

7TH SEA

BASIC RULES PLAYING THE GAME

JOHN WICK PRESENTS A ROLEPLAYING GAME "7TH SEA" BASIC RULES VERSION 1.0

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Playing 7th Sea

When you're playing **7TH SEA**, you'll find that your Hero is put in all kinds of tough situations, moments in which real danger or disastrous consequences lie just around the corner. Your Hero takes actions in response to those threats and consequences—Risks—in the hopes of saving the day, warding off fate, or just plain staying alive!

7TH SEA uses 10-sided dice (which you can find in most hobby stores) to help arbitrate the success of most actions the characters take. Whenever there is an uncertain outcome for an action, the GM tells the players to roll a handful of dice, add up the numbers, and tell her the result. This total determines the degree of success or failure.

Risks That Matter

When your Hero takes Risks, we're not going to pay too much attention to the sword she's using or the exact color of the cloak she's wearing. Those things can matter—it's hard to win a swordfight if you don't have a sword—but we care far more about the decisions your Hero makes than the small details of those choices.

When confronted by the man who killed your father, will you pick up a sword? Will you take up arms against him, even though he's the most powerful advisor to the Sun King of Montaigne? Or will you politely greet him with kind words that earn his trust, moving ever one step closer to your moment of revenge?

Either is a Risk.

Traits

Traits describe how quick, nimble, strong, resilient and charming your Hero is. Each Trait has a Rank—from 2 to 5—indicating your Hero's competence. The higher the Rank, the stronger the Trait. Your Hero has five Traits: Brawn, Finesse, Resolve, Wits and Panache.

Skills

Skills represent your Hero's training and education. The higher a Skill's Rank, the stronger that Skill is. Skills also help your Hero overcome difficulties and dangers and are often added to Traits. There are 16 Skills (see Skills on pages 6 and 7 in the *Basic Rules: Characters* document).

Risks

When your Hero takes a dangerous or important action—called a Risk—he rolls dice. In **7TH SEA**, Risks have three important elements: Approach, Consequences and Opportunities.

Approach

An Approach is the method your Hero has chosen to solve a problem. Your Approach is the Skill and Trait you roll for a Risk, but it also determines how you spend Raises during a Sequence. If an Action you wish to take isn't covered by your Approach, that Action costs you an additional Raise.

If you struggle to define your Approach, ask, "Why am I doing this? What do I want? How do I get it?"

Consequences

Risks also come with Consequences. Consequences represent everything that can hurt or hinder your Hero while attempting her Risk. Once you've said what you're doing, you can't take it back: those are the Consequences you must face. Most Risks have one or maybe two Consequences, but more dangerous Risks can have up to three or even four.

Opportunities

Other times, when a player announces her Approach, it opens up an Opportunity. This is a moment of good fortune the Hero can exploit...if she can seize it. When you announce your Approach, the GM tells you about any Opportunities you have. Not all Risks have Opportunities, but some exceptionally dramatic Risks could have one or two Opportunities.

How Risks Work

When you announce an action for your Hero, the GM decides if that action is a Risk. If it is, use these steps:

Step 1: Setting the Stage

First, the GM describes the situation. She tells you important details that may work for or against your Hero, elements she can use and elements that might hinder her.

Step 2: Approach

You tell the GM your Approach. What are you hoping to accomplish and how? The GM then decides if this is a Risk or just a normal Action. If it isn't a Risk, your Hero accomplishes her Action. If it is a Risk, the GM moves to Step 3.

Step 3: Gather Dice

The GM tells you which combination of Trait and Skill to use. Add your Trait Rank plus your Skill Rank for your Risk Pool. This is the number of dice you roll to overcome the Risk.

You may also get dice from other sources, such as Advantages.

Step 4: Consequences and Opportunities

The GM now tells you the following:

- Why the action is a Risk, e.g. you're running through a burning building.
- The Consequences of the Risk, e.g. you'll take 2 Wounds.
- The Opportunities your Risk may offer, e.g. you spot a secret document on the desk about to catch fire.

All Risks have at least one Consequence. Some Risks may not have an Opportunity. Some Risks may have a combination of Opportunities and Consequences. Your GM determines these elements before you roll dice.

If you end up with unused dice, the GM can choose to buy them from you. For each die the GM chooses to purchase in this fashion, you gain 1 Hero Point... and he gains 1 Danger Point.

Step 5: Roll & Raises

After you roll, use your dice to create sets of 10. Each set of 10 you create is a Raise. Sometimes, you may use dice that add up to more than 10. That's okay; it's still a Raise. But if you don't have enough points to make a 10, you can't use those dice for a Raise.

Step 6: Using Raises

You use Raises to take Actions, overcome the Consequences, take advantage of Opportunities, create Opportunities for other Heroes, and inflict Wounds on other characters.

On any given Risk, you can spend your raises a number of ways. Here are the most important:

A single Raise spent to take an Action ensures that you do what you set out to do—your Hero succeeds.

Raises spent to Overcome the Consequences reduce the side effects, collateral damage and harm to you caused by the Risk.

Raises spent to take advantage of an Opportunity mean your Hero gains the benefit of whatever the Opportunity offered you.

Raises spent to create a new Opportunity means your Hero sets the stage for another Hero to benefit from her action later.

Raises spent to Inflict Wounds cause 1 Wound per Raise spent to a character within reach of your Hero.

Improvising

If a Hero wants to take an Action outside the scope of the Skill or Trait that he rolled at the beginning of the Sequence, he must spend an additional Raise to improvise. Whether a Hero's Action falls within the scope of his Skill is at the GM's discretion.

Unskilled

If a Hero takes an Action that would be tied to a Skill she doesn't have, she is Unskilled and must spend an additional Raise. The Skill associated with any given Action is at the GM's discretion.

No Raises

If you cannot make 1 Raise on your roll, something interesting happens like the arrival of a new Villain or a dramatic shift in the narrative. The GM narrates the outcome of the Risk, your Hero suffers any and all Consequences, and misses all the Opportunities.

Consequences

When thinking about Consequences, the GM thinks about the circumstances of the Risk and what makes it dangerous. Consequences should not be out of left field or arbitrary; they should come from the Scene.

Action: “I want to leap to that rooftop.”

- ✦ Breaking through the thin roof when you land on the other side.
- ✦ Being noticed by guards in the nearby plaza.

Wounds as Consequences

One of the simplest Consequences you can apply to most Risks is the threat of injury in the form of Wounds. In most circumstances, Wounds are a shared Consequence that the players overcome as a group. A Risk with a Consequence of 10 Wounds, for example, can be overcome by any and all players. If the Consequence is not fully overcome, all Heroes are dealt the remaining Wounds.

A Hero who wishes to protect her friend can choose to take some or all of the Wounds that would be applied to her ally, so long as the Hero is in a position to help and spends one or more Raises.

The GM and Consequences

The GM has a huge responsibility. If you're the GM, the players came to your table to have fun. Your job is to make sure that happens. You could use Consequences to make the Heroes' lives more interesting and dramatic, or you could use them to simply screw the Heroes over.

