

Introducing

# APOCALYPSE WORLD

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www.apocalypse-world.com

Something's wrong with the world and I don't know what it is.

It used to be better, of course it did. In the golden age of legend, when there was enough to eat and enough hope, when there was one nation under god and people could lift their eyes and see beyond the horizon, beyond the day. Children were born happy and grew up rich.

Now that's not what we've got. Now we've got *this*. Hardholders stand against the screaming elements and all comers, keeping safe as many as they can. Angels and savvyheads run constant battle against *there's not enough* and *bullets fly* and *everything breaks*. Hocuses gather people around them, and are they protectors, saviors, visionaries, or just wishful thinkers? Choppers, gunluggers and battlebabes carve out what they can and defend it with blood and bullets. Drivers and operators search and scavenge, looking for that opportunity, that one perfect chance. Skinnies remember beauty, or invent beauty anew, cup it in their hands and whisper *come and see*, and don't worry now about what it will cost you. And brainers, oh, brainers see what none of the rest of us will: the world's psychic maelstrom, the terrible desperation and hate pressing in at the edge of all perception, it is the world now.

And you, who are you? This is what we've *got*, yes. What are you going to *make* of it?

## WHY TO PLAY

One: Because the characters are fucking hot.

Two: Because hot as they are, the characters are best and hottest when you put them together. Lovers, rivals, friends, enemies, blood and sex — that's the good shit.

Three: Because the characters are together against a horrific world. They're carving out their little space of hope and freedom in the filth and violence, and they're trying to hold onto it. Do they have it in them? What are they going to have to do to hold it together? Are they prepared, tough enough, strong enough and willing?

Four: Because they're together, sure, but they're desperate and they're under a lot of pressure. If there's not enough to go around (and is there ever?), who'll stick together and who'll turn on whom? Who *do* you trust, and who *should* you trust, and what if you get it wrong?

Five: Because there's something really wrong with the world, and I don't know what it is. The world wasn't always like this, blasted and brutal. There wasn't always a psychic maelstrom howling just out of your perception, waiting for you to open your brain so that it can rush in. Who fucked the world up, and how? Is there a way back? A way forward? If anybody's going to ever find out, it's you and your characters.

That's why.

## ADDITIONAL RULES

### HARM VS ARMOR

Inflicting damage onto somebody is pretty simple. If you have a gun that deals 2-harm, then you deal 2-harm to your target. If your target is wearing armor then you reduce the amount of harm by the level of armor they are wearing. See? Simple.

### GANGS

Gangs make combat complex. A gang that deals 2-harm does that much damage to a gang of *equal size*. When a gang fights somebody larger they inflict 1 less harm, and when they fight somebody smaller they inflict 1 additional harm. If you're by yourself and you're going up against a small 2-harm gang, when they do damage to you they inflict 3-harm upon you, a medium gang would deal 4-harm and a large gang would do 5-harm. When you fight as the leader of a gang, your gang is treated as a weapon.

### HEALING

Healing is resolved case-by-case. If you have a first aid kit you can try to heal somebody, but the availability of first aid kits and whether or not they can be used is largely left up to the fiction. The MC might say you need more than a first aid kit, especially if it's a serious injury. There's one thing you can always rely upon though: regular old-fashioned got-beat-up harm filled to 6 o'clock will always heal given time and rest.

### HELPING & INTERFERING

This is another area where Hx comes into play. Whenever you help or interfere with somebody else's move you roll and add your Hx with them. Helping will give them a +1 to their roll, interfering will give them a -2, but you always have to declare exactly *how* you're helping or interfering.

### BARTER

Barter is the word for money. You might expect that money has a game mechanic, but it doesn't. It's just a loose measure of who is generally able to get what stuff. Things pretty, portable, and convenient to trade are called "oddmments." In character creation, you can describe what your characters' oddmments are, or just list "oddmments worth n-barter" and leave them to be described later on, if ever. An MC might tell you to describe what your barter is, and sometimes they will tell you that you've found something worth barter. As far as that can be a game mechanic, there it is.

### HIGHLIGHTING STATS

At the beginning of every session you'll hand your character sheet to the player with the highest Hx on your sheet and they get to highlight one of your stats, then the MC highlights a second. Whenever you roll one of these two stats during the game you will mark an experience bubble.

