Pillar Island Basic Rules (v1.0)

In an effort to provide a complete campaign setting, the game rules found here are as concise as possible. In general, this Pillar Island campaign setting uses the same rules as Fifth Edition. If you have questions about how a Pillar island rule works, you can usually find the answer there. You'll want, at the very least, a copy of the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Create Your Main Character

In Pillar Island, you create a 1st-level character (known as your main character) the same way you would for any other Fifth Edition campaign but with a few changes as detailed below.

- Races. There are no changes made to races. You are free to play any race you like.
- Classes. There are no changes made to classes; all classes and subclasses are available for play. However, none of the classes start with equipment other than a set of traveler's clothes. For this reason, certain classes, such as spellcasters who rely on material components, spellbooks, etc. may find themselves at a disadvantage.
- Ability Scores. Ability scores are generated in the normal manner.
- Backgrounds. You may select any background you like. However, you do not earn extra equipment or gold when selecting a background.
- Equipment. Pillar Island characters wake on a mysterious island with only a set of traveler's clothing on their backs. They have no weapons, no money, no equipment to speak of. They rely on their skills and abilities to survive. Alternatively, you can select one of the pre-generated characters found at the end of this article.

Playing the Game

The key to a Pillar Island game is survival above all, and then coming out on top as the ultimate survivor. The following rules replace the normal rules for Playing the Game in Fifth Edition.

1st Session

The first session of a Pillar Island campaign is similar to setting up a board game.

Pillar Island Map

Place the map on the board. Then, in whatever order you decide on, each player selects a starting hex on the Pillar Island map. No player's characters can start on the same hex.

Non-Player Encounter Tokens

Add all of the non-player encounter (NPE) tokens to the non-player encounter token bag. Then, without looking, draw an encounter token from the bag and place it facedown in an empty hex that does not contain a starting hex. Continue to place NPE tokens this way until all of the hexes have an NPE token.

Set the encounter token bag out of the way.

Encounters Deck

Shuffle the main encounters deck and set it aside.

Characters Deck

Assemble the characters deck and shuffle it. Each player is then dealt three cards from the deck. These characters represent the followers of your main character and start in the same starting hex that your main character does. Plus, as you find more survivors on the island, you can gain additional characters.

Each character has one or more skill, weapon, or tool proficiencies as noted on their card. Otherwise, they use the commoner stat block (unless stated otherwise, assume they have a +0 in every skill and saving throw, and a +0 on all attack rolls). As you gain experience in the Pillar Island campaign, you can upgrade your characters, giving them new skills and abilities.

Number Tokens

Each player takes number tokens of their chosen color. Number tokens all come in pairs. One number token is placed on each character card to denote its number. Then, the matching number is placed on the starting hex map to denote the character's position. You must also use a number token to represent your main character.

Starting Order

After every player has their characters (main and otherwise), starting hexes, and number tokens, the player who last visited an island chooses one of the numbered initiative tokens. Then, the player clockwise to that player then selects an initiative token and so on until each player has selected an initiative token.

After every player has an initiative token, the player with the token numbered "1" goes first, following by "2" and so on.

Time

Pillar Island has two scales for time, one for combat and one for activities.

Combat time can work exactly the same as it does in a typical Fifth Edition game, or it can work with a quicker version detailed below (to prevent the overall game from slowing down).

Activity time is first split into days, and then into three activity phases each day; one in the morning, one in the afternoon/evening, and one at night. During each activity phase, players take turns in order of their numbered initiative tokens.

Activity Phase Procedure

1. Starting with the first player, each player declares what activity they are taking then commits one or more of their characters to the activity. A player may not commit a character that he or she has already committed to an activity during the current phase. To mark that a character has taken an action, flip their number token on their card/sheet over to the gray/used side.
2. After each character has declared and committed to their first activity, starting with the first player, each player declares a second activity that they are taking and commits one or more of their characters to the activity.
3. Players continue declaring activities in this manner until every player has committed all of their characters or they choose to skip. After a player finishes declaring all of the activities that they are going to declare for the phase, the player takes an initiative token. That player may no longer declare actions for the rest of the phase.

