Rules of the Arena

((This Page is OOC!))

Welcome to the "Rules" section of The Dueling Arena!

For the best possible education on matrix-based combat and the proper role-play techniques, please visit the Loreil Academy, which hosts monthly classes on these subjects. "Matrix-Based Combat" (or "MBC") is an OOC class for you, the player, to learn and understand the matrix system. Also, the Academy offers two classes for your character to attend – "Philosophy of Fencing" and "Fencing – In Motion." These classes are expertly taught by the Chairman of the Arena, and provide your character with a great springboard into a formal dueling education, as well as showing you – the player – some great role-play techniques to use in the Arena.

Whether you study within the Academy, or choose to do some self-study from the website, please enjoy the materials we've put together. *En garde!*

The Dueling Arena: Introduction to Matrix-Based Combat

Chances are good that you already know a very popular matrix-based game – Paper, Rock, Scissors. At a certain count, you and your "opponent" make a gesture with your hands – either Paper, Rock, or Scissors. Paper beats Rock, Rock beats Scissors, and Scissors beat Paper. If you were to graph it on a grid, it would look like this:

	OPPONENT:	Rock	Paper	Scissors
YOU:				
Rock		Tie	Lose	Win
Paper		Win	Tie	Lose
Scissors		Lose	Win	Tie

Now, if we were to have each win count as one point, this is what it would look like:

	OPPONENT:	Rock	Paper	Scissors
YOU:				
Rock		0	(1)	1
Paper		1	0	(1)
Scissors		(1)	1	0

When you read your move versus your opponent's move, you see whether you scored points, your opponent scored points, or there was a tie. "0" indicates a Tie, "1" indicates your point, and "(1)" indicates that your opponent scored a point.

It's easy! This is matrix-based combat in its most simple form.

The Dueling Arena: Cooperative Role-Play

Now, let's take Paper-Rock-Scissors a step further, and put it in a role-play situation:

Tom: ::gives his opponent a steely-eyed look, his clenched fist poised over his open palm in a perpetual state of readiness::
Dick: ::clenches his jaw to prepare for the battle to come, the knuckles of his right hand white with anticipation of the moment::
Harry: Okay, guys, best two out of three. Ready? 1 … 2 … 3!
Tom: ::raps his fist against his hand in unison with the count, and splays his fingers out for the "Paper" sign::
Dick: ::as Harry says "3," Dick's fist connects with his palm, and remains steady there, in the formation of the "Rock"::
Harry: Paper beats Rock! Tom is ahead, 1-0!
Tom: ::grins::
Dick: ::growls with dismay::
Tom: ::makes a fist yet again, his face painted with a smug expression::
Dick: ::furrows his brow in concentration, and prepares for the next round::

We've just seen how a matrix-based round plays out, in its most basic form. Tom and Dick – the "combatants" – did all of the work. Harry, whom you might recognize in the traditional role of the Proctor – called a "Caller" in the Arena – orchestrated a fair count, and announced the results and score.

In the Arena, cooperative role-play is vital. Players are expected to play their characters in accordance with the results of a given round. Notice that neither Tom nor Dick knew what the results of the round would be until they had displayed their results, and when they did, they reacted accordingly. Further, notice that Harry's participation was very minimal – he simply announced the result, and let Tom and Dick do the rest. The concept of letting the characters do as they will is the essence of cooperative role-play, and being able to do this well is a quality that marks the best of the free-form gamers.

By way of one last example, let's take it a step further, and replace their papers, rocks, and scissors with a shield (to block), a leg sweep (to surprise), and a sword (to strike), respectively:

Overlord Tom: ::twirls his blade while circling his opponent::
Xv Dick vX ::crouches low, his shield raised high in anticipation of a strike::
Overlord Tom: ::in the blink of an eye, he lashes out with his sword::
Xv Dick vX   ::spins on his heel, hoping to avoid the blade::

Now, obviously, they don't drop their weapons at this point and play "Paper-Rock-Scissors" to see who-gets-to-injure-who. Enter the Caller. Harry, in the role of the Caller, announces the closing of the round, and instructs the combatants to send him their "move" via IMs. So, here is how it would play out with the Caller's help:

Overlord Tom: ::twirls his blade while circling his opponent::
Xv Dick vX: ::crouches low, his shield raised high in anticipation of a strike::
Harry the Fair: ((Round ends in 10 seconds … get ready to send in your moves!))
Overlord Tom: ::in the blink of an eye, he lashes out with his sword::
Xv Dick vX: ::spins on his heel, hoping to avoid the blade::
Harry the Fair: ((Send!!))

We will address the timing of a given round later in this document, but generally, the Caller gives a 10-15 second warning to the players, so they can post their last lines to the chat room and decide on their move, and simply says "Send!" when he is ready to receive their moves.

