

David Schirduan's

Mythic Mortals

BE THE HERO



CHOOSE
YOUR
WEAPON



GRAB
YOUR
CARDS



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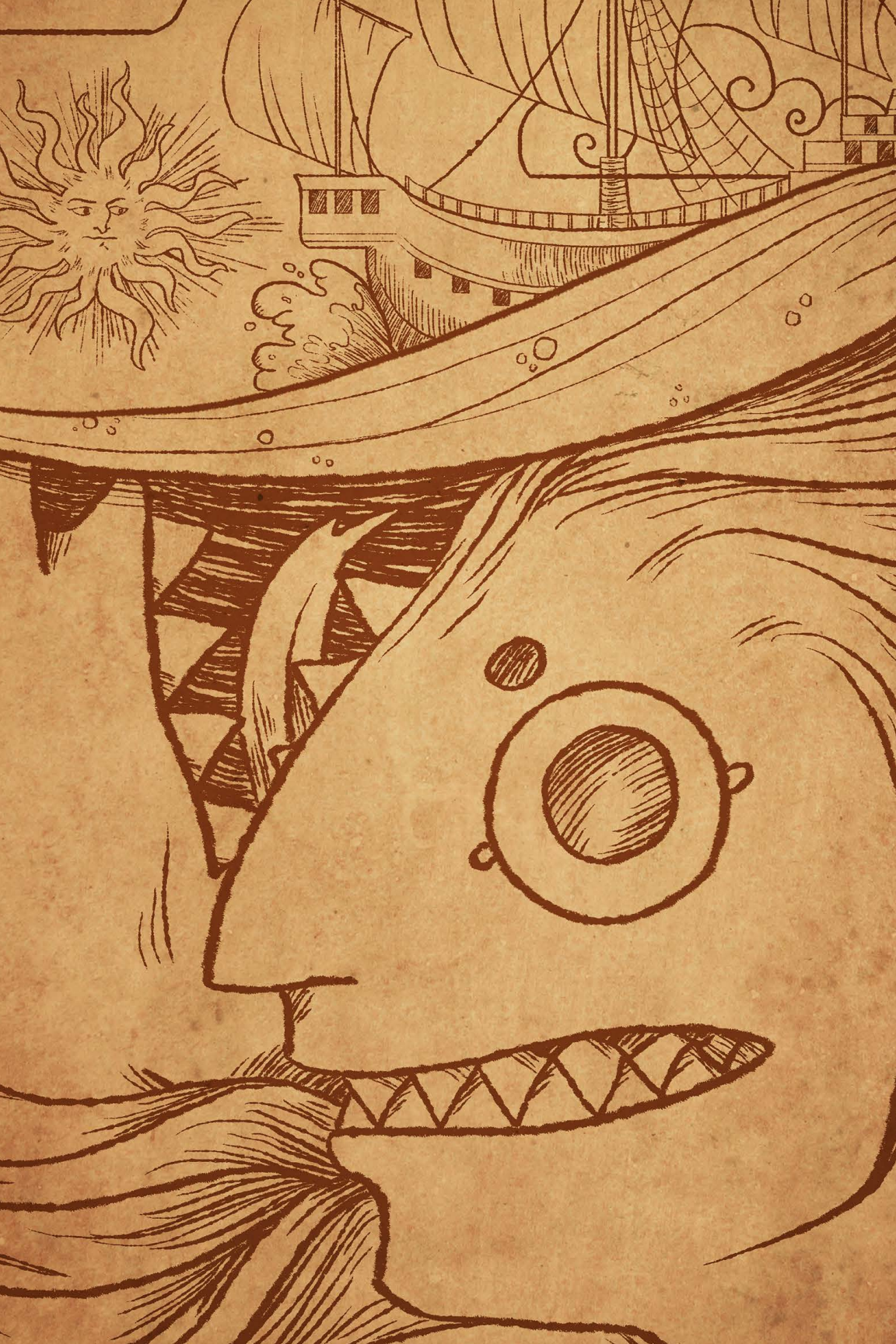
KICKSTARTER

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The Game

Mythic Mortals is an action-focused role-playing game that lets you and your friends engage in over-the-top fights and epic battles. Inspired by *THE AVENGERS*, *300*, *X-MEN*, *DEVIL MAY CRY*, and so many more; Mythic Mortals aims to bring that fun, explosive experience to the table top.

You and your friends will play as yourselves, suddenly granted incredible powers and thrown into a world that is familiar yet dangerous.

How does it differ from other RPGs?

A lot of fantastic Role-Playing Games (RPGs) are about telling intricate stories over a long period of time (for example, *LORD OF THE RINGS*). Mythic Mortals is different. It's laser focused on satisfying and fun combat. Sometimes your group just wants to beat up a bunch of monsters and feel really powerful.

You play Mythic Mortals to fight terrible monsters, but not just tactics and sword swinging; it's more like the kind of combat you find in action movies: big budget, over the top, pumped up awesomeness.

Why just deal 10 damage when you can summon the legendary bow of Diana, kick your foe off the roof of a skyscraper, and pin them to the building with a blazing bolt of fire!

Then switch up your weapons, leap off the ledge, and finish them off with a flying hammer smash.

Mythic Mortals gives you all of the tools you need to live your dreams of being an incredible, powerful hero. The combat is meant to be empowering, and the mechanics all reinforce a feeling of excitement and competency.

To keep things interesting, that incredible power shifts and fluctuates wildly, keeping you on your toes throughout the game. It's up to you to master your powers and the rules of the game. If you can do that: *you will be the hero!*

Treating Mythic Mortals like a fun beat-em-up video game is perfectly acceptable, and in fact, is my preferred approach to running this game.

Plots, puzzles, and non-combat sequences don't need to be any more complicated than old arcade games. You are a Hero, these monsters are threatening your school, house, or diner, and you've got the tools to kick butt.

GO!

Along with the above, there are two major things that Mythic Mortals does better than most other RPGs:

Mythic Mortals is fast. Designed from the ground up for one-shots and short campaigns, Mythic Mortals aims to provide a complete, satisfying experience in just a few hours. No leveling, no grinding, no complex mechanics. Everything is streamlined to be learned, played, and mastered in a single session. By the end of your adventure, you'll feel like you're just starting to get ahold of your powers and what you can do with them.

Is there always room for improvement? Sure! And I still enjoy playing Mythic Mortals to this day. But it's not necessary to invest 6 months into this game to enjoy it fully.

Mythic Mortals is about you. The real you, the one reading this book. A lot of games encourage you to create and control a fictional character, someone that you can pretend to be. Mythic Mortals encourages you to be yourself, only with incredible powers! This makes it very easy to engage with, and takes a lot of the pressure off of role-playing and trying to act in character.

You and your in-game version will both be learning how to control their powers at the same time. You'll both be exploring new things, confronting dangerous threats in your hometown, and defending the places and people that you love. Mythic Mortals wants you to bring yourself to the table, not a bunch of rules and funny accents.

How was the game inspired and created?

I created Mythic Mortals to solve a problem with my local gaming group. My group is large, but inconsistent. I never have the same combination of players, and new gamers are always joining up. This is awesome, but it does make it hard to find games to play.

Many RPGs are built for a long-term commitment, and require a lot of investment before starting. I wanted a role-playing game that anyone could sit down to play in about 2–3 hours with minimal prep and no prior gaming experience.

For over two years this idea germinated, and finally blossomed into Mythic Mortals. Forged in the fires of my fluctuating game group, I've finally got something that is solid and fun to play. I hope you enjoy playing it as much as my friends and I have!

Game World

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. [...] Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”
— Nietzsche

History of the game world

“God” is not dead. The Ancients have merely been playing dead this entire time. And as Nietzsche surmised, you will have to become much greater than these Ancients if you wish to survive.

The world is burning. People are running scared in the streets, your greatest cities are toppling (if they haven’t already), and governments are crumbling, unable to contain such massive chaos. Those ancient powers have re-awakened. Humanity, as it stands, is not up for the fight.

Back in days of the Ancients, there were hundreds, thousands of different gods, spirits, and more roaming the earth, waging war and fighting over territories. When those Ancients realized that they were slowly weakening and dying out, they called a truce. Planting seeds of their power in humanity, the Ancients slumbered for thousands of years.

For a while, humans ruled the earth and spread over the planet. As humanity grew, the power planted within us multiplied. Now it’s harvest time, and the Ancients are hungrier than ever.

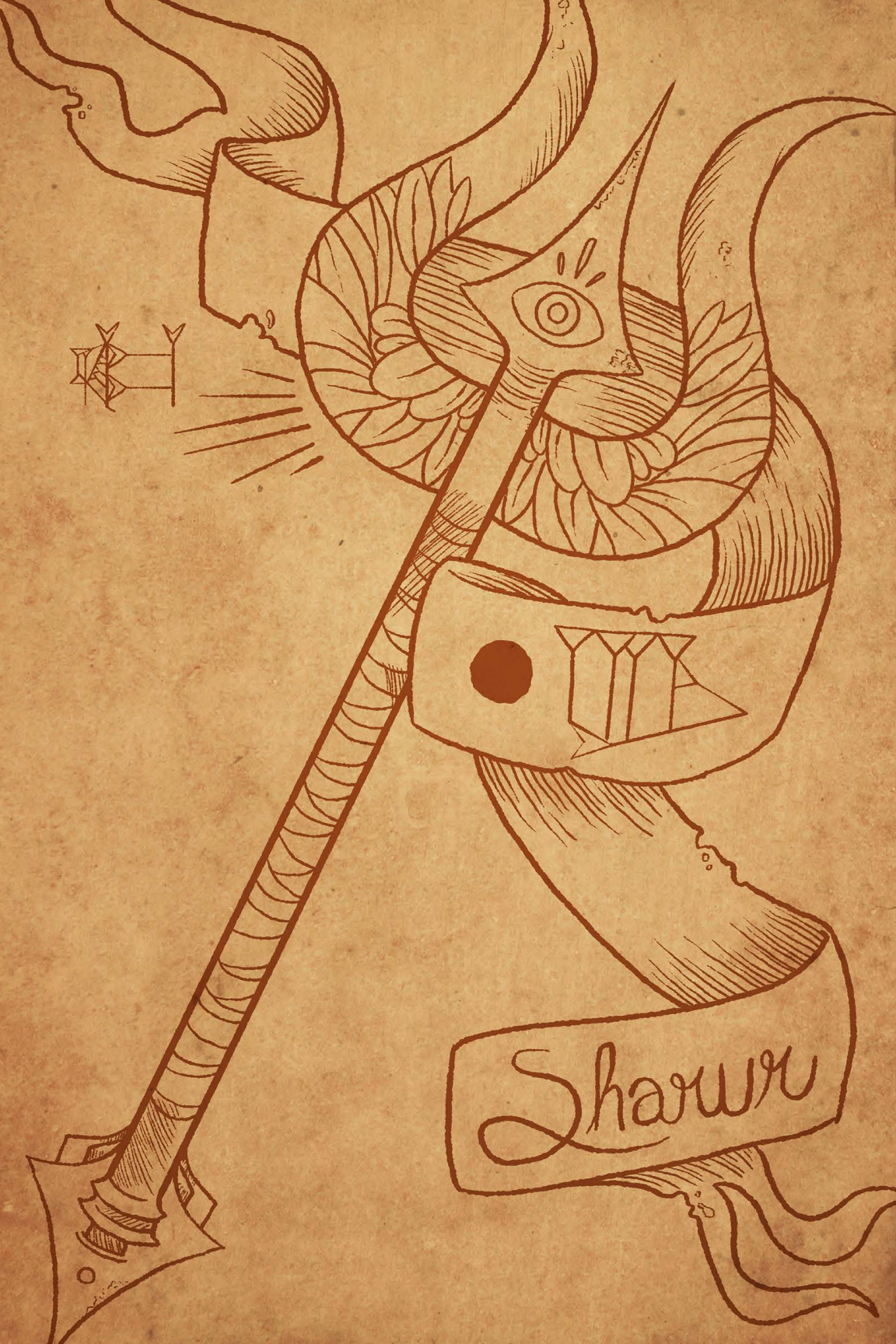
Every time a person dies, the power within them is released and the Ancients get just a little bit stronger. Eventually, they will be unstoppable, and our little species will be crushed back into dust.

