WANDERING BLADES

lethal melodrama by Daniel Kwan & Drew Quon

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Follow the development of *Wandering Blades* at **patreon.com/danielhkwan**

Sources of Inspiration

Wandering Blades was inspired by *Runecairn* by Colin Le Sueur, *Errant* by Ava Islam, *Vaults of Vaarn* by Leo Hunt, *The Black Hack* by David Black, *Sharp Swords & Sinister Spells* by Diogo Nogueria, and *Flesh & Blood* by Legend Story Studios.

Additional Sources of Inspiration

The Condor Trilogy by Jin Yong (novel series)
Biao Ren: Blades of the Guardians by Xianzhe Xu (manhua and donghua)
Blood and Steel by Qiao Jingfu (manhua)
Wu Shan Wu Xing (Fog Hill of Five Elements) (2020 animated series)
Sword of the Stranger (2007 animated film)
Hero (2004 film)
Under One Person by Dong Man Tang (webcomic)
Last Hurrah for Chivalry (1979 film)
*Come Drink with M*e (1966 film)

Introduction

What is Wandering Blades?

Wandering Blades is a rules light, low fantasy tabletop role playing game inspired by Chinese wuxia media and old-school renaissance (OSR) games. *Wandering Blades* is designed around the following core principles:

- **Danger is everywhere** - The world of *Wandering Blades* is full of danger and the smallest mistake can be deadly. The weapons and martial arts techniques wielded by their characters are instruments of death, but so are those of their enemies.
- **Simple, yet tactical** - The system of *Wandering Blades* is designed to create a gameplay experience that is easy for players to learn, while providing them with a lot of tactical depth. Players are empowered to work together and make active decisions using this system.
- **Toolbox experience** - The rules in *Wandering Blades* are written as guidelines for GMs (game masters). They are open to player interpretation, ingenuity, and expansion. Use what works best for your table!

What is this Document?

Our goal with this document is to give you an introduction to the basic mechanics of the game, a starter class, and how to run combat. In the next version of this document, we are aiming to add the following:

- **Character Sheet** - We are currently working on laying out a character sheet, but want to first ensure that the other items on this list are done first.
- **Additional Classes** - We want to add at least two more classes: the bandit and physician.
- **Advancement** - We want to make sure that character growth (i.e. levelling up) is tied to the narrative, rather than combat or acquiring treasure.
- **Renown** - In the jianghu (martial arts world), everyone is concerned about their reputation. We are currently working on a renown system involving things like noteworthy deeds!

Character Creation

Character Classes

For this quickstart guide, only one class is available. The youxia class is a versatile master of weaponry and martial arts techniques. Whether you have a single player or a full party, each youxia will be distinct from one another. As development of the game progresses, additional classes will be added alongside new mechanics!

Attributes

In *Wandering Blades*, a player character's (PC) attributes represent the characteristics that define their abilities and how they will react in different situations.

- **Strength** represents a character's physical power. It determines how much weight they can carry, how hard they can hit, and their ability to perform physically demanding feats.
- **Agility** represents a character's quickness, coordination, and reflexes. It determines a character's ability to dodge attacks, use weapons that require finesse, and their ability to perform tasks that require dexterity.
- **Focus** represents a character's mental fortitude, discipline, determination, perceptiveness, and wisdom. It determines the amount of qi they can cultivate.
- **Intellect** represents a character's knowledge of the world and problem-solving skills. It determines how well a character can assess situations, learn, and find creative solutions to problems.

Determining Attributes

Each attribute has an **ATTRIBUTE BONUS** and an **ATTRIBUTE SCORE**. These are determined by rolling 4d6 (four six-sided dice) and assigning each die value to a different ATTRIBUTE. The value of each roll is the attribute's bonus. An attribute's score is determined by adding 10 to the bonus.

Hit Points

HIT POINTS (HP) represent a character's health and vitality. They are a measure of a PC or non-player character's (NPC) ability to avoid or withstand serious injury. A character's HIT POINTS are determined by rolling their class **HIT DIE** (HD) during character creation. When creating a character, roll their class HD to determine their starting HP. Each time a character gains a new level, they are able to roll their class HD to increase their maximum HP.

