

B.E.L.L.S.

Basic Evolving Laid-Back Leveling System

Overview:

BELLS is a pen and paper table top role playing game that is focused primarily on fast paced story, flexible gameplay, and an enjoyable leveling experience. This system can work within nearly any setting: Play in within an existing franchise, one of your own making, or some combination of many. BELLS uses a Factor 20 dice system. In a Factor 20 system, a 10 is a perfect roll while a 1 and 20 are both the worst.

Getting Started:

Your BELLS starter kit should come with:

1. 2 “tier 0” dice (Green) [A Set equals 1 “tier 0” dice]
 2. 6 “tier 1” dice (Red) [A Set equals 3 “tier 1” dice]
 3. 8 “tier 2” dice (Blue) [A Set equals 4 “tier 2” dice]
 4. 10 “tier 3” dice (Gold) [A Set equals 5 “tier 3” dice]
 5. 20 “tier 4” dice (Platinum) [A Set equals 10 “tier 4” dice]
- Separate each tier of dice into two equal sets. Make sure each set has only one die with black numbers. The Game Master keeps one set of each tier, and players share the other sets as needed (if you have enough extra sets, each player can keep a set of each tier for themselves.).
 - You will need a sheet of lined paper and a pencil for each player except the Game Master.
 - You will need at least one pen to draw the health bar.

Creating your Character:

- At the top of your paper write your Character Name and Player Name.
- Below the names draw in your health bar: Three open circles followed by a vertical line; followed by a single open circle followed by a vertical line, followed by a single open circle.
(ex: ○○○|○|○)
- The Game Master should then give a brief introduction to the setting you will be playing in. This should answer questions like: What are the basics of this setting like. What technology is available? What genre(s) does this game exist in (Sci Fi? Fantasy? Modern? Historical? Pirates? Etc)? What is some common knowledge that any character living in this setting would know about?
- Once you have the basic overview of the setting, come up with two Skills (ex: shooting a gun, driving a spaceship, climbing, etc). Confirm with the Game Master that these Skills are applicable in your particular setting. Write each of them down on their own lines on the paper, leaving room to put 4 tier dots (●●●●) to the left of each Skill. Draw in one tier dot next to each of these two Skills.
- {Optional} come up with any flavor text or narrative information that applies to your character. Gender, Race/Species, Color, Backstory, Etc have no direct effect on the rules. But they might affect the difficulty of a Challenge Throw at your Game Masters’s discretion (ex: If a character is extra tall the Game Master might make it more difficult to sneak past an NPC without drawing attention).
- Your character is now ready to play.

Phases:

- There are Three overall phases that occur in BELLS: The Casual Phase, the Critical Phase, and the Leveling Up Phase.
- The Casual Phase exists when your characters are exploring and interacting with the world around them, but are not under immediate time, danger, or other constraints.
- The Critical Phase is when your characters are under immediate time, danger, or other constraints. The Game Master decides when to change the phase of the game.
- The Leveling Up Phase is defined further in this ruleset.

Turns:

- Each player takes turns interacting within their world. NPC's take turns at the Game Masters discretion. Players may agree to do a turn simultaneously (ex: Player A pushes someone while Player B kneels behind them to trip them).
- During the Casual Phase, turn order is loose and ultimately at the Game Masters discretion. The Game Master might allow one player to perform a few different actions before moving onto someone else. One goal of the casual phase is to allow the characters to move through their world more organically without jarring turn stops (Ex: if the character is trying to set up an elaborate trap in the casual phase, it shouldn't have to take multiple turns to accomplish without reason). But it is also important to prevent a player from taking too long of turns at the expense of other players. The Game Master may cut a turn short at any time in order to give the turn to another player.
- During the Critical Phase turns are much more restricted. The Game Master announces the Critical Phase by having everyone roll initiative (Note: Initiative should be considered a Skill and treated as such: See Skills later in this Rulebook). The closest initiative roll to 10 goes first, and the furthest from 10 goes last. The Game Master decides how many initiative rolls to roll for NPC's, and at what tier. Multiple NPC's might be grouped into a single initiative roll. During a turn, a player typically can either move 30 feet, or move 10 feet and use a single skill (in either order). Some Skills may be used after moving 30 feet and could potentially be used to move even further (ex: I run 30 feet and attempt to pole vault over the mote). This is entirely at the Game Masters discretion.

Skills:

- BELLS revolves around learning and using Skills. There is no limit to the number of Skills your character can learn. To learn a new Skill, your character simply needs to attempt to perform that Skill in game (and not necessarily succeed). Skills should strike a balance between being too vague and too specific. 'Use weapon' as a Skill might be too vague, and 'Drive a 1992 Japanese Sedan' might too specific. This is determined by the setting your characters exist in, and is at the Game Masters discretion.
- When attempting a Skill for the first time, write it down on its own line on the paper, leaving room to put 4 tier dots (●●●●) to the left. Do not mark any tier dots next to this Skill. This Skill is now tier 0.
- When it is your turn and you wish to use a Skill, announce it to the game master (I am going to climb up this wall). Alternatively the Game Master might tell a player to use a Skill (ex: Player A, roll for dodge!). The Game Master then decides how difficult the check will be and rolls the corresponding dice tier Set (ex: If it is a very easy check, the Game Master rolls a tier 0 die. If

it is an extremely difficult check, the game master rolls a Set of tier 4 Dice). The player then Rolls the dice tier set that corresponds with their skill tier (ex: If the player skill is at tier 1, roll a Set of the tier one dice). If the players roll is closer to 10 than the Game Masters roll, the player succeeds the skill attempt and immediately puts a checkmark to the right of that skill on their paper. If the players roll is farther from 10 than the Game Masters roll, the player fails that skill and does **not** put a checkmark next to the skill. In the event of a tie, the result is up to the Game Masters discretion (ex: the player might just barely succeed, the player and an enemy might be locked in a stalemate until the next round, or the player might just barely fail).