Don't choose the second option. Ever.

Your players want their Heroes to be just that: heroes. They are the protagonists of this story. They want to feel like swashbuckling legends and you should help them reach that goal. Yes, protagonists fail from time to time, but we're providing a mechanic for players to choose when their Heroes fail. Let them use it. Remind them to use it.

Use Consequences to make the story more dramatic. Do not use them to turn a success into a failure. Don't come up with clever ways to turn “Yes” into “No.”

Opportunities

Opportunities are a little trickier because the GM is trying to think of things that will *help* the Heroes rather than hinder their progress. When thinking about Opportunities, GMs should think about the circumstances of the Risk and what elements might be in the Heroes' favor. Usually, there is only one Opportunity per roll, but the GM might throw out more if the circumstances permit it.

Action: “I want to pick the lock.”

- ✦ One of the guards in the room is an old, trusted friend.
- ✦ There are two mounted pistols on the wall that could easily be stolen.
- ✦ Because this is the guards' quarters, they've installed a poison needle, which could be repurposed.

Just like with Consequences, all Opportunities should emerge naturally from the Scene.

Creating Opportunities

The GM can use his own Raises to create Opportunities for other Heroes. Spend 1 Raise to create an Opportunity for another Hero to use in the Scene. Other Heroes must spend a Raise of their own to take advantage of the Opportunity that is created.

Opportunities are narrative permission slips—they give players the chance to do something that they otherwise couldn't have done, typically because the situation just didn't allow it. They create a narrative opportunity that didn't exist before they spent the Raise.

Flair

Whenever Heroes make a Risk, they are encouraged to vary their tactics and to give interesting, Heroic, cool descriptions of their Actions.

Every time you use a unique Skill (one that you have not used before in this Scene), you gain 1 Bonus Die.

If players give a description of their action, make a clever quip before they roll, interact with the scenery around them, or otherwise add to the Scene in a fun way, they gain a Bonus Die. A description does not have to be something incredibly in-depth—anything more than “I’m going to use my Sword Skill” should be rewarded.

A Hero can earn one die for using a unique Skill and another for giving an awesome description. These two behaviors are not mutually exclusive and should both be rewarded.

“I Fail”

Before any roll, a player can announce, “I fail.” This means the Hero fails to overcome the Risk, he suffers all the Consequences and misses all the Opportunities. He never rolls dice so he has no Raises to spend. The player gets 1 Hero Point and describes how his Hero fails.

Gaining 1 Hero Point for failing, then narrating the outcome, adds tension and drama to an Action Sequence. Try it out.

“I Dodge”

You may notice there is no “Dodge” skill. This is intentional.

You don’t want to say, “I dodge” because that just maintains the status quo of the scene. A success in that case means that nothing changes. Instead, use your Action to change the circumstance of the Scene. Be creative. Don’t be passive. Don’t use your Risk to just say “No.” Use your Risk to take action.

Pressure

Heroes or Villains use Skills to coerce, lure, seduce or influence another character’s actions. This is called **Pressure**. When a Hero (or Villain) applies Pressure, she forces her target to either act in a way that she chooses or to spend an additional Raise if she wants to take a different Action.

First, the character applying Pressure chooses a specific Action (“Attack me” or “Run away” are good examples). The next time the Hero’s target chooses to do anything other than the directed Action, he must spend an additional Raise. Once the target spends those 2 Raises, he has “broken the spell” and may spend Raises as normal.

Pressure can be used in both Action and Dramatic Sequences. The easiest way to create Pressure is with Convince, Intimidate, Tempt and other similar Skills, but creative players may find ways to use any Skill to apply Pressure.

If someone has Pressured a character, no one else can Pressure that same character until the initial situation has been resolved.

Villains can apply the same Pressure to all Heroes in a Scene with a single Raise and a Danger Point. A Villain could use Pressure to say, “All of you will run away,” or “All of you will attack me,” or “All of you will save that helpless victim.” All she needs to do is spend a Raise and a Danger Point. Otherwise, Villains use Pressure normally.

Hero Points

All Heroes start each game with one Hero Point, a special resource they can use to do awesome things. Players can use Hero Points in various ways: activate special abilities, gain Bonus Dice, or save another character from an untimely demise.

Gaining Hero Points

A Hero gains a Hero Point when:

- ✦ Either he or the GM activates his Hero's Hubris.
- ✦ He chooses to say, "My Hero fails." The player does not roll dice and cannot spend Raises to overcome Consequences and produce other effects.
- ✦ His Hero acts in a way as described by his Quirks. A player can earn only 1 Hero Point per session per Quirk.
- ✦ The GM buys any unused dice that aren't part of a Raise. For each die the GM chooses to buy in this fashion, you gain 1 Hero Point...and he gains 1 Danger Point.

Using Hero Points

Players may use Hero Points for the following benefits:

- ✦ Add one bonus d10 to his roll before a Risk. A player may spend multiple Hero Points in this fashion on a single Risk.
- ✦ Add three bonus d10s to another Hero's roll before a Risk. This represents the first Hero helping the second in some way, even if it is only moral support; a Hero can only accept help from one other Hero at a time.
- ✦ Activate a special ability on his Hero Sheet. A player may spend multiple Hero Points on different special abilities on a single Risk.
- ✦ Take an Action while Helpless. A player may spend multiple Raises on this Action, just as if they were not Helpless.

The Danger Pool

The GM has a pool of points, as well: the Danger Pool. The GM starts each game with 1 Danger Point for each Hero. So if a campaign has 5 Heroes who are playing, the GM begins each session with 5 Danger Points.

Using Danger Points

The GM may use Danger Points from her pool to:

- ✦ Increase the total needed for a Raise by 5 for a Risk or Round. This affects all Heroes in the Scene.
- ✦ Add two dice to any Villain's die pool.
- ✦ Activate a Brute Squad's special ability.
- ✦ Activate a Villain's special ability.
- ✦ Murder. If a Hero becomes helpless, a Villain can spend a Danger Point to murder that character.

The GM can spend additional Danger Points to add multiple dice to a Villain's die pool, but can't spend multiple Danger Points on any other option, e.g. increasing the total for Raises by 10 or murdering two Heroes at once.

Action Sequence

If only a single Hero is taking a Risk at a time, the GM only needs to handle that one Risk and move on to the next Risk. But when multiple Heroes are involved, or when a Hero faces a Villain, or when all their actions are important all at once and seconds count, it may be time for an Action Sequence.

A sword fight is an Action Sequence. Escaping a burning ship with a precious Synchroneth artefact is an Action Sequence. Boarding an enemy ship on the open seas is an Action Sequence.

We divide an Action Sequence into Rounds. A Round is as long as a GM needs it to be. During a Round, every character gets to take Actions. An Action is a single activity resulting in a single result.

Step 1: Approach

Everyone announces an Approach for the Round. The GM tells each player which Trait+Skill to use for her Risk. Just like a normal Risk, all players gather dice from their Traits, Skills and elsewhere.