Qi Points

Every PC has mastered the use of qi to aid them in their adventures. Each character has a pool of **QI POINTS** (QP) that represent their inner discipline, and ability to use martial arts techniques and special **QI ABILITIES**. A character's **QI POOL** is determined by their FOCUS BONUS plus any bonus QP provided by their chosen class.

Dodge

DODGE is a number that represents a character's ability to avoid being hit by an attacker. It is determined by a character's AGILITY SCORE.

Carrying Capacity

CARRYING CAPACITY represents how much weight a character can carry before becoming encumbered. This is represented by a number equal to a character's STRENGTH SCORE. Weight in this game is calculated in the number of ITEM SLOTS an object takes up. To keep things simple, items like a backpack do not count towards CARRYING CAPACITY since a character would use them to store their items.

Techniques

Each character has a base number of martial arts **TECHNIQUES** that they have mastered by virtue of their class. In order to use them in battle, a PC must spend the required QP. New TECHNIQUES are learned when a new level is reached.

There are three types:

- **Combat Techniques** are special martial arts attacks. In combat, these require an ACTION (more on this later).
- **Reactive Techniques** are used in response to what is happening during a scene. In combat, these require a REACTION (more on this later).
- **Support Techniques** are used to aid your allies or disrupt adversaries in combat. In combat, these require an ACTION.

Optional Rule: Technique Manuals

New techniques must either be learned from martial arts manuals, masters, or through creativity and diligent practice (negotiated with the game master or GM).

Speed

PCs have two speed types:

- **COMBAT SPEED** (base of 40 feet + applicable class combat speed bonuses + equipment penalties) dictates how far they move using 1 ACTION on their turn.
- **EXPLORATION SPEED** (STR score in miles) dictates how far a character can travel outside of combat. This is affected by difficult (½ EXPLORATION SPEED) and harsh (¼ EXPLORATION SPEED) conditions.

Drive

Each character has a **DRIVE** - a strong inner motivation, passion, or desire that they pursue as part of the shared story of the table. A character's DRIVE is a powerful force that shapes their behaviour, personality, and actions.

Once per session, a player can tap into their character's DRIVE to automatically succeed on a single CHECK or SAVE.

Keepsake

Each character starts with a **KEEPSAKE**, a small item that is kept as a treasured memento and serves as a way to help craft their backstory. It can be anything from a piece of jewellery to a letter that holds sentimental value. A character's KEEPSAKE is very likely tied to their DRIVE. This item does not take up an item slot and cannot be used in combat.

Connection

A **CONNECTION** is an important relationship that a character has with another member of the party or a key NPC (if your game only has 1 player and 1 GM). This CONNECTION can be romantic, platonic, or even strained.

What's important is that the CONNECTION one PC has with another serves as a way to collaboratively create entanglements within their backstories. This can be related to a character's DRIVE and KEEPSAKE, or be something completely independent of those! CONNECTIONS are primarily used by the GM to create interesting role play opportunities and challenges. Remember that connections involving another player should be created with their input and consent before being established.

Equipment

Currency

Coinage in *Wandering Blades* is abstracted into a single currency (referred to as "coins") instead of splitting them into different denominations.

Encumbrance

When a player character is carrying more items than their CARRYING CAPACITY, they become ENCUMBERED. All rolls involving strength or agility made by an encumbered character are HINDERED.

Weapons

Weapons have the following qualities:

- **Weight Category** - a weapon's weight category determines how many ITEM SLOTS it takes up in a character's CARRYING CAPACITY. There are three weapon weight categories: Light (1 slot), Medium (2 slots), and Heavy (3 slots).
- **Damage Category** - a weapon's DAMAGE category determines what die is rolled upon a successful attack. There are three weapon DAMAGE categories: Light (1d6), Medium (1d8), and Heavy (1d10). The handedness of a weapon or other factors (such as a TECHNIQUE) may call for DAMAGE to be rolled at a category higher or lower. In this case, dice are adjusted along this scale: 1, 1d2, 1d4, 1d6, 1d8, 1d10, 1d12, and 1d20.
- **Descriptors & Special Features** - weapons also have descriptors such as range (measured by engagement zones), handedness (one-handed as 1H and two-handed as 2H), and special features (ex. *crushing*). Discretion is left to the GM, but attacking outside of a weapons range generally results in a HINDERED roll.

