



a game of being and doing

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playtest version 0.1b

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Credits and Acknowledgements


 is written and edited by [David J Prokopetz](#).

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This game is a work of fiction; any resemblance to real people living or dead is a figment of your overactive imagination.

Note: This document may not represent the most up-to-date version of . You can always find the latest revision at the following address:


<https://penguinking.com/rotate-bird/>




Introduction

 is a game of highly structured bullshitting. Like most other tabletop roleplaying games, you have traits that you invoke to roll dice and overcome challenges. However, which traits apply to which rolls isn't formally defined by the rules. In fact, what the traits are called isn't defined, either!

In lieu of a fixed list of named stats and advantages, each character's traits consist of a set of abstract symbols, and it's up to you to argue that your particular symbols mean you're the right person for the job. *Obviously* a symbol depicting a ship's anchor helps you convince a dragon not to eat your village. It only stands to reason.

 is glossed in this document *Rotate Bird*, and is tagged as such for text-to-speech purposes. “Officially”, however, the game's title is the two symbols, not their verbal interpretation, so feel free to come up with your own reading!

What You'll Need

 is a game for 3–7 players, including a Gamemaster. To play in person, you'll need pencils, paper, and at least five six-sided dice.

Online play may be more challenging, owing to the game's heavy use of graphical icons. The default symbol tables used in this document make use of icons from the open-licensed Font Awesome Free library, which can be downloaded at the following address:

<https://fontawesome.com/download>


Using these symbols in online play can be difficult owing to most forum and chat software's limited support for icon fonts. To that end, the following alternatives are provided:

1. For use in virtual tabletop apps, an archive containing all of the icons used in this document, converted to PNG format.
2. For use in chat-based play, a set of cheat sheets identifying emoji approximations of each icon used in this document.

These resources are included in this game's download package, and can be obtained from the Penguin King Games website at the following address:

<https://penguinking.com/rotate-bird/>


Rolling Dice

There are two basic ways that you'll roll dice in : to **choose a result from a table**, and to **make a test**.

When rolling on a table, look at the heading of the leftmost column. If it says “d6”, roll a single die, and look up the table row corresponding to the rolled result. If it says “d66”, roll the die twice, reading the first roll as the “tens” place and the second roll as the “ones” place, yielding a number in the range from 11 to 66. Alternatively, you can roll two dice at once if they're different colours or otherwise visually distinguishable; if you do, decide before rolling which die is the “tens” and which is the “ones”.

When making a test, you'll pick up a variable number of dice – potentially up to five, though usually it will be in the range from one to three – and roll them all at once. After rolling, pick any single die to be your result. Determining how many dice to roll and interpreting the result will be discussed under [Playing the Game \(p. 8\)](#).

Character Creation

Character creation in  has two steps: figuring out what you are, and figuring out what you can do. These phases reflect the game's two core mechanics: BEING and DOING.

First, take a sheet of paper (or a one-page electronic document, if you're not the pencil-and-paper type) and divide it into three equal sections with the following headings: “Being”, “Doing” and “Having”. The first two will be filled in presently; the last is used during play.

At several points throughout the character creation process, you'll be instructed to draw a copy of a symbol that you looked up from a table. Though this is encouraged to put your personal stamp on your character, it's not mandatory. You can also import the graphics from the icon library your game is using into your favourite word processing app, or – especially if you're playing via chat – just copy and paste the equivalent emoji from the cheat sheet. Both of these options are discussed under [What You'll Need \(p. 4\)](#).

BEING

To figure out what you are, select five random symbols from the BEING tables, re-rolling duplicates. These tables are used in many parts of this document, so they get their own section – refer to [Appendix 1: BEING Symbols \(p. 11\)](#). Take the five symbols that you rolled and draw them under the “Being” header on your character sheet.

Based on the symbols you got, briefly describe your character. Your BEING symbols need not be taken literally. They can be interpreted as physical traits, attitudes, skills, reputations, or even signature possessions. Don't define or name the individual symbols, though; you'll see why a bit later.

When coming up with your description, take care to keep your character's attributes within the realm of “basically human”. This doesn't mean you have to *be* human, but the scale you can act on based purely on your BEING traits is similar. A bird-person can fly, but they can't fly faster than sound, or in outer space. A robot doesn't need to eat, but does need to recharge its batteries. Let group consensus be the arbiter of what you can get away with.

In the next step, you'll break that rule.

DOING

Your DOING traits represent what you can do – or, more specifically, what you can do that's extraordinary. That rule from the BEING step that you have to stick to the realm of human(ish) possibility goes out the window here.

