Quick Guide to the Symbaroum Ruleset

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS a rudimentary description of the core elements in *Symbaroum's* character creation and game mechanics. It is by no means comprehensive but will hopefully give you an idea of how the ruleset is designed and operates.

The text is divided into three sections, of which the first walks you through the basics. In the second we create a player character and in the third we put that PC into action. If you have any questions you will find us on Facebook and various gaming forums.

Please note that all terms are placeholders, pending the actual translation of the core rulebook. You should also have a look at the F.A.Q and the Extended F.A.Q. where you will find more information on some of the details left out of this Quick Guide.

The Basics

THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS of all creatures dwelling in the Davokar region are outlined below, focusing on what they mean for the player character.

ATTRIBUTES

The eight attributes shared by all creatures in the game world make up the backbone of the ruleset. They are meant to reflect what basic characteristics the PC has developed over the years, and consequently how well prepared the PC is for handling different types of challenges. When the PC is facing a challenge, the player grabs a D20 and tries to roll under the value in one of its attributes. In other words, the higher the value the more apt the PC is in that regard.

A vital aspect of character creation is to decide what attributes should be the PCs strongpoints. Attribute values normally range from 5 to 15 and there are two ways to distribute values on the character sheet – either you use the typical values 5, 7, 9, 10, 10, 11, 13 and 15 and assign each of them to one of the attributes, or you take 80 value-points and distribute them as you wish (no single value being below 5 or over 15).

Secondary attributes are derived from the basic ones and include: Toughness (= *Strong*, but never below 10), Pain threshold (= *Strong*/2), *Defense* (= *Quick*), Corruption threshold (= *Resolute*/2).

Table: The attributes

ATTRIBUTE	EXAMPLE ACTIONS
Discreet	Avoid detection, sneak, smuggle items, trail person, pick pockets
Quick	Initiative, balance, climb, avoid being hit, sprint
Cunning	Recollect facts, make conclusions, do research
Strong	Withstand damage/poison/disease, perform feats of strength
Accurate	Hand-eye coordination, hit antagonist with bow/sword/axe
Vigilant	Detect person/item, avoid ambush, sense danger
Resolute	Succeed with or resist various spells, resist being influenced
Persuasive	Influence/convince others, lead, rally

Player control

In Symbaroum the players handle all dice rolls, leaving the GM free to focus on narration and interpretation. Read more on that in the F.A.Q. section of the fundraiser page.

RACE & TRAITS

There are four playable races in the core rulebook: human (Ambrian or barbarian), goblin, ogre and changeling. Regarding game mechanics, the only way they differ from each other is in terms of the traits available to, or mandatory for, them. Aside from that, they only differ in regards to history, culture and social standing.

Traits reflect both social and physical characteristics of the race. For instance all goblins and ogres have the trait *Pariah*, making them start with less money and having to make two successful dice rolls to succeed in most social challenges. Ambrian humans can have the trait *Privileged*, which works much the other way around.

The physical traits function like Abilities (see below) and may be developed by spending experience points. For instance the ogre can be *Robust*, thereby hitting harder, resisting more damage but being easier to hit; the changeling can *Confuse*, that is, alter the perception of its appearance, voice and even clothing.

ARCHETYPES & OCCUPATIONS

The three archetypes of the game – Warrior, Mystic and Thief – cover the most common functions needed for combat and problem solving in a group of adventurers. In the core rulebook each archetype is exemplified by five occupations, as for instance Sellsword and Duelist (warrior), Sorcerer and Theurg (mystic) or Treasure-hunter and Ranger (thief). And with each of the occupations comes suggestions on what is suitable in terms of Attributes, Race and Abilities.

However, both archetypes and occupations are mere recommendations, meant to be inspirational and exemplifying. There is nothing that states that you have to choose one of the fifteen listed occupations when creating you character. More on that later on ...

ABILITIES

The abilities are what really give a character in Symbaroum its distinct role and place in the game world. They represent a person's skill to utilize his/her basic attributes as efficiently as possible and are graded in three levels from novice to master.

