



# WANDERING BLADES

*lethal melodrama by* Daniel Kwan & Drew Quon

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# Sources of Inspiration

## Tabletop Games

*Runecairn* by Colin Le Sueur

*Errant* by Ava Islam

*Vaults of Vaarn* by Leo Hunt

*The Black Hack* by David Black

*Sharp Swords & Sinister Spells* by Diogo Nogueira

*Sword World 2.5* by Kei Kitazawa & Group SNE

*Coriolis - The Third Horizon* by Free League Publishing

*Flesh & Blood* by Legend Story Studios.

## Digital & Print Media

*The Condor Trilogy* by Jin Yong (novel series)

*Biao Ren: Blades of the Guardians* by Xianzhe Xu (manhua and donghua)

*Blood and Steel* by Qiao Jingfu (manhua)

*Under One Person* by Dong Man Tang and Mi Er (webcomic)

## Films & Television

*Wu Shan Wu Xing* (Fog Hill of Five Elements) (2020 animated series)

*The Assassin* (2015 film)

*Reign of Assassins* (2010 film)

*Sword of the Stranger* (2007 animated film)

*Seven Swords* (2005 film)

*Hero* (2004 film)

*Samurai Champloo* (2004 animated series)

*Last Hurrah for Chivalry* (1979 film)

*Come Drink with Me* (1966 film)

## Video Games

*Ghosts of Tsushima* (Sucker Punch Productions)

*Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* (FromSoftware)

*Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty* (Team Ninja)

*Wandering Sword* (The Swordman Studio)

# Introduction

## What is Wandering Blades?

*Wandering Blades* is a rules light, low fantasy tabletop role playing game inspired by Chinese wuxia media and old-school renaissance (OSR) games. *Wandering Blades* is designed around the following core principles:

- **Danger is everywhere** - The world of *Wandering Blades* is full of danger and the smallest mistake can be deadly. The weapons and martial arts techniques wielded by player characters are instruments of death, but so are those of their enemies.
- **Simple, yet tactical** - The system of *Wandering Blades* is designed to create a gameplay experience that is easy for players to learn, while providing them with a lot of tactical depth.
- **Skillful Combat** - Fights in *Wandering Blades* are designed to feel stylish, fast, and compelling. Success in combat relies heavily on skill, instead of luck. Players are enabled to capture momentum from their adversaries and press the advantage!
- **Toolbox experience** - The rules in *Wandering Blades* are written as guidelines for GMs (game masters). They are open to player interpretation, ingenuity, and expansion.

## What is Wuxia?

*Wuxia* (literally “martial heroes”) is a genre of Chinese fiction about the adventures of martial artists who are capable of achieving seemingly supernatural fighting abilities. This genre is often viewed as “low fantasy”, as it doesn’t typically feature any magic.

Central to wuxia stories are the complicated concepts of *jianghu* [gee-aang hu] and *wulin* [woo-leen]. *Jianghu* (literally “rivers and lakes”) can be generally defined as the social sphere of martial artists in wuxia stories. While the meaning of *jianghu* is highly nuanced and has evolved throughout China’s history, it exists in contrast to *miaotang* [me-ow taang] (literally “the temple”) – the imperial court and its associated government. *Wulin* (literally “martial forest”) is a term closely associated with *jianghu* and is used to describe the social circle or community of martial artists.

# What is a Tabletop Roleplaying Game?

In a tabletop roleplaying game (often referred to as TTRPGs or TRPGs), players assume the roles of fictional characters (referred to as player characters or PCs) and collaboratively create a story alongside a facilitator (referred to as the game master or GM). In tabletop roleplaying games, the action is described through spoken word and the outcomes are often determined by formal rules that usually involve dice rolling.

In *Wandering Blades*, the players assume the role of martial artists and craft stories concerning their adventures through a fictional world inspired by historical China.

# What Materials Do You Need?

You don't need much to play *Wandering Blades*, just the following:

- This rulebook!
- Character sheets for each player
- Pencils and erasers
- Polyhedral dice (d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20)
- Notepads for taking notes

Digital character sheets for *Wandering Blades* [can be found here](https://danielhkwon.itch.io/wanderingblades) or at [danielhkwon.itch.io/wanderingblades](https://danielhkwon.itch.io/wanderingblades). This template is fully editable in either a free or paid Notion account. Once open, hit 'duplicate' and add it to your own Notion account for future use!

# Character Creation

## Character Classes

For this quickstart guide, only two classes are available - the youxia [yo-she-ah] and outlaw. The youxia class is a versatile master of weaponry and martial arts techniques. The outlaw is a scoundrel with a notorious reputation and a mastery of unlawful skills. Whether you have a single player or a full party, each youxia and outlaw will be distinct from one another.

## Attributes

In *Wandering Blades*, a player character's (PC) attributes represent characteristics that define their abilities and how they will react in different situations.

- **Strength** represents a character's physical power. It determines how much weight they can carry, how hard they can hit, and their ability to perform physically demanding feats.
- **Agility** represents a character's quickness, coordination, and reflexes. It determines a character's ability to dodge attacks, use weapons that require finesse, and their ability to perform tasks that require dexterity.
- **Focus** represents a character's mental fortitude, discipline, determination, perceptiveness, and wisdom. It determines the amount of qi they can cultivate.
- **Intellect** represents a character's knowledge of the world and problem-solving skills. It determines how well a character can assess situations, learn, and find creative solutions to problems.

## Determining Attributes

Each attribute has an **ATTRIBUTE SCORE** and an **ATTRIBUTE BONUS**. These are determined by rolling 4d6 (four six-sided dice) and assigning each die value to a different **ATTRIBUTE**. An attribute's score is determined by adding the die roll to a base of 10, while the bonus is equal to the roll. For example, if you rolled a 1 and assigned it to Intellect, your score would be 11 and your bonus would be +1).

## Hit Points

**HIT POINTS** (HP) represent a measure of a PC or non-player character's (NPC) ability to avoid or withstand serious injury. A character's HP is determined by rolling their class **HIT DIE** (HD) during character creation. When creating a character, their starting HP is equal to the maximum value of their HD. Each time a character gains a new level, they are able to roll their class HD and add the result to their maximum HP.

## Qi Points

Every PC has mastered the use of qi, a vital energy found in all living things, to aid them in their adventures. Each PC has a pool of **QI POINTS** (QP) that represent ability to use martial arts techniques and special **QI ABILITIES**. A character's **QI POOL** is determined by their FOCUS BONUS plus any bonus QP provided by their chosen class.

QP can be restored when healing. During a SHORT REST, a number of QP restored is equal to a character's FOCUS BONUS. During a LONG REST, a character's QI POOL is fully restored.

## Dodge

**DODGE** is a number that represents a character's ability to avoid being hit by an attacker. It is determined by a character's AGILITY SCORE.

## Carrying Capacity

**CARRYING CAPACITY** represents how much weight a character can carry before becoming encumbered. This is represented by a number equal to a character's STRENGTH SCORE. Weight in this game is calculated in the number of ITEM SLOTS an object takes up. To keep things simple, items like a backpack do not count towards CARRYING CAPACITY since a character would use them to store their items.

## Techniques

Each character has a base number of martial arts **TECHNIQUES** that they have mastered by virtue of their class. In order to use them in battle, a PC must spend the required QP. New **TECHNIQUES** are learned when a new level is reached.

There are three types:

- **Combat Techniques** are special martial arts attacks. In combat, these require an **ACTION** (more on this later).
- **Reactive Techniques** are used in response to what is happening during a scene. In combat, these require a **REACTION** (more on this later).
- **Support Techniques** are used to aid your allies or disrupt adversaries in combat. In combat, these require an **ACTION**.

## Exploration Speed

**EXPLORATION SPEED** is equal to a PC's **STRENGTH SCORE** in miles. It dictates how far a character can travel outside of combat. This can be affected by difficult ( $\frac{1}{2}$  **EXPLORATION SPEED**) and harsh ( $\frac{1}{4}$  **EXPLORATION SPEED**) conditions.

## Drive

Each character has a **DRIVE** - a strong inner motivation, passion, or desire that they pursue as part of the shared story told during play. A character's **DRIVE** is a powerful force that shapes their behaviour, personality, and actions.

