

Thrift stores. Yard sales. Haberdashers.

The path to power lies in unlikely places. Few discover, much less traverse this path. Those few who do find themselves pushed to the limits.

Sometimes, they succeed; most often, they fail. And what awaits them at the end? Yet another test.

Power corrupts only those weak of will. A strong spirit wields this gift as scalpel rather than sledgehammer. And yet, as the spirit grows it must be ever careful of power's consequences and mindful of its allure.

You are one such spirit. Your destiny entwines itself with great ability, one not easily understood by the world at large. This potential weighs heavily upon your head, vigilant for the slightest of openings. It will corrupt you, but not without a struggle.

Yours is not an easy path. You are a Hatmancer, bearer of an ancient legacy. On your head rests great power and responsibility. Through your adornments you become great; through your ambitions, you become more than human.

What will you do? Who will you be?

Where is your hat?

The Game of Hats

Author: Brandon Schmelz

The Game of Hats (2006) is a product of imagination. Any similarities to any persons, games, or fictional characters, living or otherwise, are entirely coincidental. Most of the time. Brandon Schmelz is not responsible for trauma or uncomfortable situations involving creepy players. The Game of Hats feels very strongly about the use of hats during play. The designer recommends a fedora or bandana; one for style and one for versatility.

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The Game of Hats

The Game of Hats is a roleplaying game for, preferably, two to six people. It requires at least two, with one person assuming the role of the Milliner, or HM, and the rest as Hatmancers.

In The Game of Hats, certain individuals tap into an ancient power known as Millinimancy. They call upon the dormant capabilities of their headgear and infuse it with life. With Millinimancy, a Hatmancer (as these individuals are known) manifests a hat's archetype and embodies its strengths. Limitless power is at her command, but at what price?

A Hatmancer must take care to maintain her will in the face of temptation and alien intelligence. Hatmancers who rely too strongly on their hats find themselves overwhelmed by a foreign influence. Her weapons turn against her, instead possessing the Hatmancer's essence and gaining control. Those unfortunate souls operate under the hat's influence forever more, forsaking family and friends for the hat's desires.

Should a hat grow too powerful and insistent, the Hatmancer may appease the hat with slight concessions. A truly great Hatmancer bears the burden of many such demands. Thus must a Hatmancer strike a careful balance. She holds on her head unimaginable power, but at what cost?

Playing The Game of Hats

The Game of Hats requires a few objects: pencils and paper, a handful of six-sided dice, imagination, and an assortment of hats. Printing out the rules for easy reference is useful, but not necessary. A typical Game of Hats lasts between two and six hours.

Why Pencil and Paper?

The Milliner requires a pencil and paper to keep track of events, scribble notes, and provide visual aids for the players.

Additionally, pencils are excellent for flinging at difficult players. They're hard enough to make your message clear, but light enough to not cause lasting damage. Do not aim for the eyes.

Hatmancers require pencils and paper for the same reason, though pencil throwing should be discouraged. They also need a special piece of paper, the Hat Rack. This sheet of paper tracks each of their Hats and other pertinent information.

Why Six-sided Dice?

Hatmancers need six-sided dice (hereafter known as d6) more than the Milliner. These dice determine the success or failure of a character's actions. Most of the time, the Milliner won't be rolling any dice. In a pinch, dice make an acceptable flinging substitute.

Each player should have at least four dice.

Why An Assortment of Hats?

The Game of Hats references hats specifically. Without hats, much of the game's fun falls away. During play, the players don various hats to represent their current abilities. They also look neat. The goal of The Game of Hats is simple: everyone at the table, player and Milliner, should have fun. Everything else is academic.

How Do I Use This Book?

The Game of Hats includes everything you need to play. Within these pages, you will find the following chapters:

Chapter One: Rules (Page 5)

Chapter One: Rules contains everything necessary to play The Game of Hats. These include the methods for creating and advancing a character. Explanations and examples, while not strictly essential, belong in Chapter One: Rules as well.

