

The NB20 System

Combat Roleplay in the World of Warcraft

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1 INTRODUCTION TO NB20

1.1 OVERVIEW

The NB20 system was designed as a way to more elegantly resolve roleplay combat in World of Warcraft RP scenes. Too often, freeform RP battles devolve into all participants avoiding or withstanding all attacks sent their way. We often times do not wish to see our character injured or portrayed as a failure, so we lean towards them always being the big heroes that we wish them to be. This has the unfortunate side effect of leading to a combat scene that has the potential to drag on without any resolution in sight. If no one “takes the hit”, the conflict will not progress.

Some groups have chosen to add a basic `/roll` mechanic to their fights, with each player rolling off between 1-100 and the highest result being the winner. However, this method does not account for an individual character’s own traits. Having both players roll 1-100 assumes that both players are equal, which is not always the case. This can lead to arguments that do nothing but derail an RP scene. The NB20 system is meant to help alleviate such issues by providing a small measure of character customization and even a rudimentary method for advancement.

There are other systems out there that attempt to do the same thing as NB20, and each has their merits. However, I found that many of them added far too many mechanics on top of an already numbers-intensive game. Many of us roleplay to get away from the grind-intensive aspects of level, gear score, DPS output, and other such things. I wanted NB20 to be an extremely simple system that could be quickly employed with little hassle. In other words, I did not want to force players to learn another game on top of the game that is World of Warcraft.

NB20 was designed to be a lightweight and flexible system that could be used in any RP scene involving direct conflict (physical, spiritual, mental, or otherwise). A player is given a total value for their character to use for attribute statistics (stats), and it is up to the individual player to value those stats accordingly. These stats are then used to shape the range of a `/roll` action for conflict scenario resolution.

1.2 THE CORE MECHANIC

Using the NB20 system during RP is easy. When your character attempts to perform a combat action, simply follow these steps:

- 1) Choose the stat that best represents the action.
- 2) Emote the action attempt.
- 3) Type `/roll x-20` to generate the action’s result value, where ‘x’ is the value of the chosen stat.
- 4) The result is then considered by the scene’s director, or directly compared to a similar result generated by an opponent, and an outcome is emoted.

That’s it! There is a deeper discussion of this core mechanic further below, to help both directors and actors handle the myriad situations that may arise during RP combat.

1.3 WHAT IS ROLE PLAYING?

While the expected audience of NB20 is meant to be made up of people experienced with RP, I am fully aware that some of you may be completely new to the concept. There are many ways to enjoy World of Warcraft. The core of the game, arguably, is the plethora of progression mechanics that require players to participate in an ever-extending ladder of activities in the pursuit of building their character. This can be seen in the leveling content, the dungeon and raid content, the secondary pursuits like professions and reputation (all of which fall under the umbrella of player-versus-environment, or PvE), and even in the player-versus-player (PvP) content.

There is another way to enjoy World of Warcraft, however, and that is through role play (RP). Role Players, “RPs” for short, treat the game like an ever-persistent tabletop role playing game. We act in-character and develop rich stories and relationships with other RPs on our server (and sometimes cross-server as well), and these stories are often independent of the current expansion content provided by Blizzard.

If you find yourself tired of the regular grind for which World of Warcraft is famous, give role play a try. You may find that it is a pleasant alternative.

1.4 WHY CALL IT “NB20”?

The name NB20 was a twist on the D20 system, which inspired NB20’s initial development, with “NB” representing the Netherbane, a long-running RP guild on Earthen Ring (US). It was designed primarily by Richard “Tharion Greyseer” Powell, the guild master of the Netherbane and author of this document. It was

play-tested by multiple elements within the guild itself, as it was pushed as a way to help facilitate RP combat in a guild where RP combat was central. We are demon hunters, after all!

1.5 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Before we dive into rules, let us first define a few terms that you will see throughout this document.

Actor

Actors are the participants in a scene, and are separate from the director(s). Actors only have control over their own characters, and are largely only responsible for their own actions.

It is important to understand that an actor is a person responsible for *acting*. In other words, actors provide the action necessary to move a scene forward.