How the players fit in the world

You're one of the rare individuals who are able to tap into and harness some of that Ancient power within you; you can turn their own power against them. However, your control is limited as the energy shifts and mutates constantly. This power doesn't just make you stronger, it also protects you. When you take a hit, the power absorbs the impact. You can be thrown through a concrete wall, and emerge with nary a scratch.

We need you to harness and control this power as quickly as possible. And no, before you ask, I don't know what your abilities are. All that power got mixed together, giving you some power from Norse mythology, the Greek gods, Egyptian Pantheon, and Ancients unknown to you. Humanity finds itself at the bottom of the food chain, and only you and those like you can stand against the Ancients. If you can learn to control your power, you can overcome even the gods themselves!





Sharuru

Player's Guide

What You Need to Play

- ❖ A printed out Mat for each player.
Mats can be found online at [HTTP://MYTHICMORTALS.COM](http://MYTHICMORTALS.COM).
- ❖ Two 6-sided dice, preferably two per player.
- ❖ A small coin or token for each player.
- ❖ A Normal Deck of 52 Playing Cards for each player.
Take out the Jokers.

Character Creation: Selecting a Mat

Brute

You can toss cars around, smash down a building, and grab and launch enemies into the air.

Hunter

Armed with ranged weapons, your shots benefit from different elements, granting them special abilities.

Sneak

You are powerful but cautious. Your strongest attacks take 2 turns to use, but allow you to strike from the shadows with deadly force. You also have a wide variety of poisons at your disposal.

Brewer

Buff team-mates and harm enemies. You can use brews as weapons or as aids. There is a lot of flexibility and strategy for this support class.

The powers and abilities are kept somewhat vague on purpose. You get to decide what you look like, how your weapons appear, and the specifics of your abilities. Feel free to adjust your Mat to fit a cool idea that you have for your power.

Description of Basic Game mechanics

The basic rules of the game are simple and straightforward. The fun comes from the different abilities and weapons. As you read through these rules, look at your Mat to help you understand how each rule affects you specifically. Each Mat plays a little bit differently, even though the core rules are the same.

As a quick overview, you'll be trying to roll your dice under the cards on your Mat, depending on what you are trying to do. Higher cards are almost always better, because they are easier to roll under. Your cards determine your abilities and how strong those abilities are. Because things are constantly shifting, it's up to you to make the most of each hand, placing cards, rolling low, and choosing how to use your abilities.

The Deck

Whenever you want to shoot fireballs from your eyes, summon a giant battle axe, or deflect the blow from a Kraken, you must draw upon the power of your Deck, using your Mat, cards, and dice.

Your cards are used both for offense, defense, and your health. At first it seems like you'll never run out of cards...until you do! Depending on what class you have there are a lot of different strategies for preventing damage and making those cards last for as long as possible.

Your Deck is your Health

Whenever a you take damage from an enemy, that comes out of your Deck. You must discard a number of cards equal to any damage taken. When your Deck runs out of cards your power fades, and you are out of the fight.

Gini, the Brewer



MYTHOS	ACCURACY	DEFENSE	DAMAGE
<p>Roll under MYTHOS to use these Abilities</p> <p>Careful Aim: No Roll Required. Deal ½ MYTHOS damage to an enemy in Shout range.</p> <p>Cupid's Bow: Fire at an ally within Sight range. That ally immediately recovers 4 cards.</p> <p>Aggressive Shot: Fire at a target in Shout range. That target will immediately turn and attack the closest creature to it.</p> <p>Wide Spread Pain: Inflict ½ DAMAGE on up to 3 enemies in Sight range.</p>	<p>Choose your Weapon</p> <p>LightBow: Attack an enemy in Sight range. If this longbow is upgraded by Wind, it deals 10 damage.</p> <p>Shotgun: Only has two shots. Each shot deals 6 damage. Both shots can be fired at once.</p> <p>Rapid Crossbow: Fire 3 shots, each doing 2 damage. Can be split between targets in Shout range.</p> <p>Spear: You can target and hit enemies in Shout range through any wall or material.</p>	<p>Weapon Elemental Bonus (Doesn't affect Mythos abilities)</p> <p>Shots explode in a ball of Fire, knocking back everything in melee range of the target.</p> <p>Shots cover targets with Earth sludge, pinning them in place until your next turn. (Bosses merely slowed)</p> <p>Your shots ride the Wind increasing their range one tier.</p> <p>Your shots freeze foes with Ice. The next attack made against that foe deals +4 damage.</p>	<p>Suffer from a terrible Flaw</p> <p>Stubborn: You pride yourself on your skill with ranged weapons, and refuse to move.</p> <p>Confused: It's easy to forget what's going on when you're so removed from the battle. You must roll your dice OVER slot values, instead of under them.</p> <p>Bad Forecast: When you attack a foe with an element, that element affects you as well. (for Wind you suffer 4 damage)</p> <p>Lazy: Why do all the work when other people can do it? You go last in the turn order each round.</p>
<p>Move your token or coin along the track after every Action or Reaction. When you Overload, clear your Mat, and reset to "Fresh".</p>			
<p>Actions you can take on your turn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Attack with Weapon (roll ACCURACY) ► Perform a Trick (Roll DAMAGE) ► Vent: Discard 2 from your Mat, place 2 in bottom of Deck, protected until next turn ► Use a Mythos ability (Roll MYTHOS) ► Sprint: Move up to Shout Range 		<p>Reactions to a Threat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Dodge: Roll under DEFENSE, avoid damage ► Block: Reduce damage taken by DEFENSE ► Take the Hit: Take full Damage, but don't move down the Track 	
			<p>Face Card Values:</p> <p>Ace: 8</p> <p>Jack: 9</p> <p>Queen: 10</p> <p>King: 11</p>

Hunter My eyes are sharp, my hands are steady, and my aim is true. I wield a variety of ranged weapons, and deal death from afar. With a freezing chill or a fiery explosion my shots channel the elements. **I am the Hunter.**

Written by David Schirduan | Playmat Template by Edward D. | Icons from game-icons.net | Find more at MythicMortals.com

The Mat

Your Player Mat shows all of the abilities, weapons, and flaws you have access to. Most Player Mats consists of 4 Slots, a Stability Track and a small player reference section along the bottom of the Mat.

Some Player Mats are little different, but these principles hold true. For a good example, reference the Hunter mat as we go through the rules.

Slots

There are 4 columns along the top of each Mat, called Slots. A card from your Deck is placed on the top of each Slot, activating powers and giving every Slot a value. Some Mats deviate from the examples below, but this is a good place to start.

- ❖ **Mythos** – The Mythos slot determines special powers and abilities. It is also used for determining the turn order.
- ❖ **Accuracy** – Accuracy is used for making basic attacks, and usually determines which weapon is currently available.
- ❖ **Defense** – Defense is the reaction slot, and is used to dodge or block attacks.
- ❖ **Damage** – This determines how much damage your attacks deal. This Slot also determines which flaw you suffer from.

Whenever DAMAGE is in all caps, it refers to value of the Damage Slot. If damage is lower case, then it will have a preset number (4 damage). If no specific damage is listed, then you should use the value of your Damage Slot when deciding how much damage to deal.

David, the Hunter





Leland, the Brewer

Placing Cards

Whenever you draw new cards, you must choose which cards go in which slots. This is one of the most important parts of the game.

Values Determine Proficiency

The number of the card shows the level of relative strength in that Slot. Higher value cards are *always* better, and represent a greater proficiency in that slot.

For example, putting a 10 of hearts into Accuracy will make your attacks more successful (since it is easier to roll under). However, you could also put that 10 into Damage, allowing your attacks to be less successful, but more damaging. Think carefully about which Slots are most important to you.

Face Cards have preset values, listed on every Mat:

Ace: 8 Jack: 9 Queen: 10 King: 11

Suits Determine Abilities

The suit of the card you place in each slot activates the option of that suit in each column. These options remain until your cards are next switched out. A Slot will never be empty, it will *always* have a card in it, meaning you will always have one, and only one, option from each column active.

Changing the order of the cards completely changes which options you have available.

Choose carefully which cards go into which slots. You can't control what 4 cards you get, but you can control how they are used. Consider questions like:

- ❖ Which weapon do I want to have active?
- ❖ What flaw should I avoid in this situation?
- ❖ Where should my highest card go?
- ❖ Where should my lowest card go?
- ❖ Will I focus on avoiding damage, or dealing damage?
- ❖ Which Mythos ability is the most useful?

Make the most of your 4 cards, since they will change again in a few turns. It's up to you to make each turn as effective as possible.

Connecting Actions to Slots

Before we cover some of the actions you can take, it's important to understand the different strategies of placing cards. Let's take a closer look at a specific example:

You drew 4 cards: J of ♠, 3 of ♦, 5 of ♣, 9 of ♣. Depending on which cards go in which slot, you could have up to 16 different combinations and power levels with just these 4 cards! Next pages shows two example loadouts:




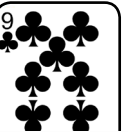



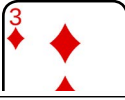
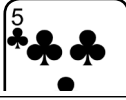
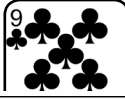
Put the Jack♠ in the Accuracy Slot. It's not a bad idea to put your highest card in your accuracy Slot, especially when starting out. Your weapons are reliable, and deal decent damage. The higher your Accuracy Slot, the easier it will be to hit with that weapon.

Put the 9♣ in the Damage Slot. High damage is important. Since your Jack is ensuring that you'll probably hit with your weapon, make the most of it with a high damage card. The Flaw (Stubborn) also doesn't really stop you from using your weapon much, so it's not a bad choice.

Put the 5♣ in the Mythos Slot. This is a low card, but the suit is a very useful Mythos ability (Careful Aim) that does not require a roll. Useful for finishing off an enemy, since it can't miss.

Put the 3♦ in the Defense Slot. Your last and lowest card goes in defense, which puts you in danger. However, your other cards should allow you to kill anything before it kills you...hopefully. As a bonus, your weapon attacks gain the Earth element, which slows down your foes and may prevent them from getting close enough to hurt you.

