

**AWESOME!**

**THE ROLE PLAYING GAME**

**BY JOSHUA MACY**

# **Awesome!**

## **The Role Playing Game**

Copyright © 2009 by Joshua Macy



Released under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License

For more information on this license, look on the web at:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>

# **Awesome!: The Storytelling Game**

Awesome! is a game of telling a story about just how awesome your characters are, and how they kick ass and take names accomplishing mighty feats of derring-do, blockbuster action movie style! For Awesome! characters, the question is not whether they succeed, only how awesome their success is. Players take turns narrating the awesome exploits of their characters, ceding control of the narrative only when they've run out of their current supply of Awesome! (or when they've failed to live up to their awesome potential and delivered some lame narration).

## **Beginning The Game**

The players choose one player to be the Director for the upcoming scene. For the first scene, they can choose randomly, or simply pick the most awesome player in the room. Subsequent scenes will be Directed by whichever player whose turn it was when the scene ended. It is the Director's job to set the scene, and to control all the antagonists and provide the challenges that the characters must surmount. It is not the Director's job to thwart the characters or make them look silly, but to help them to achieve the highest levels of awesomeness they can. The Director briefly describes the scenario for the players ("You are all martial artists gathered on a remote island to determine the Best of the Best" or "You are super-spies working for a mysterious agency.") so they can create their characters.

## Creating Characters

Starting with the player to the Director's left and going clockwise, each player briefly describes their character in a sentence or two. ("Chow Yang is the son of the disgraced former master of the Tiger Fist Dojo, determined to clear his father's name and restore his style to prominence." "Rhode Island Red is a mountain of a man, and the roughest, toughest, biker in the world." etc). Then the player to that player's right adds a Signature Shtick; a detail that makes the character particularly awesome (e.g. "Chow Yang is master of The Roaring Tiger move." or "Red's Hog, Betty-Lou, can drive straight through a brick wall without slowing down."). Next the player to the left adds one Weakness. ("Red can't resist a drink." "Agent X always helps a lady in distress, even if he knows it's a trap.") Continue around the table until everyone has a character, including the Director, who will need a character if there are subsequent scenes.

Characters have only one Stat, called Awesome! Each player starts the game with Awesome! of 20.

## Turn Order

Play begins with the Director setting the scene in more detail. Every scene should be devised around a set-piece action sequence. It needn't be a combat, though most of the time it probably will be, but it has to be something that provides scope for death-defying stunts, hair-raising escapades, and, if possible, explosions. Big ones.

Investigation, travel, preparation and the like should all be handled in passing by the Director or inserted as a parenthetical aside by a Player...Players should never have to take an action or make a decision simply to advance the plot to the next action sequence. Once the Director has set the scene, the player to the Director's left begins her turn. When her turn ends, the Director gets another turn to update the scene, detail the antagonists' responses, up the stakes, and so forth. When the Director is finished, the next Player moving clockwise takes her turn. Play proceeds in this fashion, alternating between the Director and the next clockwise Player until the scene ends.

## Taking A Turn

In Awesome! the character's action always succeeds—that's what it means to be awesome. The only thing in question is just how much awesome you can cram into one turn. The narrating player describes the awesome action that the character takes, including (if appropriate) what happens to any non-player characters as a result. The other players (excluding the Director) may, if they wish, vote whether the action is Awesome! or Lame! They need not wait until the action is over, but they may not vote on the same action twice. "Red punches the thug so hard he lands in the rolling chair and rolls back all the way across the room where the chair tips him out the window and he falls into the dumpster below." "Agent X jumps onto the back of the shark and using his spear-gun as a spur, rides the shark like a surf-board all the way back to the beach."

### Awesome!

If another player is particularly impressed, she can say "Awesome!" or give a thumbs up after a player takes an action. This causes the narrating player's current Awesome! score to go up by one.

### Totally Awesome!

If every other player voted Awesome! the player whose turn it was goes again immediately.

### Lame!

If another player thinks that the action described was pedestrian or boring, they can say "Lame!" or hold their hand up in the shape of an L on their forehead. This causes the narrating player's current Awesome! score to go down by 1.

### Totally Lame

If every other player voted Lame! then the narrating player's turn ends immediately.

## **Abstention**

Players do not have to vote one way or the other, and should probably reserve their kudos or jeers for particularly noteworthy actions.

## **No Consensus**

Typically there will be no consensus, either because there were abstentions or because there was disagreement on the Awesomeness/Lameness of the character's action. The player then rolls a d20, and this becomes the character's new Awesome! score. If the roll is higher than the character's current Awesome! score (after having been adjusted by the votes of the other players), then the player's turn ends, and the narration moves on, first to the director, then to the next player clockwise. If the roll is less than or equal to the character's current Awesome! score, the player continues with the narration.

## **Signature Shtick**

If the player incorporates the character's signature shtick (as defined by the other player at during character creation) in the action, the player rolls 2d20 and keeps the one she prefers (generally the highest one that isn't over the current Awesome! score, or simply the highest if they both would cause the turn to end, but if she wanted to end the turn for some other reason without tagging out or succumbing to weakness, it's up to her).

