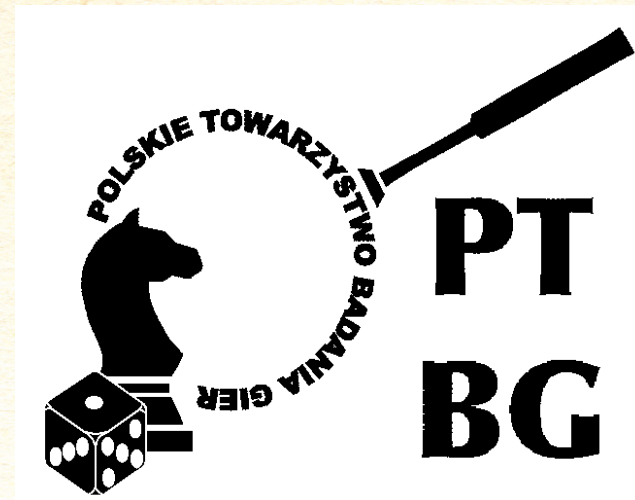


The Eastern



Frontiers

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Welcome to the Eastern Frontiers!

We present to you a historical tabletop RPG set in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It takes place in the early 1580s, under the reign of Stephan Bathory, as he wages war against Muscovy ruled by Tsar Ivan the Terrible. You can choose from a wide range of characters – nobles, half-nobles, townsfolk, peasants, even homeless rogues and vagabonds. You may play as fighters, homesteaders, courtiers, scholars, clerics, tradespeople, labourers, or so-called loose people who live outside formal social structures.

This unbridled diversity is deliberate. We want the game to support multiple themes and tones: chivalric tales of brave nobles in war; glamorous courtly intrigues; cloak-and-dagger swashbuckling; domestic matters in a tightly-knit local community; international politics and espionage; or lowlife adventures of vagrants on the road – a rich tapestry of people and walks of life. Make the game your own.

Is this a complete game?

Yes and no. This is a complete player's handbook. It includes all you need to start playing: character types, rules for character generation, and mechanics for resolving encounters. But it doesn't have anything more. Sourcebooks detailing the historical setting, sample scenarios, gamemaster's manual, and other modules are yet to come.

This is a milestone in a long-term project. Initially, we planned a comprehensive and far-reaching product with a substantial budget. In practice, the funding we received did not allow us to do everything at once – so this handbook is not the end of the story. We view it as an early-access release or proof of concept, which paves way towards something greater. It's also a chance to collect player feedback on game mechanics – and refine it.

Target groups

This game is designed for two key audiences. At present, the player's handbook will appeal primarily to those already familiar with the historical setting. RPGers from the post-Commonwealth region who have a connection with this heritage; those knowledgeable about early modern European history; and educators and activists looking to use 1581 as a 'serious game'. In the long run – with the addition of lore sourcebooks, campaign scenarios, and GM tools – we aim to reach the broader global RPG community.

What's next, then?

We are now resubmitting our grant proposal to secure funding for everything we had to cut in the first stage. The full vision includes multiple modules:



- more language versions, including Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Russian
- a sourcebook for the historical setting, informed by consultations with historians from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus
- unique combat mechanics for historical fencing, developed with practitioners
- a scenario pack featuring various themes, tones, and adventuring party types
- resources and guidelines for gamemasters
- materials for educators and organisations engaged in historical, civic and intercultural education

Keep your fingers crossed, and stay tuned for good news.

Why not crowdfund to speed this up?

We've thought about it – but for now, no. One of the goals of this project is to counter Russian historical propaganda, which weaponises heritage narratives to legitimise conquests. Yes, crowdfunding seems like a logical way to support the cause. But we don't want to compete with other crowdfunding efforts. If you want to donate to an anti-Muscovite cause, spend your money on more urgent needs than ours.

If you disagree – change our minds.

Game mechanics: a quick look

Game mechanics in 1581 are inspired by LOTTO lottery mechanisms: players roll a handful of twelve-sided dice (d12s), which function like lottery balls.

To perform a test, the player:

- begins with a set of pre-selected numbers in the range of 1-12 (like a Lotto player with a set of lucky numbers to bet on)
- rolls a specific number of twelve-sided dice (d12) (like the Lotto ball draw drawing random numbers from the specified range)
- counts how many rolled dice match the pre-selected numbers

The number of hits (matching dice) determines the level of success: 1 hit represents a partial or minimal success, 2 hits a full success, and 3 hits a spectacular success.

Example (basic LOTTO roll):

- the player has **four** pre-selected numbers, e.g. [2 - **8** - 9 - 11]
- S/he rolls 3d12 and gets 4, **8**, and **8**
- Because two dice (8 and 8) match a scoring number, it counts as two hits (two successes).

The lottery-like mechanism is built around three classic RPG components:

1. **Attributes** (value range: 1-6) = **how many numbers you bet on**
2. **Skills** (value range: from 1d12 to 6d12) = **how many dice you roll**
3. **Modifiers** (optional, varied) = adjust or influence the outcome of the roll

ATTRIBUTES: Each character is defined by six **Attributes** (value 1-6): Muscle (MSC), Reflexes (REF), Senses (SNS), Will (WIL), Brains (BRN), Charm (CHA). The value of each Attribute determines how many scoring numbers it contributes to a roll.

SKILLS: The character has a wide array of trained **Skills**, grouped into "basic" (e.g. Riding, Influencing), "specialised" (e.g. Education [engineering]) and "combat" (e.g. Firearms).

Basic (nonmodified) core game mechanics uses only **Attributes** and **Skills**. Whenever the GM demands a dice-based test, s/he decides which Attribute and Skill are the most appropriate. Attribute + Skill are always tested together.

MODIFIERS: Characters may also benefit from additional factors that modify rolls: narrowly specialised **Expertise**, specific **Motivations**, useful **Gear**, and a few other factors.

Let's start with character generation in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: Character Generation

1.1. FAMILY BACKGROUND

People aren't made equal in the Commonwealth. The great lottery of birth makes you noble-born or low-born (→ 1.1.1 Background Roll). Let's see how lucky your character was with his/her choice of parents.

1.1.1. Background ROLL: Highborn or lowborn?

Roll 1d12 to determine the Background (social class / estate) of your character's parents.

Backgr. Roll	Background	Family Backgr.	Social bonus
1	orphan of unknown origin → roll again for the class of your foster parents	–	
2-3	serf – peasant	1	serf contract
4-5	free commoner	2	personal liberty
6	burgher	3	personal liberty, municipal jurisdiction
7-8	half-noble	4	personal liberty, local or land jurisdiction
9-10	poor gentry	5	golden liberty, land jurisdiction
11-12	rich nobility	6	as above, plus land citizenship

Social bonus is the degree of liberties and privileges based on the status of your family (mostly, the father's).

- serf contract - you can appeal to the protection and judgment of your master, but you are also bound to service
- personal liberty - you are free to live your life without a master, unless you choose to enter someone's service
- municipal jurisdiction - a citizen of a royal city, you may seek the city's legal help in court
- local jurisdiction - the category of "half-nobles" includes dependent gentry: those who hold land-leases with an obligation to self-funded military service for a local magnate or royal administrator (starosta, voivode) → they fall under the jurisdiction of the estate's owner or administrator
- land jurisdiction - nobles cannot be imprisoned unless sentenced by the nobility court system
- golden liberty - the full status of a Commonwealth noble grants personal freedom and a wide range of privileges based on nobility and citizenship, including political rights

- land citizenship - a noble who holds land property has local citizenship in the poviat/land, which offers advantages in local politics, such as access to land titles and public offices

Parentage: Choose the dominant ethnic or regional identity of your parents: on the father's and mother's side separately.

Three major identities are: Polak (Polish) in the Crown of Poland; Litvin (Lithuanian) in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; and Rusyn (Ruthenian) in Ukraine. These labels are imprecise - for instance, "Litvin" denotes citizens of the Grand Duchy, which include proper Lithuanians (Baltic ethnicity) as well as proto-Belarusians (Slavic ethnicity) from the former Kievan Rus. "Rusyns" are inhabitants of the Ukrainian voivodeships of Kiev, Bratslav and Volhynia - but also many citizens of the Podolian and Ruthenian voivodeships that had been part of the Crown of Poland for much longer. The "Polak" label, understood as native to the Crown of Poland ("Crowners"), covers not only the provinces of Greater and Lesser Poland but also Royal Prussia and Mazovia.

Other Commonwealthian communities include Germans, Tatars, Armenians, Vlachs (proto-Romanians from Moldavia and Wallachia), Jews, Scots, Magyars (Hungarians), and Tigani (Roma). There are visitors and migrants from Italy, Greece, Sweden, England, France, Spain, Turkey and more. Black Africans (Moors) are extremely rare, while peoples from the Far East or the Americas are entirely absent.

Religion: Choose your denomination. The major religions are Roman Catholicism (mainly in Poland), Orthodox

Christianity (mainly in the Grand Duchy and Ukraine), and various Protestant churches (Lutheran, Calvinist, Polish Brethren). Tatar communities are typically Muslim. Jewish ones are, naturally, Jewish. If you want to be a pagan follower of old gods, choose a specific region and culture, as pagan beliefs are highly diverse.

Parentage and religion have no statistics or hierarchy or mechanical effects in the game. They're there to flesh out characters and to situate them within the historical storyworld.

1.1.2. Good fortune

The birth lottery isn't fair - but we want to be. If you weren't lucky with your character's birth status (→ 1.1.1 Background Roll), we'll make it up to you with Good Fortune. Every character in our game has 9 points of Good Fortune - and Family Background is the first thing that draws from this pool.

Each point of your Background, from 1 (serf) to 6 (rich noble), costs 1 Good Fortune. The luckier you were in the birth lottery, the more Fortune you have already used up.

Example:

If your Background = 2 (free commoner), your remaining Good Fortune is 7 (since $9 - 2 = 7$).
If your Background = 6 (rich nobility), you have 3 Fortune left

1.1.3. Homo/Femina nobilis?

What if you wanted to play a proud Commonwealthian noble but the birth lottery placed you among the low-born? Don't worry, this is where Good Fortune can change your fate.

If you aren't genuinely noble-born, you may still enter the game as a noble. This will cost you either 1 or 2 or 3 Fortune points. Choose wisely.

1 Good Fortune point = False noble

You're not a real noble but you took a chance to present yourself as one. This is a risky choice: keeping it secret will be a life-long burden (see → 1.2.3. Burden). Your Background changes to 5 (or even 6, if you are bold enough to claim so) - as long as you can fake it.

2 Good Fortune points = New noble

Your father achieved the status of a minor noble after you were born. You are now legally a nobleman's son or daughter. Alternatively - if you are a woman, you could have achieved this status by marriage. Your Family Background = 4.

3 Good Fortune points (males only) = Ennobled

You were officially ennobled by the King for military, diplomatic or administrative services. Your Family Background = 5.

Example:

If your Background Roll made you a Burgher (Background = 3) with 6 unspent points of Good Fortune, you can easily "buy" a royal charter of ennoblement for 3 Good Fortune. This officially gives you the rank of nobleman - and some glory to your name (Background = 5).

1.2. CAREER PATHS

What kind of learned expertise was central in your formative years? Were you trained to be a scholar, soldier, labourer, or something else?

In our game, **Skills and Attributes** are shaped by their chosen **Career Paths**, which represent specific areas of

competence developed through training and experience. There are eight **Career Paths**, which can be seen as character classes: fighters, courtiers, clerics, scholars, homesteaders, labourers, tradespeople, and loose people. For detailed descriptions of career paths (including their subclasses), see Chapter 4.

FIGHTERS

Key Attributes
REFLEXES, MUSCLE, WILL

Skills
Alertness, Athletics, Leadership, Warfare, Bargain, Riding, Stealth, Survival, Rummage, Rumours

Combat skills
all

Expertise
All subclasses: Stand Your Ground
Weapon of Choice
Swordsman: Duelist
Irregulars: Sneaky
Chaikas
Cavalry: Horse Archery
Born in the Saddle
Infantry: Firepower
Meleeist

Burden
Battle Wounds

HOMESTEADERS

Key Attributes
MUSCLE, SENSES, CHARM

Skills
Riding, Driving, Animal Care (selected), Local Lore (selected), Heraldry, Politics (local), Hunting, Bargain, Household

Combat skills
Fencing, Firearms, Archery

Expertise
All subclasses: Home Base
Followers
Landed Noble: Neighbours
Lady of the Manor: Lady's Request
Cossack Elder: Ataman
Steward: Efficient

Burden
Custody

SCHOLARS

Key Attributes
BRAINS, CHARM, SENSES

Skills
Writing (selected), Language (classic, selected), Language (selected), Education (selected), Law (selected), Arcane Arts (selected), Oratory

Combat skills
Brawl

Expertise
All subclasses: Critical Thinking
Bookworm
Lawyer: Rights and Lefts
Physician: Diagnose
Army Engineer: Siege Expert
Astronomer/Astrologer: Mysterious

Burden
Short-sighted

LABOURERS

Key Attributes
REFLEXES, MUSCLE, SENSES

Skills
Alertness, Athletics, Chores, Driving, Rumours, Bargain, Animal Care (livestock), Folklore (selected)

Combat skills
Unarmed, one selected Melee or Ranged

Expertise
All subclasses: Hard-working
Resilient
Villager: Provider
Household Servant: Master's eye
Camp Follower: Spoils of War

Burden
Bad Injury

CLERICS

Key Attributes

BRAINS, CHARM, WILL

Skills

Oratory, Influencing, Education (theology), Writing (selected), Language (selected), Chores, Folklore (selected)

Combat skills

-

Expertise

All subclasses: Providence
Alms

Priest: Sacrament

Friar/Nun: Monastic Support

Burden

Crisis of Faith

TRADESPEOPLE

Key Attributes

BRAINS, CHARM, REFLEXES

Skills

Athletics, Bargain, Driving, Tradecraft (selected), Chores, Language (selected), Influencing

Combat skills

Unarmed, Firearms, one selected Melee

Expertise

All subclasses: Contacts
Appraise

Craftsman: Crafty Hands

Trader: Commerce

Barber Surgeon: First Aid

Burden

Serious Debt

COURTIER

Key Attributes

CHARM, BRAINS, SENSES

Skills

Influencing, Etiquette, Politics (selected), Heraldry, Rumours, Arts (selected), Education (selected), Language (selected)

Combat skills

Unarmed; Fencing, all Ranged

Expertise

All subclasses: Intrigue
Protected

Artist: Precious

Councillor: Advice

Court Lady: Welcome

Privy Servant: Trusted

Burden

Hostile Faction

LOOSE PEOPLE

Key Attributes

REFLEXES, SENSES

Skills

Rumours, Bargain, Survival, Influencing, Crime (selected), Stealth, Local Lore (selected), Streetwise (selected), Trickery (selected), Arts (selected), Rummage

Combat skills

Unarmed, one selected Melee or Ranged

Expertise

All subclasses: Trickery
Thieving
Guile

Vagabond: Lay of the Land

Performer: Show

Pedlar: Snake Oil

Burden

Branded

Most characters have tried at least two Career Paths - and often more. This reflects changing circumstances and stages in life, brought about by choice or by fate. A person born and raised to be a humble labourer may then spend a few years soldiering and eventually become a monk. A nobleman might be raised as a homesteader, start clerical education, then abandon it for military adventures, and end up as a courtier.

You don't start as a "Level 1" character who has to level up repeatedly. If you want to start as an experienced veteran, you can do so. This, however, comes with its own risks. Experience comes with age - but age does not treat everyone kindly.

Young characters

If you want a classic campaign with low-level characters gradually rising through the world, start with young characters. Why not think of teenagers as 'level 1' and of 20-somethings as 'level 3'?

Anyway, even if you want an older character, the first step should be to build the career of your character up to his/her twenties. This is when s/he confronts the first Burden Roll (see → 1.2.3 Burden). Also, at this age characters will have accumulated **4x or 5x** Career Paths: they will be powerful enough to face whatever the world throws at them.

In narrative terms, you can imagine each "1x" as a stage in the character's formative development: first as a young kid of 7-12 years of age, then in advanced training around 13-15, then in adolescence/young adulthood circa 16-18, and into adulthood around the age of 20.

If you choose the **same Career path three times (3x)**, you acquire **one** of its special class-based **Expertises**.

Older characters

If you want an even more experienced character, you can keep adding more Career Paths, but each new **1x** Career beyond early adulthood involves another → 1.2.3 Burden Roll.

Moreover, starting from the thirties, each new decade of life requires an → Aging Roll.

Furthermore, after some age you cannot raise specific physical Attributes any more:

- at 40+ you can't develop Reflexes
- at 50+ you can't develop Reflexes or Muscle
- at 60+ you can't develop Reflexes or Muscle or Senses

Age	Careers	Burden Roll	Aging Roll	Blocked Attributes*
<20	2x	-	-	
20-24	2x	1d12	-	
25-29	1x	1d12	-	
30-39	1x	1d12	1d12	
40-49	1x	1d12	1d12+1	REF
50-59	1x	1d12	1d12+2	REF, MSC
60+	1x	1d12	1d12+3	REF, MSC, SNS

* Blocked Attributes = these attributes at this age cannot be raised by Career Paths

1.2.1. Attributes and Skills

Your character has 6 Attributes (Reflexes, Muscle, Senses, Brains, Charm, Will). The number of Skills varies between characters.

Attributes

In our Lotto-inspired mechanics, each Attribute has a set of pre-selected numbers for d12 dice rolls similar to LOTTO draws. For instance, if your Brains has three scoring numbers, e.g. **[BRN: 3 - 6 - 11]**, every time you roll **3, 6** or **11** on a d12 counts as a hit (a success).

Each Attribute must have at least one permanently assigned scoring number, and it cannot have more than six. This is what we mean by the 1-6 value range in Attributes.

You assign lucky numbers to Attributes through your chosen Career Paths. There are eight of them: Fighter, Scholar, Cleric, Courtier, Homesteader, Tradespeople, Labourer, and Loose People. Each time (**1x**) you select

a Career, you gain **three Attribute Points**. Two must be spent on career-specific Attributes, one can be spent freely. Special limits apply:

- One number cannot be used more than once in the same Attribute.
- Number **11** may be used **only** once across all Attributes.
- Numbers **1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10** may each appear a maximum of **2 times** across all Attributes.
- No limit applies to **3, 6, 9, 12**.

The relative power of each number relies on the potential to modify dice results by +1/-1 or +2/-2 through the Motivation modifier (→ 2.2.3). You can plan strategically to build a set of scoring numbers with a 100% chance for at least one success. With a Motivation range of +1/-1, you need a set of four scoring numbers to reach a 100%: **11 - 8 - 5 - 2**, and with +2/-2 you need five: **1 - 4 - 7 - 10 - 11**. Number 11 is unique - it appears in both sets.

Skills

The value of Skills is expressed by the number of d12 dice you roll. The range is:

- 6d12 (maximum)
- 2d12 (minimum for trained Skills)
- 1d12 (used for untrained Skills, at the GM's discretion).

As with Attribute Points, you gain Skill Points through your selected Career Paths. Each **1x** Career grants you **+1d12** to **four Skills**. At least one Skill is freely selected, others must be selected from a career-specific list. Since 1d12 is used to test **untrained Skills**, whenever you apply the first +1d12 boost, it raises the Skill level from the untrained 1d12 to 2d12.

In each **1x** choice of a Career, you must add the four +1d12 boosts to **four different Skills**. You cannot add +4d12 to one Skill or +2d12 to two Skills within a single 1x Career. However, if you select the same Career multiple times, you may add +1d12 to the same Skill again:

- **Allowed:** choose x1 Career, add +1d12 to four different Skills
- **Not allowed:** choose x1 Career, add +2d12 to two Skills
- **Allowed:** choose x2 Career, add +2d12 to four Skills – or +1d12 to eight Skills – or any combination of +1d12s and +2d12 so long as the total equals eight boosts

Example:

If your career choices are 3x Cleric and 1x Fighter, you can select 3x four Cleric's skills (totalling twelve +1d12 boosts) and 1x four Fighter's skills (four +1d12s).

- In the Cleric section, a total of **twelve (3x four)** +1d12 boosts to Cleric skills may result in up to twelve different skills of 2d12 each, or repeated +1d12 boosts to fewer skills. Your 3x Cleric allows for a maximum of +3d12 boost to a single skill, so you can reach a maximum of 4d12.
 - Let's assume you spend nine +1d12 boosts to get Cleric-specific skills: 4d12 Oratory, 2d12 Influencing, 3d12 Writing (Latin), 3d12 Language (Latin), and 2d12 Folklore (Lithuanian).
 - Three +1d12 boosts may go to any skills whatsoever, including combat ones. If you want, put all +3d12 in unarmed combat, resulting in Brawl = 4d12.
- In the Fighter section, you have **four (1x four)** +1d12 boosts. You can add +1d12 to any four skills from the Fighter's list - one of which can (again!) be unarmed Brawl. If you raise Brawl from 4d12 to 5d12, you have three remaining +1d12 boosts (two career-based, one freely chosen), e.g. 2d12 Fencing, 2d12 Firearms, and 2d12 Athletics.

AP = Attribute Point = one permanently assigned lucky number (from 1-12) to an Attribute

SP = Skill Point = one boost of +1d12 to a selected Skill

Career Path Attributes (x1 = 3 AP)**Skills (x1 = 4 SP)**

Fighter	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on REF/MSK/WIL	3 SP: Athletics, Alertness, Leadership, Warfare, Bargain, Riding, Stealth, Survival, Rummage, Rumours
Combat skills: all		
Labourer	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on REF/MSK/SNS	3 SP: Alertness, Athletics, Chores, Driving, Rumours, Bargain, Animal Care (livestock), Folklore (selected)
Combat skills: Unarmed, one Melee or Ranged		
Homesteader	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on MSK/SNS/CHA	3 SP: Riding, Driving, Animal Care (selected), Local Lore (selected), Heraldry, Politics (local), Hunting, Bargain
Combat skills: Fencing, Firearms, Archery		
Cleric	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on BRN/CHA/WIL	3 SP: Oratory, Influencing, Education (theology), Writing (selected), Language (selected), Chores, Folklore (selected)

Career Path Attributes (x1 = 3 AP)**Skills (x1 = 4 SP)**

Courtier	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on SNS/BRN/CHA	3 SP: Influencing, Etiquette, Politics (selected), Heraldry, Rumours, Arts (selected), Education (selected), Language (selected)
Combat skills: Unarmed, Fencing, any Shooting		
Tradespeople	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on BRN/CHA/REF	3 SP: Athletics, Bargain, Driving, Tradescraft (selected), Chores, Language (selected), Influencing
Combat skills: Unarmed, Firearms or Crossbow, one selected Melee		
Scholar	1 AP free	1 SP: free
	2 AP on SNS/BRN/CHA	3 SP: Writing (selected), Language (classic, selected), Language (selected), Education (selected), Law (selected), Arcane Arts (selected), Oratory
Loose People	2 AP free	1 SP: free
	1 AP on REF/SNS	3 SP: Alertness, Rumours, Bargain, Survival, Influencing, Crime (selected), Stealth, Local Lore (selected), Streetwise (selected), Trickery (selected), Arts (selected), Rummage
Combat skills: Unarmed, one Melee or Ranged		

Example (Attributes + Skills)

For a character aged 25, you choose 3x Fighter and 1x Scholar and 1x Labourer.

Career-based Attribute Points

- 3x Fighter = +6 AP to spend on REF/MSK/WIL +3 AP free
- 1x Scholar = +2 AP on SNS/BRN/CHA +1 AP free
- 1x Labourer = +2 AP on REF/MSK/SNS +1 AP free

Let's assume you spend all nine Fighter's APs equally on REF/MSK/WIL (REF +3, MSK +3, WIL +3). These Attributes started at zero, so their values rise from 0 to REF 3, MSK 3, WIL 3). All three Scholar's APs become SNS +1, BRN +1, CHA +1 (this raises SNS from 0 to 1 and BRN from 0 to 1, and CHA from 0 to 1). Labourer's three APs raise REF from 3 to 4, SNS from 1 to 2, and CHA from 1 to 2. In total: REF 4, MSK 3, SNS 2, BRN 1, CHA 2, WIL 3.

Each assigned Attribute Point is now converted to a specific number between 1-12.

- **REF 4** = four such numbers, e.g. [REF 2 - 4 - 9 - 11]
- **SNS 2** = [SNS 6 - 9]
- **CHA 2** = [CHA 3 - 8]
- **MSK 3** = may become [MSK 3 - 9 - 12]
- **BRN 1** = [BRN 12]
- **WIL 3** = [WIL 3 - 6 - 12]

Career-based Skill Points

- 3x Fighter = 3x sets of +1d12 boosts to four Skills: three Career-based and one free
- 1x Labourer = 1x set of +1d12 boosts to four Skills, (three Career, one free)
- 1x Scholar = same

Reminder: every untrained Skill is rolled at 1d12, so the first +1d12 boost raises a Skill to 2d12.