			
MYTHOS Roll under MYTHOS to use these Abilities	ACCURACY Choose your Weapon	DEFENSE Weapon Elemental Bonus (Doesn't affect Mythos abilities)	DAMAGE Suffer from a terrible Flaw
<p>Careful Aim: No Roll Required. Deal ½ MYTHOS damage to an enemy in Shout range.</p> <p>Cupid's Bow: Fire at an ally within Sight range. That ally immediately recovers 4 cards.</p> <p>Aggressive Shot: Fire at a target in Shout range. That target will immediately turn and attack the closest creature to it.</p> <p>Wide Spread Pain: Inflict ½ DAMAGE on up to 3 enemies in Sight range.</p>	<p>LightBow: Attack an enemy in Sight range. If this longbow is upgraded by Wind, it deals 10 damage.</p> <p>Shotgun: Only has two shots. Each shot deals 6 damage. Both shots can be fired at once.</p> <p>Rapid Crossbow: Fire 3 shots, each doing 2 damage. Can be split between targets in Shout range.</p> <p>Spear: You can target and hit enemies in Shout range through any wall or material.</p>	<p>Shots explode in a ball of Fire, knocking back everything in melee range of the target.</p> <p>Shots cover targets with Earth sludge, pinning them in place until your next turn. (Bosses merely slowed)</p> <p>Your shots ride the Wind, increasing their range one tier.</p> <p>Your shots freeze foes with Ice. The next attack made against that foe deals +4 damage.</p>	<p>Stubborn: You pride yourself on your skill with ranged weapons, and refuse to move.</p> <p>Confused: It's easy to forget what's going on when you're so removed from the battle. You must roll your dice OVER slot values, instead of under them.</p> <p>Bad Forecast: When you attack a foe with an element, that element affects you as well. (for Wind you suffer 4 damage)</p> <p>Lazy: Why do all the work when other people can do it? You go last in the turn order each round.</p>
<p>Move your token or coin along the track after every Action or Reaction. When you Overload, clear your Mat, and reset to "Fresh".</p>			

			
MYTHOS Roll under MYTHOS to use these Abilities	ACCURACY Choose your Weapon	DEFENSE Weapon Elemental Bonus (Doesn't affect Mythos abilities)	DAMAGE Suffer from a terrible Flaw
<p>Careful Aim: No Roll Required. Deal ½ MYTHOS damage to an enemy in Shout range.</p> <p>Cupid's Bow: Fire at an ally within Sight range. That ally immediately recovers 4 cards.</p> <p>Aggressive Shot: Fire at a target in Shout range. That target will immediately turn and attack the closest creature to it.</p> <p>Wide Spread Pain: Inflict ½ DAMAGE on up to 3 enemies in Sight range.</p>	<p>LightBow: Attack an enemy in Sight range. If this longbow is upgraded by Wind, it deals 10 damage.</p> <p>Shotgun: Only has two shots. Each shot deals 6 damage. Both shots can be fired at once.</p> <p>Rapid Crossbow: Fire 3 shots, each doing 2 damage. Can be split between targets in Shout range.</p> <p>Spierce: You can target and hit enemies in Shout range through any wall or material.</p>	<p>Shots explode in a ball of Fire, knocking back everything in melee range of the target.</p> <p>Shots cover targets with Earth sludge, pinning them in place until your next turn. (Bosses merely slowed)</p> <p>Your shots ride the Wind, increasing their range one tier.</p> <p>Your shots freeze foes with Ice. The next attack made against that foe deals +4 damage.</p>	<p>Stubborn: You pride yourself on your skill with ranged weapons, and refuse to move.</p> <p>Confused: It's easy to forget what's going on when you're so removed from the battle. You must roll your dice OVER slot values, instead of under them.</p> <p>Bad Forecast: When you attack a foe with an element, that element affects you as well. (for Wind you suffer 4 damage)</p> <p>Lazy: Why do all the work when other people can do it? You go last in the turn order each round</p>
<p>Move your token or coin along the track after every Action or Reaction. When you Overload, clear your Mat, and reset to "Fresh".</p>			

Put the Jack♠ in the Mythos Slot. This Mythos ability lets you attack several foes, dealing ½ Damage (the card in your Damage Slot), a perfect choice for handling a large number of enemies. In order to use it, you need a high card in Mythos, making the Jack the logical choice.

Put the 9♣ in the Damage Slot. High damage is still important, except it will be primarily used by your Mythos ability, rather than your weapon. It's the same Flaw, but doesn't impact this build too much.

Put the 5♣ in the Defense Slot. Against a bunch of foes, having slightly higher defense is important, since you'll be using that card to dodge and avoid damage. The element granted to your weapon is also useful for keeping enemies away from you.

Put the 3♦ in the Accuracy Slot. Your last and lowest card goes in Accuracy. Since you'll be using your Mythos more than your weapon (Shotgun), it's a good idea to sacrifice Accuracy. However, should the need arise, the Shotgun is a great weapon to use for burst damage, since you can fire it twice in one turn, and then go back to using your Mythos ability for your main damage.

Actions

When a fight starts, everyone takes turns. On your turn, you may perform a single Action. An Action isn't a distinct event or movement, but rather a summary of what you aim to accomplish on your turn, (which is about 2–4 seconds of real time.) You don't need to concern yourself with the minutiae of each individual step of that action.

Actions you can take on your turn: ▶ Attack with Weapon (Roll ACCURACY) ▶ Use a Mythos ability (Roll MYTHOS) ▶ Perform a Trick (Roll DAMAGE) ▶ Sprint : Move up to Shout Range ▶ Vent : Discard 2 from your Mat, place 2 in bottom of Deck, protected until next turn	Reactions to a Threat: ▶ Dodge : Roll under DEFENSE, avoid damage ▶ Block : Reduce damage taken by DEFENSE ▶ Take the Hit : Take full Damage, but don't move down the Track
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Some example actions and reactions from the Hunter Mat.

Perform a Trick

Performing a Trick includes anything you might want to do during combat that isn't about dealing damage or disabling a foe. Examples of Tricks:

- ❖ Grabbing the MacGuffin
- ❖ Overcoming a difficult obstacle
- ❖ Chasing an enemy through a dense jungle
- ❖ Clearing a path through a ruined street
- ❖ Hiding from an enemy

The GM is going to resist any Tricks that deal damage or harm an enemy. Don't try to justify an attack as a Trick. Tricks are more of a catch-all roll when you can't decide what to roll against.



*Lauren,
the Ancient Power*

TO PERFORM A TRICK

1. Describe what you are doing, and what you want to be the outcome.
 - ◆ “I’m digging a hole that I can hide the Golden Fleece in. I don’t want them to find it.”
 - ◆ “I try to yank the sword from the stone.”
 - ◆ “I want to find out where the noise is coming from.”
2. Roll two 6-sided dice and add the results together.
3. Compare the result of the dice to the value of the card in the Damage Slot
 - ◆ If the dice are below the Damage Slot, the Trick succeeds and your expected outcome occurs.
 - ◆ If the dice are above the Damage Slot, the trick fails or does not have the intended result.
 - ◆ If the dice are equal to the Damage Slot, a Critical Success occurs! In addition to the Trick succeeding; something extra cool and awesome happens. Critical results are covered more in the GM Section.
4. Move your token along the Stability Track. *The Stability Track is covered in more detail later on page 28.*
5. End your turn.

Attack with your Weapon

This includes anytime you use your weapon (from the Accuracy Slot) to strike an enemy. Some weapons have special rules and unique ranges. Make sure your target is in your weapon's range before you attack.

TO ATTACK WITH YOUR WEAPON

1. Describe your attack, your target, and your weapon:
 - ◆ “I fire at the wraith with my shotgun.”
 - ◆ “Swinging my staff around, I smash the demon in the face.”
 - ◆ “After applying poison to my blades, I sink them deep into the back of the Dragon.”
2. Roll two 6-sided dice and add the results together.
3. Compare the result of the dice to the value of the card in the Accuracy Slot
 - ◆ If the dice are **below** the Accuracy Slot, the attack succeeds and deals damage depending on the weapon.
 - ◆ If the dice are **above** the Accuracy Slot, the attack fails; no damage is dealt, and no special effects occur.
 - ◆ If the dice are **equal** to the Accuracy Slot, a Critical Success occurs: in addition to the attack succeeding, something extra cool and awesome happens. *Critical results are covered more in the GM Section.*
4. Move your token along the Stability Track.
5. End your turn.



The legendary lamb, Barometz, believed to be both a true animal and a living plant.

Use an Ability

Abilities are special powers unique to your Mat. Usually listed under your Mythos Slot, their effects vary wildly. Be sure to read each one closely, and ask your GM for clarifications.

TO USE ABILITIES

1. Describe your ability, its appearance, and any targets or effects.
 - ◆ “I’ll use ‘Widespread Pain’ to attack all three golems with flashes of light.”
 - ◆ “After getting close, I ‘Grapple’ the djinn, tossing him into the building.”
 - ◆ “With a thought, I cover the battlefield in a ‘Glacial Blast’, slowing all enemies.”
2. Roll two 6-sided dice and add the results together.
3. Compare the result of the dice to the value of the card in the Slot used for that ability (usually Mythos).
 - ◆ If the dice are *below* the Slot, the ability succeeds.
 - ◆ If the dice are *above* the Slot, the ability fails and no special effects occur.
 - ◆ If the dice are *equal* to the Slot, a Critical Success occurs. In addition to the ability succeeding, something extra cool and awesome happens.
4. Move your token along the Stability Track.
5. End your turn.

“Az I Wu Gum Ki Mukh Ti”
is a marine chimera from
Inuit legends.



Sprint

When you spend your entire turn moving around, it's considered a Sprint. Sprinting does not require a roll. It allows a player to move up to Shout range anywhere on the battlefield, within reason. (*Distances and Ranges are covered in more detail on page 32.*)

In general, Sprinting lets you get wherever you need to be, unless it's really far away. It can be extremely useful when your weapons switch, replacing your bow with a sword. Use Sprint to stay dangerous and effective, adapting to your weapons and ranges as they come.

Vent

Venting is an alternative to Overloading, and let's you switch out your cards whenever you want. It does take up your entire action, although you are protected until your next turn. (*Venting is covered in more detail later on page 29.*)



Andrew, the Brute

*Anat, a violent
war goddess*



Reactions

Reactions are made in response to a threat. They do not happen during your turn, and usually rely on your Defense Slot. Reactions are incredibly important for preventing damage and avoiding negative enemy effects. There are several ways that you can react to an attack:

Dodge

Dodging is an attempt to avoid all damage and negative effects of an enemy attack. It's whenever you try to get out of the way. Dodging is the most effective Reaction but, also the riskiest.

To Dodge

1. Describe how you are avoiding the attack:
 - ◆ “I drop to my knees, letting the blade pass over me.”
 - ◆ “I simply fall to the side, letting the beast charge past.”
 - ◆ “After my attack, I continue my roll, ending up behind the enemy.”
2. Roll two 6-sided dice and add the results together.
3. Compare the result of the dice to the value of the card in the Defense Slot
 - ◆ If the dice are *below* the Defense Slot, the dodge succeeds and you avoid all damage and negative effects.
 - ◆ If the dice are *above* the Defense Slot, the dodge fails, and you suffer full damage from the attack.
 - ◆ If the dice are *equal* to the Defense Slot, a Critical Success occurs. In addition to the successful dodge, something extra cool and awesome happens.
4. Move your token along the Stability Track.
5. End your turn.

Block

Rather than attempting to Dodge an attack, you can meet it head on, absorbing the blow and shrugging off the damage.

Blocking an attack does not require a roll, and reduces any damage taken by the value of the Defense Slot. When you Block an attack, it acts like armor in many other games, reducing damage. After Blocking an attack, move your token along the Stability Track.

WARNING: Some enemy attacks have additional effects (poison, stun, pin, etc.) that will not be prevented by Blocking. Blocking only prevents damage.

The Griffin rakes you with its claws. You decide to Block the attack with a car door you found. The Griffin deals 10 damage, and your Defense Slot has a 7. After Blocking, you take 3 damage.

The ghoulish sprays you with a vile poison. You decide to Block the attack. The attack deals 4 damage, and your Defense Slot has a 9. After Blocking, you take 0 damage, but you are still affected by the poison.