Improvised Weapons

Mundane items have damage values associated with their weight, but ATTACK ACTIONS made with them are HINDERED and DAMAGE is rolled 1 size category lower (unless otherwise stated).

Weapon Table

Name	Descriptors & Special Feature(s)	Damage	Weight & Cost (Coins)
Dagger	Melee (close), Mid-range (thrown), Lacerate (1)	1d4 (1H)	Light (1 item slot) 25 Coins
Jian	Melee (close), Keen	1d6 (1H)	
Axe	Melee (close)	1d6 (1H) or 1d8 (2H)	
Meteor Hammer	Melee (mid-range), cannot block melee attacks, Crushing	1d8 (2H)	
Staff	Melee (mid-range), Bludgeon	1d8 (2H)	
Dao	Melee (close)	1d8 (1H) or 1d10 (2H)	Medium (2 item slots) 50 Coins
Bow	Long range (projectile)	1d10 (2H)	
War Hammer	Melee (close), Crushing, Cumbersome	1d8 (1H)	
Spear	Melee (mid-range)	1d8 (1H) or 1d10 (2H)	
Guandao	Melee (mid-range), Cleave	2d6 (2H)	Heavy (3 item slots) 100 Coins
Greataxe	Melee (close), Lacerate (2)	2d6 (2H)	
Crossbow	Long range (projectile), Crushing, Reload	2d6 (2H)	

Range & Engagement Zones

Range and engagement zones help organize every character's relative positioning within an encounter and determine if someone is within reach of a weapon or martial arts TECHNIQUE. This allows movement to be viewed either precisely on a grid or in approximate terms to emphasize where a character is located relative to others (i.e. where people are and who is engaged in melee combat).

When making an ATTACK ACTION outside of a weapons effective range, rolls are HINDERED.

- **Close Range (up to 5 feet):** close proximity between combatants - within arm's reach or the range of close combat weapons like swords.
- **Mid-Range (6-15 feet):** moderate proximity between combatants - within the range of reach weapons such as spears and staves, or thrown weapons like knives.
- **Long Range (more than 15 feet):** long distance between combatants - beyond the reach of melee and thrown weapons. Examples of weapons include bows and crossbows.

Designer's Note: Wandering Blades is designed to be compatible with grid-based combat, zone-based combat, or theatre of the mind. Grid spaces should be measured as 5-foot spaces. For zone-based combat, Close Range is the zone that you are occupying, Mid-Range is the zone adjacent to you, and Long Range is any zone beyond that. One move action would move you one zone. GMs should feel free to bend and change the rules to suit the needs of their tables.

Weapon Special Features

Bludgeon - When you roll a CRIT during an ATTACK ACTION, in addition to dealing maximum base DAMAGE, the target receives the stunned STATUS.

Cleave - As an ATTACK ACTION, you may select 2 adjacent targets for your roll. This roll is HINDERED and DAMAGE is resolved once.

Crushing - Ignore up to 2 DAMAGE REDUCTION when resolving DAMAGE on successful ATTACK ACTIONS.

Cumbersome - If an ATTACK ACTION with this weapon misses, the next attempt is HINDERED.

Lacerate - Instead of rolling DAMAGE dice after a successful attack, you may choose to inflict a number stack of the bleeding STATUS on the target equal to the lacerate value of your weapon.

Keen - When you roll a CRIT during an ATTACK ACTION, in addition to dealing maximum base DAMAGE, roll this weapon's damage die and add the result to the total (ex. a CRIT with a jian would deal 6 + 1d6 damage).

Reload - After making an ATTACK ACTION with this weapon, you must spend an ACTION before you can do so again.

