



Duelist

A SYSTEM-NEUTRAL
COMBAT ADD-ON

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Duelist is a **combat add-on** for tabletop roleplaying games, intended to add depth and variety to a wide range of most popular TTPRG games without replacing their mechanics. Instead, Duelist aims to **work with the already existing game systems**, to further bring out the fun of combat.

Using Duelist in your games is going to help your fighter characters of all classes and variations **express themselves through a combat style**, and be more effective against foes at the same time. Duelist isn't a direct power upgrade for your fighters, however, as **the increased effectiveness comes at the cost of potential drawbacks**.

To accomplish those goals through the use of **a simple system of semi-random selection** and multiple convergent stances and attack types. The players can choose theirs at will, while the non-player character opponents choose theirs either through Game Master/Dungeon Master fiat or through a simple semi-random selection method—the decision roll.

How to mix it with game mechanics

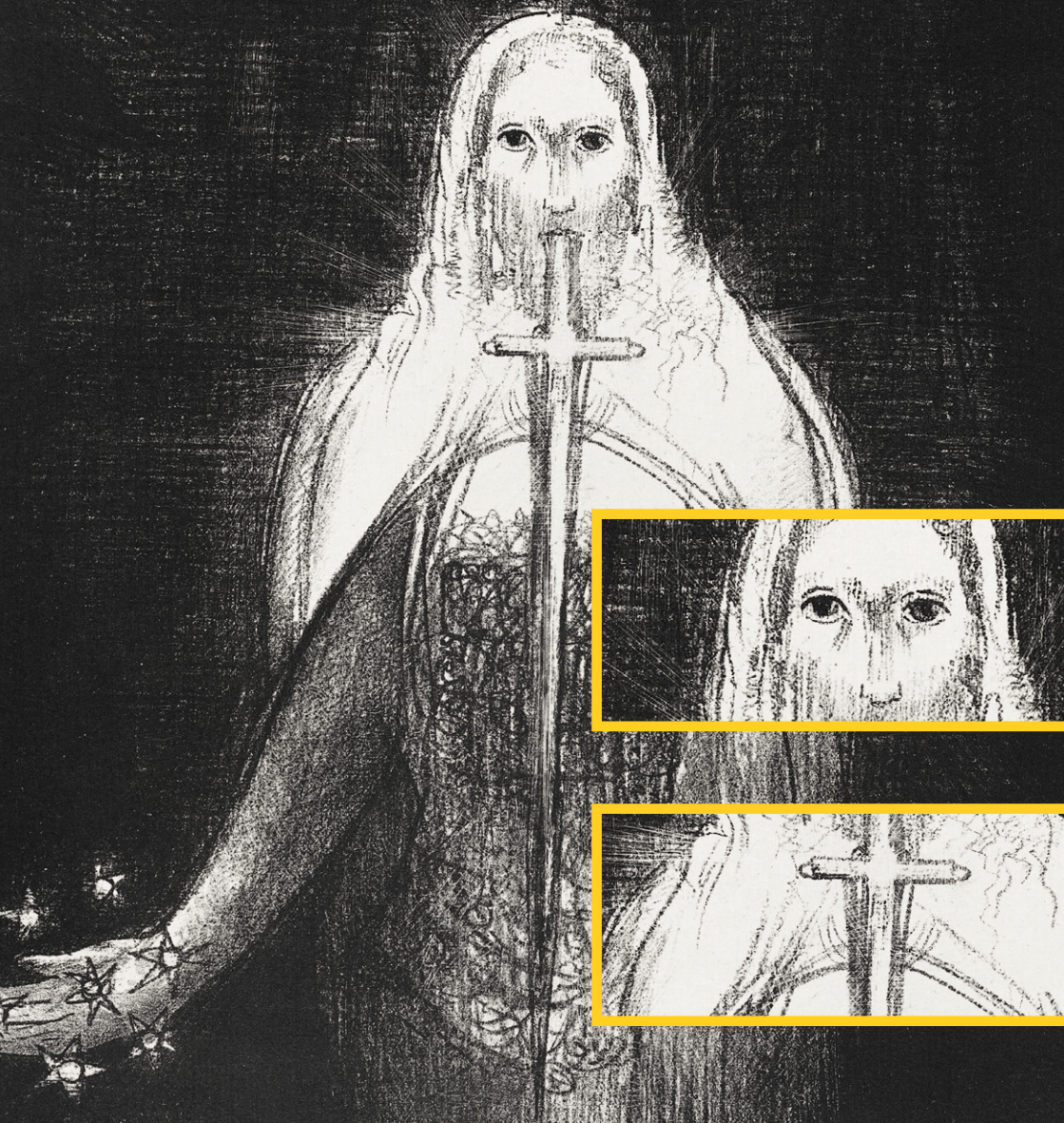
Duelist tries to be as unobtrusive to the game it's added to as possible, introducing **simple rules made with adjustability in mind**. The stances, attacks, and moves don't have specific effects outside of the game they're attached to.

