Terminology of HAT

HAT, or *HP - AC - TWENTY SIDED*, is a roleplaying game that shares three basic concepts with D&D but diverges from there. The three concepts kept from D&D are obvious from the title: HP, AC, and the D20 roll. However, each is expanded in scope. One of the goals of HAT is to create a game that embraces a more narrative and situation driven feel, while maintaining support for classic D&D modules. This is the first version on these rules, known affectionately by the author as the Bowler edition.



This page introduces and defines all the terms used in the game. It is a large, functional part of the rules as they are presented online. Many other pages link into this one in order to prevent redefining the same terms and rules over and over.

We divide these term into three groups: Core Terms, Standard Terms, and Optional Terms. Core terms are things needed to understand and play the game, all players should have a rough idea of how they work. Standard terms are basic parts of the game, but may or may not apply to all players. They just need to learn the terms that apply to their characters. Optional terms are ones that appear in optional rules for play, and may or may not be used in any given game of HAT.

One basic concept is at the root of all play though, so lets get that out of the way:

Traits

Characters are a collection of traits, each of these a word or phrase that says something about the character themselves. For example, Strength, Blitz, and Dwarf are all traits. Each trait is defined by its type and substance. The type is always one of the following: Attribute, Ability, or Aspect. The substance is how the trait works in the rules. Adjectives, Clauses, Modifiers, and Usurp are types of substance.

Traits can't possibly describe everything about a character. We solve this by using the rule of assumption. Assumption is a process by which we assume a character has quality X if no trait sets that quality. Here are the qualities which are handled by assumption:

- **Race**: The character is human.
- **Age**: The character is neither young or old, but somewhere in the middle.
- **Wealth & Resources**: The character is broke and is a wanderer.
- **Standing**: The character has no important friends outside family.

- **Equipment**: The character starts out with basic equipment, but nothing of note.

Core Terms

Here are the terms used most in the game, the basic concepts of HAT.

Attribute	Ability	Aspect
Adjectives	Clauses	Modifiers
HP	AC	Additional
Usurp	Advantage	Outcome
XP	Advancement	Contest
Encounter	?	?

Ability

One of the three types of Traits. These are the most specific of traits, meaning they are narrow in application. The question of whether an Ability applies to a situation is totally in the hands of the GM. Each ability has Adjectives and Clauses for its substance. There is a set of many Standard Abilities in HAT available for use, our you can construct them using the Ability Construction Set.

Attribute

One of the three types of Traits. These are gross traits that describe the character in general. While there are special ones, and they can be created by the player, there is a basic set: Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Each attribute has a Modifier and Adjectives as its substance. Since a modifier can be a boon or a hindrance, you can't assume that a character with an attribute has it as a virtue. It could also be a flaw.

Aspect

One of the three types of Traits. Things that aren't specific like Abilities, or gross traits like Attributes, fall into the category of Aspects. This means it ends up as a sort of catch-all for traits that don't fit into either of the other two categories. Aspects include things like character Histories, Natures, Beliefs, Legends, and so on. You can create your own Aspects with the help of the GM (see Authoring), or use any from the Known Aspects list on this page. Aspects have a special type of substance called Usurp meaning when they apply you work with the GM (without rolling) to see how they impact the fiction.

Adjectives

One of the substance rules for traits. Adjectives in HAT are free-form, and floating words or phrases that impart value. Each has no set target, hence: floating, and each can be created freely by players, hence: free-form. Adjectives impart value and as such denote a form of capability. Let us explore an example. During Adventurer creation you take the Attribute: Dexterity. It says under Dexterity to pick on Adjective. What you do now is decide what Adjective you want that might describe your

Adventurer's nimble nature or their prowess abilities and record that, like so: Lightning Quick. When it may apply to an action taken by your Adventurer, offer that up to the GM and let them decide if so.

When Adjectives apply to actions, they give acting character Advantage. If you end up with more Advantage than the opposing force when all is said and done, you'll get more dice to roll as representing said Advantage. Adjectives are each normally worth 1 Advantage, but the exception is: Incredible Adjectives.

Incredible Adjectives end in one or more exclamation points. Lightning Quick is not incredible. Lightning Quick! is incredible. The exclamation points at the end each make it worth one more Advantage when applied in the rules. So Lightning Quick!! is worth 3 Advantage, one for the Adjective and two more for the two exclamation points.