To define your DOING traits, roll once on the table in [Appendix 2: DOING Symbols \(p. 15\)](#) and once on the tables in [Appendix 1: BEING Symbols \(p. 11\)](#) to produce a pair of symbols: a DOING symbol followed by a BEING symbol. Repeat this process twice more to obtain three pairs. It's okay if you get a BEING symbol that you already rolled during the BEING stage of character creation, but you should re-roll if – against all odds – you get the exact same pair of symbols twice during this step.

Draw the symbols under the “Doing” header on your character sheet, making sure to leave a space beside each pair. Each pair is a DOING trait.

A DOING traits represents something extraordinary that your character can do. What sort of extraordinary depends on your game's premise: a DOING trait might represent a psychic power, a martial arts technique, a cyborg implant, a Batman-style gadget, or a magic spell. It will often be the case that every character in your group's game shares the same theme for their DOING traits, though in a game with a more kitchen-sink setting, each character might have their own theme.

In any case, after you've drawn the symbols on your character sheet, give each of the three traits a name. If they represent magic spells, the trait's name is the title of the spell. If they represent cyborg implants, the trait's name might be the brand and model of the implant. Don't write down a longer description of the trait or otherwise pin down what it actually does, beyond what's implied by the name you gave it.

You've probably noticed that DOING traits are the opposite of BEING traits in this respect: where BEING traits contribute to an overall description of your character, but are not individually named or defined, DOING traits get individual titles, but are not otherwise described!

Finishing Touches

Finally, give your character a name, as well as a title, handle, or *nom de guerre* that reflects the overall picture that's emerged from your BEING and DOING traits. Don't be afraid to go a little over the top with your title; if in doubt, go with something that starts with “the”.


Playing the Game

Future revisions of this document will almost certainly feature a formal framework of play. For this initial public draft, however, we're just going to get the basic conflict resolution mechanics down. Given the game's heavily improvisational nature, some groups may need little else!

Making Tests

Whenever your character does something that carries a risk of failure, or that might have consequences even if you pull it off, you have to make a test.

In order to make a test, identify at least one BEING symbol on your character sheet that's related to the task you're trying to accomplish or the risk you're trying to mitigate. The term "related" is deliberately vague here; it might be that the symbol implies a relevant skill, or it might merely suggest an affinity between your character and the situation at hand. If you can't identify at least one relevant BEING symbol, the test can't be attempted – you'll need to revise your approach.

Next, pick up one die for each related BEING symbol. You need to offer a brief justification for why each symbol is relevant, but this isn't expected to turn into a debate; the rules of  assume its players are adults who are prepared to approach the game and its mechanics in good faith. As a general rule, even a very implausible justification ought to be accepted as long as it's entertaining. Getting to roll zero dice most of the time is no fun at all!

Finally, roll the dice. After rolling, choose any one die to be your result, and look it up on the table below.

Test Results

d6	Result
1	Everything that can go wrong does; fail and suffer major fallout .
2	Sometimes it's better to fail. You do it, but suffer major fallout .
3	Whoops – that wasn't supposed to happen! Suffer minor fallout .
4	You pull it off, but suffer minor fallout for your trouble.
5	You meant to do that. You fail, but suffer no fallout.
6	You make it look easy, succeeding without fallout.

Additionally, if the number you pick rolled doubles – even double 1s! – you gain an **edge**. Edges and fallout are discussed in [later in this chapter \(p. 9\)](#).

Tests and DOING Traits

DOING traits don't contribute dice to tests – not even if the BEING symbol that the trait contains seems like it might be relevant. A DOING trait defines what you can do, not how well you do it. You still have to come up with at least one relevant symbol from the BEING section of your character sheet in order to wield your DOING traits in any way that requires a test.

There are no special limits on how you can use your DOING traits in ways that don't require a test. You should definitely abuse the privilege.

Edges and Fallout

An **edge** is a temporary advantage that you receive when you pick a result that rolled doubles on a test. You have to actually pick the number that rolled doubles in order to receive the edge – just having doubles showing on your roll isn't enough.

An edge takes the form of a temporary BEING symbol that you sketch into the “Having” section of your character sheet. The GM determines what symbol you get; they might pick one based on the situation, or roll for one and let the dice land where they may. The GM assigns the edge's symbol, but it's up to you, the player, to interpret it. An edge can be taken to represent a situational advantage, a tool or weapon that you found, or whatever else seems appropriate.







