



# Fearless

## PULP ADVENTURE

Version 0.9b

Tangent is a gaming mechanic developed by Max Slowik,  
adapted for the Fearless / TubePunk setting by Joe Coleman.

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## The Game Mechanic

This game is based on 10-sided dice, with a scale of 0 to 9, with 0 being zero, or an automatic failure.

When you attempt an action, your roll will be based on two stats, which added together are a Rating. Normally you will roll one die, though special circumstances, such as using a skill or spending Morale add additional dice to the roll. A die is successful if the roll is equal to or less than the Rating; the higher the Result the better the success.

If you have value in a specific area of skill or knowledge, that value will be added to the number of 10-sided dice you roll for success. All successful dice are added together, to produce one Result number.

**EXAMPLE:** If your Rating is 7, you roll a 3, the Result is 3.

**EXAMPLE:** If your Rating is 5, you roll a 7, 4, and 2, the Result is 6; the die that came up 7 is not successful, and not added to the rest.

## Scale

The limitation of points into attributes allows you to shape your character with a minimum of math.

- O Functional. Has a chance, but is not particularly inspiring.
- :OO Average. Capable within the common frame of reference.
- :OOO Trained. Has taken the natural ability to a serious level through effort.
- :OOOO Professional. Trained, experienced, competent and at the highest level to be expected from a mere human.

## Limitations

Two is considered average. Your character may have one Stat at 5, none of the others may be above 4.

No Skill may be higher than 2 dice.

## Rolling Rating

If you "Roll your Rating" - i.e., roll the exact number of your Rating on any die - you may also include the value ALL dice in the roll, including unsuccessful dice.

**EXAMPLE:** Your Rating is 7 and you have three dice to roll for your attempt, and the dice come up 4, 7 and 9. That would mean two successful dice but because Rating was rolled, they are all added, 4+7+9, a Result of 20.

## Critical Failure

If all dice come up as zeros, the roll is a complete failure and something horrible happens. This is a narrative effect, and the GM decides what goes down. If only one die in several is a zero, there are no ill effects; however, if only one die is rolled and it is a zero, the roll still critically fails.

## Penalties

If you are injured, having Suffered wounds, the number of wounds is subtracted from the successful die total, lowering the Result. If the Result is lowered to zero or less, you are overextended, and for the remainder of the scene, unable to act.

**EXAMPLE:** Your Rating is 6 and you roll a three and a two. You've taken four injuries, so your Result is one.

**EXAMPLE:** Your Rating is 8 and you roll a two and a zero, and have five injuries. The Result is negative three, and you're out.

## Shift

Once the Result of the roll is figured, if you have any equipment that could extend the success, the value of the equipment is added to the Result as Shift, generating the Margin of Success (MoS) number.

**EXAMPLE:** Your Result is five, and your gun adds four, making a MoS of nine.

## Resist

Should you be trying to do something to an unwanting character, they get to Resist the action. The defending character uses an appropriate STAT, If the defender's Resist is higher than the Result, the action fails. If the action is still successful, then the Margin of Success (Result + Shifts, if any) is divided by the Resist (drop the remainder), producing a Degree of Success (DoS).

**EXAMPLE:** Your Result is 5 and MoS 7. The defender's Resist is two, and the action is successful with a DoS of three.

**EXAMPLE:** Your Result is 2 and MoS 2. The defender's Resist is three, and the action fails.

In combat, the DoS of an action, should it be harmful, is the number of wounds the defender takes.

## Character Development

Your character concept is key. Where are you from? What do you do for a living? How does your body affect your everyday life? What are the five skills that are most important to you? Do you have any formal training in a weapon or do you just improvise with the closest bar stool or tree limb? What do you want? What do you fear?

When you have established your idea of how your character should work, begin applying your ideas to the game mechanic and start character generation.

Your concept determines your character's DESCRIPTION, BACKGROUND, CAREER, PASSION, FEAR and LANGUAGES. You will have more development to do beyond these – they are just your starting points.