Director

The director is the person or persons responsible for coordinating and running the RP scene. In other game systems, the term “GM” or “Game Master” is used. In World of Warcraft, however, “GM” is most often used to refer to a “Guild Master,” so “director” was chosen as an alternative. A scene can have more than one director.

Generally speaking, the director has the final say on almost all mechanical or story matters within a scene.

Godmodding

Godmodding, which originally meant that one actor was avoiding any and all actions taken against him in an RP situation (hence the origin of the term: “God Mode”), has expanded to also refer to when one actor emotes an action or the result of an action for an opponent RPer. Basically, when one RPer takes control away from the target player and emotes something ultimately against the will of that player.

Godmodding is generally frowned upon in most communities, so it is something to avoid. To do so, it is best practice to attempt to emote an attempt at an action, instead of emoting through to the result of the action.

Hit Points

Hit points are entirely optional for NB20. They represent the amount of damage or number of hits a

character can take. For the purposes of NB20, the number of hit points a character starts with is equal to that character’s Constitution stat.

When a character’s hit point value is reduced to 0, that character is typically considered to be out of that fight.

IC

IC stands for in-character. It is used when an actor is explicitly referring to something that exists as a part of the character’s narrative, or when an actor is explicitly acting as that character and not as the player.

NPC

In traditional computer role playing games, the term “NPC” refers to a non-player-character. These are typically characters run by a computer AI or script. All the shop vendors, quest givers, and AI-driven characters in World of Warcraft can be considered NPCs.

For NB20 purposes, an NPC is a character that is wholly played and directed by a director. They are there for plot purposes and sometimes even act as “set dressing.”

OOC

OOC stands for out-of-character. It is used when an actor is explicitly referring to something in the real world, or when an actor is explicitly acting as him- or herself and not as the character.

RP

RP stands for role play. As a verb, it is the act of acting as your character and not as yourself. As a noun, it is the concept of being in-character.

RPer

RPer is used to refer to a role player.

Scene

A scene is most often a single RP session. Most commonly, a scene is defined by an event that takes place at a single location.

It is possible, however, for a scene to last more than one session. It is also possible that one session may contain multiple scenes.

Session

An RP session is defined by the beginning of an RP gathering to the end of that same gathering. These can be as short as a few minutes or as long as many hours.

Sessions are most commonly made up of one or more scenes.

Stat

A stat represents a specific attribute of a character. NB20 uses six stats to define a character's abilities, each of which caps at a value of 10.

2 USING NB20

2.1 CREATING AN NB20 CHARACTER

2.1.1 Choosing a Starting Template

As you saw with the core mechanic, the NB20 system uses various stats to help modify the combat rolls. Before you can start using NB20, you will need to determine what your character's stats are. To do this, you will need to choose a template. The template chosen will provide you with the total number of stat points you can use to define your character.

As a World of Warcraft RPer, you should already have at least one character you want to use with the NB20 system. From the chart below, select the best template option that fits said character. A brief description of each is provided.

It is important to note that, since NB20 is meant to help facilitate RP combat, the numbers provided here are purely representative of a character's combat prowess. A world-renowned scholar, for example, would still likely be considered an Initiate when it came to combat skill.

Table 2.1.1.1: NB20 Template Descriptions

Template	Description	Stat Points	Feat Points
Initiate	A character that is brand new to combat can be considered an initiate. This can represent a hero who has not yet experienced the fires of war.	20	2
Acolyte	Acolytes are those characters who have tasted some combat. They are not considered to be overly skillful yet, but do have more experience than an Initiate.	24	2
Soldier	A soldier is someone who has known combat on a nearly day-to-day basis. It is what they do, and they are well trained to handle most combat situations.	28	3
Veteran	A veteran is like a soldier, but has known combat for a greater amount of his life than a soldier.	32	3
Elite	Elites are the best of the best when it comes to standard combatants. They are the special operatives of this world. Often elite characters will have a high specialization in one skill area over the others.	36	4
Mentor	Mentors are the highest tier template when it comes to NB20. These are the characters who have seen the greatest amount of combat, and have also shared their experiences and knowledge with others. They are respected by even the elites.	40	4

Once you have chosen an appropriate template, divide the total stat points of that template among the six stats of the NB20 system. No single stat may go above 10. Do not leave any amount of the stat point total left over. The total value of all your NB20 stats

should be exactly the same as the stat points of the chosen template.

