

# Toast

A Role-Playing Game by Ethan Greer

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## 1. Intro

Toast is a rules-light universal role-playing game where there are one or more players and one GM. If that information doesn't tell you anything, I suggest the following link: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-playing\\_game](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-playing_game). And I don't mean that in a condescending way; it's just that this isn't a good place to discover role-playing games and what they're all about. Or maybe it is. What the hell do I know?

What does Toast offer that a billion other rules-light universal games don't already offer? Well, the main thing is the dice mechanic, which by design produces lots (and lots) of interesting and potentially exciting moments. Fun is actively facilitated by the system.

## 2. d10+

The primary dice mechanic of Toast uses a 12-sided die, referred to as a d10+. When rolling a d10+, results from 1-10 are read as numbers, but 11 and 12 have special meanings. 11 is a flub, and 12 is a kick. These are explained later, in the "Tasks" section.

## 3. Traits

In terms of game mechanics, characters are defined through traits. All characters have the same list of traits.

Trait	What it's used for
Aesthetics	Artistic and creative aptitude.
Athletics	Move quickly and gracefully.
Aim	Hit things in a shooty way.
Attack	Hit things in a combatty way.
Defense	Avoid getting hit in a shooty or combatty way.
Dexterity	Fine motor coordination.
Health	Resist poison and disease.
Initiative	Go first when fighting.
Knowing	Know things.
Perception	Notice things.
Social	Interpersonal smoothness.
Strength	Lift! Smash! Crush!
Willpower	Endure mental duress.

If you are unsatisfied with the list of traits, simply alter it to your satisfaction. Adding or removing traits will not break the game.

### **3.1. Starting Traits**

To generate a new character's traits, start with a number of points equal to 4 times the number of traits there are. (I provide a formula to make it easier to add or remove traits from the list.) These points are distributed among the character's traits. You don't have to put points into a trait; you can just leave it at 0. No trait may be greater than 9 for a starting character.

## **4. Perks**

In addition to traits, characters have perks. Perks are specialized abilities that, when applicable, grant a +3 bonus to task rolls. (More on task rolls in a minute.) A player chooses up to five perks at character creation, and more may be earned in the course of play. Perks can be as simple or as descriptive as desired. They must be more focused than a trait, but they don't have to be super-focused. Examples:

- Knows the Krimsha Valley like the back of their hand
- Good with rifles
- Etiquette of the local barbarian tribes
- Best chef in the city
- Skilled assassin
- Child of a sailor
- Will stop at nothing to find the six-fingered man
- Wears a fine suit of heavy armor

What all you can do with perks is pretty flexible. How much or how little can be covered by a single perk is up to the individual play group. Since there has to be some arbitration, the GM has final say on the acceptability of perks. Generally, the GM should work with the players rather than just swinging the veto hammer around.

If it's not obvious, perks are where the character is really defined, personalized, and brought to life. Perks can reflect a character's background, profession, personality, ambitions, and more.

The GM is not allowed to nullify a character's perks through in-game events. For example, if a player has a special weapon as one of their perks, the GM is not allowed to arrange for the weapon to get stolen or lost.

## **5. Task Resolution**

Whenever a character wants to do something where the players and GM feel success should be randomly determined, you make a task roll. It works like this: The GM determines (with player input) what trait is to be used for the task. The player determines (with GM approval) if a perk is to be used for the task.

The player rolls d10+. If a kick (12) or a flub (11) is rolled, simply announce that fact. If a number from 1-10 is rolled, add the number to the character's trait level (and add a perk bonus [+3] if applicable) and announce the total result.

Meanwhile, the GM has chosen a difficulty for the task based on their own judgement of the situation. There are three difficulty levels:

Difficulty	Number
Easy	6
Medium	11
Hard	16

The difficulty should usually be medium, unless there's a good, obvious reason for it to be otherwise.

If the player's task result is a number, and that number equals or exceeds the difficulty number, then the character succeeds in the task.

If the player's task result is a flub, then the character automatically fails, and the GM (with player input) comes up with something interesting and cool to happen. This will usually be bad news for the character, but you can mix it up by having a flub result in something favorable every once in a while, if the fiction calls for it. (For example, slipping on a banana peel and knocking the assassin in front of a bus.)

If the player's task result is a kick, then the character automatically succeeds, and the GM (with player input) comes up with something interesting and cool to happen. This will usually be good news for the character, but, as with flubs, it can be fun to mix things up a bit.

Kicks and flubs should always be splashy and fun.

### **5.1. A Note on Difficulties**

If the difficulty numbers I've given are too easy (or too hard) for your tastes, adjust them as desired. This may be done before play, or during play on a case-by-case basis.

### **5.2. Contested Tasks**

Sometimes, two entities are directly opposed to one another. In this case, both sides roll, and the higher task result wins. On ties, the GM adjudicates what happens on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes, another roll is called for, and other times, well, something else happens. It's all fairly subjective and situational.