In the words of Robin Laws in the *Players Handbook for Over the Edge*, you need a character who is “danger-worthy”. You need someone with a spectrum of skills and knowledges that will help them survive a rough world. But you need to go beyond mere survivability and create a role you look forward to playing. Hopefully you will create a character who can function, survive and excel in the brave old world. Build someone you like and will look forward to becoming every game session.

## Description

What does someone see when they look at your character? These include the usual height, weight, hair and eye color, but you should include the feeling someone gets when they see your character. Does this character inspire fear? Confidence? Do they seem to be very self-assured? Skittish? Are they someone who is easily ignored or who demands your attention? Do he or she have a mannerism, a style, a physical characteristic or that stands out? A special piece of clothing? A visible tattoo? A strange fob or piece of jewelry?

Share the impression of this character as it might be shared with an observer and a third person.

## Background

Your background will explain the kinds of abilities and knowledge your character gained from their environment, culture and situation as they grew up. It will also give you a sense of the languages available to your character from birth.

**EXAMPLE:** Teddy McMillan was that kid who always said “Me, too!” when the gang from the docks in Brooklyn wanted something exciting. Broke his

widowed mother's heart when he was sent upstate to a work farm when his street adventures caught up to him. Reasonable skills for him would include: breaking and entering, Catholic Church, casing da' joint, fencing, underworld contact

## Career

Your character's career is how he or she primarily spends their time. This may or may not be how other people think of them, but it will give another batch of reasonable skills, as your and your gamemaster understand that career.

**EXAMPLE:** Ted McMillan grew up tough, but when he saw two friends murdered by opposing gangs, he made an unexpected turn. He joined the force under the watchful eye of Sgt. Kowalski at 12<sup>th</sup> Precinct. Ted is a good cop but will go the extra mile to help any kid from the neighborhood who wants to turn his life around.

## Passion

There is something that makes your character come alive – the chance to do that with is the most important thing in life. His passion. Her passion. It might be a high moral goal or mere greed. It might be some powerful altruistic ideal or movement toward a destination. Passion can give you a benefit from the gamemaster when it figures into game play.

**EXAMPLE:** Ted loves to rescue someone – he doesn't think of himself as a hero, but when he puts himself in harms way to save someone, he is charged and operating on a higher plane. That why the GM gave him an extra die on the shot to keep Leg Martini from kill numbers running punk Packy O'Ryan ... who is not yet beyond redemption.

Passion is not the same as Motivation. Passion satisfies your soul or fills your heart. Motivation gets you moving to advance a personal goal or to fulfill an important ideal.

## Fear

None of us are superhuman. All of us have that one thing that drops our high brain function and revert to our primitive lizard brain and one verb responses. At that moment we must RUN! KILL! HIDE! When your character's fear enters the scene, the gamemaster may give a penalty to your roll, hand a bonus to the opposition, the gamemaster may take control of the character for a few rolls, or simply say what has happened as a result of your fear.

**EXAMPLE:** Because of an incident when his boyhood gang's raid on a warehouse backfired, Ted almost lost his life. He was trapped in a room of burning chemicals and he barely escaped before the

whole warehouse exploded. He carries several scars on the back of his head from flying, burning debris. To this day he has a terror of burning to death. He can function near fire, but when the fire is all round him ...

## Languages

You have languages from birth, from common languages to the private communications of the deaf or autistic. Your base language gives you 2 dice to understand your language in difficult circumstances. You may have a chance to roll on other languages according to your Background and Career. You may (but are not required to) speak as many languages as points you have in your Knowledge. You can add dice to knowledge with points from Skills, if you feel that is appropriate.

**EXAMPLE:** Ted grew up in an Irish pocket within the larger Italian and Black sections in Brooklyn. He knows his English, has a bit of Italian and Gaelic (from his grandmother). While walking a beat in Tribeca, he developed more facility with Italian and he learned a some basic Cantonese in Chinatown – he can understand a bit of it, dares to speak a few words now and then but has given up the idea of being able to read Chinese. That gives him English 2, Italian 2, Gaelic 1 and Cantonese 1.