Blocking vs. Dodging

Blocking and Dodging may seem similar, however they represent two different strategies:

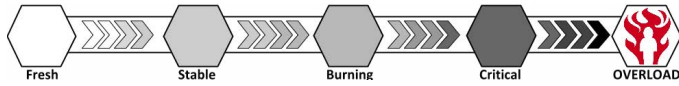
- ❖ High Defense Slot: When your defense slot is high (9+), it's better to try and Dodge an attack. Since you have a good chance of success, it is better to avoid all damage than to simply reduce the damage taken.
- ❖ Low Defense Slot: When your defense slot is lower (7-), then it may be better to simply reduce whatever damage you can than risk taking full damage from an attack.

Neither option is universally better. You must decide which choice is best for your current situation.

Take the Hit

Taking the Hit is an extremely dangerous and situational Reaction. When you decide to make no reaction to an attack, you suffer full damage but do not move along the Stability Track.

There are some rare cases when you may prefer taking damage, but they are few and far between. In 99% of cases, it is better to Block or Dodge than to Take the Hit.



A small coin can also be used to remember where you are the Stability Track. New characters start at Fresh.

Stability Track

Let's talk about health. In Mythic Mortals, your Deck is your health; whenever you take damage, you discard a number of cards off the top of your deck equal to the damage taken. This not only depletes your deck, but can result in the loss of useful cards! Be sure to use reactions and abilities to prevent as much damage as possible.

Aside from enemies, the main source of lost cards come from the Stability Track. The Stability Track is near the bottom of your Mat, and tracks how often your cards switch out.

When you get a new set of cards, place your token on "Fresh". After every Action or Reaction, your token moves along the track, one space at a time.

Overload

Once your token reaches the end of the Stability Track, you immediately Overload. Discard all four cards on your Mat, and draw four new cards, placing them in your now empty slots.

Overloading essentially causes 4 damage, and you don't get to keep any of your cards. On the plus side, Overloading lets you

keep your current set of cards for as long as possible and doesn't take up a turn.

- ❖ Discard all 4 cards from Mat
- ❖ Doesn't take up your turn.
- ❖ Keep your current cards for as long as possible.

Venting

Venting is an alternative to Overloading. Rather than waiting for Overload, you can spend your turn Venting, and switch out your cards early.

To Vent, discard two of the cards on your Mat, and place the other two cards back into the bottom of your deck. You are protected until your next turn, and cannot be harmed. Draw 4 new cards, and place them in your now-empty Slots.

- ❖ You only lose two cards.
- ❖ Takes up your turn.
- ❖ Preserve your highest cards, building a stronger deck each time you Vent.
- ❖ Protected until your next turn from all harm and damage.



Sometimes male, sometimes female, this Etruscan death divinity is still a mystery.

Death

When you run out of cards in your Deck, it's all over. Death occurs:

- ❖ When you can't discard any more cards from your Deck. If your deck is empty, but your Mat is full, you aren't dead until you next take damage.
- ❖ When you can't draw any more cards from your Deck. If your cards switch out (either from Venting or Overloading), and you don't have enough cards to fill your Mat (4 cards).

In the GM section, there are two additional suggestions about expanding Death:

- ❖ "Dead" players revert to their normal human forms, and are extremely vulnerable. They must try to regain their power.
- ❖ Dead players return as Ancient Powers, allowed to guide their allies from beyond the grave.

Recovering Cards

Many abilities allow you or your allies to Recover cards, replenishing their Deck and getting their best cards back from the Discard pile.

When you Recover cards, search through your Discard pile and choose which cards you want to recover up to the amount you are being healed. Remove these cards from the discard pile, and place them into the bottom of your Deck.

Recovery as a Strategy

Recovery prevents your deck from running dry but it can also be an important strategy. Recovery and healing are the same thing; anything that puts cards back in your deck.

Whenever you Recover cards, you get to choose which cards

you recover. Essentially, you get the opportunity to build up your deck in the way that you want. Strategic card recovery can give you the final push that you need to vanquish your foes.

You only have 1 card left in your Deck. Death is imminent! An ally heals you for 3 points. That may not be enough cards to save you for long, but it can be enough to make one last stand. You search through your Discard pile, and put 3 Kings into the bottom of your Deck.

On your turn, you vent, drawing the 4 kings and putting them into your Slots. A King in Defense, and a King in Accuracy makes you pretty much unstoppable. Until your Stability Track runs out, you have 2-3 turns of incredible potential.

...All thanks to a measly 3 cards. Recovery is power!

Invigorate

There are times when healing abilities just aren't enough, and you can't seem to Dodge/Block enough damage. When the end is nigh, you get the chance to turn the tables.

Whenever a player's Deck drains to 10 cards or less, you may Invigorate them. Invigorating another player doesn't take up your turn, or theirs. It can happen at any time (even during an enemy attack).

To Invigorate another player, discard 4 cards from your Deck. The receiving player immediately recovers 3 cards from their Discard pile. This can be done any number of times, as long as the receiving player has 10 or less cards in their deck.

If a Player dies, they cannot be Invigorated. You have a slim window of opportunity; make it count!

Advanced Player's Guide

Movement and Range

Mythic Mortals keeps things loose and abstract during combat. Spacing, distances, ranges, and more are not tracked very closely. Rather, see these ranges as a general rule of thumb.

A turn in Mythic Mortals represents about 2 seconds of in-game time. Keep this in mind whenever you estimate ranges and distances.

Melee

- ❖ You could get to your target in about 2 seconds and hit it with a stick.
- ❖ Size of an average room.
- ❖ About 40 feet.

Shout

- ❖ Your target could clearly hear if you shouted.
- ❖ 2 or 3 Melee lengths.
- ❖ About 100 feet

Sight

- ❖ You can see them with your eyes.
- ❖ 2 or more Shout lengths.
- ❖ 200+ feet

For example, if your sword has a range of melee, then you won't be able to hit an enemy far away unless you Sprint. Likewise, if you weapon has a range of Shout, then you won't need to move very much in order to hit something on the other side of the factory.

If an ability says that it hits all enemies in melee range, just imagine a room-sized circle expanding out from your character. Who would be included in that circle? It can be helpful to keep track of which enemies are in which ranges.

Stan, the minotaur has run past you, and it moving down the block away from you (Shout Range). The two dark pawns enter your lawn and close in on you (Melee range).

Sylvia, the Magus



Resolving game mechanics

Well done! You've covered 95% of all the rules. The rest of the players guide will focus on additional rules, clarifications, and some strange edge cases.

Round Up

Whenever there is a fraction, always round up to the nearest whole number. No matter how small that fraction is, round up ($2.01 = 3$).



Sam, the steampunk Hunter

Sam
21. 10. 2012

Micole, the Sneak



Suit Order Ranking

Whenever there is a tie between players (either in turn order, or ability details), resolve using the alphabetical ordering of the suits. Clubs is higher than Diamonds, which is higher than Hearts, which is above Spades. If there is still a tie, simply use a game of Paper, Rock, Scissors to resolve it.

Aside from turn order, this issue could come up if an ability says something like “Heal the player with the lowest Accuracy”, or “An enemy attacks a player with the highest Damage.” If both players have an 8, then resolve using Suit Alphabetical Order.

Ability Resolution Order

There are many times when abilities, buffs, and statuses may seem to conflict. Whenever this happens, the newer status overrides the older.

Example: If you have a flaw that prevents you from moving, but a player uses an ability that lets you move up to Shout Range, the latest ability overrides your previous flaw for that action.

Default Mat Rules

The Mat text in Mythic Mortals are short and sweet. Sometimes there isn't enough space to fit everything into that little box. So, to keep from re-writing the same things over and over, here are the default text for abilities, weapons, flaws, and bonuses.

Unless explicitly over-written, all Mat text follow these default rules:

Weapons. Roll under ACCURACY to use this weapon. It can be used on one target in Melee Range. It deals full DAMAGE. If this weapon affects allies, they can't React to it.

Bonuses. This bonus is always active. It doesn't require a roll. It doesn't take up your turn. Affected targets cannot react to the effects of this bonus.

Abilities. Roll under MYTHOS to use this ability. It can be used on one target in Melee Range. It deals 0 damage. If this ability affects allies, they can't React.

Flaws. This Flaw is always active. It does not require a roll. Affected targets can't react.

The Hunter has a weapon: Ghost Gun. All of the weapon text above applies to this weapon, in addition to the info about how it passes through materials.

Targets

When an ability says "target" then it may refer to allies or enemies. If an ability or weapon only affects a single target, then they player may choose which enemy/ally that refers to. However, if an ability says that it affects "all targets in range", then it affects all allies and enemies within that range, excluding the player using that ability.

Advanced Character Building

Aside from making your own Player Mat (*covered at the end of the book*) there are a few ways that you can customize your character.

Adding Flavor

Although many of the Player Mats are written assuming traditional fantasy trappings (armor, weapons, magic, etc.), you are not constrained by this. Much of the ability text is vague and you are encouraged to add your own “flavor” by adding descriptions or re-wording the text. A few examples:

- ❖ The Hunter’s explosive arrows are actually vials of Fear gas, that send all enemies scurrying a short distance away.
- ❖ The Brute is a frail man in an advanced techno-suit with incredible strength and fold-out weapons.
- ❖ The Sneak is equipped with a futuristic stealth suit and can infect enemies with nano-viruses.
- ❖ The Brewer is an ancient shaman, casting elaborate spells to aid his allies and harm his enemies.

Go wild and put your own spin on the Player Mats. I’ve seen Mythic Mortals used for games set in Ancient Rome, the Far Future, a Mad Max style wasteland, Silver Age comics, and more! Don’t feel constrained by anything on the page, instead use those themes as a jumping off point for your own ideas.

Deck Building

Although originally built for one-shots and convention games, Mythic Mortals can also be tweaked to allow for ongoing campaigns. It probably won’t last you for years but if you wanted to

stretch an adventure across a month or two, here are some additional rules for longer campaigns:

When you create your character you have 150 Experience Points (XP) to spend. You can spend these points to buy cards and add them to your deck. Cards cost XP equal to their value. A 5 of Spades costs 5 XP, a Queen costs 10 XP, etc.

The recommended starting deck is:

4♣	4♦	4♥	4♠
6♣	6♦	6♥	6♠
8♣	8♦	8♥	8♠
Q♣	Q♦	Q♥	Q♠
10♣			

After every combat you get XP to spend on additional cards:

Short Skirmish	10 XP
Medium Fight	20 XP
Boss Battle	40 XP

After each session, players can purchase and/or sell back cards at no penalty. For example, if you have 2 XP left over, you can sell back a 4 of Hearts, and purchase a 6 of Spades.



Nerthus, a German goddess of fertility

Example of play

Sarah (The GM) is running an adventure for Lauren (The Brute) and John (The Hunter).

Sarah refers to her notes, and describes the situation. “After defeating the smaller minions, Hades is enraged! ‘How dare you threaten me!’ he cries. His hands spout flames, melting the stone to reveal two huge metallic dogs, each with 3 heads.”

She writes down the initiative for the upcoming battle. “Looks like Lauren is up first. Both of the creatures are outside of Melee range. What do you want to do, Lauren?”

Lauren replies, “Seeing as how I’m the Brute, I want to get up close and personal. I’ll Sprint to move into range.”

“Okay. Next up are the Cerberus’. One of them attacks you, Lauren, and lashes out with a vicious spiked tail. How do you want to react; Block or Dodge?”

Lauren looks at her Mat. “My Defense is high, I think I can roll under it. I’ll dodge.” Lauren rolls a 2 and a 4, which is well under her Defense of 10. “Success! I avoid all damage.”

