Black Wolf RPG Preview

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Concept

Simple rules for reasonably realistic but quick, narrative-focused play in a dark fantasy setting. It is mostly a simplified/tweaked Call of Cthulhu 7th edition + the complications mechanic from Blood and Bone + role-playing bonus dice from Sorcerer + armour and mood from Stormbringer 4th edition. Also somewhat inspired by the Wilderness board game. The magic system is a simplified adaptation of Sorcerer.

The design goals are:

- Being deadly (make players think twice about using violence).
- Giving a sense of survival horror (losing hit points or mental stability makes everything harder, turns into a downward spiral).
- Being simple and easy to teach (even to RPG newbies) but reasonably detailed and realistic.
- Being role-playing- and narrative-focused, limit randomness and luck by using smaller dice (many D4s and D6s).

Character creation

1. Characters have seven percentage-based characteristics: **STR**(ength), **DEX**(terity), **CON**(stitution), **INT**(elligence), **PER**(ception), **WIL**(lpower), **CHA**(risma). Distribute these values among the characteristics: **80**, **70**, **60**, **60**, **50**, **50**, **40**.
2. Distribute these values among whichever skills you want: **70**, **60**, **60**, **50**, **50**, **50**, **40**, **40**.
3. Add **+20** to two *extra* skills (ie. not in the list from step 2).
4. Hit points are (**STR** + **CON**) / 5, rounding up.
5. Mental stability starts as high as **WIL**.
6. Choose between one and three complications.

General system

Almost everything is a percentage, so roll 1D100 and success is rolling same or lower. There are several types of successes:

- Rolling same or under half the rating is considered a **solid** success.
- Rolling same or under a fifth of the rating is considered an **extreme** success.

- Rolling same or under a tenth of the rating is considered a **critical** success.
- Otherwise it's a **regular** success.

Rolling over the rating is a failure, but rolling the same or over *90 + a tenth of the rating* is a **fumble**.

The narrator can make rolls easier/harder by adding bonus/penalty dice:

- For each **bonus die**, an extra "tens" die is rolled. The *best* combination is chosen.
- For each **penalty die**, an extra "tens" die is rolled. The *worst* combination is chosen.

Eg. rolling with one bonus die would mean rolling two "tens" dice and one "units" die. If the results of the dice are 80, 40 and 7, the end result is 47. Bonus and penalty dice cancel each other.

Complications

When players role-play a complication in a way that makes things worse for the PCs, the narrator can give the player 1-3 drama points for a single action. No player can have more than 5 drama points at any given time, and drama points *only last for that scene*.

Drama points can be used to add a bonus die to a roll (even after the fact; no need to decide before rolling).

Complication examples

- Trauma (specify)
- Addiction (specify)
- Argumentative/arrogant
- Clumsy (socially or physically)
- Idealist/fanatic (specify)
- Competitive
- Phobia (specify)
- Dark past/bad reputation (specify)
- Dependent NPC (specify)
- Forgetful/absent minded
- Impulsive/overconfident/overcurious
- Intolerance/prejudice (specify)
- Emotionally unstable
- Egoistic/coward

Hand-to-hand combat

It is based on opposed rolls: the two participants roll for the appropriate skills and compare their levels of success: none (failure), regular, solid, extreme, critical. The attacker uses the appropriate attack skill. The defender can choose between the dodge skill and the current weapon skill (that would mean parry), ie. Brawl cannot be used to parry weapons.

If the defender gets a *better* type of success, the attack does not succeed. However, **if skill >= 50%**, *attack roll failures can still hit*: the defender must succeed (ie. better success type) in the dodge/parry roll to avoid damage. Note that *fumbles are always failures*, regardless of skill level.

Characters can go offensive, balanced or defensive:

- Balanced: attack and defend as described above.
- Offensive: bonus die for attack, penalty die for defence.
- Defensive: penalty die for attack, bonus die for defence.

If the attack success is extreme or critical (and the defender doesn't dodge or parry, that is), the maximum weapon damage is used (no roll needed). After the weapon damage for the attack is calculated, the defender rolls for any armour they have, and subtract the result from the weapon damage to calculate the final inflicted damage.

