Welcome to *Wild Talents*

Wild Talents is a roleplaying game that emulates the worlds of comic book superheroes. You make up the characters and their adventures. From the gritty realism of *Top 10* and *V for Vendetta* to the four-color action of *Spider-Man, JLA,* and *The Avengers, Wild Talents* is built to handle it all.

Wild Talents aims to capture the dynamic action of superhero comic books. Superhero games should be fast and exciting. The rules should propel the action, not slow it down. They should be flexible enough to handle anything, quickly, without a lot of page-flipping.

Wild Talents does this with a simple, intuitive rules set called the "One-Roll Engine," or O.R.E. All character actions are resolved with one roll of the dice. In combat you don't roll to see who goes first, then again to see if you hit, then again to see if your power works, then again to see how much damage you do, then again to see how far you knock your target across the street, and so on. And you don't need to spend a lot of time looking up rules and results for every single action.

In *Wild Talents,* you roll once. That tells you all you need to know.

Creating a character in *Wild Talents* is simple and straightforward, and the modular construction of the rules allows you to tweak them to fit the tone of your game, from the deadly to the over-the-top, instantly.

In its standard rules, *Wild Talents* strives for a "realistic" feel, to give a sense of consequences for using superhuman powers with abandon—or failing to use them properly when the time is right. But every chapter is loaded with options to "open up" the game to four-color action and beyond.

The result? A different kind of superhero game. A game that plays fast and lets you easily adjust the rules to *your* style, making anything possible—from lighthearted brawls to take-no-prisoners realism.

Wild Talents is your game.

What You Need to Play

You don't need much to play *Wild Talents* besides this rulebook.

First, you need to know what a roleplaying game is all about. In this limited edition, which we expect to be snatched up by veteran gamers, our focus is on creating characters and their setting. We won't spend much time telling you what an RPG is or how to run one. If you're new to this whole thing please visit our website at www.arcdream.com for pointers.

You need lots of ten-sided dice.

You need scratch paper for writing notes and drawing maps and pictures.

You need photocopies of the character sheet (in the back of the book).

If you're the game moderator (GM), you need whatever notes or maps you have prepared to run the adventure.

Other than that, all you need is imagination.

Author's Note

I'd like to thank all the people who've made *Wild Talents* a success even before it was released—those gamers out there who spent time (and money) on my ideas. The crazed gamers who frequent the Arc Dream mailing lists and discussion board have my undying loyalty. Thanks so much, guys—you know who you are. Particular thanks go to Rob Mansperger for his terrific design work on our Web site.

I'd also like to thank the ever-patient Greg Stolze, the erudite Kenneth Hite, and the blindingly talented Sam Araya, Todd Shearer and Christopher Shy for all their hard work on this book. If you like what you find here, support them! Check out Ken's weekly column at *Pyramid Online* (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Buy their stuff—I do!

Again, thanks everybody!

Dennis Detwiller

Inspirations

While *Wild Talents* is flexible enough to handle any style of superhero gaming with speed and excitement, the standard, unmodified rules tend toward the "cinematically gritty" end of the spectrum. Our primary inspirations were such comics as *The Dark Knight Returns, Top 10, The Ultimates,* and *Watchmen,* and the *Spider-Man, X-Men* and *Matrix* movies—comics and films that combine dizzying action, intense characterization, and enough of a sense of the consequences of it all to keep us in suspense. To us, that is the heart of *Wild Talents.*

What Makes a *Wild Talents* Character?

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of *Wild Talents,* let's explain the basics—the essential components of every character.

Statistics and Skills

Statistics (or stats for short) describe the basic qualities of every character. They tell you how strong and smart your character is, how coordinated and commanding, how level-headed and how aware. The stats are Body, Coordination, Sense, Brains, Command and Cool. They're measured in dice. In normal humans they range from 1 die to 5 dice; in superhumans they can go up to 10 dice.

Skills are specific learned abilities such as driving a car or speaking Vietnamese. Like stats, skills are measured in dice; they range from 1 to 5 dice in normal humans, or up to 10 dice for superhumans.

