard here capable of tattooing a new spell on you, you would have met them already."*

### 2. Nothing strange is going on:

If it's not available here, given everything else you've established, would it be surprising? Do you feel like you'd need to explain why it isn't?

**If so:** Yes, it's available here. Nothing strange is going on that makes it unavailable.

*Example: "I'd like to buy a silver comb. Is one available?" "Well, if no vendor in the entire Starlight Fair has a silver comb to sell you, that'd be pretty strange. So yes, I'm sure you can find one."*

Or, if it were available, would that be the surprising thing, and you'd need to explain that instead?

**If so:** No, it's not available here. Nothing strange is going on that would make it available.

*Example: "I'd like to buy a silver comb. Is one available?" "There's no silverwork here in these islands, so no, but you can buy an absolutely gorgeous shell comb if you like."*

### 3. What are the odds?

They're never exactly 50/50. Think through what you've established and judge for yourself: are the odds better than even or worse than even?

**If better:** Roll a die, or have the player roll it. On a 1–2, no, it's not available; on a 3–4, yes it is, but at an increased price; on a 5–6, yes it is.

*Example: "I'd like to buy a corpse-mirror. Is one available?" "Well, you're here in a convocation of wizards, it's good odds that someone's selling necromantic materials. Roll a die."*

**If worse:** Roll a die, or have the player roll it. On a 1–4, no, it's not available; on a 5 or 6, yes it is, but at an increased price.

*Example: "I'd like to buy a corpse-mirror. Is one available?" "Well, it's possible that someone's selling necromantic materials here in the Starlight Fair, but it's not good odds. Roll a die."*

If you feel like the odds should be better than good or worse than bad, go back to **Step 2**. Nothing strange is going on.