Chapter Two: Discussion (Page 12)

Chapter Two: Discussion dispenses the formal tone of Chapter One: Rules and focuses on non-mechanical considerations for The Game of Hats. Topics in Chapter Two: Discussion consist of advice on being the Milliner, the tone and theme of the game, using the rules to supplement the theme, and personal observations from the author.

Chapter Three: Lexicon and Game Summary (Page 15)

Chapter Three: Lexicon and Game Summary is a collection of specialized terms used within A Game of Hats. This chapter, while short, provides a handy reference for Milliners or Hatmancers in a hurry. Additionally, the Game Summary is a rules reference sheet to speed up play.

For the .pdf version of The Game of Hats, certain sections are marked with the <PRINT> tag. These sections are particularly useful during play. For Milliners low on ink, paper, or time, printing these specific sections should include more than enough information to run The Game of Hats without a computer nearby. A printer-friendly version also exists that does not include pictures; while this version isn't as attractive, it saves ink.

Chapter One: Rules

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The Basics

The Game of Hats uses three six-sided dice (3d6) for all rolls. When performing an action, Hatmancers roll 3d6 and note the highest number. They then add this number to a specific value. If this total is higher than an opposing total, then the Hatmancer is successful in his action. There are a few exceptions, but the majority of actions will use this rule (also known as the Basic Rule).

Very Important Note

To perform an action, the player **must** be wearing an applicable Hat. Hatmancers rely on their Hats as the source of their powers. A player donning her Hat represents her character doing the same. Non-player characters are not subject to this restriction.

Conflict

This should go without saying, but only certain actions require a roll. Things such as breathing or walking generally don't need a roll, though staying underwater for long periods or climbing mountains might. When the Milliner calls for a roll, this is known as a Conflict. Conflicts operate on two scales, Static Conflicts and Dynamic Conflicts.

Static Conflicts are usually minor - a small fire to extinguish, minions, minor physical labor - and easy tasks. Some Static Conflicts are more difficult, but always represent either a passive or non-dramatic threat. These Conflicts include a specific difficulty value to either equal or surpass. Milliners never roll dice for Static Conflicts.

Example of a Static Conflict: *Bob dons his hard hat and points to the old library's broken door. With a smile, he says "It may be old, but can I fix it? Yes, I can."*

The Milliner decides this is a difficult task, but one that presents no real threat. He assigns a difficulty value of 7. Bob's player rolls 3d6 and gets the following numbers; 2, 4, 1. He adds the highest number rolled (4) and adds it to his Hard Hat value of 3, for a total of 7. This equals the difficulty value, so after a period of time Bob successfully fixes the door.

When the Hatmancer's roll exceeds the difficulty value by more than three, she not only succeeds at the action but performs exceptionally well. Exceptional successes grant an advantage decided upon by the Milliner. For every further three points that a Hatmancer exceeds the difficulty value the Milliner may grant correspondingly more useful advantages.

Example of an Exceptional Success: *Will places his hand upon the young lady's and smiles. "Forsooth, I have seen none exceed thee in thy beauty. Wouldst thou do me the honor of thy company upon the dance floor?"*

Despite the cheesy nature of Will's line, the Milliner decides the young lady is receptive to his advances and sets the difficulty value to 4. Will's player rolls 3d6, taking the highest number (4) and adds it to the value of his Theater Mask (4) for a total of 8. Not only does Will exceed the difficulty value, but he does by more than three. The young lady stays at Will's side for the rest of the night and gives him her number afterward.

Dynamic Conflicts are usually major - massive floods, arch-rivals, Herculean efforts - and difficult tasks. Some Dynamic Conflicts are easier, but always represent either an active or dramatic threat. All Dynamic Conflicts have detailed game statistics. Milliners usually roll dice for Dynamic Conflicts.

Example of a Dynamic Conflict: Heather meets her most hated rival, the notorious Generic Villain (a refugee from the world of archetypes), and vows to defeat him once and for all. However, Generic Villain won't go down without a fight. Heather blasts Generic Villain with her laser-beam eyes.

