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# SISU

TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME

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**PLAYER GUIDE**

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## GM Hints

### Setting Difficulty

When setting a target roll value to meet or exceed for a check, use this table as a guide.

Roll Target	Difficulty	Description
1–3	Trivial	Nearly guaranteed success. Use only when there is only a slight chance of failure.
4–6	Easy	A starting character has a fair shot. Good for simple tasks where failure is possible but unlikely.
7–9	Moderate	Requires a d6 or better to succeed reliably. The right default for most meaningful challenges.
10–12	Hard	A d8 or higher is needed for a decent chance. Most untrained characters will fail.
13–15	Very Hard	Even skilled characters may fall short. Expect to rely on modifiers and assistance.
16–18	Severe	Only top-tier characters with favorable modifiers have a real shot. Success should feel hard-won.
19+	Extreme	Extreme difficulty with very high chance of failure.

### Roll Results

When determining success or failure for a check, use this table as a guide.

Margin	Outcome	Description
7+ above	Critical Success	Super impressive success! Comes with unexpected bonuses.
4–6 above	Strong Success	Accomplished with room to spare. The GM may offer a small additional benefit.
1–3 above	Success	The task is completed cleanly with no complications.
Exact match	Marginal Success	Just barely succeeded.
1–3 below	Near Miss	Task fails, but the GM may allow a partial outcome or a retry at a cost.
4–6 below	Failure	Clear failure. Leaves a minor complication or setback in its wake.
7+ below	Critical Failure	Catastrophic failure! Comes with severe consequences.

## Extra Resources

Online rules PDFs and character sheet — <https://sisurpg.com/resources>

Examples of play in fantasy and modern settings — <https://sisurpg.com/exampleplay>

## Thanks & Inspiration

Sisu would not exist without the games that came before it. **Dungeons & Dragons** established this hobby's core vocabulary. **Tales From the Loop** and **Kids on Bikes** showed that light mechanics can tell great stories, shaping Sisu's approach. **Cairn** influenced inventory, fatigue, and the fiction-first philosophy. Thank you to all four communities.

## What is Sisu?

It is a Finnish word, but sisu is more than just a word; it embodies the spirit of resilience, determination, and perseverance in Finnish culture. It is pronounced "See-Soo".

Sisu is a tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) — a collaborative, imagination-driven experience you share around a table with friends. If you've never played one before, here's the idea: one person takes on the role of the **Game Master (GM)**, who designs a world, sets the scene, and portrays the people and dangers the group encounters. Everyone else plays as a **player character (PC)** — a unique individual they've created with their own strengths, weaknesses, and personality.

There are no winners or losers. Instead, the group works together (or sometimes against each other) to navigate whatever situation the GM presents — whether that's a tense investigation, a desperate firefight, or a conversation with a shady contact. When you want your character to do something uncertain, you roll dice to find out what happens. You should not consider this game to be the players vs the GM, rather the GM is there to guide and facilitate an entertaining shared experience. The rules below spell out exactly how that works.

All you really need to play is this rulebook, some dice, a character sheet, and a group of people ready to tell a story together.

## Creating A Character

Write your character name at the top of the portrait box. Write your title or profession at the bottom of the portrait box. Draw a picture of yourself and/or describe your looks in the portrait box.

Assign your character stats for Body, Mind, Sense, and Sisu by distributing d8, d6, d6, d4 for an already skilled character or d4, d4, d4, d4 for a non-skilled character (GM decides). Then select one stat to boost, going up by one die type — for example, d4 becomes d6, d6 becomes d8, and d8 becomes d10.

The GM will say how much money you start with. Starting equipment can either be purchased or alternatively each player may start with one weapon and one tool.

Fill in your armor value, ranging between 0 and 3, depending on what you have equipped. Fill in your speed in spaces (default 6). Fill in your max and current HP (default 10) and max and current FP (should match HP).

Select **2 skills** (observing any prerequisites) and **1 flaw**.

## Ability Check Stats

### BODY

Your measure of physical prowess. Includes things like strength, dexterity, balance, physical precision, stealth, and constitution.

### MIND

Your ability to comprehend complex ideas, do research, understand things, keep your composure, steel your resolve, resist manipulation.

### SENSE

Your powers of persuasion, magnetism, artistic flair, general likability, knowing contacts, manipulating others, and lying.

