



## COMBAT & DAMAGE

*“What’s in a name?” Mormelan asked while wiping blood from his blade on a silk handkerchief. “That which we call a heart, by any word would bleed as rich.” Reubenwald was in no shape to respond, clutching his bleeding chest, but his left hand reached for his grandmother’s magical dagger, hidden in his boot.*



**L**ife as an adventurer is hard and often violent. You can run into wild beasts, malicious raiders, cold-souled Rust Brothers, and demonic monsters. When someone gets in your way, sometimes you have no choice but to hack your way through them.

Combat can be rough for your player character and can even be lethal. Before you enter combat, you should always ask yourself: Is it worth it?

## ROUNDS & INITIATIVE

When a conflict begins, the first step is to determine who has the initiative. Do this before anyone rolls dice for an action.

### DRAWING THE INITIATIVE

Grab ten cards, numbered 1 through 10. All the players taking part in the conflict, either voluntarily or involuntarily, each draw a card and the GM draws one card for every NPC. This is called drawing the initiative. The number on the card determines the order in which you act in the conflict.

Number 1 acts first, number 2 acts second, and so forth until everyone has acted. Place your initiative card by your character sheet, so everyone can see in which order you all act. The GM puts her initiative cards in front of her.

When all the participants in the combat have acted once, the round is over, and a new round begins. The round order remains the same throughout the whole conflict – drawing the initiative is only done once, at the start of the first round.





## SURPRISE

If you perform an attack that the GM deems surprising, you may draw two initiative cards, and choose which one of the two you want. The card you do not choose is put back in the deck which is shuffled again before the others (either players or GM) draw their cards.

## TALENTS

Some talents allow you to affect your initiative. Read more in the full *Forbidden Lands* game.

## CHANGING THE INITIATIVE

You never draw a new initiative card during a fight, but you can exchange your initiative

### CARDS FOR INITIATIVE

In the custom card deck for *Forbidden Lands* (sold separately), there are ten special initiative cards to use when drawing the initiative. If you do not have access to that deck, a normal deck of cards works fine, with the ace substituting for the one.

### ROUNDS & TURNS

In the game, a round can represent any period from ten seconds up to a minute, depending on circumstances and the skills used.

Another term used to keep track of time in the game is the **TURN**. A turn is about 15 minutes long, and it is used primarily when exploring adventure sites (see page 113).





card – and thus your initiative for the round – with another player character. This can be done at the start of the fight or at the start of the round, but never during a round. You and the other player character must be able to speak to each other to exchange initiatives. You can exchange initiative cards with an enemy through the **FEINT** action (see Close Combat).

#### EXAMPLE

*On their way from the old ruined castle, a few cheap gems and old books being all they have to show for it, Nirmena the half-elf and Tyrgar the dwarf are spotted by three orcs at the edge of the forest. They grin and get ready for a fight. All five draw an initiative card each. Nirmena draws 6, Tyrgar 4, and the orcs 2, 3 and 9. The initiative order is Orc 1, Orc 2, Tyrgar, Nirmena, Orc 3.*



## SLOW ACTIONS & FAST ACTIONS

When it is your turn to act, you can perform *one slow action and one fast action*, or *two fast actions*. A *slow action* usually consists of rolling for a skill. A *fast action* is quicker and doesn't always require a dice roll, but can do so. See the lists of typical slow and fast actions below. How these work is explained in detail in the sections Close Combat and Ranged Combat, later in this chapter.

**PREREQUISITES:** Some actions can only be performed if certain conditions are met. Often this is a feature of the weapon you are using. Features of weapons and other items are explained later in this chapter.

#### NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

In typical conflicts, the GM draws one initiative card per NPC. If there are a lot of NPCs and the number of combatants is above ten, the GM will split the NPCs into groups. All the NPCs with identical stats will form a single group, and the GM will draw one initiative card per group instead of one per individual. All the NPCs in a group act at the same time in the turn order. In what order they act individually within the group is up to the GM.

#### MONSTERS

The kind of horrible creatures that are commonly called monsters don't act as regular enemies in combat. Monsters draw initiative normally, but then follow their own rules. Read more on page 93.