“Nicely done! John, the other one charges across the room towards you. How do you react?”

“My defense is not up to snuff, so I’ll just block it.” John’s Defense is 4, and the attack deals 10 damage. “Oh man, 6 cards! That hurts! Is it my turn? I want to hit it!”

“Yup”, Sarah confirms, “you’re up! What do you want to do? The dog is in melee range.”

“I will...”, John consults his Mat “I’ll use the CloudBuster, since Lauren isn’t in danger of being hit.” John rolls his dice against his Accuracy Slot...and he succeeds! “That’s 7 damage! And now I’ve Overloaded. Let me discard my mat, and draw new cards.”

Sarah writes down the damage taken. “Good work John! That’s the end of the round.”



Game Master's Guide

Players, do not read beyond this point!

Unless you are running a game tomorrow, you don't need the information beyond this point. There's a lot of stuff in these sections that may decrease a player's enjoyment of the game, it's like learning how a magic trick works.

Role of the Game Master

While the players control their characters, fight monsters, and decide how best to handle difficult situations, the Game Master controls the rest of the game world.

In *Mythic Mortals*, the primary job of the Game Master is to create interesting combat scenarios, control the enemies, and challenge the players with obstacles. There may be exposition, some plot, or some puzzles, but combat is where it's at, and the rest of the book is going to turn you into a combat crafting machine, with extra explosions.

What the Game Master Needs to Play

Most likely you purchased this book with the intention of playing *Mythic Mortals* with your friends. You organized a game, invited your friends, picked a location, and have had tons of neat ideas for adventures bouncing around in your head.

If this is true, then it may be a good idea to simply take on the task of preparation, providing everything needed to play for your players. Make sure you have:

- ❖ A deck of cards and a small coin/token for each player.
- ❖ At least two 6-sided dice. Preferably two dice per player.
- ❖ Player Mats, found at MYTHICMORTALS.COM.
- ❖ A decent sized table for mats and cards.
- ❖ Pencil and paper for the GM. The players don't need pencils, unless they really want to take notes or doodle.



Maps and Zones

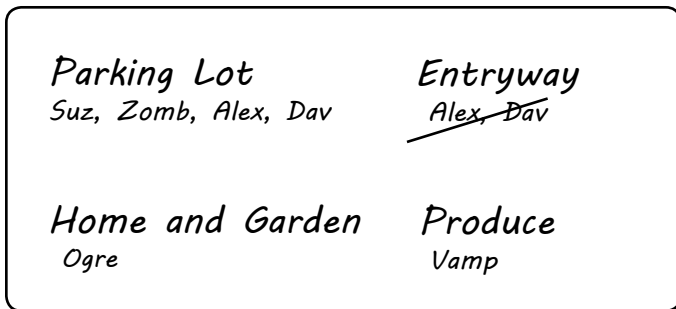
In addition, some groups may like to have the following:

- ❖ A whiteboard to sketch out the battlefield. *“There’s a tree here, two houses here, and a large ditch running through the center.”* Miniatures, chess pieces, or tokens so players can better visualize where they are in relation to monsters and to one another.

Please refrain from using a grid or hex map. Mythic Mortals works best with a shared, loose understanding of the battlefield.

Some games rely on detailed spacing, strategic battle plans, resource management, and maximizing each square on the map, but not Mythic Mortals.

Instead, you should treat fights in Mythic Mortals like a movie. The camera may cut to a bunch of different shots of the battle, but never reveal the full details of where every character is located. The general layout is understood by the audience (e.g. she is fighting the Ogre on the building while he fights mooks on the ground), however a detailed view might reveal that he wasn't at the right angle for that cool shot or she could never survive a fall that high.



Alex and Dav are moving from Entryway to the Parking Lot.

Keep the action zoomed in on the cool parts and don't let the details get in the way of players doing something awesome, even if it breaks the laws of physics. A detailed grid dampens the fun and kills opportunities for action.

An alternative to a whiteboard and tokens is to simply setup some battle zones. Everything in the same zone is considered Melee range. Everything in a different Zone is considered Shout range.

In order to move from one zone to another, a player must Sprint. Zones can be different rooms in a house, different blocks of a city, or just different places on the battlefield. Whenever anything moves from

one Zone to another, mark it down. When I'm not using a map, Zones are the easiest way to keep track of everything, for players and GMs.

Tracking Turn Order

Players and Monsters take turns in order of their Mythos value, from the highest to lowest. This creates a unique problem: every round the turn order can change drastically, requiring fluidity on the part of the GM. This is the best way to keep track of everything: Grab a piece of lined paper and write numbers descending from 11 to 2. Each number is a possible Mythos value.

- 7.
- 6.
- 5.
- 4.

At the beginning of each Round, write down a player's name next to their Mythos score. Players with the same Mythos just go next to one another.

7. Dav
- 6.
5. Suz, Alex
- 4.

Next, add the monsters. Note that their Mythos will rarely change, so we can add their current HP as well. It may help to put monsters further to the right

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 7. Dav | Vamp (15) |
| 6. | Zomb (10) |
| 5. Suz, Alex | |
| 4. | Ogre (20) |

As foes take damage and as player's Mythos values change, just cross out the old values and write the new ones on the same line. Here's what the turn order may look like halfway through a battle.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 7. Dav Suz | Vamp (15) (12) (6) |
| 6. | Zomb (10) (3) (0) |
| 5. Suz, Alex Dav | |
| 4. Alex | Ogre (20) (15) |

Mark off damage as it happens, and at the beginning of each round mark down any changes of Player's Mythos. This format allows you to go from the top of the list to the bottom, alerting players when it is their turn, and tracking enemy stats.



An Adventure

The most important thing you need to bring to the table is your adventure. “Of course,” you may be thinking “why do you even need to mention this?”

I bring it up for one very important reason: Do not bring a lot of prepared materials to the table. Seriously, *don't do it*. When preparing, go nuts with backstory, world creation, monster sketches, and whatever. When you come to the table, just bring the bare minimum:

- ❖ A Paragraph outline of your adventure (4–5 sentences)
- ❖ A list of monsters
 - ◆ Number of Monsters
 - ◆ Health (HP) and Statistics (Stats)
 - ◆ Special Attacks
- ❖ Optional twists, ideas, etc.

Mythic Mortals works best when it is in flux, and just like a grid map can ruin the cinematic battle, extensive prep will kill the excitement and energy of a Mythic Mortals adventure. There are several adventures available online at MYTHICMORTALS.COM that offer some good examples of how to layout your own notes.

NAME

Distinguishing Marks, to tell them apart

Base Damage: **Mythos: (Turn order)** **HP (Health):**

- ❖ First Special Move
- ❖ Second Special Move
- ❖ Third Special Move

Special GM notes about running or role-playing this monster.



Each foe has a Stat Block, which contain everything you need to know about that monster:

EXAMPLE: MINOTAUR

Each one has different colored metal nose-rings.

Base Damage: 9

Mythos: 8

HP: 20

- ❖ Throw a car or large object at a character (Base Damage)
- ❖ Bull-rush multiple characters, trampling them (6 damage, characters can be knocked back)
- ❖ Enrage (at low health): Eyes glow red and base damage increases to 12

Have the fight take place in wherever you are hosting the game in real life. Allow the Minotaurs to destroy furniture, smash stuff, and use the environment in various ways. *Monsters and Stats are covered in more detail in the Adventure Creation Section.*

Dealing with Critical Events

When a player scores a Critical Hit, this is the chance for something really cool and incredible to happen. At first you might need to decide and narrate what happens yourself. However, as players become more comfortable with the game and more invested in the action, feel free to turn things over to them.

Critical hits can be seen as a free pass for the character to do something awesome. “Nice shot Susan! What would you like to have happen?” Some common choices for Critical Results:



-
- ❖ Extra damage during an attack (+5 damage)
 - ❖ Protect another ally (your dodge saved both characters)
 - ❖ Achieve your goal (send a monster away, grab the MacGuffin)
 - ❖ Gain some beneficial effect (recover cards, move into desired range)
 - ❖ Disable a monster (reduce damage, pin in place, etc.)

You want Critical Results to be an exciting, routine-breaking experience. Don't worry too much about how balanced or fair a critical result is. Ride the excitement at the table; after all, most of what you're doing is improv anyway!

Water-Cooler Moments

The primary reason that you play Mythic Mortals is for what I like to call "Water-Cooler Moments". These are the moments in the game that stay with you, moments that you and your friends will remember long after the game has ended. There are usually one or two scenes that stand-out as particularly cool.

- ❖ "My sword went completely through the wall, and a shove from the Brute brought the whole thing down on top of the dragon killing it instantly!"
- ❖ "I froze a section of the sea with my arrows, jumped down to the water, and choked the monster with my bowstring."
- ❖ "Not only did my healing potion bring the Sneak back from the dead, but it gave him the cards he needed to teleport behind the Minotaur, steal its weapon, and kick it off the cliff!"

Do whatever you need to do in order to make these moments happen at your table. All the rules, abilities, and descriptions in Mythic Mortals will aid you in doing so; but you may need to adjust the way you normally play games in order to make these Water-Cooler Moments a priority.

Rule of Cool

One of the most important ways you can encourage Water-Cooler Moments in your game is by following the “Rule of Cool”.

The Rule of Cool states: *“The limit of the Willing Suspension of Disbelief for a given element is directly proportional to the element’s awesomeness.”* – TVTropes.com

In this game, it means that the environment, monster behavior, and even the rules of the game should bend over backwards to make sure that the coolest outcome is the one that happens. Here are some example from my past games:

- ❖ A player decides to dive into the mouth of the Hydra with a bag of dynamite. Even though the Hydra still has 20 HP, I rule that the bags explode, killing it instantly and sending the player sailing through the air with the heart of the Hydra clutched in her open hand.





- ❖ The brute wants to toss a car, but they are in the middle of the mall. I rule that Lamborghini is hosting one of those “Buy insurance, and win a car” promotions; and a cool sports car is only a few feet away.
- ❖ The Shifter scored a critical hit against a giant shadow-beast. I ruled that the Shifter absorbed energy from the beast, and gained a brand new form to shift into. We decided on some powers and abilities, made some marks on the player mat, and there was an unbalanced, incredibly awesome ability that the player could use for the rest of the game.

Because games of Mythic Mortals rarely last for more than 2–3 hours, it’s okay to have crazy, out of control things happen; in fact it is encouraged! Mythic Mortals should feel like a playground of ancient monsters, fun powers, and feelings of Heroism. Don’t let anything, not even the rules of the game, get in the way of that fun.

Roleplaying Enemies

One of the most fun parts of GM-ing a game is controlling the enemies. You get to use their abilities, think tactically, and describe all of the cool things that these monsters can do. Thanks to the flexibility of the world and the system, you can insert your favorite monsters directly into the game.

Almost all of the enemies that the players will face are older and stronger than they could ever comprehend. These monsters have had LOTS of time to become the perfect nemesis and will not easily surrender or give in.

Enemies never miss, they never make mistakes (directly) and if the players ever drop their guard they will be destroyed. Communicate this to your players through the descriptions of your monsters actions. Foes should toss cars, smash buildings, and cause terrible destruction.





Evolving Foes

This goes along with the previous point, but it's something that is important, especially for Bosses.

Guillermo Del Toro once said that he created his monsters to have a new surprise every scene. Your monsters should do the same. Every turn, reveal a new power or ability that your players didn't know about.

The monsters I have in this book all include several powers/abilities that could be revealed over the course of play. Mix it up and give your players a something new to see or deal with every round!