Armour

Various types of armour have the following qualities:

- **Weight category** - an armour's weight category determines how many item slots it takes up in a character's carrying capacity. There are three armour weight categories: **Light** (1 item slot), **Medium** (2 item slots), and **Heavy** (4 item slots).
- **Damage Reduction** - each type of armour has a fixed **DAMAGE REDUCTION** (DR). Each point of DAMAGE REDUCTION reduces incoming damage dice by one step (ex. heavy armour would reduce a bow's DAMAGE dice from 1d10 to 1d4). DAMAGE REDUCTION is ignored when a CRIT is rolled.
- **Descriptors & Special Features** - each type of armour also have descriptors such as COMBAT SPEED penalties or the ability to use the GUARD ACTION.

Armour Table

Category	Cost (coins)	Damage Reduction	Descriptors & Special Feature(s)
Heavy (lamellar iron, scale armour)	300	3	Speed penalty (10 feet), checks related to stealth are hindered
Medium (leather)	100	2	Speed penalty (5 feet)
Light (padded)	40	1	
Medium Shield	50	-	Guard (3)
Light Shield	25	-	Guard (1)

Armour Special Features

Guard allows a character to spend a REACTION to completely nullify incoming DAMAGE a number of times equal to the value associated with the item (ex. a shield with guard 3 may do this 3 times). When all of an item's guard is spent, a character can sacrifice the item for one final guard attempt. This results in the destruction of the item and the character receiving a STATUS of the GM's choice.

The Youxia Class

You are a **youxia** [yo she-ah] - a wandering hero who protects the innocent and seeks to correct injustices using their martial skills and diplomacy. You are neither a knight or a bandit. You have no allegiances to monarchs or noble families. Driven by an unwavering sense of justice, you avenge wrongs and help the poor - often through acts of violent heroism.

Youxia Class Features

Level	Bonus Qi Points	Signature Weapons
1	2	1
2	2	1
3	3	2
4	3	2
5	4	3

Class Hit Die - 1d10 per level.

Combat Speed Bonus - 10 ft.

Starting Coins - 150

Martial Arts Sect - You are or were a disciple of a martial arts sect. Your time spent as a disciple has granted you a distinct martial arts style, abilities, and secret techniques unknown to those outside of your sect. Your connection to your sect means that you always have a home to return to and can call upon your fellow disciples when you require assistance.

Hero in Disguise - You have a unique disguise, persona, and identity that allows you to blend into certain areas (GMs discretion). Any non-combat checks that leverage your disguise are AMPLIFIED. This false identity must be a labourer, peasant, or farmer. It takes less than an hour to become your alter-ego and you can remain in it indefinitely or until you are discovered or reveal your martial prowess. Once a youxia removes their

disguise or is discovered, they may not use it again until they have completed a LONG REST.

Signature Weapon - You have a few signature weapons that you wield, each with their own unique name. A signature weapon deals DAMAGE one category higher without changing the weight category. The number of signature weapons a youxia can possess is dependent on their level.

Youxia Techniques

A youxia starts with two general techniques of their choice and two from their chosen sect. When a youxia gains a new level, they may add either one general technique or one from their chosen sect.

General Youxia Techniques

- ***Focused Dodge*** (1 QP - Reactive) - Add your FOCUS to your DODGE against a single ATTACK ACTION.
- ***Heroic Strike*** (3 QP - Combat) - Automatically turn an ATTACK ACTION into a CRIT.
- ***Misdirect & Strike*** (1 QP - Combat) - Distract an opponent before striking them from an unexpected angle. The next ATTACK ACTION made by your allies this round are AMPLIFIED and rolled with INTELLECT.

Mountain Orchid Sect Techniques

Sect ability: once per combat encounter, as a free MOVE ACTION you may reposition to an adjacent combat zone (ex. from close to mid-range) or an equivalent of your COMBAT SPEED.

- ***Twilight Thrust*** (1 QP - Combat) - You may make a MOVE and ATTACK as a single ACTION, so long as you MOVE in a straight line..
- ***Gale Slash*** (2 QP - Combat) - A single ATTACK ACTION creates a gust of wind that can knock one opponent within close to mid-range off balance. They must make an AGILITY saving throw with a difficulty equal to your attack roll. On a failed roll, they must use a MOVE ACTION to regain their footing.
- ***Moonlit Swordplay*** (2 QP - Combat) - Using an ATTACK ACTION, strike two nearby adversaries with a single roll. You may add additional targets for each QP spent after the initial cost.