SLOW ACTIONS		
ACTION	PREREQUISITE	SKILL
Slash	Edged or Blunt weapon	Melee
Stab	Pointed weapon	Melee
Punch/Kick/ Bite	Unarmed	Melee
Grapple	Unarmed	Melee
Break Free	You are Grappled	Melee
Shoot	Ranged weapon	Marksmanship
Persuade	The opponent can hear you	Manipulation
Taunt	The opponent can hear you	Performance
Cast Spell	You are a Druid or a Sorcerer	None
Flee	No enemy at Arm's Length	Move
Crawl	You are prone	None
Charge	At Near range	Melee Charge talent

## DESCRIBE YOUR ACTIONS

When it's your turn to act, simply state which actions you wish to perform and roll dice to see if you are successful. Some actions will give your opponent the opportunity to perform a reactive action, read more under Close Combat and Ranged Combat.

## HELPING OTHERS

If you help another player character or NPC to perform an action, it costs you one action of the same kind (slow or fast). You have to state if you help someone before any dice are rolled. Helping others breaks the initiative order in the round. You can read more about helping in Chapter 3.

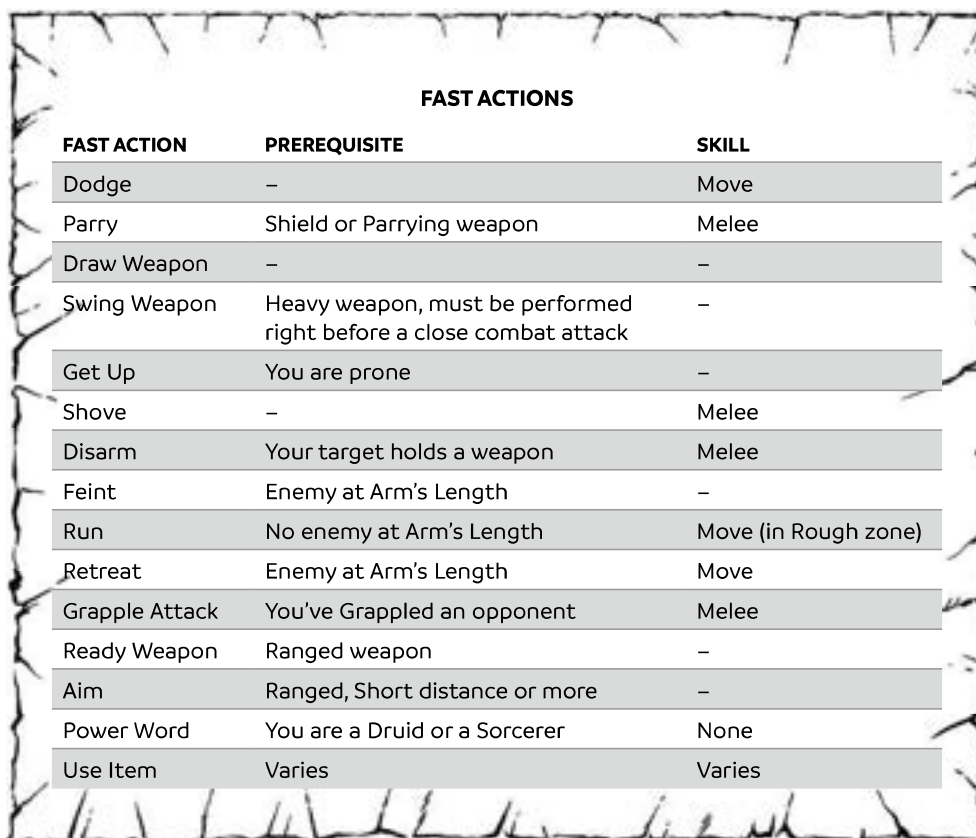
## EMBELLISH!

The list of actions is fairly comprehensive, but provides no details. It is up to you as a player to describe exactly what your adventurer does, how she looks when she attacks and what she feels when she raises her sword to attack...

## ZONES & RANGE

The combat area is divided into zones. A zone is a room or an area of ground. How big a zone is varies – from a few steps across up to about 25





*When combat starts, the adventurers are in a zone next to the orcs. The adventurers' zone is OPEN while the orcs' zone is ROUGH.*

## ZONE FEATURES

**CRAMPED:** The zone is small and/or has a low ceiling. Attacks with **HEAVY** weapons get a **-2** penalty, and it is impossible to **SWING WEAPON** before a close combat attack.

*The GM has drawn up a quick map of the area where Tyrgar and Nirmena face the orcs.*



**ROUGH:** You must roll **MOVE** when you **RUN** into the zone. Failure means you managed to get into the zone, but you fall down.