Once you have an edge, it works like a regular BEING symbol, and can be tapped for dice on tests. It can also be sacrificed to offset fallout like a regular BEING symbol – in fact, if you tap an edge for dice and the test incurs minor fallout, the edge is *automatically* sacrificed. (You can still voluntarily sacrifice it to offset fallout on tests where you didn't use it, if it makes sense to do so.) See [UNBEING and UNDOING \(p. 10\)](#) for more details.

How long an edge sticks around depends on its nature. A situational advantage goes away when the situation changes, while a tool or weapon is usually available until it breaks or you run out of ammo, both of which can be good justifications for sacrificing it to offset fallout. You can transfer an edge to another character if it's the sort of thing that can be given away.

Fallout is edge's evil cousin. Whenever you incur fallout on a test, the GM will roll on a special table to determine what goes wrong. For minor fallout, the GM will roll one die, while major fallout rolls two dice and combines the results – and heaven help you if the GM rolls doubles.

The GM may prepare a special fallout table whose symbols represent the hazards of the current scenario. Otherwise, you can use the following generic table. Its symbols can apply to most situations.

Fallout

d6	Icon	Description
1		Broken heart
2		Explosion
3		Human figure falling
4		Skull and crossbones
5		Stopwatch
6		Triangular sign with exclamation point

UNBEING and UNDOING

UNBEING and UNDOING represent last-ditch defences against unwanted fallout. They're also the only form of rules-based “damage” your character can suffer; all sorts of awful things can happen do you narratively, but only UNBEING and UNDOING can actually reduce your ability to act.

UNBEING offsets minor fallout. After seeing the result of the fallout roll, but before the GM describes what happens, you can voluntarily suffer a point of UNBEING to cancel the fallout. Mark a small X beside one of your BEING traits; until it's recovered, you can't invoke that BEING trait for dice on test. You can also sacrifice an edge for the same effect. Sacrificed edges are gone for good – cross them right off your character sheet. This is mandatory if you incur minor fallout on a test where you tapped an edge. If you tapped multiple edges on the same test, you can choose which one is sacrificed.

UNDOING offsets major fallout. Major fallout can't be offset with UNBEING, not even one die at a time. In order to offset major fallout, you need to suffer UNDOING. This works in much the same way: after seeing the results of the fallout roll, but before the GM interprets them, you can mark off one of your DOING traits in lieu of suffering the fallout. Whatever you could do by virtue of that trait, now you can't – not until it recovers.

UNBEING marks go away whenever you have a chance to rest and catch your breath for a few minutes. UNDOING is more serious, and requires special measures to recover, depending on what your character's DOING traits represent: overnight rest, a few hours of access to a machine shop, etc. If all else fails, your UNDOING marks are cleared at the end of the session.

Appendix 1: BEING Symbols

BEING symbols represent the concrete attributes of person, object, situation. You'll first see them during [Character Creation \(p. 6\)](#) when determining your character's BEING traits, while the GM will use them as prompts for the challenges you encounter.

Creating Your Own BEING Symbols

When creating your own BEING symbols, there are a few recommended guidelines to stick to:

1. BEING symbols should be representational. They can represent something ephemeral – e.g., an event or a short-lived phenomenon – but it should always be something you can point to.
2. BEING symbols should avoid depicting a complete human figure, particularly a human figure performing a specific volunary action. Such symbols lend themselves to narrow interpretations and can encroach on the territory of DOING symbols. BEING symbols that depict parts of a human figure, like a hand or an eye, are okay.
3. In most cases, you should avoid BEING symbols that depict weapons. This is especially true when playing with groups who are experienced with more traditional tabletop RPGs; BEING symbols that depict weapons tend to invoke prior assumptions about what they're good for that can discourage the lateral thinking that makes 🐦 tick.






Note that the last point doesn't mean that violence itself is discouraged in 🐦 – quite the contrary, in fact. It's just more interesting when you have to figure out how a symbol of a carrot means you're better at hitting people!