Step 2: Consequences and Opportunities

After hearing Approaches, the GM tells everyone what the Consequences and Opportunities are, if any, and when those Consequences or Opportunities occur. Some Opportunities and Consequences have Time Limits. We'll talk about that more below.

Step 3: Roll & Raises

All players roll at the same time and count their Raises and tell the GM what they rolled.

Step 4: Actions

The player with the most Raises describes his Hero's Action and spends one or more Raises on that Action (see "Step 6: Using Raises" on page 2). The more Raises he spends on the Action, the bigger the effect.

After the first Action resolves, the character with the most Raises at this point takes the next Action. It could be the same character or it could be another character, but whoever it is, the character with the most Raises always takes the next Action. If two Heroes are tied, they decide which of them goes next. Villains always go first when tied with Heroes.

Step 5: End of Round

When a player is out of Raises, his Hero can no longer take Actions during the Round. He must wait until all players and the GM have spent all their Raises for Actions.

When all players are out of Raises, the GM determines if an Action Sequence is still necessary. If so, the Action Sequence continues. Go back to **Step 1: Approach** and go through the steps again.

If the players have resolved the Scene, the Action Sequence is over.

Time Limits

Some Consequences and Opportunities have Time Limits: the players have a limited amount of time to overcome the Consequences or take advantage of the Opportunity. After that time passes, Heroes no longer have the option to jump on it.

For example, the GM could say, "You need to get off this burning ship before the powder room explodes. And the powder room will explode at 2 Raises and everyone takes 5 Wounds." That means as soon as all of the Heroes have fewer than 2 Raises, the powder room explodes and everyone takes 5 Wounds.

The GM sets these Time Limits when she presents Consequences and Opportunities.

Using Multiple Raises for a Single Action

When a player announces an Action for an Action Sequence, he spends 1 Raise to accomplish that Action. It could be to overcome the Risk, to negate a Consequence, to take advantage of an Opportunity, or perhaps to take care of some other danger that has come up during the Action Sequence.

Players may choose to spend more than 1 Raise on an Action.

Sometimes two Heroes, or a Hero and a Villain, will want the same thing, or they will each have an Action that runs counter to the other. Whoever spends the most on their Action gets it, to the exclusion of all others. However, Raises spent to overcome the Risk must be spent in a single Action—you can't spend 1 Raise to make your Action, then decide to spend a second one to reinforce it later. It's all or nothing.

Wounds & Dramatic Wounds

Wounds represent physical injuries, albeit minor ones. Dramatic Wounds are much more serious and obvious. As your Hero takes Wounds and Dramatic Wounds, she gains bonuses.

Causing Wounds

Causing another character Wounds is a Risk. You declare your Approach, gather dice, and make Raises. Spend 1 Raise to cause your opponent 1 Wound. You may spend additional Raises to cause additional Wounds: 1 Wound per Raise.

Avoiding Wounds

When you face a Villain or Hero in combat, he may spend Raises to directly inflict Wounds on your Hero outside of a Consequence. You can avoid these Wounds by immediately spending Raises—one-for-one, outside of the normal Action order—and saying what your Hero does to avoid being hurt.

Firearms

A pistol or musket in the hands of a Hero or Villain represents serious danger. Firearms are relatively easy to use, and their effects are devastating. (Brute Squads, of course, only inflict their normal damage no matter what weapons they are using.)

Anyone shot by a firearm by a Hero or Villain takes 1 Dramatic Wound in addition to all other normal effects from the attack. If you shoot another character with a firearm using 2 Raises, that character takes 2 Wounds and 1 Dramatic Wound. The target cannot use Raises to negate the Dramatic Wound from a firearm; he might be able to minimize the damage, but he can't dodge a bullet.

The good news is that a gun takes 5 Raises to reload.

Taking Another Hero's Wounds

Before another character takes Wounds, you can use your own Raises to take the Wounds instead. This is “jumping in the way” of the injury. A player may offer to do this “out of order,” in other words, when it isn't her turn to spend Raises.

Be sure to explain how you do this in dramatically appropriate fashion.

Healing Wounds

At the end of a Scene, when the Heroes have a few minutes to catch their breath and regroup, all Wounds are healed. Dramatic Wounds remain until the end of the Episode, or until the Heroes manage to deal with them through the course of play. Mundane healing, such as visiting a doctor, isn't an instant cure-all and doesn't come cheap, requiring several hours of uninterrupted treatment to heal 1 Dramatic Wound.

Magical healing, through Sorcery or artifacts, is rare and cannot be purchased. At least, not with coin...

Helpless

Most Heroes can only take four Dramatic Wounds, although some Advantages or other abilities allow some Heroes to take more. Once your Hero takes the maximum number of Dramatic Wounds he can take, your Hero becomes Helpless.

A Helpless character is prone and cannot get to his feet. A Helpless character can still roll dice for Risks, but must spend a Hero Point to taken an Action. If the Hero wants to take more than one Action, he must spend multiple Hero Points.

A Villain may kill a Helpless Hero by spending a Danger Point and announcing murderous intent as his Action: “I am killing this character.” The Villain spends all remaining Raises. Her Action resolves at the end of the Round, after all the other Actions.

In response to a Villain announcing murderous intent, any Hero can spend all of her Raises immediately (as well as a Hero Point) to save the Helpless Hero. She may take this Action even if it is not her turn. The player describes how she reaches the victim and stops the murder. The Helpless character is now safe for the rest of the Scene or until their savior becomes Helpless as well; no Villain can attempt another murder against that Hero.

If a Villain attempts a Murder outside an Action Sequence, a Hero can still spend a Hero Point to stop the murder, but it's the only Action she can take.

Dramatic Sequences

If an Action Sequence is a rush of furious activity that lasts only a few seconds, a Dramatic Sequence is the exact opposite. When deciding which Scene type you are using, ask yourself if the Scene's importance comes from immediate physical danger (Action Scene) or building tension (Dramatic Scene).

Dramatic Sequences tend to move slower than Action Sequence. The Heroes usually have more time to make decisions, but those decisions are just as important as the ones made in an Action Sequence—and sometimes are even more important.

Action or Drama?

The biggest difference between Action Scenes and Dramatic Scenes is in their pacing. An Action Scene is dangerous because you could get shot, or stabbed, or burned alive. Your adrenaline is running high.

A Dramatic Scene is dangerous because you need to make decisions on what to say, who to trust, how to spend your resources, and what is important to you. Action Scenes are fast-paced and instinctive; Dramatic Scenes are tense and cerebral. The difference between the two is not just that one Scene is fast and the other is slow. The pacing also changes because the stakes are different. When you shift from a Scene sword fighting against a villain to a Scene wooing a potential consort, there's still tension and risk of failure, it just takes a different form. It is possible for a Dramatic Scene to turn into an Action Scene, and vice versa. A Risk in a Dramatic Sequence is a long-form gambit with long-form consequences.

Step 1: Approach

The GM tells each player what the circumstances of the Sequence are in general terms and what they can expect. This should include the scope of the Sequence, any dangers that the Heroes are aware of, and how long the Sequence, in general, will last. All of these facts aren't set in stone, and things can change as the Sequence progresses.