Instead, **use whatever system rules you're playing** to best describe the effects within your game—be it modifiers, advantages, inspirations, or other fitting mechanics. You should **discuss the use of Duelist with your group beforehand**, and establish a common ground on how things work.

When resolving the attacks each round, **use the standard rules** of the game you're playing to decide whether the attack has hit or missed, **adjusted by the special effects of stances, attacks, and moves used**.



Rules



Engagement occurs when a character attacks another—simple enough.

When a character attacks another, the defendant immediately commits an action to fight back. If the system you're playing

in has contested melee rules, use those.

Otherwise, the defendant uses their action to fight instead of using their normal action in their turn.

- ◆ The attacker gets to choose their stances, attacks, and moves freely.
- ◆ The defender can use their perception (or equivalent) to assess what moves and stances are in play.

If the perception is a success, the GM/DM reveals what the opponent is doing, and the defender can react accordingly. If not, take a guess and pick—or make a roll to decide what moves and stances to use.

If a character is already committed to fighting someone and is attacked by another character, they can't play a defensive move, unless the system allows multiple actions. If so, treat this defense as any other multiple actions in that system. If your game allows multiple actions, characters can also **attack multiple opponents**, with standard penalties (if any) that exist in your game.



D E C I S I O N R O L L

If you're playing a solo game, or your GM/DM wants to leave details up to chance, you can **use the decision roll to determine what stances, attacks, and moves the foe is using.**

There are two variants: random and median. In both cases, adjust the result based on the enemy type (see next page).

- ◆ For a random decision, just **roll 1d6**.
- ◆ For a median decision, **roll 3d6**, then discard the highest and the lowest result.

- ◆ **Light, quick enemies** will play defensively, adding +1 to their decision roll result. They prefer to stay safe and win through thousand small cuts.
- ◆ **Berserker-type enemies**, such as barbarians, orks, and other creatures known for aggression will add -1 to their decision roll, as they will want to strike the enemy down quickly and brutally.
- ◆ **Well-armored foes** like knights, golems and similar, will add a +1 to their decision roll if they're unsure of advantage over the enemy but will switch to an aggressive stance if it becomes clear their armor is more than enough.
- ◆ **Small, yet numerous foes**, such as goblins, kobolds, and the like, will opt for an aggressive assault en masse, aiming to quickly isolate and overwhelm the victims - they also get -1 to the roll result. If they are equal or fewer in number, they will play defensively, especially if they wait for stronger backup—give them +1 instead in those cases.
- ◆ **Untrained foes** like city guards or peasants, will choose a balanced stance, no modifier for them.
- ◆ **Enemies who don't care for their survival**, like the undead, mind-controlled people, or magical constructs will play aggressively, getting a -1 to their roll.
- ◆ **Animalistic foes** and those ruled by instincts will prefer a defensive approach (+1) unless they're certain of an easy win. Ambush predators will often open the fight from an aggressive stance and switch later.
- ◆ **Giant opponents** like dragons may prefer to swat their foes like flies, going for defensive quick hits (+1), except those relishing in violence or taken by rage, who prefer to deliver massive blows and cause as much destruction as possible, even if it is an overkill (-1).



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If the player is an attacker, they get to pick their stance, attack, and move first, then the non-player character reacts.

If the player is in defense, they can try to use perception or equivalent first, then decide on what the response is going to be.