Once per session, a player can tap into their character's **DRIVE** to automatically succeed on a single **CHECK** or **SAVE**.

## Keepsake

Each character starts with a **KEEPSAKE**, a small item that is kept as a treasured memento and serves as a way to help craft their backstory. It can be anything from a piece of jewellery to a letter that holds sentimental value. A character's **KEEPSAKE** is very likely tied to their **DRIVE**. This item does not take up an item slot and cannot be used in combat.



## Connection

A **CONNECTION** is an important relationship that a character has with another member of the party or a key NPC (if your game only has 1 player and 1 GM). This **CONNECTION** can be romantic, platonic, or even strained.

What's important is that the **CONNECTION** one PC has with another serves as a way to collaboratively create entanglements within their backstories. This can be related to a character's **DRIVE** and **KEEPSAKE**, or be something completely independent of those! **CONNECTIONS** are primarily used by the GM to create interesting role play opportunities and challenges. Remember that **CONNECTIONS** involving another player should be created with their input and consent before being established.

## Reputation

A player character's **REPUTATION** is used to represent their impact on the world around them. This is guided by the following **REPUTATION SCORES**:

- ***Martial*** - a character's reputation within martial artists, secret societies, and the criminal world
- ***Court*** - a character's reputation within the court, government, military, and aristocratic world
- ***Common*** - a character's reputation among ordinary people

To help flesh out your character's standing in the world, assign the following **REPUTATION SCORES** to the three different worlds in the order of a player's choosing: 2 (Unfriendly), 3, (Neutral), and 4 (Friendly).

# Equipment

## Currency

Coinage in *Wandering Blades* is abstracted into a single currency (referred to as “coins”) instead of splitting them into different denominations.

## Encumbrance

When a player character is carrying more items than their CARRYING CAPACITY, they become ENCUMBERED. All CHECKS and ACTIONS involving strength or agility made by an encumbered character are HINDERED. ENCUMBERED characters may only travel up to half of their EXPLORATION SPEED.

## Weapons

Weapons have the following qualities:

- **Weight Category** - a weapon’s weight category determines how many ITEM SLOTS it takes up in a character’s CARRYING CAPACITY. There are three weapon weight categories: Light (1 slot), Medium (2 slots), and Heavy (3 slots).
- **Damage Category** - a weapon’s DAMAGE category determines what die is rolled upon a successful attack. There are three weapon DAMAGE categories: Light (1d6), Medium (1d8), and Heavy (1d10). The handedness of a weapon or other factors (such as a TECHNIQUE) may call for DAMAGE to be rolled at a step higher or lower. In this case, dice are adjusted along this scale: 1, 1d2, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, and 1d20 (ex. reducing the damage of a heavy weapon by one step reduces it from 1d10 to 1d8).
- **Descriptors & Special Features** - weapons also have descriptors such as range (measured by engagement zones), handedness (one-handed as 1H and two-handed as 2H), and special features (ex. *crushing*). Discretion is left to the GM, but attacking outside of a weapons range generally results in a HINDERED roll.

## Improvised Weapons

Mundane items have damage values associated with their weight, but ATTACK ACTIONS made with them are HINDERED and DAMAGE is rolled 1 size category lower (unless otherwise stated).

## Weapon Table

Name	Descriptors & Special Feature(s)	Damage	Weight & Cost (Coins)
Dagger	Melee (close range), Mid-range (thrown), Lacerate (1), Swift	1d4 (1H)	Light (1 item slot) 25 Coins
Jian	Melee (close range), Keen	1d6 (1H)	
Axe	Melee (close range)	1d6 (1H) or 1d8 (2H)	
Meteor Hammer	Melee (mid-range), Crushing, ATTACK ACTIONS must be made using AGILITY	1d8 (2H)	
Staff	Melee (mid-range), Bludgeon	1d8 (2H)	
Flying Claws	Melee (close range), Lacerate (1), Keen  Mid-range, Lacerate (1), Grapple	1d6 (1H)	
Dao	Melee (close range)	1d8 (1H) or 1d10 (2H)	Medium (2 item slots) 50 Coins
Bow	Long range (projectile)	1d10 (2H)	
War Hammer	Melee (close range), Crushing, ATTACK ACTIONS must be made using STRENGTH	1d8 (1H)	
Spear	Melee (mid-range)	1d8 (1H) or 1d10 (2H)	
Guandao	Melee (mid-range), Cleave	2d6 (2H)	Heavy (3 item slots) 100 Coins
Greataxe	Melee (close range), Lacerate (2)	2d6 (2H)	
Crossbow	Long range (projectile), Crushing, Reload	2d6 (2H)	

## Range & Engagement Zones

Range and engagement zones help organize every character's relative positioning within an encounter and determine if someone is within reach of a weapon or martial arts TECHNIQUE. This allows movement to emphasize where a character is located relative to others (i.e. where people are and who is engaged in melee combat).

When making an ATTACK ACTION outside of a weapons effective range, rolls are HINDERED.

- **Close Range:** close proximity between combatants - within arm's reach or the range of close combat weapons like swords.
- **Mid-Range:** moderate proximity between combatants - within the range of reach weapons such as spears and staves, or thrown weapons like knives.
- **Long Range:** long distance between combatants - beyond the reach of melee and thrown weapons. Examples of weapons include bows and crossbows.

**Designer's Note:** Wandering Blades is designed to be compatible with grid-based combat, zone-based combat, or theatre of the mind. Grid spaces should be measured as 5-foot spaces. For zone-based combat, Close Range is the zone that you are occupying, Mid-Range is the zone adjacent to you, and Long Range is any zone beyond that. One move action would move you one zone. GMs should feel free to bend and change the rules to suit the needs of their tables.

## Weapon Special Features

**Bludgeon** - When you roll a CRIT during an ATTACK ACTION, in addition to dealing maximum base DAMAGE, the target receives the stunned CONDITION.

**Cleave** - As an ATTACK ACTION, you may select 2 adjacent targets for your roll. This roll is HINDERED and DAMAGE is resolved once.

**Crushing** - Ignore up to 2 DAMAGE REDUCTION when resolving DAMAGE on successful ATTACK ACTIONS.

**Cumbersome** - Successful ATTACK ACTIONS apply the stunned CONDITION to a target. If an ATTACK ACTION with this weapon misses, the next attempt is HINDERED.

**Grapple** - If an ATTACK ACTION with this weapon hits, the wielder may automatically GRAPPLE the target instead of dealing DAMAGE.

***Lacerate*** - Instead of rolling DAMAGE dice after a successful attack, you may choose to inflict a number stack of the bleeding CONDITION on the target equal to the lacerate value of your weapon.

***Keen*** - When you roll a CRIT during an ATTACK ACTION, in addition to dealing maximum base DAMAGE, roll this weapon's damage die and add the result to the total (ex. a CRIT with a jian would deal 6 + 1d6 damage).

***Reload*** - After making an ATTACK ACTION with this weapon, you must spend an ACTION before you can do so again.

***Swift*** - The wielder may make one extra melee attack roll per ATTACK ACTION, but at the cost of their damage die being one step lower for all attacks made that turn.

## Armour

Various types of armour have the following qualities:

- **Weight category** - an armour's weight category determines how many item slots it takes up in a character's carrying capacity. There are three armour weight categories: **Light** (1 item slot), **Medium** (2 item slots), and **Heavy** (4 item slots).
- **Damage Reduction** - each type of armour has a fixed **DAMAGE REDUCTION** (DR). Each point of DAMAGE REDUCTION reduces incoming damage dice by one step (ex. heavy armour would reduce a bow's DAMAGE dice from 1d10 to 1d4). For damage involving multiple dice, both are reduced (ex. Light armour reduces the damage of a guandao from 2d6 to 2d4). DAMAGE REDUCTION is ignored when a CRIT is rolled.
- **Descriptors & Special Features** - each type of armour also have descriptors such as attribute requirements and the ability to use the GUARD ACTION.

