StoryNite Rulebook

# Introduction

**There are few things more human than stories.** They are a canvas for our complex collective experiences, for understanding one another, and for exploring our spirituality.

Stories have traditionally been read or watched, whether it be novels, plays, or film. Even now in the modern age, with video games, blockbuster movies, and virtual reality, stories still mainly come from authors to us, the reader/viewer.

StoryNite helps us go back to our roots. Taking inspiration from our ancestors telling stories by the fire and our more modern gamified stories, StoryTogether has gone all-in on playing stories together.

*At its core, playing stories boils down to a group of people making choices as characters in a story that grows and evolves. Rolling dice helps dictate the results of those choices, and, with the story facilitator/game master’s creativity and input, the story progresses and moves along.*

So instead of experiencing stories by ourselves, we live the twists, turns, and big reveals together. But the main difference is that we are the characters in the story…we are an intimate part of how the story grows and evolves. Like in any great story, we make choices, those choices have consequences, and the results of our actions bloom before our eyes.

Coach Jimmy V once famously said that you needed three things in order to have a great day: you need to laugh, you need to think, and you need to be moved to tears; if you do those three things you’re going to have a great day. Playing and experiencing a story as a group not only checks the boxes for a great day, but creates a sense of belonging, of bonding, and of community. Like any great story, it can change your perspective on life, broaden your horizons, bring wisdom and maturity, and help reinforce life lessons.

StoryNite is a framework for anyone, anywhere, regardless of experience level, to play just about any type of story. From epic high fantasy adventures to heartbreaking romantic journeys to small town horror tales or even Through the Looking Glass Sci-Fi like StoryTogether’s One Giant Leap…StoryNite rolls out the red carpet for just about anyone to experience the beauty, positivity, bonding, the laughter, the tears, the jaw-dropping moments of playing amazing, rich, and inspiring stories together.

Welcome to playing stories! I promise you won’t regret getting started…

## StoryNite Quick Start - The Starting Blocks

In stories, characters have traits. And when characters make choices, those traits tend to have an impact on the corresponding outcome.

Take for example, Sherlock Holmes – a character legendary for his deductive reasoning skills. And his nemesis, Moriarty, and his preternatural ability to avoid capture. When Sherlock encounters a crime scene, his deduction skill allows him to piece together the story of what happened quickly and effectively. And when Sherlock is on Moriarty’s tail, he’s able to more easily escape because he’s so aware of his surroundings while planning far in advance.

In that vein, the easiest way to begin to think of playing your character is in terms of things they’re good at, and things they’re bad at. If Sherlock were your character, we can safely safe that he would good at deduction/logic whereas if Moriarty were your character, he would be a good escape artist. And perhaps Sherlock is bad with women whereas Moriarty is a bad fighter.

So in StoryNite terms, we’ve already formed both the Sherlock and Moriarty characters in a Sherlock Holmes story simply by dictating what they’re both good and bad at. In fact, for you to get started with any story, just go by the following chart:

Pick:

Name (see page X)

Two Things You're Good At (see page X for ideas)

One Thing You're Bad At (see page X for ideas)

Use two, six-sided dice. Add 4 (+4) if you’re Good at whatever it is you’re trying to do; subtract 4 (-4) if you’re Bad at whatever it is you’re trying to do. And use the following table for dictating what the results of your choices are:

Potential Results:

12 = Huge success

Roll +/- Good/Bad ≥ 9 = Success

Roll +/- Good/Bad 6-8 = Up to the Story Facilitator/GM

Roll +/- Good/Bad ≤ 5 = Failure

Snake Eyes = Miserable failure

Using Sherlock again, let’s say you’re at a fancy dinner party hosted by the Baroness Childress and you’re trying to charm her for information on the mystery you’re trying to solve. Because your character Sherlock is Bad at Persuade, after you roll your two, six-sided dice to see what happens, you’ll have to subtract 4 from your total. Let’s say you roll a 9 (a 6 and a 3 respectively) – your total becomes a 5. According to the chart, you fail to charm the Baroness and the GM will help guide what happens and the story evolves.

StoryNite has a handful of Quick Start scenarios (see Appendix XXX) you can use to get your sea legs – as well as some pre-generated characters (see Appendix XXX). But don’t be afraid to create your own! The most important thing is to take your time and have fun!

# How to Play

Once you’re comfortable with the core foundation of playing stories using StoryNite Quick Start, you can move into the full rule-set which comprises the rest of this guide.

In StoryNite, there are two roles: the Game Master (GM), and the players.

The GM facilitates the story and serves as the world's - people, places etc. - guide for the players. The GM reads and/or narrates the appropriate setups to scenarios (story lines) and dilemmas (story challenges), answers player questions, and guides the story along.

Players, on the other hand, control a character within the story. To whatever degree they feel comfortable, they are, for all intents and purposes, that character. They may act as they feel the character would and/or simply defer to the results of the dice.

# Character Creation

Each player is given a Character Card (CC) where you write in your character’s name, skills, and a handful of other basic facts about your character. The CC is a translation of your character onto paper and serves as the basis for how your character interacts with the story world.