**OPEN:** The zone is open and flat, which is ideal for mounted combatants. Read more below.

**DARK/FOGGY:** Ranged attacks into the zone are modified by  $-2$  and can't pass through the zone.

### BORDERS AND LINES OF SIGHT

Another important feature of zones is the border between them. The border between zones affects both movement and ranged combat.

**BLOCKED:** The border is blocked by a wall, a deep abyss, or something similar. You cannot pass the border between the zones, at least not on foot.

**OBSCURED:** Something along the border of the zone blocks the line of sight, but not move-

ment. An example could be a doorway, shrubbery, or a curtain. Ranged attacks across the border are not possible, but movement is not affected.

### RANGE CATEGORIES

In conflict, the distance between you and your opponent is divided into five range categories. See the table on this page. The Typical Terrain column lists the types of terrain where the maximum line-of-sight usually matches that category. Read more in the next chapter.

### MOVEMENT

To move during combat, you use the **RUN** action (fast). This moves you from one zone to a neighboring zone, or between **NEAR** and **ARM'S LENGTH** distance from an enemy in the zone you are already in. No roll is required to **RUN**, unless you're moving into a **ROUGH** zone, in which case you need to roll for **MOVE** (see above).

RANGE CATEGORIES		
RANGE	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL TERRAIN
Arm's Length	Right next to you	—
Near	A few steps away, in the same zone as you	Small room, cave tunnel
Short	Up to 25 meters away, in a bordering zone	Dense forest, swamp, large hall
Long	Up to one hundred meters (four segments) away	Forest, hills, city ruins, gigantic hall
Distant	As far as the eye can see	Plains, mountains



**CLOSE COMBAT:** If you have an active enemy at **ARM'S LENGTH**, you can't **RUN** away from him. Instead, you must use the **RETREAT** action (see page 51).

**DOORS:** You can open an unlocked door with the **USE ITEM** action (fast). A locked door must either be opened by picking the lock (see page 34) or by breaking it down. A typical wooden door can take 5 points of damage before it falls apart. More sturdy doors require more force, and really massive doors also have an **Armor Rating** (see page 59).



## FLEEING THE CONFLICT

If you're losing a fight, it might be better to retreat and perhaps return with back-up. If you want to leave the conflict immediately, and you don't have any enemies at **ARM'S LENGTH**, you can roll for **MOVE** – a successful roll means you manage to get away somehow, and the conflict is over.

You cannot **FLEE** in this way if you are trapped or surrounded. The GM has final say. You cannot use your roll to move past an opponent – you must **FLEE** in the same direction you came from. The GM can modify your roll depending on the terrain and the distance to the next opponent, see the table below.

FLEEING	
RANGE	MODIFICATION
Near	-1
Short	0
Long	+1
Open Zone	-1
Rough Zone	+1

If the roll fails, you remain in combat with your opponent and cannot get away – you remain at the same distance as you were before. The GM can also inflict some additional negative consequence for you (see page 25). You can attempt to **FLEE** again in the next round.

### EXAMPLE

*The adventurers and the orcs are in neighboring zones. The distance between the groups is one segment, i.e., **SHORT** range.*



## AMBUSHES & SNEAK ATTACKS

The key to winning a conflict is often attacking when your enemy least expects it. You can achieve this in several different ways.

**SNEAK ATTACK:** When you stalk someone and your attack catches them unawares, it's called a sneak attack. First, roll an opposed roll for SNEAK. You get a modification depending on how close you are – see the table to the right on this page. If you want to attack in close combat, you usually have to get within ARM'S LENGTH. If you fail, your opponent spots you at your starting distance – draw initiative.

If you succeed, you get a free action (slow or fast, but not both) before you draw the initiative. Your target cannot DODGE or PARRY a sneak attack. Sneak attacks are always done individually, by one attacker against one target.

**AMBUSH:** A special kind of sneak attack is an ambush – you lie in wait for your enemy and attack when he passes. When you ambush someone, you roll SNEAK as described above, but with a modification of +2, since it is the target and not the attacker that is moving.

Ambushes can be carried out by a group and against a group of targets. This follows the usual rules for SNEAK – for the attackers (whoever has the lowest SNEAK skill level roll) and for the targets (whoever has the highest SCOUT roll).