### Armour Table

Category	Cost (coins)	Damage Reduction	Slots	Descriptors & Special Feature(s)
Heavy (lamellar iron, scale armour)	300	3	4	Checks related to stealth are hindered, requires a STRENGTH SCORE of 14
Medium (leather)	100	2	2	Requires a STRENGTH SCORE of 13
Light (padded, hide)	40	1	1	
Medium Shield	50	-	2	Guard (3), unable to use 2H weapons while equipped, requires a STRENGTH SCORE of 12
Light Shield	25	-	1	Guard (1), unable to use 2H weapons while equipped

### Armour Special Features

**Guard** allows a character to spend a REACTION to completely nullify incoming DAMAGE a number of times equal to the value associated with the item (ex. a shield with guard 3 may do this 3 times). When all of an item's guard is spent, a character can sacrifice the item for one final guard attempt. This results in the destruction of the item and the character receiving a CONDITION of the GM's choice.

## Supplies & General Equipment

### Equipment Sets Table

Category	Weight (slots)	Cost (coins)	Notes
Adventuring Set	2	20	Backpack, bedroll, belt pouch, flame stick, iron pot, mess kit, trail rations (5 days), waterskin, rope (30 ft.), small knife
Scoundrel's Set	2	25	Backpack, belt pouch, flame stick, lock pick (2), rope (30 ft.) and grappling hook, trail rations (3 days), waterskin, crowbar, implements for various games of chance, small knife

### General Equipment Table

Category	Weight (slots)	Cost (coins)	Notes
Flame Stick*	-	1	Limited close-range illumination, concealable
Torch	1/2	2	Mid-range illumination, burns for 2 hours even if dropped.
Lock pick	-	5	CHECKS to open locks are AMPLIFIED. This can be done 5 times before a lock pick breaks. FUMBLED checks automatically break a lock pick. Requires training.
Grappling Hook	1/2	8	CHECKS to climb are AMPLIFIED as long as the hook is anchored.
Ration	1/4	1	A ration can be consumed to take a LONG REST
Detoxifying Herbs	1/4	4	Can be used to remove the effects of poison
Cooking Kit	1/2	4	Frying pan, pot, and spoon
Calligraphy Kit	1/4	3	Paper, brush, and ink
Tent	Variable	X+	X for 1 person (X slots), Y for 2 people (Y slots), and Z for 4 people (Z slots)

\*A flame stick is a compact tube full of flammable materials that when blown on, would ignite. This small flame could then be partially extinguished by putting a cap on the tube, allowing it to be reused like a lighter!

## Misc Combat Equipment Table

Category	Weight (slots)	Cost (coins)	Notes
Incendiary Oil	½	10	Single use. As an ACTION, ignite a melee weapon. Deals an additional 2 damage per attack for 2 rounds.

## Cost of Living Table

Category	Cost (coins)	Notes
Lifestyle Expenses (Frugal)	2 / day	Stable corner, bowl of rice or congee included
Lifestyle Expenses (Modest)	6 / day	Decent room, stable access, and simple meal included
Lifestyle Expenses (Luxurious)	10 / day	Fancy suite, stable access, and fancy meal included



# The Youxia Class

You are a **youxia** [yo she-ah] - a wandering hero who protects the innocent and seeks to correct injustices using their martial skills and diplomacy. You are neither a knight or a bandit. You have no allegiances to monarchs or noble families. Driven by an unwavering sense of justice, you avenge wrongs and help the poor - often through acts of violent heroism.

## Youxia Class Features

Level	Total Bonus Qi Points	Signature Weapons
1	2	1
2	2	1
3	3	2
4	3	2
5	4	3

**Class Hit Die** - 1d10 per level.

**Starting Coins** - 150

**Martial Arts Sect** - You are or were a disciple of a martial arts sect. Your time spent as a disciple has granted you a distinct martial arts style, abilities, and secret techniques unknown to those outside of your sect. Your connection to your sect means that you always have a home to return to and can call upon your fellow disciples when you require assistance.

**Signature Weapon** - You have a few signature weapons that you wield, each with their own unique name. A signature weapon deals DAMAGE one category higher without changing the weight category. The number of signature weapons a youxia can possess is dependent on their level.

***Hero in Disguise*** - You have a unique disguise, persona, and identity that allows you to blend into certain areas (GMs discretion). Any non-combat checks that leverage your disguise within reason are AMPLIFIED. This false identity must be a labourer, peasant, or farmer. It takes less than an hour to become your alter-ego and you can remain in it indefinitely or until you are discovered or reveal your martial prowess. Once a youxia removes their disguise or is discovered, they may not use it again until they have completed a LONG REST.

## Youxia Techniques

A youxia starts with two general techniques of their choice and one from their chosen sect. When a youxia gains a new level, they may add either one general technique or one from their chosen sect.

### General Youxia Techniques

- ***Focused Dodge*** (1 QP - Reactive) - Add your FOCUS to your DODGE against a single ATTACK ACTION.
- ***Misdirect & Strike*** (1 QP - Reactive) - Distract an opponent before striking them from an unexpected angle. After resolving an attack, the next ATTACK ACTIONS made by your allies this round are AMPLIFIED and may be rolled with INTELLECT.
- ***Heroic Strike*** (3 QP - Reactive) - Automatically turn a successful ATTACK ACTION into a CRIT.
- ***Storm Strike*** (4 QP - Combat) - Make four attack rolls for one ATTACK ACTION against a single target. Damage dice are rolled one step lower (ex. If a weapon does 1d6 damage, it does 1d4 instead).
- ***Pinpoint Strike*** (2 QP - Combat) - Spend two ACTIONS (i.e. a SLOW TURN) to make one AMPLIFIED attack roll with damage dice 1 step higher and a CRIT threshold of 16-20 (on a natural roll).

## Mountain Orchid Sect Techniques

**Sect ability:** once per combat encounter, as a free MOVE ACTION you may reposition to an adjacent engagement zone (ex. from close to mid-range).

- **Twilight Thrust** (1 QP - Combat) - You may make a MOVE and ATTACK as a single ACTION, so long as you MOVE in a straight line.
- **Gale Slash** (2 QP - Combat) - A single ATTACK ACTION creates a gust of wind that can knock one opponent within close to mid-range off balance. They must make an AGILITY saving throw with a difficulty equal to your attack roll. On a failed roll, they must use a MOVE ACTION to regain their footing.
- **Moonlit Swordplay** (2 QP - Combat) - Using an ATTACK ACTION, strike two nearby adversaries with a single roll. You may add additional targets for each QP spent after the initial cost.

## Vagabond Sect Techniques

**Sect ability:** once per combat encounter, you may switch from a SLOW TURN to a FAST TURN (or vice-versa) after all turns have been declared.

- **Crimson Threat** (1 QP - Support) - With a bloody execution, you strike fear into your enemy's heart. After you kill an opponent, you may force another opponent to make a MORALE CHECK. If they succeed, their MORALE score is reduced by 2 for the duration of the combat.
- **Cutting Grip** (1 QP - Combat) - Your blades make for excellent grappling tools. Make a single melee ATTACK ACTION against an opponent. If you hit, the opponent must choose to suffer the effect of a SPECIAL MANEUVER or you may roll double the damage dice rolled.
- **Open Wounds** (2 QP - Combat) - With a flurry of slashes, you open up a series of shallow, bleeding wounds on your enemy. Using a single ACTION, make two attack rolls against an opponent. Each successful roll delivers a stack of the Bleeding CONDITION in addition to their normal DAMAGE.

## Iron Mountain Sect Techniques

**Sect ability:** You may reroll failed opposed checks against being grappled a number of times per LONG REST equal to your STRENGTH BONUS.

- ***Iron Presence*** (1 QP - Support) - Opponents within mid-range must make a FOCUS CHECK against your STRENGTH SCORE. If they fail, their ATTACK ACTIONS made against anyone other than you are HINDERED until the start of your next turn.
- ***Thundering Strike*** (X QP - Combat) - Your next attack ignores an amount of DAMAGE REDUCTION equal to the amount of QP you expend.
- ***Crashing Stone*** (3 QP - Combat) - Make a single ATTACK ACTION against an opponent. On a hit, the damage dice are doubled and the target receives the Stunned (1) CONDITION.

## Floating Lotus Sect Techniques

**Sect ability:** You may enter or change a STANCE without using an action a number of times per LONG REST equal to your AGILITY BONUS.

