

Thirteenth Age - Rules Summary

A special note for system-averse roleplayers:

I hear you! I'd like this game to be more crunchy mechanically because I know that some players found the lack of character progression in Everway frustrating, but I don't want to make it inaccessible. I'll try and make the numbers disappear for you as much as possible in the game, but it would be helpful if you could know what your Skill Check Modifiers and Backgrounds are for skill checks, and if you could keep track of your hit points and recoveries.

Heroes

Heroes have the following major characteristics:

- **Experience Level** - from 1 to 10.
- **Ancestry** - what cultural group does your hero most identify with (or against)?
- **Profession** - what does your hero do?
 - **Talents** - profession specialisations
 - **Powers** - The special things your character can do
- **One Unique Thing** - what thing makes you unique in the world?
- **Icon Relationships** - which icons do you have an affinity for, or an animus against?
- **Abilities** – How strong, dextrous, tough, clever, perceptive and charming is your character?
- **Backgrounds** - what previous experience does your hero have?
- **Defences** - Your resistances against different types of attack
- **Feats** (optional) - customisations of specific Powers

Experience Level

Your Experience Level represents the overall experience of your character as an adventurer and ranges from 1 to 10. You start at level 1.

Levels are grouped into Experience Tiers.

- Levels 1-4 are **Adventurer tier**
- Levels 5-7 are **Champion tier**
- Levels 8-10 are **Epic tier**

These tiers are also used describe environments (a dungeon can be Adventurer, Champion or Epic level, for example) and to scale up Feats and magic items.

Ancestry

Your cultural background. Your ancestry can be anything that fits in a fantasy setting. Stick with human, elf, dwarf, gnome or folk (halfling) if you want to be traditional.

Profession

Your role in the party, and possibly the way that you make money when not adventuring. Your profession determines what Powers you have.

Talents

A Talent is a specialisation of your profession at which you are particularly good - think of it like an elective that you took at your profession's college. It can be a complicated single power, a Feat-like bonus to another power, or even a whole new set of powers (Druids!).

Powers

Powers is a catch-all term for the special things that your character can do, including Spells, and derive from your character's Profession and Talents. More details below!

One Unique Thing

A feature that marks you out from everyone else in the world. See One Unique Thing.

Icon Relationships

Icon Relationships are the equivalent of alignment in D&D. Your character is assumed to have a relationship (positive, negative, or complicated) with at least one of the thirteen Icons that rule the world. Your icon relationship affects how people and organisations associated with (or opposed to) that Icon view you. The strength of your Icon relationship is measured in *relationship points*.

Abilities

Thirteenth Age uses six scores (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma) to represent your hero's base capabilities. They don't really feature in play – instead, they are used to calculate modifiers to all the skill checks (including combat) that the GM might ask you to make.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds are the 13th Age equivalent of skills. Each is an occupation or life experience that you had before you became an Adventurer, and each has a score from 1 to 5. Backgrounds are often but not necessarily related to your Profession. For example "Volunteer fire fighter in Concord", or "Fake guru", or "Three-time New Port angling champion". Background scores are used in skill checks (see below).

Defences

There are three numbers that describe a character's or creature's defences against different types of attack.

Armour Class, or **AC**, represents your character's resistance to damage through use of armour and shields and is used to defend against most forms of non-magical attack.

Physical Defence, or **PD**, represents your character's resistance to magic with physical effects, such as fireballs. It is different from AC because armour will not generally be an effective defence against such attacks, and magic users who are familiar with such spells are more likely to see them coming.

Mental Defence, or **MD**, represents your character's resistance to attacks by magic with mental effects. Brainier characters will generally have a higher MD than their more muscle-bound companions.

Feats

Note: Feats are optional. If you are system-averse, just ignore them.

A Feat is a bonus or enhancement to a particular Power or other aspect of your character. You get one additional Feat or Feat upgrade per level. Think of them as special tricks that you have learned to do while training or studying between adventures.