## Attributes

The Attributes are STATS, MORALE and MEANS and each begin at one, except for BUFFER, which starts at five. The amount of character creation points is variable. If the game is to be gritty, the characters start with seven points for STATS, MORALE, MEANS, and BUFFER. If the game is cinematic, characters have eleven points to assign to them. (Should the group wants to start off with nine points, there is no reason why not to. However, a number less than 7 or greater than 11 may prove to be unbalanced for most gaming.)

One single stat may be raised to a 5 (Base of 1 plus 4 creation points).

## Stats

**MUSCLE** - Your measure of your physical body - what you were born with as it was shaped by your upbringing. Your physical self.

**MIGHT** - Your ability to use your body to accomplish tasks, your experience and familiarity with manipulation of your body or tools. Your training.

**MIND** - Your basic ability to think, process information and apply advanced through to a situation. Your intellect.

**MOXIE** - Your ability to manipulation knowledge to accomplish a desired end, involving other people or information from other people. Your education, formal or social.

**MYSTERY** - Your spiritual, philosophical, magical or paranormal connection to your world. Your viewpoint or paradigm.

## Morale

MORALE gives players control over story and game play. MORALE begins with a base of one.

There are two MORALE scales. The Full scale shows the MORALE attribute. The Temp scale shows how much MORALE can be used in the game; a character gets twice as much temporary MORALE as their full MORALE.

Temp MORALE may be spent during a game to buy additional dice to add to any roll, including initiative; to buy a “flashback” that gives you a contact, piece of equipment or information that is needed in the moment; to ignore wounds.

The costs for additional dice use a rising scale. To buy one die costs one temp MORALE, but to buy a second costs two more, for a total of three. To buy three dice would cost six temp MORALE.

A temporary MORALE can be spent to ignore wound penalties for MORALE rounds of combat, or one action, whichever is longer.

***NOTE:** a player may have a new idea for using MORALE and suggest it to the GM for game play. MORALE is an open mechanic to give players more control over game play.*

A point of Full MORALE may be permanently “spent” to buy off an unfavorable result of die rolls, including death.

Additional MORALE may be earned through role-playing to the benefit of the genre and story.

Temporary MORALE is used during game play and regenerates to the level of full MORALE at the beginning of each session.

Moral Begins at one and is increased at character creation like any other Attribute.

## Means

MEANS is a character's ability to make purchases with cash or credit, call in favors or throw the weight of their clout around. MEANS begins with a base of one.

There are two MEANS scales. The Full scale shows the MEANS attribute. The temp scale shows how much MEANS can be spent in the game. A character gets twice as much temporary MEANS as their full MEANS.

Temp MEANS may be spent to do anything that money or a title could do, like get someone into a club or arrange a meeting with British royalty.

MEANS costs work like MORALE costs; there are inconsequential costs, (0 MEANS), minor costs (1 MEANS), significant costs, (3 MEANS), major costs (6 MEANS), fantastic costs (10 MEANS) and so on.

Small, everyday costs are inconsequential and require no MEANS be spent on them. Getting a room at a hotel could cost one temporary MEANS, a pair of Colt 1911A's would be a significant expense, and a car or plane ticket a major one. A fantastic cost could be purchasing a luxury ship or a dirigible.

Means begins at one and is increased at character creation like any other Attribute.

## Buffer

BUFFER is how much hurt you can take before you start to slow down, as well as how many injuries you can suffer before you die. Damage is first taken harmlessly as Buffered wounds, but once you take more damage than your BUFFER, then they are injuries, or Suffered wounds. The Result of every action is decreased for each Suffered wound. If the roll fails due to injury, then you're overextended, and unable to anything for the rest of the scene. Temporary MORALE can be spent to ignore Suffered wounds for MORALE rounds, or an action, whichever is longer.

When you have more Suffered wounds than BUFFER, you die.

Buffer for the pulp begins at six and is increased at character creation like any other Attribute.

## Zones

As a result of your distribution into STATS, you have ten skill Zones. The character sheet shows the formula for each Zone.

Zones and their formulae are:

Muscle+Might = Reaction to Stimulus	<b>Reflexes</b>
Muscle+Mind = Self motivated action.	<b>Maneuver</b>
Muscle+Moxie = Use of familiar technology.	<b>Tech</b>

Muscle + Mystery = **Willpower**  
Ability to act/resist opposition

Mind+Might = **Dexterity**  
Fine motor control.