4. After the last player selects an initiative token, the current phase ends and the next phase begins. However, if the current phase is an evening phase, a new day starts. See the section for New Day below.

Activities

During an activities phase, players can commit one or more characters to certain activities as described in the Time section above. The activities that they can choose are as follows:

Craft

You commit characters to create useful items for the tribe. Choose an item from the list of craftable items. Consult the craftable item's description to determine the necessary resources, checks, DCs, and results for the crafting activity. Crafted items are built in the chosen hex or carried by the present characters.

Explore

You commit characters to find hidden resources, locations, and other points of interest in a chosen hex. The characters you commit must be in the same hex that you wish to explore. Make three checks: Strength (Athletics), Intelligence (Investigation), and Wisdom (Perception). One character can make all three rolls, or you can spread out the rolls among two or three characters however you like. For each additional character in the exploration party that is not making a check, each check gains a +1 bonus (to a maximum of +5). The DC for the checks depends on the hex. Consult the Exploration Results table to see how the characters did.

Exploring Results

Successes	Result
0 Successes	You find nothing.
1 Success	Draw one encounter token from the encounter bag and place it in the hex.
2 Successes	Draw two encounter tokens from the encounter bag, choose one, and place it in the hex.
3 Successes	Draw three encounter tokens from the encounter bag, choose one, and place it in the hex.

Fish

You commit characters to fishing for animals in order to feed the tribe. The characters you commit must be in a hex containing water. You make two checks: a Strength (Athletics) check and a Wisdom (Survival) check. One character can make both rolls, or you can spread out the rolls among two characters. For each additional character in the fishing party that did not make a check or attack roll, add +1 to each of the die rolls (to a maximum of +5). The DC for the checks is based on the hex. Consult the Fishing Results table to see how the characters did.

Fishing Results

Successes	Result
0 Successes	You catch nothing.
1 Success	You catch 1 fish. Gain 2 food tokens.
2 Successes	You catch 2 fish. Gain 4 food tokens.

Forage

You commit characters to find fruits, vegetables, and other edible goods to feed the tribe. The characters you commit must be in the same hex that you wish to forage. You make two checks: Intelligence (Nature) and Wisdom (Survival). One character can make both rolls, or you can spread out the rolls among two characters. For each additional character in the foraging party that did not make a check, add +1 to each of the die rolls (to a maximum of +5). The DC for the checks is given by the hex. Consult the Foraging Results table to see how the characters did.

Foraging Results

Successes	Result
0 Successes	You find nothing.
1 Success	You find enough to feed on person. Gain 1 food token.
2 Successes	You find enough to feed two people. Gain 2 food tokens.

Gather

You commit characters to collect resources to be used in crafting, trade, etc. The characters you commit must be in the same hex that you wish to gather resources. For each character gathering, you gain the resources detailed by the terrain type; no further check is required. For example, two characters gathering wood in the forest will find a total of 4 wood. Note that some resources require the characters to use specific tools in order to gather them.

Hunt

You commit characters to hunt for animals in order to feed the tribe. The characters you commit must be in the same hex that you wish to hunt. You make three checks: a Wisdom (Survival) check, a Strength (Athletics) check, and an attack roll using one of the characters' weapons. One character can make all three rolls, or you can spread out the rolls among two or more characters as desired. For each additional character in the hunting party that did not make a check or attack roll, add +1 to each of the die rolls (to a maximum of +5). The DC for the checks is based on the hex. Consult the Hunting Results table to see how the characters did.

Hunting Results

Successes	Result
0 Successes	You fail to kill anything and a mishap occurs. The hunter takes 1d6 piercing damage.
1 Success	You fail to kill anything.
2 Successes	You kill a beast. Gain 4 food tokens.
3 Successes	You kill a large beast. Gain 8 food tokens.