Please note that the Caller did all of this OOC. Obviously, Harry (the character) has no idea what an "IM" is, and would laugh at the concept that anyone would stop to tell him – in the middle of a duel, no less – what they were going to do next. Harry the Caller is free to be a third-party role-player in the duel (we'll see how that would work in a moment), but the focus is on Tom and Dick.

At this point, Tom and Dick send their character's "move" via IM to Harry IMMEDIATELY upon hearing the "Send!" command.

Overlord Tom (in IM to Harry the Fair): ((shield))
Xv Dick vX (in IM to Harry the Fair): ((leg sweep))

Harry now compares "Shield" versus "Leg Sweep" on the matrix, and sees that Shield (formerly "Paper") beats Leg Sweep (formerly "Rock"), and announces the results.

Harry the Fair: ((Tom's Shield beats Dick's Leg Sweep! Tom is ahead, 1-0!))

Now, notice that several interesting things happened:

1) Neither combatant particularly telegraphed what they were doing before they submitted their moves. Dick was in a crouched position and spun on his heel, but didn't necessarily indicate that he would sweep the leg … instead, it looked like he might use his shield. Tom was even trickier – he "lashed out with his sword," but ended up using *his* shield!

2) Neither combatant "assumed" their success of their maneuver, like so:

   Overlord Tom: I am invincible!! ::slices his opponent's head off!::

   Not only does that completely destroy the element of cooperative gaming, it is also a heck of a thing to have to explain if you *lose* the round, which generally results in this sort of travesty:

   Harry the Fair: ((Dick's Leg Sweep thwarts Tom's Sword! 1-0, Dick!))
   Overlord Tom: ::or not::

   Further, it is bad form to make this much commitment to a proposed move, and then switch it at the last minute, like so:

   Harry the Fair: ((Tom's Shield beats Dick's Leg Sweep! 1 Point to Tom!))
   Overlord Tom: ::slices about halfway through his neck, but at the last second, raises his shield instead::

3) Both players kept it IC. They may have heard the Caller counting down the time, but their characters have no idea that their life-or-death struggle consists of "rounds" or "points."

So, how does this play out in the aftermath? … and how *does* Shield beat Leg Sweep, anyways?! Well, the logic of the moves notwithstanding for the purposes of our example, the subsequent role-play is dictated entirely by the cooperative role-playing skill of the two players. Traditionally, the player who won the point "leads" with the next post, and gives the other player the opportunity to play off of it – however, that is not a hard-and-fast rule. The important thing is to keep a sense of cooperative and fairness to the round, with due attention being paid to how many points have been scored (and thus, one another's physical condition), the type of blow that was struck, etc. Let's look at two examples:

Harry the Fair: ((Tom's Shield beats Dick's Leg Sweep! Tom is ahead, 1-0!))
Overlord Tom: ::ignores Dick's puny twig of a leg barely glancing off his shin, lifts his shield high into the air, and beats Dick's skull into pulp::

Yikes! Bad form! Here's why:

1) What happened to Tom's slashing attack? No mention is made here! This is pretty suspect in its lack of continuity.

2) Tom took the liberty of virtually ignoring Dick's attack, which doesn't do much to explain how "Shield" beats "Leg Sweep." It doesn't make much sense – and, it insults Dick's character as "puny," to boot. What happens when that puny twig of a leg scores three more points in subsequent rounds? Open mouth, insert foot!

3) Tom splattered Dick's brains all over the Arena, which means that Dick's only "logical" response is to die! Not very fair, considering that the score is only 1-0, and there is a lot of dueling left to be done! This dictates the fate of another character very recklessly, and is not much fun to play against.

Let's look at a better example:

Harry the Fair: ((Tom's Shield beats Dick's Leg Sweep! Tom is ahead, 1-0!))
Overlord Tom: ::just before he slashes down with his mighty broadsword, he notices Dick's cunning leg sweep, and in a lightning-fast maneuver, throws his shield down on Dick's knee, hoping to thwart the move::

Excellent! Here's why:

1) Tom explained how he transitioned from a sword slash to using his shield.

2) Tom gave his opponent some credit with the mention of a "cunning" leg sweep, and reacted accordingly,

3) Tom explained how his shield was able to beat the leg sweep move.