- ***Twisting Force*** (1 QP - Combat) - As a free action, attempt an AMPLIFIED SPECIAL MANOEUVRE against an opponent.
- ***Redirect Energy*** (1 QP - Reactive) - When an opponent misses you with a melee ATTACK ACTION, you may cause them to reroll the attack against another target adjacent to you.
- ***Flowing Rapids*** (2 QP - Support) - You move and roll melee ATTACK ACTIONS against up to three targets. These attacks deal no DAMAGE but instead cause your targets to receive the Dazed (1) CONDITION.

# The Outlaw Class

You are an **outlaw**, a scoundrel who operates outside the laws of the jianghu or miaotang. While often motivated by power or wealth, outlaws are also driven by a sense of rebellion and the desire to write their own destiny.

## Outlaw Class Features

Level	Total Bonus Qi Points	Talent Points	Notoriety
1	1	2	1d4
2	1	+1	1d4
3	2	+1	1d6
4	2	+1	1d6
5	3	+1	1d8

**Class Hit Die** - 1d8 per level.

**Starting Coins** - 200

**Notoriety** - Whether you're a successful smuggler, vicious killer, or cut-throat black market merchant, your exploits as an outlaw are well known throughout the underworld. When you leverage your notorious reputation during an NPC interaction, you may add a die to a related CHECK equal to your notoriety. This may be done a number of times per LONG REST equal to your INTELLECT BONUS. Additionally, encounter rolls made in situations involving NPCs who would reasonably know of your exploits are made using 3d6.

**Ear to the Ground** - You can spend an hour in a gathering place (market square, inn, dining establishment, etc.) collecting rumours a number of times per LONG REST equal to your FOCUS BONUS. When you do this, roll 1d6. If the result is lower than your FOCUS BONUS, the GM provides you with a valuable piece of information pertaining to local events, hidden treasures, or secrets.

**Outlaw Talents** - You are proficient at skills related to an unlawful lifestyle. Starting at level 1, you may spend a talent point to become trained in a talent. Another may be spent on a trained skill to become an expert, and then another to become a master. Talent points must be spent when an outlaw ADVANCES (i.e. levels up).

### Acrobatics

- **Trained** - checks related to jumping, tumbling, balancing, and climbing are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** - checks made using AGILITY cannot be HINDERED when ENCUMBERED (to a limit of your CARRYING CAPACITY + level) and your EXPLORATION SPEED is not affected by difficult conditions.
- **Master** - you may make a free WITHDRAW REACTION once per round.

### Brutality

- **Trained** - checks related to intimidation, interrogation, and brawn are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** - your unarmed strikes deal 1d6 damage. You wield improvised weapons as if they are conventional weapons.
- **Master** - when you are at 0 HIT POINTS, your melee ATTACK ACTIONS deal extra damage equal to your STRENGTH BONUS.

### Perception

- **Trained** - checks related to detecting traps, navigating city streets, and finding subtle details are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** - checks related to tracking targets, finding hidden details, and spotting ambushes are AMPLIFIED.
- **Master** - you are able to perceive camouflaged objects or enemies, even in challenging conditions (ex. darkness), making you immune to the effects of an AMBUSH.

### Shadow Economics

- **Trained** - checks related to discerning lies and bartering are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** - you may accurately appraise valuable goods and relics, and receive a 25% discount from black market merchants with which you hold good standing. Checks related to using language to hide the truth are AMPLIFIED.
- **Master** - when engaging in OVERLAND TRAVEL, your rolls are AMPLIFIED if your destination aligns with known trade routes.

## Stealth

- **Trained** - checks related to blending into crowds, moving undetected, or hiding your presence in dim light or shadowy areas are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** - checks related to hiding in plain sight are AMPLIFIED.
- **Master** - when you attack an unsuspecting target from a hidden position, you may add your INTELLECT BONUS to your damage.

## Thievery

- **Trained** - checks related to pickpocketing, sleight of hand are AMPLIFIED.
- **Expert** checks related to device tampering, trap disarming, lock picking, and locating helpful criminal allies are AMPLIFIED.
- **Master** - you may re-roll a check made while engaging in thievery a number of times per LONG REST equal to your FOCUS BONUS.

## Outlaw Techniques

An outlaw starts with one technique of their choice. When an outlaw gains a new level, they may add one new technique.

- **Displacing Blow** (1 QP - Combat/Reactive) - Your attack pushes the target 10 ft away from you (from close to mid-range). This technique can be declared after an ATTACK ACTION resolves.
- **Immobilize** (1 QP - Support/Reactive) - When you make a successful ATTACK ACTION, roll damage 1 step lower to prevent the target from using MOVE ACTIONS on their next turn.
- **Show of Force** (2 QP - Combat) - After you successfully kill an enemy (either follower or leader), you make a display of brutality to force a MORALE CHECK for the remaining enemies.
- **Rally** (2 QP - Support) - Allies that have taken damage this turn recover one class hit die worth of HP.
- **Taunting Strike** (3 QP - Combat/Support) - You reveal your position and make a dramatic attack that deals additional damage equal to your INTELLECT BONUS and draws the attention of the target to you.
- **Wild Strike** (1 QP - Combat) - Make a single, HINDERED ATTACK ROLL. Damage is doubled on a hit. On a miss, enemy ATTACK ACTIONS against you are AMPLIFIED.

# Basic Mechanics

## Checks & Saves

When a character attempts to do something where the outcome is risky or uncertain, they attempt a **CHECK** by rolling 1d20 and adding a relevant **ATTRIBUTE BONUS**. To succeed, the roll must be equal to or greater than the **DIFFICULTY** of the roll. If the **CHECK** is opposed by a character or NPC, success is based on whoever has the highest roll. **SAVES** are a type of **CHECK** used to avoid bad outcomes brought on by risky situations. **DIFFICULTY** is determined by the GM.

## Sample Difficulty Scores

Type	Difficulty	Notes
Trivial	5	Someone without training would likely succeed
Easy	10	Someone with training should have no trouble
Moderate	13	A bit of a challenge, even with ample time and basic training
Challenging	16	Requires training and practical experience
Difficult	18	Requires training and substantial experience
Futile	20	Even with training and considerable experience, luck is required

## Checks in Combat

If a character would like to try something that would involve a **CHECK** during combat (ex. Hiding, a physical feat, etc.), they may do so on their turn at the cost of an **ACTION**.

## Crits & Fumbled Rolls

In combat, when a character rolls a natural 20 (i.e. 20 before modifiers) during an **ATTACK ACTION**, they deal maximum **DAMAGE** and ignore any **DAMAGE REDUCTION** their target has. This is called a **CRITICAL** (or **CRIT**). Outside of combat, the GM and the player may work together to decide the outcome of a **CRIT**.

When a natural 1 is rolled, this is called a **FUMBLE**. The GM always decides the outcome of a **FUMBLE**.



## Amplified & Hindered Rolls

When a situation calls for a roll to be more effective, it is **AMPLIFIED**. When a roll is **AMPLIFIED**, the player receives a +5 bonus. In a situation that calls for a die roll to be less effective, such as attacking someone shrouded by smoke, it is **HINDERED** and receives a -5 penalty. Amplified and Hindered cannot be applied multiple times to a single roll and if both are applied to the same target, they simply cancel each other out.

If ever a situation is unclear, the GM is always able to collaborate with the players to determine if a roll should be amplified or hindered.

# Combat Mechanics

## Overview

Combat flows in 4 steps:

1. Resolve ambushes
2. Declare FAST TURNS, SLOW TURNS, & COMBAT STANCES
3. Resolve ACTIONS & REACTIONS
4. Resolve MORALE & repeat

### Step 1: Resolve Ambushes

Unless they have been ambushed or decide to go second during a round, **Player Characters always go first** in any order they would like in combat. During an ambush, those being ambushed are unable to use REACTIONS and always act last. **QI ABILITIES** can be used in an ambush. Once ambushes have been resolved, determine the starting positions of the combatants and begin the standard turn order.

### Step 2: Declare Fast/Slow Turns & Combat Stances

In combat, a **round** consists of many **turns** - one for every combatant. At the start of every round, after ambushes are resolved, each combatant involved in the encounter decides if they want to take a **FAST TURN** or **SLOW TURN**. These are declared by the PCs and GM at the same time.

- FAST TURNS happen first. Characters may take 1 ACTION on their turn and 1 REACTION during the round.
- SLOW TURNS happen last. Characters may take 2 ACTIONS on their turn and 1 REACTION during the round.