Each player announces an Approach for the Sequence. Your Approach is a general strategy for dealing with the complicated implications of the Scene. Each Approach is a Trait+Skill combination (with appropriate Bonus Dice).

Step 2: Gather Dice

Just like a normal Risk, all players gather dice from their Traits, Skills and elsewhere.

Step 3: Roll & Raises

All players roll at the same time and count their Raises.

All players tell the GM what they rolled.

Step 4: Actions

The GM narrates the Sequence, describing details, presenting challenges and circumstances. Heroes spend their Raises to overcome challenges, accomplish goals, or take action to change their circumstances. There is no strict sequence of events or actions in a Dramatic Sequence—things are much more fluid and malleable than procedural and direct Action Sequences. Players spend Raises to take Actions, take advantage of Opportunities, and avoid Consequences, just like an Action Scene.

Out of Raises

If a player runs out of Raises, she does not roll again. She can continue to participate in the Dramatic Sequence, but she can no longer spend Raises to achieve effects or overcome challenges. After all, she doesn't have any more Raises to spend.

Dueling

Any ruffian off the street can hack away with a sword. Such an individual might be known as the best sword in the slums, the sharpest soldier in the regiment or the most dangerous in a crew of pirates. A Duelist would take her apart without breaking a sweat.

Learning the Art of the Sword

When you purchase the Duelist Academy Advantage, you learn a Dueling Style. The core book lists all of the Dueling Styles. This guide shares the basic maneuvers all duelists know.

Maneuvers

Attending any Duelist Academy grants access to all **Maneuvers**, specific ways to wield a weapon that stay consistent across Styles. In addition to these Maneuvers, a Duelist also gains access to a Style Bonus, a unique advantage based on his training.

To perform a Maneuver, spend a Raise on your Action. A Duelist can perform one, and only one, Maneuver on each of his Actions. A Duelist can still spend multiple Raises to perform multiple Maneuvers within an Action Sequence as separate Actions.

In addition, a Duelist can never perform the same Maneuver in consecutive Actions (you cannot perform Slash, then on your next Action perform Slash again). A Duelist may perform a Maneuver twice in the same Round of an Action Sequence, but there must be an additional Maneuver (or non-dueling Action) between the repeated Maneuvers.

Slash

A basic Maneuver used to attack, but one that even the most gifted street thug wishes she could master. When you perform Slash, deal a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry.

Parry

The art of putting your weapon between yourself and harm. Perform Parry to prevent a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry. You can only activate Parry on your Action, immediately following the Maneuver that caused your Wounds.

Feint

Posturing and positioning in such a way that your opponent drops his guard or tries to block an attack that never comes. When you perform Feint, you deal one Wound—if your target is injured again this Round, he suffers one additional Wound.

Lunge

A reckless and sometimes desperate Maneuver, but one capable of ending a conflict immediately. When you perform Lunge, spend all of your Raises. You deal a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry plus the Raises you spend. These Wounds cannot be avoided or prevented.

Bash

Forcing your opponent off balance—with your pommel or a closed fist—to render her next strike less effective. When you perform Bash, deal one Wound; the next time your target deals Wounds this Round she deals one less Wound for each Rank you have in Weaponry.

Riposte

Failure to master Riposte has resulted in more students failing to graduate from their Academy than any other Maneuver. When you perform Riposte, you prevent a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry, and deal a number of Wounds equal to your Ranks in Weaponry. You can only perform Riposte on your Action, and you must perform it on the Action immediately following the Maneuver that caused the Wounds you are preventing. A Duelist may only perform this Maneuver once per Round.

Ship Battles

A **Ship Battle** is just like any other Action Sequence. The Ship's watch spies an enemy in the glass, the officer of the watch calls for general quarters and the GM asks the players for their Heroes' Approach. The Sequence has Consequences for the Heroes to negate and Opportunities to jump on. When players use all their Raises, the GM determines whether or not to continue the Action Sequence.

For more information on Ships, see Chapter 7 of the Core Rulebook, page 241.

Step 1: Approach

Just like a normal Action Sequence, players describe their Approach for the Round. For players who are not familiar with naval combat, here are some suggestions:

Fire the Cannons: Heroes can fire cannons at the enemy ship, hoping to damage it enough to sink her, force her surrender or cripple her enough for a boarding action.

Man the Sails: "Going aloft" gives the Heroes an opportunity to put the Ship out of range of the enemy's cannons and grappling hooks.

The Bilge Crew: The Bilge Crew remains below, doing repairs to the Ship during combat, patching holes, and making sure she doesn't sink.

Doctor's Crew: A Hero could assist the Ship's doctor (if it has one) dealing with the injured Crew.

Boarding Party: Ships have to get close enough for grapples, but once they do, sailors can go face-to-face.

Step 2: Consequences and Opportunities

Having determined your Actions, the GM now tells you the Consequences and Opportunities.

Most times, the Consequences of engaging an enemy Ship are Wounds from the cannons. But your own Ship can take Hits and Critical Hits—the equivalent of Hero Wounds and Dramatic Wounds. You can spend Raises to prevent those. The Enemy Ship can also target key parts of your own Ship. She can fire at the rudder (meaning the Ship can't turn), aim at the main mast with chain shot (meaning she can't move at all) or even target the Crew with grape shot. If you don't prevent these Consequences, your Ship could lose maneuverability, speed or valuable crewmembers when the inevitable boarding action occurs.

Meanwhile, the Sequence may have Opportunities. You may have a shot at the Enemy Ship's main mast or rudder, get into position to "cross the T" or take potshots from the rigging. If you don't take advantage of these Opportunities, they're lost.

Step 3: Gather Dice

The GM tells you which combination of Trait and Skill to use. Add your Trait Rank plus your Skill Rank for your Risk Pool. This is the number of dice you roll to overcome the Risk.

Step 4: Roll & Raises

After you roll, use your dice to create Raises. Just like any other Action Sequence.

Step 5: Spend Raises

You spend Raises to take Actions, overcome the Consequences, take advantage of Opportunities, create Opportunities for other Heroes and Inflict Wounds.

Game Master

Players have it easy. A player has only a single character to keep track of. You—the GM—have an entire world. Not only that, you are also the arbiter of all the rules, the settler of disputes, an improvisational actor and voices for a cast of thousands. Sound impossible? Relax, it's easy.

Before All Else: Preparation

While GMing requires improvisation, the other important ingredient for a successful game is preparation.

Your Group

Before you GM, take a moment to think about your group. Knowing your audience is one of the most important factors in entertainment—and make no mistake, *your job is to entertain the players*.

Let's say that again.

**YOUR JOB IS
TO ENTERTAIN
THE PLAYERS**

They have a role in that job, but you should know your group, what they like or don't like, and most importantly, what they expect. Both so you can fulfill those expectations and *twist* them in fun, painful ways.

Table Rules

Every gaming group has a set of "table rules," acceptable and unacceptable behaviors at the gaming table. Do you allow cell phones or laptops? How about sketching or knitting? Be up front and clear about them. When you all sit down for the first session, have a print out, hand it out and read through them out loud. Make sure everybody understands.