Heather's Super Hero Mask and Cape (4) is powerful, but Generic Villain is no slouch. His own Generically Evil Moustache (5) opposes her laser blast. Heather's player rolls 3d6, adding the highest number (3) to her Super Hero Mask and Cape for a total of 7. The Milliner, on behalf of Generic Villain, rolls 3d6 (4) and adds his Generically Evil Moustache for a total of 9.

Heather's laser-beam eyes target Generic Villain but to no avail. Once the smoke clears, he twirls his moustache and laughs. "Silly girl, you'll never defeat Generic Villain!"

Exceptional successes apply to Dynamic Conflict rolls in the same manner as Static Conflict rolls.

What Happens When I Win?

While most roleplaying games use tables, charts, and complicated math, The Game of Hats allows more freedom for both Milliner and player. When a Conflict succeeds on a roll or a player fails to overcome its difficulty value, the Milliner decides on the results. When a player succeeds, she also narrates the outcome. The Milliner or other players may argue against the narrated result, though the final decision is in the hands of the Milliner.

The Right Tool for the Right Job

Players often prefer one Hat over another. This preference may stem from stylistic issues or familiarity, but it usually involves higher numbers. A Hat with more Ranks is more powerful and immediately useful, but players should be discouraged from using one high-Ranked Hat to the exclusion of others. When performing an action, the Milliner may insert a modifier based on a Hat's applicability. This modifier usually ranges from -3 to +3. This rule encourages players to don a variety of Hats and hopefully improve play for everyone at the table.

Example of The Right Tool: Heather's arch-nemesis may have escaped, but she's still hot on his trail. She takes a running leap off the pavement and wills herself to fly through the air. If she flies quickly she may yet catch up to the ne'er-do-well.

The Milliner decides this is an appropriate (and interesting) action for the Super Hero Mask and Cape, so he adds a +1 modifier to Heather's die roll. The action is still fairly difficult, with a difficulty value of 9, so Heather rolls her favorite dice. She adds her Ranks (4) to the highest number (4) for a total of 8. The +1 modifier brings this to a 9, the exact number she needs. Up, up, and away!

Example of The Wrong Tool: Todd is a powerful Hatmancer. He focused on one Hat, his Zombie Makeup, to the exclusion of all others. In his element, Todd can perform tasks other Hatmancers only dream possible. Outside his element, however...

Mere hours ago, someone animated the contents of a popular children's board game and ensorcelled local townsfolk into performing roles suitable to such an environment. Todd applies his Zombie Makeup and shambles through the streets, hoping to look inconspicuous. The Milliner shakes her head and asks Todd to roll at difficulty value 9, applying a -3 modifier for the sheer absurdity of a zombie traveling through Candy Cotton Lane. Even though Todd has considerable Ranks in his Zombie Makeup (6) and rolls well (5), the -3 modifier drops his total to 8. Todd moans in confusion as the Bubblegum Brigade closes in.

Character Creation

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Like most roleplaying games, The Game of Hats features one person in the role of administrator (the Milliner) and a variable number of players. The players each create a detailed persona (the Hatmancer) to represent themselves in the game. Hatmancers are created through two Elements, one Subjective and one Objective.

A Hatmancer's background and personality comprise his Subjective Element. While these qualities have no specific impact on play, they remain an important piece of the game. Subjective Elements create well-rounded, interesting Hatmancers. Such Hatmancers are often more integral to the game's events.

When creating Subjective Elements for your Hatmancer, keep the following three words in mind:

Motivation: While not true of everyone, Hatmancers are more than shallow caricatures. What drives your character? Two Hatmancers may pursue the same goal, but for wildly differing reasons.

Hooks: While Milliners arbitrate events in the game, the Milliner and the players work together to create an intriguing and enjoyable story. Hooks are inspirations for Milliner and player alike to weave Hatmancers into the plot. Standing off against the evil villain means more when a family member's life is at stake or he shares a past with one of the characters.