Fighter's SPs amount to twelve +1d12 boosts, but no more than 3x to one Skill. For instance:

- +3d12 boosts to Fencing (cut&thrust) = 4d12
- +1d12 to Warfare = 2d12
- +1d12 to Survival = 2d12
- +1d12 to Archery = 2d12
- +3d12 to Firearms = 4d12
- +2d12 to Ride = 3d12
- +1d12 to Stealth = 2d12

Labourer's SPs (four total): +1d12 to Drive, Rumours, Bargain, Chores, so each becomes 2d12

Scholar's SPs (four total): +1d12 to Writing (Latin), Language (Latin), Education (Theology), Law (Commonwealthian), so each becomes 2d12

1.2.2. Career-based Expertise

Let's repeat: choosing 3x the same Career Path grants you one Expertise for free.

At the expense of 3 Good Fortune points, you may purchase another Expertise from a Career Path in which you have at least 3x selections.

Example:

If you chose x3 Fighter, you gain one Expertise from the Fighter's list for free. You may then purchase a second Fighter Expertise for 3 Good Fortune.

Fighter

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Fighter	Stand Your Ground:	test WIL in a Clash of Wills
	Weapon of Choice:	fight with your preferred weapon type (sabre, sword, rapier, pistol, etc.)
Cavalry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Light• Hussar• Petyhorec• Reiter/Arqueb.	Horse Archery:	shoot while moving (riding, running, sliding)
	Born in the Saddle:	make any Riding test
Infantry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Haiduk• Musketeer• Pikeman• Halberdier• Greatswordsmen• Grenadier• Cannoneer	Firepower:	shoot from a distance
	Meleeist:	make Combat Rolls against multiple opponents
Irregular <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cossack• Opryshok• Armed Servant	Chaika:	take any combat action on a boat
	Sneaky:	hide in ambush or move stealthily
Swordsmen <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gentry• Fechtmeister	Duelist:	fight a one-on-one duel with a fencing weapon

Labourer

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Labourer	Hard-working:	make any MSC- or REF-based test for manual labour - or to simulate work to minimise effort
	Resilient:	make any WIL-based test to endure pain, hunger, physical exhaustion, or extreme conditions
Villager	Provider:	test any Skill to produce or process resources
Servant	Master's eye:	test any non-combat action under direct supervision of your master/mistress
Camp Follower	Spoils of war:	test Bargain, Driving, Tradecraft, Heal, Rummage, Language in a military environment

Homesteader

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Homesteader	Home Base:	try to obtain a resource from home
	Followers:	test Influence or Oratory to rally a group of local supporters
Landed Noble	Neighbours:	test Influence to seek help from another local noble
Cossack Elder	Ataman:	test Influence against any Cossack who isn't your personal enemy
Lady of the Manor	Lady's Request:	test Influence against any male character living in the area
Steward	Efficient:	make any Household test related to management of land estates

Cleric

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Cleric	Providence:	invoke God's protection to test Influence to dissuade aggression
	Alms:	test Influence or Oratory to raise money from layperson co-believers
Priest	Sacrament:	test Influence on co-believer(s) within 3 hours after performing a sacrament in their presence
Friar/Nun	Monastic support:	seek help from someone in your monastic order

Courtier

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Courtier	Intrigue:	test Rumours or Influence in courtly environments
	Protected:	test Influence to dissuade someone from hurting you
Artist	Precious:	test Influence to gain money from a rich patron
Councillor	Advice:	test BRN or CHA to persuade a superior to follow your counsel (not usable on hostile factions or personal enemies)
Court Lady	Welcome:	test Influence to gain an audience with an important person
Privy Servant	Trusted:	test Influence to access places or people under your lord/lady's control

Tradespeople

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Tradespeople	Contacts:	test Influence or Rumours to gain support from people in your business network
	Appraise:	test Bargain to assess the value and quality of familiar goods and services
Craftsman	Crafty hands:	make any REF-based test for manual tasks in your profession
Tradesman	Commerce:	make any BRN or CHA-based tests for deals or trade-related insights
Barber Surgeon	First Aid:	test Heal to treat wounds or pull out teeth, or Folklore for folk medicine

Scholar

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Scholar	Critical thinking:	make any BRN-based test to see through lies, deceit, manipulation and superstition
	Bookworm:	test BRN to search for information in libraries, or recall relevant reading
Physician	Diagnose:	test Education (medicine) or Heal to recognise a condition and recommend treatment
Army Engineer	Siege expert:	make any SNS or BRN-based test to design, operate, and assess the condition of siege equipment and fortifications
Lawyer	Rights and Lefts:	test Influencing or Bargain to procure false testimonies or documents to win cases
Astronomer/ Astrologer	Mysterious:	test Influencing or Bargain to win the trust of the mighty and powerful

Loose People

Career Path	Expertise	You can re-roll one 1d12 when you:
any Loose People	Trickery:	make any CHA-based test to extract resources from gullible audiences
	Thieving:	make any REF or SNS-based test to steal
	Guile:	make any CHA-based test to weasel out of blame for wrongdoings
Vagabond	Lay of the Land:	test Local Lore, Rumours, Folklore, Language, or Survival
Performer	Show:	make any REF-based test to entertain or sway gullible audiences
Pedlar	Snake Oil:	test Bargain or Trickery or Rumours to manipulate gullible audiences

1.2.3. Burden

At the age of 20 your character makes one Burden Roll. It would be too generous to assume that s/he could live to adulthood unburdened with any lasting scars from the past. . Choose one of your Career Paths, roll 2d12 and check the result.

Alternatively, you may spend 1 Good Fortune to skip the Burden Roll entirely. Be among those lucky few who are indeed unburdened by the past.

What if you took a Burden Roll and you absolutely hate the result? You may spend 2 Good Fortune to nullify this outcome.

EXCEPTION: If you decided in → 1.1.3 Homo Nobilis to be a **false noble**, the result is pre-determined and irreversible. You enter the game with Burden: Secret.

Roll 2d12	Burden
2-4	None
5-6	Ill fame: → you have ill reputé in one poviat/land (choose which), you can't use Background Modifier against people from there
7-8	Oath: → you are bound by an oath to do something or to be obedient to someone

Roll 2d12	Burden
9-10	Trauma: -1 WILL permanently, as a result of trauma
11-12	Debt: → you owe 3+1d6 floren, repayable within 6 + 1d6 months
13-14	Secret: → you hide a personal secret that may have grave consequences
15-16	Enemy: → you have a personal enemy of comparable social rank and influence
17-18	Banishment: → you've been banished from the Commonwealth (if you're a noble) or from a city/town (if non-noble)
19-20	Disgrace: rightly or wrongly, you've been accused of disgraceful acts → -1 CHA when dealing with those who know of it
21-24	Career Burden: → on the right side

If you are creating an older character, each additional Career choice (1x) triggers another Burden Roll.

In addition, when the character reaches ages 30, 40, 50, and 60, they must make an Aging Roll.

* Blocked Attributes = these cannot be increased via Career after reaching this age

1.2.4. Effects of Aging

Every time the character reaches the age of 30, 40, 50 and 60, s/he risks a decrease in Attributes due to illnesses, malnourishment, accidents, or simply old age. This is determined by an Aging Roll.

** no Attribute can drop below 1 – if this would be the case, it counts as no effect

Again, Good Fortune can avert the verdict of Fate.

- If you don't like the result of the Aging Roll, you may spend 2 Good Fortune to nullify it,
- or you may spend 1 Good Fortune pre-emptively to skip the Aging Roll entirely.

Career	Burden
Fighter	Battle wounds: -1 to MSC, REF, SNS, or CHA (you choose)
Labourer	Bad injury: -1 to MSC or REF (you choose)
Cleric	Crisis of faith: → lose 1 point of Motivation: Faith or Duty
Scholar	Short-sighted: -1 SNS for long-distance visual perception
Tradespeople	Serious debt: → you owe 10+1d6 floren, repayable within 6 +1d6 months
Courtier	Hostile faction: beware: you've made enemies within one political faction
Homesteader	Custody: you are responsible for a dependent person → cost: 1d3 floren per month
Loose People	Branded: your face is scarred with a criminal brand → -1 CHA when dealing with all except beggars, criminals, etc.

Age	Careers	Burden Roll	Aging Roll	Blocked Attributes*
<20	2x	–	–	
20-24	2x	1d12	–	
25-29	1x	1d12	–	
30-39	1x	1d12	1d12	
40-49	1x	1d12	1d12+1	REF
50-59	1x	1d12	1d12+2	REF, MSC
60+	1x	1d12	1d12+3	REF, MSC, SNS

Aging Roll	Effect of aging on Attributes**
1-3	no effect
4-5	-1 CHA
6-7	-1 REF
8	-1 SNS
9	-1 MSC
10	-1 WIL
11	-1 BRN
12	make two Aging Rolls instead

1.3. MOTIVATIONS

Many people believe in causes greater than themselves, and are willing to go to great lengths (and great pains) to uphold their principles. If you play a principled character, you can channel this extra motivation whenever your deeply held values are at stake.

You have exactly **three points** to distribute among the following motivations:

FAITH - to be invoked whenever you act in the service of God (but only if this is motivated by **true religious zeal** - not by the earthly interests of church institutions)

HONOUR - whenever you act **out of personal commitment** to a code of honour

SLAVA - whenever you act motivated by the desire to win glory and recognition **in the eyes of society**

DUTY - whenever you act motivated by **your sense of duty**: loyalty to your lord, or faction, or family, or King and country, or your town, village or poviat (This also includes loyalty to religious institutions pursued for power or affiliation rather than faith.)

SELF - whenever you act to prioritise **your own gain**, ambition, or survival **over others**

In the storyworld, if you have **zero** motivational points in Faith, Honour, Slava or Duty, you simply don't care enough to make any extra effort. If you have **two**, you are a devout believer. If you have **one**, you are moderately dedicated.

In game mechanics - whenever you roll dice in a situation which puts your values at stake - you can use your motivation to **defy Fate** by changing the value on one of the dice. Yes, that's right: **after rolling dice, you may grab one and turn it to alter the outcome**:

- if your motivation equals 1, you can turn one die by **+2 or -2** (but not 1)
- if your motivation equals 2, you can turn one die by **+1 or -1**

You can use each Motivation this way **once per scene/encounter**.

Motivations should be enacted in role-play and carry narrative consequences. If you are motivated by Faith, you should show respect to clergy, observe religious rites, and donate money to the church. If you follow Honour, you should keep your promises and refrain from dishonourable deeds. If you consistently betray your declared values, the GM may reduce your Motivation score.

The "Self" motivation works in the same way but with a twist. First of all, if it equals zero, it doesn't make you a selfless Samaritan with no instinct of self-preservation. Let's assume that your character has a normal will to live and prosper and protect what's theirs. You cannot invoke the Self motivation to avoid harm or earn money through honest work. If you invest in Self as a motivational power, it means that your character is exceptionally driven by the desire to accumulate wealth and climb up the social ladder. You will be able to use this motivation whenever you have a chance to gain an advantage over someone else, to get noticed and earn a favour of someone powerful, to acquire a substantial sum of money, to avoid responsibility by blaming someone else, or rise up by taking someone else's place.

It doesn't mean you are completely amoral. You may have Self = 2 and Honour = 1, or Self = 1 and Duty = 1 and Faith = 1 - in which case the other motivations will limit how far you'll go for self-interest. But any Self motivation means you are always tempted to put yourself first. If there's loot to be shared, you want a larger share. If you can take credit for someone else's work, you'll be tempted to do so. If someone needs to make a sacrifice for the sake of others - you won't be the one (unless you hope it will pay off in the long run). Just like with the other motivations, it should be reflected in role-play, with the Gamemaster authorised to reduce the Self score if the character consistently acts too selflessly.

You have exactly **three** points to distribute among the motivations - or **four**, if you buy one extra for 2 Good Fortune. If you don't want to spend all three, you don't have to - but there's nothing you can exchange them for.

worn (cumulative, up to the max. limit of CHA =6)

- high-quality weapon or horse or a tool-of-a-trade that adds a special Doublet bonus : when you roll two hits on the same scoring number (e.g. **8** and **8**), you get one extra hit (i.e. two hits become three).

1.4. GOOD FORTUNE

If you have any Good Fortune points left, you can spend them on:

- doubling the money to start the game with
- expensive equipment or clothes that adds +1 CHA when

- a rare item which cannot be bought otherwise: such as a combined weapon (e.g. gun-axe) or revolver or grenade launcher (hand mortar) or telescope or astrolabe or portable clock (at GM's discretion, some may cost more than 1 Good Fortune)
- magical item or relic that allows you to use Witchcraft or Arcane Modifier to re-roll (once per game session for each such an item)
- relationship with a powerful person that adds +1 Background in dealings with one specific Faction
- one extra point of Motivation (see → 1.3. Motivation)

for **two** Good Fortune

- one extra Expertise from a career path you have selected at least 3x, for **three** Good Fortune

Fortune points can also be spent on extra modifications to Attributes. This will cost:

- **one** Fortune to permanently add **one** no-limit scoring number to your **lowest** Attribute
- **three** Fortune to change the value of one scoring number to 11 in one Attribute (normally, you are limited to only one 11 - now you get another)

1.5. GEAR UP

To equip your character, choose **5 x Basic Gear**, **1 x Personal Trinket**, and **1 x Plot Hook**.

Basic Gear (choose x5):

- standard soldier's weapon: 1 bladed weapon + 1 knife/dagger, 1 firearm + 9 bullets and powder, 1 bow/crossbow + 9 arrows and quiver, 3 grenades, 1 warhammer or axe, etc.. or 1 lasso (if you want a cheap peasant's weapon such as a wooden club or pitchfork, you may have it for free)
- a piece of armour: 1 helmet, 1 gorget, 1 reinforced gloves, 1 chainmail or chestpiece or cuirass, 1 pair of bracers, 1 gambeson, 1 sheepskin coat, etc.
- 1 horse or trained animal companion: dog, falcon, otter, bear (or livestock, if you prefer)
- tools of the trade: a collection of items you need for regular practice of a particular trade or craft or profession
- travel bag: one medium or large satchel, saddlebag, chest box, or bundle with basic necessities packed for the road

You don't need to list every single item in your travel bags and trade toolkits down to the last chisel, needle, ribbon, handkerchief, and sausage. It's a good idea to list some key items, but it should be assumed that your travel bag has all basic things a person of your standing would need under normal circumstances when they travel, starting with food and weather-appropriate clothing. Likewise, tools of the trade should include all standard paraphernalia needed in everyday practice of a specific profession.

Personal Trinket (choose x1):

- Something with no real value and no mechanical effect, meant to flesh out your character's personality or backstory

Plot Hook (choose x1, or more if you bought something plot-relevant for Good Fortune):

- an item that can initiate or activate a connection with

an NPC: letter of recommendation, legal document with potential leverage, personal belonging someone would like to have back, key to a particular door or padlock, map leading to a hidden spot, symbol of a pagan faith that may put you in trouble when discovered... discuss it with your GM

How to pack it all?

If you like the gritty realism of luggage and transportation, here's a practical inventory scale:

- small pouch the size of a pocket (typical coin purse or belt pouch); or small box (e.g. pencil case or jewellery box); or liquid container (waterskin, flask, bottle)
- small bag or satchel or a medium-size basket or wooden box or barrel, which you can lift and carry (at least for some time) in one hand
- large bag or basket or chest carried with both hands, or on the back, or as a large saddlebag
- two large bags (e.g. pair of saddlebags) or a huge travel chest that cannot be carried long-distance by a single person (so it must take two - or a beast of burden)
- small two-wheel or four-wheel cart, pulled by a person or a draft animal
- large four-wheel cart, wagon or carriage, too heavy to be pulled by a single person for any travel-significant distance - often too heavy for one draft animal

How much coin do I have on me?

A tricky issue! The amount of money your characters begin with depends on what kind of adventuring party you are - and on the story setup the GM throws you in. If your group start off as escapees from Tatar captivity, having been stripped of literally everything - you will have zero coin and no gear but the shirt on your back.

For parties of meagre but not hopeless means, such as camp followers, village craftsmen, impoverished nobles looking for opportunities, Cossacks with some savings

from the last raid, or servants who have recently received some pay, we propose two models:

- **1 floren (30 groshen) per head** - a fair and balanced budget, same for everyone
- **15 + 2d12 groshen** - a roughly similar though randomised amount (17-39 groshen)

In a '**master + retinue**' group, the master usually has a substantial sum but retainers don't. Use this reference for wealth levels:

- **3-5 groshen** - loose people without a master; humble commoners in someone's service; villagers and lone homesteaders who rely on non-monetary economy

- **1 floren** - as above
- **3-6 floren** - tradespeople, lesser gentry in someone's service, soldiers with war booty - anyone whose savings enable them not only to survive but also to buy something every now and then, and maybe even keep a servant
- **10-15 floren** - if you have this much coin on you, you are a well-off business person or landowner or courtier or public official, and you are likely to maintain a few people in your service

If you play as a wealthy **elite** such as royal courtiers, you may have **100 floren** in savings, and 10-15 floren of monthly earnings. If you are supported by a powerful family, it can be ten times more.

A bit of lore on Commonwealthian coins

Big business happens with heavy coins: gold ducats and silver talers, either minted in the Commonwealth or imported from abroad. Small-time everyday trade uses small (though still silver) coins named grosh (groshen).

- Ducat (aka 'red goldpiece') - circa 50 (Polish) groshen
- Taler - circa 30 groshen
- Half-taler - circa 15 groshen

Polish groshen coins: 6-grosh, 3-grosh, 1 grosh, half-grosh

Litvin groshen coins: Litvin grosh (=1,25 Polish grosh), Litvin half-grosh

Smallest coins: solid (shilling) = 1/3 grosh; ternar = 1/6 grosh, denar = 1/18 grosh.

The main unit of account is 1 złoty (literally: 'goldpiece'), often called "floren", equal to 30 Polish groshen or 24 Litvin groshen. Many records and invoices calculate expenses and payments in florens - but no floren coins exist.

What can I buy?

1 floren (30 groshen) can buy food for a month, if you eat reasonably well - or even for three months, if you save on both quality and quantity. Less, if you also have a horse or mule to feed. In daily cost, a humble labourer eats for 0,5 groshen, a townsman or castle guard or lesser gentry for 1 grosh, a rich burgher or noble for 2 groshen, and a royal courtier for 3 groshen. A chicken is 1 grosh or less, a quarter cow is 1 floren or more.

Circa 1 floren is also the typical price for the basic version of a standard weapon (falchion, sword, halberd, hussar lance, matchlock arquebus) or a small piece of protective gear (helmet, bracers, armoured gloves, shield), or a saddle.

A cheap draft horse is about 5-6 floren, and a decent riding horse will cost you 10-12. If you want a trained warhorse, you're looking at 20-30 floren and more.

and a gallon of beer is 1 grosh or even less.

A new pair of shoes costs 10-20 groshen.

Beer, wine and liquor are sold in barrels of varying sizes (120-300 litres), and in gallons (ca. 4 litres), quarts (1/4 gallon = ca. 1 litre), half-quarts (pints), and cups (1/4 quart). A gallon of wine or vodka is about 10 groshen,

There's also the question of quality, artisanship, and ornamentation. The prices above apply to standard, basic versions of goods bought at standard prices at urban markets. They will vary:

Price multiplier	Manufactured items	Mass-produced goods
x 0.5	damaged, filthy, multiply repaired	low quality, or superfluous market
x 1 (default)	basic: cheap materials, no ornaments, but functional	standard quality, stable economy
x 2	decent: durable, good-looking, may have basic ornaments	moderate shortage of supply
x 3	rich: ornate, high-quality materials	high scarcity
unlimited	luxurious: ornate, high-quality, and expensive decorations (gold, silver, ivory, jewels)	extreme scarcity in dramatic conditions, e.g. of food in a hunger-stricken besieged town

Chapter II: Game mechanics

2.1. LOTTO MECHANISMS AND RPG MECHANICS

Game mechanics in **1581** are inspired by LOTTO lottery mechanisms: players roll a handful of twelve-sided dice (d12s), which function like lottery balls. To perform a test, the player:

- begins with a set of pre-selected numbers in the range of 1-12 (like a Lotto player with a set of lucky numbers to bet on)
- rolls a specific number of twelve-sided dice (d12) (like the Lotto ball draw to generate random numbers in the specified range)
- counts how many rolled dice match the pre-selected numbers → this determines the rate of success or failure

This lottery mechanism operates through classic RPG components: Attributes + Skills + Modifiers:

- **Attribute** (value range: 1-6) = how many lucky numbers you score with in a roll
- **Skill** (value range: from 1d12 to 6d12) = how many dice you roll
- **Modifiers** (optional, varied) = modify the dice roll or alter its outcome

Attribute + skill couplings

Attributes are always tested alongside a Skill. If no specific Skill clearly applies, use the following defaults (whether trained or untrained):

- **Muscle** and **Reflexes**: tests of raw physical strength or dexterity use **Athletics**
- **Senses**: tests of general sensory perception call for **Alertness**
- **Charm**: eloquence or charisma rely on **Influencing**
- **Will**: willpower uses **Leadership**
- **Brains**: whichever trained Skill is the most appropriate to the situation

The basic "Attribute + Skill" test may be affected by various **Modifiers**, which may change:

- the number of dice rolled
- the number of lucky numbers selected before the roll
- the results of dice rolls
- the number of hits scored in the test

2.1.1. Character Attributes (values: 1-6)

There are 6 Attributes representing the character's physical (REF, MSC, SNS) and mental (BRN, CHA, WIL) faculties. As a general rule, no Attribute can be lower than 1 or higher than 6. The value of an Attribute tells you how many scoring numbers it has, e.g. REF = 3 means you've assigned three lucky numbers to REFLEXES. This is a sample stat block for Attributes →

Attributes have **permanent** and **current** values:

- permanent = your base capability, as developed through experience and training
- current = permanent values affected by temporary modifiers, such as gear, injuries, or conditions

Reflexes = 3 → 2 - 5 - 12 - X - X - X
(Agility + Speed)

Muscles = 4 → 1 - 3 - 7 - 10 - X - X
(Strength + Stamina)

Senses = 2 → 5 - 12 - X - X - X - X
(Perception + Aiming)

Brains = 2 → 8 - 11 - X - X - X - X
(Intellect)

Charm = 2 → 5 - 8 - X - X - X - X
(Charisma + Eloquence)

Will = 3 → 3 - 4 - 10 - X - X - X
(Courage, Will, Endurance to pain)

Situation	Effect
light wound	-1 all physical (MUSCLE, REFLEXES, SENSES)
heavy wound	-2 all physical (MUSCLE, REFLEXES, SENSES) (and can't attack in the next Combat Roll)
mild/serious illness	-1 / -2 all Attributes
minor/serious shock, e.g. concussion	-1 / -2 SENSES and BRAINS and CHARM
drunk/very drunk	-1 / -2 SENSES and REFLEXES
joyfully drunk	as above, but also +1 CHARM
intimidated or traumatised	-1 WILL

ATTRIBUTE REDUCTION: When the current value is reduced, you deactivate the last assigned scoring number(s) (e.g. -1 MSC, REF, SNS in the stat block above would deactivate "10" in MSC, "11" in REF, and "12" in SNS)

ATTRIBUTE INCREASE: if the current value is increased above your permanent stats, you can freely assign another scoring number for that Attribute. No limits here - other than you cannot repeat a number within the same Attribute, and you cannot exceed six scoring numbers per Attribute.

2.1.2. Character Skills (values: 2d12 - 6d12)

A **trained Skill** starts at the value of 2d12, and can increase to a maximum of 6d12.

Tests of **untrained Skills** can be attempted at 1d12 - but only when it makes sense that a person could succeed without formal training. Many physical actions, such as climbing or dodging, can be successfully attempted this way. But could anyone ever succeed at writing a letter if they don't know how to write? or speak in a foreign language with no knowledge of it? The gamemaster will decide when it makes sense to allow for a test without a trained Skill.

There are three groups of Skills:

- **simple Skills:** they have only one form, such as Driving, Riding, Hunting, Influencing

- **specialised Skills:** they have multiple specialisation areas, such as Writing (Latin), Writing (Cyrillic), and Writing (Hebrew), each treated as a separate Skill
- **combat Skills:** subdivided into Fencing, Melee, and Ranged

A Skill is always tested in combination with an Attribute. Oftentimes, a Skill is naturally tied to one Attribute (e.g. the knowledge of **Heraldry** goes with **BRAINS**; it's hard to imagine another option). But many Skills can be channeled via various Attributes. The player may suggest the most suitable pairing, subject to GM approval.

Example 1

Influencing is the skill of making others do what you want them to do in a subtler way than forceful coercion or intimidation. It covers persuasion, seduction, taunting, provoking, etc. It may pair with:

- **BRAINS** - for persuasion based on logical argumentation, facts, reasoning, common sense
- **CHARM** - for persuasion or provocation based on fast talk, guile, witty remarks, pathos, slogans, friendliness, seductiveness, or personal charisma

Example 2

Tradecraft (gunsmith) is the skilled craft of manufacturing and repairing firearms: pistols, muskets, arquebuses. Manual actions with tools and crafty hands will be based on **REFLEXES**. Visual inspection of a firearm to detect any defects will call for **SENSES**. Inventing an engineering-based modification will rely on **BRAINS**.

Tests of **simple** and **specialised** Skills follow identical rules - **combat** will have exceptions.