Once FAST and SLOW TURNS are declared, each combatant may assume a **COMBAT STANCE**, which grants them a series of bonuses and penalties. These persist until an ACTION is spent to move or switch stances during a PC's turn.

- DEFENSIVE STANCE = +2 DODGE and -2 ATTACK
- AGGRESSIVE STANCE = +2 DAMAGE and -2 DODGE
- BALANCED STANCE = +1 DODGE and +1 ATTACK

## Step 3: Resolve Actions & Reactions

In *Wandering Blades*, the following count as **ACTIONS** in combat: **MOVE**, **ATTACK**, select **TECHNIQUES**, and **SPECIAL MANEUVER**.

The following count as **REACTIONS**: select **TECHNIQUES**, **PARRY**, **COUNTER**, **WITHDRAW**, **GUARD**, and **BIND**.

### Actions

#### Move (Action)

In combat, characters take a **MOVE ACTION** when they want to reposition to an adjacent combat zone (ex. from mid-range to close range).

#### Attack (Action)

If a character wishes to attack another, they may attempt an **ATTACK ACTION** at the cost of 1 **ACTION**. Follow these resolution steps:

1. Attacker rolls 1d20 + **STRENGTH** or **AGILITY BONUS** (their choice) and compares the result to the defender's **DODGE**
2. Regardless of the **ATTACK ROLL** outcome, the defender may use their **REACTION**
  - a. If the defender chooses to use their **REACTION**, that must first be resolved
3. Resolve **DAMAGE** - roll the damage dice of the attacker's weapon, deduct damage value from **HIT POINTS** (account for **DAMAGE REDUCTION**), mark **WOUNDS**, and apply **CONDITIONS** (if called for)

#### Dual Wielding

If a character is wielding two one-handed weapons simultaneously and attempts an **ATTACK ACTION**, they roll the damage die for each weapon and select the highest result.

#### Unarmed Attacks

As a single **ACTION**, any character may attempt two unarmed **ATTACK ACTIONS** that each deal 1d2 damage.

## Improvised Weapons

As an action, any character may attempt an attack with an improvised or makeshift weapon. Unless otherwise stated, the ATTACK roll is HINDERED and the DAMAGE of an improvised weapon reflects its weight category, but one step lower (GM's discretion).

## Hit Points & Damage

When a character or NPC takes DAMAGE, their HIT POINTS are reduced by that amount minus the total DAMAGE REDUCTION of their armour. At 0 HP, they are compromised and are now susceptible to WOUNDS, which are serious injuries that can result in death.

## Technique (Action)

Unless otherwise stated\*, a character can only use a martial arts TECHNIQUE as an ACTION.

\*Some techniques (REACTIVE TECHNIQUES) can be used as REACTIONS.

## Special Maneuver (Action)

### Feint

Roll an INTELLECT CHECK against a DIFFICULTY equal to a target's INTELLECT SCORE. On a success, your next attack is AMPLIFIED.

### Grapple

Roll an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY check (attacker's choice). The winner may:

- **Disarm** - force the loser to drop an equipped weapon. They must use an ACTION to pick it up.
- **Push/Throw** - move the defender one engagement zone away. If the attacker loses, the next ATTACK or SPECIAL MANOEUVRE against them by the defender is AMPLIFIED.
- **Trip** - the defender is knocked prone and must use an ACTION to stand up. When prone, they may only attempt ATTACK ACTIONS (HINDERED) using close-range weapons or unarmed attacks. ATTACK ACTIONS made against a prone character are AMPLIFIED and deal maximum DAMAGE.

## Qi Abilities

In combat, QI POINTS can be spent to use QI ABILITIES (as an ACTION unless otherwise stated) or to take additional REACTIONS (without consuming an ACTION or REACTION).

Qi Ability	QP Cost	Effect
Deadly Strike	1	As a REACTION, reroll all damage dice for an ATTACK ACTION and keep the new total.
Intense Focus	1	Your next SKILL CHECK or ATTACK ACTION is AMPLIFIED.
Visualisation	1	Automatically succeed on a saving throw.
Meditative Healing	1	Regain HIT POINTS equal to a roll of your class HIT DIE.
Surging Gale	1	Attempt an unarmed ATTACK ACTION. In addition to damage, a success pushes the target up to 2 ENGAGEMENT ZONES away.
Push the Pace	2	As a REACTION, take an extra ACTION during your turn.

## Reactions

Characters receive 1 free **REACTION** per round of combat. This can be used at any time during a round and does not carry over to the next. Once a character's free REACTION has been used in a round, they may spend qi to take additional REACTIONS (1 QP each).

### Parry

When an attack hits you, roll 1d20 + STRENGTH or AGILITY BONUS (their choice) and compare the result to the incoming attack roll. If the result is equal to or higher, then the attack fails and the defender resolves DAMAGE against the attacker without having to take an ATTACK ACTION.

### Counter

If an incoming enemy melee attack misses, make a free ATTACK ACTION against the attacker.

## Withdraw

Roll 1d20 + AGILITY BONUS and compare the result to the incoming attack roll. If the result is equal to or higher, then the character avoids DAMAGE and may move up to one engagement zone.

If an attempt to WITHDRAW fails, resolve DAMAGE. The next attack made against the defender is AMPLIFIED.

## Guard

When a character is wielding an item with the guard special feature, they may GUARD against incoming ATTACK ACTIONS without rolling. When a character chooses to GUARD, incoming damage is nullified. This can be done a number of times equal to the guard value of an item.

## Bind

If an incoming enemy attack misses, the defender can initiate a BIND by making an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY CHECK. If the defender wins, both combatants' weapons are locked together. On each character's turn, they may make an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY CHECK to WITHDRAW, COUNTER, or disarm their opponent. While bound, ATTACK ACTIONS against both combatants are AMPLIFIED and they cannot attack.

## Step 4: Resolve Morale

The state of a combat encounter dictates whether NPCs will surrender or run away. Allied and adversarial NPCs or creatures have a listed MORALE SCORE between 2 and 12. In combat, a MORALE ROLL is triggered when more than half of the NPCs have been killed, if the **leader** is defeated, or at the GM's discretion (such as when an NPC leader receives a horrible wound). When this happens, the GM rolls 2d6 and compares the result to an NPC's MORALE SCORE. If the result is higher than their MORALE SCORE, the NPC will attempt to retreat, surrender, or negotiate on their next turn.

After MORALE is resolved, repeat step two, and declare FAST TURNS and SLOW TURNS.

## Wounds & Conditions

Any DAMAGE beyond 0 HIT POINTS results in a WOUND. Every 5 WOUNDS, a character receives a negative effect known as a CONDITION. These are selected by the GM and reflect the severity of a PC's injuries. Specific TECHNIQUES and scenarios such as resting without supplies can also result in a character receiving a CONDITION. An NPC "follower" is instantly killed or knocked out of combat when they are reduced to 0 HP.

A long-term CONDITION is cleared when a PC takes a FULL REST.

Condition	Effect
Encumbered	All rolls involving strength or agility made by an encumbered character are HINDERED. Cleared when a PC is carrying an item load equal to or under their carrying capacity.
Hungry (X)	You cannot take a LONG REST to restore HP or QP until you have a proper meal. When a character is at Hungry (4), they begin to lose 1 class HD worth of HP every day.
Dazed (X)	Your ATTACK ACTIONS are HINDERED on your next X turns.
Stunned (X)	You may only take 1 ACTION and no REACTIONS on your next turn, but do so as a SLOW TURN. Each application of this CONDITION stacks.
Bleeding (X)	You lose 1 HP at the start of your turn. You may use an ACTION to make an INTELLECT saving throw to stop the bleeding. Each application of this CONDITION stacks.
Poisoned (X)	Each poison has a unique effect and cannot stack with another. The duration of the effect is equal to X rounds.
Wounded Limb	CHECKS and ACTIONS that involve AGILITY are HINDERED. Long-term CONDITION.
Severed Limb	A limb is lost and you lose consciousness. Permanent CONDITION.
Dying	If a character has the dying CONDITION, they will die in a number of rounds equal to their FOCUS BONUS unless they receive medical aid.