Advice on Being Descriptive

For games that have a heavy focus on environments or dialogue, the GM must make sure to vividly describe the world,

the strange scenery, and the unique culture the players are experiencing.

However, in *Mythic Mortals*, it is much more important to describe sequences than to describe scenes. Let me give an example:

“You are sitting in your home. The smell of day-old pizza and laundry detergent mixes with low lighting and dim glow of your TV. You just got a brand new video game, and have been playing it for over 40 hours straight. Your room is untidy, but not dirty and boxes of board games sit next to a pile of unread mail. Some friends are coming over soon to help you get past a tough part in the game and you assume the noises outside means they have arrived. After the Golem busts through your door and attacks you, you learn otherwise.”

Compared to...

“The hulking Golem busts through the door, knocks over a table, and is charging towards you. As it gets close, it draws a sword from its back, and swings it towards your head, cutting a huge hole in your floor. What do you do?”

While the first description is much more vivid at painting a scene, the second draws you into the action. Be sure to narrate the multiple steps of a foe’s action. “It burns red, then flies upward, before turning and belching flames.” Sequences draw players in and help them track what is happening at the table.

Another reason that *Mythic Mortals* is set in the modern day is so that scenes can be described much more quickly and easily. “You’re standing in front of your house.” “You are in a Library.” “The office building is quiet...too quiet.”

Skip right to the action, narrate the sequences, and keep the players invested in what’s going on.

Transitions During Combat

Another quick aside: In a heavy, action-focused game like Mythic Mortals, it's important to transition well from one scene to the next. For example:

“Alright John, you did 7 damage. Susan, what do you want to do? Alright, you hit, 4 damage. Alex, you're up.”

While the above is functional, it is hardly cinematic. Not only is there little description of each attack but nothing is connecting the battle together. One of the easiest ways to keep players engaged is to make some simple transitions.

Pretend you are the movie director, shifting the camera from one player to the next, getting different pieces of the battle, but still connecting everything together. Here's a long example, *italics are my thought process*:

It's a new round, I'll quickly summarize.

Alright Kevin, only two minotaurs remain, one of which is near you, and the other one is near Megan. You have the upper hand. What do you want to do?

Kevin describe his attack, I'll transition to Megan.

Nice shot Kevin! Megan, you see the minotaur fly past you, sailing off into the distance. The one near you turns with rage in it's eyes. What do you do.

After she describes her action, I summarize, and bring it back to Kevin.

He does not seem happy. Two minotaurs down, and the last is frozen in a cage of ice. Kevin, you get a free attack. What do you want to do?

Keep the transitions short, but functional. Make sure all players know what is happening, and make it clear what is expected of the next player.

Advanced Game Master's Guide

Mythic Mortals is not a complete game. What you hold in your hand is a toolbox. It contains everything you need to make your own games. YOU are the game designer. This book is more like a game engine, or a console. You're the one who gets to create and run the game session for your friends.

There is no single right way to run a game of Mythic Mortals, but there are LOTS of wrong ways. I'm here to help you avoid some of those pitfalls.

If you've played other RPGs before, then you should know that Mythic Mortal requires a change in the way you run games. It's built for a very specific type of experience, and if you try to run it like any other RPG, it will fall flat. So how should you run Mythic Mortals? You need to use a technique I call "Reactive GM-ing".

This applies to adventure creation as well, but mostly to the actual running of the game. Mythic Mortals has a few features that can mess you up if you're familiar with more traditional rpg systems:

- ❖ Combat balance is myth
- ❖ Mechanics outside of combat aren't supported in Mythic Mortals
- ❖ The short game length isn't designed for sweeping stories or deep experiences

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- ❖ The shifting powers and weapons don't much leave room for XP or advancement.
 - ❖ You play as yourself, and you only know what you know. No hunting and tracking skills, no lore, no diplomacy, etc.

These features and more all combine to confound GMs who like a delicate, finely tuned game system. Does that mean Mythic Mortals is a wild, untameable ride?

Yes. Yes it does. And as the GM, it's your job to make that ride as much fun as possible.

Reactive GM-ing means that you spend less time on preparation and more time adjusting things on the fly. Change the HP of monsters, make up abilities, decrease damage, switch around the environments, and more.

All of this is required because of one key point:

What Mythic Mortals is Not

MYTHIC MORTALS IS NOT A PUZZLE

Many games treat combat like a puzzle. Players must use their abilities, resources, items, turns, movement, spacing, and more to overcome the challenge set before them. In this case, balance is a huge deal. You want a fight to be interesting and difficult, without being punishing and brutal.

And that works great for puzzles! After all, how much would it suck if you were half-way through a crossword and someone said, "aha! I see you're getting frustrated. Here's some free words. Have fun kid!" No one likes that. People play puzzles for the challenge.

But that's not why you play Mythic Mortals. Mythic Mortals is more like a roller coaster. It provides the illusion of danger, the illusion of a challenge. Why do people feel accomplished for rid-

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ing a Roller Coaster? They were strapped in! And if half of them had a stop-button, they'd mash it partway through the ride. They had no choice, once they got on.

But it's still fun, and it still feels good to finish. "I did it!" you think to yourself. That's the kind of combat Mythic Mortals aims to provide. And in order to maintain that illusion you'll need to keep a hand on the game at all times.

If a monster is taking too long to kill, trash it. If the players are beating the tar out of your cool boss, have it unleash a new deadly attack. Keep the tension high, and keep the players engaged.

Here's an example: I had a boss that flew around a city. The players fought it on the ground, but then it started climbing a building. Most of my players just switched to ranged weapons, but one player didn't have any ranged options. In a puzzle-combat, then it's tough cookies for him. He should have optimized his character better. But in Mythic Mortals, I can adjust whatever I need to keep players engaged.

So the monster sprouted a long deadly tentacle, grabbed the player, and tossed him up the side of the building. It was still an attack, but now that player was in striking range and could continue to participate in the boss fight.

While GM-ing you'll be doing this kind of thing all the time. You must be ready to tweak the battle as it progresses to make up for player's errors, or a monster's weakness.

The rest of the tips and advice in this book will flesh out these ideas some more, but don't forget the main point:

Mythic Mortals is not a puzzle, it's a ride. You're the conductor. Keep your players engaged, keep the tension high, and do whatever it takes to preserve the fun. And after the ride is over, you'll have a table full of people who have smiles painted on their face, all because of you. Be proud!

Advanced Game Master Advice

Let the Players Be Clever

The rules are kept simple to make it easier for the players to jump into the game, and for you to run a game. But with simple rules like these, it's easy for a player to think, "No matter what I say, I'll just roll a basic attack and do damage." You must constantly be encouraging and rewarding players who get into the spirit of the game and come up with creative ways of fighting.

So if a player spends their turn setting up a trap or clever maneuver, reward that with some extra damage! Or if it's not normally a player's turn, but they have a really neat idea to take advantage of the moment, let them do it.

Also, you should play badly.

You read that correctly. Did you know that one of the challenges when programming video game enemies is making the enemies smart enough to seem challenging, but dumb enough for the player to beat?

It would be very easy to design a game where the computer knows exactly where the players are, hits them perfectly, and wins every game. No one would play it, even though the AI is basically perfect.

You should keep the same things in mind when controlling your enemies. As the GM you have all the information. You know that the Brute can't kill enemies; you know that the Hunter doesn't have a long range weapon, and you know that the Sneak

is charging up an attack right now. If you use all of that information perfectly, you could probably “win” the combat scenario. But that wouldn’t be fun, for you or your players.

Instead, you should have the monsters make mistakes. Is a player’s defense high enough to block all the damage from an attack? You should still have that monster attack, even if you know it will be ineffective. It makes the players feel good to have their strategies rewarded. You should give them the satisfaction of getting the best of their foes.

This doesn’t mean every fight should be a walk in the park; sometimes it’s great to fight against a brilliant group of foes. Just make sure you drop the ball from time to time, and let the players get what they’ve earned.

Don’t Let Combat Drag On

In *Mythic Mortals*, combat is where heroic moments and feelings of empowerment take place. It’s where the players can express themselves and do neat things. Combat should not be balanced or careful. Enemies are dangerous, but only dangerous enough to *feel* like a threat; like a gripping thriller book or exciting action flick.

Don’t ever try to present a “fair” challenge. If you’re ever in doubt, always err on the side of too easy rather than too deadly. A fight easily won is better than a fight easily lost.

It’s better for a fight to end too soon than to drag on too long. If the fight ends early, just summon a few more copies of enemies. But if things are slowing down, and monsters are taking more than 3–4 rounds to die, then cut their HP, have them retreat early, or change the fight in a drastic way (new location, new set of enemies, new stakes or goal, etc.). Don’t let things slow down or get repetitive.

There's Always a Rope or Chandelier

If a player wants to use an ability or do something cool, as long as it makes sense, they should be able to do that. If they want to use a car door as a shield against the Medusa, then you should make sure that there is a car nearby, retroactively or in advance.

The environment is only as solid as the players need it to be. Just like in a movie, a scene is never fully realized on screen. There is a ton of stuff outside of the frame that will be exactly where it needs to be. When the hero turns to run off screen, she will find exactly what she needs, be it:

- ❖ A getaway car
- ❖ The weapon
- ❖ An enemy she's been hunting

Your game should be the same. If you're in a mall, and a player says, "I could use a fire extinguisher." Your response is, "Oh, what luck! You're next to the employee break room, which has a fire extinguisher in it!"

Let the reality of the game adapt to the wishes and needs of the players. Again, that doesn't mean everything should be a walk in the park, but when you have to choose between "realistic" and "awesome", choose "awesome" every time.

Incentives To Fight For

While some games rely on player progression, XP points, and loot to motivate players to fight monsters, *Mythic Mortals* doesn't have any of that stuff. Instead, you'll have to be creative when you give players a reason to fight.

Have the monsters attack the players' favorite breakfast joint, or make the situation one of self-defense. It doesn't need to be dramatic or heart-wrenching. But it needs to be something.

One powerful idea is to take the setting by the horns and implement it in your game. If you recall, the player's powers come from seeds of energy planted in humanity. One of the reasons the Ancient powers are wreaking havoc is to reclaim and absorb some of the power by killing humans.

Make this a direct consequence in the game. Litter your battlefield with innocents and civilians. Whenever an enemy kills a mortal human, that enemy gets a little stronger, recovers health, or both. This motivates players to protect civilians, and fight for something more than just killing monsters.

Adjudicating Actions

Here's a simple set of steps you can follow when running your games. Whenever it is a player's turn:

1. Transition to the player, create a Call to Action:
 GM: *After Tina smashed the manscorpion through the window, the other one approaches you threateningly, Andrew.*
What do you do?
2. Listen to what the player says:
 Andrew: *I yell ferociously, and threaten back with my weapon!*
3. Confirm Intent.
 GM: *So you want to scare it away? Or is this an attack?*
 Andrew: *No, I have this ability that let's me paralyze enemies with a yell.*
 GM: *OH! okay, gotcha.*
4. Resolve Mechanics:
 GM: *It looks like that ability requires a Mythos Roll. Let's see if you can make it!*
5. Narrate Result (or let the player do so), be sure to give it an exciting description:

GM: *Alright, as the manscorpion approaches, Alex takes in a deep breath. As the manscorpion begins to attack, you unleash a furious roar, blasting the foe backwards, shattering windows, and causing a nearby car to explode!*

6. Transition out to the next player/enemy:

GM: *The scorpion lands nearby, and is paralyzed with fear! Tina, this monster isn't going anywhere, and it landed right next to you. What do you want to do?*

When it is an enemy's turn, you can simply transition, narrate result, and transition out. These steps can be used during the entire game, keeping a consistent flow from shot to shot, and will help get players into a rhythm. The more you practice this, the more it will become second nature to you.