If both parties flub or both parties kick, it's treated as a tie, but interesting things also happen. If one party flubs and the other kicks, have fun with it. Something spectacular should happen.

## **6. Tone**

It's up to the individual group how serious (or not) you want your game to be, but it should be noted that Toast works well for comedy adventure, primarily thanks to the kick/flub mechanic.

## 7. Combat

Ah yes, the beats. The focus of Toast isn't really combat, so I'm keeping it very simple. This allows for maximum flexibility at the individual game level while making my job as game writer much easier.

Combat goes like this:

- All participants roll a d10+ and add their Initiative trait to determine their Initiative number. (We'll get to flubs and kicks in a minute.)
- The character with the highest Initiative number goes first, followed by the character with the next-highest, etc. Settle ties with another roll, or any other method that pleases you.
- The acting character can move a little ways (say, 20-30 feet) and take one action (such as an attack). That's it. No tricky stuff whatsoever unless your group wants to add house rules.
- When everyone has taken their turn, repeat the process until nobody wants to fight anymore.

With a combat system this bare-bones, there is potential for boredom. This can be alleviated by a) not getting into combat very often; b) everyone trying to be more descriptive than, "I swing my sword;" and/or c) house rules.

### 7.1. Flubs and Kicks in Initiative

If you roll a flub for your Initiative, you don't get an action this round. Come up with something interesting to explain this inactivity.

If you roll a kick for your Initiative, treat it as a 12 and add your Initiative trait as normal. Come up with something interesting to explain this extra speed.

### 7.2. Making an Attack

Attacks are handled like contested tasks. The attacker rolls on their Aim or Attack trait with whatever appropriate perk, and the defender rolls on their Defense trait with whatever appropriate perk. In the event of a tie, the attack is not successful.

Note that it doesn't matter whether the defender is aware of the incoming attack; they always get to roll their Defense trait.

### 7.3. Damage

A successful attack causes one wound. An entity can take a number of wounds according to its importance (see below). When an entity takes a number of wounds equal to or exceeding their importance, they go down and are out of the fight. (Extra wounds are not tracked; if a PC has taken 6 wounds, they are unconscious and are considered to have taken 4 wounds.)

If it was an NPC who went down, the players decide whether or not deadly force was used. The player who dealt the final blow has final say. If the PC used deadly force, the NPC dies. If the players would rather leave the victim alive (for the time being) the NPC is unconscious.

If it was a PC who went down, the PC is unconscious.

An unconscious combatant will remain unconscious until basic first-aid is administered.

Aside from determining when the entity goes down, wounds do not inhibit an entity. Wounds go away at a rate of one per day.

#### **7.4. Importance**

How much damage an entity can sustain is a function of their importance to the story. Use the table below.

Entity	Importance	Wounds
Player-Characters	High	4
Nemeses	Almost as High	4
Lieutenants	Medium	3
Elite Minions	Low	2
Minions	Lowest	1

If you want to have Big Damn Monsters in your game, you could theoretically up the number of wounds. Just be careful not to overdo it.

#### **7.5. Death**

PCs don't die unless the player allows it. The GM is free to turn the screws, but the characters always manage to escape with their lives.

### **8. Character Advancement**

#### **8.1. Gaining More Perks**

At the end of a session, a player can petition the other players and GM to add a perk to their character. The proposed perk must make sense in the context of what's been going on in the game. If people are in general agreement, the player may add the perk. The GM has final say. This can be done, at most, every other session, at the GM's discretion.

#### **8.2. Raising Traits**

During the session, whenever you use a perk, make a note of the trait used. At the end of the session, the player consults this list of traits and rolls a d10+ for each one. On a flub, nothing happens. On a kick, the trait goes up a level. On a number result, if the number is greater than the trait, the trait goes up a level.

### **9. Stuff**

Exactly what and how much stuff a typical character has at character creation will vary from game to game. I recommend just letting the PCs have whatever they want, within the bounds of normalcy, according to the setting, the PCs' place in the setting, and the circumstances. The overall tone of Toast discourages writing down long equipment lists, but if that's what the GM wants to require, that's fine.

Extra-special possessions should be taken as perks.

## **10. Magic**

If you want your game to include supernatural elements, probably the easiest thing to do would be to add traits for the different types of magical abilities, and handle more specific powers with perks. You know, similar to how the rest of the game works.

Every setting is different, and exactly how much can be accomplished with a single perk is up to the GM and the group to decide. A perk might represent a single effect (fireball), or an entire class of effects (fire magic).

When making magical attacks, Willpower is a good trait to use for defense. Of course, you can also use regular old Defense if it makes more sense for your fiction. Or something else entirely. The real point here is to make magical combat similar to regular combat, in that the attacker rolls their attack trait, and the defender rolls a defense trait. The details are up to you.

## **11. Conclusion**

That about wraps it up for Toast. I've tried to provide a useful toolkit for some lightweight, fun role-playing. Good luck, and thanks for reading.