Every skill is based on a stat—driving a car fast around a corner requires balance and hand-eye coordination, so the Driving skill is based on the Coordination stat.

Base Will and Willpower

Most characters, normal and superhuman alike, have a Base Will score that defines their internal resilience, confidence, and drive. It rarely changes.

Most superhumans also have a Willpower score, which drives their incredible powers. Self-confidence is crucial to achievement; tragedy and defeat sap the abilities of the most powerful hero.

Base Will and Willpower aren't measured in dice like stats and skills; they're measured in points that you spend or risk to do superhuman things.

Powers

Only superhumans have superpowers. There are three kinds: hyperstats, hyperskills, and miracles. The term "superpower" includes any of them.

Hyperstats and hyperskills are ordinary stats and skills exaggerated to incredible levels—a hyperstat in Body (also called Hyperbody) grants you superhuman strength; a hyperskill in Darts makes your dart-throwing impossibly accurate.

Miracles, the third variety, are abilities that are just plain impossible for a normal human to perform—only superhumans can possess them. Flying under your own power and the ability to turn people into gold are miracles. Miracles are measured in dice, from 1 to 10; but unlike skills they are not based on any stats. Miracles stand alone.

Dice Pools

Whether you're using a miracle, a stat by itself, or a stat and a skill, any important and challenging action is resolved with a roll of 10-sided dice called a dice pool. No dice pool ever has more than 10 dice. If any dice come up matching, the action succeeds. The more dice that match (called the "width" of the roll), and the higher their face value (called the "height"), the better. (A matching set of ones is good, but a matching set of tens is a lot better.)

In combat, an attack roll's width determines the amount of damage and which attack goes first. An attack roll's height determines which part of the target takes the damage. Outside of combat, a roll's width determines how long the action takes (and sometimes other things, like how much damage is healed when you perform first aid). A non-combat roll's height determines the quality of the success.

Hit Locations and Wound Boxes

Hit locations are where you take damage when an attack hits you. Most characters have six hit locations: left leg, right leg, left arm, right arm, torso, and head. Each hit location has a number of wound boxes that are filled when you take damage. If all a location's boxes are filled with light damage (called Shock), it's temporarily disabled (or you're unconscious). If all boxes are filled with more severe damage (called Killing), it's permanently maimed (or you're dead).

Example of Play

This section will give you an idea what a game of Wild Talents *plays like. If you're new to the game, you might want to read the rules first, then come back here to see how it all works.*

The player characters in this scene are Henry "Wraith" Francis and "Rabid Anne" Gareth, police officers with the so-called "Talent Squad" in a city with a large population of superhumans. "Rabid Anne" is a normal human with quick wits and a cool head, equipped with special gadgets created for the T-Cops. "Wraith" can turn incorporeal (as described in the Insubstantiality *miracle, page 99); and while incorporeal he can fly (page 89) and turn himself invisible (page 100). They've been sent downtown on a drunk-and-disorderly call.*

Terms in **bold** *are defined under* **"Wild Talents Definitions."**

GM: Your skimmer pulls to a stop and hovers high over the address dispatch gave you. It's a professional section of town. Mainly skyscrapers and street-level bodegas and sports bars, plus a few older, smaller buildings. There are a few blue-and-red flashes down on the street. Cop cars.

Wraith: I bring the skimmer down to street level.

Rabid Anne: I radio in that we're here. Any sign of the disturbance?

GM: Yep. As your skimmer touches down, one of the regular cops waves and points to a bar. A sign with a big neon football is marked "First Round and Ten". The glass front has been shattered. There's smoke coming out. It's dark in there, but you see something big moving around.

Rabid: I strap on my helmet and activate the sensors. Can I see inside better?

Wraith: I leave my window open and wraith out through the door, then wave to the cop. "What's up?"

GM: The cop jogs closer. He doesn't react to your trick. He looks too worried to react. He says, "It's Doctor Jurassic!"

Wraith: I thought he was a good guy!

GM: You said that in-character? Okay. The cop gives you a look. "No kiddin'. Tell him."

Wraith: I nod at the cop. Rabid, what's the score?

