

daydream universal

VERSION 0.2α by Val Ryzhov itsuno@gmail.com

(feel free to ping me about the game).

Hack of [Freeform Universal RPG](#) by Nathan Russel.



NO DICE, NO PAPER, NO TABLE. A minimal narrative solo rpg with your eyes closed. When you want to explore stories while on a train or drifting off to sleep.

Your character has a **DRIVE** (an attitude, belief or instinct) and **5 TAGS**:

- a concept to define them (descriptor and noun)

E.g. Mystic assassin dancer; Young alien refugee; Disillusioned Shinra special ops ex agent.

- 2 edges to distinguish them (cool abilities)

Yoga master & Enhanced body; Force-sensitive & Guild thief; Way of the Sword & Social camo.

- a memento/gear/familiar to help them (make it iconic)

Set of grapple claw-knives; Weird tele-staff; Intelligent pet cyber bat.

- 1 **FLAW** to hinder them (make it dangerous)

Impractical flashy clothes; Always angry; Tracked by Shinra.

TAGS may count as helpful (+) or hindering (-) depending on the situation.

Think story beat → scene → episode → story arc. Start each scene *in medias res* (just before interesting action). Envision and narrate it like a movie. Pile on pressure. Say what the truth demands. For surprise factor, skip the first 2 things that come to mind and use the third one. Move the story beats at a high pace.

Resolve your action once per story beat when both success and failure are interesting, by asking: **DO I ACHIEVE X?**

All relevant helpful **TAGS** and circumstances minus

all relevant hindering **TAGS** and circumstances give you the answer:

- 2 **NO, AND...** (make things much worse)
- 1 **NO, BUT...** (punish, but introduce a silver lining or an opportunity)
- 0 **YES, BUT...** (add a complication or a heavy price)
- 1 **YES, BECAUSE...** (describe and move to the next story beat)
- 2 **YES, AND...** (make it awesome)

If you get bogged down by details, resolve with a **YES, BUT...** (move story forward).

Start with 3 **DRAMA POINTS**. Gain 1 when you follow your **DRIVE** dramatically, use your **FLAW** to your benefit (as a **+TAG**) or achieve something amazing. Spend 1 to:

- add a **+TAG** (narrate a helpful circumstance) to a scene when resolving action
- avoid a **-TAG** (hindering condition) that results from your action

Remove conditions narratively. At the start of a new episode set **DRAMA POINTS** to 3. After you resolve a story arc, change your **DRIVE** and **FLAW** and gain a new edge (**+TAG**). Play out a closing scene, where your character reflects on that.

Clever diceless resolution system from an FU hack I couldn't find the source of :(tell me if you know.

"Say what the truth demands" is an awesome formula from [Monsterhearts 2](#) by Avery Alder.

optional gameplay tools

SETUP. In a google doc or other phone-glanceable app put down

- your character's drive, 5 tags, drama points and (later) current conditions.
 - a paragraph of the character's backstory, explaining their drive
 - bullet points about the world, factions and important characters (hashtags help)
 - some evocative art of the characters and setting to get imagination going
 - a short summary of each session whenever you can
 - a black background to avoid bright light before sleep :) also it looks cool
- All this is not constantly needed in play, just to remind, chronicle and share.

ROLL *i* D10 (IMAGINARY DICE). Pick two 3-digit numbers, find their difference (or add them together). Then add 100's and 10's digits to 6 times the units digit. The new number's units digit is your roll. E.g. $677-375 = 302 \rightarrow 3+0+2*6 = 15$, the roll is a **5**.

When resolving action, apply -1 to the result for the odd roll and $+1$ for the even roll, $+3$ if rolled a **0** (lowest even), $+2$ if rolled a **2** (next to lowest even), -2 if rolled a **7** (next to highest odd), -3 if rolled a **9** (highest odd).

E.g. $454-260 = 194 \rightarrow 1+9+4*6 = 34$, the roll is a **4**, even, apply $+1$ to the result
 $267-138 = 129 \rightarrow 1+2+9*6 = 57$, the roll is a **7**, next to highest odd, apply -2

If you make a mistake, don't worry, it's still a (pseudo) random number, go with it.