Move

You move any number of your characters around the map. Each character has a number of move points as shown on their card (for Fifth Edition characters, divide their move speed by 5 to come up with their movement points). To move into a hex, a character must spend a number of movement points equal to the hex's movement cost. For example, if a player wishes to move a character into a mountain jungle hex, they must spend 4 movement points. A character cannot enter a hex that they do not have enough points to enter. Upon entering a hex with an NPE token, flip the token over. If the token is blank, you can return it to the encounter bag and continue moving your characters. Likewise, if the token is an area of interest, you can choose to ignore it and continue moving your characters.

If a character moves into a hex that has an NPE token in it or has another players' characters in the hex, an encounter will occur, and they must stop and cannot move any further during the activity phase even if they have movement points remaining.

After moving all the characters you wish to commit to moving, you must resolve any encounters you triggered (in any order you wish).

Rest

You commit your characters to take a long rest. To denote that a character has rested during the day turn their card sideways. The rules for long rests work the same in Pillar Island campaigns as they do in a normal Fifth Edition campaign settings.

Stealth

Stealth works the same as the move activity except that the committed characters only have half their normal movement points to spend. While using stealth, characters can move through hexes that contain encounters. If the characters end their turn in a hex that contains an encounter, they must still resolve the encounter as normal.

Encounter Resolution

If a player's characters are in the same hex as an NPE token or another player's characters at the end of their turn, they must resolve the encounter before the next player can take their turn.

Non-Player Encounters

A non-player encounter (NPE) is a beast, monster, trap, or some other hazard that can halt your characters' progress. Typically, an NPE has two options for resolution: **avoid** or **confront**. Both avoiding and confronting an encounter require one or more checks from the characters present in the hex as detailed in the encounter description in the Non-Player Encounters document.

Avoid. If the characters successfully avoid the encounter, the player moves all of the characters in the encounter's hex to an adjacent hex. The hex the characters move into cannot contain an NPE token or another player's characters. If there is no free hex for the characters to move into, they must confront the encounter.

Confront. If the characters successfully confront the encounter, the encounter token is removed and the committed characters gain the experience noted for the encounter. If the characters fail in their confrontation, they must move to an adjacent hex that does not contain an NPE token or another player's characters. If no such hex is available, all of the characters in the hex are automatically destroyed.

Areas of Interest

If you committed characters to investigate a new or previously investigated area of interest, draw the top card of the area of interest's Encounter Deck. Encounters from the Encounter Deck work the same as other NPE encounters, but with the following changes:

- If your committed characters successfully avoid an encounter or you fail to confront the encounter, they do not have to move to an adjacent hex. However, you must return the encounter card facedown on the top of the area of interest's Encounter Deck.
- If your committed characters successfully confronted the encounter, the characters gain the experience noted on the encouner card. Discard the encounter card. You may then choose to reveal the next encounter card on the area of interest's Encounter Deck and continue to do so until you successfully avoid an encounter, fail to confront it, there are no encounter cards remaining in the area of interest's Encounter Deck, or you have no characters remaining.

Player Encounters

There are two methods for dealing with players: direct combat, using the normal Fifth Edition combat rules, or the Quick Combat rules described below.

Quick Combat (Optional)

If one player's characters enter the hex containing another player's characters, the players may resolve the encounter as follows.

1. Initiative
At the start of a player encounter, both players choose one of their committed characters as a leader for the group. Both characters roll initiative (a Dexterity check). The character that won initiative then decides if they want their group to be the attacker or defender during this round of combat.

2. Attacker Takes an Action
The player that is the attacker takes their action first. Each action that the attacker can choose is detailed below.

3. Defender Takes an Action
After the attacker takes their action, the defender then takes their action, choosing from the same actions detailed below.

4. Players Assign Damage
Players assign any damage dealt during the round of combat to their characters. Dead characters are removed from the hex.