Rabid: "Please. Call me Anne. Or Officer Gareth." Can I see inside?

GM: Ambient light is bright outside, late afternoon and all, so night vision doesn't do you any good. But zooming in you can see pretty well.

Wild Talents Definitions

2x10: Read as "two by ten," meaning a roll in which two of the dice came up 10s.

Adventure: A short, self-contained storyline. An adventure usually lasts one to four game sessions, but some are longer. Adventures can be stand-alone or strung together like issues in a comic book.

Base Will: A number of points measuring a character's internal fortitude, drive, and resilience.

Campaign: An ongoing story usually involving the same group of core characters in the same setting. A campaign is comprised of multiple adventures.

Cinematic: A style of play emphasizing action and danger but allowing for exceptional heroics. *Raiders of the Lost Ark* has cinematic action.

Combat Phase: One of three segments of a combat round. Each round has three phases: the declare phase, the roll phase, and the resolve phase.

Combat Round: A brief span of time in which action happens. It can be anything from a second to several seconds long. Usually, each character in a scene gets at least one action in a round.

Damage: Harm suffered by a character or object. Measured in Shock and Killing damage (abbreviated S and K).

Declare Phase: The first phase in a combat round, in which all characters announce what they're trying to do this round.

Defense: Any action that attempts to prevent an otherwise effective attack from succeeding. Maneuvers such as dodging and blocking are the most common, but many miracles can be used to defend, as well.

Dice Pool: The dice that a player rolls to see if her character's action succeeds. Dice pools generally are rolled only when an action is especially challenging and the outcome is important to the game; for most other actions, no roll is required—the GM just decides what happens. Dice pools are determined by adding together a stat and a skill or by looking at a miracle's dice rating. You can never roll fewer than 2 dice or more than 10.

Difficulty: The minimum height that a matching roll must be for the action to succeed.

Dynamic Contest: A contest where two characters' actions are working against each other. The highest matching roll succeeds.

Four-Color: A style of play that emphasizes over-the-top heroics and dramatic action. The JLA and Avengers comics are good examples.

The windows are about ten feet tall. Inside, it looks like the lower half of a tyrannosaurus rex staggering drunkenly across the room.

Rabid: Crap. All right. I get out of the car. Skimmer, I mean. And flip the safety off my gun. Let's head inside.

Wraith: Right. I fly over to the door and yell out, "Doctor—" What's this guy's real name?

GM: Daniel Tunbridge.

Wraith: "Doctor Tunbridge! This is the police. You need to turn human and calm down!"

GM: Inside, the bar is three stories tall, with balconies surrounding a central open area. Lots of big-screen TVs. Now all smashed. There are a few people still inside—a couple of bartenders cowering behind the main bar, and a few people stuck on the balconies. Doctor Jurassic is a full-size, real-life T-rex. He turns, suddenly looks not at all wobbly, and roars. LOUD.

First **combat round. Declare** your actions. Wraith, you have the lowest Sense **stat,** so you declare first. Then Anne.

Wraith: Ah, nuts. I'm **defending** with *Insubstantial.*

Rabid: If there's enough of a wall under the broken window, I'll hunker behind it. Otherwise I'm dodging if he comes at us.

GM: There's no wall, just broken glass. He's not charging at you, but his roar is bad enough— **roll** 'em!

Wraith: Looks like 8 and 3, and I'll put both my **wiggle dice** at 10s. So I'm defending at **2x10. Width** 2, **height** 10.

Rabid: My dodge says . . . no matches. Damn.

GM: Doc Jurassic's roar is 2x10. Wraith, your defense is a **dynamic contest** against his roar, and your 2x10 matches his roll for both width and height. That means you **gobble** up his attack dice and make it miss—you go all-the-way insubstantial for a moment and the sound waves go right through.

Anne, no such luck: Take 2 **Shock damage** to the head. You see the bystanders in the bar and the cops outside scream and cover their ears in the sudden, horrifying noise.

Rabid: My helmet has *Immunity* to flashes and loud noises at **level** 2. That reduces the attack's width by two.