For some, creating a character is a fun, time-intensive affair where they flex their creative muscles and pour their heart and soul into their backstory, motivations, and choice of skills. For others, creating a character can be a foreign, even intimidating process filled with thoughts like “I have no idea what I’m doing…please help!”

No matter where you fall in that spectrum, we will roll the red carpet out for you so that you’ll come out on the other side with a fully playable character.

For players, new and old, looking to jump right into playing stories with StoryNite, see the yellow highlighted **Fast Track** (FT) symbol: if it’s there, read it. If not, skip over and you’ll be playing stories in 15 minutes or less…

(FT) If you’re playing a StoryNite (or pre-generated) story, have the GM read its introduction from the scenario guide. If the story is of the GM’s own creation, the GM should give the players an introduction to the story world and where/when the players will find themselves.

Then, just hand out a CC to each player and, for each section on the card, follow the below sections to bring your character to life!

## Name

(FT) To begin, start with a name. It can be anything really, even your own name. Heck, you could be nameless if you really felt like it! Don’t get too hung up here; anything will do! But when you have one, write it on your Character Card.

## Role

(FT) The role you envision yourself playing in the group of players (that group is commonly referred to as the “party”). For example, if see yourself as a Master at Healing, perhaps your role might say "Doctor" or "Healer." For role playing purposes, you could also write your role in the form of a title, like "Doctor Leonard McCoy" or "Leonard McCoy, Healer."

Write it on your Character Card.

If nothing is coming to mind don’t sweat it – leave that section blank and come back to it once you’ve completed the rest of your character card.

(FT) When you decide on your role, choose a primary skill associated with that role i.e. Healing for Doctor, see “Skills” below. For all “Easy”-level dilemmas where your role’s primary skill is a Solving skill, you may automatically succeed that dilemma. For more details, see “Playing a Story – the Basics” below.

## Skills

(FT) In StoryNite, skills are how your characters solve dilemmas and interact with the world around them. To get to an island at the center of a small lake, would my character swim (Athletics) or build a boat (Craft)? Facing an enemy, would my character be diplomatic and talk things through to a peaceful conclusion (Persuade) or battle their foe into submission (Combat)?

Naturally, your choice in which skills you leverage (and when) can have massive impacts on both the flow of the story and the effect you and your fellow players have on the story world. As in life, there is rarely one perfect set of choices and outcomes. So be thoughtful and considerate in which skills you choose both for yourself and in relation to your fellow player characters.

(FT) The definition of each skill is below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Skill | Skill Definition |
| Athletics | Athletics is your skill in running, agility, jumping, climbing, swimming, and acrobatics.  |
| Combat | Your skill in combat dictates your level of ability to fight with all types of melee and ranged weapons. It also dictates your ability to fight unarmed. |
| Craft | Craft is your character's skill in building, creating, and visually analyzing just about anything. Even areas such as artistic skill and cooking fall under Craft. |
| Electronics | Electronics allows your character to manipulate hardware and software electronic components of any kind to any degree. Hacking, developing, interfacing, downloading, decrypting etc. would all fall under Electronics. |
| Heal | Healing is your skill is restoring lost health in both player and non-player characters. |
| History | The History skill allows your character to know the lore, customs, language, religion, geography, and general context of the universe within which they reside. |
| Intuition | A sixth sense in some, the Intuition skill allows your character to parse truth from falsehood, detect intent, and quickly and accurately read body language. Intuition allows you to see/find hidden objects and/or people more than others. |
| Nature | Knowledge and sense of all things in the wild: animals, plants, survival skills, etc. |
| Navigate | Your sense of direction and capacity to locate and discover points of interest. Navigate also encompasses both traditional piloting of aircraft, spacecraft, land vehicles, as well as riding animals. |
| Magic | The Magic skill is your ability to use magic in all its forms.  |
| Persuade | The persuade skill allows you to convince NPCs to agree with your line of thinking. Persuade also encompasses seduce and charm-like effects. |
| Perform | Ability to sing, act, dance, and/or play instruments.  |
| Science | The science skill determines the character's deductive reasoning ability in all areas and your knowledge of any/all fields of science.  |
| Subterfuge | Sleight of hand, deception, stealth, sneaking, trickery, escaping.  |

Because the choice of skill is so critical when solving dilemmas, it re-emphasizes how important it is the party has a diverse skill set among them from the beginning. It's therefore wise for the party during character creation to confer on which skills they're each taking to ensure they collectively have a wide-range of skills available should the dilemma call for it.

Each story is different in terms of the amount of starting skills - i.e. the amount of Master, Expert, and Proficient-level skills - each character starts with. But before each story, when you're creating your character, the GM will provide you with that information.

Further, each story may have certain skills which aren’t applicable. In Lord of the Rings, for example, there are no electronic devices. And in Star Trek: The Next Generation, there isn’t any magic (per se). If the story being played has skills which aren’t applicable, the GM should inform the players during character creation.

(FT) The standard for character’s beginning StoryNite stories is to begin with **one Master skill, two Expert skills, and three Proficient-level skills**. One, two, three!

## Talents

(FT) Consider though, beyond skills, what it is you want your character to be good at doing? What are this character’s talents? If you have a role, what would it allow your character to do well?

