

Set Up (these steps are not in fixed order, feel free to bounce around as needed)

- 1.0 Define **theme, setting, premise, and scope** as a group.
- 2.0 Determine **character concepts**
 - 2.1 Pretenders can be any damn thing you want them to be. There's no list to choose from, no canonical background to adhere to, no character classes or racial modifiers. Be the character White Wolf rules wouldn't let you play. Be the cool monster you saw on *Buffy* last week. Be something you made up when you were twelve to scare your little brother. Just keep a few things in mind:
 - 2.2 Pretenders should be **cool**.
 - 2.3 Powers and characteristics should be logical and interesting.
 - 2.4 Pretenders must be able to pass as human, at least some of the time.
 - 2.5 Pretenders should be able to sense other Pretenders somehow.
 - 2.6 Pretenders should have a hook- a need, drive, or other priority that makes contact with humans a necessity.
 - 2.7 "Power levels" don't matter as much as coolness and potential for depth and interesting interactions.
 - 2.8 You don't have to flesh out every little detail now, a basic conceptual "sketch" is fine to start with. You can always add or change anything you like later on as long as everyone agrees it makes sense and is consistent with the idea and the story.
- 3.0 **Define the situation at hand**, flesh out and link PCs, NPCs, and the setting. Give your characters a reason to interact. They don't have to all have the same priorities, but they should have some common ground to relate to and *an immediate situation that needs dealing with by all of them in some way*.
- 4.0 **Connections and Enemies**
 - 4.1 Each character should have at least one Connection to someone they care strongly about, whether it's a PC, an existing NPC, or a new one created for the purpose. Connections should be specified only for intense relationships that evoke strong emotions from the character.
 - 4.2 Each character should have at least one Enemy. An Enemy can be a specific person but at least one Enemy should be something broader, either a concrete or an abstract group of some kind. Enemies should be important to the character, the antithesis of the character's ideals in some way, a worthy adversary. And it should be well known to the character- something they *actively oppose*, not a secret foe they aren't aware of.
- 5.0 Rough out character appearances, in a few sentences, no more. Leave the rest to imagination and actual play.

6.0 **Basic stats:** Air (Active Mental), Water (Passive Mental), Fire (Active Physical), Earth (Passive Physical) and Spirit (covers all supernatural effects as well as luck).

6.1 Stats may be anything from 0 (pathetically inept, even for a human) to as high as you want, but keep in mind that you roll at least 1 die per point of a stat, so anything crazy could get out of hand. 1 or 2 are pretty weak. Human scores would average around 3, except for Spirit, which ordinary humans don't have at all. 4 is high for a human but fairly average for a Pretender, 5 is preternatural, anything 6 or above is inhuman.

6.2 Yes, that's right, you don't roll for stats, or assign points from a pool. Just decide what's right for your character and make sure it isn't going to prevent the other PCs from being important as well.

6.3 You needn't take a high stat unless you want EVERYTHING covered by that stat to be high. If you want specific capabilities within the scope of any stat, you can define them as Powers or Specialties.

7.0 **Powers and Abilities:**

7.1 You can specify any powers or abilities you want, whether they are human skills or supernatural capabilities of any kind that are appropriate for your character.

7.2 No, there's no list. Just make up what you need and make sure everyone agrees it makes sense.

7.3 You don't have to assign any scores. Any supernatural powers are determined by your Spirit score, and any "ordinary" special skills are determined by the relevant stat.

7.4 You can also list the character's supernatural weaknesses or vulnerabilities here, but not character flaws or human frailties, those should go under Specialties.

7.5 Anything you want to be especially good or powerful at, you can take as a Specialty in the next step.

8.0 **Specialties**

8.1 You can take as many Specialties as you want, and they should cover anything you want to be really good at. Anything you list as a Specialty will give you a free re-roll anytime that Specialty is relevant to a roll.

8.2 Specialties don't have to be powers or skills, and they don't have to be positive. They can be emotions, drives, character flaws, fears, passions, stylistic elements, even quotations. The only requirement is that when you use a Specialty to get a re-roll, that element must be present meaningfully in the narration of the results of the scene. This is especially true for flaws or negative traits, which you can invoke for a re-roll any time as long as the flaw is featured prominently in the resolution of the scene.

8.3 At least one Specialty should be based on the character's personality, emotional state, social situation, etc. This is a game about powerful, passionate, dynamic personalities.

Actual Play (Wee!)