## Voluntarily Ending Your Turn

Players may voluntarily end their turns by either Tagging Out or Succumbing to Weakness

### Tagging Out

A player may tag out to another player to continue the narration by describing a set-up for that player's character ("I toss Maxie the gun.") and indicating that player should continue (either verbally or by tapping their palm or the table in front of them). In this case the Director does **not** get a turn before the next player. A player may not tag another player if the Director has not had a turn since that player's last turn (because that player tagged away): the Director must always be allowed a turn before a player can go again. The character's current Awesome! score remains in effect.

### Succumbing to Weakness

A player may voluntarily narrate the character succumbing to the Weakness defined during character creation. The player's turn ends, and the character's Awesome! score is reset to 20.

### When to Roll

Players are encouraged to describe their actions elaborately and with panache, and it's quite possible that one "action" can encompass a whole series of maneuvers, as in "Jackie grabs the mop and back-flips over the ninja behind him, then sweeps the mop handle around in a gigantic circle, knocking all six ninjas into the shelves, where they fall in a heap with the cans of paint falling on them and covering them head-to-foot in all the colors of the rainbow." How much is too much? Generally speaking, the action should end when it's logical and narratively satisfying to do so, usually after both an action by the character and a reaction by the antagonists. Remember, every time an action ends there's a chance that the player's turn will end then and there, either by vote of the other players or by the roll of the die. A player can have a sense of whether a follow-up action is likely, based on the current Awesome! score, but it's never certain. You probably don't want to end with the mop handle sweeping the ninja's legs out from under them, but not knowing whether they fall, flip and save

themselves, or what. On the other hand, if you're going on and on, hogging the spotlight and preventing anybody else from displaying the awesomeness of their character, they may vote that it's **Lame!** just to get you to stop.

### **Third Person Vs. First Person Narration**

Third person narration is more in the spirit of the game, but first person narration is perhaps more like a role-playing game and may be easier for players accustomed to RPGs. On the other hand, narrating over-the-top awesomeness may strike some players as being unpleasantly like "power gaming" if done in the first person. It's more a matter of aesthetics than anything else.

### **The Director's Turn**

During the Director's turn, the Director narrates any unfinished results from the players' turns and the actions taken by the antagonists. The Director is free to introduce new antagonists or complications to the situation, and is expected to do so to keep things exciting. The Director does not have an **Awesome!** score, and may continue as long as necessary in order to provide fodder for the players' next turns, but should bear in mind that the point of the game is for the players' characters to be awesome, not for the Director to tell a story. During the Director's turn it is legitimate for the Director to incapacitate, sideline, or "kill" any character except for that of the player whose turn is about to commence, with the understanding that it will never actually result in the elimination of a PC unless the player has indicated that is acceptable or she has to leave the game; whatever the Director does to a PC has to be reversible by the time its that player's turn again, up to and including the apparent death of the character; if the PC has not been restored to action by another player by that time, the player gets a free action (not requiring voting or a die roll) to restore the character to action.

## **The Bogus Rule**

If all the players vote that a particular action by the Director is Bogus (by shouting Bogus or holding their noses), then the Director is obliged to retract that piece of narration and replace it with something more to the players' taste. If the players vote Bogus three times during the Director's same turn, the game ends and everybody loses.

## **Player vs. Player**

It may sometimes happen that PCs end up fighting each other because of the logic of the scenario (e.g. a martial arts contest) or because of one player's narration (say, proposing an archery contest). To keep the flow of the narrative, so that the players dueling don't have to wait for their turn to come around again each time, resolution changes in the following way: the first player announces a duel, and if the other player(s) accepts, each takes turns narrating a single action (the character's action and the opposing character's reaction). Voting takes place as normal, and the first character whose turn ends (either because of rolling higher than the current Awesome! score or by votes of Lame!) loses the duel. The winner of the duel gets one more (free) action to narrate the victory, and play passes to the Director, and then to the next clockwise player from the initiator of the duel who was not involved in the duel. The Director does not get turns in between the actions of the dueling players. It is the responsibility of the players to ensure that even as they are narrating their character (potentially) winning the duel, they don't make the opposing player's character seem weak; attempts to do so (e.g. by announcing their character one-punches the opponent) should be immediately voted Lame! by the other players.

## **Ending the Scene**

The scene ends when a character has achieved the goal for the scenario, explicit or implicit, or defeated the last antagonist present, and the players all high-five each other. If the conditions for ending a scene have been achieved, but one or more players withholds the high-five, then the current player's turn ends (and the Awesome! score remains unchanged) and it becomes the Director's turn immediately. It is then up to the Director to introduce new antagonists or complications so the players can try to achieve a more satisfactory outcome.

## **Starting a New Scene**

If the players wish to continue, the Directorship passes to whichever player whose turn it was when the prior scene ended. It is up to this new Director to continue the story, using the same characters and basic set-up, but possibly taking it in a new direction. It is also up to the new Director to narrate the introduction of the previous Director's character (or re-introduction if the game has gone on that long) as well as possibly the sidelining of the new Director's character. Play proceeds clockwise from the new Director.

## **Ending the Game**

The game ends by mutual agreement whenever the players are satisfied.



# Awesome ! Character Sheet

Name

Description

Signature Shtick

Weakness

Awesome Score