Clauses

One of the substance rules for traits. A clause is a rule of the game in a specific format. Abilities have one or more clauses, which is how they function within the rules of HAT. Each clause can worded like so: Do <X>, and earn <Y>; or: Earn <Y>, if <X>. X is some condition that must be met, and Y is the mechanical result that you earn. The condition of a clause may be entirely fictional or not, but the result of a clause is always mechanical. To put it simply, clauses always link the fiction of the game to the rules of an Ability. Lets explore the clause used in the Ability: Smash. Smash says: “The player may add the Adjective: Brutal and one level to attack battle actions for the cost of 1 HP.” The condition here is “pay 1 HP” and the result: may add the Adjective: Brutal and one level to attack battle action“. Its as simple as that.

Modifiers

One of the types of substance for traits. While Abilties never have modifiers, Aspects sometimes do, and Attributes always have them. Additional scores count as positive modifiers as well. A modifier is simply an adjust made to the total of a roll. When more than one modifier applies, you sum them to create one modifier from them, as so: A roll that was *STR + Stunt* is: *D20 + STR modifier + Stunt modifier* for the total. You then use that total to determine Outcome.

Usurp

One of the types of substance of traits. When a trait has the Usurp ability, it means that within the limits given, the player can Usurp the normal rules and do that the trait specifies. If the trait does not specify what can be done, that means its something in the vein of the trait created by the player of that character and the GM. For instance, the Elf Aspect trait has this Usurp: ”*In addition, they may Usurp the rules for the cost of 2 HP when the GM allows them to perform a stunning feat of physical prowess and earn a level result effect as the GM picks*“ That's fancy talk for the ability of the elf to do things outside the normal scope of the rules, if the player pays 2HP and the GM allows. What can this allow: stunning feats of physical prowess. So if your Elf reached a thirty foot wide chasm, perhaps you could pay 2 HP to Usurp and leap it in a daring feat of prowess.

While the Usurp may trigger other game mechanics, and often does, it never has any inside it or rolls. That means the fiction and events of the Usurp are just between the player and the GM. Whatever

actions taken in the fiction by the player's adventurer don't trigger the game rules. Above, when jumping the chasm, you wouldn't consult the rules of the game as GM to determine the outcome. Instead you decide that as you envision it with the player's input.

HP

This is one of the three main currencies of play, the others being AC and XP. HP are Hunger Points, and signify the drive and ambition of an adventurer. You can say that the presence of HP makes them an adventurer. There is no direct correlation to the amount of ambition the adventurer has and the amount of HP they possess. Instead, think of it as how far they are from losing all ambition and suffering a Collapse.

A Collapse happens when the adventurer runs out of HP. At this point the player can retire their adventurer and make a new one as the GM allows, if that is what they want for their character. You could picture this as a moment of crisis where the adventurer questions their drive to go on. Regardless of any of that, any Contest the adventurer is currently in is forfeit, combat or otherwise and consequences are figured.

Only Adventurers have any amount of HP (and brutal forces of the wild like monsters and so on). A regular person may have none and in which case they will never have the mettle to become an adventurer, or they may have one to four HP and may have the potential but never realized it.

As a player you will spend your HP in contests to activate Clauses and mechanics. The core one of which lets you buy off the effect of an Attack by paying its Outcome in HP, which is called a Discount.

Of the currencies, HP returns the slowest, meaning at best you get a Draft of +2 HP per round. However this isn't a recovery, its +2 HP, and you can go beyond your normal maximum HP for the period of one Encounter.

AC

This is one of the three main currencies of play, the others being HP and XP. AC is Armour Class, and is a measure of the ability to evade incoming attacks. This isn't just weapon strikes, but subtle arguments, passionate pleas, and so on. You don't get AC from donning armor, you get it from being tough as nails, fearless, and doing whatever it takes to rebuff that which would change you.

The basic use of AC is just as Discount from HP, however in use it is subtly different. The normal use is Evade, you pay 3 AC to remove 3 Outcome from an incoming attack of any type. You can pay less AC, meaning an outcome 2 attack costs only 2 AC to counter, but never more than 3. This means an Outcome 4 attack or higher can't be totally cancelled by AC, just reduced by 3.

A lot of Abilities require you to pay AC to activate them, which in the fiction is like have to put yourself out there to use them. To cast a dangerous spell, or make a daring attack, you are going to pay AC as you open yourself to injury.

AC returns much quicker than HP. A draft of AC returns an Adventurer to full, no matter how much you spent from it.

Additional

Additional are modifier scores (but usually bonuses) in addition to the ones you get from Attributes. All adventurers start with Acumen, Stunt, and Trick as their scores. They may also get more from Abilities and Aspects, examples being Faith, Thievery, and Occult. You can picture these scores as character capability in various areas.