Vagabond Sect Techniques

Sect ability: once per combat encounter, you may switch from a SLOW TURN to a FAST TURN (or vice-versa) after all turns have been declared.

- *Crimson Threat* (1 QP - Support) - With a bloody execution, you strike fear into your enemy's heart. After you kill an opponent, you may force another opponent to make a MORALE CHECK. If they succeed, their MORALE score is reduced by 2 for the duration of the combat.
- *Cutting Grip* (1 QP - Combat) - Your blades make for excellent grappling tools. Make a single melee ATTACK ACTION against an opponent. If you hit, the opponent must choose to suffer the effect of a SPECIAL MANEUVER or you may roll double the damage dice rolled.
- *Open Wounds* (2 QP - Combat) - With a flurry of slashes, you open up a series of shallow, bleeding wounds on your enemy. Using a single ACTION, make two attack rolls against an opponent. Each successful roll delivers a stack of the bleeding STATUS in addition to their normal DAMAGE.

Iron Mountain Sect Techniques

Sect ability: You may reroll failed defender checks against being grappled.

- *Iron Presence* (1 QP - Support) - Opponents within 30 feet of you must make a FOCUS CHECK against your STRENGTH SCORE. If they fail, their ATTACK ACTIONS made against anyone other than you are HINDERED until the start of your next turn.
- *Thundering Strike* (X QP - Combat) - Your next attack ignores an amount of DAMAGE REDUCTION equal to the amount of QP you expend.
- *Crashing Stone* (3 QP - Combat) - Make a single ATTACK ACTION against an opponent. On a hit, the damage dice are doubled and the target is stunned.

Floating Lotus Sect Techniques

Sect ability: Once per turn, you may enter or change a Stance without using an action.

- *Twisting Force* (1 QP - Combat) - As a free action, attempt an AMPLIFIED SPECIAL MANOEUVRE against an opponent.
- *Redirect Energy* (1 QP - Reactive) - When an opponent misses you with a melee ATTACK ACTION, you may cause them to reroll the attack against another target adjacent to you.
- *Flowing Rapids* (2 QP - Support) - You move up to half of your COMBAT SPEED and roll melee ATTACK ACTIONS against up to three targets. These attacks deal no DAMAGE but instead cause your targets to be dazed until the end of their next turn.

Basic Mechanics

Checks & Saves

When a character attempts to do something where the outcome is risky or uncertain, they attempt a **CHECK** by rolling 1d20 and adding a relevant ATTRIBUTE BONUS. To succeed, the roll must be equal to or greater than the **DIFFICULTY** of the roll. If the CHECK is opposed by a character or NPC, success is based on whoever has the highest roll. **SAVES** are a type of CHECK used to avoid bad outcomes brought on by risky situations. DIFFICULTY is determined by the GM.

Here are some recommended DIFFICULTY scores:

- Moderate - Difficulty 12
- Challenging - Difficulty 15
- Difficult - Difficulty 18
- Futile - Difficulty 20

Crits & Fumbled Rolls

In combat, when a character rolls a natural 20 (i.e. 20 before modifiers) during an ATTACK ACTION, they deal maximum DAMAGE and ignore any DAMAGE REDUCTION their target has. This is called a **CRITICAL** (or **CRIT**). Outside of combat, the GM and the player may work together to decide the outcome of a CRIT.

When a natural 1 is rolled, this is called a **FUMBLE.** The GM always decides the outcome of a FUMBLE.

Amplified & Hindered Rolls

When a situation calls for a roll to be more effective, it is **AMPLIFIED.** When a roll is AMPLIFIED, the player receives a +5 bonus. In a situation that calls for a die roll to be less effective, such as attacking someone shrouded by smoke, it is **HINDERED** and receives a -5 penalty. Amplified and Hindered cannot be applied multiple times to a single roll and if both are applied to the same target, they simply cancel each other out.

If ever a situation is unclear, the GM is always able to collaborate with the players to determine if a roll should be amplified or hindered.

Combat Mechanics

Combat flows in 4 steps:

1. Resolve ambushes
2. Declare FAST TURNS & SLOW TURNS
3. Resolve ACTIONS & REACTIONS
4. Resolve MORALE & repeat

Step 1: Resolve Ambushes

Unless they have been ambushed, Player Characters always go first in any order they would like in combat.