SNEAK ATTACKS & AMBUSHES	
RANGE	MODIFICATION
Arm's Length	–2
Near	–1
Short	0
Long	+1



## CLOSE COMBAT

When you attack in close combat, you use the MELEE skill. Close combat usually happens at ARM'S LENGTH. With some weapons, you can attack from NEAR distance (see the weapons, below).

**WEAPONS:** When you enter close combat, it is wise to have a weapon in hand. Weapons give you a Gear Bonus for your roll (see page 31), increase the damage caused and allow you to perform actions that are harder or even impossible without a weapon. Several close combat weapons are described in the table on page 55.

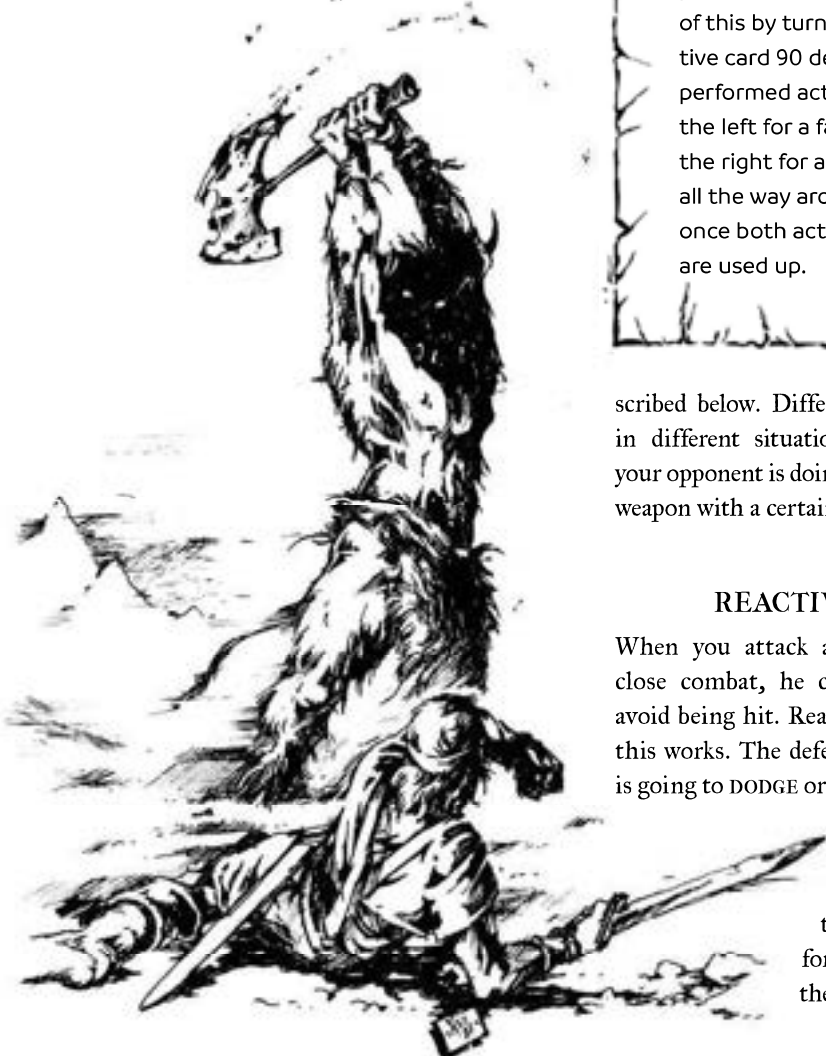
**SHIELD:** Carrying a shield is also very useful in close combat. You can PARRY attacks with it, but you can also use it to SHOVE opponents to the ground. Shields are described in the table on page 60.

**STANCE:** To be able to attack an opponent in close combat, you have to stand up on your



feet. If you are prone, you must first spend a fast action to **GET UP** before you can attack. The exception is the **SHOVE** action, which can be done even if you are prone. While you are prone, standing enemies get a +2 modification on all close combat attacks against you.

**ACTIONS:** There are several actions to choose from in close combat, all of which are de-



### MARK YOUR ACTIONS

Because reactive actions break the initiative order, it can be hard to keep track of how many actions the combatants have performed. A tip is to keep track of this by turning the initiative card 90 degrees for every performed action. Turn it to the left for a fast action and to the right for a slow action, and all the way around 180 degrees once both actions in the turn are used up.

scribed below. Different actions are effective in different situations, depending on what your opponent is doing. Some actions require a weapon with a certain feature.