Continuing the Dr. McCoy example, his role in the party is Doctor. He’s an excellent Healer to be sure. But he’s also an excellent at Researching, Problem-Solving, and Awareness. He’s a good Judge of Character, he’s Resilient, and he has Steady Hands, many of which help quite a bit as a Doctor and some are just because of what makes up Leonard McCoy.

(FT) Talents are traits, strengths, passions, and areas of excellence for your character. They add situational bonuses that can help throughout the course of the story. When your character encounters dilemmas, you use their skills to help solve dilemmas. Talents have synergy with skills; when applicable, you may leverage your talents to add a bonus to your skill roll.

Let’s say your character came across a futuristic alien computer of some kind and you’ve determined that you’d like to access its information. You look a bit closer and see that the user interface is not in a language you understand. From a skill perspective, you could potentially use Electronics, to access the interface and maybe change the language settings, History, to see if you know how others have accessed such computers before, Intuition to see if the user interface is intuitive enough to navigate without knowing its language, or even Craft to see if you can’t develop your own interface for the machine’s database.

But your character also possesses talents. Take the "Hacker," “Technologist,” “Detail Oriented,” and “Polyglot” talents as examples. Hacker would allow you to gain access to a foreign system more quickly, Technologist would allow you to leverage your experience across myriad systems to help you extract information from this new system, Detail Oriented would allow you to detect patterns in the user interface to navigate around without knowing the words/symbols, and Polyglot would allow you to learn languages more easily on the fly to allow you to pilot the alien user interface.

(FT) It’s up to you to justify to the GM – when you’re making your skill rolls – just how your talent applies to your roll & corresponding action. If the GM accepts your justification, you may apply your talent bonus to your skill roll.

(FT) There are three ranks of talents – I, II, and III – each of which give bonuses to rolls in applicable situations: +2, +4, and +6 respectively. In story terms, having a rank I talent means your character is/could be professionally proficient at that talent. Rank II means your character has a significant degree of mastery over that talent. And Rank III means your character is one of the ten best people in the world at that talent.

(FT) If a character possesses a talent that at least somewhat, but not fully, applies to how the character is attempting to solve the dilemma, the GM may allow the character to apply a portion, typically half, of the talent bonus to their character's roll.

So using the Alien Computer dilemma above, if your character was a Rank II Hacker, and the GM accepted your justification on how you would use that talent to access the Alien Computer, you would receive a +4 bonus to whatever skill roll you chose to solve the dilemma.

(FT) So pick/make-up up to two, rank I talent/traits your character possesses. Below is a table to help get your started **but is by no means a comprehensive list**!

If you’re having trouble, just ask yourself: what talents would make sense for someone in my role?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Talents of the Mind | Talents of the Body | Talents of Spirit |
| "Trickster"  | "Acrobat" | "Listener" |
| "Salesman" | "Strong" | "Resilient" |
| "Well Spoken" | "Quickness" | "Artist" |
| "Awareness" | "Fitness" | "Friendly" |
| "Writer" | "High Energy" | "Inquisitive" |
| "Full of Ideas" | "Endurance" | "Creative" |
| "Programmer" | "Flexible" | "Diplomatic" |
| "Detail Oriented" | "Hearty" | "Empathetic" |
| "Good With Money" | "Tough" | "Team Builder" |
| "Teacher" | "Durable" | "Humorous" |
| "Innovative" | "Iron Stomach" | "Leadership" |
| "Logistician" | "Resistant" | "Good Judge of Character" |
| "Repairman" | "Swimmer" | "Storyteller" |
| "Mathematician" | "Climber" | "Wise" |
| "Negotiator" | "Jumper" | "Musician" |
| "Disciplined" | "Sprinter" | "Ambitious" |

## Health, Defense, and Damage

(FT) If you’re looking for the “default” values, on your Character Card just write 10 for Health, 1 for Defense, 4 for Damage, and then move on to Items. Otherwise, see below for the definition of Health, Defense, and Damage and your options for customizing each one.

### Health

Your Health is a measure of how much damage your character can sustain before they die. Sometimes during sections of the story (called “scenarios”) - whether in combat or elsewhere - your character will take damage (DMG for short). When that happens, as will be explained later, mark it on your character sheet in the Health section.

When you've run out of Health, your character begins to die. More on the specifics on character death in the “Death & Dying” section of this guide below.

### Damage

Damage is the amount of Health you remove from an enemy during combat when you successfully hit them. Defeating the enemy comes down to you reducing their Health to 0.

### Defense

Defense is the amount of damage that’s negated if and when a character is successfully hit in Combat.

Take, for example, plate armor vs. leather armor; if you were to punch or slice with a sword someone wearing plate armor, they would take less damage than someone wearing leather armor.

### The 3 Builds

A “build” is a configuration of Health/Defense/Damage numbers that lend themselves to a specific play style. Take for example the traditional Knight vs. Wizard character architypes. A Knight is muscled, well-armored, and has a nice sword. Wizards by contrast have little armor, aren’t as nimble, but, you know, have fireballs (so they pack a punch).