During an ambush, those being ambushed are unable to use REACTIONS and always act last. QI ABILITIES can be used in an ambush. Once the ambush round is resolved, the standard turn order begins.

Step 2: Declare Fast & Slow Turns

In combat, a **round** consists of many **turns** - one for every combatant. At the start of every round, after ambushes are resolved, each combatant involved in the encounter decides if they want to take a **FAST TURN** or **SLOW TURN**.

- FAST TURNS happen first. Characters may take 1 ACTION on their turn and 1 REACTION during the round.
- SLOW TURNS happen last. Characters may take 2 ACTIONS on their turn and 1 REACTION during the round.

Step 3: Resolve Actions & Reactions

In *Wandering Blades*, the following count as ACTIONS in combat: MOVE, ATTACK, select TECHNIQUES, and SPECIAL MANEUVER.

The following count as REACTIONS: select TECHNIQUES, PARRY, COUNTER, WITHDRAW, GUARD, and BIND.

Actions

Move (Action)

In combat, players typically take a **MOVE ACTION** to do one of the following things:

- Move up to their COMBAT SPEED at the cost of 1 ACTION
- Assume a COMBAT STANCE at the cost of 1 ACTION

Combat Stances

Instead of moving their COMBAT SPEED, you may use 1 ACTION to have your character assume a **COMBAT STANCE**. The bonuses and penalties received from each stance persist until an ACTION is spent to move or exit a stance.

- DEFENSIVE STANCE = +2 DODGE and -2 ATTACK
- AGGRESSIVE STANCE = +2 DAMAGE and -2 DODGE
- BALANCED STANCE = +1 DODGE and ATTACK

Attack (Action)

If a character wishes to attack another, they may attempt an **ATTACK ACTION** at the cost of 1 ACTION. Follow these resolution steps:

1. Attacker rolls 1d20 + STRENGTH or AGILITY BONUS (their choice) and compares the result to the defender's DODGE
2. Regardless of the ATTACK ROLL outcome, the defender may use their REACTION
   a. If the defender chooses to use their REACTION, that must first be resolved
3. Resolve DAMAGE - roll the damage dice of the attacker's weapon, deduct damage value from HIT POINTS (account for DAMAGE REDUCTION), mark WOUNDS, and apply STATUSES (if called for)

Optional Rule: Lethal Damage

If you want combat to feel more lethal, damage dice can "explode". This means that when a damage die is rolled and lands on its maximum value, it is rolled again, adding the new value to the maximum value. If the die again lands on its maximum value, it explodes a second time. This happens until the die rolls a value other than its maximum.

Dual Wielding

If a character is wielding two one-handed weapons simultaneously and attempts an ATTACK ACTION, they roll the damage die for each weapon and select the highest result.

Unarmed Attacks

As a single ACTION, any character may attempt two unarmed ATTACK ACTIONS that each deal 1d4 damage.

Improvised Weapons

As an action, any character may attempt an attack with an improvised or makeshift weapon. Unless otherwise stated, the ATTACK roll is HINDERED and the DAMAGE of an improvised weapon reflects its weight category, but one step lower (GM's discretion).

Hit Points & Damage

When a character or NPC takes DAMAGE, their HIT POINTS are reduced by that amount minus the total DAMAGE REDUCTION of their armour. At 0 HP, they receive the compromised STATUS and become susceptible to WOUNDS, which are serious injuries that can result in death.

Wounds & Statuses

Any DAMAGE beyond 0 hit points results in a WOUND. Every 5 WOUNDS, a character receives a new STATUS reflecting the severity of their injuries (lightly wounded, moderately wounded, and critically wounded). Generally, the STATUS they received is dictated by the narrative. Specific TECHNIQUES can also result in a character receiving a STATUS. An NPC "follower" is instantly killed or knocked out of combat when they are reduced to 0 HP.