PCs get an extra bonus die if they role-play/describe the attack or parry in an interesting or original way, maybe using the environment. Narrator's decision.

A blow that makes a character lose half of their hit points in one go inflicts a major wound (see table below). Regardless of having received major wounds or not, while a character has half the hit points left (or less), all physical rolls get a penalty die.

Major Wounds

Choose something dramatically appropriate, but you can also roll:

1-60	Really impressive scar	**81-90**	Damage to internal organs (-10 CON)
61-70	Losing eye, nose, ear, teeth (-10 CHA)	**91-95**	Broken arm/leg (-10 DEX)
71-80	Concussion, head injury (-5 INT, -5 CHA)	**96-00**	Amputated hand/foot, part of arm/leg (-15 DEX)

When characteristics are lost, the same loss is applied to any skills that make sense (eg. losing CHA makes you lose in Charm; losing INT makes you lose in Persuasion; losing DEX makes you lose in Athletics, Swim, Ride, Sleight of Hand, play instruments and combat skills).

Combat equipment

Weapons

- Brawl: 1D6
- Dagger: 2D4
- Short sword: 1D4+1D6
- Sword/scimitar: 2D6
- Two-handed sword: 3D6
- Hatchet: 1D4+1D6
- Battle axe: 2D6
- Two-handed axe: 3D6
- Mace: 1D4+1D6
- Two-handed mace: 2D8
- Spear: 2D8
- Javelin: 2D6

- Short bow: 1D4+1D6
- Bow: 1D6+1D8
- Crossbow: 3D6
- Sling: 2D4

Armour

Armour protects against a number of hit points. The number is not fixed, but must be rolled.

Leather armour: 1D2

Half plate: 1D4

Full plate (uncommon and impractical): 1D6

Mental stability

Stressful or scary things make characters lose mental stability. Characters start with mental stability equal to their WIL. Every time there is something stressful (see table below), characters roll for mental stability using their current rating as a percentage:

- If they pass they lose the specified amount (1D6+1D4 when suffering a serious major wound).
- If they lose, they lose the maximum plus the specified amount (10+1D6+1D4 in the example).
- Critical success makes character lose minimum (2 in that example).
- Fumble makes them lose maximum (20 in that example).

Having less than half the original value means every non-physical roll has a penalty die.

Having less than 10% of the original value puts the character into a mental breakdown: it could be hardcore survival mode (not caring about others, including other PCs), breaking down in foetal position, freezing in terror, ...

Every night of half-decent sleep the character recovers 1D6 stability points

Example challenges

- Seeing another PC be in danger - 1D4
- Seeing another PC suffer a major wound that is not a scar - 1D6
- Seeing another PC die - 1D6+1D4
- Be in an unfamiliar, potentially dangerous, position - 1D4
- Be surprised by something inexplicable, like magic - 1D4
- Be in danger - 1D6
- Suffer a major wound that is not a scar - 1D6+1D4

Use common sense when related things happen: seeing someone receive a major wound, then die, would make the second roll be for 1D4, not 1D6+1D4!

Skills

A percentage besides the skill indicates an initial value, even if the skill is not chosen.

Physical

- Athletics (climb/jump): 20%
- Ride: 20%
- Swim: 20%

Nature

- Navigate: 20%
- Track: 10%
- Survival: 10%

Subterfuge

- Pick Lock
- Sleight of Hand: 10%
- Ambush: 10%
- Hide: 20%

Social

- Persuade: 20%
- Charm: 10%
- Intimidate: 10%
- Psychology: 10%
- Perform (specify: sing, play instrument, theatre, disguise...): 10%
- Arts & Crafts

Knowledge

- First Aid: 20%
- Natural World (pick specialization): 10%
- History (pick specialization): 10%
- Religion (pick specialization): 10%

Magic – experimental!

No spells or magical abilities. Only demon invocation and binding. Any character that wants to invoke or bind demons needs at least 70 in INT, and at least 70 in WIL. Demons are NPCs, not equipment, and they have their own demon character sheet which is handled by the narrator and kept hidden from the sorcerer player.