Moxie+Might = **Perception**  
Ability to perceive and interpret

Mystery + Might = **Aid**  
Response to reverse injury/damage.

Mind+Moxie = **Knowledge**  
Formal education

Mind + Mystery = **Intuition**  
Understand without knowledge/perception.

Moxie + Mystery = **Influence**  
Effect on others.

## Skills

As a result of your BACKGROUND and CAREER you have eight dice to add into skills of your own creation, with a maximum of 2 in any one skill. These indicate the ability you feel is vital to your character, which they have gained ability in through training and life experience. For each skill you determine the two STATS that govern the skill. You may call on one STAT twice for appropriate skills.

**EXAMPLE:** A Feat of Strength can be performed using MUSCLE + MUSCLE as your Target Number, if you have a skill for Feat of Strength.

## Themes

In Pulp adventure it is common for a character to have a weird power. These are usually not taken as "Super" powers, but along the lines of "cloud men's mind," "mystic visions" or an increased sense or ability. You may have one THEME, or power, with two aspects, each of which is represented by an extra die to roll when attempting to use that THEME. You may put both dice into a single aspect of your power or theme. To have a second THEME you must take a FLAW. You may take a third aspect if you take a second FLAW.

You are not required to have a THEME.

## Sample Themes

Pulp powers are not on the "Super" hero level, but edges, bumps and advantages the character can call upon for an added edge in a role-playing situation. A Theme requiring a die roll must be defined in terms of two Characteristics for a target number. This type of Theme can be taken as a single theme with two

dice, or two themes with one die each. A Theme that gives a situation or a nifty toy does not require that definition or die roll.

Two dice in a Theme means you must take one Flaw. You may opt to not have a Theme power and trade the value of the themes for additional bonuses in the trade-out scale.

### PHYSICAL/MENTAL THEMES

An Ability theme might allow 1 or 2 dice added to a specific physical Characteristic, Zone or Skill, added to rolls on the designated ability..

### PSYCHIC THEMES

1 or 2 dice rolled independently in an attempt to use a paranormal ability; telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance, clairaudience, psychometry, etc.

### SITUATIONAL THEMES

You may opt for a theme that reflects your social functioning – having a sidekick or a follower, having easy introductions to people in different locations, or a similar enhancement in social functioning. Social themes do not require an allocation of dice, they are simply with the character.

### WEIRD THEMES

1 or 2 dice rolled independently to use a power outside the normal experience; cloud men's minds, control zombies, speak to animals, commune with dead, control another mind, etc.

***NOTE:** a player may have ideas for Theme Powers beyond the GMs preconceptions and are welcome to present them for use by their characters.*

## Flaws

A FLAW is a character defect or physical defect that would have an effect on the character during game play. A FLAW may be as simple as an odious personal habit, a phobia or weakness. It may include a missing limb, a hard-to-hide identity or an association with a person or group who have a negative effect on the character's action in the adventure.

If you take a second THEME you must have one FLAW.

You may take a second FLAW for an additional aspect to a THEME or to trade for other values.

## Trade Outs

A FLAW or a THEME may be traded for other parts of character development. Use the following scale:

### FLAW or THEME

- 1 = 1 THEME OR FLAW
- 1 = 2 SKILL LEVELS
- 1 = 3 points for ATTRIBUTES/STATS

You may opt to have no FLAWS and trade your basic Theme for other benefits.

Use of points from Trade Outs do not effect other limitations on Attributes, Stats or Skills.

## Tools

There are three Categories of tools, simple, modern, and advanced. Simple tools have a base Shift of two, and are things such as levers, wedges, and knives. Modern tools provide a Shift of three, and are things like socket wrenches and firearms, and Advanced tools are anything out of reach of the majority of the world, like microrobots, Tesla devices, or self-propelled ammunition. Superb tools add a Shift of four.

It would make sense for a very large lever to provide a better Shift than two, and as such there are Ranks of tools, as well. Each Rank of the tool is multiplied by the Category of it, therefore a Rank three, Exceptional Simple Tool provides a Shift of six.