## Resting - Healing After Combat

HIT POINTS are replenished during rests. If you are interrupted during either type of rest, no healing is received.

- **SHORT REST** - a quick break that restores a character's HP by a single HD and QP by their FOCUS BONUS. A SHORT REST takes 1 hour.
- **LONG REST** - an extended break that fully restores a character's HP and QP. A LONG REST takes 8 hours. This requires a character to have a source of sustenance (a ration, meal, etc.). A PC may take a long rest without sustenance, but they receive a stack of the hungry CONDITION.
- **FULL REST** - a proper break in a place of safety. Requires lodgings for at least 7 days. Gain the effects of a LONG REST and to remove long-term CONDITIONS.

## Optional Combat Rules

### High Stakes Crits & Fumbles

If you would like to speed up the flow of combat and make crits and fumbles feel even more dangerous, a CRIT also allows the attacker to make a free ATTACK ACTION while a FUMBLE gives the defender a free COUNTER REACTION.

### Lethal Damage

If you want combat to feel more lethal, damage dice can "explode". This means that when a damage die is rolled and lands on its maximum value, it is rolled again, adding the new value to the maximum value. If the die again lands on its maximum value, it explodes a second time. This happens until the die rolls a value other than its maximum (excluding instances where only 1 point of damage is possible due to damage reduction).



## Combat Example

*The large, masked warrior steps off of the dais and levels his guan dao towards you. "There is no need for the blood of others," he growls, "if you wish to fight me, then fight me."*

### Combat begins

**GM:** Let's determine who goes first. Jeremy, both of us have to secretly choose if we'll take a fast turn or a slow turn.

*Jeremy and the GM both determine what type of turn they want for this round and reveal their choice. Both have chosen a fast turn, hoping to seize the initiative by sacrificing the extra action from a slow turn.*

**GM:** We've both chosen to take a fast turn, but since you are a player, your fast turn always goes before mine. What do you do?

**Jeremy:** I lunge forward and strike with my jian! I'll spend a Qi Point to use my Twilight Thrust technique so I can combo Move and Attack into a single action.

*Jeremy moves forward so that he is within close-range of the warrior. He makes an attack with his jian - rolling 1d20 and adding his character's Agility Bonus. He*

*gets an 18, which beats the warrior's Dodge of 14.*

**GM:** The warrior is going to use his Reaction for the turn and attempt to Parry your attack.

*The warrior rolls 1d20 and adds his Strength. He gets a 19 which is higher than Jeremy's 18.*

**GM:** Since his Parry roll was higher than your attack roll, he knocks your blade away as the blunt end of his guan dao swings around and hits you in the stomach. Since this is a Parry, I only have to roll 2d6 for damage.

**Jeremy:** Luckily, I have light armour on so I get to reduce that damage die by 1 step!

**GM:** Alright, so that means I'm rolling 2d4 instead of 2d6! He deals 7 damage to you!

*The GM rolls 2d4 for the Warrior's guan dao attack.*

**Jeremy:** Dang, that still hurts! I have 4 HP left.

**GM:** The warrior gets to go now. He swings his weapon towards you, but since you are in close-range, the Attack

roll with his mid-range guan dao is Hindered.

*The warrior rolls his attack with a -5 penalty since it is Hindered. He gets a 10, which is lower than Jeremy's Dodge of 12.*

**Jeremy:** Nice! He's gonna miss his attack so I'll use my Reaction for the turn to Counter!

*Jeremy gets to make a free Attack. He rolls a natural 20, a crit!*

**Jeremy:** Since my jian is a signature weapon [a youxia class feature] of mine, my damage die is a step higher than 1d6 at 1d8!

*Instead of rolling damage like normal, Jeremy's Crit allows him to do maximum damage as well as ignore the Damage Reduction of the warrior's heavy armour.*

**Jeremy:** That means I deal 8 damage! I sidestep his heavy swing and plunge my blade into a weak point in his armour.

**GM:** Now that both of you have finished your turns, we would normally end the round and start a new one. However, the warrior has received quite a hit and I think it makes sense to Resolve Morale

[Morale is rolled when more than half of the NPCs have been killed, if the leader is defeated, or at the GM's discretion].

*The GM rolls 2d6 and compares it to the Morale of the warrior. She rolls a 10 which is higher than the warrior's Morale of 9.*

**GM:** Since the Morale roll was higher than his Morale score, he surrenders. *The warrior steps away from you, lowering his weapon in defeat and pressing a hand to his wound. "A good fighter knows their limits," he grunts, "even as they work to surpass them. You have bested me."*

Combat ends

**Designer's Note:** Jeremy was very lucky to score that critical hit and cause his opponent's morale to break. If combat had continued, he would have to carefully ration out his Qi Points so that he makes the most of every decision. Low-level player characters have especially few Qi Points available to them and no guarantee of being able to rest and recover them between fights. Having those abilities available to you can be the difference between life or death for a character.

# Encounters & Exploration

## NPCs & Adversaries

In *Wandering Blades*, characters controlled by the game master (GM) are known as non-player characters (NPCs). They serve a variety of roles during play, such as allies to the player characters (PCs), adversaries, plot drivers, or simply inhabitants of a setting to help populate the game world and provide opportunities for narrative interaction.

Based on their strength and role, NPCs are presented with varying degrees of detail. **Named NPCs** that players will interact with outside of combat, will have a brief description alongside the following **roleplay prompts**: appearance, voice, motivations, morality, and secrets.

**Powerful adversaries** will have the details of a named NPC, but with **tags** and streamlined **combat characteristics**. Tags provide the GM with a quick, high-level overview of an adversary. Some examples include:

- ***Melee Attacker*** - effective combatant at close and/or mid-ranges
- ***Ranged Attacker*** - effective combatant at mid and/or long ranges
- ***Versatile Attacker*** - effective combatant at all ranges
- ***Strategic*** - will make tactical decisions regarding the combatants they target
- ***Aggressive*** - will attack the closest opponent in combat, regardless of their threat
- ***Creature*** - adversaries with non-human characteristics, sometimes fantastical or grotesque in nature
- ***Follower*** - lower difficulty adversaries that typically accompany a Leader
- ***Leader*** - higher difficulty adversaries that sometimes fight with a group

Adversaries that might not pose a difficult challenge to a PC in a one-on-one fight are simply listed with tags and combat characteristics.

## Sample Adversaries

### Bandit

*Follower, Versatile Attacker*

**HP:** 5

**Dodge:** 11

**DR:** 1 (Hide - Light Armour)

**QP:** 1

**Morale:** 5

**Attributes:** Strength +1, Agility +1, Focus +1, Intellect +0

**Attacks:** *Axe* +1 (1d6 1H or 1d8 2H, Close range) or *Bow* +1 (1d10, Long range)

**Technique:** *Rally* (1 QP - Support) - Allies within mid-range recover 1d2 HP.

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### Guard Dog

*Follower, Beast*

**HP:** 7

**Dodge:** 12

**DR:** N/A

**QP:** 0

**Morale:** 5

**Attributes:** Strength +2, Agility +2, Focus +0, Intellect +0

**Attacks:** *Bite* +2 (1d6, Close range, Grapple)

### Imperial Scout

*Follower, Ranged Attacker*

**HP:** 6

**Dodge:** 11

**DR:** 2 (Leather - Medium Armour)

**QP:** 1

**Morale:** 6

**Attributes:** Strength +0, Agility +1, Focus +1, Intellect +1

**Attacks:** *Bow* +1 (1d10, Long range)

**Technique:** *Rapid Fire* (1 QP - Combat) - Attack a target twice using a single ATTACK ACTION.

## Wei the Viper

*Leader, Versatile Attacker, Strategic*

A notorious assassin, Wei the Viper hides their identity behind a sinister serpent mask and long list of victims. They strike from the shadows with hooked daggers laced with a venomous concoction of their design.

**Appearance:** Slim build with armour hidden under fine, yet minimalistic silk robes

**Voice:** Uncomfortably slow and quiet

**Motivations:** Money and power over others

**Morality:** Willing to commit heinous crimes

**Secrets:** Knows the location of a hidden grove where poisonous herbs grow

**HP:** 11

**Dodge:** 14

**DR:** 1 (Padded - Light Armour)

**QP:** 2 + # of PCs

**Morale:** 8

**Attributes:** Strength +1, Agility +4, Focus +2, Intellect +0

**Attacks:** 2 *Daggers* +4 (Melee/Mid-range, Lacerate [1], Swift)

### Techniques:

*Gu Strike* (1 QP - Combat) - Make a single, AMPLIFIED ATTACK ACTION. On a hit, the target receives the poisoned (2) CONDITION - they may only take SLOW TURNS and all strength and agility checks are HINDERED.