Golden Rules

There's really only one rule in **7TH SEA**.

The Golden Rule: Have Fun.

There's a second golden rule, but it only applies to Game Masters.

The Second Golden Rule: If someone isn't having fun, fix it.

Feel free to show your players the second rule if it's necessary. We hope it isn't.

Spotlight

Think of your gaming group as a chorus, and yourself as the director. As long as everybody sings in harmony, you've got something beautiful going on. But nearly everyone wants a chance to sing solo. Lay out all the Heroes' Stories in front of you and take a good look at them.

Figure out which ones work together and which ones don't. The Heroes with similar Stories will be in the spotlight, at the center of attention, while the other Heroes act as supporting cast. Then, those who acted as supporting cast get their chance to stand in the spotlight while others lend a helping hand telling the main story.

Remember to explain your method to your players. If you explain to them how the round-robin storytelling works, they'll sit back and provide some colorful backdrop until it's their turn.

The Three Hats

When you play the role of the Game Master, you're really playing three roles: the author, the referee and the storyteller. Let's take a quick look at each of those hats and see how they fit.

Author Hat

7TH SEA is a collaborative storytelling game. That means all the players—including you—are *authoring* the story. But no plot survives contact with the players. They all have their own agendas and voices. Your job is not to tell the players a story, but to help the group tell *its* story.

Storyteller Hat

Once the game begins, the GM shifts modes from author to storyteller. You have to describe a world you've never seen before and maintain a suspension of disbelief for hours at a time. Calling a GM an improvisational actor isn't right—an actor has only to maintain a single character at a time. A GM has to maintain an entire world.

Referee Hat

When you put on your referee hat, you make sure everyone gets a fair shake from the rules of the game. You clarify the rules of the game and make decisions quickly, ensuring that the pace of the game doesn't lag so nobody has an opportunity to take out their cellphone.

Want More GM Tips?

Want to learn more about GMing **7TH SEA**? The Core Rulebook contains a plethora of helpful information about doing just that!

After the Game

So you've just finished your first session and everyone is still sitting round, chewing on cold pizza and downing the last sodas. This is the perfect time to get a little feedback on your game.

Rewards

The first thing to do when a game ends is hand out the rewards the players have earned. Most of the time, that's Advancements from Stories, but you might give out Hero Points for excellent roleplay.

Evaluation

After the players are done with their Advancements, take a moment or two to look at what happened, what went right and ways to fix what went wrong.

Evaluating Style

First, talk to your players about the game. Ask questions they have to think about:

1. What was the most memorable moment?
2. What would you like to do differently?

If you don't feel comfortable asking these questions in public, take the players aside and ask them individually. Just make sure that they tell you what they liked and what they would want to see different.

Evaluating Story

Your players can also help you plan for next week's session. All you have to do is ask them about the game and where they think it's heading. Ask them about the ambiguous or mysterious parts of the plot. Your players' feedback will give you options you never even considered.

Villains

Villains are an essential element in a 7TH SEA campaign. They set the tone of the game, showing Heroes exactly where the stakes rest. This section details how to use Villains in your campaigns, defines his role in a story, and builds a Villain from the ground up, starting with his past, his motives, and even his ethics. We'll discuss how to play him, how to fit him into your campaign, and how to keep him showing up just when the Heroes least expect it.

Ends and Means

Heroes don't fall into the "ends justify the means" camp. That's for Villains. The "two wrongs do not make a right" philosophy lives here. Just because a Villain steals from a Hero does not mean the Hero may now steal from him.

Murder in 7th Sea

Characters aren't killed by accident in 7TH SEA. When a Villain or rival Hero or a Brute Squad is defeated, they don't simply die; they lie before you, Helpless...and vulnerable.

For the most part, killing a Helpless person is an unjustified killing. An Evil Act, under nearly any and all circumstances.

Heroes do not commit murder. Ever.

But Heroes do kill when their hands are forced by Villains and their cronies. They kill when there is no other way to get justice, when they must end a life to save another. They kill when there are no other options. But they remember it and often regret it. For some Heroes, the act haunts them to their grave.

Bringer of Conflict

The chief role of your Villains is to be the *antagonist*. To provide your Heroes with conflict. To change their lives in real and powerful ways. Not just standing between your Heroes and their needs and wants, but uprooting the Heroes' lives and throwing them in the gutter.

This is the role of your antagonist: to create conflict, strife and change in your Heroes' lives.

Goals & Motives

No one is evil for the sake of evil—no one.

Every Villain has his reasons for being a despicable, dastardly fellow. Below are some of the most common motivators for acts of depravity and evil. Your Villains should focus on one or two.

Acceptance

"I don't want to rule the world alone."

A Villain looking for acceptance is generally concerned with his appearance and demeanor; he doesn't want word of his amoral acts getting back to his paramour. Often, he even goes out of his way to ensure she thinks the most of him. This desire slowly changes into a need for redemption.

Ambition

"Of course the Prophet preached against ambition. He was the one at the top."

Villains with the ambition motive don't care who's ahead of them on the social ladder; those folks are going to fall. Preferably with a knife in their back. Ambitious Villains are best when they're ruthless.

Order

"Theft. Murder. It's all around us. Only a strong man can bring order to this world. A man unafraid to break the law to make justice."

You know his name. He swings through the night, thwarting crooks and distributing justice to the wicked. You know his name—but is he a Villain? He doesn't murder anyone and he upholds the "spirit" of the law. He's doing what's right in the name of a noble cause, isn't he?

Villainy

Villains do not have full character sheets, although they share a few elements with Heroes. A Villain has Arcana (both a Virtue and Hubris), just as a Hero does. They also possess Advantages, same as a Hero. They do not have Skills, however, and they have only two Traits: **Influence** and **Strength**. The combined total of these creates his **Villainy Rank**.

The Ethics of Villains

Before you create a Villain, you must ask yourself, “What is my Villain willing to do to get what he wants?” In other words, you have to question his ethics. Here are three viewpoints to consider.

Doing the right thing for the wrong reasons

Villains often do the right thing for selfish or evil reasons. Your Villain might be motivated to do a thing that the Heroes might support...but for terrible reasons that corrupt the act itself.

Doing the wrong thing for the right reasons

The hardest Villain to figure out is the misguided one. On the other hand, the Villain is attempting to do the right thing. Her jaded sense of right and wrong, however, has put her on the wrong side of the fence.

Doing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons

Finally, we have the despicable monsters who don't care about ethics. These are the Villains who simply do the wrong thing for the wrong reasons.

It's all too easy to let this kind of Villain get out of hand. Give your Villains motivations other than “I'm Evil!” even if it's just “...because I'm smart/daring/strong enough to get away with it.”

Ranks of Villains

When looking at Villains, their Villainy is a good indication of how powerful they are.

A **Weak Villain** (a middle-management gangster or a toady guard captain) is around Villainy 5.

A **Strong Villain** (a feared mercenary captain or a renowned assassin) is around Villainy 10.