Most of the 35 abilities are related to combat. Some makes it possible for the PC to attack or defend with other attributes besides *Accurate* or *Defense*. For instance the novice level in the ability Iron Fist lets you roll the attack dice against the PCs *Strong* when engaged in melee, and the ability *Sixth Sense* lets you attack with *Vigilant* (instead of *Accurate*) when using ranged weapons. Others let you deal more damage (e.g. *Berserker*, *Natural Warrior*), pin down enemies (e.g. *Sharpshooter*), avoid opportunity attacks when passing by an opponent (e.g. *Acrobatics*, *Equestrian*) or lower the enemy's defense or armor value (e.g. *Two-Handed Force*).

Some of the combat abilities can be used for other kinds of challenges (*Acrobatics* may let you climb a wall without rolling the dice), but there are also abilities that have little or nothing to do with fighting. Depending on your level, the *Scholar* ability gives you social and arcane knowledge, as well as the ability to read and communicate on other languages. *Medicus* lets you treat and investigate wounds/disease; *Alchemy* lets you produce and understand toxins and other elixirs. You will also have access to the ability

Exceptional Attribute, which makes it possible to add 1 to 3 points to an attribute value. Last but not least there are the Mystical Abilities described down below.

A PC typically starts the game with two abilities on the novice level and one on the adept level. Interestingly enough, much of the actual effect of the individual abilities comes from how you combine them with others. And if you are really serious you take some time to talk to the other players before selecting abilities for you PC. The efficiency of the group will greatly depend on how you mix and mash the abilities!

MYSTICAL TRADITIONS & ABILITIES

All PCs can learn mystical abilities (i.e. spells) and rituals, but not without the risk of becoming spiritually corrupted. To lower the risk for corruption you have to master the theory and practice of some *Mystical Tradition* (Wizardry, Theurgy or Witchcraft), designed for precisely that purpose. Once that is done you can still select whichever spell you want, but the tradition will only protect you when learning and using the ones covered by its theory and practice.

The wizards of Ordo Magica are typically disciplined students of the natural laws. They can for instance deal damage with spells like *Firewall* and *Sulfur Spray*; influence opponents with *Mind Control* and *Disorder*; or manipulate gravity with *Telekinesis* and *Levitation*.

The Theurgs are servants of the dying Sun God Prios. Among other things they can treat the wounded and sick with *Healing* or *Inherit Wound*; draw from Prios strength with *Holy Aura* or *Witchhammer*; or deal damage with *Soul Burn*.

Witches deal with the power of the wilds, following the path of the blood, the winds and all things growing. The can for instance become one with nature with spells like *Shapeshifting* or *Nature's Grasp*; ensnare enemies with *Bewitch* or *Vines*; and deal damage with *Larva Boil* or *Wind Arrow*.

There is also the dark tradition of **Sorcery**, practiced by mystics who embrace rather than try to avoid corruption. But we will not go into detail about them in this document ...

CORRUPTION

Corruption is nature's way of responding to all attempts to warp, violate or exploit it. The rules distinguish between Temporary and Permanent Corruption. The latter is afflicted on the PC when it for instance learns a mystical ability or ritual, binds with a mystical artifact or when its total corruption reaches the PCs Corruption Threshold. Temporary Corruption melts away at the end of the scene and is for example gained when casting spells, using mystical artifacts,

suffering injuries from certain beasts or travelling through especially dark places in Davokar.

To calculate a person's Total Corruption you simply add any temporary corruption to the permanent one. Depending on the amount of total corruption the PC will suffer spiritual as well as physical stigmas. As soon as the PC receives his first point of corruption his shadow (or aura) gets tainted (a taint which may be detected with rituals, spells and the ability *Witchsight*). Later, when the total corruption surpasses the corruption threshold, the PC suffers some form of physical stigma – e.g. wounds that won't heal, eyes that glitter in the dark, sulfurous breath, a taste for raw flesh or lukewarm blood.

Even further down the road, when the total corruption surpasses the double corruption threshold, it is over and done: the PC transforms into a full-fledged blight beast and nothing can reverse that process.