- Acumen is a measure of judgement, insight, and awareness. It makes the adventurer more perceptive and understanding.
- Stunt is a measure of physical training, speed, and coordination. It makes the adventurer more deft and nimble.
- Trick is a measure of learning, smarts, and wit. It makes the adventurer more cunning and knowledgeable.
- Faith is a measure of belief and spiritual power. It makes the adventurer more headstrong and powerful in the cleric realm of powers (prayer).
- Occult is a measure of magical knowledge and power. It makes the adventurer more disciplined and powerful in the magic-user realm of powers (spells).
- Thievery is a measure of ability in the thief's arts. It makes the adventurer more inquisitive and able in the thief's realm of powers (artifice).

Advantage

Advantage is a mechanic by which the player (or GM) rolling the dice can get more dice to roll. These dice do not add together, but instead they work as a pool form which you take the highest rolled die as the result. If you rolled three dice and got: 3, 14, and 11, you would keep the 14 as your total. However, there is another option for using Advantage as well: Push.

When you Push, you have your Adventurer leverage some of this advantage for a better outcome instead of better odds at a better outcome. You pay one Advantage AND one HP and trade that for +1 level of Outcome give the roll earns at least 1 Outcome (a roll result of 5+).

Outcome

Outcome is what you earn from rolling the dice in the game. A roll for Outcome is the roll of a twenty-sided die plus one or more Modifiers, but usually two of them. Outcome means the Adventurer did better at what they were attempting. You earn one Outcome from every full five points you roll. A roll of 17 is 3 Outcome, and a roll of 11 is 2 Outcome. A roll of 4 or less on the die earns no Outcome - EVER. If a roll of 4 or less would have created Outcome (from Modifiers or Push, etc) the player can only earn that Outcome if they pay HP equal to the levels of Outcome they will get. If they do not, or cannot, they earn no Outcome.

XP

This is one of the three main currencies of play, the others being AC and HP. XP is naturally earned over the course of play through Encounters and Story. Every ten points earned gets the adventurer an Advancement, but does not spend it. You spend XP via Story, and occasionally through the rules of traits, like creating instances of powers such as prayers, spells, and artifice.

This is a two-way street in regards to Story, since it can also earn you XP. For instance, taking a 0 Outcome result from an action when a Story Point would give your adventurer a problem earns them 1 XP.

Advancement

When a player earns 10 XP, they get an Advancement. They get the advancement right then and there, no waiting is applied. If this gives the adventurer a new ability, explain that in the fiction as you like. Each Advancement lets a player do one of the following for their adventurer:

- Increase HP 4 and Improve a trait.
- Increase AC 2 and Improve a trait.
- Add 3 Additional and Improve a trait.
- Add a new trait and Improve a trait.
- Improve two traits.
- Pay off a Story Debt.

Contest

A Contest happens when something interesting happens in the fiction (any player or GM decides it is so) where something hangs in the balance. Combat is a contest in which injury hangs in the balance, but this could happen in a wide range of situations. A duel for the rights to a treasure map, a drinking game to the last one standing, or an argument about which way to go can result in a contest.

The mechanism of Contests are always the same, though the abilities and scores will change. The first one to either lose all their HP and Collapse, or takes X Outcome of hits loses the contest and suffers the consequences. X is normally 10 here, but could be 5 for a short contest and 15 for a long one as the GM decides. Short or long has nothing to do with strength, but only with pacing.

Hits in combat are injury and take a long time to heal, which work as hits against your next contest right off the bat. If my adventurer had 5 steps of injury, they begin their next contest with 4 hits against them (all contests). Other contests may or may not impose such a steep price for hits, though generally there is something involved, XP being a common one.

A serious XP for Hits Contest is known as a Conflict. In these cases hits at the end of the Contest, win or lose, are lost XP. If you can't pay the XP, you end up with Story Debt.

Encounter

An Encounter will result in an XP reward, and is general a sequence of one or more Contests that results in something important happening within the fiction. Clearing out all the monsters at the gates of a dungeon might be an Encounter, or finding the person with the map you need in the golden city could be as well. The rewards range from 1 XP to 3 XP, and an additional reward or two can be tacked on by the GM for interesting achievement, roleplaying or so on. This means you could earn 1 XP for something minor, and up to 5 XP for something really kick ass. All participating adventurers earn the same XP reward for the encounter, so that means if your buddy does something awesome, you get to share in the reward.

Standard Terms

Optional Terms

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