

PART ONE: THE BASICS

PLAYING IRONSWORN

To play Ironsworn, you create your character, make some decisions about the world you inhabit, and set the story in motion. When you encounter something dangerous or uncertain, your choices and the dice determine the outcome.

Ironsworn supports three modes of play.

- ♦ Guided: One or more players take the role of their characters, the protagonists in your story, while a gamemaster (GM) moderates the session. The GM helps bring the world to life, portrays the people and creatures you encounter, and makes decisions about the outcome of your actions.

- ♦ Cooperative (Co-Op): You and one or more friends play together to overcome challenges and complete quests. A GM is not required. The Ironsworn game system will help you explore the dramatic stories of your characters and their fateful vows.

- ♦ Solo: As with cooperative play, no GM is necessary. You portray a lone heroic character in a dangerous world. Good luck!

Ironsworn is primarily intended for solo and small group play. One to four players (plus a GM in guided mode) is ideal. The characters portrayed by other players are referred to in these rules as your allies.

WHAT YOU NEED

If you're playing solo, just grab some materials and get started. A session can be as long as you like, from a few minutes to a few hours.

If you're playing with one or more friends—either guided or co-op—you probably want to dedicate enough time to make some progress in your quests. Plan on a couple of hours or more.

Make sure you have:

- ♦ Two ten-sided dice (d10) for each player. These are your challenge dice.
- ♦ One six-sided die (d6) for each player. This is your action die.
- ♦ Optionally, another pair of ten-sided dice to use as your oracle dice.
- ♦ A printed character sheet for each player and printed asset cards.
- ♦ Some counters for marking status tracks on your character sheet. You can use paper clips, beads, dice, coins, tokens from other games, or whatever is convenient.

MECHANICS AND THE FICTION

Ironsworn uses various mechanics, such as rolling dice and managing the stats and resources on your character sheet. As a player, you will often make decisions based on a desired mechanical outcome. For example, you might choose a particular action to get a bonus on your die roll. The basic mechanics of Ironsworn are introduced in this chapter.

Ironsworn is also heavily reliant on the fiction, which is the imagined characters, situations, and places within your game. You will play from the perspective of your character. You will interpret actions and events in a way that is consistent with the dramatic, fictional reality you have forged for your story and your world.

IRON VOWS

Vows are the core of playing Ironsworn. It is your vows that drive you. These goals create the context for your adventures and challenges. As you complete vows, you gain experience and new abilities.

When you create your character, you start with a background vow. When you setup your campaign, you envision or encounter an inciting incident which triggers a new vow. There are several prompts for vows associated with the details of the world in chapter 4, and with foes and encounters in chapter 5. You can select something which fits your vision for the world and your character's goals, or just come up with something yourself. If you are playing in co-op mode, you and your fellow players may have shared vows and personal vows.

YOUR CHARACTER

You use your character sheet to track your stats, overall condition, and progress in your quests. You also have assets, which are abilities you choose when you create your character and when you gain experience. These components help you determine the outcome when things get dangerous or uncertain.

However, your character is more than these mechanical bits. You are the protagonist in a rich story. You have hopes and fears, virtues and failings. You have a history. You are, or were, part of a community. This is the fiction of your character. Consider a few of these details as you create your character, but don't sweat it. You'll evolve it through play. At the start of your game, put your character on stage to see what happens. Fill in the blanks—for your character and your world—as you go.

MOVES

Moves are self-contained systems to resolve a specific action, scene or question. There is a move for most common situations you encounter in Ironsworn. They have specific triggers, phrased as "When you [blank]." When your character does that thing, or you encounter that situation, refer to the move to see what happens.

Moves are organized by activities.

- ♦ **Adventure moves** cover a variety of dangers, conducting investigations, traveling, making camp, and healing.
- ♦ **Relationship moves** involve persuading others to do something, building bonds with people and communities, resting and recuperating within a community, aiding your allies, and initiating duels.
- ♦ **Combat moves** are used when fighting (but not exclusively; other moves may come into play as well).
- ♦ **Suffer moves** occur when you endure hardship, such as suffering physical harm or facing a dispiriting challenge.
- ♦ **Quest moves** encompass iron vows, making progress in a sworn quest, and improving your character.
- ♦ **Fate moves** help you decide what happens in solo and co-op play, or support the GM's decisions and brainstorming in guided play.

When a move's name is referenced within these rules or by another move, you'll see it as *italicized* text.

Most moves are based on risky actions you are taking. You are attacking with your sword, making a dangerous climb, or healing an ally. These moves use dice to determine the outcome. This is called an **action roll**.