All feats have a *Scope*, which is a pre-requisite that you have to have in order to take the Feat - usually the Power to which the Feat relates. Feats with a *General* scope can be taken by anyone.

You can "re-spec" your Feats when you change Powers and Spells.

Game Mechanics

Skill Checks

Summary:

- (d20 + Skill Check Modifier + Background) vs Difficulty Class
- Natural 20 = critical success
- Natural 1 *may* be a fumble

When your character tries to do something where a range of interesting outcomes are possible, the GM will ask you to roll a Skill Check using one of your six Skill Check Modifiers. These are bonuses (or possibly penalties) calculated from your Ability scores by a (not so) arcane formula.

Which Skill Check Modifier you use depends on how you describe what you are trying to do.

1. **Strength (STR)** skill check for feats of bodily power or force.
2. **Dexterity (DEX)** skill check for tasks involving agility, reflexes or handiness.
3. **Constitution (CON)** skill check for feats of toughness or endurance.
4. **Intelligence (INT)** skill check for tasks involving knowledge, reasoning or abstract thought.
5. **Wisdom (WIS)** skill check for flashes of intuition, insight or perceptiveness.
6. **Charisma (CHA)** skill check for tasks involving force of personality and social grace.

Non-combat skill checks

To make a skill check, simply roll a d20 and add the relevant Skill Check Modifier. You can also add the value of **one** of your Backgrounds if you can justify it. For example, a background as a sailor could be added to a DEX skill check for climbing or an INT check relating to boats.

Tell the GM what the total value of your skill check is. If it meets or exceeds the Difficulty Class (DC) that they assign to the task (a multiple of 5 - at Adventurer level, 10 is easy, 15 is average, 20 is hard etc.), things go more or less as planned. The GM may ask you to narrate what happens.

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If the total doesn't meet the DC, that's not necessarily a fail. It's a suggestion to introduce an interesting complication or role-playing opportunity. The mighty barbarian attempts to leap across a river but misses the DEX check. Perhaps he makes it but pulls a hamstring.

A **Natural 1** (when you roll 1 on the d20) *may* be a Fumble (GM's choice - it's not plausible for a supposedly competent adventurer to fail at anything they try to do 5% of the time). In combat, this will usually mean that you do no damage to your opponent, not even Miss damage (see below). When making a skill check, there could be a negative consequence if the GM can think of one that would be fun, interesting and plausible - a piece of equipment may break, you make a loud noise in a sneaking situation, you make an implacable enemy of someone you were trying to persuade, etc.

A **Natural 20** (when you roll 20 on the d20) is a Critical Success or Crit. You almost certainly succeed and something extra good happens.

Note: Some powers may increase the *Crit Range* of a skill check to, say, 18-20. This means that a natural roll of 18 or above is a crit. This will normally be a short-term thing.

Combat skill checks

Attacks using spells or weapons in combat also use ability-based skill checks, but with a couple of small modifications. Instead of a Background, you add the current value of the Escalation Die. And instead of a Difficulty Class, you are trying to beat one of the Defences of your opponent. More details below!

Icon Relationship Rolls

Summary:

- **6** on a d6 - icon helps you
- **5** on a d6 - icon helps, but with a complication

From time to time, you may be asked to make an *Icon Relationship roll*. This is a mechanic that is intended to introduce "spotlight time" for particular characters by foregrounding an Icon Relationship. For once, this is done with a d6 rather than a d20 (the designers said that this was because they wanted to make icon relationship rolling "special").

Roll a d6 for each relationship point you have with that Icon. If you get a **5** or a **6**, tell the GM. A 6 means that the Icon or its forces will assist you in some way in your current mission (if you have a negative relationship, they make a mistake that you can exploit). A 5 is similar but there is a complication.