5. Combat Continues or Ends
If both sides have characters present in the hex at the end of the combat round, the combat continues and a new round begins. Repeat steps 1 through 5 (that includes rerolling initiative). If one or both sides have no characters present in the contested hex, the combat ends.

Quick Combat Actions

The following actions are available to take during your turn.

Attack. Your committed characters attack the other group. You make a group attack roll against the defender's group armor class (see below). After the attack, you deal damage equal to your group's damage value. Consult the Attack and Defense Result table below to determine if you apply a multiplier to your group's damage value.

Attack and Defense Result

Attack - Defense	Damage Multiplier
-10 or lower	0%
-5 to -1	50%
0 to 5	100%
6 - 9	150%
10 or higher	200%

Peaceful Resolution. You choose not to take any action with your committed characters and instead choose to make peace with the other player's characters. On the other player's turn, if they also choose to have a peaceful resolution, the combat ends. Before the end of your turn, one or both of you must move your committed characters to an adjacent hex that does not contain an NPE or another player's characters. In the rare instance where neither of you can move your characters, you must continue the combat and may no longer select the peaceful resolution action. Before either of you evacuate your characters, you may trade any items that your respective committed characters are carrying.

Retreat. Your committed characters move to an adjacent hex that does not contain any encounters. If there is no hex for them to move into, they fail to retreat and your turn ends. If you retreat but still took damage in the same round, you only take half of the damage dealt during the damage round.

Special Actions. Some players and/or characters have special abilities that they can use. Each special action has its own resolution and effects as described in the feature, spell, etc.

Group Attack Bonus, Damage Value, and Armor Class

If you use Quick Combat rules presented here, then your committed characters will have three additional statistics: **group attack bonus, group damage values**, and **group armor values**. The three scores are calculated as follows:

- **Group Attack Bonus (GAB)**. Add together each character's attack bonus.
- **Group's Damage Value (GDV)**. Add the average damage dealt by each character together.
- **Group's Armor Class (GAC)**. Subtract 10 from each character's Armor Class. Add together the remaining values and add 10.

Quick Combat Round Example

Dave moves his characters into Tracy's hex, inciting a player encounter. Both roll initiative; Dave gets 13 and Tracy gets 14. Tracy decides to be the attacker.

On Tracy's turn as an attacker, she attacks Dave's characters. She has six characters in the hex, each armed with a spear. Put together, her characters have a GAB of +6. She rolls a 6 for an attack roll, for a total of 12.

Dave has five defenders and one is wearing leather armor; his group's GAC is 14. Tracy subtracts Dave's GAC from her attack roll: 2. Referencing the Attack and Defense Results table, Tracy deals 100% of her GDV which is 24.

Before taking damage, Dave gets to choose his defender action; he decides to attack, too. He has five characters with a total GAB of +4. He rolls a 15, for a total of 19. Tracy's GAC is 10. Dave beat Tracy's GAC by 9, which means he deals 150% of GDV. Dave's GDV is 8. Therefore, Tracy's group takes 12 damage.

At the end of the combat round, during the damage phase, Dave assigns the 24 damage his group took and Tracy assigns the 12 damage her group took. All of Tracy's characters are bloodied, but still standing, however, Dave lost four of his characters in the fray.

Now it's Dave's turn. He takes the Retreat action. Fortunately for Dave, Tracy chooses the Peaceful Resolution action. The combat ends and no further damage is dealt.

End of the Day

Following the evening phase is the clean-up/End of the Day phase. All players perform the following steps in order.

1. **Feed characters.** You must spend one food per character. For each character you cannot feed, you must put a hunger token on their card.
2. **Give exhaustion.** Give one exhaustion to any character that did not rest the day before or has a number of hunger tokens equal to 3 + their Constitution modifier. Typical exhaustion rules apply.

Random Event. After the players have performed their own clean-up steps, one player rolls a d100 and consults the random events table to determine what happens.

Then, the next day begins, starting with a new morning phase.