Random BEING Symbols





































To obtain a random BEING symbol, roll on the following table:

d6	Instructions
1-2	Roll on Table A
3-4	Roll on Table B
5-6	Roll on Table C





































Random BEING Symbols, Table A

d66	Icon	Description
11		Anchor
12		Apple
13		Bag with dollar sign
14		Beer mug
15		Bell
16		Bird
21		Bomb
22		Bone
23		Book
24		Broom
25		Bug
26		Candy cane
31		Carrot
32		Cat
33		Chemical flask
34		Chess knight
35		Chicken drumstick
36		Cinema film
41		Cloud
42		Coffee mug
43		Compass
44		Cowboy hat
45		Crown
46		Dog
51		Door
52		Earth (planet)
53		Egg
54		Evergreen tree
55		Eye
56		Faceted gemstone
61		Feather
62		Fish
63		Flag
64		Flame
65		Fork and knife
66		Gear

Random BEING Symbols, Table B

d66	Icon	Description
11		Giftwrapped box
12		Glass of liquid
13		Guitar
14		Gust of wind
15		Hallowe'en ghost
16		Hammer
21		Handcuffs
22		Hardhat
23		Headphones
24		Heart
25		Hourglass
26		House
31		Human brain
32		Human hand
33		Human skull
34		Human tooth
35		Ice cream with cone
36		Key
41		Knight's shield
42		Leaf
43		Lemon
44		Lightbulb
45		Lightning bolt
46		Liquid droplet
51		Magnet
52		Magnifying glass
53		Mitten
54		Money
55		Moon
56		Musical notes
61		Padlock
62		Paintbrush
63		Pair of scissors
64		Pair of six-sided dice
65		Paperclip
66		Paper plane

Random BEING Symbols, Table C

d66	Icon	Description
11		Parchment scroll
12		Paw print
13		Pencil
14		Pepper (vegetable)
15		Puzzle piece
16		Radiation symbol
21		Reading glasses
22		Ruler (measuring instrument)
23		Scales (measuring instrument)
24		Screwdriver
25		Shoe prints
26		Shrimp
31		Slice of bread
32		Slice of pizza
33		Snowflake
34		Soccer ball
35		Socks
36		Spider
41		Spoon
42		Star
43		Suitcase
44		Sun
45		Syringe
46		Telephone handset
51		Theatre masks
52		Thermometer
53		Tornado
54		Trash can
55		Trophy
56		T-shirt
61		Umbrella
62		Waves on water
63		Wedge of cheese
64		Weight (heavy object)
65		Wine bottle
66		Wrench

Appendix 2: DOING Symbols

DOING symbols are the active counterpart to BEING symbols. Where a BEING symbol is passively open to interpretation, a DOING symbol suggests a particular focus, perspective, or *motion toward*. You'll first encounter them during [Character Creation \(p. 6\)](#) when determining the DOING traits that define your character's special abilities; other applications are mostly the province of the GM.

Creating Your Own DOING Symbols

The most important thing to keep in mind when defining your own DOING symbols is that they should generally be non-representational. They can refer to a specific action, but shouldn't directly depict it.

The reasons for this are twofold: first, a concrete depiction of a particular action narrows the symbol's interpretive breadth, and can make it difficult to reason about how it applies to some of the odder BEING symbols.





































Second, a symbol that's too directly representational can create ambiguity about whether it's a DOING symbol or a BEING symbol; does the symbol represent the depicted action, or does it represent the thing performing it?

Beyond that, what makes for a good DOING symbol depends on your game's premise. The default set of DOING symbols presented in this document lend themselves best to a free-wheeling, somewhat comedy-oriented game; other premises may call for other approaches. For example, in a game about wizards where each of your character's DOING trait represents a magic spell, DOING symbols might be the sigils for particular schools of magic.

Random DOING Symbols

To obtain a random DOING symbol, roll on the following table:

Random DOING Symbols

d66	Icon	Description
11		Circle with a diagonal slash through it
12		Cartoon word balloon
13		Check mark
14		Crosshairs
15		Division sign
16		Downward-pointing arrow
21		Equals sign
22		Exclamation point
23		Ellipsis (three dots in a horizontal row)
24		Fast-forward symbol
25		Four arrows pointing inward toward a central dot
26		Four outward-pointing arrows originating from a common point
31		Line chart displaying a rising trend
32		Infinity symbol
33		Not equal sign
34		Pause symbol
35		Percent sign
36		Pie chart
41		Play symbol
42		Plus/minus sign
43		Question mark
44		Recycle symbol
45		Rewind symbol
46		Sign of Mars
51		Sign of Venus
52		Six squares stacked into a pyramid
53		Square root sign
54		Square wave
55		Three circular nodes connected in a triangular pattern
56		Three flat rectangles layered on top of each other
61		Three geomatric shapes, a triangle, a circle and a square
62		Two curved arrows forming a clockwise circle
63		Two horizontal arrows crossing each other in the middle
64		Two stacked arrows, the top pointing right, and the bottom, left
65		Two squares stacked on top of each other, diagonally offset
66		Upward-pointing arrow