Awesome: A Hatmancer isn't just another regular Joe. Hatmancers are more interesting, more active, more awesome. What separates your character from the millions of supporting cast?

While these three words are not on the Hat Rack, it may be helpful to write your responses for ease of reference.

A Hatmancer's abilities and Hats comprise his Objective Element. These qualities have a specific effect on play. Objective Elements provide players with concrete representations of their Hatmancer's capabilities. The rules use Objective Elements to determine the outcome of actions in a fair, balanced manner.

Characters write their Objective Elements on a piece of paper known as the Hat Rack. A sample Hat Rack is included in the back of this book.

Creating the Character

Creating a new Hatmancer's Objective Elements takes less than five minutes. Her Subjective Elements may take less or more depending on the player's preference. The following steps outline the character creation process, with a note indicating whether it is a Subjective or Objective Element:

The Hat Rack

The Hat Rack contains:

A space for the character's name, preceded by the word "Name:".

A space for a short synopsis of the character, preceded by the word "Concept:".

Three spaces for the character's arsenal of Hats and a space for Control and Self, along with Drawbacks.

Initial Concept

This is a Subjective Element. An initial concept can be anything from a single phrase, mental image, or detailed history. While you will no doubt refine the character's personality through the rest of the character creation process and play, an initial concept provides a useful frame of reference.

Selection of Hats

This is both an Objective and Subjective Element. As a player, you must bring three hats to the table. You wear these hats during the game to gain access to the Hatmancer's powers.

Assign Ranks

This is an Objective Element. Your character draws power from her hats, but her ability to do so depends on the hat's ability and its willingness to grant power. To represent this, you assign Ranks to each of your hats. A higher number indicates a more powerful Hat.

First write down the name of your Hats in the spaces provided. After this, you assign ranks from your pool. A typical Game of Hats uses a pool of 7 points. Every point assigned to a Hat's Rank costs one point from this pool. When assigning points, remember that no Hat may have a Rank higher than 4 during character creation.

Example of Assigning Ranks: *Rebecca is creating her very first Game of Hats character. She brought a Mardi Gras Mask, Knight Helmet, and Wizard's Cap to the game so she writes these on her Hat Rack. After some deliberation, she decides her Hatmancer needs a powerful Knight Helmet and Wizard's Cap, but neglects the Mardi Gras Mask. She assigns 3 Ranks to the Wizard's Cap and Knight Helmet, but only 1 to the Mardi Gras Mask.*

Ted also brought three hats to the table. He writes down his Spaceman Helmet, Werewolf Mask, and Pirate Hat on the Hat Rack. Unlike Rebecca he wants a more balanced array of Hats, so he puts 3 Ranks in his Pirate Hat and 2 in the Werewolf Mask and Spaceman Helmet.

Determine Control and Self

This is an Objective Element. Hats are both a great and terrible responsibility. They are initially benign, but something sinister lurks beneath the surface. A character too dependent on his hats becomes little more than a vessel of unearthly power. To represent this balance, the Hat Rack contains space for two numbers: Control and Self.

To determine Control, add the Ranks of your two highest Hats. To determine Self, subtract Control from 12. Hatmancers with a large number of Hats have a higher Control; for every two Hats above three, add the next highest Ranked Hat to Control.

Example of Control and Self: *Rebecca's character has two powerful Hats. This grants her great abilities but threatens to one day consume her. Her two highest Ranks are a three in both the Knight Helmet and Wizard's Cap, so her beginning Control is 6. Subtracting 6 from 12, she also places a 6 in Self. Rebecca's character straddles the line between normal and unnatural.*

Ted's Hats are less powerful but are also less obtrusive. His 3 ranks in Pirate Hat and 2 Ranks in Spaceman Helmet combine for a Control of 5. Ted's Self of 7 means he's less likely to fall under the sway of the beings upon his head.

Congratulations!

You've finished your character. Now it's time to don your hat and play.