An **Epic Villain** (the bloodthirsty general of an enemy army or the insane leader of a dark cult) is around Villainy 15.

A **Mythic Villain** (the greatest assassin the world has ever known or a demi-god champion attempting to take over the world) is around Villainy 20.

Strength & Influence

Strength is the Villain's personal ability, intellect, charm, skill with a sword, ability to use magic, etc. It is her individual capability. If you took away the money, the political power, the goons, and put her in a room with a sword, this is what the Villain is capable of. A Villain's Strength also determines how many Advantages she has.

Influence is the Villain's money, resources, minions, political power, allies, etc. It is her ability to change the world to achieve her goals.

Some Villains have more Strength than Influence and vice versa.

Using Strength & Influence

Whenever a Villain takes a Risk, he rolls up to a number of dice equal to his Villainy Rank. The Villain doesn't need to declare an Approach; he simply rolls his dice and spends his Raises to affect (or thwart!) the Heroes, inflicting Wounds and taking Actions like any Hero.

Note that we said “up to his Villainy Rank.” A Villain never has to reveal his true power to Heroes... not until it's far too late. Also note that a Villain typically only takes a Risk when trying to affect the Heroes—for most other things, the Villain simply spends Influence.

Yes, this means a Villain can roll as many as 10 to 20 dice for a single Risk and spend those Raises however he likes without penalties for Improvising. How do Heroes overcome such monumental foes?

The same way you eat a whale: one bite at a time.

Taking On a Villain

Heroes can take Actions to undermine the Villain's Influence and Strength. When they do, his Villainy Rank lowers. Here's how you do it.

Undermining Influence

When a Hero takes indirect action against a Villain that Hero reduces the Villain's Influence. Note that if the Heroes seek to undertake this sort of action against a Villain, they should have an idea of what the general effect will be if they succeed.

Villainous Influence is malleable, constantly in flux. It grows as the Villains complete schemes, hire underlings, bribe others, kill rivals, and advance their personal agenda. It shrinks as the Heroes foil their plots, turn their allies against them, expose their corruption to the populace, and rob their vaults.

As a Villain's Influence decreases, her dice pool for all Risks decreases as well. A Villain rolls only her current Villainy Rank when she makes a Risk.

Undermining Strength

A Villain's Strength is her personal capability with words, weapons, Sorcery, or anything else. While you can weaken a Villain by attacking her Influence, the only way to defeat her is by facing her directly.

Villainous Strength is permanent. It changes rarely (if ever) and acts as a measure of the Villain's threat as an individual.

Once a Villain has Wounds equal to her Strength, the next single Wound she takes becomes a Dramatic Wound. So a Strength 10 Villain can take 10 Wounds, but her 11th Wound is a Dramatic Wound.

When a Villain takes 4 Dramatic Wounds, she is defeated and (like a Hero) becomes Helpless. A Strength 10 Villain becomes Helpless upon taking the 44th Wound in a Scene.

Schemes

While the Heroes are running around town trying to find a way to take him down, the Villain doesn't sit idly by. He's always plotting, coming up with new ways to increase his Influence. He does this by creating Schemes.

A Scheme is a specific plot, crime, heist or similar activity designed to increase the Villain's personal power. To create a Scheme, a Villain invests Influence into them. Every Influence Rank invested in a Scheme is a gamble—the Villain effectively bets the Heroes won't be able to stop him this time. A Villain cannot use Influence against Heroes while it is invested in Schemes.

A Scheme is an active plan, never a reactive one. "Don't get caught" is not a Scheme because the Villain should be trying to do that all the time. "Continue to gain power" is not a Scheme because it is not explicit. "Find out who is working against me" is not a Scheme because it doesn't result in Action, but "Assassinate the person who stopped my last heist" is a good alternative.

If the Scheme is Successful...

If the Heroes fail to stop the Scheme, the Villain gains double his investment. In other words, if the Villain invests 4 Influence in a successful Scheme, he gains 8 Influence back.

If the Scheme is Unsuccessful...

If the Heroes foil a Villain's Scheme, the Influence that were invested in the Scheme are simply lost. The Villain's gamble hasn't paid off; he spent Influence and gained nothing. Other effects within the Scheme may cause the Villain to lose additional Influence—if he dispatched another Villain—a minor Duelist, for example—to accomplish the Scheme and you defeat her in a duel, the main Villain loses the Influence he invested into his lackey.

What Does Influence Do?

Influence is a Villain's currency. It's how he gets things done, attracts minions and Brute Squads to his service, bribes nobles and local officials, and otherwise *influences* (see what I did there?) the world into doing what he wants it to do.

Recruiting Brutes and Villains

As a GM you may ask, "Aren't I introducing these all the time? Do I have to spend every time I do something?"

No.

Not all Brutes answer directly to a Villain. If the Heroes piss off the City Watch, for example, they aren't necessarily under the control of the Villain but they'll still come after the Heroes. But when the Villain hires the infamous Black Hand Assassin's Guild to go after the Heroes, or when he bribes a magistrate to have the Heroes branded as wanted criminals, he buys that privilege with Influence. This is when the Villain explicitly sends a Brute Squad after the Heroes.

"Recruiting another Villain" creates another Villain that answers to the main Villain. A "new Villain" that doesn't answer to them doesn't cost the GM anything. You can (and should!) introduce new Villains all the time. But if your main Villain wants minions and lackeys that are more powerful than a Brute Squad, she has to pay for them in Influence.

All this hired help allows Villains to build a Villainous empire, an organization that "invests" the Villain's influence into unsavory people who work on the Villain's behalf. And any Influence gained by these recruited Brutes or minor Villains goes to the Villain in charge, not necessarily to the Brutes or minor Villain who gained the Influence.

Influence Costs

- Hire or recruit another Villain: 2 per 5 Strength of the Villain
- Employ a Brute Squad: 1 per 10 Brute Points
- Convince a Hero's ally to betray him: Hero's Panache score
- Find a secret location: 1
- Escape a scene: Highest Trait present

What Does Strength Do?

Strength is a Villain's personal capability. It is an abstraction of all of the Villain's Traits and Skills, simplified to make him simultaneously more dangerous and easier for the GM to manage. You don't need to remember how many Ranks a Villain has in each Skill; all you need to know is his Strength.

There are other factors that are influenced by Strength, however. Villains have Advantages just like Heroes. All Villains can have 5 points in Advantages, plus additional Advantage points equal to their Strength.

Any effects from Advantages, Sorcery, Dueling Styles or anything similar that has a variable effect depending on Skill Ranks or Traits are influenced, instead, by the Villain's Strength. For such effects, Villains are considered to have Skill Ranks or Trait Ranks equal to half their Strength. For example, a Strength 7 Villain is considered to have Weaponry 4 for the purposes of Maneuvers.

Villainous Pressure

Villains can spend a Raise and a Danger Point to apply the same Pressure to all Heroes in a Scene. Of course, Heroes can always overcome the Pressure by spending an additional Raise.

Brute Squads

When the Heroes come face to face with adversity that intends to do them harm, it isn't always a Villain. Villains have underlings, goons, faceless mercenaries and other threats that they wield against the heroes. These threats are called Brute Squads.