Making Saves

In some situations, natural ability or previous experience won't help you – it's all a matter of luck. When this happens, you make an *easy*, *normal* or *difficult* Save. This is a simple d20 roll with *no modifiers*. If you roll 6+ (easy), 11+ (normal) or 16+ (hard), you pass the save. Otherwise you fail.

Powers

Here are the general rules for Powers. See the Profession descriptions for the exceptions and specialisations associated with each Profession.

Invocation Time

Invoking a Power takes a Standard Action, unless otherwise specified in its description.

Target

The **Target** of a Power indicates the number and disposition of creatures that it affects and the maximum **Range** at which it works:

- **Personal** The power only works on you.
- **Adjacent / Melee** The power works on someone at touching distance or melee weapon distance from you.
- **Nearby** The power works on someone who is within 25 feet or so.
- **Far away** The power works on someone who is within eyeshot.

Duration

How long a Power lasts is described in its effect description. Most powers are instantaneous.

Recharge Rate

When you use it, a Power *discharges* and cannot be used again for a while. How long that is depends on the Power's Recharge Rate:

- **At-will** The Power recharges as soon as it is used. You can use it again almost immediately.
- **Short Rest / Per Combat** The Power recharges after your character has had a short sit-down (10 min or so).
- **Recharge X** (spells only). The Power recharges *if* you make a Save after combat.
- **Long Rest / Daily** The Power recharges after your character has had the equivalent of a night's sleep (six hours or so).

Levelled Powers

Most Powers have a *level* (an odd number - 1, 3, 5, 7, or 9) which is the minimum **Experience Level** you need to have in order to memorise them. These Powers take up **Memory Slots** as described in your Profession Progression. You can change your "loadout" of memorised powers when you train at level-up, or at each **Long Rest** (spells only). Every Profession that uses levelled Powers has a spellbook or manual with a standard selection from which to choose (you'll get extra pages as you level up), but you are encouraged to suggest additional ones that fit your character.

Free Powers from profession features, **Talents** or **Feats** do not take up memory slots and (usually) do not change with level.

No Duplicates

You can only memorise a single instance of a Power. This is to encourage variety. You get to use a daily Power like Fireball once per day, and that's your lot.

Spells

A Spell is a magical levelled Power. Your training as a spellcaster allows you to change the ones you have memorised once per day (*Long Rest*) instead of once per level-up. Spells generally have higher level versions (representing your increasing mastery of them) that you can memorise when you have the appropriate *Memory Slot*.

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Like any other Power, spells discharge once cast and cannot be used again until the conditions of their Recharge Rate are met. It's a good idea to choose a mixture of daily, per-combat and at-will spells.

Many spells are *Ranged* which means that they are difficult to cast when an enemy is up in your face.

Feat Upgrades

Many Powers can be optionally upgraded with a Feat, which gives them an enhanced effect.

Healing and Recoveries

Summary: Recovery Die + Base Recovery

Like D&D, Thirteenth Age uses Hit Points to track your overall health. This is meant to be a resource that you have to manage. Having low hit points means that your character is not well and may be more vulnerable in combat.

The ability to recover hit points during an adventure is limited. With the exception of *Free Recovery* powers, all forms of healing, including rallying in combat, first aid, healing spells and potions use a *Recovery*, which can be thought of as a measure of your character's long-term stamina. By default, you will start with **3** of these per adventure. Cross off a recovery each time you use one.

Recoveries use the *Recovery Die* specified for your Profession.

To use a Recovery, roll the Recovery Die and add the Base Recovery. You recover that many hit points (obviously you can't go over your maximum).

If you run out of Recoveries, your character enters a state of exhaustion. Healing potions, rallies and first aid become much less effective. You can still heal, but the number of hit points you recover is halved and you are at a penalty on all attacks and defences.

You will only get your expended Recoveries back after a long period of rest and relaxation (a Full Heal-up). Usually this will be between adventures.

Combat

Combat is divided into **rounds** in which each participant has a **turn** where they get a number of **actions**.