Advanced Rules

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Drawbacks

Characters appease Hats by making concessions to their influence. These concessions often take the form of Drawbacks. Drawbacks tie in to the archetypal image of a Hat and enforce certain stereotypical behaviors.

The more powerful a Hat, the more Drawbacks a character must affect. Hats with a Rank of 4 are sufficiently strong to require a Drawback. Additionally, failing an action requires a check to avoid gaining a new Drawback. Other situations may require a check, as detailed in the sidebar on this page.

When Do I Make A Control Check?

The following situations call for a Control Check. Other situations may require a Control Check as well; these are for the Milliner to decide.

- Failing an action. If a character fails an action, they must make a Control Check. When the Control Check fails, place an “X” next to the Hat performing the action. Once a Hat accumulates three “X” marks the Hat gains a new Drawback and the X marks are removed.
- Neglecting a Drawback. If the player fails to incorporate a Drawback, make a Control Check for each neglected Drawback. When the Control Check fails, place an “X” next to the Hat with the Drawback(s) in question. Once a Hat accumulates three “X” marks the Hat gains a new Drawback and the X marks are removed.
- Gaining a new Rank or Hat. When a character gains a new Rank above 3 or adds a new Hat to his Hat Rack, make a Control Check. If this Control Check fails, the Hat in question immediately gains a new Drawback.

Performing a Control Check

Control Checks are an exception to the Basic Rule. When performing a Control Check, roll 3d6 as in the Basic Rule. However, rather than taking the highest die instead add the two lowest. If this number is greater than or equal to the character’s Control, the character avoids gaining a new Drawback. When the number is less than the character’s Control, the Control Check fails and this most often results in a new Drawback.

Example of Control

Checks: *Brian is new to the world of Hatmancy, having first donned his hat not a month ago, so his hats exert very little Control (5) When Brian makes a Control Check, he rolls 3d6 (3 4 3) and adds the two lowest numbers, 3 and 3, for a total of 6. He stands strong in the face of temptation and his Hats wait patiently for their next attempt.*

Nicholas is a much more experienced Hatmancer and his Hats are powerful enough to exert significant Control (9). His Control Check carries more risk; he rolls 3d6 (6 1 3) and adds the two lowest numbers, 1 and 3, for a total of 4. As this is less than his Control Nicholas fails his Control Check.

What is a Drawback?

Drawbacks are the manifestation of the human mind’s inability to control limitless power. The player and character must act out these Drawbacks at all times or suffer additional consequences.

It may seem counterintuitive to fight a Hat’s Control by giving in to its desires. Drawbacks are a combination of unnatural influence and necessary concessions. Acting within a Hat’s archetype sates its

What is a Drawback, Continued:

hunger for control and prevents it from making further demands. However, neglecting a Drawback or using a Hat's power improperly once again draws attention to its bearer and the cycle begins anew.

Drawbacks are specific to individual Hats; players only act out their Drawbacks when wearing an appropriate Hat. The Milliner may assign Drawback to players or allow them to decide their own at his discretion.

Example of a Drawback: *Poor Rebecca. A series of unfortunate rolls led to a Drawback early in her career. Whenever Rebecca wears her Wizard's Cap, she must spout nonsense and gibberish, preferably in rhyme, to perform her actions. Casting an Invisibility spell requires the embarrassing incantation "by the hoary hosts of Haggart, envelop me in mist and cloud me from the eye of others!" A real hit at parties, that one.*

Ted is no more fortunate. His Werewolf Mask developed the Drawback of Incessant Snarling. Whenever Ted speaks while wearing his Werewolf Mask, he snarls so as to render speech nearly incomprehensible.

Sample Drawbacks

For Milliners and players in need of inspiration, here are some potential Drawbacks for different Hats.