A Brute Squad has only one statistic—Strength—determined by the number of individuals in the Squad. A Squad of five soldiers has a Strength 5. A Squad of eight guards has Strength 8. A Squad of ten assassins has Strength 10.

Engaging the Brute Squad

When your players engage a Brute Squad, use these Steps:

Step 1: Approach

Heroes announce their response to meeting the Brute Squad: run away, hide, attack, generally any other thing they want to do.

Step 2: Gather Dice

The GM tells each Hero the appropriate Trait and Skill combination for their Approach and the attached Consequences. For a Brute Squad, the Consequences are always, "Take a number of Wounds equal to the Strength of the Squad."

Step 3: Roll & Raises

Players use their Raises to take Actions against the Brute Squad, decreasing the Strength of the Brute Squad. Each Raise reduces the Squad's Strength by one.

Step 4: Brutes' Turn

If a Brute Squad has not been reduced to zero, they get to attack the Heroes. The Brute Squad delivers a number of Wounds equal to its current Strength. Thus, if a Strength 8 Brute Squad has been reduced to Strength 3, the Hero facing the Squad takes 3 Wounds. If multiple Heroes are facing multiple Squads, the GM decides which Squads attack which Heroes. A Squad must deal all of its damage to a single Hero.

Step 5: Continue?

If the Brute Squad still has Strength left, it may choose to continue its assault on the Heroes. It may also choose to surrender. Probably not, but hey, a guy can hope, right? Go back to **Step 1: Approach** and continue until either the Heroes are incapacitated or the Brute Squad is defeated.

Brute Squads may use this opportunity to reorganize themselves, as well. A 5 Strength Brute Squad and a 3 Strength Brute Squad could choose to combine their efforts to become a single 8 Strength Brute Squad, or a 10 Strength Brute Squad could choose to break into two 5 Strength Brute Squads.

Brutes During Action Sequences

When Brutes attack Heroes during Action Sequences, Heroes have to contend with both the Brutes and the Consequences of the environment. For example, on a ship during a storm, a group of pirates climb over the side and begin taking over the ship. The GM tells the players, "You have to deal with Consequences: you must spend a Raise to avoid being blown off the ship by the storm."

Number of Brute Squads

More than one Brute Squad can show up at a time. In fact, we suggest multiple Brute Squads if the Heroes are highly skilled. Duelists can dispatch Brute Squads quickly and clever players can find ways to deal with them in other ways.

So, Game Master, depending on the size and capability of your group, consider how many Brute Squads you want. After all, they come in packs. You can always order more.

Monsters

Monsters are common features in Théan folklore and legend. And once you know where to look, you will see them everywhere. Beneath every rock, behind every hedge, around every corner, there is some unfathomable creature who sees all of mankind as little more than food waiting to be eaten.

Making a Monster

If the Monster is impressive and dangerous alone assign it a Strength value to determine its capabilities. Monstrous Villains usually don't have Influence and instead operate entirely on Strength. They also have Monstrous Qualities instead of Advantages, abilities that allow them to make use of their inhuman powers against Heroes.

A Monster that was once human (such as a vampire or werewolf) has all the Influence and Advantages of a human Villain—in addition to Monstrous Qualities—but an inhuman beast (a sea creature or a giant otherworldly snake, for example) has only Monstrous Qualities. There is no limit to the number of Monstrous Qualities that a Monster can have.

If the creature hunts in large groups, you treat it similar to a human Brute Squad. Typically a Monster Squad will have only one or two Qualities, but treat that as more of a guideline than a rule.

Monstrous Qualities

The core book has a full list of the Qualities that can be given to a Monster. A Quality modifies the way a Monster rolls dice, grants bonuses under certain circumstances, or allows the GM to spend Danger Points for specific effects. This guide shares three of the qualities from the full list.

Fear

Some Monsters are so terrifying that they strike terror into the hearts of mere mortals. All Risks against such a Monster lose 1 die for each Rank of Fear the Monster possesses. Some Virtues—Comforting and Courageous—and Sorceries—Hexenwerk or Glamour—can help Heroes overcome such foes.

Elemental

This is a creature of raw elemental might, such as a demon whose blood literally boils in her veins or a hungry ghost of winter who can freeze a man solid with a touch. Choose an element, such as fire, ice, lightning, etc. If this Monster is a Villain, when the Monster is exposed to that element or uses that element to attack the Heroes, it rolls 5 additional dice in any Risk to do so. If this is a Monster Squad, it inflicts double Wounds when using its element. Any Wounds that would result from the Monster's element (such as if a Hero throws oil on a fire Monster and sets it aflame) are ignored.

Fearsome

This Monster is terrifying to behold, much less face. The Monster gains a Rank of Fear, plus an additional Rank of Fear per 5 Strength. Spend a Danger Point to double the Monster's Fear Rank for 1 Round.

Powerful

Raw physical power at the command of something whose only desire is destruction. This Monster could easily pick up and carry a horse, and perhaps more. Spend a Danger Point to double the number of Wounds dealt by the Monster after a successful attack against a Hero.

Shapeshifting

The best hunters never let their prey know they are being hunted until it is too late. Spend a Danger Point to have this Monster assume a new form. The new form is completely indistinguishable from whatever it is mimicking, save for a specific thing that the GM determines. For example, a specific Monster may always have cat's eyes or have a snake's fangs.

Tentacled

Perhaps a giant octopus or squid, or a more "ordinary" creature that has suffered at the hands of dark magic or forbidden scientific experimentation, this creature has powerful tentacles that make it a greater threat than it would otherwise be. For every 5 Strength, this creature has a Tentacle. Tentacles are always Strength 5 and can be destroyed by inflicting a single Dramatic Wound.

Game Master Stories

Game Master Stories drive the whole game forward. We'll outline four types of Game Master Stories later, but don't treat that as an exhaustive list. Feel free to write Stories for just about every aspect of your games. First, here is a quick primer on the shared elements of Game Master Stories.

Shared Story Elements

Stories often share the same elements. Each has a Start, a Goal and a series of Steps. To start writing any story you should give it a short name to act as a conceptual reminder of what you wish to see from the story. Once you have a clever name you define the Goal of the Story.

Goals

The Goal of a Story is also its ending. The Goal is a specific action that the Heroes must take to finish the Story. You should know, without a doubt, when your Story has been completed.

Write down, in a few words, what the Heroes need to do. You don't need to determine every tiny detail right now, just a broad scope of what the Heroes need to accomplish. It does, however, need to be an actionable item. After you know what it is you want the Heroes to accomplish, you need to figure out how to get there.

Goals should be flexible, capable of changing enough to ensure they never become unattainable. If you realize the Goal you originally set out has become unattainable you should simply shift the Goal to help keep the game moving. Never penalize the Players for a lost Goal. Write the next Step and keep going, even if it seems like a non sequitur.

A Game Master Story's Goal does not have a reward attached to it. The reward for a Game Master Story is left up to the individual players to select, though the Game Master can suggest likely advancement for a completed Story.