Note for re-enactors: Yes, this is completely unrealistic. We are simulating heroic combat where each player (and enemy!) has an opportunity to do a co-ordinated, awesome action that could turn the tide of battle.

Roll for Initiative!

At the start of combat, roll d20 and add your DEX Skill Check Modifier. Opponents do the same. This determines the order in which party and enemy character turns occur.

You can choose to **delay** your turn to later in the initiative order if you wish, e.g. to see what an enemy does or to allow an ally to act first. If you do this, your position in the turn order changes.

When it's your Turn

You get 1 Standard Action, 1 Quick Action and 1 Move Action per round.

Actions can be taken in any order.

- A *Move Action* is a change in position. Swing down on a rope, charge into battle, take cover from those pesky archers.
- A *Quick Action* is an action that takes very little time to perform. Reload a hand or light crossbow, or grab a handy beer glass, chair or rock.
- A *Standard Action* is a more involved activity that takes a few seconds. Most melee, missile and spell attacks take a standard action, as does first aid. You can also use your standard action to make an additional move.

Note: The Standard Action for bow and sling attacks is assumed to include reload time.

Roleplayers: Ignore the distinction between different types of actions and just tell the GM what you want to do. They will let you know if they think it is too much for one turn.

Resisting Ongoing Effects

At the end of your turn, if you are suffering an *Ongoing Effect* (e.g. bleeding, poisoned, stunned, paralysed), you can make a normal (11+) Save against it. If you succeed, the effect ends.

Otherwise it continues. Damage from ongoing effects happens after your turn actions but before the save attempt.

When it's not your Turn

A *Free Action* is something that you can do at any time, when it's your turn or when it's not. Some of your Powers may be free actions. Short taunts at enemies or instructions to allies count as Free Actions.

Some characters may have an *Interrupt Action*, for example an intercept attack on someone who tries to move past them.

You may also get an *Opportunity Attack* as a Free Action if your opponent does something that makes them vulnerable, for example if they try to cast a *ranged* spell while you are engaging them.

Attack!

Summary:

- Skill Check for weapon/spell/power + Escalation Die + temporary modifiers vs AC or PD or MD

All attacks are simply specialised skill checks. To make a basic attack, pick a target that's in range, roll d20 and add the Skill Check Modifier for the weapon or spell you are using (typically STR for melee, DEX for ranged, or INT/CHA/WIS for various types of magic). Also add the current value of the Escalation Die and any temporary modifiers that apply. Tell the GM the total. If it equals or exceeds the target's defence (AC for weapons, MD or PD for spells), it's a **Hit**. Otherwise it's a **Miss**.

Note: The number you roll on the d20 is called the **natural roll**. It may matter - some of your powers may trigger when the roll is even or odd, or in a certain range.

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What's the Escalation Die?

This is a way of ramping up the conflict so that it comes to an end sooner. It is a bonus to attack rolls that increases as the combat proceeds.

The roleplaying justification is that the escalation die represents your character learning to read their foes and the combat environment, making their attacks more effective. If that helps.

Doing Damage

Summary:

- Hit: Damage die + base damage
- Miss: Miss damage
- Critical: x2
- Fumble: 0

Melee and missile weapons have a *Damage Die*.

- If you **hit** with a weapon, roll the Damage Die and add the *Weapon Base Damage*. Your target loses that many hit points.
 - *Weapon Base Damage* is determined at level-up from your Experience Level, the damage die and the Base Ability Modifier for the weapon by an arcane formula.
- If you **hit** with a spell, roll the the damage die and add the base damage specified for the spell's level (see individual spells). Most spells also have an additional effect when they hit (remind the GM!).
- If you **missed**, you may still get to do damage! Tell the GM what the **Miss** damage is for the weapon/spell (if it has any).
- If you rolled a *Crit* when attacking, your damage total is doubled.
- If you rolled a *Fumble* when attacking, the target takes no damage. There may also be a bad effect, e.g. hitting an ally in melee or dropping your weapon.