Here's one way that Dick can now react:

Xv Dick vX: ::when Tom reared back with the sword, Dick knew he would be off-balance, and chose that moment to strike. But his opponent was much more shrewd than he anticipated, and gasped as the edge of the shield cracked solidly into the side of his kneecap. He roared in pain and scrambled away as quickly as he could:: And now, they set up for the next round …

Overlord Tom: ::gathers up his shield quickly, and pursues his grounded foe::
Xv Dick vX: ::slowly gets up, favoring his other leg, and readies his blade::

Finally – and entirely optionally – the Caller may do a little third-party role-playing, provided that he/she does not interfere with the duel, and keeps the focus on the combatants. We already know what the "OOC Purpose" of the Caller is … so, to keep things legitimate, the "IC Purposes" of the Caller are as follows:

1) To ensure a proper duel as agreed by both parties,
2) To monitor the duel as an impartial third-party,
3) To declare a victor when one opponent has outmatched the other.

Therefore, it is perfectly appropriate for a Caller to react to particularly impressive blows, or otherwise add to the drama of the moment, but always in a manner that allows the combatants to dictate the action …

Overlord Tom: ::gathers up his shield quickly, and pursues his grounded foe::
Xv Dick vX: ::slowly gets up, favoring his other leg, and readies his blade::
Harry the Fair: ::from his vantage point in the center of the Arena, he watches with interest as Dick limps into a standing position, and Tom closes in on him … ::

Cooperative role-playing is easy and fun! Best of all, you can always learn something new, so be sure to "duel" both with old friends and new faces!

The Dueling Arena: The Matrix, Moves List, and Scoring System

Below is a table showing the official matrix for the Arena. Definitions of abbreviations, descriptions of moves, and the scoring system are outlined further in this section.

	CV	SL	HC	LC	LG	TH	CP	LP	SS	DU
CV	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	(1.0)	(0.5)	1.0	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0
SL	0.5	0.0	1.0	0.5	(0.5)	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0	1.0	(1.0)
HC	(0.5)	(1.0)	0.0	0.5	0.5	1.0	1.0	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)
LC	(1.0)	(0.5)	0.5	0.0	1.0	0.5	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)	1.0
LG	1.0	0.5	(0.5)	(1.0)	0.0	0.5	1.0	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0
TH	0.5	1.0	(1.0)	(0.5)	0.5	0.0	(1.0)	1.0	1.0	(1.0)
CP	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LP	1.0	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)	1.0	(1.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
SS	1.0	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0	1.0	(1.0)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
DU	(1.0)	1.0	1.0	(1.0)	(1.0)	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

The red bar on the left represents your moves. The green bar on top represents your opponent's moves. The first six moves listed – Cleave (CV), Slash (SL), High Cut (HC), Low Cut (LC), Lunge (LG), and Thrust (TH) – are considered offensive moves. The other four – Circular Parry (CP), Lateral Parry (LP), Side Step (SS), and Duck (DU), is your defensive repertoire.

Remember, points are scored based on the outcome of your move versus your opponent's move. Use the matrix to cross-reference the two actions. For example, your "Low Cut" versus an opponent's "Duck" would net a full point – 1.0 – for you. Any time your opponent ducks right into your low attack is a certain win!

Your opponent will cross-reference the results also, and see that the outcome is "(1.0)," which means that their opponent (that's you) won a point.

The beauty of the system is that the actual "attack" or "parry" does not limit you. You may play the maneuver however you wish. A successful "Duck" (against a High Cut, for example) clearly scores a point – so, how? Perhaps it was a duck followed up by a powerful leg sweep, or maybe a crouch to dodge, and a follow-up thrust to the midsection. Conversely, a "High Cut" doesn't have to just be a "High Cut." It can be played in any number of ways – from the ordinary to the extraordinary!

DESCRIPTION OF MOVES

This is a brief description of the moves mentioned above, and how they could reasonably play out against the other moves:

Cleave (CV): A cleave is a powerful overhead cut, coming vertically from head-to-toe. If it connects, it can do serious damage to an opponent's head and torso.
Slash (SL): A slash is a strong side-to-side or diagonal cut, coming in from one side and moving to the other. A slash typically aims straight for the upper chest.

The Cleave and Slash are both powerful offensive maneuvers, and can easily overwhelm lesser attacks. However, quick strikes, meant to unbalance an opponent, can disrupt an incoming Cleave or Slash before the blow can land. Cleaves versus Slashes are likely to cause both combatants to wound each other.

High Cut (HC): A steady, balanced side-to-side cut to the chest.
Low Cut (LC): A steady, balanced side-to-side cut to the legs.

These medium-paced cuts are a strong part of any dueler's arsenal. They can anticipate and outreach the pesky thrusting attacks, and are therefore particularly effective against them. However, they do not fare well against powerful strikes. High Cuts versus Low Cuts will draw blood from both duelers simultaneously.

Lunge (LG): A quick forward crouch, followed by a stab to the lower torso.
Thrust (TH): A sudden straight-arm jab with the weapon to the upper torso.