EQUIPMENT
Finally some notes on equipment, or to be precise on the weapons and armor of Symbaroum. In the hands of a player character a weapon basically does 1D4 to 1D10 in damage – ranging from unarmed (D4), via daggers (D6) and one-handed arms (D8), to heavy weapons (D10). Armor worn by a PC absorbs 1D4 to 1D8 of damage. (Note that NPCs and other antagonists have fixed damage and armor values, consequently ranging from 2 to 5 for weapons and 2 to 4 for armors.)

Adding to this are the qualities. A one-handed weapon typically does 1D8 in damage, but the Raven Axe has the quality Deep-Reaching giving it +1 in damage and (sadly) also making it five times as expensive. Other qualities make the weapon easier to hit with (Precise), boosts the defense value (Balanced) or awards its carrier an opportunity attack when entering into melee (Long).

Armors always have the Quality Impeding, reducing the defense value of the one wearing it (easier to hit but withstands more damage). But that can to some extent be counteracted with the quality Flexible (less hindering but much more expensive).

In other words, starting with a basic damage/armor value and adding positive or negative (e.g. Blunt or Cumbersome) qualities you can easily design and mimic any kind of specific weapon and armor.

Character Creation

SO, LET'S CREATE OURSELVES a player character. This quick guide obviously does not cover all aspects of character creation, but even with the added complexity of the full ruleset the process should not take more than half an hour. Here we go!

WHERE TO START?
When crafting your Symbaroum PC you can actually start anywhere you like. If you have found a really cool ability or mystical ritual, you can use that as a point of departure when making choices regarding race, attributes, equipment and other abilities. Or maybe you are interested in playing as a member of a particular race? Then by all means, write down ogre or goblin on your character sheet and go from there. Someone else may have a soft spot for a certain kind of weapon – a morning star, a curved two-handed sword or a crossbow – and uses that as a fundament for his/her PC build.

That being said the step-by-step walkthrough down below is of course nothing but an example of how you may go about creating your PC. I will be making a warrior, and I will focus on the core ruleset, leaving everything that has to do with setting, background and personal ambitions out.

STEP BY STEP
After having given it some thought I have decided to start with the race – I want to build an Ambrian human who recently arrived from the dead realm of Alberetor and who still knows next to nothing about Ambria and the secrets of Davokar forest (just like me, the new player). In the case of an Ambrian human I have to choose one of the traits *Connected* (giving me access to assistance and information from some specific group or faction) or *Privileged* (earning me more start-up funds and a social standing that can help me in some situations). I will go with the latter, imagining that my PC is a member of the gentry who was left behind to command the defense of some historically important site.

So ... My PC is a low-born noble and some type of commander. I take a look at the archetypes and find the occupations Captain and Knight. The former one seems most in line with my intentions, so I take a minute to ponder its suggestions concerning attributes and abilities. It says that Persuasive should be my strongest attribute and that I should consider the abilities *Dominate*, *Leader*, *Armor Proficiency* and *Shield Fighter*. The *Dominate* ability catches my eye ...

The novice level of the *Dominate* ability makes it possible for the PC to use the attribute *Persuasive* instead of *Accurate* when attacking in melee. In addition, the adept level gives the PC a chance to make an enemy hesitate and look for some other target to attack. I kind of like that, picturing my PC as the stern and confident warrior who silently dominates the battlefield just by staring down his enemies! Obviously this means that I need to assign a high value to *Persuasive*, so I turn to the attributes before selecting the other abilities.

Running with the typical distribution of 5, 7, 9, 10, 10, 11, 13, 15, I first and foremost attribute 15 to *Persuasive*. I also want him to be kind of imposing so I assign 13 to *Strong*. But what will be his weaker points? Well, he is a commander so I guess that he would have others to help him sneak, scout and such. He will have 5 in *Discreet*, 7 in *Vigilant* and 9 in *Cunning*. The values left for *Accurate*, *Quick* and *Resolute* are much the same, but I'll put the 11 on *Resolute* just to give him an extra edge when it comes to withstanding mind controlling spells and the like.

