

# WHITEGRAVE



# Whitegrave

Old-School Urban Fantasy Roleplaying

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# Whitegrave

At the edge of time and reality lies the city of Whitegrave. Those living there are the refugees of lost realms drawn together in a bitter struggle for survival. All know that the city is the best hope for all, despite their petty squabbles and bitter rivalries.

Swept to the world of Taran through the magickal Ether Storms, many are the descendants of the random swirlings of Etheric energy that captures and carries all manner of beings across time and reality. Others had ancestors who stepped through a Moongate and entered the world willingly, but they are no less trapped. Taran is a world between other worlds, a place where the lost seek to become found.

The desolate lands that surround Whitegrave are the doom and the hope of many. For those who would escape the confines of the city, the realms around it are filled with abandoned places from which treasures and artefacts might be recovered. With each passing year, the adventurers of Whitegrave both reach further and delve deeper into the secrets of the world upon which they find themselves. It remains to be seen whether these items and secrets are best discovered or left untouched.

## The City Itself

It is said that, originally, Whitegrave was a Dwarf city built across the banks of the river that runs through its heart. It not only sprawled east to west across the rich fields around the river, it also delved downward: even the most open-minded Dwarfish architect could not resist delving beneath in search of riches.

In the centre lay the Citadel, a square tower of stone overlooking a bailey and keep which was home to the House of Whitegrave. Around this central keep grew the town of artisans, safe within the outer walls of the Old City. Here were built the guild houses and businesses that began the city's rise towards being the greatest trading port on the face of Taran. Along the river banks, running east towards the sea, grew the Port of Whitegrave.

As history unfolded, the city was visited by the Trading Companies of the world of Taran. Many were from other parts of the world, including Human and Hobbytt families who settled in their own districts. Although Orc, Goblin, and a Giantish raiders plagued the lands to the north, few came far enough to seriously threaten the security of the city.

Until the first Ether Storms came, that is.

Taran was struck by the storms all at once. A sudden shift in the currents of Ether that run through the lands caused eruptions of volcanoes and earthquakes on a massive scale. In the air, the skies

boiled with Etheric energy, causing huge tornadoes and storms. The city was struck as the lands around shook and burned. This was when the river turned dark, becoming known as the Blackwater.

The Ether Storms swept with them the first invaders. The Krixx and the Elves were all drawn to Taran at this time, initially fighting for survival upon the now ravaged lands of the Dwarf farmers. The Church of the All-Father proclaimed this was a punishment for abandoning the old ways, but the city itself held firm.

Huddled against the Old City walls, the refugees built their slums. In time, even the Dwarfs could not bear to see such suffering outside their walls go without aid: thus began the first attempts to bring those outside the city into some kind of alliance.

The Elves helped the Dwarfs to build the Great Gate - a portal designed to channel Etheric Energy down into the earth, forged from stone and iron but empowered with Rune Magick. This was the first, and greatest, of the Moon Gates which allowed the Rune Magi the ability to quickly travel the lands and bring assistance to those thought abandoned.

The Church of the All-Father strengthened their aid, extending and sanctifying the Grand Cathedral in the heart of the city. From here, the Church built dozens of smaller chapels throughout the city to act not just as local places of worship, but also as centres for healing and the distribution of aid.

Around the outside of the slums was built the Great Wall, a border between the promises of safety within Whitegrave and the horrors that lie outside. As the wall was built, the artisans of the four allied species (Dwarfs, Humans, Hobbytts, and Elves) offered sanctuary to any who would help to rebuild the city. During this time, despite tension and the odd incident of violence, the Krixx joined the Council. Within a few years these newcomers were joined by Goblins, Orcs, and Bruxx.

The city's Eastern Quarter, long the poorest of the slums, was opened to house the Goblins and the Bruxx. The Underwarrens were dug by Bruxx seeking a new home, while the surface structures were thrown up by Goblin and Orc artisans. To this day, the area remains rough-and-tumble but filled with opportunity.

Humans tended to build on the south side of the Blackwater, forming tenement communities along long and tightly-packed streets. The Hobbytts too flocked to the south, making for the most extensive mix of architectural styles as mixed ethnicities rubbed shoulders.

