# USR

## Unbelievably Simple Role-playing

USR (Unbelievably Simple Role-playing) System
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# Introduction

Have you ever fancied yourself as a space-faring adventurer, exploring the vast regions of an alien-filled galaxy? Or what about a master sleuth in Victorian England? Perhaps you want to live out the exploits of a thief in a fantasy realm? With the USR system you can do all this and more. Using the simple rules in this booklet, you will soon be creating exciting stories with your friends while munching on high-carb snacks.

USR is an easy game to learn but there are optional rules throughout if you fancy making it a bit more advanced. Feel free to add your own rules or change current ones to match your preferences. The most important thing is that you and your group have fun with it.

In the future I will be releasing a number of role-playing games based on the USR system, from pulp action to time-travelling sci-fi, so stay tuned!

I really hope you enjoy this system and have a lot of fun with it. It's always been a dream of mine to get a role-playing system published and put out there for everyone to play.

Scott Malthouse – February 2012

## What you need

You don't need any fancy schmancy equipment to play USR: just a handful of friends (2-6 does the trick), some pencils, paper and a variety of multi-sided dice (4, 6, 8, 10, and 12-sided). These dice will be referred to as 'd(number of sides)'. For example, an 8-sided die is called a d8. Ok, I guess a 10-sided die is pretty fancy, but these weird dice are readily available on the internet and at your local hobby store.
If you're feeling saucy then you can use graph paper and miniatures to keep track of characters during their adventures, but this is purely optional. Sometimes it's just better to let everything play out in your collective imaginations.

## What the heck is a games master?

A games master, or GM, acts as the game's referee as well as controlling the people and enemies the players come across. The GM also creates the adventure and the world the players inhabit. Essentially the GM is a god, but don't let it get to your head.
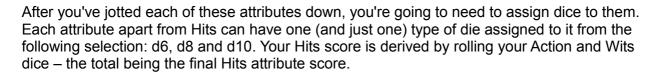
# Creating your character

Each player needs a character to take part in the story. Depending on the genre that your group wants to play, the character could be an interstellar smuggler, a modern day assassin or even a ninja owl. No matter what universe you decide to play in, each character has the same set of attributes:

**Action** – This attribute determines how well-versed in combat the character is as well as how quick and dexterous they are.

**Wits** – This attribute determines how intelligent and perceptive the character is.

**Ego** – This attribute determines how the character acts socially. A high Ego means the character is a good leader and able to charm the pants off most people.

**Hits** – This determines how much punishment a character can take before she dies or is knocked unconscious. Hits are reduced when a character is hurt and can return to its initial score when the character heals.

After you've jotted each of these attributes down, you're going to need to assign dice to them. Each attribute apart from Hits can have one (and just one) type of die assigned to it from the following selection: d6, d8 and d10. Your Hits score is derived by rolling your Action and Wits dice – the total being the final Hits attribute score.

Example: Susan decides that her character's going to be more brains than brawn, so assigns her attributes thusly:

Action: d6
Wits: d10
Ego: d8
Hits: 7

## Fleshing out your character

Once you have your attributes, you need to get some meat on your character's bones. Give them a name, an occupation and a back-story. The more detail the better, but don't go overboard – give room for development through storytelling. For example, Susan's smart character is going to be a physicist in her modern day espionage game. She calls her Melissa Stryker, an only-child from a very wealthy family. Susan then details how Melissa came to work at the Cyberware Corporation and what her experimental goals are.

### *Optional Rule: Narrative Points*

Every character is assigned 1 narrative point at the start of every adventure. Narrative points are a tool to put the story in the players' hands, allowing them to spend them to change the outcome of a situation. It essentially allows the players to overwrite what the GM has planned in the players' favour. For instance, Susan could spend her narrative point to create a convenient med-kit in the room when there's a medical emergency. However, the GM can deny the use of a narrative point if she thinks it's too overpowered, but may provide another way of using the point.

## Specialisms

A character may choose three specialisms. Specialisms show specific skills and knowledge the character has acquired through her adventures. There is no set skill list because to cover every genre would take a hell of a long time, so try and think of something yourself and run it by your GM to make sure it's appropriate. For Melissa, Susan could choose 'Physics' as one of her specialisms. A specialism is tied to an attribute and give a +2 bonus to that attribute's die roll when the specialism is used. With Melissa, her 'Physics' specialism is tied to Wits, so she gains a +2 when rolling for Wits (d10) when dealing with the subject of physics.