### REACTIVE ACTIONS

When you attack a prepared opponent in close combat, he can **DODGE** or **PARRY** to avoid being hit. Read more below about how this works. The defender must declare if she is going to **DODGE** or **PARRY** before you roll for your attack.

**DODGE** and **PARRY** are called reactive actions, since they are performed immediately, and they break the normal initia-



tive order in the round. However, they do count as per usual against your two available actions in the round (one slow and one fast action). For every reactive action you perform, you get one less action when it is your turn, and once you have used both your actions during the round, you can no longer DODGE or PARRY (talents can modify this, however).

### SLOW ACTIONS

**SLASH:** You swing your weapon at your opponent. Requires a weapon with the **EDGED** or **BLUNT** features. Roll **MELEE** plus the weapon's Gear Bonus. Can be **DODGED** or **PARRIED**. If your target **DODGES**, he gets a +2 bonus. If you hit, your opponent takes Weapon Damage on his Strength. If you roll multiple ✕, the damage increases by 1 for each additional ✕. If the enemy takes a critical injury (see page 62), roll on the table for slash wounds (for **EDGED** weapons) or blunt trauma (for **BLUNT** weapons).

**STAB:** You attempt to impale your opponent. Requires a weapon with the **POINTED** feature. Roll **MELEE** plus the weapon's Gear Bonus. Can be **DODGED** or **PARRIED**. A target who **PARRIES** with a weapon gets a -2 penalty, while parrying with a shield gives a +2 bonus. If you hit, your opponent takes Weapon Damage on his Strength. If you roll multiple ✕, the damage increases by 1 for each additional ✕. If the enemy suffers a critical injury, roll on the table for stab wounds.

**PUNCH/KICK/BITE:** Does not require a weapon. Roll for **MELEE**. Can be **DODGED** or **PARRIED**, and any attempt to **PARRY** gets a +2 bo-

nus. If you hit, your opponent takes 1 point of damage to his Strength. If you roll multiple ✕, the damage increases by 1 for each additional ✕. If the enemy suffers a critical injury, roll on the table for blunt force wounds (unless you have fangs – in that case, use the table for slash wounds).

**GRAPPLE:** You grab hold of your opponent. Roll for **MELEE**, as no weapon can be used. Can be **DODGED** or **PARRIED**. If the attack succeeds, both you and your opponent fall to the ground. The opponent drops any weapon he was holding, and cannot move. The only action he can perform is **BREAK FREE** – which is a slow action and requires him winning an opposed **MELEE** against you. While you are grappling, the only action you can perform is a **GRAPPLE ATTACK**. It works like **PUNCH/KICK/BITE**, but is a fast action and cannot be **DODGED** or **PARRIED**.

### FAST ACTIONS

**DODGE:** You throw yourself out of the way of your opponent's attack. Reactive action. Roll **MOVE** (not **MELEE**). You cannot use a weapon. If the attacker **SLASHES**, you get a +2 bonus. Every ✕ you roll eliminates a ✕ from the attacker's roll. Any excess ✕ have no effect. When you **DODGE**, you fall prone. You can choose to remain standing, at the cost of a -2 penalty.

**PARRY:** You block your opponent's attack. Reactive action. Requires a shield or a weapon. Roll **MELEE** and the Gear Bonus of the shield or weapon used. If you **PARRY** with a weapon that lacks the **PARRYING** feature, you get a -2 penalty. If the attacker **STABS** you, you get a +2





bonus when you **PARRY** with a shield but a  $-2$  penalty if you parry with a weapon. Every **X** you roll eliminates a **X** from the attacker's roll. Any excess **X** have no effect.

**DRAW WEAPON:** You draw a weapon from your belt or scabbard. No roll is required. This fast action can also be used to pick up a weapon or other item from the ground (within **ARM'S LENGTH**). Also see the **QUICKDRAW** talent.

**SWING WEAPON:** You swing your melee weapon to make your upcoming strike more powerful. No roll is required, but this fast action requires a **HEAVY** weapon. Must be performed directly before a **SLASH** or **STAB**, in the same round. If the attack is successful, the damage done increases by  $+1$ .

**STAND UP:** Rise from a prone to a standing stance, or the other way around. Close combat attacks against opponents that are prone are modified by  $+2$ .