The north of the city was divided, the Elves taking to the north-western quarter and the Dwarfs the north-east. The Krixx, being insectoid, sought burrows away from the river and settled in ghettos scattered between the other communities. The spires of their hives being the only visible sign of their presence, each Krixx warren housed a separate Queen.

In the centre, the Old City prospered as the mixed communities shared resources and traded. The Rune Magi and the College of Magi built their respective homes, the latter neighbouring the extensive manors of the Dwarf Houses.

# Characters

Roleplaying games begin with **Characters**. Two, usually, as a minimum: a protagonist and an antagonist. That said, most roleplaying games are group affairs that encourage each **Player** to “run” a character - their own protagonist - against one or more opposing characters “run” by the **Game Master**. However you look at it, these games need cool characters.

For a roleplaying game, a character has three main features:

1. A role within the setting of the game.
2. Some abilities by which to make a difference.
3. Some goals and motivation.

Each setting provides different suggestions for what kind of roles might be suited to the characters. There is, however, a kind of chicken-or-egg relationship between these elements: the setting suggests character roles while the character role can suggest setting ideas.

To keep things simple, this game has a definite setting in mind and organises the roles available from this standpoint.

Because our baseline setting is an urban fantasy setting, we'll begin with roles suited to that idea.

*For other settings, check out other games in the Affinity System range.*

## Rule Number One

The most important rule is that the **Game Master** (GM) always has the right to modify the rules. In fact, it's encouraged. There are gaps in the rules—holes which we did not fill on purpose because much of the fun of “old school” gaming is being able to make rules up as you need them.

This could be as simple as “um, grab some dice, roll them, and tell me the number” or more complex home-brew charts for the smallest of details. Along the way we'll be making suggestions, explanations, and giving ideas; feel free to use these ideas or discard them as you like.

This is your game, after all.

## Troubleshooters

To speed play, the Players will create one or more **Troubleshooter** characters. Troubleshooters are starting-out adventurers who have yet to both prove themselves and to specialise.

Troubleshooters have very limited capabilities in the first session or so of play. They are often referred to as “Level Zero” characters, because they haven’t yet earned enough **Experience (XP)** to attain Level 1 in a **Role**.

Here’s how to get started:

1. Choose a **Species** for your character.
2. Roll the character’s **Affinities**, using the dice indicated in the Species entry.
3. Roll the character’s **Roots**, assigning the starting equipment and special ability based on what you roll.
4. Calculate the character’s **Hit Points**, and their **Melee Combat Skill** and **Missile Combat Skill** values.
5. Go shopping with the character’s starting cash, as determined by their Roots.

You are now ready for play.

## Experience (XP)

As play continues, your Game Master will award your character(s) Experience (XP). These are points granted as a reward for the stuff that you achieve - whether it be overcoming dangerous foes, uncovering secrets, or some other goal.

Once your character reaches 100 XP, they will be eligible to “level-up” to Level 1. At this point, your character can be assigned a **Role** and will receive all the benefits associated with that Level 1 rank.

As your character receives increased XP, they will eventually reach the next XP target for Level 2. As each Role has different Level 2 targets, the players will find their character needs to achieve different things to “level up” again.

This process of playing the game, earning XP, and levelling-up continues until the character tops out at Level 20; by then, most players feel that it’s time to retire the character and start a new one.

Details on how the Game Master might award Experience is handled later in the rules.

# Affinities

Games have rules. They also tend to need to quantify things. Thus, the character has some **Affinities** which quantify their raw ability in certain key functions of the game.

The Affinities are:

- **Strength (STR)**: how physically powerful you are.
- **Endurance (END)**: how tough and resistant you are.
- **Agility (AGL)**: how physically slick and coordinated you are.
- **Dexterity (DEX)**: how good you are with hand-eye coordination and fiddly stuff.
- **Intellect (INT)**: how quick-thinking and smart you are.
- **Awareness (AWR)**: how observant and perceptive you are.
- **Discipline (DPL)**: how self-controlled and determined you are.
- **Presence (PRE)**: how persuasive and influential you are.
- **Tech (TCH)**: how good you are at handling technological devices.

Each Affinity has a value ranging from 1 (oh dear) to 20 (awesome).