### AT THE END OF EVERY SESSION

At the end of every session you'll choose a character that learned the most about your character and you'll tell them to increase their Hx with your character. Your MC might also ask you if you had fun. Be honest.



# APOCALYPSE WORLD

When you play Apocalypse World, your GM is the Master of Ceremonies: the MC.

## ARCHETYPE

You will start by selecting an archetypal post-apocalyptic character to play. These are called the playbooks, and there are 11 of them to choose from. They are:

- the Angel, a medicine man
- the Battlebabe, a sexy & dangerous fighter
- the Brainer, a weirdo psychic
- the Chopper, a leader of a biker gang
- the Driver, a car enthusiast and road warrior
- the Gunlugger, a gunslingin' fighter
- the Hardholder, a leader of a community
- the Hocus, a leader of a cult (maybe)
- the Operator, a job creator
- the Savvyhead, a technical wizard
- the Skinner, a people person

## NAME

Every playbook has suggestions for your character's name. You don't have to use any of them, but they help give you a sense of the post-apocalyptic world.

## LOOK

Just like Name, every playbook will have suggestions for how your character should look. These are not mandatory, but they do help to give you a sense of atmosphere.

## GEAR

Every playbook starts with gear suitable to the archetype of the playbook. Some characters start with a special item, like Angels get Angel kits, and Brainers get psychic gear, but almost everybody starts with a weapon or two and a little bit of money.

## EXPERIENCE

Whenever you roll a highlighted stat, whenever your Hx with someone goes to +4 or -4, or whenever a specific move instructs you to, you will mark an experience bubble.

## STATS

You'll have four sets of numbered stats to choose from. These will look pretty simple as most of them range from -2 to +2. All of the basic moves you can take in the game play off of these stats.

The stats are:

- **Cool:** meaning cool under fire, calm, rational, clearthinking, calculating, unfazed.
- **Hard:** meaning hard-hearted, violent, strong-willed, aggressive, mean, physically and emotionally strong.
- **Hot:** meaning fucking hot, attractive, subtle, gracious, sexy, beautiful, inspiring, interesting.
- **Sharp:** meaning sharp-witted, clever, alert, smart, perceptive, educated, skilled, trained.
- **Weird:** meaning a weirdo, psychic, genius, uncanny, lucky, strange, prophetic, touched.

## THE BASIC MOVES

- **Act Under Fire:** whenever someone does something requiring unusual discipline, resolve, endurance or care.
- **Go Aggro:** using violence or the threat of violence to control somebody else's behavior, without (or before) fighting.
- **Seize By Force:** read "seize something" broadly — a character can seize the upper hand, seize momentum, or even seize the moment — but "by force" is strict. This is a move for when the guns and knives and crowbars are already out on both sides.
- **Seduce or Manipulate:** using leverage to get somebody to do what you want (sex is the leverage for seduction).
- **Read A Sitch:** can mean carefully checking things out, studying and analyzing, or it can mean a quick look over the wall and going by gut. Depends on the character.
- **Read A Person:** means investing time in studying a person carefully through an entire conversation, noticing changes in their tone, the movements of their eyes and hands, and their most fleeting expressions.
- **Open Your Brain:** anybody can open their brain to the psychic maelstrom, but everybody finds something different.

# NAME -

## LOOK

This page represents the meat & potatoes of your character sheet. All of your Stats are here, what your character looks like, your Hx with the other characters, your current level of Harm (if any), and your Improvement tracking.

## STATS MOVES

<b>COOL</b>	<input type="radio"/> highlight	<i>do something under fire</i>
<b>HARD</b>	<input type="radio"/> highlight	<i>go aggro; seize by force</i>
<b>HOT</b>	<input type="radio"/> highlight	<i>seduce or manipulate</i>
<b>SHARP</b>	<input type="radio"/> highlight	<i>read a sitch; read a person</i>
<b>WEIRD</b>	<input type="radio"/> highlight	<i>open your brain</i>
<b>HARM</b>	<input type="radio"/> stabilized	<p>countdown</p> <p><input type="radio"/> shattered (-1cool)  <input type="radio"/> crippled (-1hard)  <input type="radio"/> disfigured (-1hot)  <input type="radio"/> broken (-1sharp)</p>

## HX

*help or interfere; session end*

Hx, meaning history, or shared history, measures how well one character knows another. It doesn't measure how well your character likes the other, just how well your character knows the other. It's also asymmetrical: my character might know yours very well, like Hx+2, while yours doesn't know mine well at all, like Hx-1.