In StoryNite, there are three pre-defined configurations of Health, Defense, and Damage: the “Warrior”, the “Rogue”, and the “Wizard” that you may choose from:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Build: | “Warrior” | “Rogue” | “Wizard” |
| Health | 12 | 10 | 8 |
| Defense | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Damage | 3 | 4 | 6 |

Of course, by choosing one of these architypes doesn’t pigeon-hole you into a certain playstyle; they’re just statistics for getting started. To be clear, by choosing the “Warrior” configuration for example, you don’t have to play a Warrior etc.

Once you settle on a configuration, write them down on your character sheet.

## Backstory

Backstory is a high-level summary of the defining experiences, goals, traits, attributes, and flaws that encapsulate your character up to the beginning of the story. It can be as sparse or as intricately detailed as you like. For many, it’s a fun and creative process to dig into and flesh out your character. If though, that’s not your thing, feel free to skip and add to at your leisure.

As the story progresses, you’re able to leverage your backstory to serve as the anchor for your character’s evolution. Perhaps, like Inigo Montoya, you’re a superlative sword fighter (Skill: Combat), skilled in making friends (Talent: Friendly), who all their life has sought vengeance against the six-fingered man for killing his father (Flaw: Revenge). Or maybe you’re like Jean Luc Picard, the Captain of a Starship (Talent: Leadership) with a knack for Diplomacy (Skill: Persuade) who isn’t particularly fond of kids (Flaw: Fear of Interacting with Children).

No matter what your character makeup, their backstory can serve as the vital lifeblood of how they move about the story world. All journeys have to start somewhere, so make sure your backstory is the way you like it prior to beginning play. It will come up throughout the story!

## Statuses

During scenarios, the results of your actions/decisions - both good & bad – may grant you a status. There are two types of statuses: "Permanent" and "Temporary." Temporary statuses only apply for the remainder of the scenario whereas Permanent statuses apply for the rest of the story in its entirety.

Gaining a status is most often a byproduct of the choices you and your party members make and how you make them. Some statuses add bonuses to various rolls and others unlock conditions only players with that status otherwise would have had access to during the scenario/story.

### Example Statuses

For example, let’s say the party has cleverly cracked a Sherlock Holmes type case with their excellent deductive reasoning skills. The GM might grant one or more players a Permanent Status called “Holmes’ Cleverness” that would grant a permanent +2 to Science rolls. Or perhaps during a Romeo and Juliet scenario, where Romeo expertly persuaded his way into the Capulet manor, that player may get a Temporary Status called “Silver Tongue” which gives the player playing Romeo a +2 to Persuade throughout the rest of that scenario.

Beyond statuses which enhance skills, there are also effect-based statuses. Let’s say the players just saved a tribe from a marauding band of brigands. The GM might grant the players a Permanent Status called “Friend of the Village” which adds bonuses of various types to any interactions the players have with members of that tribe for the remainder of the story.

While players are responsible for declaring that a status(es) they possess are relevant to the dilemma they’re trying to solve, the GM should track which statuses each player character has earned.

(FT) At the beginning of a story, the GM will be responsible for dictating whether the players begin with any statuses.

## Items

Throughout the course of your story you and your fellow players may come across items which could help you down the line. Some items add a bonus (+2) to a certain skill or perhaps unlock a different pathway to solving a scenario down the road such as a key or a token of some kind. Both currency and supplies are also types of items you may carry.

(FT) You may carry as many items as you and the GM feel is reasonable. At the beginning of the story, work with your GM on which items you possess from the jump.

## Courage

As in life, in StoryTogether Courage is what allows your characters to go above and beyond. By you making smart, clever, and/or wise choices as your character, the GM may reward you with a point of Courage. They may certainly do so at their discretion as well.

While you may only have one point of Courage at any one time, you may spend your Courage in one of two ways:

1. To re-roll a failed roll
2. To significantly expand on what’s possible with a successful roll
	1. Let’s say you’re playing as Robin Hood and you’re trying to win the Sheriff of Nottingham’s archery competition in an attempt to gain free access to his castle. In the finals, you’re about to make the competition-clinching shot when you notice that your arrows have been tampered with: a skilled fletcher has altered the angles of the arrow’s feathers, changing their standard trajectory.
	2. Normally, hitting the target’s bullseye with an intentionally defective arrow would be impossible, or at least extremely unlikely, even for an archer of Robin Hood’s skill. But by using their point of Courage, the Robin Hood player significant expands upon what Robin Hood is capable when they use the chosen skill - in this case Combat for shooting the arrow - making it much more plausible to hit the target with the janky arrow.

So spend those Courage points wisely!

# Playing a Story – Styles of Play for Both Beginners & Experts

Before we dive into the basic mechanics of playing stories, let’s briefly cover the two styles of playing stories: Turn-Based/Fast (Beginners) & Traditional/Fluid (Experts).

Traditional tabletop role playing games, outside of combat, exist more in a real time space. The GM gives players the context of the setting and the gravity of the players’ choices/actions takes hold from there. There’s a constant interaction between GM & players and the story evolves as the consequences of the players’ choices/actions take shape.

While **you can absolutely play StoryNite stories using that traditional tabletop role playing game pacing style,** this StoryNite rule book is geared toward the style best suited for beginners: turn-based/fast.