These quick maneuvers are meant to surprise and unbalance an opponent. They are especially valuable against opponent's who favor powerful attacks. Shrewd opponents who see thrusts and lunges coming will counter-attack with cuts. When a quick thrust comes over the top of a crouching lunge, both duelers will suffer.

Circular Parry (CP): A circular parry deflects attacks coming straight at the lower section of the body, leaving an opponent unbalanced and out of position.
Lateral Parry (LP): A lateral parry blocks strikes coming towards the upper section of the body, momentarily stunning an opponent with the force of the parry.

Used wisely, parries can block the strongest of attacks, and potentially set up the defender to counter-attack!

Side Step (SS): An agile display of footwork to dodge an incoming blade, especially a vertical slash or an attack aimed towards the legs or lower torso.
Duck (DU): A quick crouch to avoid attacks clearly targeted to the upper half of the body, including fierce slashes to the midsection.

The proper movement of the body is just as important as the use of the blade!

DESCRIPTION OF SCORING

Scoring is fairly straight-forward – one move bests another move, and the winning combatant gets the points. Points are always added to a running tally – never taken away. The numbers in parentheses indicate that an opponent has scored points, not that yours must be taken away from your current score.

In general, this is what the points indicate:

0.0 Points: Neither combatant scores. This typically occurs when each opponent makes a defensive maneuver at the same time (no blow is struck), or in some cases, when each opponent makes the same offensive move, and parries back the other's weapon.

0.5 Points: This indicates a glancing blow (offense) At times, combatants can simultaneously deliver off-target hits to one another.

1.0 Points: This indicates a direct hit. This occurs when one opponent successfully executes an attack that cuts right through an opponent's defenses, or struck an open area while an opponent simultaneously attacked. Also, an attack may be parried/dodge and countered for a full point.

At times, it can be a bit difficult to determine how exactly points are scored in a given scenario. For example, if a "Duck" beats a "Slash," and that scores the winning point in the duel … how is that possible? Can one "duck their way to victory?" Well, no … and it is left up to the players to determine how best to deal with that. One suggestion for a defensive score might be to position your character in a defensive-riposte, or to execute a deft counter-attack. For the last point of the game, the "ducking" character could rise from their crouch, put their sword at the throat of their unbalanced opponent, and demand that they yield!

It's all about the game! BE CREATIVE!

SPECIAL RULES

In duels that count towards official World Rankings, as well as all Arena-sponsored Tournaments, certain Duelers who have achieved a particular win-loss record (or have achieved other requirements as set by the Arena directors) shall be permitted to use one or more "Superior Manuevers" in a duel. For more information, please see the section of the Arena website called "Rankings" and "Tournament."

The Dueling Arena: Putting it all Together for a Duel

Now that we've discussed the elements of cooperative role-play, and have also covered the matrix, the scoring system, and the special moves, it's time to talk about how to actually put all this together!

There are two types of rules: Recreational Rules and Official Arena Rules. The Official Arena Rules are for specific use in Arena-sanctioned World Rankings and Tournaments. Please refer to the Arena website for more information. The rules that are about to be covered are the Recreational Rules for everyday use.

RECREATIONAL RULES

A duel shall consist of two Duelers and should be officiated by one Caller (it is permissible for two Duelers to agree by mutual consent to post moves to the room simultaneously, rather than relying on a Caller).

Duels are separated into Rounds. A round is a period of time for characters to engage in the duel (via cooperative role-play), and at the end of the round, players shall simultaneously post their move. The outcome shall be determined, the score shall be announced, and if there is no winner at the end of the round, the duel shall continue. Rounds are typically one minute in duration; however, players may agree to any period of time they wish.

At the beginning of the duel, the Caller should announce the start of the duel, and silently count down the remaining time in the round. The Caller should give the players a warning before their moves are required to be submitted (15 seconds is usually best), and say "Send!" when the round is expired. Players are required to submit their moves via IM within 10 seconds of the Caller's request. The Caller then compares the results, announces the outcome, and the next round begins.

Duels shall last until one of the following happens:
1) One Dueler has 5 Points or more at the end of a round AND is ahead by at least 1 Point,
2) 15 Rounds have elapsed.

The winning dueler is the one who reaches 5 Points or is ahead after 15 Rounds.

For the purposes of Recreational Rules, all of these guidelines – while recommended – can be changed by mutual consent of both players. The Caller's player shall serve only to ensure that both players agree, and to officiate the duel fairly.

The Dueling Arena: The Most Important Rule

 … most of all …   HAVE FUN! The competition with the matrix-based system can be intense, but the real reason it exists is to serve as a conduit for cooperative gaming. It is far more important to win friends and new RP partners through fine role-play than it is to "win" a duel. On behalf of the Players of the Wardens of Loreil – enjoy!