Alternatives to Death

Death stinks, and it usually isn't fun. Luckily, there are a few ways we can make it better. Although the rules say that running out of cards means death, there are two other ways to handle this in your games:

ANCIENT POWER

When a player dies, allow them to play as an Ancient Power for the rest of the session. This will require some extra copies of the Ancient Power handy. The benefit is that players can still participate in combat, albeit in a less direct role.

MORTAL MAN

Another option is that running out of cards means they run out of power. They must play as a mortal man, weak and fragile, until they can restore their power. You could even have an adventure based around regaining their powers! For mortal players, just use sim-

ple mechanics based on Apocalypse World. Any hit that a mortal takes from a monster will result in death or crippling damage. Whenever a mortal attempts something difficult or dangerous, roll 2d6. If the result is:

10 or Higher	They succeed with little to no difficulty
7–9	Success with a cost, or a partial success
6 or Lower	Dangerous or drastic failure

Creating Adventures

Here’s a secret: Mythic Mortals adventures are not balanced. Not even close. They aren’t fair, they aren’t complex, and they don’t rely on a hard-set formula. Creating an adventure is a little prep beforehand, and a LOT of hand-waving and adjusting things on the fly.

But don’t worry, I’m here to help. This is written from me, David, to you, a fellow GM. I’ll let you know how I prepare and run Mythic Mortals; and you can adapt it for your own style.

Italic sections are examples of what each section describes. I’m going to walk you through how I create an adventure, from start to finish, with examples for every step of the way.

Theme/Concept

This seems obvious, but think about the kind of adventure and tone you wish to set. Is this going to be a gritty, dangerous mission set in the bowels of Tartarus? Is it set in modern day New York? Will your group be defending survivors, or attacking a fortification of Ancients? These will all be set up in a similar way, but the starting details will affect how you phrase and create your adventure.

The setting of Mythic Mortals is vague and open-ended on purpose. Use that to your advantage, and shoe-horn in whatever monsters, gods, powers, settings, or scenarios that you want.

I want to run a gritty adventure set in ancient Sparta. The players will play as Spartan troops who are granted the boons of their respective deities and given their powers. They have to hold the gates long enough for a band of troops to escape before they all die horribly, sacrificing themselves for their homeland.



Adventure Format

Will this be a 1 hour adventure, or a 3 hour adventure? I have a rough template for both kinds, but you can do something in between if you wish. Both are similar, but the one hour game has a very focused, clear ending while the other can be padded out to whatever.

Timeframe

- ❖ One Hour Templat
 - ◆ Medium combat
 - ◆ Two-Stage boss monster
- ❖ Three Hour Template
 - ◆ Short Combat
 - ◆ Medium Combat
 - ◆ Three-Stage boss monster

This will be a three hour adventure, but with a twist; the last stage of the boss goes on forever, and will be a last stand/obstacle thing. Most of the padding goes onto the end.

Environment

No good battle ever went down on flat concrete stretching for miles in each direction. Combat takes place in the mud, the dirt, the cluttered streets, and the overturned cruise ship. Make sure to pick a location ripe for interesting combat maneuvers, tricky situations, loose debris, or even something that's familiar to everyone (like a local library or restaurant).

Multiple levels is also a great addition to any fight, and allows for interesting maneuvers and strategy. Basically, fill your battlefield with things that the players and enemies can use to their advantage, as well as things that get in their way.

Although the Hot Gates are somewhat plain, I'm going to say that the players have been fighting the whole time, and don't gain their powers until near the end of the battle, when corpses, weapons, broken remnants of armor, and fallen rocks litter the battlefield.

The players have the Gates to their back, which in my version will be a tall cliff face with a small path through the middle. About 500 ft ahead of them will be a sheer drop off into the ocean. Because long drops are always fun.

Monsters

The most important rule of creating foes is:

Give the monsters cool abilities and powers

It's absolutely key that each monster have a few interesting or terrifying things that it can do before it dies. Things like: Trapping the players, disarming them, summoning more monsters, changing the landscape, knocking players back, pinning players in place, forcing them to overload, etc.

My general rule is to give each monster at least 3–4 abilities. This keeps things fresh and unpredictable, even if there are several monsters on the field at the same time.

You'll be controlling these monsters. It's a lot more fun if you can describe all the cool things these monsters are doing, rather than just repeating, "The orc attacks you" over and over.

Brainstorm some foes. You won't need more than 3–4 different kinds of monsters and a big boss per adventure.

Example Monster 1

I'll have a few basic human soldiers, and instead of abilities, I'll give them different weapons.

PERSIAN SOLDIERS

- ❖ Spear, can attack at melee range, or toss at a player
- ❖ Sword and shield; if a player misses their attack, the soldiers immediately counterattack
- ❖ Crossbow, snipe players at range
- ❖ Dual axes; attack two players at once

As for another monster, let's make it interesting, and say the Persians summon horrible monsters from another world. We'll have 2 strange Persian creatures for the players to fight.

WRECKING-WHEEL

A strange barrel shaped contraption that can fold up and charge into battle, blades whirring

- ❖ Fold up, and roll in a straight line, attacking multiple players
- ❖ Smash the ground, sending several fallen weapons flying towards a player
- ❖ When destroyed, spill out a handful of Persian soldiers

Example Monster 2: SabreTooth

A truly ferocious beast with 6 legs, a prehensile tail, and spikes/claws/teeth sticking out of everywhere that makes sense. The beast wields a huge bloody meat cleaver with its tail.

- ❖ Jump high, landing on the other side of the battlefield to flank players
- ❖ Slash a player with the cleaver
- ❖ Throw the cleaver, and grab another weapon from the ground, changing tactics
- ❖ Grab a player, and drag them around the battlefield, maybe even tossing them towards the edge

Boss Monsters

Bosses can be tricky: you want to create a monster that is intimidating at first glance, but can ultimately be destroyed by the players. Making something the size of a mountain is scary, but it will be difficult to justify the players just slicing up the feet. I usually make my bosses building sized, but you could easily make something smaller or a little larger.

Bosses come in several stages, with damage, effects, or modifiers not transferring between stages. It's almost like creating 2–3 different monsters that have the same appearance. I use a 2-stage boss for one hour adventures, and 3-stage boss for three hour adventures. You can give your boss more stages if you wish, time and creative energy permitting.

2 Stage Boss

The first stage should be fairly simple and straightforward. You want the players to become familiar with the thing, and get a handle on how it moves, attacks, etc. The same rules apply for bosses as for monsters. Make sure your boss has interesting attacks and abilities, especially in the second stage!

In the second stage, you mix it up, and mess with their preconceptions. Change the appearance, the tactics, and the behavior of the boss. The second stage should be much more dangerous!

Since this is a straightforward combat adventure, we'll just have a two stage boss, albeit one more deadly than I normally make a boss; since this is a last stand and all.

Boss: King of Persia

This is not the king that we know from history. He's channeling power much like the players, with dark glowing red armor, cloaked in shadows and wielding a huge dual-sided battleaxe. He can switch weapons and abilities much like the players, and will be a formidable foe.

FIRST STAGE

- ❖ Attack with incredible speed, strength, and flourish
- ❖ Taunt the players, laughing and jeering as he teleports around the battlefield
- ❖ Throw the battleaxe spinning around the battlefield, attacking other players
- ❖ Overload, unleashing a blast of energy, and re-appear wielding one of the same weapons and abilities as another player (SCARY!)

As players begin to wear him down, he overloads again, knocking all players back, and re-forming as a new creature: a 15 foot tall demon made of blood and shadows. A dripping finger points to the player with the most cards in their deck. As the demon speaks in a horrible guttural language, red flame lances towards the player. They immediately discard half their deck.

SECOND STAGE

- ❖ Unleash waves of red blasts that knock players back, sending them flying
- ❖ Grab a player and toss them off the cliffside (players can roll to climb back up)
- ❖ Summon a huge skeleton scythe, hammering a single opponent
- ❖ Point to another player and begin speaking death. If not interrupted in time, another player discards all but 4 of their cards.

3 Stage Boss

Very similar to a 2-stage boss, with one major difference: The middle stage is an Obstacle; something the players must overcome before they can continue the fight. Maybe the boss runs away, forcing a chase, or it summons other monsters to protect it. Maybe there is a kind of shield, or the players are trapped and must escape. Whatever it is, it needs to mix up the combat, and give everyone a break.

Numbers and Statistics

Before you start recording stats and writing down numbers, keep these two important rules in mind:

- ❖ If your monster/boss stage is slowing down combat, kill it immediately! It's better for a monster to have too little HP than too much. Dragging out combat will kill the flow of the game.
- ❖ If combat ends too soon, just summon another copy of that monster and keep things rolling.

Both of these rules will compensate for any fluctuations; of which there will be MANY! Player Mats are built to be fun and interesting, not balanced and fair.

It's up to you to adjust to how things are going during the game; keep things moving quickly, no matter what your prep says!

With that in mind, let's talk stats.

I've found that players using the classes I've made tend to do about 7–8 damage per round per player. In Mythic Mortals, Health Points are rather like a timer; they just tell you how long an enemy should stick around before it dies horribly. So, you can

either have a bunch of small enemies that don't last long, or have a few large enemies that last a while.

Damage, meanwhile, is just a way to prioritize and alert players to what is more dangerous. Give something high damage, and they will focus on it. I try not to go below 5 damage, because it's too easy to block, but more than 12 damage for a monster's attack can be really unfair and kill your players quickly. Here are my template for 3 different kinds of combat encounters:

- ❖ 2–3 Large Foes:
 - ◆ 20–25 HP 8–10 damage each
- ❖ 5–10 Small minions:
 - ◆ 5–10HP 5–7 damage each
- ❖ Boss Stages:
 - ◆ First Stage: 25 HP, 6–10 damage
 - ◆ Obstacle Stage: 5–10HP, if any
 - ◆ Last stage: 30 HP, 8–12 damage

You don't ever want a single enemy to last more than 2–4 rounds. Any longer than that, and it gets boring. A few rounds is enough time for monsters to use their abilities, inflict harm, and then die.

Also, give each monster a Mythos value, or a turn order. Faster enemies have higher Mythos. If you really want to make something dangerous (like a boss, for example), give it multiple turns per round.

If you only have 2–3 players, then you may need to decrease the HP, or have monsters not take as many turns per round. With 4–5 players, bump the HP and damage up a bit, let enemies act a few more times per round. Again, I must stress that combat is fluid, and you'll be adjusting enemy HP, damage, turn order, and more as you run your game. Don't rely too heavily on your prep.

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Puzzles and Obstacles

I won't go into too much detail here, mostly because I'm not very good at puzzles. Too often I spend a lot of time on a puzzle only to have my players solve it immediately. Or, on the flipside, they never figure it out, and I feel obtuse and confusing.

So my best advice for you is to create some kind of obstacle or barrier that is the facade of a puzzle. For example, in the "You Meet In a Tavern" adventure, the 2nd stage of the boss is a chase scene, forcing players to find a way to quickly scale buildings and free-run across the rooftops in an effort to keep up with the fleeing dragon.

This does not need to be complicated, or drawn out. Even if it only lasts for a few minutes, that's long enough to break up the combat and get the players excited about the next phase of the game.

Another simple solution is to summon a minor monster or group of monsters for the players to fight while the boss powers up and gets ready for the next phase.