**SHOVE:** You try to push your enemy to the ground. Roll **MELEE**. A weapon with the **HOOK** feature or a shield can be used. If your oppo-



ATTACK & DEFENSE			
	SLASH	STAB	PUNCH/KICK
Parry with weapon	-	$-2$	$+2$
Parry with shield	-	$+2$	$+2$
Dodge	$+2$	-	-
Parry without Parrying weapon: $-2$			
Dodge without going prone: $-2$			



nent has higher Strength than you, two ✕ are required to succeed, otherwise one is enough. If the attack is successful, your opponent falls to the ground and is prone (however, see the STEADY FEET talent). Any additional ✕ have no effect. Your opponent can DODGE to avoid your SHOVE. PARRYING a SHOVE requires a shield.

**DISARM:** You try to knock the weapon from your opponent's hands. Roll MELEE and your weapon's Gear Bonus. Disarming an opponent wielding a one-handed weapon requires one ✕, a two-handed weapon requires two (however, see the FIRM GRIP talent). If you succeed, your opponent drops his weapon, which lands at ARM'S LENGTH. Any excess ✕ have no effect. You cannot DISARM a shield. Your enemy can PARRY or DODGE your DISARM.

**FEINT:** You trade initiative cards with an opponent at ARM'S LENGTH (or NEAR, if your close combat weapon can reach that far). The new initiative order takes effect the next round. No roll is required.

**RETREAT:** This action must be used instead of RUN if you have an active enemy at ARM'S LENGTH. Brings you to NEAR range. Roll for MOVE. If you fail, you move but your enemy gets a free attack against you – a SLASH, STAB or PUNCH that doesn't count toward his actions in the round and which you can't PARRY or DODGE.

#### EXAMPLE

*The fight between the adventurers and the orcs begins. Orc 1 uses his two actions to RUN toward Tyrgar, first from SHORT to*

*NEAR distance, then to ARM'S LENGTH. Orc 2 does the same, but approaches Nirmena. Then it's Tyrgar's turn. His axe is already drawn, so he uses his fast action to SHOVE Orc 1 to the ground, which succeeds.*

*He then proceeds to use his slow action to SLASH the orc, who has already used up his actions in the round and can't PARRY or DODGE. Tyrgar rolls the following dice: four Base Dice for his Strength, two Skill Dice for his MELEE skill, one Skill Die for his AXE FIGHTER talent, two Gear Dice for his axe's Weapon Bonus, and two bonus Skill Dice because his opponent is prone. He rolls three ✕. The first ✕ means he hits. The next two ✕, combined with his axe's Weapon Damage of 2, results in 4 points of damage to the orc, who is Broken.*

*Nirmena's turn. She draws her sword (fast action) and tries to STAB Orc 2, but misses. Orc 3 runs to ARM'S LENGTH from Tyrgar. Then the round is over.*



## RANGED COMBAT

When you attack someone from a distance, you roll MARKSMANSHIP. You need a ranged weapon, even if it's simply something to throw. The table on page 57 describes various weapons and indicates the maximum range at which the weapon can be used.

#### RANGE

When you shoot at someone, it is harder to hit your target the further away they are. At SHORT





range, you get a  $-1$  penalty, and at LONG range it's a  $-2$ . At ARM'S LENGTH, you get  $-3$  since it's very hard to draw a bead on an opponent that close to you. This does not apply if you are shooting at a defenseless or completely oblivious opponent at ARM'S LENGTH – in that case, you get a  $+3$  bonus instead.

SHOOTING RANGE	
RANGE	MODIFICATION
Arm's Length	$-3/+3$
Near	$-$
Short	$-1$
Long	$-2$
Distant	$-3$ (requires Aim)

## ACTIONS

The actions available in ranged combat are not as numerous as in close combat, but there are a few options.

**READY WEAPON:** Fast action. Before you can fire your bow or sling, you must READY it – prepare the weapon by nocking an arrow or placing a stone in your sling. Once you have READIED your weapon, you can't take any slow action other than SHOOT and no fast action other than AIM (see below) – if you do anything else, you must READY the weapon again before you can SHOOT. Note that the FAST SHOOTER talent allows you to fire bows and slings without using an action to READY the weapon.

Crossbows don't need to be READIED. Instead, you must LOAD a crossbow (slow action) before each shot. You can carry a LOADED crossbow around as long as you like.