Turn-based stories have a tendency to develop and evolve quicker than their counterparts. And the pace is more conducive to learning the ins and outs of playing stories together. Each person has an obvious role and place at the table. As you and your fellow players get more comfortable, consider downloading the StoryTogether guide on how to play stories with StoryNite in the traditional pacing style.

# Playing a Story – The Basics

Now that we have our characters completed, and we’ve clarified the styles of play, we’re ready to learn how to play a story.

(FT) Stories are broken up into a series of playable scenarios. Analogous to chapters in a book or episodes in a TV show, scenarios often have their own beginning, middle, and end. And within each scenario are a series of dilemmas the players must overcome.

(FT) Solving dilemmas come down to the skills and applicable talents the players choose combined with the justification for how they’ll apply that skill and talent, if applicable.

(FT) StoryNite is a game of six-sided dice. When a player uses a skill they've selected, they roll an amount of six-sided dice commensurate with their degree of proficiency in the skill per the chart below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Skill Level | Number of Six-Sided Dice |
| Untrained | 1d6 |
| Proficient | 2d6 |
| Expert | 3d6; take highest 2d6 |
| Master | 4d6; take highest 2d6 |

Let’s continue the Sherlock Holmes example and say that in the critical, climactic scene you the player are Sherlock Holmes and are trying to persuade your arch-nemesis Moriarty to once and for all leave his life of crime. Luckily, you are a Master of Persuasion.

Using the chart above, a character who is a Master of Persuasion would roll 4, six-sided dice and take the top two results when they use Persuasion to solve a dilemma.

Let's say in this attempt to Persuade Moriarty you rolled a 2, 5, 1, and a 4 respectively. Because your 5 and 4 are the highest of the four results, you drop the 1 and 2 - and keep the 4 and 5 - for a total of 9 (5+4).

And either before or after the roll of the dice, the player can then, if they wish, justify/explain how they’ll persuade given the context of the dilemma.

In this case, you give an impassioned speech about the tragedy society suffers by not having Moriarty’s genius dedicated to its improvement. (FT) The GM takes into account their subjective analysis of how well the player justified their choice using the following chart:

(FT)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Justification Level | Skill Bonus |
| Dumb/Foolish/Naïve | -2 |
| Average/Default | +0 |
| Smart/Clever/Wise | +2 |

In this case, both the GM and your fellow players are impressed by your cunning and wit. The GM grants you a +2 bonus for your excellent justification bringing your subtotal for your roll to a great 11 (9+2).

Further, concurrent to your desired timing around your skill explanation/justification, you may additionally justify how a talent your character possesses is relevant to your method of solving the dilemma. Continuing the Sherlock Holmes example, let’s say your character possesses the Rank II Talent “City Planning” – something you took earlier in the story to help solve a particular mystery. Because the crux of your argument is that Moriarty’s genius could benefit society, you tell the GM that, in your speech to persuade Moriarty, you’re going to weave-in specifics on just how his genius would benefit society with your Talent for City Planning.

The GM considers your talent justification and agrees, allowing you to add your Talent bonus to your roll. In this case, your “City Planning” Talent is Rank II which means you get a +4 bonus to your roll bringing your grand total an incredible 15 (9+2+4).

The GM then compares your total roll of 15 to the level of difficulty in their head (or what the Scenario Guide has) for Persuasion for that dilemma. (FT) The following chart is a standard for GMs and players alike to calibrate their expectations on how difficult a dilemma is to solve given its context:

(FT)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Difficulty | Roll Needed |
| Easy | 3-6 |
| Medium | 7-10 |
| Hard | 11-15 |
| "Impossible" | 16+ |

In this case, persuading the story’s main antagonist to stop pursuing their life’s goals is borderline impossible if not objectively impossible. But a 15 is a compelling roll given the above chart. The GM might say that “Moved by your words and your passion for his redemption, Moriarty sets down the vial of poison and backs away from the Madame Pomphrey. He says: “Perhaps Holmes my old friend you are right.” He pauses and takes a look around the room. “But perhaps not.” And kicks the nearby table, sending one of his beakers to the ground whose instantaneous shattering envelopes the room in a thick, acrid smoke. You sense he is trying to escape. What do you do?”

That sequence of events, from the player dictating how they’re going to leverage their chosen skill, to the roll, to their justification, to the application of talent, to GM’s narration of the result, is the core of how StoryNite works and serves as the basis for how stories are played.

## Playing a Story –Support vs. Solving vs. Not Applicable Skills

Playing a story is often boils down to collaboration between players as they encounter and solve dilemmas. Like Jazz, Dance, or Basketball, the chemistry between the players can be the difference between an average and a great team. The choice of which skill and when to use it is a critical component of playing stories in StoryNite.

(FT) On a per dilemma basis, there are three types of skills:

1. Support skills
2. Solving skills
3. Not Applicable skills

(FT) After the GM has read or narrated the setup to a dilemma, they will categorize the 14 StoryNite skills into one of the above buckets for the players. It’s possible some skills may be both Support and Solving skills for that particular dilemma.