*Vanish* (1 QP - Support) - Disappear from sight for a brief moment, allowing for an opportunity to evade pursuit. Cannot be the target of ATTACK ACTIONS for 1 ROUND.

# Reputation

Player character exploits in *Wandering Blades* are the driving factors behind their REPUTATION. This is a series of scores that can be used to guide NPC interactions with player characters. Each character has the following REPUTATION SCORES:

- **Martial** - their relationship with martial artists, secret societies, and the criminal world.
- **Court** - their relationship with the court, government, military, and aristocratic world
- **Common** - their relationship with ordinary people (farmers, merchants, craftspeople, etc.)

REPUTATION SCORES are fluid and adjusted freely by the GM based on a player character's actions. Keep in mind that not every failure or success will have an impact on a character's reputation. Only the most noteworthy events can impact the REPUTATION of a character.

## Reputation Table

Score	Disposition	Effects
1	Hated	The NPC or faction is openly antagonistic and will at least attempt to thwart the party's progress.
2	Unfriendly	The NPC or faction is distrustful of the PCs. They may refuse to assist the PCs or demand compensation before cooperating.
3	Neutral	The NPC or faction is indifferent to the PCs' presence and may offer basic assistance. They are unlikely to go out of their way to aid or hinder them.
4	Friendly	The NPC or faction is welcoming and cooperative. They may assist the PCs without immediately requesting compensation.
5	Favoured	The NPC or faction actively seeks to aid the PC - offering valuable support, information, etc.
6	Revered	The NPC or faction will make great sacrifices for the PC.

# Exploration

## Overland Travel

Unencumbered characters can travel a number of miles per day equal to their EXPLORATION SPEED (STR score).

- **Difficult terrain** (dense forests, mountainous trails, low visibility, heavy rainfall, etc.) halves the EXPLORATION SPEED of a character or party.
- **Harsh terrain** (mountaineering, complete darkness, intense heat, etc.) quarters the EXPLORATION SPEED of a character or party.
- Being **encumbered** further halves a character's EXPLORATION SPEED.
- When **travelling as a group** (party), overland travel is conducted at the slowest member's EXPLORATION SPEED.

When embarking on a long journey, a member of the party must serve as the navigator. They roll 1d20 + INTELLECT BONUS and compare the result to the overland travel table.

### Overland Travel Table

1d20	Outcome
1	Lost and disoriented
2-5	Lost
6-10	Partial success - delayed
11-15	Success - on-course
16-19	Critical success - discovered a shortcut
20	Exceptional success - significant advantage

# Player Characters & Social Play

## Character Advancement

Characters in *Wandering Blades* increase their level (advance) by gaining **experience** (XP) from their adventures at the end of every session. The GM will ask the players the following questions, with a “yes” answer rewarding 1 XP:

- Did you **PARTICIPATE** in the session (combat and/or roleplay)?
- Did your character accomplish a **NOTEWORTHY DEED** that would impact their standing with a faction?
- Did your character take meaningful action related to their **DRIVE**?
- Did your character experience a tough **SETBACK** or **OBSTACLE**?
- Did your character have an impactful scene with their **CONNECTION**?

When a PC earns 5 XP, they increase their level by one and receive all of the class features associated with their new level (refer to each class feature table), a new **TECHNIQUE**, and an increase to their maximum HP equal to their class HD. At every even level, players may increase a single attribute by +1 (improving the **ATTRIBUTE BONUS** and **ATTRIBUTE SCORE**).

## Optional Rule: Technique Manuals

Instead of learning new techniques with each advance, characters must either learn them from martial arts manuals, masters, or through creativity and diligent practice (negotiated with the game master or GM).



# The Land of Blades

Also known as the Lunar Kingdom, the Land of Blades consists of the region forming the frontier of the seas to the south of the Radiant Lands. It is known as a land steeped in tradition; where the people are hardworking and honest. Forged from centuries of bloody conflict, its name comes from the region's famed metalworking techniques and legendary sword masters. For nearly 500 years, the region has been under the domain of the Yue dynasty - a line of kings and queens descended from a legendary swordsman who brought peace to the land after decades of strife.

## Adventure Primer: The Wolf of Longshan

### Read Aloud Text:

*In the year 496\*, King Yichen of the Yue dynasty has grown weak and bitter with age. Manipulated by the clandestine machinations of self-serving eunuchs pulling strings from the shadows, his court has fallen into disarray. Far from the capital, insatiable ministers amass wealth and personal armies in the kingdom's border territories. Trading posts and villages, already burdened by the greed of these corrupt officials, find themselves further oppressed by gangs of ruthless bandits.*

*However, amidst the darkness that has engulfed the land, a glimmer of hope remains. Wandering disciples of ancient martial arts sects, honourable outlaws driven by a code, and compassionate scholars stirred to action by corruption in the court act valiantly to aid the common folk. Armed with martial skill and cunning, they embark on perilous journeys to stand against oppression, right wrongs, and enact retribution for the downtrodden.*

*You are one of these heroes.*

\*The calendar year 496 is the current measure of the time since the founding of the Yue dynasty after the Great War Under Heaven. The current era is referred to as the Reforged Age.

## Background

### Longshan

Longshan ("dragon mountain") is a tranquil trading post nestled in the foothills of the White Dragon Peaks and surrounded by dark forests. Its winding cobblestone pathways meander through quaint courtyards adorned with lanterns and ornate stone carvings. Far from the eyes of the capital, the lands surrounding Longshan were once a haven for criminals and political dissidents before the court brought order to the region.

## Summary

A series of brutal killings have shaken the inhabitants of Longshan. The victims have all been torn apart in a manner officials attributed to wolf attacks. In reality, the attacks were done by a serial killer known as White Wolf. Despite extensive hunts, the small military force stationed there has failed to stop the killings and the locals have grown frustrated and fearful that something far more sinister is occurring. Minister Yu Chen does not want to lose face, and has refused to seek help from the court in halting the killings. Instead, he has resorted to enforcing strict curfews, preventing anyone (including travellers) from leaving Longshan, and hiring mercenaries to bolster the military presence in the village.

## Hooks

Here are some reasons for a small party or a solo PC to start the adventure:

1. The PCs pass through Longshan on their way to the Yue capital, Old Dragon's Nest. The locals point out that the adventurers appear to have combat experience and offer 300 coins if they are able to find and kill a "wolf of supernatural speed and size" that stalks the forest surrounding the village.
2. The PCs arrive to discover a group of soldiers burning a pile of dead beasts. The soldiers will warn the PCs that it is unsafe to travel in the area at night and escort them to the local inn. They will discover that the local military will prevent them from leaving the village under orders from Minister Yu Chen.
3. The PCs discover the body of White Wolf's most recent victim, who is barely alive and requires urgent medical attention. Bringing them to Longshan will entangle the PCs in the mystery.

## Points of Interest

### Elder's Residence & Village Cemetery

The village elder's modest house is the oldest building in Longshan and is located next to the village cemetery, a terraced hillside dotted with meticulously tended burial mounds and ornate stone grave markers. The entrance to the cemetery is marked by a grand gate.

### Makeshift Barracks

The village's meeting hall has been commandeered by Captain Qihui's forces and converted into a makeshift barrack. The soldiers have used rough-hewn timber and salvaged materials to reinforce the traditional building, damaging the intricately carved panels that adorn the walls. Inside, rows of narrow bunks offer respite for the tired soldiers and the air hangs heavy with the scent of smoke.

### The Woods

In the dark forest beyond the flickering lights of the village, the air is thick with the scent of damp earth and decaying leaves. Before the killings began, the locals would freely hunt in the woods and gather all they needed without fear. Now, the trees stand as silent witnesses to the danger that prowls beneath the canopy.

### White Wolf's Lair

White Wolf lives with a pack of mountain wolves in a cave deep within the woods. The cave walls are rough and uneven, and the entire lair is illuminated by luminous moss. Animal bones litter the entrance, breaking underfoot if one is not careful.