Steps

Knowing the Goal helps you know the ending, but the road getting there is where the Heroes spend most of their time. That's where the Steps come in. When you create a new Story, you need to determine what the first Step is. Like the Goal, each Step should be an achievable item. However, unlike Goals, they can be as detailed and specific as you like.

The Stories a Game Master writes should have the next few Steps outlined. The trick is to start specific and grow vague, only to fill out the details of your Steps as they grow closer to completion. The next immediate Step should be very detailed and specific.

Write a short sentence that declares the next thing the Heroes need to accomplish in order to progress the Story. Again, this needs to be a definitive action. Then write the next Step, but try to be a little broader than the Step before. Leave yourself room to adjust the Steps before they become the current Step in the Story.

During the course of a Story, if you realize something the group must accomplish before securing their next Step, add a new Step into the Story. Don't pull the rug out from under the players and change the current Step they are working on, but add your next Step in as soon as you identify it.

If the current Step becomes unattainable for some reason strike it from the list and write a new Step replacing the lost one.

Finally, when you tell the players about the Steps, only tell them the very next Step in your Story. They don't need to see the vague plans two or three moves down the road. Keep them focused on the task at hand and as long as you know the direction of your narrative you should avoid problems.

Rewards

Game Master Stories offer the same rewards as Hero Stories. When the Game Master Story is complete, the players who completed the Steps of the Story get to select an advancement as if they completed a Hero Story with a similar number of Steps.

Type of Stories

As mentioned earlier, there are four common types of Stories that the Game Master will be writing. The main two are broken up by time, the third is a new take on writing stories similar to the Hero Stories, and the fourth one is an entirely different beast.

Season Story

A Season Story is one that takes place over the course of several game sessions. These are long-term Stories and are written on the player's Hero Sheet. While this means everyone is writing the same thing it helps the player keep track of the big picture.

Game Masters should strive to accomplish at least one Step in a Season Story every game session to keep things moving. This isn't a hard rule, though.

Season Stories should, almost always, be five Step Stories. The occasional four Step Story may happen from time to time, but Season Stories should never be three or fewer Steps.

Episode Story

An Episode Story is one that takes place over the course of a single game session. These are short-term Stories and can be tracked on a Story Card for all the players. Since these Stories are going to be wrapped up in a single session, the players shouldn't need a strong reminder.

Game Masters should strive to accomplish at least one Step in an Episode Story for every hour or two a game session is played. However, if the players are distracted with Hero, Character or Session Stories, don't force an Episode Story on them. As long as the Heroes take Steps to resolve a Story, consider the session a success.

If you don't finish an Episode Story in a single game session don't panic. That Story has just become a two (or more) parter. Add "Part 1" to the end of the Story's name and split the remaining steps into a Part 2.

Episode Stories should be two or three Steps long. Occasionally a one Step Story could occur but be careful because there are only a limited number of possible one Step rewards. Avoid making Episode Stories four or five Steps.

Character Story

A Character Story is one that helps the Heroes learn more about, or accomplish a Goal for, a non-Hero character. Character Stories can last from a single session to several sessions, possibly even spanning multiple seasons. How these are tracked is up to the group. If some players are more interested in a specific Character Story they may consider adding the Story to their Hero Sheet. For other Stories a single Story Card might be enough to remind the group about the lingering Story.

There is no good guide for how slowly or quickly the Game Master should work through a Character Story. These simply need to progress at the speed of character interest.

Character Stories can be anywhere from one to five Steps long. Character Stories are a great place for quick little one-Steps but they can also be used to tell more elaborate NPC backstories. Use the players' interest as a gauge for how long a Character Story should run.

Retroactive Story

A Retroactive Story is one that happens after the action. Sometimes the game will carry itself along and it's not until after everyone is done playing that the Game Master looks back to notice he completely dropped the ball on Stories. When this happens you write a Retroactive Story. Retroactive Stories are always written after a game session is over and typically rewarded at the start of the next session.

The biggest difference with a Retroactive Story is that you already know the Goal and Steps before you even start writing. Think back to what the Heroes accomplished in the game session and mark that as the goal. Then run through each Scene and make notes about what the Heroes accomplished there. This should give you a rough list of Steps.

Retroactive Stories should reward the players at the same rate as an Episode Story but should fall on the smaller side. Retroactive Stories could often be one or two Step Stories with the occasional three Step Story if things were really going well.

Corruption

This is a game about Heroes. However, there are times when a Hero is tempted to take an action that is less than heroic. Villainous, in fact. When that happens, the Hero gains a **Corruption Point** (or just “Corruption”).

A Hero earns Corruption when she performs an evil action. And by “evil” we mean a few things.

Causing Unnecessary Suffering

If a Hero intentionally causes another character unnecessary pain, it’s an evil act. Heroes don’t torture. Heroes may intimidate and threaten, but never torture. That’s worth a Corruption Point. One step toward becoming a Villain.

Inaction

If another character is in mortal danger and a Hero could save him without any risk to herself, and chooses not to, it’s an evil act. Villains don’t care about the helpless and needy.

Evil Acts

The first time a Hero commits an **Evil Act**, she earns a Corruption Point.

The second time a Hero commits an Evil Act, she gains 2 Corruption Points for a total of three (1 for the first plus 2 for the second).

The third time? 3 Corruption Points for a total of six (1 for the first plus 2 for the second plus 3 for the third).

The fourth time? 4 Corruption Points for a total of 10. (1 for the first plus 2 for the second plus 3 for the third plus 4 for the fourth).

The GM should *always-always-always* warn the player before giving her a Corruption Point. “Are you sure you want your Hero to do this?”

The GM is the final arbiter of who gets Corruption Points. No arguing. No complaining. If the GM gives a fair warning, players best consider their next action carefully.

Fall from Grace

Whenever a Hero gains Corruption, the GM rolls 1d10. If the result is equal to or less than a Hero’s current Corruption Points, the Hero turns into a Villain. She becomes an NPC controlled by the GM. Given how Corruption Points build, the fourth Evil Act is your last one as a Hero.

Redemption

A Hero may redeem himself, burning away the evil in his past. To do so, he must commit himself to a Redemption Story. The Redemption Story must end with him performing a significant good deed. This may be a selfless act of heroism, a costly sacrifice or some other noble gesture.

The Story must have 5 Steps and the Hero may not complete any other Story while a Redemption Story is active. Upon completion the Hero may remove 1 Corruption Point.

You’re Going to Do Fine

That’s a lot, right? But don’t worry. You’ve got this. I know you do. I’ve got confidence in you. You’ve got a bunch of friends willing to help you and support you. You’ve got this book. You’ve got a whole heaping lot of **7TH SEA** fans on the internet willing to offer you advice.

Being a GM is hard work. But it’s also rewarding work. When you pull it off, it really is like being a magician. Watching the players’ reactions. Reacting to things *that don’t exist*.

Yeah, I’m going back to that because it’s important. Don’t worry about the things you screw up. Chances are, your players didn’t notice. And if they did, they’re willing to ignore it. Just keep moving.

You’re going to do fine.