These stats, and what they represent, are discussed in the table below.

Table 2.1.1.2: NB20 Stat Descriptions

Stat	Symbol	Description
Strength	S	Strength represents a character's physical strength. This usually directly translates into the sheer force of a hit, or the sheer ability to withstand a hit. Brute force physical attacks and defenses will often use strength as their primary statistic.
Agility	A	Agility reflects a character's speed and ability to move. High agility characters can both strike swiftly and dodge effectively. If a physical attack does not use strength, then it will likely use agility.
Intellect	I	A character's book smarts is represented by intellect. Typically, if a character is considered smart, this is the stat that reflects this. Mages, whose spells often come from ancient tomes of knowledge, will have high intellect scores.
Willpower	W	Willpower is a character's sheer strength of mind and force of will. Characters who have a more natural magical talent, or who call upon forces that are often found within themselves, will have a strong willpower score.
Constitution	C	Constitution is a measure of a character's body's ability to resist ill effects. If a character is poisoned, diseased, or has some other internal ailment from physical or magical sources, it would likely be covered by constitution. Constitution also directly affects a character's starting hit points, if the hit points option is being used.
Perception	P	Perception represents a character's awareness. Characters that find themselves more aware of a combat situation will have a high perception statistic. Perception can optionally be used at the beginning of a combat to determine turn order.

When choosing a value for each stat, keep the following points in mind.

- Normal characters in the world, the non-heroic ones, will have stats around the 0 – 1 range. This represents average civilians, farmers, stonemasons, and the like. World of Warcraft player characters represent heroes and villains that exist at a much greater level than these, so even the weakest of heroes are far stronger than the everyday citizen.
- An initial stat value of 10 should be used rarely. Characters will need room to grow, and the NB20 system assumes that a stat of 10 is fully maxed out. This means that there is no room for that character to grow that stat. Mentors will likely be the only character template that have stats this high. Elites may as well, but it's likely to be a singular specialty.
- The average value for most heroic character stats should be 5. This represents the “everyday hero” of this world. Soldier and veteran templates make up the bulk of these types of heroes.

Once you have finished assigning values to stats, look up the feat point value of the template you chose

in Table 2.1.1.1. Feat points and their usage are described below.

2.1.2 Feats

A feat is an extraordinary action that can be performed by characters. To execute a feat, simply declare that your next action will be a feat, then spend a number of feat points to buff your next roll. For each feat point spent for a roll, you can add +3 to the result of that roll. The only way an action roll result can exceed 20 is with the use of feat points.

You can choose to spend as many feat points as you want in order to buff a single roll, but only one roll per session may be buffed in this way. The feat points spent are then deducted from the total feat points a character has until the next established feat reset time. By default, feat points reset back to full every Tuesday of the week to coincide with other resets within World of Warcraft, but individual communities can adjust this as they wish.

Once you have determined your stat layout and feat points, you are done creating your character for the NB20 system. To make things easier to track, you may wish to put those stats in the Description or Notes field

of an RP mod like MyRolePlay. The following format is suggested:

```
(( NB20: S5 A5 I5 W5 C5 P5 F3 ))
```

2.2 NB20 DURING ROLEPLAY

As seen during the introduction, the core mechanic of NB20 is quite simple to execute. This section, however, is meant to elaborate a little more on how to best employ that very core mechanic.

2.2.1 The Attempt

At the center of NB20 is the following core philosophy:

When roleplaying an action directly against another actor in a roleplay scene, unless otherwise allowed, actors should emote the attempt at an action instead of directly emoting the results of that action.

This helps to avoid the concept of Godmodding and save a lot of unnecessary arguments.

With NB20, it breaks down into the following steps:

- 1) Choose the stat that best represents the action.
 - a. Declare if you are attempting a feat and how many feat points you are spending towards the feat.
- 2) Emote the action attempt.
- 3) Type `/roll x-20` to generate the action's result value, where 'x' is the value of the chosen stat.
 - a. Add the modifier provided by the feat points spent, if any.

For example,

Tharion is sparring with Araatris. Tharion, who is slightly stronger than Araatris, chooses Strength as the combat stat to use. Tharion emotes:

"Tharion lunges at Araatris with a targeted thrust of his practice blades."