Simple Skills		
Skill	Key attribute	What it is for
Riding	REFLEXES	riding on horses, mules, donkeys
Driving	REFLEXES	driving carts and carriages
Swimming	MUSCLE or REFLEXES	swimming
Influencing	CHARM (charm, seduce, deceive) or BRAINS (reason, outsmart)	persuading others to accept your ideas
Bargain	CHARM	haggling for the best price or deal
Heal	BRAINS or REFLEXES	treating wounds, healing illnesses
Interrogating	WILL	forcing others to speak - by threats and by torture
Leadership	CHARM or WILL	issuing commands, intimidating
Boating	REFLEXES or MUSCLE	rowing, sailing, maintenance of boats
Rumours	CHARM or BRAINS	recalling, spreading, collecting rumours
Rummage	SENSES	searching for hidden objects
Carousing	MUSCLE or CHARM	keeping energy and sober mind at parties; keeping others entertained
Stealth	SENSES or REFLEXES	hiding, sneaking, moving quietly
Survival	SENSES or MUSCLE or BRAINS	finding food and shelter in the wild
Alertness	SENSES	noticing things by sight, smell or hearing
Athletics	REFLEXES or MUSCLE	feats of physical strength or agility
Warfare	BRAINS	battlefield tactics, knowledge of military matters
Etiquette	CHARM or BRAINS	behaving properly in high society
Chores	MUSCLE or REFLEXES	daily maintenance and care to keep objects and animals in good condition
Oratory	CHARM	delivering powerful public speeches
Hunting	SENSES or BRAINS	tracking, finding game, organising hunts
Household	SENSES or WILL	domestic and agrarian management
Heraldry	BRAINS	knowledge of heraldry and genealogy

Example (Skill test)

Test **Riding** to stop a horse from rearing.

Character stats: **REFLEXES = 2**, **Riding = 3d12**.

The player has two scoring numbers [**REF 2 - 4**] and rolls 3d12.

Results: (3, 6, 6). Zero hits, the action fails.

Specialised Skills		
Skill (selected)	Key attribute	Specialisation
Education	BRAINS or SENSES	medicine, astronomy, history, cartography, navigation, engineering, rocketry, artillery
Arcane Arts	BRAINS	alchemy, astrology, Kabbalah
Folklore	BRAINS	herbalism, witchcraft, local myths (one region and culture)
Animal Care	MUSCLE or BRAINS or REF.	falconry, livestock, hounds, horses, bears, camels
Tradecraft	MUSCLE or BRAINS or REF.	blacksmith, gunsmith, miller, innkeeper, counterfeiter and many others

Skill (selected)	Key attribute	Specialisation
Politics	BRAINS	foreign, Litva, Ukraine, Prussia, Lesser Poland, Greater Poland, Mazovia
Law	BRAINS or CHARM	Commonwealth law, Magdeburg law, Church law
Writing	BRAINS	Latin, Cyrillic, Hebrew, other script
Local Lore	BRAINS	one land or poviat, or a long trade/campaign route
Language	BRAINS or CHARM	any foreign language, modern or classical
Streetwise	CHARM or BRAINS	Krakow, Vilnius, Gdansk, other
Crime	REFLEXES or BRAINS	forgery, poison, pickpocket, lockpicking
Trickery	CHARM or WILL or REFLEXES	gambling, charlatanry, disguise
Arts	CHARM or BRAINS	painting, sculpting, music, composing, poetry, theatre

Example (Skill test)

Test **Folklore (herbalism)** to identify healing herbs in a witch's hut.

Character stats: **BRAINS = 3**, **Folklore (herbalism) = 3d12**.

The player has three scoring numbers [**BRN 2 - 4 - 10**] and rolls 3d12.

Results: (3, 6, **10**). One hit (number 10): enough to pass an "easy" test.

Combat Skills		
Skill	Key attr.	Weapons covered
Fencing (cut & thrust)	REF/MSC	one-handed cut-and-thrust weapons (sabre, falcion, dussack, swords)
Fencing (thrust)	REF/MSC	one-handed thrusting weapons (rapier, swords)
2H Fencing	REF/MSC	two-handed / hand-and-half sword
Melee (blunt & slash)	REF/MSC	one-handed blunt and slashing weapons (warhammer, axe, pick, mace, club)
2H Melee (blunt & slash)	REF/MSC	two-handed blunt and slashing weapons (bardiche, heavy mace/club, scythe, flail)
Polearms	REF/MSC	two-handed polearms (pike, spear, halberd, war scythe, pitchfork)
Knife Fight	REF/MSC	knives and daggers
Lance	REF/MSC	one-handed spears and lances
Lasso	REF	lasso
Archery	SNS	bow
Crossbow	SNS	crossbow
Firearms	SNS	pistol, arquebus, musket
Grenades	REF/MSC	grenades, improvised bombs
Unarmed (brawl)	REF/MSC	brawl, fist fight, improvised blunt weapons
Unarmed (grapple)	REF/MSC	grappling parrying dagger, shield, firearm, two swords, knife
Dual Weapons (selected)	REF/MSC	(Without this Skill, a weapon in your off-hand is tested at 1d12 . With this Skill trained, you can test it at your Dual Weapon level. E.g. if you have Firearms 5d12 but Dual Weapons: Firearms 3d12, you shoot with your off-hand at 3d12.)

NOTE: Within the "Fencing", "Melee" and "Unarmed" groups, training in one of the Skills allows you to fight with weapons from related Skills with a -1d12 penalty. E.g. Fencing (cut & thrust) = 4d12 also works as Fencing (thrust) = 3d12 and 2H Fencing = 3d12.

The full version of the game will feature unique combat mechanics based on **combat Skills**. For now, we use simplified combat rules that follow the basic "Attribute+Skill" model with some added twists (see → Chapter 3: Simplified Combat Mechanics).

2.2. STATIC AND DYNAMIC SKILL TESTS

In the original LOTTO, you need to score at least 3 "hits" or "successes" (matching numbers) to win something. In **1581**, even 1 "hit" is usually enough to qualify as partial or minimal success, 2 hits = full success, 3 hits = spectacular success.

2.2.1. Static Skill Test

In static skill/ability tests "player vs difficulty", the gamemaster determines how many hits are needed to beat the challenge. For tests with standard (easy) difficulty, 1 successful hit is enough for a partial/minimal success. If the GM decides that the test is difficult, s/he may require no less than 2 hits for a minimal success. For extremely difficult tests, the required number of hits is 3.

his/her efforts. If there is an active opponent, we have a **dynamic confrontation** (see → 2.2.2).

Static tests in **1581** have three difficulty levels: **easy** (1 hit needed to succeed), **hard** (2 hits to succeed), and **extreme** (3 hits to succeed).

The degrees of success are: **minimal** (technically successful, but not entirely satisfying); **full** (action successful with no "buts"); and **spectacular** (performed with elegance and flair and/or with results exceeding expectations).

Static tests are used whenever the character is struggling against the environment and with his/her own competences. In other words, no one is actively opposing

Scored hits	Success (easy test)	Success (hard test)	Success (extreme test)
1	minimal success	FAIL / partial success	FAIL / partial success
2	full success	minimal success	FAIL / partial success
3	spectacular success	full success	minimal success
4	spectacular success	spectacular success	full success
5	spectacular success	spectacular success	spectacular success
6	spectacular, plus ATT boost*	spectacular, plus ATT boost*	spectacular, plus ATT boost*

*Scoring 6 or more hits is like a 'six' in LOTTO: an epic win! Whenever it happens, you can change one scoring number in one Attribute. This time you can ignore the usual limits on scoring numbers: if you want another 11 in your stat block, you can have it (but you still cannot repeat the same number in the same Attribute).

completed with incremental progress through repeated actions (such as gradual destruction of objects with repeated blows/cuts/bites), there is also **partial success**. If the player tries to untie a complex knot, which is a 'hard' task requiring 2 successes on the dice, scoring 1 hit may be counted as a partial success that reduces the difficulty level from 'hard' to 'easy' for the next attempt.

Example

Character is trying to bash through a door, using **MUSCLE = 4 + Athletics = 3d12**.

GM sets the difficulty to "hard" (2 hits required) to bash through, but "easy" to do damage.

1. Player has 4 lucky numbers [**MSC 2 - 8 - 11 - 12**] and rolls 3d12 (results 1, 4, and **8**)

2. Because one die (8) matched a pre-selected lucky number, it counts as one hit.

This is a **partial** success: the door gave in slightly but it's not fully open yet.

JOINT ACTION: Quantitative/Qualitative Modifier

When two or more characters collaborate, they may pool their resources. In game mechanics, this adds a JOINT Modifier (see → 2.2.3. Modifiers) - either the quantitative or qualitative variant.

quantitative - each next person brings his/her force to the group effort, so the effects are multiplied. 20 peasants in harvest time can do 20x the work of a single peasant.

100 infantry shooting at the enemy will fire 100x more shots than a single shooter.

qualitative - when team collaboration increases the efficiency and quality of the work, but does not multiply the effects - it's quality over quantity. For instance, preparation of a fancy feast will benefit from having more than one chef, as they can exchange know-how and optimise mutual inspiration. But bringing in 100x chefs won't make the feast 100x better.

2.2.2. Dynamic confrontations

Use dynamic confrontations when two characters oppose each other actively.

The key thing is to choose **which Attribute + Skill pair** is challenged by which of the opponent. They will often be symmetrical, but often will not.

Example 1 (symmetrical)

In a confrontation of willpower, two opponents are trying to intimidate the other (see → 3.1 Clash of Wills). They both rely on masculine toughness coupled with a threat of violence. It will be a symmetrical test of **WILL + Leadership** against identical **WILL + Leadership**.

Example 2 (asymmetrical)

In a confrontation of willpower, two opponents are trying to intimidate each other. One relies on masculine toughness with a threat of violence. The other invokes the powerful name of his master and protector Duke Voivode, threatening with future consequences. In this confrontation, threats of **WILL + Leadership** clash against **WILL + Influencing**.

In **dynamic confrontations** - player-vs-player or player-vs-NPC - we make a lottery-based dice roll as above, but there are two fundamental differences:

1. No difficulty level is set by the GM. The degree of success/failure results from the number of 'hits' scored by the struggling characters against each other. Mutual hits cancel each other out, so to get 1 successful hit (minimal/partial success), you need to score 1 hit more than your opponent.
2. The dice roll is split into two parts: **Shared Roll + Top Roll**, based on the level of Skills which are being confronted.

Shared/Top Roll

The Shared/Top Roll starts with comparing the level of Skills between the opponents. If the contested Skills (with all active modifiers) are equal, the **players make only one Shared Roll**. If one character has more dice (i.e. higher Skill), they **first make a Shared Roll together**, and then the more skilled one **makes a separate Top Roll**.

1. SHARED ROLL: The number of dice is determined by the **shared** Skill level: if it's 3d12, they roll three d12s; if it's 5d12, they roll five. It doesn't matter who physically rolls the dice.
2. Both sides may - if they can - apply Motivation Modifiers to alter the result of the Shared Roll.
3. Eventually, both sides check how many hits they scored using their individual scoring numbers. If the Shared Roll shows **(5, 7, 12)**, a character with **[WIL 5 - 8 - 10]** would score **one** hit, and a character with **[WIL 5 - 6 - 12]** **two** hits.
4. TOP ROLL: If one character's Skill is higher, the Shared Roll takes place all the same, but the more skilled character gets a Top Roll as a bonus. It uses the 'extra' dice not spent in the Shared Roll. E.g. someone with 4d12 vs someone with 3d12 first spends 3d12 for the Shared Roll, and then rolls the remaining 1d12 left as their Top Roll. Hits scored in the Top Roll are not shared with the opponent.
5. Ultimately, the result of dynamic confrontations is the difference between hits scored by both sides. If one side scores 3 hits and the other scores 1 hit, a score of 3:1 counts as 2:0 - a win by 2 hits.

Example 3 (dynamic confrontation, asymmetrical)

Two opponents are trying to intimidate the other into retreating. One relies on masculine toughness with a threat of violence. The other invokes the powerful name of his master and protector Duke Voivode, threatening the opponent with future consequences. In this confrontation, threats of **WILL + Leadership** will clash against **WILL + Influencing**.

1. Character A has **[WIL 5 - 8 - 10] + Leadership 3d12**. Character B has **[WIL 5 - 6 - 12] and Influencing 4d12**.
2. The level of skill shared between them is 3d12 for the Shared Roll. They roll 3d12 and get **(5, 7, 12)** as shared results. Char A scores **one** hit, Char B scores **two**.
3. Character B rolls an extra 1d12 for the Top Roll. The result = **5**. Even though both characters normally score with **5**, the Top Roll works only for the more skilled one. Therefore, Char A remains at **one hit** and Char B advances from two hits to **three hits**.
4. Ultimately, the confrontation of Char A (1 successful hit) against Char B (3 successful hits) ends with a 2:0 victory for Character B → this counts as winning by 2 hits (full success).

The degree of success follows the standard progression from **minimal success** (winning by 1 hit) to **full success** (winning by 2 hits) or **spectacular success** (winning by 3 or more).

If the GM decides so, a form of a **partial success** may also apply if the result of the Skill test is a tie, but one character has a higher Attribute.

JOINT and GROUP Action

Either 'static Skill tests' or 'dynamic confrontations' may be made for joint actions in which two or more characters join forces:

- two or more characters jointly facing a **static Skill test** against an environment
- one-vs-many: one character in a **dynamic confrontation** with two or more opponents
- many-vs-many: two teams in a **dynamic confrontation**

Regardless of the format, we always use the same mechanics:

- **Static Test:** Attribute + Skill vs a Difficulty Level
- **Dynamic Test:** Attribute + Skill vs Attribute + Skill

The only difference in **joint (collaborative) action** is in a special JOINT Modifier (qualitative and quantitative), which may raise the tested Attribute, Skill, or both (→ 2.2.3. Modifiers to Skill Tests).

2.2.3. Modifiers to Skill Tests

JOINT Modifiers - qualitative/quantitative

This applies in joint action in which two or more characters are working together. The test is made as if by one character, but the levels of the respective Attribute and Skill are taken from the strongest members of the group. For instance, if one character has [Attribute = 2 and Skill = 5d12] and the other character has [Attribute = 6 and Skill = 2d12], we combine the best Attribute (=6) of the latter with the highest Skill (5d12) from the former.

qualitative

It works when collaboration focuses on best quality: to create a better work of art, a more persuasive legal argumentation, a better chance of deciphering a code, etc. If the collaborators' statistics aren't equal, combine them as described above. If all collaborators have equal values of the respective Attribute and Skill, add one +1d12 to the test.

Example 1 (static Skill test + Joint modifier, qualitative)

Test **Folklore (herbalism)** to identify healing herbs in a witch's hut.

Main character stats: **BRAINS = 3, Folklore (herbalism) = 3d12**.

Helper's stats: **BRAINS = 5, Folklore (herbalism) = 1d12**.

Modifier: Because the helper's Attribute is higher (BRN = 5), it is used instead of the main character's (BRN = 3). Folklore (herbalism) = 3d12 remains, as the helper's skill is lower.

The same can be used to mix different Attributes and Skills for a maximum synergy - if it makes logical sense.

Example 2 (static Skill test + Joint modifier, qualitative):

Two characters are writing text for a public speech. One is a lawyer who uses his **BRAINS = 4 + Law (Commonwealthian) 3d12** to make the best legal argument. The other is a courtier who uses his **CHARM 5 + Oratory 3d12** to make it the most eloquent.

Modifier: Because the helper's Attribute is higher (CHA = 5), it is used instead of the main character's (BRN = 4). Their Skill levels are equal (3d12), so no difference here.

quantitative

Quantitative advantage happens when success comes from pooling strengths, not polishing quality. Lifting heavy weights or playing tug-of-war are evident examples. Joint

action still combines the best Attribute and best Skill from the group - but quantitative advantage also adds extra d12 to the roll. The character gets an extra +1d12 for one extra helper, or +2d12 for two or more helpers.

Example 3 (static Skill test + Joint modifier, quantitative)

Test **Athletics** to dig through the rubble of a collapsed house to save a survivor.

Character A: **MUSCLE = 3, Athletics = 2d12.**

Character B: **MUSCLE = 2, Athletics = 3d12.**

Character C: **MUSCLE = 4, Athletics = 2d12.**

Modifier: Use MSC = 4 (highest MSC in team) coupled with Athletics 3d12 (highest Skill in team). Two extra helpers provide +2d12 bonus (quantitative Joint Modifier), effectively raising the roll from 3d12 to 5d12.

In dynamic confrontations between large groups (when at least one side has 10+ people), bonus dice are gained for numerical superiority: +1d12 for a 2-to-1 advantage, or +2d12 for a 3-to-1 ratio or higher.

for success, it is taken with a -1 penalty to the Attribute. Analogously, when a slow and careful execution improves your odds, it is tested with a +1 bonus to the Attribute. The best example is shooting:

- fire two quick shots without a moment to aim → both shots -1 to SENSES.
- take time for a careful aim → +1 to SENSES.

HASTE & CARE Modifiers

Whenever a quick and hasty action lowers the chance

Example (static Skill test + Care modifier)

Test **Folklore (herbalism)** to identify healing herbs in a witch's hut.

Character stats: **BRAINS = 3, Folklore (herbalism) = 3d12.**

Modifier: The character examines the herbs very thoroughly, to the best of their knowledge. This changes **BRAINS** from = 3 to = 4 for the needs of this test.

The player normally scores on 3 numbers [**BRN 2 - 3 - 8**] but now picks one extra [**10**] and rolls 3d12 (results: 5, 6, **10**). One hit (number 10): enough to pass an "easy" test.

EXPERTISE Modifiers

Class-based Expertise(s) allows you to **re-roll one die** after you make a Skill test. See Character Generation → 1.2.2 Career-based Expertise.

Example (static Skill test + Expertise modifier)

Test **Archery** to shoot while galloping on a horse. This is a "hard" test, it requires 2 hits to succeed.

Character stats: **SENSES = 5, Archery = 4d12. Expertise: Horse Archery.**

The player scores on five numbers [SNS 2 - 4 - **6** - 8 - 12] and rolls 4d12 (results: 3, 5, **6**, 10). S/he scores **one** hit on the dice.

Modifier: Thanks to the Expertise, s/he decides to re-roll the '10' and luckily scores another **6** - another success!

GEAR Modifiers

High-quality tools or trained animals (e.g. horses in Riding tests) increase your efficiency in Skill tests that use them. Whenever you **score two hits with a doublet** (i.e. the same scoring number on two dice, e.g. **8 and 8**), it counts as **three hits**. In other words, your **full success** becomes **spectacular**.

Example (Skill test + Gear modifier)

Test **Archery** to shoot while galloping on a horse. This is a "hard" test, it requires 2 hits to succeed.

Character stats: **SENSES = 5, Archery = 4d12. Gear: trained warhorse.**

The player scores on five numbers [SNS 2 - 4 - **6** - 8 - 12] and rolls 4d12 (results: 3, **6**, **6**, 10).

Modifier: Because s/he wins a **doublet hit** (number 6 twice), it counts as **three** hits.

MOTIVATION Modifiers

Morality traits represent values a character cares about and is willing to take risks for. See Character Generation → 1.3. Motivations. They are:

- **Faith** - to please God
- **Honour** - to uphold a personal code
- **Slava** - to win fame and admiration

- **Duty** - to fulfil loyalty or obligation
- **Self** - to seek personal advantage above all

Dedication to these values may be moderate (Motivation = 1) or strong (Motivation = 2). It may also be zero. Once per encounter, the player may use a Motivation to **modify the result on one die** by +2/-2 (with Motivation = 1) or by +1/-1 (with Motivation = 2).

Example (Skill test + Motivation modifier)

Test **Influencing** to sway a Catholic friend towards Calvinism.

Character stats: **CHARM = 4, Influencing = 5d12. Motivation: Faith = 2.**

The player scores on four numbers [CHA 2 - **4** - 6 - 8] and rolls 5d12 (results: 3, **4**, 7, 10, 12). **One** successful hit.

Modifier: Faith = 2 gives the power to change the result on one die by +1/-1. The player grabs the "7" and turns it to "**8**", scoring the **second** hit.

BACKGROUND Modifiers

Family Background may help in social situations in which people may treat you with more respect due to the status of your parents. If you are actively invoking your background when making a CHARM or WILL-based test, you may use the value of your Background instead of that Attribute.

Example (dynamic confrontation + Background Modifier)

You demand an audience with the field hetman. You will test **CHARM + Influencing** against the **WILL + Leadership** of the Captain of the Guard. Your CHA = 2, but your Background = 4 (half-noble). Using your family status as leverage, you make this roll as if your CHA = 4.

Modifier: You have two pre-assigned numbers to CHARM [CHA 4 – 8 –], now you can choose **two more** scoring numbers. For example, [CHA 4 – 8 – **2** – **10**]

MAGIC Modifiers

Magic items or rituals allow the player to re-roll a test once per game session. There are two variants: folk witchcraft and superstition can only re-roll all dice (which may bring even worse results) - whereas educated arcane arts can re-roll one selected die (keeping all other results).

Example (Skill test + Magic modifier)

Test **Riding** to stop a horse from rearing.

Character stats: **REFLEXES = 2**, **Riding = 3d12**.

The player has 2 lucky numbers [**REF 2 – 4**] and rolls 3d12 (results: 3, 6, 6). Zero hits so far.

Modifier: The character has a magic amulet to protect him from harm. The player decides to re-roll the 3d12, hoping for a better result.

TACTICAL Modifiers

Whenever there's a significant situational advantage due to terrain, relative position, careful preparedness, surprise effect, etc., the Gamemaster may grant **one or more extra d12** to the Skill test. Analogically, if the character(s) face a significant disadvantage, the GM may impose a tactical penalty, reducing the number of Skill dice.

Example (dynamic confrontation + Tactical modifier)

Player character vs. an NPC in an Intimidation test (Clash of Wills → see 3.1) - while the NPC is pointing a gun at him. Being held at gunpoint is a significant psychological disadvantage. The GM judges that the player loses -2d12 (alternatively, the GM could add +2d12 to the NPC's test instead).

COMBINED Modifiers

All modifiers can stack in the same test.

Example (Skill test + multiple Modifiers)

Test **Riding** to stop a horse from rearing.

Character stats: **REFLEXES [2 – 4]**, **Riding = 3d12**.

The player rolls 3d12 (results: 9, 9, 11). Zero hits so far.

Magic modifier: The character has a magic amulet to protect him from harm. The player decides to re-roll the 3d12, hoping for a better result. The new results are: 3, 11, 12. Still zero hits.

Motivation modifier: The player invokes Motivation: Slava = 2. The character wants to be admired and respected, so he can't become a laughing stock by falling off his own horse. Motivation = 2 allows him to turn one die by +1, so he turns the "3" to "**4**" to score 1 hit.

MODIFIERS - COMPLETE SHEET

HASTE & CARE: ±1 to Attribute depending on whether the action is done in haste or with care

JOINT: combine best Attribute + best Skill among helpers

- **qualitative:** if all stats equal → +1d12
- **quantitative:** +1d12 (1 helper) / +2d12 (2+ helpers)
(or based on ratio: 2:1 → +1d12 / 3:1 → +2d12)

EXPERTISE: re-roll one die in a relevant Skill test

GEAR: doublet (same result twice) counts as **three hits**

BACKGROUND: use **Background level instead of CHARM or WILL** in social tests

MOTIVATION: turn 1 die by **+2/-2** (Motivation = 1) or **+1/-1** (Motivation = 2)

MAGIC: once per session: re-roll **all dice (witchcraft)** or **one die (arcane)**

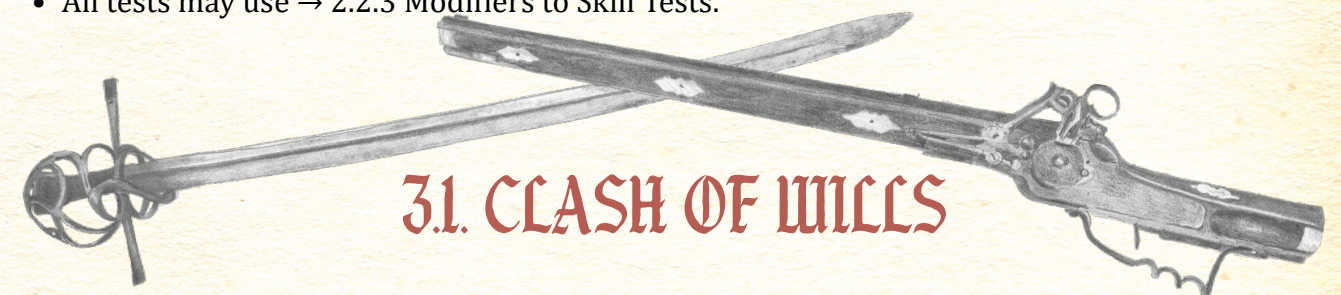
TACTICAL: apply ±d12 depending on terrain, situation, or surprise

Chapter III:

Simplified
combat mechanics

The full version of the game will feature unique combat mechanics. In this version, we want to rely on basic mechanics for skill/attribute tests, so our combat rules follow the basic "Attribute+Skill+Modifiers" model.

- Ranged attacks (shooting and throwing) are → 2.2.1 Static Skill Tests.
- Clash of Wills, Melee Combat, and Chasing/Maneuvering are → 2.2.2 Dynamic Confrontations.
- All tests may use → 2.2.3 Modifiers to Skill Tests.



3.1. CLASH OF WILLS

Unless one party attacks without a warning, combat is usually preceded by a verbal confrontation of taunts, demands and threats. Oftentimes, the side that loses the round of threats backs off without a fight. Many confrontations are won simply by threatening the opponents into retreating or surrendering.