UNSEEN ORACLE. Roll *i* D10 to answer yes (even roll) or no (odd). **DEGREE:** roll *i* D10 and see to what extent this is in favour of the question (high, 5–9) or not (low, 0–4).

INVISIBLE CLOCK. Imagine a 3 or 4 step clock, advance with each story beat or **NO** result. If the clock hits last step, the delayed event happens in the next story beat.

HIDDEN SPRING. Set a delayed event, similar to a clock. On each **NO** action result ask the **UNSEEN ORACLE (DEGREE)** if it goes off, adding the number of story beats since "loading the spring". This gives a more unpredictable clock.

SCENE GENERATOR. If you want guidance for a scene, roll *i* D10.

- even/odd — the situation is beneficial/hindering
- higher numbers mean more intense and unexpected situations
- thus, 9 is a major plot twist (odd, so not in a good way)
- if divisible by 3 (0, 3, 6, 9) it is emotional and/or tied to character's backstory
- if divisible by 4 (0, 4, 8) it allows removing a condition or finding unexpected help
- theme/aspect, interpret freely, based on context and any personal associations: (and/or roll again for a combined effect)

WIND	Speed Mind Persuade Purity Honor	EARTH	Wild Power Spirit Heal Poison	FIRE	Blood Freedom Aggression Passion Heart	WATER	Calm Cold Intuition Sadness Deceit	LIGHT	Joy Gift Wealth Luck Virtue	DARK	Death Threat Loss Barrier Mystery
01		23		45		67		8		9	

Imaginary Dice via [random numbers in your head](#) by George Marsaglia.

Concept of clocks is from [Apocalypse World](#) by D. Vincent Baker and Meguey Baker

optional story tools

RICH TAGS. Try to make tags fairly versatile (but not so generic they trigger almost every time) and not overlapping too much thematically with each other. Folding 2 things into a tag works well (*Risk-taking Healer, Unreliable Telekinesis*). Also fun if tags can backfire. Adjust them after play if you need to.

VIGNETTE. In the beginning of your story introduce the character in a calm scene, as they reflect on an important memory or the latest adventure they had, based on their back story. Once in a while do a vignette like that again to narrate character's thoughts and emotions as the story unfolds.

FLASHBACK. Play out a story beat, a scene or an episode from the past.

LIGHT THE BEACON. Come up with an idea of an intermediate destination for the current story to work towards, reachable in 1-2 episodes. The Beacon can 'go out' if the story takes a different turn, and you light a new one.

STORY ARC. Follow a story structure in episodes. Or use individual episode types that fit your story. An episode is usually told in 1 to 3 sessions, and typically has some sort of intermediate resolution to its events.

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|---|--|
| 1 Inciting incident, meeting other key characters, setting the goal. | 6 Travel above and beyond for knowledge and power. Wise helpers. Hard truths. Growth. |
| 2 On the way to the first Beacon, relationships grow, back stories revealed. | 7 Return. Others and the world through a new lens. |
| 3 Reach the first Beacon. Escalate. Dire peril. | 8 Journey to the ultimate showdown. Ramp up pressure. |
| 4 Standoff. Loyalties tested and revealed. False triumph or bitter defeat. New Beacon. | 9 Climax. Final standoff, sacrifices, losses and victory/tragedy. |
| 5 Recovery and preparations. Redemption. New help. | 10 Denouement. Things go back to how they were, but not quite. Heroes part ways. Epilogue. Foreshadowing of the future. |

LOST PAGES. If you feel stuck with the narrative, just do a time skip. Narrate briefly what came to pass, where the characters are in a new situation and what they know about it. Scene Generator can help.

COURSE CORRECTION. You may change previous facts of the story if you don't quite like the way it's going. Disregard contradictions that aren't easy to resolve. Add or remove tags as needed.

RESET: if you loose track of your last scene after a hiatus, reconstruct it as best you can and resolve with a **YES, BUT...** & a fitting condition and set **DRAMA POINTS** to 3.