- 9.0 You can change your character sheet at any time, as long as the group agrees that it fits the character concept. If you forgot something important, just let everyone know and add it. If something happens that would change your character permanently, just clear it with the group and make the change.
- 10.0 **The Rule of Jared:** Don't Roll Unless It's Important. The dice should only come into play when the result of a scene is dramatically important to the story and themes being played out. Otherwise, just describe the scenes as you see fit within the paradigms set out by the group. *If less than three of the major four Categories aren't involved in a resolution, it's probably not worth rolling for!*
- 11.0 Rolls are made for **conflict resolution**, often covering an entire scene, almost never reduced to a single action or exchange, unless it's really important or complex. The GM determines the scope of a roll according to the demands of the story. This means one roll is more likely to encompass scenarios like "Will we escape from the sewer creature's lair", rather than "can I punch the sewer creature in the gills". Just define each involved player's general goal or priority, then roll the dice. Once you know the results of the roll, you can spell out the specifics during the narration. This is called "Fortune in the Middle" resolution, for those interested in RPG design.
- 12.0 **Roll 1 die** per point of the relevant stat as determined by the GM.
- 12.1 Add 1 die if opposed by one or more Enemies.
- 12.2 Add 1 die if one or more Connections are meaningfully involved in the scene.
- 12.3 Add 1 die if being meaningfully assisted by one or more other characters, whether PCs or important NPCs. In situations where PCs are cooperating toward a goal, the player with the highest relevant stat should roll, adding the single bonus die for cooperation.
- 13.0 The GM assigns points of **Adversity** as they see fit, based on how much difficulty they think the player(s) will encounter trying to accomplish their goal. This shouldn't be used as a club, Pretenders are cool and generally much more powerful than ordinary humans. They generally only have a tough time when faced with daunting odds or dangerous circumstances.
- 13.1 The player may buy off Adversity by dropping one die from their pool for each point of Adversity they wish to nullify.
- 14.0 Player making the roll assigns dice as desired to the four **primary categories** on the **Roll Result Table**, by placing the dice as they choose in the boxes, no more than one die per box. Any boxes left empty are considered a result of "1".
- 14.1 Generally speaking, 1 or 2 is abject failure, 3 is mitigated failure, 4 is bare success, and 5 or 6 are definitive success. Each category lists the basic results for each roll. Feel free to interpret these as liberally as you wish, according to the needs and flow of the story, and the consensus of the group. That doesn't mean you can interpret a failure as a success, it just means be as inventive with the nature of the failure or loss as you like.

- 15.0 Any extra dice may be assigned to **Optional Categories** if the player wishes, or discarded if they don't want to.
- 15.1 When the GM is narrating, they always have the option to introduce Optional elements, even if the player did not assign any dice to those categories. However, assigning a die to an Optional category *does* bind the GM as far as the effect's implications. Non-GM players cannot add Optional elements unless a die has been assigned to the appropriate category.
- 16.0 After the dice have been assigned to categories as the player wishes, they may then activate any appropriate **Specialties** in order to re-roll any of the dice. They must choose a specific die to re-roll, and it must stay in the same category, but they may invoke more than one Specialty to re-roll the same die more than once if they wish. The caveat is that each Specialty invoked must be included in the scene narration, if possible in a way that ties it to the category it was used to re-roll. This is especially important to keep track of when multiple PCs are working together towards the same goal during a scene.
- 16.1 **Cooperation:** The real strength of cooperating is that all characters involved may invoke Specialties to get re-rolls. Each involved player may invoke one or more of their Specialties and assign the re-roll to any die they choose, with or without consulting the other players. The narration must take each invoked specialty into effect, however, so make sure they are relevant to the situation.
- 16.2 You may also "re-roll" categories with no dice assigned to them, whether primary or Optional. Simply announce the Specialty you are invoking and the category, roll a die, and place the die in the category you named. The narration still must include the Specialty, preferably in relation to the category named.
- 17.0 Once the players are finished re-rolling, the GM may apply any remaining points of Adversity by subtracting one per point from any *one* of the dice available. These results are final.
- 18.0 When two or more PCs are in opposition, the GM assigns one the Active role and one the Passive role. The Active player rolls as normal, while the Passive player may assign Adversity equal to half the value of their relevant stat, rounded up.
- 19.0 When a 3 or 4 is assigned to the **Safety** category, the narration should include some form of meaningful negative consequence. The simplest way is to give the character a temporary automatic Adversity score for certain kinds of rolls or activities, but other ways are possible as long as the group agrees it is appropriate. The GM has final say. This should be noted on the character's sheet.
- 19.1 When a 1 or 2 is assigned to the Safety category, the narration should include some form of severe and lasting negative consequence. Mechanically, this can often be represented by adding a permanent, automatic Adversity score for certain rolls or actions to one or more characters' sheets. Again, other methods are possible as long as the group can agree, with the GM resolving disputes by fiat. Whatever the group decides should be noted on the character's sheet in the appropriate place.

- 20.0 When a 1 or 2 is assigned in the Style category, the narration should include some form of embarrassment or fumbling by one or more characters. In addition, if another roll is made involving that character during the same scene or one linked to it, the character gains one additional point of Adversity due to being "off their game" or unbalanced in some way. This provides great opportunities for characters who have been blowing it right and left to get back into the action with some dramatic flair, so don't be afraid to get slapped with a fumble or two.
- 21.0 **NPCs** do not have stats or dice. Usually the *GM* will narrate their actions as they see fit. During conflict-resolution, whomever is assigned will narrate the actions of **NPCs** consistent with the story and results of the roll.
- 22.0 **That's it! Have fun!**