Clash of Wills = **dynamic confrontation** → a Shared/Top Roll confronting **WILL + Leadership** (or other relevant Skills if the GM allows, e.g. Warfare or Influencing).

In confrontations of groups, we test the WILL of group leaders or spokespersons, modified by a **Joint Modifier (quantitative)** based on the number of combatants. Whoever commands a superior force, gains a +1d12 or +2d12 bonus:

- If both groups have less than 10 armed combatants, you get +1d12 bonus for one extra combatant on your side, or +2d12 bonus if you have at least two combatants more than the opponent
- If at least one side has 10+ combatants, the bonus is based on the ratio of numerical superiority: +1d12 bonus for a 2-to-1 advantage, or +2d12 for 3-to-1 advantage and higher.

RELATIVE COMBAT VALUE: Numerical superiority isn't everything. A small elite force may intimidate a large untrained one. Whereas a numerical superiority may add +1d12 or maximum +2d12 to a Clash of Will (and same for Combat Roll → see 3.2 Combat Round), use a cumulative **TACTICAL Modifier** +1d12 for each relative advantage:

- on horseback vs on foot;
- trained vs untrained;
- elite status or particularly bad fame;
- well-armed against poorly armed;
- prepared vs caught unprepared;
- well-rested vs tired;
- a better tactical position (higher ground, or cover, or ambush);
- a coordinated offensive maneuver, e.g. cavalry charge or volley fire.

For example, winged hussars typically gain: 1) on horseback; 2) trained; 3) elite; 4) well-armed → +4d12 Tactical Bonus against untrained and poorly equipped peasant infantry.

Either way - if you want to win a confrontation without a fight, you need to beat the opposing group in a Clash of Wills.

Win by	Success rate	Clash of Wills - effects
1 hit	partial success	they stand down and leave you be - for now
2 hits	full success	they back off and leave, you are in control of the place (but they leave in order and may come back soon)
3 hits	spectacular success	depending on what you wanted: they either surrender, or flee in panic (and won't come back soon)

If your leader loses a Clash of Wills by 2 or more hits, and your group retreats or surrenders, you all suffer -1 penalty to WILL. This “**intimidated**” condition lasts until the end of this encounter.

SPECIAL: If you have any Expertise from the Fighter's list, you can start a fight immediately, even if you lost the Clash of Wills. If any one on your team initiates combat after a lost Clash, those who have a Fighter's Expertise may join the fight right away.

Those without a Fighter's Expertise must either retreat

or take cover or idly stand by or drop their weapon to signal a will to surrender - or maybe use a non-combat Skill to attempt to deescalate. They must wait until the next Combat Round to pick up the courage to fight.

Attacked Without Warning

If you are attacked without a warning, you make the same type of roll. If your group wins, you all can act in combat normally. If your group loses, the effects are more painful than a lost Clash of Wills. This time the enemy aren't offering a non-violent way out - they want to spill your blood:

Lose by	Condition	Attacked Without Warning - effects
1 hit	intimidated	same as losing a Clash of Will: fighters with Expertise act normally, others can't attack in this Combat Round
2 hits	faltering	even fighters cannot attack offensively in this Combat Round, they can either take a defensive stance or retreat fighting on the move
3 hits	fleeing	either flee or surrender: non-fighters flee in panic - fighters with Expertise can fight while retreating

3.2. COMBAT ROUND

Combat takes place in short rounds lasting a few seconds each.

MELEE is resolved through Dynamic Confrontations (Shared/Top Rolls).

RANGED attacks are resolved with Static Skill Tests (GM sets difficulty).

Each character has **four actions** per Combat Round to spend on movement, attacks, reloading, or non-combat Skills.

- **rapid shot/throw** = 1 action (Haste Modifier -1 to SNS/REF)
- **normal shot/throw** = 1 action
- **carefully aimed shot** = 2 actions (Care Modifier +1 to SNS/REF)
- **rapid movement** = 1 action (1 jump, dodge, dismounting, duck for cover, lunge)

- **normal movement** = 1 action (running 3 steps, mounting, climbing a few stairs)
- **reload pistol** = 3 Combat Rounds
- **reload arquebus/musket** = 5 Combat Rounds
- **melee/fencing attack & defense** = non-standardised (see → 3.2.4 Melee)

Sequence of actions in a Combat Round:

1. rapid attacks (shots, throws, melee attacks)
2. rapid movement (1 quick jump, dodge, lunge, ducking, dismounting)
3. normal attacks
4. normal movement
5. carefully aimed/prepared attacks

Attack combined with movement (i.e. you must either get in position to shoot/throw, or take a step or lunge forward to reach with a melee attack) is resolved in the movement slot.

3.2.1. RANGED Combat

Characters not engaged in Melee may:

- spend up to 4 move/shoot/throw actions
- spend up to 3 move actions to enter a melee (see → 3.2.4 MELEE)
- take other actions (e.g. reload)

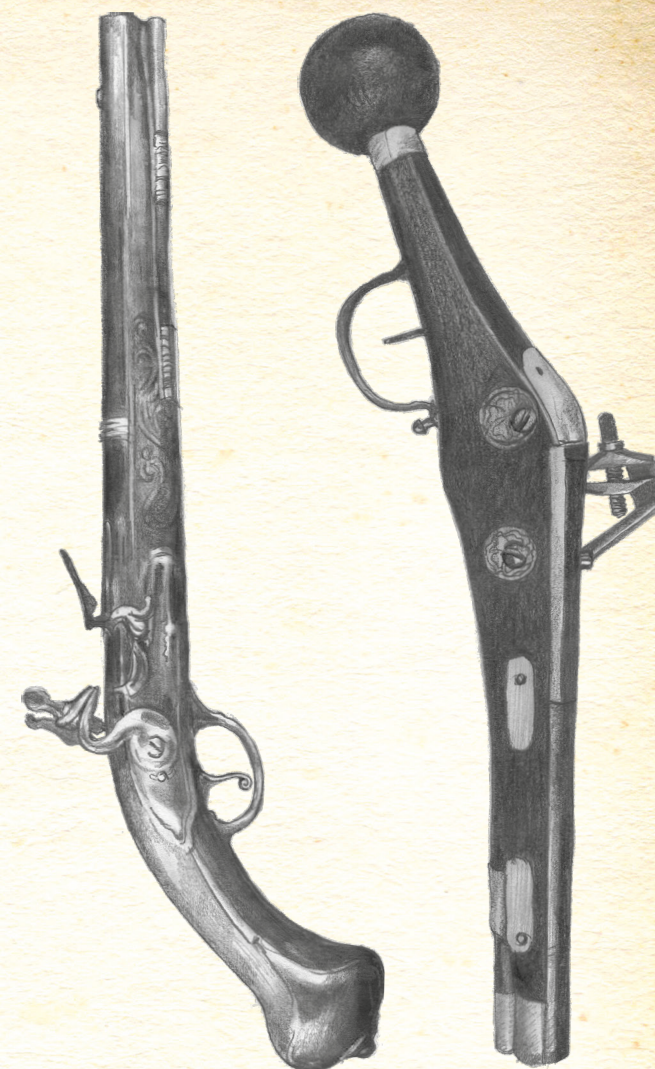
SHOOTING/THROWING: One combat round has **four** actions to spend on Shoot/Throw & Move & Reload actions. An unmoving shooter may fire up to 4 rapid shots, or 2 normal shots, or 1 carefully aimed shot.

A ranged attack = a standard test of **Attribute+Skill (+Modifiers)**, vs. difficulty level (see → 2.2.1 Static Skill Test). For all RANGED weapons, the key Attribute is **SENSES**. For all THROWN weapons, it is **REFLEXES**.

- **Shooting:** SNS + Firearms/Archery/Crossbow
- **Throwing:** REF + Spear/Knife/Grenade/Lasso/one-handed Melee weapon

When spears, knives, one-handed maces or axes or warhammers are used for throwing, they use the same Skill dice as in melee.

Based on the GM's assessment of weather conditions, visibility, and distance, the test may be **easy**, **hard**, or **extreme**, or even close to impossible with an impossibly high number of hits required to actually hit.



Example (Archery):

Attribute: SENSES = 3, Skill: Archery = 4d12.

The GM sets difficulty to “hard”, i.e. 2 hits required for success.

The player has 3 lucky numbers [SNS 2 - 4 - 6] and rolls 4d12 (results: 4, 12, 12, 7) = only 1 hit (on number 4). It would be enough for an “easy” target, but not for a “hard” one. The player misses this shot - unless s/he applies a Modifier to score one more hit.

The default situation for **easy** shooting/throwing is a human-sized and unmoving target located at approximately 50% of the weapon's effective range. This target requires only 1 hit to hit:

- 5 steps (say, meters) for thrown knife, warhammer, hand-axe, club, mace, lasso
- 10 steps for thrown small grenades or heavy stones

- 15 steps for thrown spear
- 10/20/25 steps for small/medium/large pistol
- 50 steps for good-quality arquebus
- 75 steps for good-quality musket

Modifiers to difficulty level for distance, size and cover apply. For instance: a fast-moving target is always **hard** or **extreme**.

Difficulty level
(hits required to hit)

Situation

+1 (higher difficulty)

- distance: target close to 100% max effective range
- movement: fast-moving target (e.g. dodging)
- movement: fast-moving shooter (running or riding)
- visibility: reduced due to fog or darkness or foliage
- small target: target behind 50% cover or 50% smaller than human body
- side wind (for firearms)

+2 (higher difficulty)

- very small target (about 20% of a human body)
- distance: beyond 100% of max effective range
- visibility: very low
- side wind (for archery/crossbows)

+3 or more (ask GM)

- very tiny and precise target: a feather off someone's cap, or bulls-eye in an archery contest, or a small flying bird

-1 (lower difficulty)

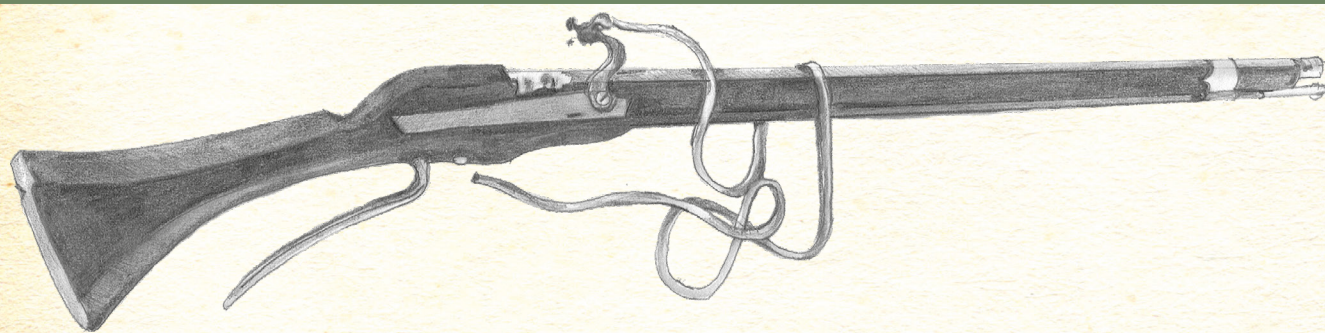
- distance: target at about 25% of max effective range
- large target: rider on horseback

-2 (lower difficulty)

- very large target: group of soldiers in tight formation
- distance: just 2-3 steps away

reduced to 1

- near point-blank shot/throw in melee



DODGING: if a character is shooting/throwing at someone who is actively trying to dodge, for simplicity we still test shooting as a static skill test (not dynamic confrontation). The dodge action will increase the test difficulty from "easy" to "hard", or from "hard" to "extreme" - because it's a 'moving target'.

AIMING: Taking time to aim adds +1 bonus to SENSES (for shooting) or REFLEXES (for throwing) (Care Modifier).

RAPID SHOTS: Shooting or throwing with haste costs -1 SENSES (shooting) or REFLEXES (throwing) (Haste Modifier). It can be used to:

- shoot/throw first before the enemy attacks
- rapidly change/move into position and shoot in one action
- shoot 2 guns (or throw 2 thrown weapons) with both hands in one action. If you score more than 1 success on the dice, both projectiles hit their targets

RELOAD: Reloading a pistol takes 3 Combat Round, and a musket/arquebus takes 5 Combat Rounds. Unjamming

a jammed wheellock takes 1, 2 or 3 actions - 1 action with 3+ successful hits, 2 actions on 2 hits, 3 actions with 1 hit. Placing a bowstring on a bow/crossbow takes 1 Combat Round, and replacing a broken string takes 2 Combat Rounds.

MISFIRES: One d12 in tests of Firearms/Archery or Grenades should be designated as a Misfire Die (e.g. different colour). It works as a normal die for scoring lucky numbers, plus triggers MISFIRE effects. For wheellock firearms (and for makeshift / improvised bombs), a misfire happens whenever the Misfire Die rolls 1 or 2. For matchlock and flintlock guns (and military-grade grenades), misfire happens only when the Misfire Die shows 1. For bows and crossbows, when the Misfire Die shows 1 you re-roll it immediately - and if it's 1 again, the bowstring breaks.

- a firearm after a misfire is still loaded and can be fired in the next action
- wheellock special rule: if two misfires happen in a row, the lock jams and it needs a successful "easy" test of REF + Firearms to fix

- a grenade or bomb is still functional but the fuse either fell out or extinguished
- a broken bowstring cannot be mended, you need a new one

Damage (wound) dealt depends on the number of successful hits you score against the GM-set minimum. For "easy" shots it is enough to win by 1 hit on one d12. For "extreme" difficulty you need minimum 3 hits to count as minimal success, so in

"extreme" shooting 3 hits count as 1 success - and it would take 5 hits to score 3 successes.

LASSO: When thrown, lasso deals no wounds. It can only be used for "precision" aiming: 1 hit means a weak hold from which the target may easily escape, 2 hits is a strong hold, and 3 hits is a perfect hold with +1d12 Tactical advantage to control - or wound by suffocation - the caught target in the next Combat Round.

YOUR GOAL (ranged)	win by 1	win by 2	win by 3 or more
lethal combat	light wound	heavy wound	fatal wound
wound, not kill	fatal wound	heavy wound	light wound
precision	partial success (your shot hit the target but didn't strike clean)	clean strike	clean strike with ease (+1d12 Tactical bonus to next action, if applicable)

If you score some hits but not enough to meet the difficulty level, you simply miss.

If you have zero scored hits, you accidentally hit someone (light wound) or something else - if such an unintended target is nearby.

3.2.2. Armour saving throw

If the target is wearing armour that might have been struck, they make an Armour Saving Throw (AST). The armour has a protective effect when the result of the AST (1d12) falls within the armour's protective

range (e.g. 1-2 for minimal armour, 1-4 for 25% of body protection, or 1-11 for full body armour).

AST is used against both ranged and melee attacks.

AST Roll (1d12)	Armour Cover
1-2	minimal, e.g. a helmet or bracers
1-4	about 25% of the body seen from the direction of the attack
1-7	about 50% of the body, e.g. cuirass + helmet
1-10	about 75% of the body, e.g. cuirass + helmet + faulds + shoulder pieces
1-11	about 90% of the body, such as the full cuirassier's armour: from closed helmet all the way to armoured leg protection
12+	armour bypassed: no protection
REF/SNS modifier	REF or SNS attack: the number of successful hits is added to the AST Roll
MSC modifier	MSC-based attack with spectacular success (3+ hits): it ignores 1 level of armour protection (i.e. strong armour works like light armour; light armour has no effect) if the attack is dealt with a two-handed weapon (also: mine/grenade explosion in close range; or hit from a cannon ball):
2H modifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 successful hit ignores 1 level of wound reduction • 2 hits ignore 2 wound reductions • 3 hits ignore 2 wound reductions and also break the armour

If your AST Roll (with modifiers) is higher than your current armour class, then your armour has no effect.

If your AST Roll (with modifiers) falls within your armour's protective range, the armour can reduce the severity of wounds by -1 (light protection) or -2 (strong protection) on a scale of:

Wounds	Severity	Effects
-	nothing	none
0	scratch/bruise	none, but counts as "first blood" in duels
1	light wound	-1 REF/MSC/SNS
2	heavy wound	-2 REF/MSC/SNS; can't attack in next Combat Round; then actions reduced to 2 per Combat Round
3	fatal wound	reduced to 1 slow movement action per Combat Round; will die unless the wound is stabilised
4	instant death	irreversible death

STRONG ARMOUR (-2 Wound Reduction): all plate armours; chainmail (but only against cuts and bullets); two layers of light armour (e.g. chainmail on gambeson)

LIGHT ARMOUR (-1 Wound Reduction): all leather armours; padded armours (gambesons); chainmail against piercing and blunt weapons



3.2.3. Chasing and maneuvering

Besides shooting, Ranged Combat may include fleeing, chasing, and maneuvering to gain a tactical advantage. This is a **dynamic confrontation** based on REF + Athletics/Riding/Driving.

Joint Modifiers apply only if it makes situational sense: a group of armed servants chasing a thief inside a castle may indeed deserve a Joint Modifier, as they can effectively cooperate to corner him in tight spaces. But the same group would gain no such advantage chasing him in open fields.

Winning by:

- 1 hit - slight increase (if you flee) or reduction (if you chase) of distance to enemy

- 2 hits - major increase or reduction, or keeping exact distance if you wish, plus a small Tactical modifier to next round (at GM's discretion)
- 3 hits - as above, plus a strong Tactical modifier to next round (at GM's discretion)

TACTICAL Modifier applies for different categories of mobility. A person on foot can't outrun a horse in the open. An armoured rider will find it hard to outmaneuver a footman in the woods. Below you will find speed ratings and maneuverability ratings for pedestrians, riders, and vehicles. The Tactical Modifier applies as a penalty: you lose -1d12 from your Skill test for every category of speed or maneuverability (whichever applies more) you are below your adversary.

Rating	Speed	Maneuverability
1	Light horse	Person on foot, unburdened
2	Horse with heavy load	Light horse
3	Horse-drawn cart, light	Person on foot, armoured
4	Horse-drawn heavy cart or carriage	Horse with heavy load
5	Person on foot, no heavy load	Horse-drawn cart, light
6	Person on foot, armoured	Horse-drawn heavy cart or carriage

3.2.4. MELEE Combat

A Combat Roll in MELEE is always a **dynamic confrontation**, resolved via a Shared/Top Roll. For all MELEE weapons (Fencing, Melee, Polearms, Knife Fight, Lance) and unarmed combat, the key Attributes are **REFLEXES** and **MUSCLE**, tested with the appropriate Combat Skills.

When MELEE Combat Round begins, the player must decide:

1. which ATTRIBUTE + Skill to use with which weapons
2. to fight Offensively or Defensively
3. what intended outcome they aim for

In group confrontations - either one-to-many or many-to-many - the Shared/Top Roll is modified by a **JOINT** Modifier (quantitative) for team effort as normal.

SUPERIOR REACH: When melee starts and one combatant has a clear reach advantage, it counts as a Tactical Modifier (+1d12 to the Combat Roll). If they win the Combat Roll, the tactical bonus persists. If they lose, the adversary has closed the distance and this advantage is lost.

MOUNTED VS ON FOOT: A rider against a footman always has +1d12 Tactical Bonus in melee - unless the footman wields a polearm with Superior Reach (see above), in which case the bonuses cancel out.

MOUNTED SABRE: In mounted combat, the sabre is a superior weapon: it has +1d12 Tactical Bonus against other melee weapons used by enemy riders. If the enemy has Superior Reach, the bonuses cancel out.

DISTANCE CONTROL: Distance in melee is crucial if one combatant has a superior reach (longer weapon), and if any combatant wields a shorter weapon in the other hand, and if unarmed grappling is involved. There are four melee distance tiers:

- out of reach (disengaged) - melee attacks impossible without movement to close distance
- weapon's reach (with or without a superior reach) - melee attacks possible from both sides with their primary weapons; off-hand shorter dual weapons can only parry
- arm's reach - primary weapons as well as secondary (Dual Weapons) can be used effectively to deal wounds
- close quarters - only unarmed attacks and very short weapons (knives, blunt objects) and hilt punches apply

To shorten distance, you must act **offensively**. If you win this Combat Round, you successfully shift the distance by one or two steps closer.

To increase the distance - or hold it while the enemy is trying to close - you must act **defensively**. If you win, you either maintain or increase the distance by one or two steps (e.g. escape from close quarters to weapon's reach, or from arm's reach to out-of-reach).

TWO WEAPONS: If the character wields two one-handed weapons, or a weapon + shield, s/he sums up both d12 pools in the Combat Roll. If s/he has the **Dual Weapons** skill trained for that off-hand weapon, s/he uses the full skill level (so the absolute maximum for a MELEE Combat Roll with two weapons is 12d12: a theoretically possible combination of 6d12 training in a primary Fencing/Melee weapon + 6d12 in a Dual Weapon). If s/he has no training in that Dual Weapons, s/he will only roll 1d12 for it.

- at **weapon's reach**, shorter secondary weapons can parry, but not attack → hits scored on Dual Weapons dice can only nullify the enemy's hits but cannot deal wounds
- at **arm's reach**, hits scored with primary and secondary weapons are equal → you can stab with a parrying dagger or hack with a hand-axe or bash with your shield

POINT-BLANK SHOT: It's possible to fire a pistol or throw a thrown weapon with your off-hand during melee. Special rules:

- you take a -1d12 penalty: lose one die from your melee Combat Roll
- shooting/throwing is a Static Skill Test using appropriate Dual Weapons (Firearms, or a throwing weapon) skill
- always based on REFLEXES, and has "easy" difficulty due to point-blank distance
- if done as a Rapid Shot/Throw (-1 Haste Modifier), it is resolved before the Shared Roll - if done as a normal shot, it is resolved after the Shared Roll
- if you're making the Top Roll, you can also shoot/throw before (Rapid) or after (Normal) the Top Roll

SHOT VS BLADE: When opponents aren't yet engaged in melee but are within a short distance, one may try to shoot while the other charges. The shooter is not using a Dual Weapons skill, but is trying to shoot the enemy using the primary weapon and primary hand. In this special case, shooting/throwing will not be a Static Skill Test, but a **dynamic confrontation**:

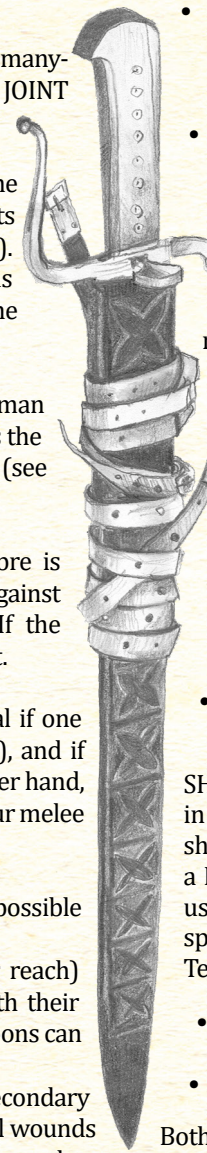
- shooter's SNS + Firearms/Archery (or REF + a throwing weapon skill)
- against meleeist's REF/MSC + melee weapon skill.

Both try to strike first, which should be a Rapid attack with a Haste Modifier on both sides. For convenience, we may ignore it, as this modifier is equal for both.

Attributes and Skills

The player chooses between REFLEXES and MUSCLE as the basis for the Combat Roll.

This Combat Roll will test the character's Combat Skill appropriate to what s/he's using as the primary weapon. If s/he is fighting with two weapons, two Combat Skills will be involved. For instance, s/he may use **REFLEXES [3 - 6 - 8 - 11] + Fencing (thrust) 4d12 + Dual Weapons (Parrying) 2d12**.



Offense vs Defense

Combatants must choose between offensive and defensive in each Combat Round.

If you fight **defensively**:

- if you have the Top in the Shared/Top Roll, after the Shared Roll you may switch REF to MSC or vice versa
- if you win the Combat Roll, you either keep or increase the distance to whichever is optimal for you for the next Combat Round
- if the effect is "mutual light wound", you only get a "scratch/bruise"

If you attack **offensively**:

- if you have the Top in the Shared/Top Roll, you simply add the Top hits (if any) to your Shared Roll results
- if you win the Combat Roll, you may shorten the distance to whichever is optimal for you for the next round



Example (Dual Weapons in Melee):

MUSCLE = 3, REFLEXES = 4, Fencing (cut&thrust) = 4d12, Dual Weapons (Melee) = 3d12. With another weapon in the off-hand, the player rolls a total of 7d12, choosing REFLEXES or MUSCLE.

For **MUSCLE** she has three scoring numbers [MSC 1 - 2 - 3] and rolls 4d12 (results: 4, 7, 1, 11) = 1 hit on **Fencing (cut&thrust)** as the primary weapon, plus 3d12 (results: 1, 3, 3) = 3 hits on **Dual Weapons (Warhammer)**.

Assuming that the opponent scores only 2 hits, there are two variants: If the character offensively entered (or already was in) the distance of **arm's reach**, she can count all 4 hits toward the wound. Her 4 hits vs enemy's 2 hits → winning by 2 hits. In lethal combat this is a heavy wound.