Status	Effect
Encumbered	All rolls involving strength or agility made by an encumbered character are HINDERED.
Compromised	When a character's HIT POINTS are reduced to 0 or below, they are considered Compromised and can receive WOUNDS
Dazed	Your ATTACK ACTIONS are HINDERED on your next turn
Stunned	You lose your next turn
Bleeding	You lose 1 HP at the start of your turn. You may use an ACTION to make an INTELLECT saving throw to stop the bleeding. Each application of this STATUS stacks.
Wounded Limb	CHECKS and ACTIONS that involve AGILITY are HINDERED. COMBAT SPEED can optionally be reduced by half.
Severed Limb	A limb is lost and you lose consciousness
Dying	If a character has the dying status, they will die in a number of rounds equal to their FOCUS BONUS unless they receive medical aid

Technique (Action)

Unless otherwise stated*, a character can only use a martial arts TECHNIQUE as an ACTION.

*Some techniques (REACTIVE TECHNIQUES) can be used as REACTIONS.

Special Maneuver (Action)

Feint

Roll an INTELLECT CHECK against a DIFFICULTY equal to a target's INTELLECT SCORE. On a success, your next attack is AMPLIFIED.

Grapple

Roll an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY check (attacker's choice). The winner may:

- **Disarm** - force the loser to drop an equipped weapon. They must use an ACTION to pick it up.
- **Push/Throw** - move the defender up to a number of feet equal to their STRENGTH BONUS x 10. If the attacker loses, the next ATTACK or SPECIAL MANOEUVRE against them by the defender is AMPLIFIED.
- **Trip** - the defender is knocked prone and must use an ACTION to stand up. When prone, they may only attempt ATTACK ACTIONS (HINDERED) using close-range weapons or unarmed attacks. ATTACK ACTIONS made against a prone character are AMPLIFIED and deal maximum DAMAGE.

Qi Abilities

Unless otherwise stated, QI ABILITIES can only be used in combat as an ACTION. They can be restored when healing. During a SHORT REST, a number of QP restored is equal to a character's FOCUS BONUS. During a LONG REST, a character's qi pool is fully restored.

Qi Ability	QP Cost	Effect
Deadly Strike	1	As a REACTION, reroll all damage dice for an ATTACK ACTION and keep the new total.
Intense Focus	1	Amplify your next d20 roll.
Visualisation	1	Automatically succeed on a saving throw.
Meditative Healing	1	Regain HIT POINTS equal to a roll of your class HIT DIE.
Push the Pace	2	As a REACTION, take an extra ACTION during your turn.

Reactions

Characters receive 1 free **REACTION** per round of combat. This can be used at any time during a round and does not carry over to the next. Once a character's free REACTION has been used in a round, they may spend qi to take additional REACTIONS (1 QP each).

Parry

Roll 1d20 + STRENGTH or AGILITY BONUS (their choice) and compare the result to the incoming attack roll. If the result is equal to or higher, then the attack fails and the defender resolves DAMAGE against the attacker without having to take an ATTACK ACTION.

Counter

If an incoming enemy attack misses, make a free ATTACK ACTION against the attacker.

Withdraw

Roll 1d20 + AGILITY BONUS and compare the result to the incoming attack roll. If the result is equal to or higher, then the character avoids DAMAGE and may move up to their COMBAT SPEED.

If an attempt to WITHDRAW fails, resolve DAMAGE. The next attack made against the defender is AMPLIFIED (+5 bonus).

Guard

When a character is wielding an item with the guard special feature, they may GUARD against incoming ATTACK ACTIONS without rolling. When a character chooses to GUARD, incoming damage is nullified. This can be done a number of times equal to the guard value of an item.

Bind

If an incoming enemy attack misses, the defender can initiate a BIND by making an opposed STRENGTH or AGILITY CHECK. If the defender wins, both combatants' weapons are locked together. On each character's turn, they may make an opposed STR or AGI CHECK to WITHDRAW, COUNTER, or disarm their opponent. While bound, ATTACK ACTIONS against both combatants are AMPLIFIED and they cannot attack.