**AIM:** Fast action. Before you SHOOT, you can AIM. This gives you a  $+1$  bonus to the attack. You must AIM and SHOOT in the same round – you cannot save the bonus for a later round. Please note that you cannot READY your weapon, AIM and SHOOT in the same round, as that is a total of three actions. It's possible if you have the FAST SHOOTER talent, however.

You can't AIM at an aware opponent at ARM'S LENGTH – he is too close for you to be able to draw a bead on.

**SHOOT:** Slow action. Roll for MARKSMANSHIP and the weapon's Gear Bonus. Can be DODGED, but to PARRY a ranged attack the target must have a shield. If you hit, your target takes Weapon Damage on his Strength. For every additional  $\times$  rolled, the damage increases by 1. If the target suffers a critical injury, roll on the table for stab wounds if you used a bow or throwing knife and use the table for blunt force if you used a sling or a thrown rock.

**DODGE:** Fast reactive action. You throw yourself out of the way of your opponent's attack. Roll MOVE (not MELEE). Every  $\times$  you roll eliminates one  $\times$  from the attacker's roll. Any excess  $\times$  have no effect. When you DODGE, you fall prone. You can choose to remain standing, at the cost of a  $-2$  penalty.

**PARRY:** Fast reactive action. To be able to PARRY a ranged attack, you must have a shield. Roll



using MELEE and the shield's Gear Bonus. Every ✕ you roll eliminates one ✕ from the attacker's roll. Any excess ✕ have no effect.

dim-witted that they simply cannot be swayed by words, no matter how silvery your tongue is. Read more about monsters on page 93.

## REACTIVE ACTIONS

Just like in close combat, your opponent must declare if he intends to DODGE or PARRY before you roll to attack. DODGE and PARRY are reactive actions and break the normal initiative order in the round.

### EXAMPLE

*The last remaining orc RETREATS and then RUNS. In the next round, Tyrgar DRAWS his crossbow and then SHOOTs it. The range is now SHORT which gives Tyrgar a -1 penalty. Yet he rolls two ✕, and with the crossbow's Weapon Damage of 2 he inflicts 3 points of damage.*



## SOCIAL CONFLICT

Sometimes, you can make things go your way without resorting to violence. Instead, you trick or convince your opponents without drawing your weapon. This might even be possible in the midst of combat, if the GM judges it plausible. For non-violent conflicts, you use the MANIPULATION skill.

What you ask of your opponent or what you want him to do must be within reason – no NPC will agree to do anything or act completely against their own interests, no matter how good your roll is.

**MONSTERS:** Many monsters are so savage or

## RESOLUTION

When you try to convince or bluff someone, make an opposed roll of MANIPULATION versus your opponent's INSIGHT. It only counts as a (slow) action for you.

If you successfully MANIPULATE your opponent, he must either do what you want or immediately attack you with physical violence. Even if your opponent chooses to do what you want, he can still demand something in return. The GM decides what that entails, but it should be reasonable enough for you to be able to meet those demands. It is up to you to accept the agreement or not.

## NEGOTIATING POSITION

Your chances of MANIPULATING someone successfully are affected by your negotiating position, which is determined by the GM. Each of following factors modifies your roll by +1:

- ❖ You have more people on your side.
- ❖ What you ask for doesn't cost your opponent anything.
- ❖ Your opponent has suffered damage to any attribute.
- ❖ You have helped your opponent previously.
- ❖ You present your case very well (determined by the GM).

Each of the following factors modifies your roll by -1.

- ❖ Your opponent has more people on his side.





- even LONG range. The GM modifies your roll negatively if she deems that the range impairs your negotiating position (see above).

Some valuable or very impressive artifacts can give a Gear Bonus to your MANIPULATION roll.



When you want to MANIPULATE a whole group, you usually address the group's leader or spokesperson. Remember that your roll is modified by  $-1$  if your opponent has more people on his side. If you reach an agreement with the leader, the rest of the group usually follows. If there is no given leader it's harder – every single opponent acts individually.

As an adventurer, you always want a weapon close at hand – you never know where danger lurks. The tables and images on the following pages show various kinds of common weapons in the Forbidden Lands.

To MANIPULATE someone, you usually need to be in NEAR range – but if it is applicable to the situation, the actions can be used at SHORT or

The features used in the weapon tables are explained below.