## PLAYBOOK SPECIAL

Each of the characters also has a special move that kicks in when they have sex with someone. For most of the characters, the special sex moves only apply when they have sex with another player's character. This is the closest thing Apocalypse World has to an alignment or morality system, as the character's special sex move illustrates how they relate to other people and the world. This is also why Apocalypse World is a game for adults.

## IMPROVEMENT

*experience* ○○○○● >> *improve*

This area details summaries for all of the improvements a character can take: new moves, improve stats, sometimes you get a gang or a holding or whatever, things like that. Whenever you mark experience, you fill in one of the circles at the top of this box. When you mark your fifth experience bubble, you improve your character. When you take an improvement, you erase all of your little experience bubbles and start over at 0.

Once a character's improved 5 times, new options from this box open up: like advancing the basic moves, creating a second character, or changing the character into a new archetype.

# THE MOVES

● **Moves:** All of the characters can use the same set of basic moves, plus each character playbook lists some special moves for just that character. The MC might have some special custom moves for you too. The rule for moves is *to do it, do it*. In order for it to be a move and for you to roll dice, the character has to do something that counts as that move. Example: If you say "I manipulate him" then the MC is going to ask you how and what kind of leverage you're using, and only after you describe the particulars of what you're doing can you roll dice. Conversely, whenever you dictate that your character does something that counts as a move, it's the move and you roll dice. Example: If you say "I shoot him in the back of the head" then the MC might declare that you're going aggro and instruct you to roll dice.

○ **Dice:** Any time you have to roll dice, you're picking up two six-sided dice. Rolling a 6 or less is a miss, and it lets the MC make a move of their own. Rolling between a 7 and 9 is, generally, a success but it's not a great success. Rolling a 10 or higher is a great success. The basic moves even have advanced versions so when you roll a 12 or higher you do something even better than you intended to! Sometimes you'll come across something that says "take +1 forward" or "take -1 ongoing while..." or the like. +1 or -1 forward just means to add 1 or subtract 1 from your very next roll. +1 or -1 ongoing means to add 1 or subtract 1 from all your rolls, from now until whatever's giving you the bonus or penalty changes.

○ **Partial Success:** I mentioned above that rolling between a 7 and 9 is, generally, a success. That's not true. It's *technically* a success, but it comes with complications or a cost. This is almost always determined by the fiction of the game you are playing. Example 1: You're trying to manipulate a hitman into working for you for only 1 barter when his asking price is 3 barter. You roll a 9. The MC tells you the hitman will agree to 2 barter if he gets half of it up front, or he'll work for free if you sleep with him. Example 2: You've failed to pay what you owe to the hitman in example 1 and now you're trying to repair your car's engine before your garage is burned down (acting under fire) and you roll an 8. The MC will probably give you a choice between putting your car in neutral and rolling it out of the garage meaning you and your car gets a little singed (giving you and your car 1-harm), or managing to get the car started just as the roof collapses (meaning another act under fire roll or your car takes some serious damage, maybe 2- or 3-harm). Your car will be saved, but there's a cost to pay and it's your choice what the cost is.

○ **Diceless GMing:** The MC never rolls dice. Instead, the MC has a list of moves that they make whenever you fail a roll or the action has died down. If none of the players know what to do and are looking for direction, the MC can make a move to kickstart the action as well. Apocalypse World requires that the MC follow a particular agenda which rewards jumping headfirst into a game with very little planning. Does that sound scary? It shouldn't. The MC has a list of principles which act as advice for following the agenda. If your MC follows the agenda and uses the principles when making MC moves then you will all come away from the table feeling rewarded, and everyone will think you have one kickass GM.

○ **the Harm Clock:** Harm is Apocalypse World's word for damage. When you take 1 harm you mark 1 segment of your harm clock. Harm before 6 o'clock heals over time. Past 6 o'clock and you'll need medical attention to get better. Once your clock is marked up to 9 o'clock you will start to get worse over time until your harm is stabilized.