The character who succeeds in the attack

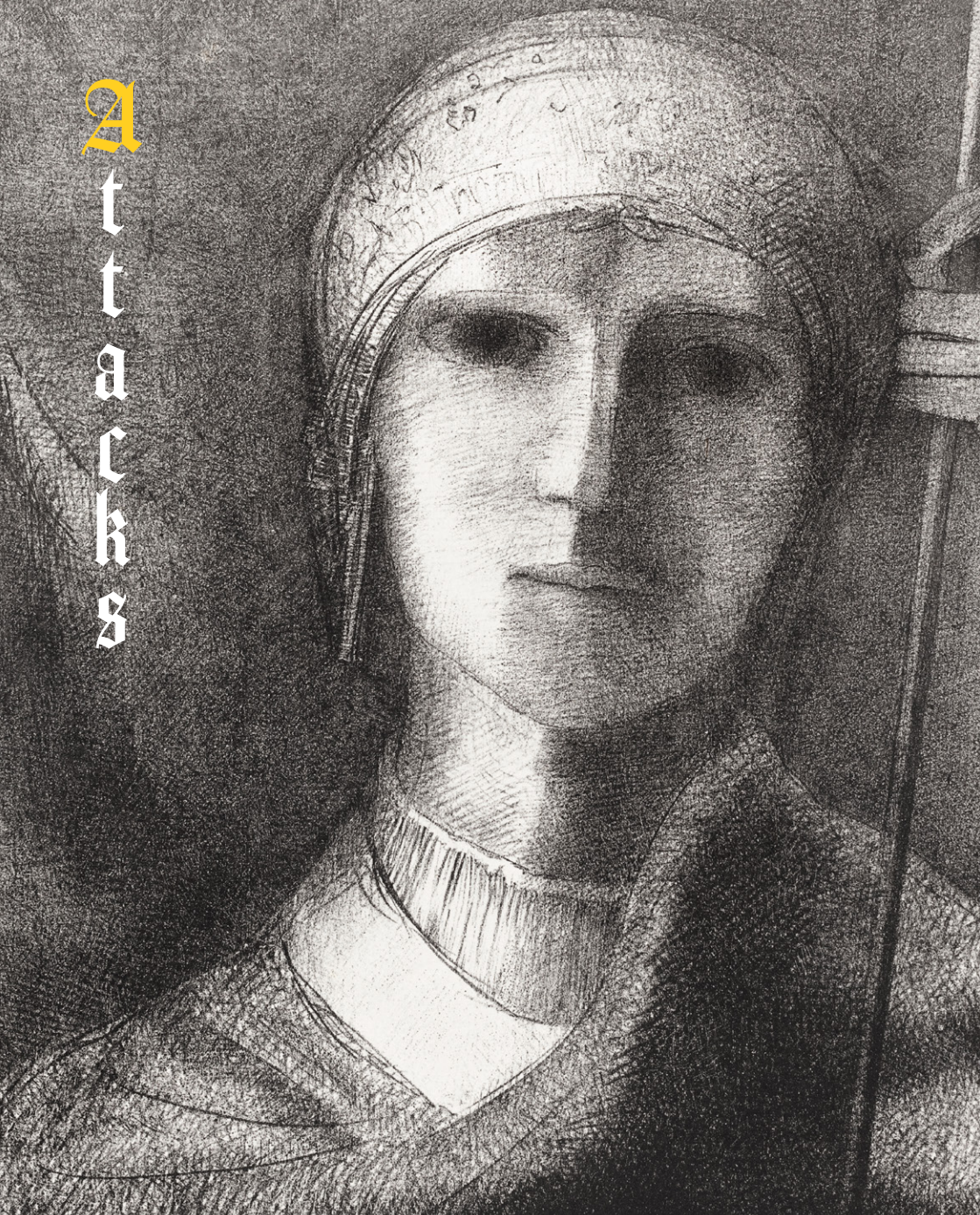
(as per the standard rules of the game you're playing) gets to deal damage plus add all the effects of their chosen move (plus system effects, if any), and becomes the attacker next turn. If the resolution of the round would cause both characters to be in the offense, use their initiative scores or a coin toss to resolve the tie.

If the game you're playing uses **an initiative system**, both combatants are moving on the faster character's initiative turn, regardless of whether the faster character is in offense or defense.

Stances reflect **the fighter's posture and care for their safety**. Fighters aiming to protect themselves and others usually focus on defending stances, while those whose first priority is to deal damage will choose aggression.