Cowboy Hat: (Bad) John Wayne impression, wearing a sheriff's badge and holster, miming a gun with your fingers, exaggerated swagger

Spaceman Helmet: Quote lyrics from David Bowie, begin every sentence with radio static, take big moon man steps

Vampire Fangs and Cape: Transylvanian accent, dramatic and sweeping gestures, bite others (er...maybe not)

Ninja Mask: Clipped Japanese accent, spout Ninja wisdom for every situation, flip out and kill people all the time and be totally sweet

Winged Helmet: Chase others while singing opera and wielding a spear, make flapping motions when performing actions, wear a toga

Superhero Mask and Cape: Monologues, alliterative announcements, dramatic gestures, seeing situations in black and white morality, punch walls until things change and then claim they've always been that way

Advancement

Beginning characters have meager Hat Racks. To add Hats or empower their original headgear requires Advancement Points.

Players receive Advancement Points at the end of a gaming session. Between games, they may spend Advancement Points to do one of three things:

- Add Ranks to an existing Hat
- Purchase a new Hat
- Imbue existing Hats with Extras

A typical Game of Hats session is worth three to five Advancement Points, as determined by the Milliner. Every player should receive roughly the same number of Advancement Points. A particularly entertaining or helpful player may deserve a point more than the others, again at the Milliner's discretion.

At this rate of progression, players can improve their abilities at a consistent rate.

Add Ranks

Adding Ranks to an existing Hat is the easiest form of advancement. To add a Rank, players must spend a number of Advancement Points equal to the next Rank. However, adding Ranks above 5 comes at a steeper price. Ranks above 5 cost five Advancement Points plus two additional Advancement Points per Rank above 5. Thus, Rank 6 costs 7 Advancement Points and Rank 7 requires 9 Advancement Points.

Example of Adding Ranks: *At the end of the night's session, the Milliner awards 4 Advancement Points. Todd looks at his Hat Rack and decides to advance his neglected Hats, both at 1 Rank. He spends 2 Advancement Points for each Hat, raising both to 2 Ranks.*

New Hat

Beginning Hatmancers have only three Hats. This isn't a case of financial woes, but a limit to their power. Hats require a certain commitment of will and Hatmancers who spread themselves too thin soon grow insane, giving their soul to their increasingly greedy Hats. That said, a variety of Hats is a popular path to greatness.

Adding a new Hat requires 3 Advancement Points. This Hat begins at Rank 1.

Imbue Extras

Imbuing Hats with Extras is an optional rule discussed in more detail in **Chapter Two: Discussion**. Extras are abilities that modify the Basic Rule or other elements of **The Game of Hats** and cost a variable number of Advancement Points.

Chapter Two: Discussion

The Introduction

I have a confession. Don't think any less of The Game of Hats for my weakness, but I am not a hat person. My hair remains free and unrestrained. No hat in the world looks good atop my head and science is as of yet incapable of producing one. So why, of all things, a roleplaying game based on hats? Two reasons.

- Hats are fun. Sometimes we don't have time for epic campaign or tale of personal horror; sometimes we want something fun. Remember playing dress up as a kid? We've been doing the same thing this whole time, but now we wear character sheets (and Cheeto-stained t-shirts). The Game of Hats brings us back to our roots. We're still pulp heroes, ancient creatures of the night and robots. Now we wear hats. (Some of us LARP and understood this already. My apologies.)
- This is serious business. Hats are a (thinly-veiled) metaphor. We have our vices and crutches and The Game of Hats is a non-threatening way to explore deeper issues. What price for power? How to get there? Many games feature this theme, but The Game of Hats is a good way to introduce the metaphor to those not usually interested in something so potentially depressing.

This is the point of Chapter Two: Discussion. I have a good handle on The Game of Hats, though I know (hope) a fan comes along and learns the game far better than I ever can. (This is more common in larger games, but every game finds its devoted audience.) Chapter Two: Discussion is my thoughts on playing The Game of Hats.

Putting On the Serious Hat

The Game of Hats is a silly game by default. Rules examples include zombies, Candy Land knockoffs and generic villains. It also has too many capital terms for its own good. When the players have bonnets and eye patches a serious mood flies right out the window. Drawbacks only make this worse. So why put on your serious hat?