Invoking demons

Invoking a demon is a process that needs to be adapted to the setting, but it should never be quick. Certainly, it must not be possible in stressful situations with threat of violence. As a general rule, it should be a process involving some kind of ritual lasting at least two hours, and needing a quiet, safe place. The process should mentally drain the character, so it shouldn't be possible to try more than once in the same day. Mechanics-wise, the process involves a series of steps:

1. The character decides the *real WIL* of the demon to be summoned, its form, and its abilities. The narrator decides a *need* for the demon.
2. At the end of the ritual, an INT roll is performed. If failed, the character cannot contact or summon the demon. In any case, the ritual requires a 1D6 mental stability check.

3. Right after, an *opposed* WIL roll against the demon WIL is performed. The outcome of this roll determines how strong the binding is (the *initial bound WIL*): if the sorcerer failed the WIL roll, it's 50% of the demon's real WIL; if the sorcerer succeeded, but with the same or worse success type than the demon, it's 75% of the demon's real WIL; otherwise, it's the demon's real WIL. Note that if the sorcerer is at half of their mental stability or less, this WIL roll has a penalty die.

WIL ratings for demons

There are three different WIL ratings for a demon: the *real WIL*, the *initial bound WIL*, and the *current bound WIL*. The first one is the one decided in step 1, and used only for rolls in which the demon acts on own interest (as opposed to the sorcerer asking the demon to do something). The second one is calculated in step 3 above, and is essentially the initial **and** maximum value for the third one. Finally, the third one (*current bound WIL*) is the value to be used whenever the sorcerer asks the demon to do something, ie. in most situations.

Interacting with demons

Every time the sorcerer asks the demon to use one of its abilities, the narrator rolls for the demon's *current bound WIL* and the demon only obeys on a successful roll. However, every time the demon does something for the sorcerer, it loses 2D4 in *current bound WIL*. This rating can be recovered by serving the demon's need: every time the sorcerer serves the need, the *current bound WIL* goes up by 2D6. Optionally, if the need was served in a clever or especially meaningful way, it can go up to the *initial bound WIL* without rolls.

Whenever the *current bound WIL* is half or less of the *initial bound WIL*, the demon will be actively hostile towards the sorcerer and will occasionally try to sabotage them (any uses of WIL for sabotaging purposes can use the demon's *real WIL*).

Getting rid of a demon needs a similar, multi-hour ritual as summoning. In this case, though, the sorcerer needs a better success type in an opposed WIL roll against the demon's *real WIL*.

Demon skills

Feel free to make up any skills that make sense in your setting. **Maybe the number of skills should be directly related to the demon's WIL? Or their power/intensity?** The following is a list of suggestions:

- *Armour:* the demon can provide extra armour to the sorcerer. It will last for a single encounter (even if there are several enemies). The amount of armour is the biggest die that is greater or equal than 10% of the demon's WIL (1d8 for 80%, 1d4 for 45%, etc).
- *Boost:* the demon can give a bonus die to rolls of a given characteristic or skill (to be determined on demon's creation). It will last for a single roll, or a series of related rolls (eg. in combat, it will last for the whole encounter).

- *Cloak:* the demon can help the sorcerer not be noticed. This is valid for any perception rolls any NPCs would have to make to notice the sorcerer (penalty die), and to ambush rolls and similar (bonus die).
- *Command:* the demon can control a non-human animal for a limited time (a couple of minutes), commanding them to do things.
- *Confuse:* the demon can make an NPC be confused for a single turn, making them lose their next action.
- *Link:* the demon can have a vague idea of where the sorcerer is and what is happening around them, and viceversa.

Demon needs

Demon needs are meant to create tension and to be inconvenient to the sorcerer, and possibly the whole group. They should act as a subtly corrupting influence, possibly pushing the sorcerer to do more and more for them. The ideal demon need will put the sorcerer in uncomfortable situations, in moral dilemmas, or directly in danger. Also, the demon (through the narrator) could ask the sorcerer to do specific things (stealing a specific object from a specific NPC) to satiate its need. The demon/narrator has the last word as to how to satiate a need.

Demons don't necessarily explain in detail what their need is: they can simply crave or ask the sorcerers for things.

Example needs

- Hoard objects
- Earn money
- Produce chaos and confusion
- Lie
- Kill/Soul drinking
- Defeat other sorcerers or demons
- Corrupt everything that is pure or stable
- Curiosity