If the character fought at **weapon's reach**, she cannot use any of the 3 hits scored on the Dual Weapon to deal wounds. She uses 2 of the 3 off-hand hits to nullify the enemy's 2 hits - but she can only use the 1 primary-weapon hit to determine the effect. In lethal combat 1 hit = light wound.

Intended Outcome - LETHAL COMBAT

Before the roll, each combatant **declares what they want to achieve** in this round. One option is **lethal combat**. If you are literally fighting for your life, your purpose is to hurt the enemy badly - and you don't care whether they survive. You want them off the board immediately so they lose the chance to hurt you.

Once the goals are established, both sides make the Shared/Top Roll and compare the results. Sometimes the fight ends immediately with one side fatally wounded - sometimes it continues in the next round with a new Combat Roll.

The effects of winning a Combat Round depend on **what you wanted as success**. If it's **lethal combat**, you want to eliminate the enemy as quickly as possible. The more hits you score on the dice, the deadlier wound you deal to the enemy.

Here's how you win when you beat their Combat Roll:

- if none of you score any successes, you all survive it without a scratch
- if your successes are equal, you both get **light wounds** (mutual hits)
- if you win by just 1 success, you deal them a **light wound** and they remain a threat
- if you win by 2 successes, you deal a **heavy wound** and they can't attack in the next combat round (but may do so after the first shock passes, reduced to 2 actions per combat round)
- if you win by 3 successes, you deal a **fatal wound** and they are out of this fight for good
- optionally, the GM may also introduce the fourth level: if you win by 4+ successes, it's an **instant kill**
- if you fight against multiple foes, you can divide your successful hits among them as you please, e.g. if you scored 3 hits you may deal 2 hits to one enemy and 1 hit to another

YOUR GOAL (melee)

win by 1

win by 2

win by 3

win by 0

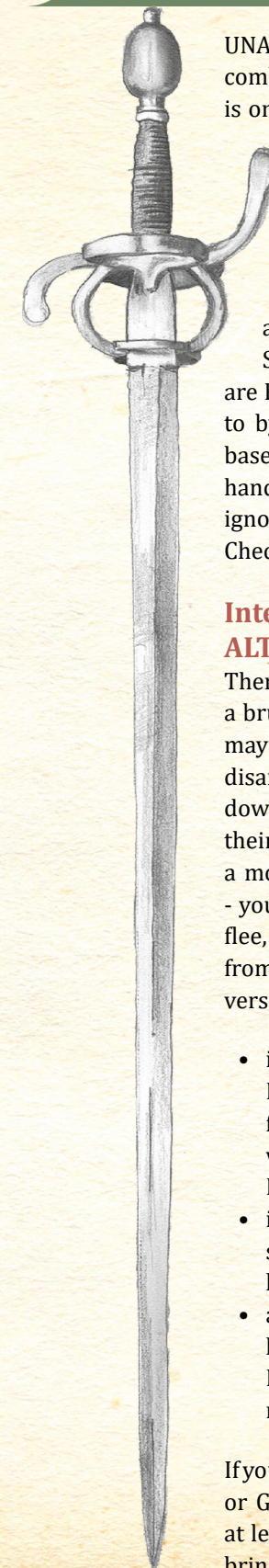
lethal combat

light wound

heavy wound

fatal wound

mutual light wound



UNARMED: If you win in Unarmed combat, the severity of the wounds dealt is one degree lower: not fatal but heavy; not heavy but light; not light but merely a bruise.

ARMOUR: If the wounded target is wearing armour, the severity of wounds can be reduced with an AST Roll (see → 3.2.2 Armour Saving Throw). If your melee attacks are REF-based, you have a higher chance to bypass the armour. If they are MSC-based, and/or if you strike with a two-handed weapon, you have a chance to ignore the protective effect of the armour. Check the AST Roll table for details.

Intended Outcome - ALTERNATIVE TACTICS

There are other goals in combat beyond a brutal kill-or-be-killed. Sometimes you may try something more spectacular - disarming the enemy, or knocking them down, or hitting a very precise spot on their body to show off your finesse (cut a moustache, or ear, or hat). Sometimes - your aim is to disengage from melee to flee, or conversely, to close the distance from armed combat to grappling (or vice versa). For instance:

- in an honourable duel "to first blood", Player 1 declares he wants to use the first opportunity to draw **first blood** without harming the opponent - and Player 2 declares the same
- in the same duel, Player 1 declares the same as above, but Player 2 declares he wants to **disarm** the opponent
- assaulted by two robbers who want to kill him (they go for **lethal combat**), Player 1 wants to disengage from melee and run away (his goal is **flee**)

If you want to **DISARM** or **FELL/UNHORSE** or **GRIP** the enemy, you need to win by at least 2 successes - winning by 1 won't bring you any advantage. If you win by 2

or more, they are temporarily unarmed/downed, and everyone who attacks them may get a +1d12 Tactical Bonus.

If you attempt to **PUSH** someone **OFF/DOWN** a wall or well or into any specific place, the ultimate effect will depend on what this location does to them. However, if you and the enemy's hits cancel out to 0, you both fall into the trap. If you win by 1, you only move half-way in this direction. If you win by 2, you move half-way and deal a light wound. If you win by 3, you have them right where you wanted.

If you try to **KNOCKOUT** by a powerful blow to the head or torso (armed or unarmed combat) or by a suffocating grapple (unarmed only, or lasso), winning by 1 hit succeeds but is a fatal wound, winning by 2 succeeds but is a heavy wound, winning by 3 succeeds with a light wound.

If you duel to **FIRST BLOOD** and try not to do real harm, winning by 1 deals a light wound unintentionally, you need to win by 2 or 3 to make no harm.

If you want to show off **FINESSE** with non-lethal but very precise cuts, such as someone's ear, moustache, cap feather, etc., it's either all or nothing. Either you win by 3 and succeed, or you get zero effect. Use the same rules if you want to put a gun to someone's chest or stomach and threaten them with a point blank shot.

If you want to terrorise someone by putting a **BLADE-to-THROAT**, or to heart, or stomach, it is a risky business. You can unintentionally kill them when they make a sudden move.

If you want to **FLEE** from Melee by moving out of range, winning by 1 cost you a **light wound**, winning by 2 is a full success (this Combat Round ends), and winning by 3 gives you +1d12 Tactical Bonus to the next round.

YOUR GOAL (melee)	win by 1	win by 2	win by 3	win by 0
lethal combat	light wound	heavy wound	fatal wound	mutual light wound
disarm, fell, grip, unhorse	nothing	full success	full success (+1d12 Tactical next round)	nothing
push off/down	half-way	half-way + light wound	full success (effect varies)	mutual fall
knockout (alive)	knockout + fatal wound	knockout + heavy wound	knockout + light wound	nothing
first blood (no harm)	first blood + light wound	first blood, no harm	first blood, no harm	mutual first blood or bruise
flee	disengage, but get light wound	disengage	disengage (and +1d12 Tactical)	mutual light wound
finesse	nothing	nothing	full success (no harm or scratch as intended)	mutual light wound
blade to throat	nothing	full success + light wound	full success (+1d12 Tactical)	fatal wound

Number of Actions in MELEE

Generally, we have **four** actions in a Combat Round, and these are precisely defined for Ranged Combat. In Melee, however, we don't want to over-define all possible cuts, thrusts, lunges, footwork, dodging, parrying, feints and all. We'd rather leave the details of combat maneuvers to the imagination and narrative preferences of players.

A Combat Roll resolves a **stage** in a MELEE confrontation. It's not a single attack, nor is it the whole encounter. One test resolves a flurry of combat actions that ultimately concludes in:

- a wound, or
- a spectacular effect that may not include wounding (disarming, tripping over etc.)
- disengagement from melee
- change of status from armed to unarmed (closed quarters) or vice versa

How exactly the fight unfolds shall be described narratively in whatever detail the players wish.

End of Combat Round

After the Combat Roll and its outcomes are resolved, combatants may:

- continue the melee into the next round
- disengage from / stop the melee

If both combatants try to disengage, it happens automatically: they just stop to take a break. If only one wants to disengage but the other doesn't, then disengaging may only be enforced if that character wins a Combat Round with **FLEE** as his/her declared intention.

OPTION: Fast Combat

Normally, a MELEE Combat Roll is a dynamic confrontation in which both combatants rely on REF- or MSC-based scoring numbers in a Shared/Top Roll. This is possible if both sides have stat blocks with scoring numbers.

Fast Combat is a convenient option for nameless NPCs, whom you see for a split second on a battlefield. Here, only the player counts his/her successful hits on the scoring numbers. Random enemies don't need full stat blocks with scoring numbers. Instead, they just need a **Challenge Level**: number between 2-6 that says how dangerous they are in combat.

In general, CL = 6 is an absolute killing machine, and CL = 2 is an untrained weakling. CL 1 is possible only if it's a child or someone severely disabled. But CL is a relative value - the GM should take into account all tactical modifiers that may increase or decrease the combat value of that NPC in that situation. A trained soldier of CL = 4 may be counted as CL = 6 if s/he has superior reach and higher ground.

To count the number of successful hits for the NPC, the GM simply rolls 1d12. The range of successes is between 0 and 6 - always limited by the Challenge Level. If the NPC has CL = 3, s/he can score 1, 2 or 3 successes as in the table below - but dice results of 4, 5 or 6 count as zero. Only if the NPC has CL = 6 can s/he score up to 6 hits.

To resolve the Shared/Top parts of the Combat Roll, the NPC's Challenge Level counts as Skill level.

If the NPC has the Top Roll, s/he doesn't get it. The player simply rolls all Skill dice s/he has, and the GM rolls 1d12 for the NPC's successes as above. The same happens if the player has the Top Roll and attacks **offensively**.

If the player has the Top Roll and fights **defensively**, s/he may choose to split the roll:

- Shared Roll: player rolls the Shared dice, GM rolls the 1d12 NPC Fast Combat, and both compare the number of successful hits,
- Top Roll: player rolls his/her Top dice to (hopefully) increase the number of hits (and s/he can switch between REF/MSR or point-blank shot, as usual in defensive tactics)

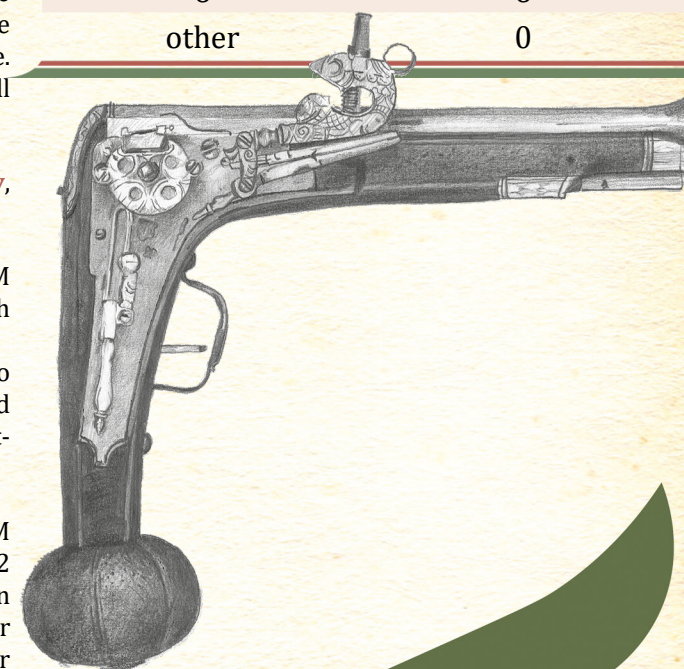
In combat with multiple NPC opponents, the GM rolls either one extra 1d12 or two extra 1d12 for the opponents. The rules are the same as in the Joint Modifier: +1d12 for one extra fighter or a 2-to-1 ratio, and +2d12 for two extra fighters or a 3-to-1 ratio.

OPTION: Bad Luck

If you roll "1" and "12" together, it's a "13" that brings bad luck: you slip and fall, or drop/break your weapon, etc. (GM decides). If it happens due to an Arcane or Witchcraft Modifier, it also nullifies all your successes. If Arcane or Witchcraft brings you "6, 6, 6", bad luck will follow you all day.

1d12 NPC Fast Combat

1d12 NPC Fast Combat	Successful hits (limited by CL)
1 or 11	1
2 or 12	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
other	0



Chapter IV: Characters and career paths

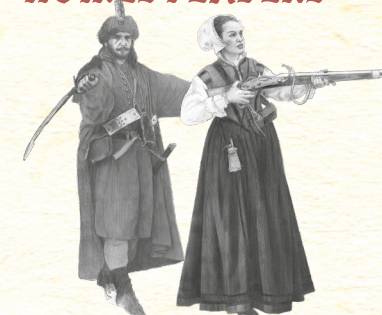


FIGHTERS



Cavalry, Infantry, Irregulars,
Swordsman

HOMESTEADERS



Landed Noble, Lady of the Manor,
Cossack Elder, Steward

SCHOLARS



Army Engineer, Lawyer,
Physician, Astronomer/Astrologer

LABOURERS



Camp Follower, Villager,
Household Servant

CLERICS



Priest, Nun,
Friar

TRADESPEOPLE



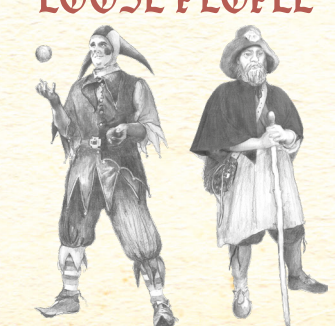
Barber Surgeon, Trader,
Craftsman

COURTIER



Court Lady, Privy Servant,
Artist, Councillor

LOOSE PEOPLE



Performer, Vagabond,
Pedlar

FIGHTERS

Key Attributes
REFLEXES, MUSCLE, WILL

Skills
Alertness, Athletics, Leadership, Warfare,
Bargain, Riding, Stealth, Survival, Rummage,
Rumours

Combat skills
all

Expertise
All subclasses: Stand Your Ground
Weapon of Choice
Swordsman: Duelist
Irregulars: Sneaky
Chaikas
Cavalry: Horse Archery
Born in the Saddle
Infantry: Firepower
Meleeist

Burden
Battle Wounds



The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is a land in turmoil, positioned on the frontlines of frequent and brutal conflicts. Tatar raids scourge the southeastern borderlands, Muscovy looms threateningly in the east, and domestic banditry plagues roads between cities and on the mountain passes. In such times, the ability to fight is not just a virtue – it is a necessity for survival, the defense of one's family, and the protection of one's community.

What distinguishes a fighter from an ordinary person defending their home is profession: fighters live by the sword. This category includes all kinds of fighters – regular infantry, cavalry and artillery as well as domestically trained sword masters and armed servants. At the same time, the chaos of war breeds predators: bandits, marauders, and mountain brigands like the Carpathian opryshoks.

Fighters dedicate themselves to the art of combat. They train their bodies relentlessly and hone their skills to a high level of mastery. Their physical presence alone – seasoned, disciplined, and often visibly scarred – can be enough to dissuade lesser men from picking a fight.

The culture of the Commonwealth is deeply martial. Valour, strength, and readiness for battle are central to a nobleman's identity. Weapons and armor are more than tools of war; they are emblems of status and honour. A noble who cannot fight, or refuses to, invites scorn and suspicion. It suggests they are unworthy of their social standing.

Professional fighters are often affiliated with a military faction: the Crown's army, the Litvin army (that is, the troops of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), the Cossack brotherhood, or private troops maintained by powerful aristocrats and officials. However, every nobleman with a bunch of henchmen stands for a small warband on its own.

Swordsman

You are a master of the sword, dedicating your entire life to perfecting this singular skill. You spent countless hours refining your technique. You are agile, precise, and have tactical insight predicting the moves of your opponent. As a result, you possess a keen understanding of combat and an unwavering commitment to personal honour. And you take great pride in your expertise. You should also be disciplined and well-versed in etiquette. After all, your skill with the blade is not only a means to victory in battle but also a reflection of your social standing. Many swordsmen were born for this career – heirs to a knightly lineage.

Distinct fencing styles are practiced in the Commonwealth, and it is unlikely to be equally proficient in all:

- In the 1580s the saber is still a relatively new arrival, imported mainly from Hungary and the Ottoman empire. The curved blade is made for cutting, but some fairly straight Hungarian blades also allow for thrusts. The sabre is the best weapon for fencing on horseback.
- The rapier, popular in Germany, France, Italy and Spain, still has a cutting edge but is made for deadly piercing thrusts. Due to a superior blade length, it has a reach advantage over the sabre. It is the best weapon for duels on foot – especially when coupled with a buckler or parrying dagger in the off-hand.
- The medieval cut-and-thrust longsword is not entirely gone – and Commonwealthian nobles, when faced with a rapier-wielding adversary on foot, often choose the sword over the sabre. Besides classic longswords, there are various types of cavalry swords that allow for cutting and thrusting, either single- or double-edged: broadsword, sidesword, backsword, all lumped together under the name 'pallash'.
- Commoners, foot soldiers, brigands and poor gentry often carry short cut-and-thrust falchions, dussacks, messers and the like: single- or double-edged, with straight or slightly curved blades.
- The greatsword (two-handed sword, Zweihander) is mostly practiced by town dwellers (town militia) in the Commonwealth, and is commonly seen in the hands of landsknecht mercenaries from Germany. But the knightly art of two-handed fencing is not entirely dead to the gentry, either.

Combat-trained outside regular military formations, swordsmen could be seen as just another group of Irregulars – but they should not. First of all, their training was long and rigorous, and rooted in a respectable martial tradition (chivalric or academic). Secondly, swordsmen's training pursues individual excellence, not group tactics. Yes, they should hold their own in the thick of any battle, but they truly excel in one-on-one duels.

Gentry

For European nobility – whether in the Commonwealth or abroad – swordsmanship is an integral part of their identity and status. Taught to wield the blade from your early youth, you were raised in a culture where the sword is a symbol of honour. Your training encompassed dueling, personal defense, and battlefield tactics. You are well aware of proper dueling conduct, but have also been trained for mounted combat and battles. You are a product of a long martial tradition – striving to be a living reflection of the noble ideals of duty, loyalty, and valour.

Swordsmanship is the default career path for any nobleman who hasn't been trained to be anything else. If you lacked the patience, talents or funds for a different career – then the most dignified path left was that of a troublemaker ready to draw steel for someone else's cause. You may be living in your family home as one of several landless sons waiting for inheritance, or you may work as a protector and enforcer for a powerful patron. You may also ride with a band of penniless daredevils looking for opportunities on the lawless Ukrainian steppes, or in the war-torn eastern frontiers of the Grand Duchy.

Your martial style reflects your homeland's traditions. Commonwealthian and Hungarian nobles favour the sabre, while Western Europeans prefer the rapier or the longsword. Interestingly, swordplay and horsemanship are also practiced among noble women. A few have even carved out reputations as fearless fighters, raiders, firebrands, and warband leaders.

Fechtmeister

The nobles haven't monopolised the art of fencing. Rich burghers are equally keen on having their sons taught how to swing the blade. Western Europe has a long tradition of institutionalised fencing schools, commonly attended by wealthy city-dwellers. The Commonwealth has little trust in such institutions, but there are fencing masters and teachers in cities and at aristocratic courts. Most are former soldiers, retired swordsmen, or foreign experts who have come to the Commonwealth to share their knowledge.

You are not merely a fighter but a master of technique, with a deep understanding of European martial traditions. You can teach more than just the mechanics of combat; you instill discipline, strategy, and honour in your students. You may work as a private tutor training noble youth in combat techniques applicable to both formal duels and battlefield situations. You also impart the code of dueling and the philosophy behind martial conduct.

You may also be a bodyguard providing personal protection to high-ranking nobles and influential figures. In that case, you do not just protect the body; you also safeguard the reputation and secrets, often entrusted with ensuring that your charge can move safely through court intrigues and political machinations.

Irregulars

Even in the absence of full-scale warfare, the Commonwealth is not a safe place. Enemy raids, vicious family feuds, and common banditry are looming threats, not to mention petty violence over petty things between neighbours or rivals. Weapons are found in nearly every household – whether an axe or a hunting bow or just a stout club. Due to the scarcity of regular armed forces and long travel distances, communities understand the simple truth: their safety depends on their own able-bodied men (and sometimes women) arming up in self-defence. Many civilians practice with weapons – and some of them make combat-readiness the core of their career.

Various groups of armed civilians operate beyond and sometimes alongside regular troops. Among them are common bandits, such as murderous highwaymen, who like to prey on lone travellers. There are mountain brigands in the Carpathians, who tend to be less murderous and more inclined to attack larger (wealthier!) groups – while enjoying a significantly larger support from the local community. Then there are Zaporozhian Cossacks, whose relentless raids into Tatar and Ottoman lands are tolerated (if not quietly encouraged) by the Commonwealth as retaliation for Tatar incursions that repeatedly scourge Ukraine. Finally, there are armed household retainers and guards in private service – often better equipped than regular troops.

Irregulars come in all shapes and sizes, and so do their armaments and combat prowess. They may be just a bunch of fugitive peasants with hand-axes and flails who have just begun their thug life with zero combat experience. But a well-trained and disciplined retinue of a battle-hardened nobleman may be a formidable force.

Armed Servant

The Commonwealth is home to thousands upon thousands of servants: male and female, young and old, from many walks of life and speaking a multitude of languages. All respectable and non-respectable households want to keep domestic help – and anyone with coin wants armed muscle for protection. Any merchant, trader or noble travelling for business or pleasure is accompanied by an armed retinue. It is not just a matter of safety but also a display of status.

Life as an armed servant is a mix of boring chores, laidback leisure, shameless debauchery, and bursts of casual violence – the kind that secures respect in the neighbourhood and only occasionally turns lethal. You are not a soldier: you're a servant to your master or mistress, so your job is to do whatever they command. At home, they will order you around to do mundane chores, but if they keep many servants, you will enjoy a lot of idle time. They won't send you to work the fields. You will take care of the stables, deliver letters, run errands in town, or

assist in hunts. Your main job is to defend the household – and it may also include raiding, pillaging and besieging someone else's, depending on your master's temper.

It gets harder on the road. All the daily chores and heavy lifting will fall upon you, from setting up camp to cooking to cleaning to horse care. If your master is going to war, you and your mates follow the army as a part of the rowdy, unruly wagon train, being in charge of your master's supply wagons and spare horses. You aren't supposed to ride into battle, but you must be ready to fight if your army's camp is raided – or if anyone comes after your master's belongings.

Armed servants are equipped and trained with whatever their master can afford. If he has money to throw around, his retinue will have military-grade arquebuses and sabres, broadswords or falchions. It is fashionable to dress and equip armed servants in the style of haiduk infantry. But it is also common to hire Cossacks, marauders, or landless gentry who enter service with their own weapons and clothes. Men of all nations, ethnicities and religions can become armed servants. A woman in this capacity would be extremely unusual – but not entirely impossible.

Cossack (unregistered)

You are a member of the all-male Cossack brotherhood, a close-knit, militarised community focused on securing their freedoms and rights on the wild steppe along the Dnipro River. You are no stranger to combat, including fighting on horseback and aboard boats. Skirmishes, ambushes and raids are your bread and butter. The king relies on you and your brothers-in-arms to defend the south-eastern frontier of the Commonwealth. A few hundred Cossacks have joined the royal Register, becoming regular infantry in the Commonwealth's service. They take pride in their status, often finding themselves at odds with unregistered Cossacks like you.

You do not have any official status or recognition within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Coming from a humble or troubled background, you joined the Cossacks for the promise of freedom and equality denied by the established feudal system. You may envy the rights of registered Cossacks, who are exempt from taxes and can only be judged by royal army courts. People like you become Cossacks for various reasons – runaway serfs, criminals seeking a second chance, and nobles looking for glory and plunder. Most of your brothers are Eastern Orthodox Christians, but you'll meet men of many faiths – or with none at all.

You are used to a harsh and self-reliant life. You know how to hunt, fish, and survive in the wilderness. Though outside of the Commonwealth's military structure, you often serve as a volunteer or mercenary. Much of your

profit comes from raiding. You are no stranger even to naval warfare. Cossacks command a fleet of small boats called chaikas, which they sail down the Dnipro River and into the Black Sea. Their hit-and-run tactics against the Tatar and Ottoman holdings are swift and brutal – no less than Tatar raids into the Commonwealth.

Opryshok

Opryshoks (oprishki) are brigands from the Carpathian Mountains. You turned to banditry as a form of resistance against oppression and poverty. You and your band focus on targeting the wealthy – nobles, merchants, and those tied to the ruling class, like tax collectors and landlords. You know the mountains like the back of your hand, making them both your home and your battleground, relying on guerrilla tactics. Above all, you are fiercely loyal to your people and your leader.

There are many reasons one might find themselves on the slippery path of banditry: heavy taxes, forced labour, a feud with a neighbor, a thirst for gold, or the desire for glory. Only you can say which of these drove you. Perhaps

you even came from a privileged background. But that no longer matters. Now, you are an outlaw, a rebel, a servant of fortune. You can call yourself whatever you wish, but it doesn't change the harsh truth. No matter your reasons, you rob people. You kill them for their gold.

The authorities see you as nothing more than a criminal. There's undoubtedly a bounty on your head, and you need every ounce of wit and skill to avoid punishment. You've become an expert at gathering information, organizing ambushes, and slipping away from prying eyes. You've fought in countless skirmishes, often relying on your speed and the element of surprise to gain the upper hand. You are bold, daring, with a devil-may-care attitude.