Specialisms are written on character sheets with their bonus in brackets, such as Physics (+2).

### Examples of Specialisms

**Action:** Long Jump, Running, Throwing, Strong, Quick Reflexes, Gymnastics, Endurance, Intimidating.

**Wit:** Physics, Deduction, Mathematics, Observant, Trickster, Disguise, Sneaky, Strategic.

**Ego:** Leadership, Bartering, Initiative, Charming, Musician, Empathetic, Manipulative.

### Example of a USR character

**Melissa Stryker**
Physicist

**Action:** d6
**Wit:** d10
**Ego:** d8

**Specialisms**

**Wit –** Physics (+2), Chemistry (+2)
**Ego –** Leadership (+2)

*Melissa is a physicist working at Cyberware on a secret project that could revolutionise nuclear energy. She is friendly, but won't stand to be pushed around by others. She shows great leadership in the most stressful of situations and always tends to know the right thing to do in an emergency. Her goals are to a) win the Nobel Prize for physics b) lead mankind into a better future and c) break up with her good-for-nothing boyfriend.*

# Playing the game

Here we look at how the game is played, from how to race motorcycles against punk bikers to blasting holes in outlaws with your six-shooter.

### Contested Attribute Tests

There will come a time in every game when a player is put in direct conflict with someone or something. This could be a bake-off, court battle or motorbike race, whatever it is there's a really simple way of working out who comes out on top.

When someone is actively competing against someone else the player makes an attribute test. Both the player and the GM (or another player if it involves another character) rolls a die corresponding to the relevant attribute. If the player was locked in an arm wrestle with a Parisian sock merchant, both would roll their Action attributes. The highest roll wins the contest. On a tie the test is re-rolled until there is a clear winner.

### Non-Contested Attribute Tests

Sometimes the player won't be in direct competition with anyone else. Perhaps they're trying to climb a mountain or weld metal on a space walk. Here they must roll their relevant attribute on a difficulty table to see whether they succeed.

*For example, Melissa the physicist is tied up in the back of a car. She must first break her bonds and then escape the car safely. Her player tells the GM that Melissa will try and escape from her bonds. The GM asks for a medium Action roll (the bonds aren't particularly tight). The player rolls a 5, which is a success. Melissa escapes from her bonds and now must get out of the car. She opens the door and flings herself onto the pavement. This is a dangerous move, so the GM asks for a medium Wit roll, on the count of having to angle herself right for the fall. She rolls a 3 – she is unsuccessful! Melissa bounces hard off the pavement and injures herself. The GM rules that Melissa deducts 2 from her Hits score for her wound.*

## Difficulty Table

| Successful Roll | Difficulty | |
|---|---|---|
| 2+ | Easy | *(e.g. Jumping a small fence, working out a simple maths problem)* |
| 4+ | Medium | *(e.g. Riding a horse, rock climbing)* |
| 7+ | Hard | *(e.g. Breaking into a safe, hot-wiring a car)* |
| 10+ | Very Hard | *(e.g. Understanding a foreign language, building a robot)* |
| 14+ | Impossible | *(e.g. Disproving relativity, downing a bottle of tequila without vomiting)* |

# Combat

Fighting is handled in the same way as contested attribute tests but with a little extra added on. All contested rolls use the Action attribute during combat, but in this instance one participant is the attacker and he other is the defender. If the attacker rolls higher than the defender then the attacker has scored a hit and the defender's Hits score is reduced by the difference between the winning and losing rolls. When Hits reach 0 the character is dead. Alternatively the GM may rule that the character is merely unconscious. Hits may be regained through healing, but may never go above the initial score.

*For example, Melissa is fighting an intruder. Melissa rolls 6 on her Action attribute and the GM rolls a 4 for the intruder. The intruder then has his Hits reduced by 2 (6-4=2).*

## Weapons and Armour

Weapons can give bonuses in combat, giving one side the edge over the other. Each weapon type  gives a bonus to the Action roll when attacking. Weapon types are as follows:

Light weapon +1 (e.g. short sword, handgun, club)
Medium weapon +2 (e.g. Uzi, claymore, laser repeater)
Heavy weapon +3 (e.g. flamethrower, gatling gun, plasma rifle)

The character only gets a weapon bonus on their attack roll, not their defence roll.