Regardless of the Game Masters decision, the play does **not** put a checkmark next to the skill.

- Each skill tier only determines what dice tier to use. Nothing can modify the number rolled by the dice, what is rolled is the final number.
- The Game Master can situationally require that you roll tier dice below your skill tier. This should be done sparingly and only with good reason (ex: your character is heavily intoxicated and is trying to walk a tightrope). This cannot be below tier 0.
- The distance from 10 between a Players roll and the Game Masters roll determines the extent of how well that skill succeeded for failed. (Ex: if the Player rolled a 13 and the Game Master rolled a 6, the player barely succeeded as the player is only 1 point closer to 10 than the Game Master. If the Player rolled a 10 and the Game Master rolled a 1 or 20, then the player perfectly succeeded. If a skill is done perfectly, the player adds an additional check mark next to that skill). The result from the degree of success or failure is entirely at the Game Masters discretion (ex: It might just be different narratively, or damage might be assigned, or it might affect another player's skill checks).
- Some Skills might require a specific piece of equipment to attempt (ex: use rifle skill would require the character to have access to a rifle).
- The Game Master has the right to refuse a player a checkmark in order to prevent cheesing the system (ex: after successfully climbing a wall, the player attempts to climb up and down the wall repeatedly in order to collect checkmarks).
- The Game Master can decide to award an extra checkmark for using Skills in an extra cool way.

Combat:

- Combat itself is also based on Skills. The attacker chooses the skill they wish to attack with, and the defender chooses the skill to defend with. The combat then resolved just like any other skill check. The Game Master should make the opposing skill check harder or easier depending on how effective the defending skill check is against the specific attack skill in the specific situation. (ex: The attack roll is a higher tier if the player defends with 'dodge' Skill while prone facing the completely wrong direction).

Damage:

- In any given situation, the Game Master may assign damage based on the outcome of a roll at their discretion. The severity of damage is also at the game masters discretion, and should account for many factors: the skill that was failed (and in Combat, the type of attack that was used), the severity of the failure, the setting this takes place in (ex: are guns considered powerful or weak in this setting?), any armor worn by character being damaged, etc.
- Damage consists of three type: Scrapes, Wounds, and Traumas. On the health bar at the top of the character sheet, the left three circles are Scrape slots, the middle circle is a Wound slot, and the right circle is a Trauma slot. Scrapes are less severe than Wounds, and Wounds are less severe than Traumas.
- Each slot can only take a single point of damage.

- Scrapes can be placed in Scrape slots, Wound slots, or Trauma slots.
- Wounds cannot be placed in Scrape slots, but can be placed in Trauma Slot.
- Traumas can only be placed in Trauma slot.
- When receiving damage, the damage must be assigned to the lowest available Slot. If no slot is available, the player character immediately dies.
- ‘Plot Armor’ should not exist in BELLS. Player Character death is not the end.
- Healing damage should be handled by an applicable healing skill that fits the setting.

Player Character Death:

- Upon dying, the player character immediately drops all the items (including currency) they had in their direct possession (ex: Not in a bank), and erases half of their checkmarks rounded down.
- The player gets to choose which checkmarks to erase. If this is in the Critical Phase, the player skips their turns until they decide which checkmarks to erase.
- The items are not destroyed, they just are dropped at the location of player death. They are then treated as any other item. Players or NPC’s can take or otherwise interact with those items.
- The Player character then comes back somewhere in the relatively near vicinity to, but not directly at, the location of player death. If it is in the Critical Phase, It should be far enough away that the player cannot reach the location of player death for at least two turns.
- Depending on the setting, it might be the original player reincarnated, or a clone, or a long lost cousin, or a twin, a character with a different name, etc. This is only to fit the setting and has no affect on gameplay.
- Skill Tiers cannot be lost by Player Character Death, only checkmarks.

Leveling Up:

- The Game Master will declare a Level Up Phase at their discretion. This should be done at any reasonable in game long rest or after a successful mission/quest (Ex: The players successfully cleared out the cave of enemies so the Game Master announced a level up).
- Leveling up should happen at least a couple times per session.
- When Level Up has been declared, the player rolls a level check roll for each Checkmark next to that skill.
- A level up check must equal exactly 10 to level up the skill to the next tier.
- Upon successfully leveling a skill to the next tier, all checkmarks for that skill are erased. One skill cannot be leveled more than a single Skill tier in a single Leveling Up Phase
- Failing a level up roll does not erase a Checkmark. The checkmark can be used again during the next Leveling Up Phase, unless the particular skill was leveled up to the next Tier.
- There is no limit to how many skills can level up during a single Leveling Up Phase.
- Follow the following chart to determine what dice tiers to use while attempting to Level.

| Attempting to Level: | Dice tier to Use |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| From Skill Tier 0 to Skill Tier 1 | Tier 3 |
| From Skill Tier 1 to Skill Tier 2 | Tier 2 |
| From Skill Tier 2 to Skill Tier 3 | Tier 1 |
| From Skill Tier 3 to Skill Tier 4 | Tier 0 |