Shameless Promotion

For those interested in a more serious game using similar rules to The Game of Hats, Blind Catharsis Games proudly presents **Pantheon**, the game of deific politics. Look for **Pantheon** by December 2006.

The serious hat offers benefits of its own. The Game of Hats offers an experience similar to both live-action roleplaying and tabletop gaming when head accessories are kept to a minimum level of garishness. Done right, the hats (and other headgear) add to the serious atmosphere. The rules stay in the background and allow the Milliner to run the game she desires.

However, theme and mood are the province of individual gamers. The Game of Hats is a set of rules to facilitate the game, not cement an exact style of play. Make The Game of Hats your own. Far better writers than I have excellent advice for running a particular style of game. That said, individual supplements for The Game of Hats include advice for setting the appropriate tone for that specific genre.

If you want to run a serious game, The Game of Hats provides the mechanics. Assign realistic abilities for the Hat and make sure everyone's on the same page. Control checks provide a system-induced balance. Everything else is up to your group.

On the Power of Hats

Chapter One: Rules doesn't explicitly state what hats are capable of. This is on purpose. By default, hats have no defined limit.

Prior to beginning a new Game of Hats, the Milliner and players should discuss what hats can do. In some games, a Super Hero Mask may allow flight, laser vision, heat vision, super breath, and the entire Superman gallery of powers. Other games prefer street level supers and may include a few powers with less capability. Neither option is more correct than the other; save in the context of an individual game.

On the Basic Rule

The Basic Rule is just that: basic. It stays out of the way and keeps the players from getting bogged down in minutiae. Less math and more hats. New players find the system easy to understand and the optional rules allow more experienced gamers to make things more advanced. Since nearly everything uses the Basic Rule, the game flows smoothly.

Note that *nearly* everything uses the Basic Rule. One system in particular abandons the Basic Rule in favor of something similar. Why? Why must Control checks work differently?

Why Do You Hate Rules-Heavy Games?

I don't. Honest. I'm credited in White Wolf Games' **Exalted** and recently ran a successful campaign of **Iron Heroes**. I like variety in my roleplaying games. The truth is, light rules just work better for The Game of Hats. No special internet gaming theory terms, just gaming fun.

Regular rolls use the Basic Rule to focus on the results rather than the dice. Players eventually assimilate the Basic Rule and think nothing of it. Control checks, however, are important. Using a different method for Control checks puts them in the spotlight. When Control checks come around the players take notice.

On Extras

Imbuing Hats with Extras is an optional rule for players looking for more from their The Game of Hats experience. When Hatmancers gain Advancement Points, they may spend a certain number of points to change the Basic Rule for a specific Hat. Changing the Basic Rule in this way is known as an Extra. Some Extras make the imbued Hat stronger or less likely to consume the owner's sanity, while others merely present options. A list of Extras can be found on the next page. Hats may have any number of Extras.

Each Extra specifies the number of times it may be taken. Feel free to create new Extras (and preferably send them to the author; I'm interested in the results) or just use the ones below.

Extras

Hat-tastrophe

Cost: 8 Advancement Points

Once per story, the Hatmancer may force another (friend or foe) to reroll any one action. **Hat-tastrophe** is not tied to a specific Hat, but Hatmancers may buy it only once.

Hat Trick

Cost: 6 Advancement Points

When rolling the dice for an action with this Hat, if the result includes three matching numbers add three to the highest die. You may buy **Hat Trick** once for each Hat.

Lucky Hat

Cost: 4 Advancement Points

When rolling the dice for an action with this Hat, if the result includes two matching numbers add one to the highest die. You may buy **Lucky Hat** once for each Hat.

My Hat Know No Limit

Cost: 10 Advancement Points

Roll an extra six-sided die for the Hat imbued with this Extra. **My Hat Know No Limit** can be purchased three times for an individual Hat, for a maximum of 6d6.