Through all the hardships, your brethren have become your family, the only ones you can trust in this world. Together, you form a loose band, hiding in remote areas to avoid the authorities' grasp. While the Commonwealth authorities occasionally try to hunt you down, the common folk often see you as heroes.

Cavalry

As a proud member of the Cavalry, you are a master of the saddle, trained in the art of mounted warfare. Whether charging into battle, skirmishing, or maneuvering in rough terrain, keeping your horse under control in combat is your fundamental skill. Apart from horsemanship, as a cavalryman you are also trained in close combat, capable of fighting both on foot and on horseback, using both ranged and melee weapons. Your specific weapon proficiency and preferred tactics depend on the unit you ride with.

Foreign cavalry, primarily reiters and mounted arquebusiers, are usually hired by the Commonwealthian army as fully-formed mercenary units from abroad. The national Commonwealthian cavalry is organised into banners, each banner composed of privately-funded retinues. Whether in a hussar, petyhorec or kozak banner, the model is the same. First, the banner commander secures a commissioning letter from the king, or duke, or bishop, or whoever funds it. Then, he recruits self-equipped 'companions' with retinues of varying sizes – typically between two and six. The retainers are armed and outfitted at the companion's own expense. The poorest companions, especially in light cavalry, may ride alone: just one man on one horse. The companion draws the soldier's pay for himself and for each retainer, and the standard contract lasts 3 months.

Companions in hussar banners are almost exclusively noble-born – exceptions are rare. Retainers are often of noble lineage, too: either impoverished nobles who cannot afford to self-equip, or inexperienced youngsters who are not yet ready to start as companions. However, many retainers come from more modest backgrounds.

Since the companion pays for the horse, gear and training, he has the freedom to recruit whoever he trusts. Even a serf's son may rise to become a hussar retainer – if he has proven his skill, courage and loyalty as an armed servant. In practice, only about a half of winged hussars are noble-born, and even fewer in less prestigious formations.

It might seem that women have no place in cavalry banners – but the Commonwealth's history has recorded two such cases from the 17th century: one battle-hardened wife of a banner's commander who accompanied him on campaign, and one trumpeter in the service of the army's chief commander.

Light cavalry (Tatar/Vlach/kozak)

Light, often irregular cavalry goes by the name of "kozak" (adjective: kozacka) – not to be (as it often is) confused with the Zaporozhian Cossacks. It recruits men from every walk of life, across regions and ethnicities. There are also two ethnic-based formations: Vlach and Tatar. Vlach horsemen are recruited in the mountainous Carpathian region, primarily (but not exclusively) from Vlach and Rusyn settlers and refugees from the Principalities of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. Tatar cavalry banners are part of the army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, their military service made mandatory in exchange for land and autonomy. Tatar units are also kept in service privately by powerful aristocrats.

Light cavalry is prized for its speed and mobility. They ride swift, lightly equipped horses and excel in raiding, scouting and ambush tactics. Their typical armament includes sabres and spears, along with reflex bows,

pistols and arquebuses. While many kozaks and Vlachs prefer firearms, Tatars traditionally favour the bow. Some carry shields and wear elements of protective gear (bracers, gorgets, light helmets, mail shirts, gambesons, reinforced gloves) - there is little standardisation in equipment.

Petyhorec

Petyhorcy are medium-armoured cavalry of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, wearing chainmail shirts and misiurkas (steel caps with aventail). They fight with a hooked spear (rohatyna) and sabre, often carrying round shields (kalkan). For ranged combat, some still use bows and arrows, but pistols and arquebuses are increasingly common. Petyhorcy are drawn primarily from the Cherkess people, along with GDL Tatars and GDL gentry with their retainers.

In battle, they are typically deployed for flanking maneuvers, or for striking enemy lines that have been already softened by heavy hussars. They are also capable of performing scouting and raiding duties typically assigned to light cavalry.

Hussar

Winged hussars are medium-heavy cavalry, considered the Commonwealth's most prestigious formation. Many noble families seek to place their sons in the hussar ranks, viewing it as a mark of elite status and personal valour. A hussar must wear steel armour (breastplate, or cuirass, or at least heavy chainmail) and helmet, and be armed with a sword or sabre, a pallasch or stabbing sword (koncerz), and pistols. Lances are provided by the army.

Hussars fight in large, disciplined units, commonly feared for their thunderous full-speed charges with long lances. After the lances get broken and dropped, they fight with sabers or cavalry swords, also having a pair of pistols at hand.

Reiter/Arquebusier

Reiters are armoured cavalymen armed with a pair of heavy pistols and a pallasch sword. Armour varies by regiments: there are heavy reiters in steel helmets and cuirasses, and light reiters wearing leather armour and wide-brimmed hats. Most of them are foreign mercenaries recruited into the Commonwealth's forces - more commonly found in the army of the Grand Duchy. Differences between reiters and arquebusiers are minimal: reiters fight with pistols, arquebusiers with arquebuses (and it's not uncommon for them to carry pistols as well). As a reiter or arquebusier, you are skilled in both firearms and sword, and well-trained in ranged tactics and horsemanship.

Reiters are trained in the caracole maneuver: to ride in dense formations towards the enemy until within effective range, discharge shots repeatedly one rank after another (the front line wheels to the rear after firing, opening way for the next volley), and then retreat for reloading or advance into melee.

Arquebusiers may employ similar tactics, too, especially in mixed-cavalry formations. However, their primary tactics is shooting from a distance - either from horseback, or dismounting to fire from behind the horse, resting their guns on the saddles for support.

Infantry

Whatever humble background you may come from, you are a trained soldier - not some inept yardbird or camp follower. You know military drill, heavy-handed discipline, and collective responsibility. You can stand your ground, hold formation, and make the most of your firepower or your blade.

Yea, discipline. Learned the hard way, marching long distances in scorching sun, struggling not to fall asleep on graveyard shifts, and freezing your ass off in winter campaigns. Not to mention all this digging, hauling, heavy lifting and construction works. And severe punishments when caught slacking.

There's a silver lining, though. Educated not in schools but by hardship and necessity, you've become a capable and resourceful constructor. Earthworks are your thing: digging trenches, raising pallisades and embankments, and building temporary shelters against harsh weather.

Then there is the siege experience. Climbing scaling ladders, ramming gates, planting charges, battering walls with cannon fire and grenades - you have been there, done that (some of that, at least). Should you find yourself in a besieging force again, you will know what to do. You'll be careful to dodge rocks, scalding water, boiling oil, or anything life may hurl at you from the ramparts high above.

As a part of the infantry, you fought in a foot regiment, ranged or melee. Choose:

- German landsknecht regiment: arquebusier, musketeer, crossbowman, pikeman, halberdier, greatswordsmen
- Scottish pike-and-shot regiment: musketeer, pikeman
- Polish, Litvin, Hungarian, or Registered Cossack banner: haiduk, grenadier
- Town or palace guard: halberdier, pikeman, musketeer, crossbowman
- Artillery crew: cannoneer

Haiduk

(Hungarian, Commonwealthian, registered Cossack)

Haiduks are light infantry from Hungary, armed with arquebuses and sabres or swords, and equipped with hand axes and pickaxes for earthworks. They are versatile: trained in both ranged combat and melee. At King Bathory's orders, all Commonwealthian infantry - Polish, Litvin, and Cossack alike - are now modelled after the Hungarian haiduks (even if not called by this name). As a haiduk, you are skilled in hit-and-run tactics and ambushes. Coming from a poor background, you have high adaptability to hard toil and harsh environments.

Grenadier

(Hungarian, Commonwealthian, registered Cossack)

Grenadiers are a bold innovation on the battlefield. A haiduk regiment includes only a handful - brave souls who will sneak close to the enemy with a satchel of grenades and wreak havoc. Grenades are devastating when thrown into enemy trenches, tight formations or at charging cavalry. They may soften enemy fortifications, or simply be lobbed over them. This is a dangerous and short-lived job: you must get close enough to throw, survive the blast, and make it back afterwards - often while under fire.

Musketeer/Arquebusier

(Scot or German or town/palace guard)

Muskets are long-barreled firearms - so heavy they require a rest fork stuck in the ground. Shorter and lighter, arquebuses can be fired from the shoulder. As a musketeer or arquebusier in a pike-and-shot regiment, you are trained in precise drill routines to collaborate with pikemen and halberdiers. Of course, you know how to shoot, reload, and maintain the gun. In good weather, you can fire 1 (musket) or 1-2 (arquebus) shots per minute. You are capable of performing your duties both in open field battles and sieges.

Crossbowman

(German or town/palace guard)

There's no denying that firearms now dominate the battlefield. Crossbows are becoming a thing of the past - but they have not entirely vanished. They have superior accuracy and are more resistant to wet weather. Moreover, heavy crossbows have superior effective range to many firearms. Crossbowmen serve alongside arquebusiers and musketeers in landsknecht regiments. Crossbows are also popular in castle garrisons and with irregular town

militias, especially for defensive purposes.

Pikeman

(Scot or German)

Pikemen are the melee-trained component of Scottish pike-and-shot and German landsknecht regiments. Armed with pikes (very long spears), they are crucial for countering cavalry charges. Deployed in dense formations, pikemen can create a "hedgehog" or a living wall of spikes, protecting their ranged infantry from melee attacks. As a pikeman, you need strength, stamina, and teamwork, as pike formations require tight coordination. Moreover, you need a brave heart to hold firm when enemy riders are charging toward your line.

Halberdier

(German or town/palace guard)

Halberdiers are trained with halberds - versatile polearms that combine spear, axe, and hook. As a halberdier, you need strength to wield this weapon in close combat. The halberd allows for both chopping and thrusting attacks, it can be used effectively both in attack and defense. In the Commonwealthian army, halberdiers are found alongside pikemen and greatsword-wielders in landsknecht mercenary units. Perfect for defending narrow passages, the halberd is used not only to fight but also to control space - ideal for castle/palace/city guards.

Greatswordsmen

(German)

Landsknechts who volunteer to fight in the front line receive double pay. Among these Doppelsöldner (double-pay men) are wielders of two-handed great swords (Zweihänders). A great sword deals heavy blows and has a relatively long reach. It can be effectively used against riders and infantry. Tales are told about greatswordsmen using huge sweeping blows to cut through pike formations - multiple pikes at a time.

Cannoneer

(Artillery, or any infantry regiment)

Artillerists, known as cannoneers or bombardiers, are well-paid elite specialists. They know how to maintain, transport, position, load and fire cannons. They can gauge gunpowder quality, assess the durability of fortifications to cannon balls, and of cannons to heat fatigue from repeated shots. Gunpowder experts, they can make grenades and mines. On the battlefield they may be grouped in artillery units, or be attached to infantry regiments to support them with small, portable cannons. In besieged towns and fortresses - their defensive firepower often saves the day.

HOMESTEADERS

Key Attributes

MUSCLE, SENSES, CHARM

Skills

Riding, Driving, Animal Care (selected),
Local Lore (selected), Heraldry, Politics (local),
Hunting, Bargain, Household

Combat skills

Fencing, Firearms, Archery

Expertise

All subclasses: Home Base
Followers

Landed Noble: Neighbours

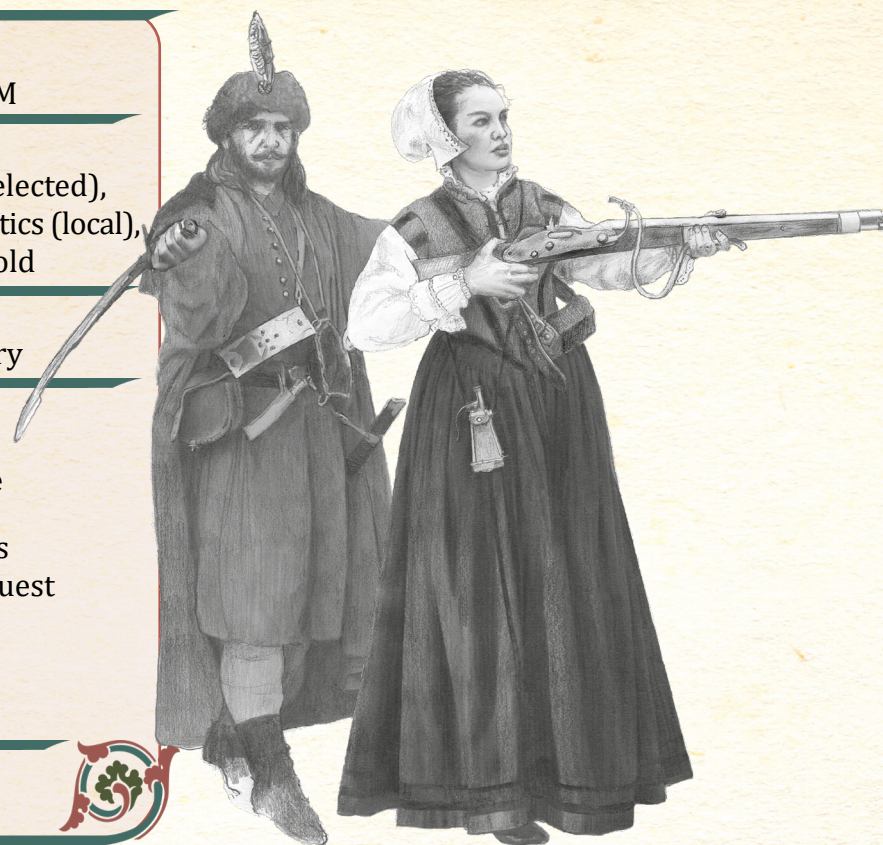
Lady of the Manor: Lady's Request

Cossack Elder: Ataman

Steward: Efficient

Burden

Custody



Living off their own or leased land, Homesteaders form one of the most essential groups in the Commonwealth. After all, the country's wealth is widely believed to rest on crop, cattle and forest production. Land use takes various forms: private ownership, fixed-term or lifetime lease, administration of a royal or church estate acquired through public office – all the way to lawless settlement on empty land no one has claimed or cares to govern.

These differences carry weight in terms of legal and social status – but far less so when it comes to daily life and responsibilities. As long as you are in charge of the property and those bound to it, it doesn't matter whether you leased, bought, inherited, or took it by force. Even if you act as a mere steward in your master's absence, all the serfs, farm hands, house servants and tenants answer to you.

The wealthier landholders are specialists in agrarian economy: lessees of royal or magnate estates, owners of entire villages or village clusters, or Cossack elders running prosperous homesteads. You won't see them toil in the fields – they have a labour force to do that. Those who hold several properties, especially across regions, must hire stewards and overseers to handle day-to-day operations.

The poorest homesteaders have nothing but a cottage and a patch of land – whether owned or leased – which they work with their own hands, and the family's. This includes well-off villein serfs who have enough resources to send hired farm hands to the master's fields – but must personally work their own. Such is also the fate of the poorest landed gentry, who do own a piece of land, but have no serfs or tenants to command. Even if they temporarily house extra farm hands or maids, who will toil all day for food and shelter, every able-bodied person in the household has to pull their weight. In such cases, the gap between Homesteaders and Labourers narrows. If you work your own land living under your own roof, you're a Homesteader. If you work for someone else, you're a Labourer. The power dynamics are different – sweat and toil may be the same.

Landed Noble

A Landed Noble typically is able to prove an excellent lineage, through generations of titled ancestors – pantlers, masters of the horse, chamberlains, cup-bearers, and judges. Only those freshly ennobled lack such a pedigree. A strong grasp of your family tree and heraldry makes you valued for your noble descent: a person of recognised standing – and of extensive connections.

Five institutions channel your activities in the local community. First the church you attend and support, and often help maintain. Second, the local assembly (sejmik), whose sessions you may attend to debate politics, vie for public office, and elect or be elected to the Commonwealth's parliament or Tribunal. Then, the land court that keeps property ledgers and settles civil disputes – and the starost's or voivode's office that deals with criminal cases. Finally, the nearest town marketplace, where you sell your produce and buy luxuries and necessities.

Your main concern is the condition of your estate. It may focus on crop farming or animal husbandry, or both at once. You may also manage fish ponds, forests and orchards. You may raise draft animals for transport or warhorses for the army. Many nobles derive income from brewing beer and running a tavern, usually leased out to a specialist. Depending on the region, innkeepers often happen to be Jews, Armenians, Cossacks, or Germans.

Of course, you do little of this personally – you have household staff to take care of things. Still, you are the master, so the general oversight rests with you. Unless you hire a capable steward, you must perform all Steward's duties. You must also think about defence – especially if you have enemies or live in a volatile area. If an attack on your manor is a possibility, you keep Armed Servants, invest in fortification and good relations with neighbours, and have watchmen posted at all times.

Lady of the Manor

What if a landed noble is a woman? In the Commonwealth, this would surprise no one – especially not on the sparsely populated eastern frontiers. Under the law, noblewomen have the right to own and inherit property, and even their husbands may not sell or lease that property without their consent. In theory, a noblewoman is expected to be under the guardianship of a male relative. In practice, however, widows, wives, and even daughters often manage estates themselves – living off the profits and keeping armed retainers to protect their holdings.

What noblewomen lack, compared to their male counterparts, are political rights. While they may privately dispute matters with neighbors and meddle in local affairs, they cannot be elected to public office, nor

are they allowed to vote at local assemblies (sejmiks). If they have a serious case to plead, they might be permitted to speak before the gathered gentry – but that is the extent of their formal voice. To influence politics, they must act through others, behind the scenes, through persuasion, marriage, or subtle pressure.

Alternatively, they may choose the way of violence. On the lawless eastern marches, some noblewomen are as hardened as any man. Proficient with sabre, horse, and pistol, these so-called she-wolves lead small bands of armed retainers – or Cossacks – and are unafraid to use them in neighborly feuds, raids, or bloody reprisals. Their reputation for cunning and ruthlessness often rivals that of their male kin – if not surpasses it.

Cossack Elder

To the southeast of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lies the endless steppe – a harsh frontier region constantly threatened by Tatar raids. The land there is vast and fertile, and mostly unclaimed, attracting the bold, the desperate, and the free-spirited from across the Commonwealth. You are one of them.

You joined the Cossacks at the Zaporizhian Sich, where you proved yourself in battle and leadership. Over time, you earned the respect of your brothers and rose to the rank of Elder – a position granted not by wealth or inheritance, but by merit and the vote of the Rada, the Cossack Council. Eventually, you settled and claimed land on the eastern side of the Dnipro River. Now, you live in a khutir – a small, fortified homestead – with

your family and companions, claiming and defending your land by right of toil, sweat, and the sword. You even have peasants working for you. Your livelihood primarily comes from cattle breeding, as the constant Tatar threat limits prospects for crop farming.

As an Elder, you are a military commander, community judge, and diplomat. You oversee a local group of Cossacks and their families, settling disputes, organising defence, and speaking on their behalf at the Sich. You also maintain ties with the Cossack Register, newly created by King Stephan Bathory – a few hundred Cossacks officially enlisted into the Crown army. The complex net of loyalties is becoming risky to navigate between the Sich-based brotherhood, the King, and the Crown military. Being

a Cossack Elder means living under constant scrutiny, as those who lose the communal trust may easily be dismissed. You answer to the Rada, which may cast you down far quicker than they raised you.

Your service to the king includes rallying Cossacks for military campaigns in times of war, and mediating between the Sich, the Crown, and local dignitaries and

nobles. You are also responsible for defending the frontier against Tatar attacks. Due to your frequent contact with Rusyn and Polish nobility, you and your family have adopted many of their customs – the traditions of hospitality, education, reverence to law and honour. The frontier has made you a skilled fighter and rider, proficient with both blade and firearm. In a time of need, you can rally a number of armed Cossacks to your banner.

Steward

As a Steward, you have been entrusted with the oversight of a noble, royal, or church estate. You act on behalf of the landowner, who is either absent or too high above such mundane duties. This is a position of great responsibility and constant pressure. You keep the whole operation running. Crops must be harvested, livestock accounted for, peasants kept in obedience, and taxes duly paid. In larger estates, you may have many low-grade officials and overseers under your command.

Stewards come from many backgrounds. Some are impoverished nobles seeking stable employment. Others are educated commoners, skilled in reading, writing, accounting, and negotiation. Most are male, but women are also known to excel in such duties.

You may have risen through the ranks of the household, or you may have been placed here as part of a patronage network. Your authority over the property is real

– even if your power relies entirely on the owner's whim.

You oversee village labour, manage serf obligations, supervise crop quotas, and coordinate seasonal works like planting, harvesting, and road repairs. You may be in charge of collecting rents and in-kind payments, maintaining grain stores, and trading surplus goods. You know how to read ledgers, write reports, and estimate profits. You keep an eye on weather, yield, pests, and unrest. You often mediate disputes among the estate's inhabitants and hired hands.

Your less regular but no less important duties include hospitality and festivities. If there's a hunting party to host, a church holiday to celebrate, a visiting dignitary, or hungry soldiers looking for a station, you are the one to make it happen – with maximum effect and minimum damage. Your knowledge of agriculture, local customs, animal husbandry, and estate logistics is hard-won. So is your ability to navigate between the interests of peasants, masters, contractors and clients.

SCHOLARS

Key Attributes
BRAINS, CHARM, SENSES

Skills
Writing (selected), Language (classic, selected),
Language (selected), Education (selected),
Law (selected), Arcane Arts (selected), Oratory

Combat skills
Brawl

Expertise
All subclasses: Critical Thinking
Bookworm
Lawyer: Rights and Lefts
Physician: Diagnose
Army Engineer: Siege Expert
Astronomer/Astrologer: Mysterious

Burden
Short-sighted



Scholars dedicate their lives to the pursuit of knowledge, often spending their youth buried in books and debate. They serve society as lawyers, engineers, physicians, astrologers, and teachers – drawing on their expertise as both their livelihood and their calling.

Becoming a scholar demands significant investment, whether from family, patrons, or the Church. Advanced education is neither common nor easily attained. Most scholars come from the nobility, the urban middle class, or the clergy – those with the means to afford private tutors, pursue university studies, or enroll in a Jesuit college or a secular academy. While few women are recognized as scholars in the strictest academic sense, many noblewomen receive private education and play active roles in the intellectual and cultural life of the Commonwealth.

Regardless of profession, a scholar is trained in the trivium and quadrivium – grammar, rhetoric, logic,

arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. They master classical languages (especially Latin, and often Greek), enabling them to read ancient authors, compose formal letters, and participate in international correspondence. This broad intellectual foundation opens doors at courts, universities, and institutions of power.

Scholars tend to be well-traveled, moving between cities and courts to pursue opportunity. They are familiar with the geography and languages of the Commonwealth. Yet despite their prestige, many remain financially dependent on wealthy patrons and clients. Their fortunes may rise or fall not with their intellect, but with the success and generosity of those they serve.

Lawyer

Lawyers are always in demand in a society so deeply invested in preserving honour, rights, and privileges. As a lawyer, you mediate countless legal disputes, wielding your knowledge of the law and rhetoric to navigate the tangled legal landscape of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Several legal systems function in the Commonwealth. Royal cities are governed by Magdeburg law. Commoners and leaseholders living on private, royal or church land remain under the jurisdiction of the landowner. Soldiers are tried by military courts, while clerics answer to their bishops under canon law. Jewish, Tatar and Armenian communities have their own autonomies and jurisdictions. The Lawyer career we present to you practices the Commonwealthian law for noble-born citizens.

Your path began at a formal university, where you received the foundations of legal education. But to practice law in the Commonwealth, you were also required to complete a rigorous apprenticeship under an established practitioner. Only after that could you swear an oath before the court and receive a royal patent – the official license granting you the right to practice.

Years of study have made you a master of legal codes and courtroom strategy. You are fluent in Latin, the official language of legal documentation in most regions except for the three Ruthenian voivodeships. You may also need Ruthenian or German, depending on your locale. Your sharp rhetoric and commanding presence serve you well – not only in court, but in any arena where power and persuasion matter.

In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, few escape the reach of litigation for long. You are the one who knows how to bring a case before the appropriate court – be it grodsky, zemsky, podkomorski, komisarski, or even the Tribunal. You know the bureaucracies that hold the keys to land, status, and justice. You know how to extract records, validate claims, challenge testimony, and if need be, rescue reputations from ruin.

Reconciliation is the soul of your work. You uncover evidence, prepare witnesses, and negotiate terms that protect your client's interests. And if the case is lost, you know how to soften the blow – or delay the consequences. With enough experience and discretion, your skills might one day secure you a position at the side of a duke or senator, as their trusted legal advisor, strategist, and shield.

Physician

As a physician, you are one of the few equipped with the knowledge and skills to diagnose illnesses and treat people. It is a high-status profession, often pursued by noblemen and rich urban elites – nearly impossible to adopt by a woman, regardless of her social standing.

To become a physician, you have completed a rigorous education at a university, studying the classical works of Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna. After years of learning, you became an expert in human anatomy, pharmacology, and herbal medicine. You are well-versed in the medical practices and views of the 16th century, which can be summarized as follows: plagues arise from the pestilent air that spreads across the land from cities, while illnesses are the result of an imbalance of humors in the human body.

Although you have performed a fair number of autopsies to uncover the secrets of human anatomy, you believe that surgery is beneath your station and should be left

to barbers with lesser education – a view shared by most physicians of your time. This does not mean you lack the theoretical knowledge to perform surgery, but rather that you have had less practical experience in the field.