The main goal is to keep combat from getting repetitive; which has always been the biggest problem in my games. Do whatever you have to do. Change the environment, mix up the monsters, introduce some non-combat sections, etc.

To see the final product, look at the Last Stand adventure available online at MYTHICMORTALS.COM.



Additional Information

Making Mats

Making a Mat more of an art than a science. I highly encourage you to create your own mats, or adjust the ones included with this book. That's why I've created a blank template for you to create your own classes and Mats. You can download it at MYTHICMORTALS.COM.

Join the Mythic Mortals G+ community to pitch ideas, get feedback, or share your creations with others. Mythic Mortals is released under a CC-by 4.0 license, meaning you can sell your own Mats, adventures, and creations based on Mythic Mortals, so long as you credit me in there somewhere. Go nuts!

General Guidelines

The flexibility and the freedom of designing a Mat can make it hard to find a nice balance. Should this weapon do 7 or 8 damage? Should I have two ranged weapons, or just one? Does this Mythos Ability require a roll?

These questions are important, but not as much as you might think. Here are some basic guidelines to keep in mind when designing your Player Mat:

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- ❖ Player Mats should offer interesting choices. There should be no one best combination. Maybe this ability is better for ranged attacks, and this one is better for a defensive play style.
 - ❖ You usually don't have more than 5–10 words to explain an ability. Keep it short, and if you can't fit it in the space, then maybe the ability itself is just too complicated! This is a harsh limitation, but it results in better weapons and powers.
 - ❖ Keep the Unwritten Mat Rules in mind when you're working. You don't need to write down that players must roll under ACCURACY to use a weapon, since it's already in the unwritten rules. Likewise, if an abilities does damage, make sure you specify it, since abilities deal no damage by default.
 - ❖ Players should rarely be able to deal more than 10 damage in a single turn. A lot of enemies are built with this limitation in mind, and breaking this rule should be something incredible or costly. A good example is the Sneak can deal more than 10 damage, but only if they spend two turns setting it up.
 - ❖ Avoid simple Modifiers. Those are boring, and hard to remember. Gaining +3 to Mythos may be helpful, but it isn't very fun.
 - ❖ Don't worry too much about "balance". Instead, just work hard to make sure your player mat won't invalidate other players. Every Mat excels at something in particular, and yours should be no different.

To start our hacking adventures, let's go look at one of the Mats in detail: The Hunter. I consider the Hunter to be the most basic, straightforward Mat that I've created. It was the first, and is the template upon which I base my other Mats.

Default Slot Template

Several of my Mats break from this template, but I still consider it a very solid starting place.

-
- ❖ Mythos – Abilities
 - ❖ Accuracy – Weapons
 - ❖ Defense – Bonus
 - ❖ Damage – Flaws

This way, each slot is useful, and offers players different ways to combine and adjust their options. Try not to overload a Mat with too many options; e.g. have a Mat with weapons in each Slot. Variety is the spice of life!

Dealing Damage

All mats need a way to deal damage. While a pure support class may sound interesting, in practice most players find dealing damage more satisfying than solely supporting their allies. Even the Ancient Power can throw their weight around during a battle, and they are designed to be passive!

When it comes to specifics, you can either give a weapon/ability variable damage (e.g. it depends on the card in your slot), or you can give it set damage (6 damage). A few guidelines for choosing which:

- ❖ The default is to give a weapon/ability variable damage. This puts control directly in the hands of the players, and let's them choose what is most important.
Should this weapon do more damage, or should this ability be easier to use?
- ❖ Static damage must be paired with a useful or special ability. If a weapon's effect is really strong, feel free to limit the damage that it can do.
Say a weapon banishes an enemy for a round. That is a very useful ability, and you can limit the damage to keep it from being stronger than the other options.

The Hunter has a good mix of variable and static damage. The more useful abilities (spread shot, widespread pain, Careful Aim) have limits set on their damage. This prevents them from being the best choice. While Longbow and Ghost Gun have variable damage, and their weapon abilities are pretty simple, since variable damage is useful enough.

Reactions

Some mats offer players new Reactions to choose from. Reactions can be a great way to help a Mat feel unique, but be careful: Reactions are used more than most other abilities, you must take care not to make them too powerful.

A good rule of thumb is that no Reaction should be “safer” than Blocking or Dodging. New reactions should come with a higher price, but offer more of a benefit. Something like “Take half damage, and deal the same amount to the enemy.” This is riskier (players can’t control how much damage they take), but gives a nice payoff (enemies die faster).

The Hunter doesn’t have any new Reactions. I instead put most of the work into Reactions for the Duelist.

Abilities

Most abilities are tied to the Mythos Slot, akin to magical spells. They usually require the player to roll under their Mythos Slot. These abilities will make each class feel distinct. For example, the Sneak doesn’t roll for his Mythos abilities but they take two turns to use. The Brute only has one Mythos move, but with several different follow-ups. Here are my Mythos guidelines:

- ❖ These abilities should never just deal simple damage, after all, that's what weapons are for! Come up with some other special power or effect for the Ability to inflict on foes or help allies.
- ❖ Give powerful abilities some kind of drawback or give a weak ability a strong effect. Keep things balanced. Abilities give your players the chance to shine; make sure they are interesting and useful!
- ❖ Avoid extended affects. Don't force players to juggle and remember lots of details. For example: "The next 3 attacks you make will not miss" How will players remember when those attacks are done? How many do they have left? Does it stack? Keep abilities simple and focused.
- ❖ Keep ongoing effects simple and short; a one time buff or "the next attack does X damage" kind of stuff. No effect should last beyond the next round.
- ❖ The complexity comes from the combinations, not from a single ability! Don't make one really neat ability and three boring ones. Look at the Brute. She only has one ability: grappling. But her different variations give her a flexibility that she wouldn't normally have.

Weapons

Weapons should be fun and interesting. Their purpose is to modify and add variety to your basic attacks. Saying "I hit him with my sword" every round gets old after about 4 seconds.

All weapons have a range and deal damage. Usually, weapons deal damage equal to a player's Damage slot, but not always. Look at the Hunter:

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- ❖ The Shotgun has decent damage, but can be unloaded all at once to deal very high damage, at the cost of not being able to use it after that one big attack.
 - ❖ The Crossbow also has decent set damage, but spreads it across 3 different targets (each of which can trigger the different elemental affects). This is meant to pair well with the Defense bonuses.
 - ❖ The Light Bow has incredible range, special to the Hunter. This is a very powerful weapon, and allows the hunter to dominate ranged combat. It even gets a special buff when combined with another bonus (which would normally not be very helpful).
 - ❖ The Ghost Gun allows the Hunter to target and hit people through walls or any surface. Good for hitting a fleeing target.

Overall, the spears are the weakest of the bunch, and that's okay. Not everything needs to be perfect and balanced, it just need to be fun and interesting.

Defense Bonuses

These can be tricky to come up with at first, but once you get an idea of what a Mat is focused on, then you can create Bonuses that encourage and support certain play styles. If need be, go back and change weapons/abilities to combo well with certain Benefits, or vice versa.

Benefits are always active, giving strength to a particular playstyle, or combining with another weapon/mythos ability.

For example, the Hunter is all about range, so I had one Bonus that upgrades the range of all weapons by one tier! However, the longbow was already at the highest tier...hence the special bonus when those two are combined.

These retroactive combos can really help the Mat to gel and fit together better. Always be thinking about how powers, weapons and benefits combine.

Flaws

Flaws are the most interesting part of the class for me. I love drawbacks and consequences (failure is usually more interesting than success!).

A word of warning: ensure that your flaws don't invalidate your class. For example, giving the hunter a flaw where she can't hit anything beyond melee range invalidates a TON of her abilities, passives, and weapon choices. My first few flaws did this, and were not fun to work around; they just made players feel useless.

One flaw should never cancel out the other choices your player makes. It can modify and create drawbacks in areas that the Mat doesn't focus on: movement, for example.

Never does the Hunter get expanded movement options, so limiting those can be interesting; it has the added benefit of forcing the player to rely on the strengths of the class.

To show a bad example, the Brewer used to have two flaws, one that didn't let him hurt enemies, and another that didn't let him help allies. I thought it would be interesting but then a player complained that this one flaw canceled out the rest of his choices on the Mat, and he even had one unfortunate combination where he couldn't harm enemies or help allies. Not fun at all!

On the other hand, I thought Merciful was kinda funny, and would force the brute to work with other players to finish off foes (keeping him from being a solo fighter). Then a player said: "Wait, I can toss foes at allies, right? That means they are dealing the killing blow, not me!" It was an awesome moment, and I hadn't planned for that.

That's the goal, to make a bunch of individual pieces that can be combined in fun and interesting ways. When it works, man does it work!

You can do it! No Mat is perfect and yours won't be either. Just do your best to make interesting pieces, and then tweak them until they work together. Let your ideas simmer and try something new!

Questions?

Join the Google+ Mythic Mortals community, and let us know what you're working on! I'd be glad to help you however I can.

Or you can shoot me an email at: DAVIDSCHIRDUAN@GMAIL.COM. I'm always glad to hear from you! And, of course, you can find all of the adventures, playmats, and more at MYTHICMORTALS.COM.

Recognition/Inspirations

One of the best parts of working on Mythic Mortals has been reading and researching other games to see how they play, what they do well, and ~~what I can steal~~ what inspires me. Here are some games that have made Mythic Mortals possible, and I would highly recommend you play.

Project Dark - Will Hindmarch

This ingenious game by Will Hindmarch was my original inspiration for Mythic Mortals. It was not the tone, setting, or mechanics, but the character sheet that drew me in. PD uses slots and cards in a more complex and intricate way than Mythic Mortals. If you are a fan of stealth games, subterfuge, or the Thief games, then you owe it to yourself to check this out.

GUÐ HIALPI HANS AND OK SALU OK GUÐS MOÐIR BÆTR ÞAN HANN GÆRÐI TIL



Dungeon World – Adam Koebel and Sage LaTorra

This game taught me how to GM, and how to support my players. It encourages collaborative, adventurous games. I really wanted to maintain that high-action, fun-focused tone in Mythic Mortals. If you want to be a better GM, then go read Dungeon World.

Legend – Rule of Cool

The first game I ever GMed, Legend taught me a lot about how much fun strategic, grid-based combat can be. Even though Mythic Mortals has a very simple tactical system, Legend influenced it in many ways. One of the key parts of Legend is the interchangeable tracks you select to build your characters.

Not only did this simplify character creation, but it encouraged players to find interesting combinations. Giving the players interesting choices to make was one of my key design goals with Mythic Mortals. Thanks Legend, for teaching me about combat and designing decisions.

Wushu – Daniel Bayn

A simple game of descriptive combat, Wushu does a fantastic job of allowing players to direct and choreograph beautiful, intricate fight scenes. The mechanics are light and simple, but in play it is an exhausting, inspiring romp from one fight scene to the next. If you love the Matrix or kung fu movies, this is one of the best games to make you feel like you are taking part in something like that.

Feng Shui 2 – Robin D. Laws

Better than any other game, Feng Shui is really good at systemizing tropes. The game is a love letter to pulpy action movies, and it shines through in every part. There's even a mechanic for cocking your shotgun unnecessarily! If Mythic Mortals is too lite on mechanics, then Feng Shui is a great place to start.

Kickstarter Backers

None of this would be possible without the incredible generosity and faith from these fine folks. Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart!

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For 2-6 players

Supports many 2-3 hour game sessions

You will need a deck of cards for each player and at least two 6-sided dice.

For ages 8+

Find adventures, classes, and more information at mythicmortals.com