Power Overwhelming

Cost: 10 Advancement Points

When rolling the dice for an action using this Hat, add both the highest and lowest dice to your Ranks. You may buy **Power Overwhelming** once per Hat.

Second Chance

Cost: 5 Advancement Points

A Hat with the Second Chance Extra may reroll the dice for an action three times per session. You may buy **Second Chance** multiple times.

Strong Will

Cost: 4+ Advancement Points

Permanently reduce your Control by one. It may still be increased through other means, such as gaining new or more powerful Hats. You may buy **Strong Will** more than once, but each purchase costs 4 Advancement Points more than the previous purchase.

Chapter Three: Lexicon and Game Summary

Lexicon

Advancement Points: (Page 10) Players earn Advancement Points after every session of The Game of Hats. They may spend these points to increase their capabilities.

Basic Rule: (Page 5) Roll 3d6 and note the highest number. Add this to your Ranks and compare this total to another variable.

Conflict: (Page 5) Conflicts are obstacles and tasks for players to overcome. Conflicts come in two varieties – Dynamic and Static.

Control: (Page 8) Hats exert influence over the mind of a Hatmancer; Control represents the amount of this influence.

Drawbacks: (Page 9) Both character and player must act in a certain manner when they possess a Drawback.

Dynamic Conflict: (Page 6) Exceptionally difficult or important Conflicts are considered Dynamic and require dice rolls from the Milliner.

Elements: (Page 7) Players use a series of steps to create characters. Each step involves Objective and/or Subjective Elements, questions and considerations for more interesting characters.

Extras: (Page 14) An optional rule allows Hats to gain additional powers or subvert the Basic Rule.

Hat: (Page 3) A garment worn upon the head. For the purposes of this game, Hat encompasses a wide variety of cranium accessories.

Hatmancer: (Page 3) Individuals with the ability to bring forth power from their Hats.

Hat Rack: (Page 3) A character's Hats and important notes are kept on this sheet of paper.

Headgear: (Page 3) See Hat.

Milliner: (Page 3) This person arbitrates in-game events and portrays non-player characters.

Millinimancy: (Page 3) The art of magic through personal accessories.

Objective Element: (Page 7) An Element that involves game mechanics.

Pool: (Page 8) The number of points available during character creation.

Ranks: (Page 8) A measure of potency. A Hat with more Ranks is more powerful, yet more demanding.

Self: (Page 8) The portion of a Hatmancer's soul and sanity remaining.

Static Conflict: (Page 5) An easy or extended Conflict. The Milliner sets a difficulty value for these Conflicts.

Subjective Element: (Page 5) An Element that does not involve game mechanics.

Game Summary

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To perform an action, roll 3d6. Add the highest die to the Ranks in your Hat.

For a Static Conflict: If the total equals or exceeds the difficulty value, you succeed.

For a Dynamic Conflict: Compare your total to the Milliner's total. If your result is equal to or greater than the Milliner's, you succeed.

If your result beats the opposing value by more than three, you score an exceptional success.

The Milliner may impose a modifier between -3 and +3 for particularly appropriate or inappropriate Hats.

To perform a Control check, roll 3d6 and add the two lowest dice together.

If this number is greater than or equal to your Control, you succeed.

If this number is less than your Control, you fail.

See the sidebar for information on Control checks.

When Do I Make A Control Check?

- **Failing an action.** If a character fails an action, they must make a Control Check. When the Control Check fails, place an "X" next to the Hat performing the action. Once a Hat accumulates three "X" marks the Hat gains a new Drawback and the X marks are removed.
- **Neglecting a Drawback.** If the player fails to incorporate a Drawback, make a Control Check for each neglected Drawback. When the Control Check fails, place an "X" next to the Hat with the Drawback(s) in question. Once a Hat accumulates three "X" marks the Hat gains a new Drawback and the X marks are removed.
- **Gaining a new Rank or Hat.** When a character gains a new Rank above 3 or adds a new Hat to his Hat Rack, make a Control Check. If this Control Check fails, the Hat in question immediately gains a new Drawback.