Your knowledge makes you an invaluable traveling companion and a respected guest in most cities. Your greatest strength lies in your ability to diagnose – identify specific illnesses or wounds before they become too severe to treat properly. Your chances of providing the correct treatment far surpass those of the less educated medical practitioners.

In fact, you greatly benefit from the high social standing your profession affords you. You work for noble families and those who can afford your services, giving you access to a network of influential contacts. However, in the rural areas of the country, your competition consists of charlatans and folk medicine practitioners who rely on unscientific methods.

Army Engineer

As an engineer, you possess the expertise to design fortifications, construct fortresses, and operate siege weaponry and machinery. In addition to your classical education in mathematics and physics, you completed an apprenticeship with a military engineer, where you gained firsthand experience in modern practices. This included studying Italian Renaissance military engineering, with its focus on bastions and star-shaped fortress designs, as well as the works of ancient authors. You've learned all about Archimedes' military machines and Vitruvius' role as a constructor of ballistae. Thanks to your extensive training, you've acquired a diverse set of practical skills that make you an unseen force on the battlefield.

Besides your expertise in construction and fortification, you are skilled in working with artillery, including cannons and mortars. Throughout your apprenticeship, you gained extensive knowledge in mechanics, ballistics, and even metallurgy. You understand how to position siege weaponry

to maximize its efficiency. You are well-versed in siege tactics, adept at both designing and dismantling defensive positions, constructing redoubts and blockhouses, as well as sapping military fortifications. Additionally, you are skilled at creating improvised solutions on the spot, such as bombs and defensive barricades.

Constantly working with the military has also given you basic self-defense skills – you know how to shoot firearms and may be proficient in fencing. All this knowledge is invaluable in a frontier land, earning you respect regardless of your social standing. Your career could provide you with patronage from the high-ranking nobility or even the king himself.

While it remains rare, a commoner with exceptional talent and battlefield success may rise above their station – and for foreign engineers drawn to the Commonwealth by its constant warfare, noble status is not entirely out of reach.

Astronomer/Astrologer

Distinguishing between an astronomer and an astrologer is no easy task. Every astronomer must be well-versed in astrology, as it is taught at universities alongside mathematics and natural philosophy. Conversely, an astrologer without a thorough understanding of astronomy could easily become the object of ridicule.

As an astronomer, you apply advanced knowledge of mathematics and geometry to the observation of the heavens, formulating hypotheses grounded in empirical data and rigorous calculation. You chart planetary motion, study eclipses, and refine models of the cosmos – not always in conflict with Church doctrine, but often probing its limits.

As an astrologer, your concern lies in the influence of celestial bodies on human affairs. This places you in close proximity to the physicians of your day. Indeed, university courses in medicine regularly include lectures on astrology, which is viewed not as superstition but as an esoteric science crucial to diagnosis and treatment. The stars may reveal a patient's temperament, the course of an

illness, or the optimal date for bloodletting.

Astrology, however, is not merely academic. The most renowned astrologers are masters of influence. Their clients include nobles, army officers, and bishops – men and women eager for guidance, reassurance, or justification. Horoscopes often function as self-fulfilling prophecies: once convinced, clients strive to make them true. Much like Macbeth – the troubled protagonist of a drama from this very era – you might shape your destiny through belief in the stars as much as by the stars themselves.

Your expertise in mathematics and spatial measurement also lends itself to cartography, which is why many astronomers engage in mapmaking. From heavenly spheres to earthly borders, your tools are compasses, astrolabes, and reason. In courtly life, astrologers serve as trusted advisors, wielding subtle yet considerable influence. Whether forecasting weather, fate, or a political rival's downfall, you speak the language of the stars. Many are eager to listen.



LABOURERS

Key Attributes

REFLEXES, MUSCLE, SENSES

Skills

Alertness, Athletics, Chores, Driving,
Rumours, Bargain, Animal Care (livestock),
Folklore (selected)

Combat skills

Unarmed, one selected Melee or Ranged

Expertise

All subclasses: Hard-working
Resilient

Villager: Provider

Household Servant: Master's eye

Camp Follower: Spoils of War

Burden

Bad Injury



Labourers make up the overwhelming majority of the population in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Despite their low status, they form the backbone of the Commonwealth's economy. Unlike Homesteaders, they don't run a household – they work for someone else. Unlike Tradespeople, they don't earn their living through skilled crafts – they do simple, menial, unskilled tasks that often involve relentless physical toil. They raise crops, tend to animals, build homes, repair roads, carry water, chop wood, clean stables, and perform countless other tasks that sustain both rural and urban life.

The life of a Labourer may be rooted in a village community, among family and familiar land. Farmers, herders, shepherds, fishers, hunters and the like fall into the Villager category. Alternatively, they may have chosen – or been forced – to move into someone's household as Servants. Either way, a laborer's life is defined by their relationship with their master – whether it's a landowner for the villagers or an employer for servants. Labourers live at the mercy of their master's decisions and moods. Camp Followers are exceptional in that they offer their labour to many people in the army and around it – they avoid dependence on a single master.

Their standard of living is modest at best. Labourers typically reside in humble, overcrowded conditions – basic huts or cottages, servant quarters, or sheds on

the estates they work for, or in tents or wagons on the road. Many never experience the comfort and privacy of a room of one's own. In village huts, they often share space with extended family members, and pool their efforts to survive. Servant quarters usually house several people in one room – if they are assigned any. Oftentimes, they sleep in barns, common rooms or dining halls, which they must vacate at dawn.

It is rarely a life freely chosen – most fall into it by birth or necessity. Still, hard labour builds hard character. From such humble roots may emerge the strongest backs, the keenest eyes, and the most stubborn wills. Labourers know how to survive on meagre means, and know many ways to find more.

Villager

If you were raised as a villager, you live a simple, down-to-earth lifestyle. You've spent your whole life under one roof with your family, learning most of your skills from them. You never attended school and are likely illiterate. You've heard a thing or two about religion from the local priest, but you've mostly focused on practical skills that help in your daily life. All your social life revolves around religious and seasonal celebrations, with traces of the old faiths still lingering in the traditions and customs of your people.

The most typical occupation of a villager is farming: tilling the fields, sowing grain, harvesting crops, and tending to livestock. Agricultural cycles shape the rhythm of life, with long, backbreaking days dictated by the seasons. But rural economies are not limited to farming alone. Across the Commonwealth, there are villages built around other livelihoods: shepherd communities in the hills and borderlands, forest villages that supply timber, charcoal, resin, and wild game, and fishing settlements along rivers and lakes and on the Baltic Sea. These specialised economies often foster unique skills and local customs that distinguish one village from another.

Many peasants live in serfdom: in exchange for the right to a patch of farmland and a humble wooden hut, they are bound to servitude. In most cases, this means several days a week of unpaid labour on the master's estate, along with other services, such as the hated night watch, and regular in-kind payments. Some villages are inhabited by rent-paying tenants, who owe payments in money or goods instead of free labour. Villages built around forest, fishing or livestock-based economies typically pay their master with a share of their produce, alongside modest coin payments. There are many different arrangements of peasant obligations – a mix of labour, rent, quotas of crops and other produce, and other services, such as transportation. Newly established villages often enjoy 15, 20 or even 25 years of exemptions from all duties.

You are strong and resilient, able to endure harsh conditions and the demands of daily hard work. With your deep connection to the land, you are highly self-sufficient, capable of finding or producing food in familiar environments. You also possess skills needed to mend and repair simple goods.

Household Servant

As a Household Servant, you receive a place to live and a wage in return for your work. You are expected to fulfill a wide range of duties, from cooking and cleaning to acting as a personal attendant, running errands, assisting with hunting or feasts, and maintaining the employer's property. You are skilled in mending things and ensuring that your employer's orders are followed. You also know everyone within the household, staying aware of the constant flow of rumors that might go unnoticed by the master you serve.

Even households of moderate means employ servants – for the kitchen, the stables, personal attendance, childcare, and more. Businesses in towns and villages, from workshops and market stalls to mills and inns, employ servants to assist with customers and handle daily chores. Household Servants are often recruited from the local community: sons and daughters of friends, relatives, or tenants, often sent into service from a young age. Manor houses usually recruit domestic servants from among local villagers – quite an upgrade from toiling in the fields.

Not only commoners enter household service – so do impoverished nobles without land, who attach themselves to a wealthier employer in hopes of advancing their status. In provincial manors, noble-born Household Servants typically serve as personal attendants to the master, mistress, or their children. Noble origins grant some distinction, like the right to shake hands with the master, but little more. A noble-born servant will clean the master's boots, serve meals, and saddle horses just like any other. Able-bodied noblemen in their prime are more likely to become Armed Servants – the peaceful Household role is more appropriate for youngsters, elderly and women.

A master-servant relation is based on an oral or written fixed-term contract. On the one hand, this contract makes you dependent on your employer and bound to service for at least one year. On the other hand, it provides some security, as you can rely on your employer's protection. Moreover, you enjoy impunity for any damage or crimes committed while carrying out the master's direct orders.

Camp Follower

No army on Earth can march far without its baggage train: a clattering procession of wagons, carts, packhorses, and herds of livestock, all tended by a rowdy, motley crew of camp followers. These people trail the army wherever it goes, hauling supplies, munitions, and daily necessities. They offer every kind of service and goods imaginable within the boundaries of the camp. Camp followers are not soldiers – they prefer to keep well away from the heat of battle, maintaining a reasonably safe distance. Still, their lives and livelihoods depend entirely on the progress of war. When defeat looms and the camp is threatened, many will simply flee.

Two things draw people to this life: family and business. Some professional soldiers are accompanied by their wives and children, who follow them from one battlefield to the next. These families live on the road, sharing in the army's

hardships, triumphs, and losses. A number of wagoners and herders are hired directly by military command to manage essential provisions. Others come on their own terms – as private entrepreneurs. Soldiers' pay and looted treasures are quickly exchanged for food, drink, warm clothes, boots, and an array of services: from laundry and transport to sex and tooth-pulling. Shrewd traders and craftsmen can make modest fortunes from soldiers eager to spend their spoils.

Camp followers form a remarkably diverse crowd – from spouses and children to cart drivers, herders, barbers, laundresses, tinkers, butchers, bakers, and sutlers. All genders, ages, backgrounds, and useful trades are welcome – so long as they can carry their own weight. The baggage train is a community of its own, and your portable home is part of it – one that needs a lot of maintenance work to be ready for the road ahead.

CLERICS

Key Attributes

BRAINS, CHARM, WILL

Skills

Oratory, Influencing, Education (theology),
Writing (selected), Language (selected),
Chores, Folklore (selected)

Combat skills

-

Expertise

All subclasses: Providence
Alms

Priest: Sacrament

Friar/Nun: Monastic Support

Burden

Crisis of Faith



In the class-bound society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, joining the clergy is one of the few legitimate paths to social mobility for those not born into nobility. It offers education, influence, and access to power – regardless of one's origins.

Clerics uphold the doctrines and rituals of their denomination: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, or Protestantism (usually Lutheran or Calvinist). Though these branches often compete for authority, the Commonwealth is renowned for its policy of religious tolerance – a rarity in Counter-Reformation Europe. The Warsaw Confederation of 1573 enshrined religious freedom for the nobility and guaranteed certain protections for religious minorities. Thanks to this, it is not unusual to see rabbis or imams serve as religious leaders within the Jewish and Muslim (Tatar) communities. In the more remote reaches of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, remnants of pagan traditions still flicker on the margins of society.

Clerics are central to both spiritual life and public affairs. They officiate rituals, preach to congregations, and tend to the moral wellbeing of their communities. But their influence extends further: they act as diplomats, educators, mediators, and patrons of art and architecture. The clergy oversees schools, shelters, and universities. Their institutions shape minds and morals, and their decisions carry weight even in courtly and civic matters. In the Catholic Church, bishops hold seats in the Commonwealth's Senate, bridging the divide between

altar and throne.

Clerics include not only ordained priests but also friars, monks and nuns. Becoming a cleric requires both spiritual calling and formal training. Students study theology, classical languages, logic, and oratory at seminaries, church schools, yeshivot, or madrasas. They are expected to not only master sacred texts, but also understand the cultures and politics of the communities they serve. To walk the path of a cleric is to become a spiritual leader, social steward, and political actor. You carry the burden of belief – but also the power to shape minds, resolve disputes, and continuously acquire land and wealth at the expense of the faithful.

You may be involved in missionary work. While the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is a multireligious country, you often travel to expand the influence of your church. This involves delivering public sermons and studying local cultures to make conversions more appealing. Missionaries are frequently assigned to work with specific nobles, offering guidance and advice to secure their support. At times, missionaries may also take on the task of identifying and combating heresy.

Priest

The Commonwealth is home to many religions, and as a Priest, you must choose one to serve: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Arianism (Polish Brethren), Judaism, or Islam. People from nearly any social background may pursue this path and rise through its ranks. However, priesthood is not open to women. Judaism and Islam are almost exclusively limited to ethnic communities: Jews and Tatars, respectively. Catholicism is dominant in Poland, Orthodoxy in the GDL and Ukraine, and the Protestant denominations are scattered across the country – especially among the nobility and burghers.

As an ordained Priest, you are seen as an intermediary between God and the people, guiding souls toward salvation – an essential figure in a deeply religious society. You uphold doctrine, perform sacred rituals, preach to the faithful, and serve as a moral and spiritual leader. These duties are not only holy obligations – they are your livelihood. Offerings from congregants, stipends from landowners, or income from church land help sustain your position.

You completed formal religious training – in a seminary, church school, yeshiva, or madrasa – and likely served as an apprentice to a senior cleric. Your studies included classical languages, theology, philosophy, and the doctrines of your faith. You were trained not only to minister to the soul, but also to manage a community: offering counsel, resolving disputes, and recording the vital events of life – births, marriages, funerals, conversions.

Priesthood is one of the avenues of social mobility, even for nobles. A successful priest may rise to become a bishop, rabbi, mufti, or other high-ranking cleric. In time, you might be sent on diplomatic missions, serve as a political advisor, or act as guardian of local law and morality.

You are deeply embedded in your faith's hierarchy, working to further its goals while maintaining influence among both townspeople and the powerful. Your role blends spiritual guidance, scholarship, politics, and bureaucracy. You are a caretaker of souls – but also an administrator, educator, negotiator, and community leader.

Nun

You entered the convent seeking purpose, protection, or peace – perhaps by personal calling, family decision, or necessity. Whatever the reason, you now belong to a community of women bound by prayer, labour, and devotion. Your world is cloistered, but your influence is not. If you are Catholic, you had many orders to choose between: Benedictines, Poor Clares, Brigittines, Cistercians or Dominicans. Orthodox monasticism is not divided into orders.

Your path began with a novitiate period, where you learned the Rule of your order, deepened your knowledge of scripture, and prepared for a lifetime of service. Once you took your vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, your former identity faded. You became a Bride of Christ, a steward of faith and care.

In the convent, your days are structured around prayer, silence, and work. You may teach girls from noble or burgher families, serve as a healer, copy religious texts,

or administer the convent's landholdings. Your duties are practical and spiritual: the convent is a sanctuary, but also a self-sustaining institution that manages resources and educates future generations.

Though nuns rarely travel, your reach can still be wide. Wealthy families entrust you with their daughters' upbringing. Nobles seek your prayers in times of war or illness. You may serve as advisor to powerful women, or manage charitable projects that affect entire communities. If your convent is affiliated with a particular patron, you may gain access to courtly influence – quietly shaping decisions through counsel and correspondence.

As a missionary sister, you may spend long periods outside of the convent, sent among the laypeople to teach, heal, seek conversions. You may be tasked with supervising the convent's businesses, or meeting with important figures to safeguard its interests. In times of turmoil, you may be dragged into politics to act as a messenger or spy.

Friar

You left the world to serve something greater. Whether fleeing sin, following a vision, or obeying your family's will, you joined a monastic brotherhood, committing to a life of discipline, labour, and humility. If you are Orthodox, you follow the rule of St. Basil. If you are Catholic, you chose between Benedictines, Franciscans, Bernardines, Cistercians and Jesuits.

Your journey began as a novice, learning the ways of your order, internalizing its rules, and preparing for the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Your days became cycles of prayer, study, and physical labour. In the monastery, you serve as a scribe, teacher, healer, or steward, helping the brotherhood sustain both its soul and its holdings.

But many monks are not confined to cloisters. As a friar, you may walk among the people, offering sermons in

market squares, caring for the sick, or seeking alms for your community. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, friars are often missionaries, spreading the Word among rural populations or countering the rise of Protestantism in contested lands.

You are a man of the road, used to cold inns, suspicious villagers, and endless foot journeys. You know how to speak simply, live modestly, and survive on the charity – or pity – of others. Your spiritual authority can sway hearts, and your literacy can open doors and pockets.

Sometimes, you're more than a preacher. You might act as an informer, counselor, diplomat, or quiet agent of the Church's interest in places where politics and faith intersect. As a monk or friar, you do not own much – but you carry influence, memory, and faith wherever you go.

TRADESPEOPLE

Key Attributes

BRAINS, CHARM, REFLEXES

Skills

Athletics, Bargain, Driving,
Tradecraft (selected), Chores,
Language (selected), Influencing

Combat skills

Unarmed, Firearms, one selected Melee

Expertise

All subclasses: Contacts
Appraise

Craftsman: Crafty Hands

Trader: Commerce

Barber Surgeon: First Aid

Burden

Serious Debt



Tradespeople keep the wheels of the Commonwealth's agrarian economy turning. They supply essential goods – tools, weapons, fabrics, barrels, books – and make commerce possible between rural estates and bustling city markets. While nobles grow grain and raise livestock, it is the tradespeople who shape, transport, and sell the products that sustain everyday life. Noblemen are prohibited from practicing trade - doing so risks being stripped of their noble status on the grounds of Commonwealthian law.

Most tradespeople come from the free townsfolk of the Commonwealth's towns and cities - not only major urban centers such as Kraków, Gdańsk, Vilnius, and Lviv, but also dozens of provincial towns. This is the golden age of guilds, and most of the skilled craftsmen belong to one. Guilds regulate prices, limit competition, and provide legal protection for their members. They also safeguard quality, maintain tradition, and shape urban politics. To work a trade legally, one must belong to a guild – and to belong, one must first serve as an apprentice, often from a young age.

Through these apprenticeships, tradespeople learn to read, write, count, craft, and negotiate. They master both their tools and their tongues, whether they work leather or iron, wood or cloth. The best go on to become journeymen, and eventually masters, entitled to open

their own shops and take on apprentices of their own.

Wealthy merchants and master craftsmen often rise beyond their station, challenging traditional hierarchies. Some become guild elders, advisors to mayors, or even powerbrokers who shape city policy. The rural nobility, for all their land and titles, rely heavily on tradespeople – to craft their luxuries, repair their arms, and transport their grain, fur, and lumber to markets as far away as Venice, Constantinople, or Amsterdam.

In a world defined by birth, the guild is one of the few ladders of ambition. However, there are also those who practice crafts outside the guild system, often just outside the city limits to avoid violating trade laws. Unguilded craftsmen (*partacze*) often offer second-rate quality but at more affordable (*undercut*) prices.

Craftsman

As a Craftsman, you earn your place in society through skill, precision, and years of disciplined labour in your selected craft. Maybe you chose metalworking (blacksmith, bladesmith, gunsmith, armourer, cutler, locksmith, tinsmith), or leatherworks (saddler, tanner, cobbler, glovemaker), or woodworking (carpenter, cooper, wheelwright, wainwright, joiner), or textiles (tailor, seamstress, weaver, hatter, cloth dyer), or something more fancy (clockmaker, bellfounder, organ builder, engraver, jeweller, gold/silversmith, printer, glassblower), or more commonplace (candlemaker, ropemaker, basket weaver, soapmaker, potter, tilemaker, stonemason, bricklayer). You use your talent to create valuable goods to trade across the Commonwealth.

The path of trained craftsmen begins early. Around the age of ten, you were apprenticed to a guild master in your craft. There was no money for formal schooling. Your education came from long hours in the workshop, watching, helping, and eventually mastering each stage of production. You learned how to select raw materials, manage tools and fire, measure precisely, and turn visions into form. After years of toil, you produced your masterpiece – a final test of your ability. If accepted by the guild, you were granted the right to call yourself a master craftsman, open your own workshop, take

apprentices, and sell your work legally in town markets. Women sometimes learn the craft in the family, and widows are often allowed to inherit the business after the late husband.

Now, your skill speaks for you, whether you're forging plowshares or gold rings, cutting fine velvet or carving sacred altarpieces. From the daily needs of commoners to the commissions of wealthy nobles and clergy, you provide what cannot be easily replaced.

Membership in the guild brings benefits and burdens. You enjoy legal protections, collective bargaining power, access to materials, and the backing of fellow craftsmen. But the guild also imposes rules – on production quotas, pricing, apprenticeships, and even innovation. To rise too quickly, or to produce work that threatens tradition, is to risk reprimand or worse.

In a society stratified by birth, craft is one of the few paths to respect and influence. Nobles may scoff at merchants, but they still pay handsomely for a master's blade, a tailored doublet, or a wedding chalice. With talent and persistence, you might gain patrons, wealth, and a reputation that spreads far beyond your town walls.

Trader

Traders are the driving force of the Commonwealth's economy, from humble local vendors selling salt and cloth all the way to wealthy international merchants moving timber, furs, amber, and grain across borders. As a trader, your success depends not only on supply and demand, but also on your ability to read people, seize opportunity, and navigate a web of guild rules, taxes, and shifting alliances. You are no stranger to financial roles, either. This includes facilitating credit between merchants, dealing in foreign currencies, and sometimes even acting as a moneylender.

You were born into a family with an established trade enterprise, and from an early age, you were expected to inherit the family business. Your training began at home, not in a university: you learned the craft through practice – how to evaluate goods, negotiate prices, manage inventories, balance accounts, and issue or secure credit. You may never have received a formal education, but you took care to learn foreign languages. Fluency opens doors and closes deals.

Once you completed your training, you paid the substantial

entrance fee to join a merchant guild, granting you the right to trade in particular cities and markets. In return, the guild offers protection: legal support, mediation in disputes, assistance with transport logistics, and, most importantly, access to a network of contacts spanning the Commonwealth and beyond. These contacts provide vital information – on prices, tariffs, safe roads, embargoes, and the preferences of noble clients. Yet the guild is not without its constraints: it can limit access to certain markets and push out less favoured competitors. Widows are often allowed by the guild to take over the late husband's business, which makes female traders a familiar sight.

As a merchant, you're used to the risks of traveling long distances. International trade remains the most lucrative in terms of potential profits, but it requires substantial investments, along with complex legal and diplomatic considerations. For those who succeed, the rewards go beyond wealth. An influential trader may become a powerbroker, banker to nobles, or even financier to the Crown.

Barber Surgeon

As a barber, you don't just perform grooming tasks like haircuts and shavings. You also carry out medical procedures, such as tooth extractions, bloodletting, and, most importantly, surgeries like lancing abscesses or treating wounds. In fact, you are one of the few with practical surgical experience, capable of providing first aid.

You learned your craft through an apprenticeship, gaining skills under the guidance of an experienced barber. You mastered everything from cutting hair to performing medical tasks, though your training in medicine was more practical than academic – after all, you never had the chance to study at a university. Still, attending medical lectures in cities like Kraków and Vilnius was always an option.

Upon finishing your apprenticeship, you joined the city guild, gaining access to shared knowledge. You live and work in an urban area, where there is high demand for

both your grooming and medical services, especially considering that educated physicians are rare and few people can afford their fees.

During military campaigns, you can accompany the army as a surgeon. In those times, you are responsible for treating wounds, amputating limbs, and performing other essential medical tasks on the soldiers. Additionally, due to your constant practice, you have a deeper understanding of human anatomy than some academics. You can recognize certain bodily conditions and provide treatments based on your hands-on experience.

This is a profession for the low-born. Only an impoverished and disgraced nobleman would consider picking up this trade – even though some knowledge of wound treatment is common among nobles who have been to war. Also, this is primarily a men's job, as women aren't admitted into the barbers' guild. If they have learned the craft, they must have done so outside formal channels.

COURTIERS

Key Attributes

CHARM, BRAINS, SENSES

Skills

Influencing, Etiquette, Politics (selected), Heraldry, Rumours, Arts (selected), Education (selected), Language (selected)

Combat skills

Unarmed; Fencing, all Ranged

Expertise

All subclasses: Intrigue
Protected
Artist: Precious
Councillor: Advice
Court Lady: Welcome
Privy Servant: Trusted

Burden

Hostile Faction



All across Europe, power gathers around courts – secular and ecclesiastical. A royal or grand-ducal court offers the highest prestige and influence. A provincial voivode's or bishop's court may seem modest in comparison, but it functions as a parallel center of political and often also military power, especially in remote regions. To be a courtier is to live within a dense and ever-shifting hierarchy of service, influence, and opportunity.

Courtiers include many roles from scribes, secretaries and advisors to jesters, stable masters, pages and ladies-in-waiting. Their relative status is not in the name of their role, but in the prestige of the court they serve. For example, a wet nurse to royal children might wield more influence and enjoy greater social mobility than a secretary in a provincial chancery. Likewise, a jester – often considered the lowest of courtiers – might be rewarded with land, trusted with state secrets, or asked to advise in matters of state, as in the case of the famed Stańczyk.