In the Moriarty example above, the GM might have said the Support skills are History, Intuition, Navigate, and Science. The Solving skills are Combat, Persuade, and Subterfuge. And the Not Applicable skills are Craft, Electronics, Heal, Nature, Magic, and Perform.

### Support Skills

(FT) Support skills are ones which don’t directly solve the dilemma or progress the story. They do however often add value to the party in a number of ways. They can net you crucial additional information, context, items, and statuses which can massively increase your odds of successfully completing the dilemma, scenario, and story.

Intuition, for example, is often a Support skill as it gives the players additional information about people or their surroundings and even occasionally even nets critical information and/or uncovers hidden objects/items/paths that otherwise would be unseen.

### Solving Skills

(FT) Solving skills are ones which always explicitly solve the dilemma and advance the story.

If the party, for example, is trying to unlock a door to progress, and Electronics is a Solving skill for that dilemma, successfully using Electronics would likely open the door, allowing the party to proceed.

### Not Applicable Skills

(FT) Not applicable skills are ones, for that dilemma only, won’t add any value to the party by their use in that dilemma. Players though should feel free to justify a ‘Not Applicable’ skill’s use if they disagree with the GM’s ruling that a certain skill is not applicable.

## Taking Turns: Who Goes First? And How Often?

(FT) After the dilemma is setup and the GM has asked the party how they intend to solve the dilemma, each member of the party may select either a Support or Solving skill. Typically, the party confers among one another in a reasonable amount of time and dictates to the GM the order in which they’re going to utilize their one skill choice each.

In the Moriarty example, if Holmes and Watson were present, the player playing Watson might declare that he’s first using History (Support) followed by Holmes using Persuade (Solving).

### Support Skills before Solving Skills

(FT) The best practice in StoryNite is for the party to always, when they can, use Support skills before Solving skills. When a Solving skill is successful, the party succeeds, and automatically proceeds in the story. It’s best, therefore, for the party to position the players taking a Support skill as their turn before the Solving skill players. That way, the value of succeeding in a Support skill isn’t lost.

Continuing the above example, if Holmes had gone before Watson, and succeeded their Persuade (Solving) roll, Watson would never have had the opportunity to leverage their History (Support) skill.

### What Happens if the Party Fails their Solving Skills?

(FT) If, after the party has all made their choices and performed their rolls, they fail all their Solving skills, they receive a penalty proportionate and appropriate to that failure.

Using the Holmes example, if he had failed his Persuade roll, the party would likely have been harmed or at least put at a significant disadvantage.

If the party survives the penalty, each member may then select one Solving skill to perform in a second attempt to solve. If the party is successful, they proceed in the story as normal. If they fail, the penalty is further amplified.

This pattern continues until the party proceeds successfully or either dies or permanently fails the story.

# Playing a Story – Example Dilemma

With all the tools we need in hand, let’s take a look at an example dilemma from start to finish.

The GM begins the dilemma with their narration:

“You three players are explorers on a quest to find and return a tribe’s missing ruby, stolen by a band of brigands. To that end, you’ve tracked the thieves to a remote piece of land, almost entirely surrounded by a chasm spanning as far as the eye can see.

Knowing the ruby is on the other side, you search along the chasm until you come across a dilapidated, wooden bridge which extends some twenty feet across to the other side.

How does the party make it across?

The Support skills are Craft, History, Intuition, Nature, and Science.

The Solving skills are Athletics and Craft.

And the Not Applicable skills are Combat, Electronics, Heal, Magic, Navigate, Perform, and Subterfuge."

The three players converse and collectively decide that the player who is an Expert at Nature (Support for this dilemma) should go first so that the following two players can have the best possible lay of the land. They then agree that the player who is a Proficient in Intuition (Support for this dilemma) should go second to see if the bandits went in this direction and that the player who is a Master at Craft (Solving for this dilemma) should go third to get the group successfully across.

The first player tells the GM they are going to use Nature for their turn. They roll their three, six-sided dice (Expert) and get a 1, 4, and 5. They drop the lowest roll of 1 for a subtotal of 9 (5+4).

They then justify/explain their action by stating: “I don’t think I have any applicable talents here but I will go look more closely at the bridge, checking to see whether the rock it’s anchored to is solid or not. I have a feeling this may be a trap.”

The GM feels that the player gave an “Average” justification so does not alter the players stated total (+0) and, accordingly, confers with the Scenario Guide and reads off the result for Nature with a score of 9.

The GM tells the first player: "You take a closer look at the bridge and you find that the bridge, while tied to the rock, is not properly affixed. If anything, the rock anchor appears intentionally unstable – you don’t believe the bridge will be able to support your weight as a result. Your party receives a bonus (+2) to Craft rolls for this dilemma." A great result!

The second player tells the GM they are going to use the Support skill Intuition for their turn. They roll their two dice (Proficient) and get a 4 and a 3 for a subtotal total of 7. Because the second player has the Rank I talent of Tracking, they’re easily able to justify to the GM the use of that talent, bringing their total to 9 (7+2). The second player says: “Using my Tracking talent and skill in Intuition, I’m going to try and get a feel for whether the bandits went in this direction.”