## Conditions (cont.)

<b>Dying</b> Requires healing within a timeframe (default 30 min, or GM-determined) or suffer a lasting wound or death.  <i>Self-recovery: GM determined</i>	<b>Encumbered</b> Speed halved. Disadvantage on attack checks and ability checks.  <i>Self-recovery: Reduce items to 9 or fewer</i>	<b>Frightened</b> Disadvantage on all ability checks and attacks while the source of fear is visible. Cannot move toward the source.  <i>Self-recovery: MIND (≥6) or 10 min</i>
<b>Grappled</b> Speed becomes 0.  <i>Self-recovery: BODY (≥ opponent BODY roll)</i>	<b>Incapacitated</b> Cannot take actions or reactions.  —	<b>Invisible</b> Attack checks against have disadvantage; own attack checks have advantage.  —
<b>Paralyzed</b> Incapacitated, cannot move or speak. Attack checks against have advantage.  <i>Self-recovery: 10 min</i>	<b>Poisoned</b> Disadvantage on attack checks and ability checks.  <i>Self-recovery: BODY (≥6) or 1 hr</i>	<b>Prone</b> Disadvantage on non-ranged attacks. Adjacent attacks against have advantage; ranged attacks against have disadvantage.  <i>Self-recovery: Take an action to stand</i>
<b>Restrained</b> Speed becomes 0. Attack checks against have advantage; own attack checks have disadvantage.  —	<b>Stunned</b> Incapacitated, cannot move, can speak only falteringly. Attack checks against have advantage.  <i>Self-recovery: MIND (≥6) or 10 min</i>	<b>Unconscious</b> Incapacitated, unaware of surroundings, drops held items, falls prone. Attack checks against have advantage.  <i>Self-recovery: 10 min (unless Dying)</i>

## Lasting Wounds

Occasionally a player may suffer a permanent or long-lasting injury from a major event or in place of death. The GM determines when these happen and if they are recoverable over time.

## Example Skills

<b>Acrobat</b> <i>Prereq: BODY ≥ d6</i>  +2 to BODY ability checks requiring balance, climbing, jumping, or swinging.	<b>Bash Master</b> <i>Prereq: BODY ≥ d6</i>  +2 on attack checks with all blunt weapons.	<b>Blade Master</b> <i>Prereq: BODY ≥ d6</i>  +2 on attack checks with all bladed weapons.
<b>Body Builder</b> <i>Prereq: BODY ≥ d6</i>  +2 on BODY strength ability checks.	<b>Book Smarts</b> <i>Prereq: MIND ≥ d6</i>  +2 on MIND research ability checks.	<b>Brawler</b> <i>Prereq: BODY ≥ d6</i>  No disadvantage on attack checks for unarmed attacks.

## A Turn

A single turn consists of **1 move**, **1 action**, and **1 bonus action** in any order. Bonus actions are very quick things: a short phrase, a hand gesture, switching/dropping a weapon, etc. Healing or standing from prone are full actions. The GM determines what counts as a bonus action.

## Non-combat Turn

Players may announce actions at any time. Once a player starts, others must wait unless hindering or assisting. A player may take multiple turns in a row if nobody else wants to act. The GM may announce NPC/monster turns.

## Combat Rounds

A single round of combat consists of everyone involved performing 1 turn, lasting 5 seconds (12 rounds per minute). The round includes all players and enemies involved in combat.

## Initiative

Often turn order is logically clear. Some skills let a character act first. In cases where turn order is not clear, all participants roll SISU die — highest acts first.

## Ability Checks

When a player wants to perform a difficult action, they roll the die assigned to the relevant ability stat. You may also roll any equipment die that makes sense for the situation. Take only the highest result. The GM sets the target value; being over or under may grant bonuses or problems.

### Advantage

Roll two of the same ability dice (and any equipment dice), choose the highest result. All applicable modifiers still apply.

### Disadvantage

Roll two of the same ability dice (and any equipment dice), choose the lowest result. All applicable modifiers still apply.

### Assisting Others (non-combat)

If logical, the GM may allow another player to assist, granting a +1 or +2 bonus (GM discretion).

### Hindering Others (non-combat)

If logical, the GM may allow another player to hinder, applying a −1 or −2 penalty (GM discretion).

## Attacking

As an action, players, monsters, and NPCs can attack. Once an attack is declared, a damage check is performed.