Tharion's Strength is 7. Thus, Tharion uses `/roll 7-20` in order to make his attempt. The result ends up being a 13.

2.2.2 The Result

Once you have generated your action's roll result, the opponent has a chance to respond by making an opposing roll. If the opponent is another actor, then the opponent may attempt to defend against your action using a similar method as above:

- 1) He would choose an appropriate stat for the defense.
 - a. He would declare if he is attempting a feat and how many feat points he is spending towards the feat.
- 2) He would then type the `/roll y-20` command to generate the action's result, where 'y' is the value of his chosen stat.
 - a. He would add the modifier provided by the feat points spent, if any.
- 3) He then emotes the response based upon the results.

For example,

Araatris, who is slightly faster than Tharion, chooses Agility as her most appropriate defense stat against Tharion's attack. She declares in OOC chat that will attempt to dodge the attack. Araatris's Agility is 8, so she uses `/roll 8-20` in order to try and stop Tharion's attack. The result ends up being a 12.

Since Tharion's attack is a success, Araatris would then emote:

"Araatris attempts to dodge the attack, but Tharion's blades jab her in the shoulder, scoring a hit."

If the opponent is a director, then the director does not need to make an opposing roll. Instead, the director evaluates the number generated by the actor's attempt roll and determines a proper result using his or her best judgement and storytelling abilities.

As a general guide, the director may optionally use the follow table:

Table 2.2.2.1: Director’s Guideline for Roll Result Outcomes

Result Range	General Result Outcome
1 – 5	Unless the task was an easy one, this attempt has likely failed.
6 – 10	This result represents a near failure or near success, depending on the action. It’s better than the previous result, but still not great.
11 – 15	A solid result. This could likely be a success unless the task was very difficult.
16 – 19	This is a very good result. Chances are high of success for results within this range, with only the absolutely most difficult tasks failing.
20+	A result of 20 or higher should always be considered a success. It may even provide certain bonuses at the director’s discretion.

For example,

Araatris is directing the sparring scene with Tharion. Tharion makes his attack per above, and gets his 13 result. Araatris then consults table 2.2.2.1 and determines that 13 is a solid result, so she emotes:

“Araatris dodges out of the way of the first of Tharion’s practice blades, avoiding the weapon, but the second one jabs against her shoulder, scoring a hit.”

/roll 8-20 is a 20. Tharion gauges that this is a very strong success that provides Araatris with an opportunity for a free hit, and he declares such in OOC chat. Araatris then emotes:

“Araatris steps into Tharion’s thrust, side-stepping his blades with ease. She slices her wooden practice daggers across Tharion’s torso as she passes.”

2.2.3 Director Controlled Attacks

If it is a director-controlled NPC making an attack against an actor, it is handled a little differently than the above. The director will emote the initial attack made by the NPC, but does not have to perform a `/roll`. The target actor can then choose a proper stat with which to defend and make her `/roll` based upon that. The director will then evaluate the number generated and declare in OOC chat whether it is a success or failure and any descriptions to help fill out the result. The defender can then emote an appropriate response using that information.

For example,

Using the same scene as above, but assuming that Tharion is acting as the director instead of Araatris, we see Tharion emote:

“Tharion lunges at Araatris with a targeted thrust of his practice blades.”

Araatris rolls her Agility stat as a defensive action in an attempt to dodge. The result of the

2.2.4 Taking Damage

The concept of hit points is entirely optional for the NB20 system. Many people just prefer to “roll with the punches” so-to-speak and emote damage and character injury in a more dynamic fashion. However, there are some who prefer a more structured approach.

For NB20, the number of starting hit points a character has is equal to that character’s constitution stat value. Only successful attacks and other damaging effects can reduce a character’s available hit points.

By default, every successful attack does only 1 point of damage to a character. It is up to the director if certain stronger hits do more damage. It should be said that a character who has no hit points remaining is not necessarily dead. That character is just out of that combat.

It is up to the director to determine the severity of the hits and how that effects further RP during the scene. It is best to always discuss such things with the director beforehand. If no director is present, then it should be an agreement between the involved actors.