To generate your starting Affinity values you will roll dice for each and note down the score. The average person will have a score of 10 across the board. Because you're not average, however, your character will often end up with scores above average.

Which dice are rolled for which Affinity is a function of your character's **Species**. You can find out more about that in the appropriate section of this rulebook but, for the sake of clarity, here's the dice you'd roll for a Human:

## Human Affinities

| STR    | END    | AGL   | DEX    | INT    | AWR    | DPL    | PRE    | TCH    |
|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1d10+6 | 1d10+6 | 1d8+7 | 1d10+6 | 1d10+6 | 1d10+6 | 1d10+6 | 1d10+6 | 1d12+4 |

## Derived Attributes

Each character has a range of values that are derived from their Affinity values. These are the secondary attributes, generally used in matters of combat.

The derived attributes are:

- **Hit Points:** Average of Endurance and Discipline (round up), plus bonuses from Species and Role (see the Wounds section for more details).
- **Base Initiative:** Average of Agility and Intellect (round up).
- **Melee Combat Skill:** Average of Strength and Agility (round up).
- **Missile Combat Skill:** Average of Dexterity and Awareness (round up).

# Tests

Before you create a **Character**, it's useful to know how the numbers work. How do all those nifty Affinities work in the game?

A lot of the time, you'll simply describe what your character is doing and, hey presto, there they are doing it. Crossing the street, speaking to a witness, or driving the car are all actions which can be narrated within the ongoing story without much fuss.

Sometimes an action involves risk. When the failure matters to your character in some meaningful way, you need to take a **Test**.

Tests are made by rolling some dice. In short, to succeed you need to roll equal to or less than the value of the Affinity that's being tested.

*For example, if I am testing my Strength to see if I can break down a door, then I need to roll equal to or less than the value of my Strength.*

Sometimes a test is made more difficult due to circumstance. A test that is typically a mere challenge calls for a roll of 3d6. If things harder, the GM will ask you to add one die for each level of difficulty the test endures; if things are easier, the GM will take away a die.

This leaves the difficulty of things looking like this:

- 1d6 is Easy
- 2d6 is Routine
- 3d6 is Challenging
- 4d6 is Tricky
- 5d6 is Difficult
- 6d6 is Formidable
- 7d6 is Amazing
- 8d6 is Incredible
- 9d6 is Hopeless
- 10d6 is Beyond Hopeless

## Thresholds

Sometimes a test will have a **Threshold**. This means that, in addition to rolling less than or equal to your Affinity value, you also need to roll higher than the Threshold.

Typically, a Threshold is attached to things that offer some kind of passive resistance to your action.

*For example, when trying to break down that door the GM decides that it's not just Difficult but also reinforced. He assigns a Threshold of 8. Now you've got to roll less than your Strength but also more than the reinforcement Threshold of 8.*

The most common form of Threshold is probably armour worn in combat. The **Armour Value (AV)** is a Threshold.

#### Example Thresholds

| Threshold | Type                      |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| 0         | No resistance             |
| 5         | Soft items                |
| 6         | Leathery items            |
| 7         | Hardened items            |
| 8         | Reinforced items          |
| 9         | Tough metal items         |
| 10        | Reinforced metal items    |
| 11        | Armoured items            |
| 12        | Reinforced armoured items |

## Boost Dice

For some tests your character might have some skill, piece of special gear, or other ability that boosts their chance of success. We call these **Boost Dice** because... well, they boost your chances of success.

Each Boost Die can be added to the handful of dice you are asked to pick up by the GM. Instead of simply totalling the dice, however, you can substitute one of your Boost Dice for any of the regular dice.

*For example, with my Difficult Strength test, I pick up 5d6. Because my character has been empowered by a magick spell, however, the GM says I can also pick up a Boost Die. I roll 6d6 and pick the most favourable 5 dice to total. In other words, I'll probably ignore the die with the highest value because I want to roll lower than my Strength.*

We recommend using different coloured dice for Boost Dice to make this simpler.

## Modifiers

Sometimes you'll see that a character picks up either a bonus or a penalty to a test. In these cases, the value is added or subtracted from the value of the Affinity being tested.

*For example, my character is testing their Strength of 15 but has a penalty of -2. I must roll equal to or less than the reduced Strength of 13 (15-2 = 13). Damn.*

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