Feminine power is strongly felt at secular courts that have female royals or aristocrats. Their ladies-in-waiting are key to maintaining the court's appearance and internal harmony. They do far more than accompany noblewomen. They may act as tutors, household managers, matchmakers, and intermediaries. If no court physician is present, they tend to the sick, pregnant, or postpartum. They organise artistic events, supervise

decoration and architecture, and often patronise or inspire artists.

Two offices are key to the proper functioning of any court: the treasury and the chancery. The treasurer manages court finances and, depending on the ruler's wealth, may oversee all dealings in agriculture, forestry, trade, and livestock management. The chancellor or deputy chancellor heads the chancery, where official and private documents are drafted, stamped, copied and stored. At lower-rank courts, you are more likely to find a secretary instead of chancellor. Either way, those who oversee the secret chancery and personal correspondence are especially trusted, as they are privy to delicate information. They often act as advisors and may actively guide policy behind the scenes.

Roles vary greatly between courts, and it's impossible to list them all. A personal confessor, commander of the guard, master of the hunt, or diplomatic secretary might be absent in one setting and indispensable in another.

At royal courts even a head chef, master of the kitchen, is an important courtier, whose feasts are as much political theatre as sustenance. Those who can afford to maintain a court often command private armed forces, even in peacetime. As such, courtiers often include officers, bodyguards, and commanders of the guard. Rich nobles often admit poor gentry into service with no other duties but attendance and assistance. Noble-born servants enjoy a higher status than those from common

backgrounds – a fact reflected in a ceremonial handshake with the master and the official rank of ‘hand-shaking’ servant (rękodajny).

Youths from various backgrounds – nobles, petty gentry, even commoners – are drawn to courts by the hope that even the humblest position there may launch a career or lead to a favourable marriage. They aren’t entirely wrong about it.

Artist

Court artists are often foreign guests who came with returning diplomats, encouraged by substantial sums of money, sometimes as companions to capable or merely wealthy youth during their education at prestigious Italian universities. Many artists and other courtiers arrive with the retinues of foreign wives of kings or magnates of the Commonwealth. Many others, of course, are domestic talents native to the Commonwealth.

Performing artists – singers, instrumentalists, jesters, gymnasts, actors – are hired by wealthy and ambitious persons not only for aesthetic appreciation. They are there to highlight the status of the benefactor, in particular by entertaining and impressing esteemed guests who admire their talents. Painters, sculptors, poets, playwrights, composers, goldsmith artisans and others who create long-lasting works have an even more important role to play – they immortalise the benefactor’s deeds and name for posterity.

Court artists work for educated and at least moderately sophisticated audiences. Therefore, they need to be well-versed in the Roman and Greek classics as well as Bible studies, as this is what shapes the shared mythological imagery of the Commonwealth’s elites. Those who work with visuals or texts should be knowledgeable about history and speak Latin (for Catholic or Protestant courts) or Church Slavonic (for Orthodox courts).

All artists who share the same benefactor must compete for his or her attention, and this competition can sometimes get fierce. Scheming, gossip, blackmail, and even occasional fist fights between artists are not unheard of. On top of that, being emotional figures, artists are prone to falling in love affairs, some of which are scandalous. Even the most promising artist may thus get expelled from the court and be forced to look for a new place elsewhere.

Councillor

The role of a Councillor is to provide thoughtful and well-informed advice to a person of high standing – be it a monarch, duke, bishop, voivode, or similar authority. As wisdom often comes with age and experience, most Councillors are middle-aged or elderly. However, exceptions exist: a young and accomplished priest, lawyer, or scholar may rise to the role if he compensates for his youth with strong credentials and a high-profile recommendation.

While it is uncommon for women to be officially appointed as Councillors, it is certainly possible for a woman to serve as a trusted advisor – especially to another woman: a duchess, prioress, or queen. Social background plays a significant role. Most Councillors at aristocratic courts are noble-born or at least burghers. A commoner may attain the position only after rising through the ranks of the church, academia, military, or municipal government. Nationality matters less, as courts and councils are often

cosmopolitan by nature.

Councillors advise on both political and domestic matters. Their primary responsibility is to confer with their master, offering reasoned opinions and practical solutions. Yet to be truly effective, a Councillor must do significant work of gathering and verifying information. They converse – both publicly and in secret – with courtiers, envoys, soldiers, and other relevant individuals. They also maintain correspondence with prominent figures across the Commonwealth and abroad.

Often, Councillors do not confine themselves to collecting intelligence. They may become active participants in courtly or foreign intrigues, working to safeguard their master’s interests. To this end, a Councillor might hire informants, bribe officials, or dispatch spies. A trusted Councillor with international contacts may be entrusted with diplomatic missions – with or without a covert agenda.

Court Lady

A Court Lady serves as a companion, attendant, and intermediary within the refined yet treacherous world of aristocratic households. Though her position may seem decorative to the untrained eye, a court lady navigates a delicate balance of social grace, political awareness, and personal ambition. She is often of noble birth – though not always from the highest ranks – and her family may have secured her place at court as part of a wider strategy for influence or alliance-building.

Her duties vary with the household she serves, but typically include assisting a noblewoman – be it a duchess, queen, or magnate’s wife – in her daily affairs: from managing correspondence and organizing entertainments to dressing, accompanying her in public, and acting as a discreet confidante. In certain contexts, a court lady may be charged with educating children, supervising the servants, or maintaining the lady’s private chapel or charitable enterprises.

A Court Lady must be graceful, literate, and capable of navigating courtly rituals with ease. She is expected to speak a foreign language, possess basic knowledge of theology and history, and engage in music, embroidery, or poetry – all skills that reflect her mistress’s refinement. More importantly, she must be discreet, loyal, and politically astute. At court, friendships and rivalries are often hidden behind smiles, and a careless word can ruin reputations.

While court ladies officially hold no power, they can wield quiet influence. Trusted attendants are often privy to secret conversations, private disputes, and confidential letters. They may pass information to their family, act as messengers between noble houses, or quietly shape the opinions of their mistress and her circle. Court life offers them opportunity, but also danger: a court lady’s reputation is her shield, and a single misstep – whether a love affair, rumour, or betrayal – can end her career and her social prospects.

Privy Servant

The Privy Servant is more than a mere household aide – they are indispensable in the daily life of a high-ranking noble or royal, managing private affairs and performing duties too intimate or sensitive to entrust to strangers. Often born of humble origins, they rise not through birth but through absolute loyalty, discretion, and usefulness. Their title may be modest, but their access is unrivalled.

Their tasks are broad and deeply personal: tending to their master’s clothes and bedchamber, preparing baths and meals, keeping keys to private stores, managing household money, and handling routine correspondence. In noble courts, a privy servant may also act as a bodyguard, valet, or personal secretary, depending on the needs of their employer. Their proximity allows them to know much – and to be noticed little.

To succeed, a Privy Servant must be invisible when necessary and irreplaceable when required. They must

read moods, anticipate desires, and navigate shifting tensions with quiet efficiency. They are expected to be literate, numerate, and discreet. Some are even taught foreign languages, especially if their master is active in diplomacy or travel.

Their role naturally places them close to secrets. They see and hear what others do not – lovers slipping through corridors, documents left unlocked, voices raised behind closed doors. A wise servant keeps such knowledge sealed unless called upon to act. Still, some are drawn into intrigue, whether willingly or through coercion: smuggling letters, stealing documents, bribing guards, or planting false rumors. Others become spies or informants in long-standing struggles between noble houses or foreign powers. A Privy Servant may never sit at the high table, but they often stand at the hinge of great decisions.

LOOSE PEOPLE

Key Attributes

REFLEXES, SENSES

Skills

Rumours, Bargain, Survival, Influencing, Crime (selected), Stealth, Local Lore (selected), Streetwise (selected), Trickery (selected), Arts (selected), Rummage

Combat skills

Unarmed, one selected Melee or Ranged

Expertise

All subclasses: Trickery
Thieving
Guile

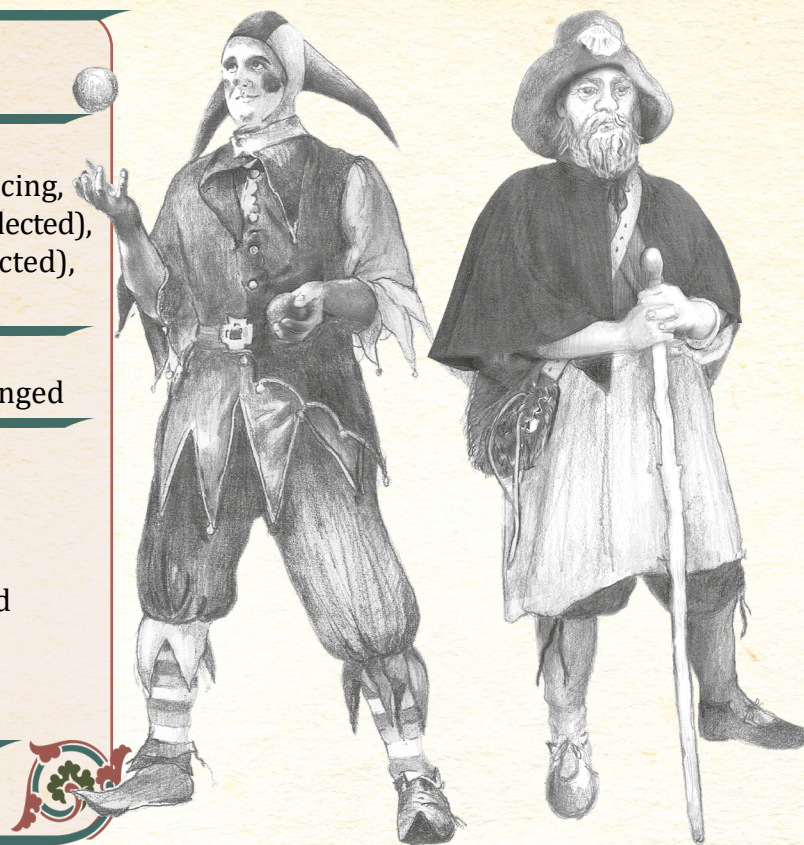
Vagabond: Lay of the Land

Performer: Show

Pedlar: Snake Oil

Burden

Branded



Loose People are those who live beyond the margins of settled life – homeless, rootless, and largely unprotected by law or custom. Not anchored to land, guild, or master, they drift from place to place, from one day to the next, surviving by wit, labor, deception, or performance. To officials and chroniclers, they are beggars, vagrants, whores, thieves, tricksters – the scum of the earth. To themselves, they are simply people trying to stay alive in a world that rarely offers mercy.

Loose People are a constant presence across the Commonwealth, though rarely a welcome one. In cities, they gather in the shadow of churches and marketplaces, sleeping under bridges or huddled in abandoned buildings. In villages, they might appear during fairs or harvests, working for scraps or begging for bread. On the road, they travel in small groups or alone, always watching for danger.

They are not one people but many – diverse in origin, motive, and skill. Among the Loose People are the broken, the cunning, the brave, and the doomed: former soldiers, failed apprentices, escaped serfs, widowed mothers, bastard children, and artists of the lowest kind. Some dream of rising above their lot. Others take pride in living

outside a system that offers them nothing better. It's hard to guess their background: this old crippled one-armed beggar might have once been a noble, before long years of Tatar slavery stripped him of everything – money, health, and sanity.

What they lack in social rank, they make up for in adaptability. Loose People learn to lie convincingly, flee swiftly, hide cleverly, and seize opportunity when it appears. Some pass themselves off as pilgrims, miracle-seekers, or holy fools. Others sell charms and relics, offer entertainment, or trade stolen goods. A few live by deception, but many simply survive by doing the work no one else wants to do.

Vagabond

A Vagabond is a wanderer without home, trade, or protection of guild or master – one of the countless souls drifting along the roads and forest tracks of the Commonwealth. Neither peasant nor townsman, neither free nor enslaved, the vagabond lives in a state of legal and social limbo. Some are fugitives from justice or conscription; others are former serfs who fled their lords or tradesmen ruined by debt, fire, or war.

Vagabonds move from village to village, city to city, hoping to find shelter, scraps of food, or temporary work. To many, the vagabond is a figure of suspicion. In the eyes of the authorities, idleness is a crime, and the mere act of wandering without purpose may bring arrest, flogging, or forced labour. In towns and villages, they are often turned away or pelted with stones – especially if they cannot offer a convincing tale.

For this reason, many vagabonds claim to be pilgrims – bound for some distant shrine, holy relic, or miracle site. A scallop shell on the hat, a staff in hand, and a sacred name on the lips may open doors otherwise barred. In reality, only some vagabonds are truly devout. For others, the pilgrimage is a mask.

The Vagabond is no fool. A life on the move sharpens the senses and teaches caution. Vagabonds learn to read people, judge danger, and find shelter where none is offered. They know the hidden paths, the rhythms of the seasons, and the mood of the roads. Some pass for beggars or pilgrims. Others offer help in exchange for a night's rest: chopping wood, fixing thatch, or nursing the sick. Still others steal, poach, or scavenge, surviving by wit or desperation.

Performer

A Performer is a travelling artist of the road – an acrobat, puppeteer, storyteller, balladeer, fire-breather, or animal trainer – who entertains crowds too poor or too lowly to ever see a court stage. They perform in village squares, fairgrounds, roadside inns, and market stalls, bringing wonder, laughter, and sometimes fear to audiences starved for distraction.

A Performer's life is hard, uncertain, and frequently dangerous. Many are born into roaming troupes; others are outcasts, escaped apprentices, or failed scholars who traded shame for showmanship. They live from hand to mouth, relying on applause and tossed coins, always at the mercy of weather, illness, or a drunken crowd. Their craft may be dismissed as vulgar or immoral by priests and officials – but to the common folk, they are magicians,

jesters, and wandering saints of laughter.

These artists are resourceful. They build stages from carts, sew their own costumes, and compose songs to suit the mood of a town or the vanity of a patron. Some Performers incorporate news, gossip, or political satire into their routines, winning applause – or attracting trouble. Others double as fortune-tellers, pickpockets, smugglers, or whores.

Though they hold no fixed address, Performers often know more about the land than those rooted in it. They track trends in mood and belief, shifting borders of fear and faith. They pass secret messages hidden in song, or deliver warnings dressed as jokes.

Pedlar

A Pedlar is a travelling seller of small goods – needles, ribbons, trinkets, ointments, combs, relics, and whatnot – carried in a box, bundle, or cart. Though not bound to a fixed shop, the pedlar serves as a crucial link between isolated communities and the larger world. Villagers and townsfolk alike rely on pedlars to bring wares, stories, and news from distant places.

A pedlar's origins are humble: often a runaway apprentice, an impoverished widow, or a younger son with no inheritance. They live from sale to sale, moving constantly to avoid tolls, fees, and suspicions of theft. Their accent, dress, or goods may mark them as an outsider – maybe barely tolerated, yet undeniably useful.

Pedlars are gifted talkers. They charm, cajole, and exaggerate to make a sale. They can sniff out a gullible customer with ease. Some supplement their trade with fortune-telling, minor theft, or shady deals. Others are honest, or at least try to be, knowing that reputation can mean the difference between hospitality and a beating.

In their travels, Pedlars gather valuable knowledge: which roads are safe, which roadside inns aren't, where famine or disease has struck. They know the mood of the market and the cost of bread. They hear whispers of rebellion, foreign plots, or court scandals. Many act as informal messengers or spies, passing notes between lovers, fugitives, or criminals in hiding.

Notes on image credits

Character art in 1581 was hand-drawn by our artist Anna Tyczyńska on the basis of photographs and paintings listed below.

- The artwork for Trader is based on the portrait of Nicolas de Respaigne by Peter Paul Rubens.
- The artwork for Vagabond and Haiduk are based on photos of Tomasz Łomnicki published on his website <https://www.lomnicki.pl>. Photo credited to Izabela Kulig.
- The artwork for Court Lady is based on a photo of Marta Dardzińska published on the Facebook page [Nobilis Domina/silva rerum.xvii](#). Photo credited to [ByBujka - Fotografia](#).
- The artwork for Landed Noble is based on a photo of Michał Mochocki from his personal archive.
- The artwork for Nun and Friar is based on a photo of Gabriela Krysińska and Tomasz Zając posted on Facebook by photographer [Jarosław Popczyk](#).
- The artwork for Lady of the Manor is based on a photo posted on Facebook by [Kaciaryna Vadanosava](#). Photo credited to A. Prusskaya.
- The artwork for Camp Follower is based on a photo of Deborah Torlai posted on Facebook by [Compagnia della Picca e del Moschetto](#).
- The artwork for Lawyer is based on a photo of Jakub Tinka posted on Facebook by photographer [Vlado Roško](#).
- The artwork for Armed Servant is based on a photo of a Cossack reconstruction published on [Kostiantyn Bohomaz's](#) Pinterest and credited to photographer Олександр Безобчук.
- The artwork for Privy Servant is based on a photo of a Hungarian nobleman's outfit published on Pinterest by [Historical Costumes](#).
- The artwork for Army Engineer is based on a photo published on Pinterest by [Tim Knight Guerniot](#).
- The artwork for Performer is based on a photo published on Pinterest by [Bevanne Lake](#).
- The artwork for Petyhorec is based a photo of pancerny published in Andrzej Mikiciak's text on the website of [Towarzystwo Jazdy Dawnej](#).
- The artwork for Barber Surgeon is based on a photo published on the Facebook page [Bravos Barber Club](#) and credited to Marie Houwer.

The artwork for Villager is based on an unidentified photo from the private collection of one of our consultants. We haven't yet been able to trace the original source but will update the information once confirmed. In all other cases, we contacted the person from the original photo or the person who posted it, sharing our proposed credits information. We adjusted it accordingly whenever requested.

Character

Background:

x

Parentage:

x

Religion:

x

Careers

x

x

x

x

Motivations

+/-

+/-

+/-

+/-

REFLEXES:

MUSCLES:

SENSES:

BRAINS:

CHARM:

WILL:

SKILLS

Basic

Specialised

Combat

d12 Alertness

d12 Athletics

d12 Influencing

d12 Leadership

d12

d12

d12

d12

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EXPERTISE

Career Class

EFFECT: re-roll 1d12 when:

BURDEN:

1581

GEAR

Weapon/Item

Quality

Effect

Price

ARMOUR

cover:

Armour Piece

Quality

Effect

Price

ANIMALS

Horse/Other

Quality

Effect

Price

NOTES:

1581



Thank you




Personal note from Michał Mochocki

The PLC, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, has been part of my life for nearly three decades – and I discovered it through none other than a RPG, the Polish game *Dzikie Pola* (1997). I went from player to gamemaster to scenario writer to a section editor for a print RPG magazine. This turned me into a community manager, and eventually landed me a job as co-author of *Dzikie Pola*'s second edition in 2005. This makes the Eastern Frontiers a kind of 20th-anniversary tribute.

I won't deny it – I used to be a devout enthusiast. I took part in historical reenactments, organised heritage events and informal historical education, and promoted all Commonwealth-themed things. Today, my approach is more critical and distanced, but I still see great value in engagement with this heritage. And the old sentiment still lingers.

As a scholar, I study the heritage and memory of the PLC and their ideological underpinnings. I know all-too-well how history is made in the present – through the ways we want to remember and speak about it. Together with my colleagues Paweł and Jakub, I developed a framework mapping five major PLC heritage discourses active in Poland today: nationalist, fundamentalist, socialist, postcolonial, and multiculturalist. Heritage and memory are intrinsically linked to identity – it's politically volatile!

As a citizen of Poland and the European Union, I am concerned not only about the threat posed by Russia, but also about the rise of homegrown nationalisms. PLC heritage is part of it, appropriated as it is by conservative nationalists and Catholic fundamentalists. My take is firmly multiculturalist: the PLC was not "great Poland" but a joint project of multiple constituent lands and communities, with mutual influences working in many directions. I believe this interpretation is not only the most accurate, but also the most valuable to our societies. It is a shared (even if conflicted) Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian-Ukrainian heritage of a political union that once triumphed over Russia. A multiculturalist angle is equally good in confronting Russian imperialism and divisive local nationalisms.

This game itself is a multicultural project, co-created by authors from Poland, Ukraine and Belarus affiliated with organisations in Poland, Ukraine and Lithuania. The Lithuanian component is currently the weakest, but will be strengthened in the next stage. All the authors I invited to the project were capable of working within a multiculturalist paradigm – one in which the PLC's history and heritage aren't forces of destruction, but resources for building shared resilience. But enough from me – they will speak for themselves.

Michał Mochocki

Personal note from Arina Komarnitska

RPGs and history have always been the two big passions in my life. I work with RPGs professionally as a narrative designer, but history has always been something I've explored on my own time.

I'm from the Zaporizhzhia region in Ukraine, so naturally, I've been drawn to the 16th–17th centuries in this region. My interest in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth goes way back to my reenactment and LARPing days. I have to admit, it was also fueled by authors like Henryk Sienkiewicz and Panteleimon Kulish who shaped my imagination growing up.

Over time, I've kept an eye on historical research, especially regarding the Rusyn szlachta of the late 1500s. Deeper historical context always finds its way into how I think about worldbuilding and storytelling.

So when Michał Mochocki reached out about Eastern Frontiers, and we realized we had a shared vision, I was immediately interested. It felt like the right project at the right time.

Since then, I've poured myself into the character types and the stories you'll play through them. Not just to make them fun – but to make them speak.

I hope that as you explore this world, you'll feel the weight of its stories, the complexity of its people, and the choices that shaped them. And maybe, like me, you'll find that the past still has plenty to say.

Arina Komarnitska

Personal note from Jerzy Szeja

I have been a Polish language teacher for 35 years, and a role-playing gamer for a few years longer. But my love for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (P-LC) goes back even further. I did not fall in love with this political project thanks to Henryk Sienkiewicz, although I read The Trilogy when I was ten years old. What influenced me more was The Commonwealth of Both Nations by Paweł Jasienica (the pseudonym of Leon Lech Beynar), which I discovered two years later, in 1977.

As a teacher, I ran narrative role-playing game sessions for over a dozen years, including during classes as an educational experiment.

In 2003, I defended the first PhD dissertation in Poland on role-playing games at the Institute of Polish Culture at the University of Warsaw. The book version of this dissertation was published the following year under the title Fabular Games – A New Phenomenon of Contemporary Culture (RABID 2004). These were the years of moral panic against role-playing games (RPGs and LARPs), led by the Catholic Church and organizations associated with it. To counter this, together with friends, I founded the Games Research Association of Poland. We study and promote the culture-shaping role of games in our civilization.

This historical tabletop RPG set in the PLC, which I have the honor of co-authoring, concerns the most glorious period in our history – a time when the community of Eastern European peoples was so strong that not only had it created original and valuable culture in every field, but also managed to resist the political and military ambitions of two powerful empires: the Muscovite and the Ottoman. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a feudal state and did not withstand the test of time, but its idea lives on in our memory, also in the form of the European Union project.

Jerzy Szeja

Personal note from Artemij Istuszkina

In my life so far, I've spent time in both Ukraine and Poland. This cultural experience was formative for my interest in the history of the region and Polish-Ukrainian relations more broadly.

I was invited to this project for a simple data analysis, but it evolved into something much larger. Drawing from years of experience as a Dungeon Master in systems such as Dungeons & Dragons 5e and Pathfinder 2e, it was a pleasure helping to shape this project according to my experience and desires as a dungeon master.

It's a fabulous idea for a game set in this unique time and place, and that is worked on by an international team. It's a step in the right direction to bring together people and cultures from all these different countries with something to unite around - a shared history, vision, and passion.

I hope you will enjoy playing this game as much as I enjoyed making it.

Artemij Istuszkina

Personal note from Yaraslau I. Kot

For those of us born in the USSR, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was always a distant echo - misinterpreted, twisted, and overshadowed by dominant political narratives. It was rarely something we could claim, understand, or explore on our own terms.

Historical memory is contested ground, but it is also a space of possibility. In today's world - where both Russian imperialism and nationalist simplifications seek to flatten history into a weapon - 1581: The Eastern Frontiers is an act of cultural defiance. It refuses to reduce the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to either a chauvinist fantasy or a Russian caricature.

Instead, it brings back the messy, vibrant, painful, and inspiring complexity of a shared heritage - from a multicultural standpoint.

As someone who has been forced to leave my country, I see this game not just as entertainment, but as a form of quiet resistance. I am ethnically Belarusian through my mother and Ukrainian through my father's roots; a political refugee living in Poland and working in Lithuania. Even in displacement, I continue to work with history, memory, games, and civic culture - because forgetting is not an option. We have plenty of examples of where that can lead.

Supporting this game was a deeply personal decision. I'm also proud that the Magnus Ducatus Foundation - named after the Grand Duchy itself - could help bring this vision to life. While I contributed fewer texts than my historian and writer colleagues, my input focused mostly on game design and testing.

I approached the project with two goals in mind: first, to learn more about this period in my homeland's history; and second, to help show that historical games can do more than entertain. They can educate. They can challenge. They can foster solidarity across borders.

This is why Eastern Frontiers matters. It reclaims the Commonwealth. Helping shape this game gave me something rare: hope. Hope that we can remember differently. Play differently. Imagine differently. And perhaps - through all that - begin to live differently too.

And maybe, just maybe, by playing together, we can begin to stitch back some of the threads that were torn apart.

Let this be just the beginning.

Yaraslau I. Kot