The GM tells the second player: “While your friend is examining the bridge’s anchor into the rock, you take a closer look at the bridge. Being so old and in such a state of disrepair, you feel it’s unlikely the bandits came this way. But, for some reason, despite your observations, you get a strong feeling that somehow, someway, the brigands did cross this bridge.”

The third player tells the GM that they will use their skill in Craft (Master) and the Rope item in their pack to reinforce the bridge at its key joints in the rock to make it safe to cross. The player rolls: a 1, 2, 5, and 6 for a subtotal of 11 (6+5). And because the first player earned a bonus to Craft this dilemma, they also get a bonus of +2 for a grand total of 13. The second player informs the GM that their total is a 13.

The GM judges the player’s justification to be “Excellent” and adds +2 to that 13 for a total of 15. They confer with the Scenario Guide for what a 15 in Craft gives the players for this dilemma and says: "You thoughtfully use your rope to strengthen the bridge's intentionally defunct support system. Testing your work and the bridge carefully, you're sure it'll now hold your weight. Slowly but surely, you three make your way across and to the other side. There, you’re able to pick up the trail of the bandits who indeed did cross here."

The three players have successfully solved the dilemma! And even discovered the route the bandits took to their hideout to boot. The GM then reads the story/setup that gets the players to the next dilemma in the scenario and continues from there.

# Playing a Story - Order of Operations

For reference, below is the order of operations for resolving dilemmas:

1. GM reads setup and decision-making prompt
2. GM dictates Support vs. Solving vs. Not Applicable Skills
3. Players confer and dictate turn-order
4. Player 1 informs GM of chosen skill
5. Player 1 rolls the amount of dice applicable to their degree of mastery in chosen skill, taking the top two results
6. Player 1 justifies/explains if they have any Talents applicable to the roll.
	1. The GM approves/denies the use of the Talent
7. Player 1 informs GM of the grand total of the roll and justifies/explains how they’re going to use that skill
8. GM aggregates the players roll with the effect of their justification (if any) and compares the grand total to the scenario guide for that dilemma & chosen skill
9. The GM tells the player what the result of their roll is and what rewards and/or consequences come about as a result
10. Each player in the party, one by one, performs steps #3 and #4 and, for each, the GM repeats #5 & #6
11. The party either passes the dilemma or fails
	1. If the party passes, the GM reads the prompt to get the players to the next phase of the story
	2. If the party fails, they receive a penalty appropriate to the dilemma

Special Results

* When solving a dilemma, if two players each roll for the same skill, one of the two players does not roll at all. Instead of rolling and in lieu of their turn, one player simply confers a bonus (+2) to the other player when they use that skill on their turn.
* Rolling a 2 (snake eyes) is an automatic failure. Rolling a 12 is an automatic success for “Hard”-level dilemmas and under. If, after rolling a 12, an additional 12 is rolled, even “Impossible” level dilemmas are an automatic success.

# Combat

Sometimes during the course of a story the party will be thrown into combat either by choice, design, or by consequence. Each player character and NPC engaged in Combat will take turns until one side is victorious one way or the other.

Turn order is determined by the degree of proficiency in the Combat (and/or Magic, if applicable) skills. So Masters in Combat would always go first, followed by Experts etc. Break ties with a simple 2d6 roll of the dice.

Masters in Combat & Magic roll 4d6 and take the top 2d6 results as their attack. So let’s say, for example, that a Master of Combat rolled a 4, 3, 1, and a 6. Their Combat roll would be a 10 as the 4 and 6 are their two highest rolls. Experts in Combat/Magic roll 3d6 and take the top 2d6 results and those Proficient in Combat simply take the 2d6 result they roll.

After you roll, and determine your results, keep that base roll as it’s possible to add to that subtotal through Talents. If you have a talent that you feel applies to the particular Combat situation you find yourself in on your turn, justify how-so to the GM. If they agree, they will instruct you to apply a bonus to your base roll commensurate with your talent rank i.e. Rank I = +2, Rank I = +4, and Rank I = +6.

Take for example, a character who has the Brawling talent (Rank II) and is fighting in hand-to-hand combat with a NPC. After the player rolls their base roll, they can justify to the GM how Brawling applies to the hand-to-hand combat situation at hand. In this case, Brawling certainly applies and the GM allows the player to add their Rank II bonus (+4) to their combat base roll.

Then, if you wish, you can describe/justify to the GM what your character attempts to do on their turn in Combat. If you do well, and your justification is clever, the GM will add a bonus (+2) to your base roll. If you do poorly, and your decision-making is counter-productive, the GM may impose a penalty (-2) to your base roll. You are always free to simply take your base roll (+0).

If you are victorious, you may dictate the manner of your enemy’s defeat (i.e. death, knocked unconscious, stunned, bound/gagged etc.).

To summarize:

Your base roll + your Talent bonus (if any) + your justification bonus (if any) = your total Combat roll.

When fighting an enemy, the GM will perform similar steps to the ones you took for your character. When they have their total Combat roll, the GM will compare to your total Combat roll; the higher of the two does their Damage to the other, minus applicable Defense, who marks this lost Health on their Character Card.

Once each character has gone once, the first round ends and the second round begins with the same order as the first. Combat continues until one side has won one way or the other.

Use the below as reference for the steps for Combat in StoryNite.