So, back to the abilities ... I could go with *Leader* but after concluding that it would not do me much good on the novice level (I have already made *Dominate* my level II ability) I choose *Armor Proficiency*, directly giving me +1 dice tier in armor value (e.g. D4→D6 or D6→D8). For my second novice ability I feel like selecting something to give the character flavor, something that stands out compared to your typical commander. I choose *Witchsight*, making it possible for my PC to see the dominant shadow of a person or a place – apparently he was left behind in Alberetor because he had a gift for "sniffing out blight-stricken creatures". But wait ... *Witchsight* uses *Vigilant* to reveal heretics and corruption! I'd better return to the attributes and boost that one, switching the 7 in *Vigilant* for the 11 in *Resolute*.

As for mystical traditions and powers I can skip that for my PC, and the same goes for corruption. Sure, the ability *Witchsight* costs 1D4 temporary corruption to use – forcing the shadowplane to reveal its secrets is not done without risk. But there is no cost in permanent corruption to learn it, so let's instead turn to the weapons and armor section!

As a privileged human I start the game with 50 silver thaler in my purse. Incidentally that's the price for a full plate mail so if I buy that, I cannot afford anything else. Bah, I don't want a cumbersome plate mail anyway. I settle for a standard scale mail, costing 5 thaler, giving me –3 in *Defense* (Impeding) and absorbing 1D6 damage – or rather 1D8 since I have the ability *Armor Proficiency*.

Great, now I have money left to buy myself a fine sword. I settle on the duel sword at the cost of 25 thaler. It has the quality Precise giving me +1 when attacking. I also add a standard shield (+1 in Defense), a bow and a quiver with 20 arrows. With the ranged weapon I have to roll against *Accurate* when attacking, but one cannot be without the ability to attack from afar, can one?

EDOGAI ARO	
Race	Human (Ambrian)
Trait	*Privileged*
Discreet 5, **Quick** 10, **Cunning** 9, **Strong** 13, **Accurate** 10, **Vigilant** 11, **Resolute** 7, **Persuasive** 15	
Abilities	*Dominate* (adept), *Armor Proficiency* (novice), *Witchsight* (novice)
Weapons	Duel Sword 1D8 (Precise), Bow 1D8
Armor	Scale mail 1D8
Defense	8 [*Quick* 10, Impeding –3, Shield +1]
Toughness	13 **Threshold** 7
Equipment	13 thaler

So, he is finished. Apart from a name ... After a quick look at the suggestions made in the race section I name him Edogai of the house Aro. Now, let's put Edogai into action!

Let's fight!

LET'S MAKE THIS SIMPLE, just to cover the basics of fighting. Edogai is traveling with a caravan through the Titans, destined for the Ambrian capital Yndaros. The wagons have made a stop and he walks away to take a leak. When zipping up he hears a growling and turns around to face a lone jakaar (a wolf-like beast). The predator looks famished and desperate, in consequence stupid enough to attack our brave captain.

First, we need to have a basic understanding of the combat mechanics. Basically, when faced with a challenge in the game world, the player must roll a D20. In order to overcome the challenge the dice must land on a figure which is equal to or lower than the player character's value in one of the attributes. For instance, if the character tries to do something which requires him to be quiet or cautious the attribute *Discreet* is used; if he searches for something or is on his guard then *Vigilant* is the active attribute.

However, there are two aspects that add to the complexity. First the Abilities, which represent the particular skills of a player character. The abilities sometimes open up for the player to use another attribute than the one which seems natural in a certain situation. In the case of my dear Edogai, the ability *Dominate* lets him attack with *Persuasive* instead of *Accurate* when in melee. Another character mastering the ability Iron Fist would roll against *Strong*, and so on.