## Key NPCs & Adversaries

### Minister Yu Chen

A ruthless minister known for his iron-fisted approach to governance. Arriving in Longshan with a retinue of soldiers, he brought order to the village and the surrounding region by imposing heavy taxes and brutal reprisals to dissenters. While some see him as a saviour, others believe that he has overstayed his welcome.

**Appearance:** Excessive and luxurious

**Voice:** Smooth and persuasive

**Morality:** Ruthless - will not hesitate to exploit others for personal gain

**Motivations:** To accumulate enough wealth and power to usurp the throne

**Secrets:** Resorted to blackmail and murder to obtain his position

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### Father Chen, Village Elder

Father Chen has lived in Longshan his entire life. Despite his status, he lives a modest, yet respectable life maintaining the village cemetery and performing funeral rites for the dead.

**Appearance:** Frail with age, modest clothing

**Voice:** Gentle and wise

**Motivations:** Preserving the village cemetery

**Morality:** Values tradition with unwavering resolve

**Secrets:** Possesses knowledge of a wondrous sword buried in the village cemetery

## Hoon, Travelling Merchant

A blackmarket merchant who frequently trades secrets and military contraband with nations outside of the Land of Blades' borders. Hoon has been trapped in Longshan since the start of the killings, having stopped in the village for supplies.

**Appearance:** Stout and well-dressed

**Voice:** Smooth and persuasive

**Motivations:** Desperate to leave Longshan to meet with a foreign blackmarket buyer beyond the borders of the Land of Blades

**Morality:** Profit-driven and willing to bend the rules to secure lucrative deals

**Secrets:** The crates of mundane goods in his wagon contain stolen military arms and armour

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## Captain Qihui

*Leader, Melee Attacker, Strategic*

Qihui is a career soldier from a military family who has participated in many battles. She was formerly a part of Minister Yu's personal guard, but volunteered to oversee Longshan.

**Appearance:** Scarred face and a stern countenance, adorned in battle-worn armour. seen with a number of soldiers (use the *Imperial Scouts* NPC type) equal to the # of PCs + 1.

**Voice:** Gravelly and authoritative

**Morality:** Fiercely loyal to family

**Motivations:** Protecting her family and securing their future

**Secrets:** Resents Minister Yu Chen and sees her current station as a demotion

**HP:** 15

**Dodge:** 10

**DR:** 3 (Scale - Heavy Armour)

**QP:** 3 + # of PCs

**Morale:** 11

**Attributes:** Strength +4, Agility +0,

Focus +3, Intellect +1

**Attacks:** *Guandao* +4 (2d6, mid-range, Cleave)

### Techniques:

*Crescent Strike* (1 QP - Combat) - Roll a single AMPLIFIED ATTACK ACTION against all combatants in front of you. Resolve hits as normal.

## White Wolf

*Leader, Melee Attacker, Aggressive*

Mistaken as a supernaturally large and strong beast, White Wolf is an animalistic killer clad in the pelts of four mountain wolves. Preying on isolated villages and travellers, few survive to share the truth about his identity. White Wolf is usually accompanied by 4 wolves (see: Wolf).

**Appearance:** Tall, extremely muscular, and wears hide clothing and a cloak made of white wolf pelts

**Voice:** Low and gravelly

**Motivations:** Their insatiable need to kill

**Morality:** None

**Secrets:** One of their parents is an influential military officer

**HP:** 30

**Dodge:** 12

**DR:** 1 (Hide - Light Armour)

**QP:** 2 + # of PCs

**Morale:** 12

**Attributes:** Strength +5, Agility +2, Focus +2, Intellect +0

**Attacks:** *Homemade Flying Claws* +2 (1d8, mid-range, Lacerate 1, Grapple) or +5 (1d8, close-range, Keen, Lacerate)

### Techniques:

*Whirlwind Flail* (1 QP - Combat) - Roll a singled HINDERED ATTACK ACTION against all combatants within mid-range. Resolve hits as normal. Combatants hit by this technique are unable to make MOVE ACTIONS towards the wielder for one turn.

*Unstoppable* (1 QP - Reactive) - If an attack were to reduce you to 0 HP or below, instead reduce your HP to 1.

## Wolf

*Follower, Beast*

**HP:** 8

**Dodge:** 13

**DR:** N/A

**QP:** 0

**Morale:** 5

**Attributes:** Strength +2, Agility +3, Focus +0, Intellect +0

**Attacks:** *Bite* +3 (1d6, Close range, Grapple)

# Wandering Blades Quick Reference

## Checks

1. PC describes an action with an uncertain outcome
2. GM decides on the DIFFICULTY
3. PC rolls 1d20, adding an appropriate ATTRIBUTE BONUS. If the result is  $\geq$  the difficulty, the attempt succeeds
4. GM describes the outcome

Amplified roll: +5 bonus

Hindered roll: -5 penalty

## Combat Overview

1. Resolve ambushes
2. Declare FAST TURNS, SLOW TURNS, & COMBAT STANCES
3. Resolve ACTIONS & REACTIONS
4. Resolve MORALE & repeat

## Turns

- Fast turn = 1 action
- Slow turn = 2 actions

## Combat Stances

- Defensive stance = +2 dodge and -2 attack
- Aggressive stance = +2 damage and -2 dodge
- Balanced stance = +1 dodge and +1 attack

## Actions

- Move
- Attack
- Technique
- Qi Ability (Combat & Support)

## Reactions

### Parry

- Trigger: Incoming attack hits
- Response: Roll 1d20 + Strength or Agility Bonus
- Outcome: If  $\geq$  incoming attack, deal damage to the attacker

### Counter

- Trigger: Attacker misses.
- Outcome: Make a free ATTACK ACTION against them

### Withdraw

- Trigger: Attacker hits
- Response: Roll 1d20 + Agility Bonus
- Outcome: If  $\geq$  incoming attack, avoid damage and you may move to an adjacent zone

### Guard

- Trigger: Attacker hits
- Outcome: Avoid damage and reduce your shield's guard value by one

### Bind

- Trigger: Attacker misses
- Response: Attacker and defender make opposed Strength or Agility checks
- Outcome: See page 29 for additional details

### Qi Ability (Reactive)

- See respective qi ability's description for their details

## Qi Abilities

Qi Ability	QP Cost	Effect
Deadly Strike	1	As a REACTION, reroll all damage dice for an ATTACK ACTION and keep the new total.
Intense Focus	1	Your next SKILL CHECK or ATTACK ACTION is AMPLIFIED.
Visualisation	1	Automatically succeed on a saving throw.
Meditative Healing	1	Regain HIT POINTS equal to a roll of your class HIT DIE.
Surging Gale	1	Attempt an unarmed ATTACK ACTION. In addition to damage, a success pushes the target up to 2 ENGAGEMENT ZONES away.
Push the Pace	2	As a REACTION, take an extra ACTION during your turn.

## Special Manoeuvres

### Feint

Roll an INTELLECT CHECK against a DIFFICULTY equal to a target's INTELLECT SCORE. On a success, your next attack is AMPLIFIED.

### Grapple

Roll an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY check (attacker's choice). The winner may:

- **Disarm** - force the loser to drop an equipped weapon. They must use an ACTION to pick it up.
- **Push/Throw** - move the defender one engagement zone away. If the attacker loses, the next ATTACK or SPECIAL MANOEUVRE against them by the defender is AMPLIFIED.
- **Trip** - the defender is knocked prone and must use an ACTION to stand up. When prone, they may only attempt ATTACK ACTIONS (HINDERED) using close-range weapons or unarmed attacks. ATTACK ACTIONS made against a prone character are AMPLIFIED and deal maximum DAMAGE.



# Designer's Message

Thank you for downloading this quick guide to the mechanics and world of *Wandering Blades*! I am deeply passionate about this project and can't wait to publish the full core rulebook. Community feedback is incredibly important as we develop the game. If you've run a session (or even two!) of the *Wandering Blades*, we'd love to hear your thoughts!

You can share feedback on the [Wandering Blades community forum](#) and via Twitter message [@danielhkwon](#)!

Follow the development of *Wandering Blades* at [patreon.com/danielhkwon](#)