2.3 WHAT'S THE BEST STAT?

The first step to attempting an action in NB20 is to choose an appropriate stat with which to roll. The descriptions in Table 2.1.1.2 should help with this. However, those descriptions are purposefully open and vague.

The basic idea is that you should choose the stat that is most appropriate for your character. Sometimes, this can be easy. If your character making a swing with a heavy weapon, for example, then strength is the likely stat to use. Similarly, if the character is thrusting with a light weapon like a rapier, agility may be more appropriate.

What happens when the situation is not as clear? If a demon hunter chooses to use Immolation, an ability that lets him engulf his body in felfire and damage enemies around him, for example, what stat would be used for that? What about a priest attempting to bring up a holy shield quickly to avoid an incoming attack from an opponent? Would that be agility, intellect, or willpower?

In the case of Immolation, if you believe the ability is something drawn from within the demon hunter himself, then willpower may be the most likely stat. If, however, your demon hunter learned the ability by reading an ancient tome and figured out proper incantations to evoke the power, then intellect may be more appropriate.

Similarly, if your priest learned how to shield herself by reading holy texts, then it could be an intellect based ability for you. However, if your priest has an innate connection to her deity, then her willpower could override that.

The stat that you choose for your abilities should be based upon your character and how he or she functions in the world. Just because one person uses willpower for Immolation, however, does not mean that you have to do the same. Use whatever works best in the context of your character.

2.4 COORDINATING LARGE GROUPS

The above examples work great when the combat is between two or three characters. Generally, most RPer's can work out whose actions take precedence amongst themselves. However, things get a little more complicated once you get into groups beyond that number.

For the purposes of NB20, a "large group" can refer to as few as four people. We have found through playtesting that it can be difficult to decipher a proper order of priority when dealing with roll results during a

large combat scene. This is why NB20 has a simple and optional (but recommended) action priority system.

At the beginning of a combat, all participants in a combat should roll using their character's Perception stat. Perception, per Table 2.1.1.2, represents a character's awareness of the combat scene. While most people will assume this means they can find things more easily than others, it actually plays into the idea that the character is also more keenly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his or her opponents. Thus, the character is capable of better perceiving the potential flow of battle.

Once results are rolled, the character with the highest result takes first action, followed by the next highest result. Repeat this until you have reached the character with the lowest result on the list. The full completion of every character in the combat taking an action is referred to as a "round of combat."

If two or more characters roll the same perception result, simply have just those characters roll-off with each other and place them accordingly. Repeat this step for as many duplicate results as are generated.

For each action taken, a response is allowed for the target of that action, and that response should not count towards that character's action during that round of combat. Director discretion should be used, however, to ensure the best flow for the scene.

2.5 ADVANCING A CHARACTER

Similar to hit points, the concept of experience progression is entirely optional for the NB20 system. Initially, the intent was to allow each actor to change her character's stats as that character evolved over the course of varying RP sessions. This is still the intended default method.

For those that wish something a little more guided, a director running a long storyline can grant certain characters additional stat points upon the completion of specific milestones. These stat points can be added to any stat the character has, and may even push that character into the next highest template.

Each time a stat is adjusted, the actor can total up his stat points and divide by 10. The result, rounded to the nearest whole number, will be that character's new feat point value.

Note that individual stat values may not exceed 10, and the total of all stat values for a character cannot exceed 60. A Mentor at 60 is a fully maxed out character.

2.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is extremely important to remember that NB20 was designed to be lightweight and simple. It leaves a lot of control in the hands of the directors and actors participating in a scene, and this was intentional. It was not designed to be comprehensive or air-tight. If you run across a situation that the mechanics presented here cannot resolve, then use your best judgement and

discuss it with everyone present in the scene. Above all, however, try not to let yourself get bogged down with too many details or a rigid adherence to the numbers. This is meant to be a fun experience, and there is no need to argue over numbers in a RP situation.

RP is about collaborative storytelling in a semi-persistent world. Keep that in mind and have fun with it!

3 CREDITS AND LICENSING

3.1 CREDITS

The following people contributed to the development of the NB20 system and this document, and a sincere thanks is given to all of them.

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3.2 LICENSING

NB20 is protected by some licensing or another, I'm sure. I'll need to do more research on it...