Similarly, armour can be used to negate the effects of being hurt. Each armour type reduces the number of Hits taken in combat.

Light armour -1 (e.g. jerkin, gauntlets, light bullet-proofs)
Medium armour -2 (e.g. bullet-proof vest, chainmail)
Heavy armour -3 (e.g. plate mail, riot gear, Nebulon Steel)

*For example, Melissa picks up a pistol and shoots at the intruder. The pistol is considered a medium weapon so she would get +2 to her Action roll. She rolls a 5 and adds the 2, resulting in a total of 7. The intruder rolls his Action die with a result of 5. Ordinarily he would take 2 hits, but he has found a metal dustbin lid that counts as light armour, so he reduces the hits by 1, knocking the remaining 1 from his Hits score. The bullet got through but the makeshift shield slowed it down.*

These examples are by no means the only weapons and armour that you can have in a game. The GM could create a rocket launcher that gives the character a +5 bonus or a suit of armour that's a -4. Just use the above examples as guidelines and have fun making up your own bad-ass creations.

## How combat flows

It's up to you how you want combat to play out. You could play it fast and loose, going round the table clockwise to determine the order players act in, or you could assign each player an initiative score based on their Wits roll + their Action roll, the acting order going from highest to lowest.

During combat a player may take two **different** actions: including but not limited to moving and attacking. USR keeps movement fairly abstract because of the nature of the generic system, so it's up to the GM to determine how far a character can move. 20Ft per action is generally a good guideline when on foot.

## Using specialisms in combat

Characters can use their specialisms in order to gain an edge in combat situations. For example, Melissa wants to identify what liquid is in the beaker on the table. As her first action she uses her Chemisty specialism to try and figure out whether it might be useful in combat. The GM says it's a hard difficulty roll. She rolls a 7 and adds 2 for her specialism, giving a result of 9 – a success! The GM tells her it's a bottle of hydrochloric acid. As her second action, she picks up the acid and flings it at her opponent. She rolls her Action die +1 for the acid and scores a hit!
If the character has a specialism that directly affects combat, like Sniper, they can use their first action to make an attribute test with the difficulty determined by the GM. If they are successful then they get an extra +1 when rolling to attack.

*For example, Bert is a police officer who has the Handguns specialism. He's facing down a perp but he's hiding behind a hostage. He chooses to roll his Handgun specialism. The GM rules that because of the hostage, this will be a hard difficulty roll. Bert rolls a total of 8 and is successful. On his next action he shoots at the perp. He rolls a total of 7 (die + medium weapon + specialism bonus). The perp rolls a 3, taking 4 hits! It looks like Bert's going to be getting a promotion.*

# Optional Rule: Character Advancement

A lot of people like their characters to gain experience through their adventures and advance their abilities. USR has an optional rule for this, but you're more than welcome to change the rule to suit your play style.

Every character accrues experience points (xp) during adventures which represents their ability to learn new skills. Once they have racked up a certain amount of xp they can advance a level, giving them a new specialism or giving them an extra +1 to a current specialism. A single specialism can have a maximum of +5.

*For example, Melissa has enough experience points to progress to 2nd level. She can either choose to give one of her current 3 specialisms a +1 bonus, making it +3, or learning a new specialism, like 'Motorbikes'.*

As stated earlier, your choice of specialism should fit the character if you want to have a good, rounded roleplaying experience. A nuclear scientist is probably not going to gain a specialism in 'Animal Training', so remember to keep it logical. It's a good idea to keep track of what you have done during that level of play to see if you can weave a specialism in off the back of a particularly notable success.

As well as gaining a specialism, the character also adds 5 to her total Hits score. This becomes the character's new initial Hits total.

Experience points are given at the end of each session. They can be awarded for excellent roleplaying, a particularly ingenious idea or perhaps great teamwork. One point should be awarded for each example, so it's not unusual for a player to get only one point per session.

| Experience Points | Level |
| --- | --- |
| 0 | 1 |
| 5 | 2 |
| 10 | 3 |
| 15 | 4 |
| 20 | 5 |
| 25 | 6 |
| … | … |