CATEGORIES	SHIFT
Simple	2
Modern	3
Advanced	4
RANKS	MULTIPLIER
Neccesary	x1
Adequate	x2
Exceptional	x3
Unbelievable	x4
Beyond and up	x5+

Most weapons use the same system but the categories are narrowed, each of which are Ranked. Simple weapons can be Large, Sharp, Heavy, or Accelerated, as by a bow or sling. Modern Weapons (Firearms) can have large Calibers, magnum, lightweight, or otherwise high powder to mass rounds (Capacity), and extended Barrels. Advanded weapons can use the standard Tool system, as there are no defineable narrowed Categories.

SIMPLE	SHIFT
Large	2
Sharp	2
Heavy	2
Accelerated	2
MODERN	
Caliber	3
Capacity	3
Barrel	3

Every time a weapon falls into a Category, it is added as Shift. A weapon can have a Category's Shift stacked if it is great enough.

**EXAMPLE:** A sword is large, and sharp, giving it a Shift of 4

**EXAMPLE:** A Sling and stone is nothing but accelerated, giving a Shift of 2

**EXAMPLE:** A bow is large sharp and accelerated, a club is heavy and large. . .

**EXAMPLE:** A heavy revolver could have Capacity and Caliber, for a shift of 6

**EXAMPLE:** A hold-out pistol has Caliber, for a shift of 3

**EXAMPLE:** An elephant gun has all three, for a shift of 9

Additionally, firearms have another advantage: rate of fire. Semi-automatic (pistols, rifles) guns receive an additional die when firing multiple shots (usually three) in a round of combat. Fully automatic weapons, such as machine and sub-machine guns, when firing fully automatic (from 30 to 60 shots a round, or the entire clip) get two additional dice. And finally, something with swappable barrels and belts of ammo twenty feet long get three extra dice.

Also, semi-automatic or greater rates of fire can be walked across multiple targets. For each target beyond the first, you drop a die and make one roll versus them all.

**EXAMPLE:** You're emptying a clip from a Thompson at three people. You have a Skill in Firearms, starting you with two dice. Firing fully-automatically gives you four dice total, and shooting at two beyond the first leaves you with two dice to roll; the Result and Margin of Success are used on all targets.

## DEFENSIVE TOOLS

Armor improves Resistance. Some defensive tools only provide a Resist bonus against a particular kind of damage, such as an asbestos coat; while the coat is not going to stop bullets in the least, it will ward off flame very well. Defensive tools are Ranked, the Rank adding to the Resist, if it applies to the situation.

DEFENSE	RANK
Light	1
Moderate	2
Heavy	3

Examples of light armor would be a rubber lab coat, or hardened leather clothes. Moderate armor would be flack vests and asbestos coats. Heavy armor would be gas masks, or plate mail.

## Initiative

At the beginning of each round of combat, roll a die, zero means the character doesn't go. Highest numbers go first. Characters with numbers that tie for initiative roll simultaneously, the best Result happens first. Modified results that equal zero or below, or a die roll of zero, means no action is possible.

MORALE may be spent to buy additional actions in a round, but that expenditure must come before the Initiative roll is attempted. The resulting rolls indicate when multiple actions may be taken. In the event of a tie in action positions, the player takes one action at the result of the roll, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> action in the next numerical action..

Whenever a character takes damage, his initiative result is lowered by the amount of damage he takes. If this lowers initiative to zero or less, the character loses his action that round.

## Role-Playing By Agreement

I don't expect to run into many Newbies to role-playing at this point. What I have found is conflicting goals can lead to some really bad gaming experiences.

Before gaming some agreement is necessary. Not just agreeing on place and time, but goals and methods.

James West, a friend and fellow game designer, has concluded that games are successful when a) Players get their characters to work the way they want them to work, and b) the GM gets his/her primary plot or theme addressed.

As a GM and a writer, I do not think winning because you have more/bigger guns, unlimited resources or unfair advantage over the adversary or other players. I find it satisfying and heroic when someone succeeds because they come up with a better idea, find a new use for tools they already control or does a complete heroic plunge into certain death to accomplish the higher good.