GM: Oh. Well, that's too much for his roll. No damage for you, either. It's the next round.

Rabid: Good! All right. Let's see if we can find out what his problem is. I shoot him with my stun beam.

Wraith: Look at you. Always with the shoot-

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ing! I'm flying in to rescue some people.

GM: Okay. Jurassic lumbers forward to stomp on Anne. Roll.

Rabid: Holy. . . . Dice gods, be good to me.

Wraith: Um . . . I'm not doing anything fancy with *Insubstantial* since I haven't yet gotten to the dino-bait—I mean bystanders. Do I need to take a multiple actions penalty to use it and *Flight* at the same time?

GM: No. Just roll *Flight.*

Wraith: Okay. I rolled 9, 9, 6, and 2, and set the wiggle die to 9, for 3x9. Width 3, height 9. Fast and elegant. That's me all over.

Rabid: My stun beam is 3 hard dice, so 3x10. But my armor keeps me to width 2 for **initiative,** so I go at 2x10. That sounded like a lot of dice you were rolling there, GM. . . .

GM: Yep. Jurassic's stomp comes up . . . 2x10. Okay. That's a tie, so I'll say your shot goes off just as Jurassic is looming over you. What kind of damage does it do?

Rabid: Six Shock to the head.

GM: It doesn't look like he even feels it. Then the very large, very heavy foot comes down. Hard. And squashes you flat into the cement. Take 6 Shock and 6 **Killing** to every single hit location.

Rabid: Good Lord! Uh . . . okay. My *Heavy Armor* stops 4 Shock and 4 Killing, so that's 2 Shock and Killing left. Are we using the **"Shaking It Off"** rules?

GM: Yes.

Rabid: All right. How about this: I spend 6 **Willpower** to buy off the damage from my head, and we say my head escaped the stomping?

GM: Sounds good. With that Killing damage you've got broken bones and internal injuries everywhere else, but you're alive and conscious. Time for a **Stability check** on your next action. If you blow it, you're going to lose some more Willpower.

Wraith, you hear the stomp—THOOM!—and turn in time to see Jurassic lift his foot off Rabid's crushed body.

Declarations?

Wraith: Uh. . . .

Definitions continued . . .

NPC: Non-player character. A character created and portrayed by the GM.

Out of Character (OOC): Something the player says that the character in the game is not saying. ("My dice suck! Pass the chips.")

PC: Player character. A protagonist or featured character in the game, portrayed by one of the players.

Player: Someone who plays a PC in the game.

Regular Dice: Ten-sided dice rolled to resolve difficult actions.

Resolve Phase: The last phase in a combat round, in which all the action happens based on what the characters declared and rolled in earlier phases.

Roll: A throw of the dice.

Roll Phase: The second phase in a combat round, in which all characters roll one dice pool based on the actions announced in the declare phase.

Set: A group of matching dice.

"Shaking It Off": An optional rule where a character spends Willpower to reduce damage from an injury.

Shock Damage: Surface trauma, such as shallow cuts, bruising impacts, or light bleeding. Shock damage can be incapacitating but is usually not fatal.

Skill: An area of specialized training. Add skill dice to stat dice to determine a stat+skill dice pool.

Stability Check: A roll of the Cool stat plus the Stability skill, usually required when facing mental trauma such as mortal fear. (A character without the Stability skill can roll just the Cool stat.)

Stat: A character's native Body (strength), Coordination (speed and agility), Sense (perceptiveness), Cool (coolness under fire), or Command (strength of personality). Every skill is based on one of the stats.

Static Contest: A standard dice pool roll. If two or more dice match (and beat the difficulty of the action, if any), the action succeeds.

Width: The number of matching dice in a successful roll. Width usually indicates the speed of an action or the amount of damage an attack inflicts.

Willpower: A character's internal fortitude, drive, and resilience. Willpower starts equal to Base Will but changes often. In most games, Willpower fuels superhuman powers; characters who lose faith in themselves lose what drives them to superheroics.

Wiggle Dice: Dice that are not rolled but can be set to any number after the other dice are rolled, thus guaranteeing a success.