- 1-2 Aggressive.** This stance focuses on taking the opponent down—either uncaring for one's safety, or because another fighter takes care of safeguarding the attack. Reduce whatever defense the character has by 50% (rounded up), but increase whatever bonus to hit they have by 50% (also rounded up).
- 3-4 Balanced.** The resolute warrior's opening stance. While it offers neither bonuses nor penalties, it is a careful method of measuring one's advantage over the opponent.
- 5-6 Defensive.** Focusing mostly on protecting oneself and others, the combatant in defensive stance sacrifices 50% (rounded up) of their chance to strike at the enemy effectively, instead of increasing their defense by 50% (you guessed it, rounded up).

Attacks



Fighting is more than just slapping your foe with a heavy object until they stop moving. Striking with speed is sometimes more important than crushing power, and vice versa.

1-2 Powerful. Delivering massive blows may leave one open to parries and counterattacks, but it is bound to hurt when they land. Strong hits deal 50% (rounded up) more damage than they normally would, but are delivered second, even if dealt by the attacker. They are always telegraphed, even without a perception roll, and have a disadvantage—or a negative modifier to hit, in whatever manner it suits your game.

3-4 Balanced. Standard attacks, as described by your base game.

5-6 Quick. Sometimes hitting the enemy quickly is more important than hurting them—be it to interrupt an incoming strong attack, deliver poison or a card effect, or just to get the first hit in. Quick attacks deal only half the damage (rounded up) but are always delivered first, even if the character is defending, and are not telegraphed. Even if a character uses perception to see through the attacker's stance and card, they won't see what card is used. Quick attacks are always delivered with an advantage, a positive modifier, or equivalent in your game.

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Moves are the **specific actions characters perform in combat**, adding flavor and effectiveness to stances, attacks, and your base game combat system.

The six base moves replace your game's default attacks. If your game has special attacks and abilities for melee combat characters, moves are used with those attacks, and their effects are an addition to the game effects.

Just like stances and attacks, **moves are organized to work with the decision roll.** If you're using the decision roll, the attacker makes the roll first, and the defender makes a decision based on their perception success (if any) and better judgment.

Additionally, **a stance and attack will influence the move picked.**

- ◆ The aggressive stance and powerful attacks give -1 to the move decision roll.
- ◆ The defensive stance and quick attacks give +1 to the move decision roll.





Offense

- 1-2 Lunge.** A powerful attack aiming to throw the opponent off-balance. If successful, the opponent is at a disadvantage in whatever action they want to perform next.
- 3-4 Slash.** A regular attack with no special benefits, but also without drawbacks.
- 5-6 Thrust.** A lightning strike at a vulnerable area. It only does half the damage (rounded up) but ignores half (rounded up) of the armor class or other protection the enemy has.

Defense

- 1-2 Riposte.** Block your opponent's strike and immediately strike back. If successful, you can immediately attack your opponent, who can't play a card to defend themselves.
- 3-4 Parry.** Defend yourself from the opponent's attack. If successful, you are in offense next turn, regardless of initiative (if any).
- 5-6 Feint.** A feigned retreat intended to draw your enemy in for an opportunity attack. If successful, you move into offense, and your next attack is at an advantage.

B O N U S

M O V E S

Bonus moves provide **additional effects after the main attack was played**. They require the main action to be successful in order to take effect. If your game has bonus actions or equivalent, use those to play the bonus moves. If not, you can play one bonus move after a successful attack against your foe.

- 1 Throw Dirt.** Throw a fistful of dirt, caltrops, a powder, or another small item from your inventory. If your main attack was a success, go to offense next turn, and the opponent can't play a defensive card.
- 2 Dirty Trick.** Sucker punch, kick or stab your enemy. If your main attack was successful, add unarmed damage to damage dealt, or a second weapon's damage, if you have any.
- 3 Refreshment.** Down a healing potion, quick salve of herbs, or just pause to catch a breath. If your main attack was successful, recover 10% (rounded up) of your hit points (or equivalent), or use a healing item from your inventory.
- 4 Hearty Call.** Strike with a shout of intimidation, aiming to distract and terrify your enemy. If your main attack is successful, your next attack has an advantage, and your opponent's defense a disadvantage.
- 5 Taunt.** Shout a challenge at your opponent. If your main attack was successful, the opponent has no choice but the keep fighting you in the next turn.
- 6 Defensive Maneuver.** Set yourself into a better position to defend by how your opponent fights. Gain an additional 25% (rounded up) defense.