This means I like low power, low technology settings where the human factor outweighs the latest invention or idea.

I like heroes, so I'm not sympathetic to the undead, in any form, or those who casually off a bus load of nuns or kill a few innocents to get the heroic confrontation with the villain.

I like players who surprise me with creativity and who value the triumph of good over the luxury and excessive indulgences of evils.

The simplicity of Max's original Tangent design, the player control championed by James West, the simplicity of the five-stat game as designed by Ken Davis, provide a minimum toolbox from which we can build an epic adventure. Together.

If you agree. For your part you need to describe to me what you want from your character and how you expect that character to work. Not in front of the whole group - it is good for a character to have some secrets from the group. But let me know.



# Fearless PULP ADVENTURE - Version 0.9a

Tangent/PDQ is a gaming mechanic developed by Max Slowik, adapted for the Fearless / TubePunk setting by Joe Coleman.

## Generation Summary

### Concept

- Name
- Description
- Background
- Career
- Passion
- Fear
- Hobby
- Motivation (Personal)

**Attributes** – Base, add 11 points, one Stat allowed at 5, all others maximum of 4)

Stats	base = 1
Morale	base = 1
Means	base = 1
Buffer	base = 6

### Calculate Zones

Muscle+Might =	<b>Reflexes</b>
Muscle+Mind =	<b>Maneuver</b>
Muscle+Moxie =	<b>Tech</b>
Muscle + Mystery =	<b>Willpower</b>
Mind+Might =	<b>Dexterity</b>
Moxie+Might =	<b>Perception</b>
Mystery + Might =	<b>Aid</b>
Mind+Moxie =	<b>Knowledge</b>
Mind + Mystery =	<b>Intuition</b>
Moxie + Mystery =	<b>Influence</b>

**Skills** – 8 dice, no more than 2 in any one Skill

**Theme** – 1 Theme allowed with 2 aspects/dice. For a 2<sup>nd</sup> Theme, one Flaw is required. For a 3<sup>rd</sup> Theme, a second Flaw is required.

**Flaw** – No Flaw is required. One Flaw is required for 2<sup>nd</sup> Theme. Second Flaw is required for 3<sup>rd</sup> Theme.

**Trade Out** – You may give up the base Theme, or take a Flaw without taking a Theme, at these values. Trades do not alter the limitations on values.

- 1 = 1 THEME OR FLAW
- 1 = 2 SKILL LEVELS
- 1 = 3 points for ATTRIBUTES/STATS

**Tools** – Weapons & Armor are created with these values:

SIMPLE	SHIFT
Large .....	2
Sharp .....	2
Heavy .....	2
Accelerated .....	2
<b>MODERN</b>	
Caliber .....	3
Capacity .....	3
Barrel .....	3

### OFFENSIVE

<b>Sample Weapons:</b>	
Large Sword .....	4
Sling and stone .....	2
Large Bow .....	6
Large Club.....	4
Small Revolver.....	3
Large Revolver.....	6
Small Automatic .....	6
Large Revolver.....	4
Shotgun.....	6
Elephant Gun.....	9

### DEFENSIVE

<b>Armors:</b>	
Light .....	1
Moderate .....	2
Heavy .....	3

**Optional Rules** –Fearless starts players at Veteran level and Sidekicks are allowed.

### Sidekick Costs

	Number	Level(s)
<b>Veteran</b>	3	Green or
	1	Experienced and
	1	Green

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		THIS GAME	
Player		Level	
Character			
Description			
Background			Attributes Base = 1 Add ____
			Skills ____ Dice 2 Max
			Options 1 Attribute at 5 0 ThemeTrade Sidekick(s)
Career			
Hobby			
Passion			
Fear			

Attributes	Zones	Skills	Languages
MUSCLES	Reflexes		
MIGHT	Maneuver		
MIND	Tech		
MOXIE	Willpower		
MYSTERY	Dexterity		
MEANS	Perception		
PERM ○○○○○○○○	Aid		
TEMP □□□□□□□	Knowledge		
MORALE	Intuition		
PERM ○○○○○○○○	Influence		
TEMP □□□□□□□	Personal Motivation		Group Motivation

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