The other aspect has to do with the fact that many challenges become easier or harder depending on who or what the character interacts with. Sneaking past a guard is for instance easier or harder depending on how *Vigilant* the guard is. And to hit an enemy with a sword can be more or less difficult depending on how *Quick* the opponent is. Rule-wise this is achieved by modifying the value that the player must roll against, most often in a way which directly relates to some attribute value of the opponent. In concrete terms: If the aforementioned guard has the mediocre value of 10 in *Vigilant*, no modification is made (±0); if the guard is very absentminded and only has 5 in *Vigilant*, the player gets to add 5 (+5) to the attribute he must roll against; and should the guard be so watchful that he has 15 in *Vigilant* the player must subtract 5 (–5) from the value he needs to roll under with the D20.

Because of the latter, the stats of the jakaar Edogai is facing are displayed like this, having modifiers tied to the attributes and also fixed values for weapons and armor:

Edogai has time to draw his sword before the jakaar makes its move. He also activates his *Witchsight* to find out if the jakaar is blight-stricken, and thereby more dangerous than your ordinary beast. The GM tells me (the player) that I must roll against *Vigilant* modified by –1 *(the enemy's Discreet)* to be able to read the shadow. I grab the D20 and hope to roll equal to or under 10 *[Vigilant 11, modified by –1]*. The dice lands on a 7. The GM says that according to my reading the creature is without taint, and then he reminds me to roll a D4 to determine how much the reading corrupts Edogai. I roll a 2 and make a note of that on the character sheet, next to Temporary Corruption.

When the jakaar lunches forward, we first determine the order of initiative, based on the attribute *Quick*. The wolf beast has 15, Edogai 10 so the jakaar gets to attack first.

The GM tells me to roll a D20 for *Defense*, modified by the wolf's *Accurate* which is –3. Hence, I must roll 5 or lower to avoid being bit *[Defense 8, modified by –3]*. The dice lands on a 7 and the jakaar bites down on me. But I can still avoid being damaged.

The GM tells me that the bite does 4 in damage. I grab my armor dice (D8) and roll a 3. One of the wolf fangs penetrates my scale mail, but the injury is not that bad (4–3=1). I make a note of the damage received on my character sheet, then it is Edogai's time to retaliate!

The GM informs me that the enemy has –5 in *Defense*, but at first I ignore that and tries to dominate the beast. That requires me to make a successful roll against *Persuasive* modified by the opponents *Resolute [Persuasive 15, modified by Resolute +1 = 16]*. I roll a 4 and the poor wolf will not be able to attack during the upcoming turn. Now, let's attack!

To hit I must roll equal to or under 11 *[Persuasive 15 and Precise weapon +1, modified by Defense –5 = 11]*. The Sun God Prios smiles at Edogai and the dice lands on a 9. My GM mumbles a curse before telling me that the jakaar's armor value is 2. I roll a D8 to determine the damage: a 5!

The jakaar takes 3 points in damage and the second turn of the combat scene begins. The lone beast is overwhelmed by my presence and cannot attack. Instead it turns around to escape. The GM tells me that I can make an opportunity attack when the enemy is leaving melee, but for some reason I decide not to. After all, I am a man of honor, not some lowlife who stabs wounded animals in the back!

As the temporary corruption drains away, Edogai of the house Aro returns to the caravan with a smile on his face, looking for someone to take care of the bite wound …

LONE JAKAAR	
Opposition	Weak [signals the strength of the NPC, ranging from Weak to Mighty]
Race	Beast
Trait	*Natural Weapon* II [+2 damage], *Armor* I [2 in armor value]
Discreet 11 (–1), **Quick** 15 (–5), **Cunning** 7 (+3), **Strong** 10 (0), **Accurate** 13 (–3), **Vigilant** 10 (0), **Resolute** 9 (+1), **Persuasive** 5 (+5)	
Abilities	None
Weapons	Bite 4 (short)
Armor	Wolf skin 2
Defense	–5 [*Quick* 15]
Toughness	10 **Threshold** 5

Thank you for reading this short guide to the Symbaroum ruleset. We hope it gives a fair account of the core mechanics, but there is much more to discover once the game launches. Mystical powers is barely touched upon here, and nothing is said about things like PC advantage, elixirs/toxins, movement, different action types, wounds/healing/death, line of sight and so forth. On the other hand, on this stage we can hardly provide you with a comprehensive rundown of the game mechanics – until the translation already is done!