Ouch!

When an enemy hits you, you lose hit points.

When you have lost half your hit points, you are *Staggered*. This means that it is obvious to friends and foes that you are in a bad way. It doesn't affect your rolls, but may affect enemy targetting and powers.

If your hit points reach zero you are *Unconscious* and can take no actions except Dramatic Revival. An ally can use a standard action to revive you.

A note on death and dying

There are rules for character death and dying, but I am not proposing to use them. Player character death will only happen if players agree that it is dramatically appropriate. This may apply to some NPCs as well!

Conditions

Some attacks apply a *Condition* such as Stunned, Stuck or Wounded. The GM will give you a condition card if this happens to you. A condition lasts until the GM says so - usually a fixed number of rounds, or until an Ongoing Effect Save is passed.

Rallying / Healing

Rallying is a self-willed recovery or self-applied emergency first aid. You can do it *once per combat* as a Standard Action. *Healing* is a magical or medical action. They both use a Recovery.

After the Battle

Short Rest

When the battle ends, you will (hopefully) get a Short Rest. During a Short Rest, you can:

- Recover some or all of your hit points by binding and healing wounds using Recoveries.
- Spellcasters roll to see if their used *Recharge X* spells can be used next combat.
- Recover the use of your *Short Rest* spells and powers.

Long Rest

To recover fully, you need a decent night's sleep at an inn or camp fire. After a long rest:

- You recover most or all of your Hit Points (no recoveries needed).
- All your powers recharge, including your Recharge X and Long Rest ones.

Magic Items

Magic items in 13th Age are quirky, both mechanically and literally.

In the world of the 13th Age, magic is a living thing, which means that permanently enchanted items have a personality and you have to have a relationship with them if you want to use them. This manifests in two ways:

- Enchanted items have personality Quirks that manifest as speech, thoughts, small movements, or clouds of emotion. As long as the *total number of magic items that you wear or wield is less than or equal to your Experience Level*, these tendencies are completely resistible - you can indulge them or not as you wish. If you have more worn or wielded magic items than your level, they may force you to behave according to their quirks when dramatically appropriate.
- Permanently enchanted magic items have a type, or Chakra. Most commonly, a chakra relates to the area of the body they are worn on (helmets, gloves, shoes etc.), but they can also be a category like magical ammunition or written magic (scrolls, grimoires etc.). *You can only have one magic item per chakra*. Think of your brain as a house and a magic item as a cat with a favourite spot...

Notes:

- One-use items (Potions, Oils and Runes) don't have quirks or chakras and don't count towards the magical item total. You can own as many of them as you want.

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- Magic items have an Experience Tier (Adventurer, Champion or Epic). You can use a magic item that is of a higher tier than you currently are, but it will take up two or three "slots" in your magic item total.
- Rings have either a left hand chakra or a right hand chakra (i.e. you can wear two rings, one on each hand).
- *Magic item bonuses don't stack.* If you have two magic items that affect the same stat, use the better bonus. The other item has no effect (and it may be offended). This includes bonuses from one-use items - you can't use a +1 oil to turn a +2 sword into a +3 one.

At the End of the Adventure

Icon Relationships

At the end of the adventure, roll *all* your Icon Relationships. If you roll a **6**, tell the GM. In the next adventure, you can expect that Icon to feature in some way.

Levelling Up

My intention is to run an episodic "legacy" style campaign consisting of ten adventures where you level up between each one.

When you level up, you get these benefits:

- +1 to all your skill check modifiers and defences!
- More damage from weapon attacks!
- More hit points!
- More and/or higher level memory slots for your levelled powers!
- An additional Feat or Feat Upgrade!
- The ability to use an additional magic item!
- At 4th level, 7th level, and 10th level, a boost to Ability scores!
- At 5th level and 8th level, an additional Icon Relationship point!

I'll take care of the numbers - normally, all you'll have to do is choose a couple of additional Powers and optionally a Feat.