Step 4: Resolve Morale

The state of a combat encounter dictates whether NPCs will surrender or run away. Allied and adversarial NPCs or creatures have a listed MORALE SCORE between 2 and 12. In combat, a MORALE ROLL is triggered when more than half of the NPCs have been killed, if the leader is defeated, or at the GM's discretion (such as when an NPC leader receives a horrible wound). When this happens, the GM rolls 2d6 and compares the result to an NPC's MORALE SCORE. If the result is higher than their MORALE SCORE, the NPC will attempt to retreat, surrender, or negotiate on their next turn.

After MORALE is resolved, repeat step two, and declare FAST TURNS and SLOW TURNS.

Healing After Combat

HIT POINTS are replenished during rests. If you are interrupted during either type of rest, no healing is received.

- **SHORT REST** - a quick break that restores a character's HP by a single HD and QP by their FOCUS BONUS. A SHORT REST takes 1 hour.
- **LONG REST** - an extended break that fully restores a character's HP and QP. A LONG REST takes 8 hours.

Example of Play

The large, masked warrior steps off of the dais and levels his guan dao towards you. "There is no need for the blood of others," he growls, "if you wish to fight me, then fight me."

Combat begins

GM: Let's determine who goes first. Jeremy, both of us have to secretly choose if we'll take a fast turn or a slow turn.

Jeremy and the GM both determine what type of turn they want for this round and reveal their choice. Both have chosen a fast turn, hoping to seize the initiative by sacrificing the extra action from a slow turn.

GM: We've both chosen to take a fast turn, but since you are a player, your fast turn always goes before mine! What do you do?

Jeremy: I lunge forward and strike with my jian! I'll spend a Qi Point to use my Twilight Thrust technique so I can combo Move and Attack into a single action.

Jeremy moves forward so that he is within close-range of the warrior. He makes an attack with his jian - rolling 1d20 and adding his character's Agility Bonus. He gets a 18, which beats the warrior's Dodge of 14.

GM: The warrior is going to use his Reaction for the turn and attempt to Parry your attack.

The warrior rolls 1d20 and adds his Strength. He gets a 19 which is higher than Jeremy's 18.

GM: Since his Parry roll was higher than your attack roll, he knocks your blade away as the blunt end of his guan dao swings around and hits you in the stomach. Since this is a Parry, I only have to roll for damage.

The GM rolls 2d6 for the Warrior's guan dao attack.

GM: He deals 7 damage to you!

Jeremy: Dang. I have light armour on so I get to reduce that damage by 1, taking 6 instead. I have 4 HP left.

GM: The warrior gets to go now. He swings his weapon towards you, but since you are in close-range, the Attack roll with his mid-range guan dao is Hindered.

The warrior rolls his attack with a -5 penalty since it is Hindered. He gets a 10, which is lower than Jeremy's Dodge of 12.

Jeremy: Nice! He's gonna miss his attack so I'll use my Reaction for the turn to Counter!

Jeremy gets to make a free Attack. He rolls a natural 20, a Critical!

Jeremy: Since my jian is a signature weapon [a youxia class feature] of mine, my damage die is a step higher than 1d6 at 1d8!

Instead of rolling damage like normal, Jeremy's Crit allows him to do maximum damage as well as ignore the Damage Reduction of the warrior's heavy armour.

Jeremy: That means I deal 8 damage! I sidestep his heavy swing and plunge my blade into a weak point in his armour.

GM: Now that both of you have finished your turns, we would normally end the round and start a new one. However, the warrior has received quite a hit and I think it makes sense to Resolve Morale [Morale is rolled when more than half of the NPCs have been killed, if the leader is defeated, or at the GM's discretion].

The GM rolls 2d6 and compares it to the Morale of the warrior. She rolls a 10 which is higher than the warrior's Morale of 9.

GM: Since the Morale roll was higher than his Morale score, he surrenders.
The warrior steps away from you, lowering his weapon in defeat and pressing a hand to his wound. "A good fighter knows their limits," he grunts, "even as they work to surpass them. You have bested me."

Combat ends

Designer's Note: Jeremy was very lucky to score that critical hit and cause his opponent's morale to break. If combat had continued, he would have to carefully ration out his Qi Points so that he makes the most of every decision. Low-level player characters have especially few Qi Points available to them and no guarantee of being able to rest and recover them between fights. Having those abilities available to you can be the difference between life or death for a character.