1. Using the provided Initiative Tokens, create a tracker of the turn order so that it's easy to follow who is "up to bat."
2. With the turn order established, players and enemies alike take their turn in combat. Players complete the following steps when it's their turn:
	1. Roll the proper amount of six-sided dice, take the top 2d6 results, and get your base roll.
		1. Master in Combat: 4d6
		2. Expert in Combat: 3d6
		3. Proficient in Combat: 2d6
		4. Untrained: 1d6
	2. If your character has any talents which you feel apply to the context of their combat, justify to the GM.
		1. If the GM agrees, apply the Talent Rank bonus to your base roll.
			1. Rank 3: +6
			2. Rank 2: +4
			3. Rank 1: +2
		2. If they disagree, keep your base roll.
	3. If you wish, describe what your character will do with/on your combat turn.
		1. If the GM feels you do a good job, they will instruct you to apply an additional +2 to your combat roll
		2. If the GM feels you did a poor job, they will instruct you to apply a -2 penalty to your combat roll
		3. Of course, you may do neither!
	4. Add your total base combat roll to any talent bonus and to any justification bonus. Provide your grand total combat roll to the GM.
3. The GM compares that grand total number to the enemy’s grand total; if the player has the higher number, the player does damage to the enemy.
	1. To get the amount of damage inflicted, check the character card section under “Damage”. Give that number to the GM.
	2. The GM then subtracts the enemy’s Defense from that number. The resulting total is how much damage you inflict on the enemy.
4. The GM keeps track of the damage you and the other players are inflicting on the enemy and lets the player(s) if the enemy has been defeated.
5. Conversely, when the enemy takes their turn, the GM performs these same steps against one or more of the players. If the enemy successfully hits the player, they do DMG in the same manner as the players. Players keep track of their Health by shading in the appropriate piece(s) on their character cared when they take damage. If the player falls to 0 Health, they must inform the GM (see “Death & Dying” below).

After the round is complete, it simply starts again from the beginning and continues until one side is victorious. At that time, the GM will narrate the results and, if the players were successful, the GM will further narrate the story until the next dilemma or safe harbor.

# Death & Dying

There may come a time during the course of the story where your character’s health is reduced to 0 or below. When your character’s health hits 0, they fall unconscious. While unconscious, the character is to experience a near death mini-scenario appropriate to that character.

In this near death scenario, the character will experience moments, events, memories, and/or dreams relevant to their life’s journey thus far. This profound meta-narrative on the character’s life should represent in some fashion the essence of what has got the character to where they’re at today. The scenario should come with an appropriate level of difficulty.

If the character succeeds in this near death mini-scenario, their Health is returned to 1 but they remain unconscious for as long as the GM feels is reasonable. Any additional damage taken while in this unconscious state will result in automatic death of the character.

If the character fails their near death mini scenario, they die barring appropriate live saving measures by other players/NPCs.

# Character Evolution & Safe Harbors

Sometimes between scenarios, players will have the opportunity to visit a Safe Harbor. Safe Harbors are different from story to story - think the Millennium Falcon in Star Wars or Rivendell in Lord of the Rings - but they are always a secure, albeit temporary, stop where players can rest, recover, and interact.

But perhaps more importantly, Safe Harbors are where characters have a chance to reflect on their experiences. It is during these moments of becoming aware of our growth that we evolve and become more capable.

Each Safe Harbor is different and it's the GM's responsibility to use the Scenario Guide to dictate when the players have arrived at a Safe Harbor and what is/isn't available there. But regardless of those special circumstances, at each Safe Harbor players may:

1. Recover all of their lost Health
2. Converse with each other and/or any non-player characters (NPCs) in the area
3. Craft Item(s)
4. Train: at each Safe Harbor, each character gets one point to spend on Training (or to save for future evolutions)
* Costs 2 Training Points: Permanently adds +1 Health or +1 level in skill (i.e. moving from Proficient to Expert)
* Costs 3 Training Points: +1 Rank in Talent (i.e. moving from Rank II to Rank III)

And, as a party, do the following:

1. Trigger Random Encounter: within each Safe Harbor are a series of potential happenings which can only take place if the players select this option. The outcomes aren't always "good" so make your decision to proceed wisely!

As the story progresses so too does your character. Through their experiences and accumulation of items, statuses, and training, your character evolves. What direction you take that growth is entirely up to you but one piece of advice: choose wisely!

# Modding/Homebrewing StoryNite

The Golden Rule in tabletop role playing games is “do whatever is best for the table” and StoryNite is no different. StoryNite is made to be added onto based on the needs and desires of the GM & players.

Over time, StoryTogether will release modules that GMs & players can add onto the core StoryNite system. Want a more traditional combat system? Just add our Traditional Combat module onto this guide. Want attributes and abilities? We’ll have those too. And of course, you’re more than welcome to use your own ideas and creativity to enhance your stories with this system.

StoryNite is a starting point, not a destination. And StoryTogether is a resource for helping you get there and have wonderful times with good people along the way.

# Go Play Some Stories!

StoryNite is here to empower you, your friends, your family, and strangers alike to play stories together of any size, shape, scale, and complexity.