Some moves measure your headway against an extended challenge, such as a journey or fight, using a progress track. When you are ready to resolve the challenge, you make a **progress roll**.

Other moves utilize a different kind of dice roll, called an **oracle roll**. These moves help determine the outcome of uncertain events out of your character's control. If you're playing solo or co-op, you can use the Ask the Oracle move to answer questions about the world, resolve how other characters respond, or determine what happens next.

Some moves don't require a roll. They might support or reference a separate move, or simply help you resolve a mechanical or narrative situation. Don't roll dice unless a move tells you to.

THE ACTION ROLL

When you make a move representing a risky or uncertain action, you roll three dice at once.

- ♦ Challenge dice: Two ten-sided dice (D10)
- ♦ Action die: A six-sided die (D6)

Challenge Dice and Action Die

Add your relevant stat to your action die. The move will tell you which stat to add, or may give you a choice. Some moves will tell you to use one of your tracks, such as health or supply, in place of a stat. Based on the move or your character's assets, you may also have an opportunity to apply one or more bonuses called adds. The total of your action die, your stat, and any adds is your action score. Your action score is never greater than 10—anything over that is ignored.

How to roll the dice

To determine the outcome of your move, compare the action score to each of the challenge dice. You want it to be greater than the individual value of those dice.

How to compare the challenge dice to the action die

There are three possible results for a move.

STRONG HIT	WEAK HIT	MISS
 Two Successes is a Strong Hit Strong Hit: Your action score is greater than both the challenge dice. You succeed at what you are trying to do.	 One Success is a Weak Hit Weak Hit: Your action score is greater than only one of the challenge dice. You probably succeeded, but with a lesser effect or cost.	 No Successes is a Miss Miss: Your action score isn't greater than either of the challenge dice. You failed, or need to make some serious concessions.

The move will tell you how to interpret the outcome of your action, or offer a choice. The result may include mechanical changes to your character's status and narrative changes to the current situation.

When you score a miss on a move, you'll usually see a prompt to Pay the Price. This is a special move that lets you pick a likely negative outcome or roll to see what happens. If you're playing with a GM, she may consult with this move, or just tell you the price.

The main thing to remember on a miss: Something always happens. The situation gets more complex, dramatic, or dangerous.

Ties always go to the challenge dice. Your action score needs to exceed—not equal—the challenge dice to count as a hit.

MATCHES

 What a Match looks like

When you roll for a move, you should be on the lookout for a match on the challenge dice. In cooperative and solo play, this is your trigger to add a twist, create a new complication, or otherwise mix things up. Something interesting, unexpected, or unusual happens. If you're unsure, you *Ask the Oracle*, which is a move you use to ask questions or check for inspiration. If you're playing with a GM, a match on the challenge dice can be her prompt to introduce a surprising turn of events.

The outcome of a match should be evaluated based on the result of your move.

- ♦ **Strong hit:** The match should represent a twist in the narrative, something interesting, or a new opportunity.
- ♦ **Miss:** The match should represent a heightened negative outcome, a complication, or new danger. Things get worse for you in an unexpected way.

You can also let the intensity of your success or failure frame how you interpret a match. Rolling matched 10's on your challenge dice should prompt you to introduce a harrowing turn of events or a dire failure. It's as bad as things get.

GM'S AND THE DICE

If you are playing as a GM, you can focus on guiding the game and responding to your player's questions and actions. Since NPCs don't make moves, you won't need to make action rolls. However, you might want to have a pair of D10's available for oracle rolls.

THE MOMENTUM MECHANIC

Momentum is a special mechanic which is central to playing Ironsworn. Your momentum value ranges from a -6 to +10 and represents how you are faring in your quests. Move results may tell you to increase or decrease momentum.

The momentum track is on the left side of your character sheet. You can use a paper clip or token to mark the current value.

When you have positive momentum, things are going your way. You have the advantage. You are in control. Your path is clear. You are properly positioned for success.

When you have negative momentum, the tide has turned against you. You face tough odds. You are outmatched. Your next steps are uncertain.

Momentum persists through scenes and between gaming sessions. When you finish a session, write down your current momentum value. Then, pick up where you left off when you return to the game.

GAINING MOMENTUM

You gain momentum as an outcome or option when making moves. This represents securing advantages, acquiring new insight, and making progress in your quests. If a move tells you to add momentum (phrased as “take +X momentum”), increase your momentum track by the value indicated. The choices you make in a move, or the assets you use to support the move, may modify the amount rewarded.

In general, taking +1 momentum represents a minor advantage. Taking +2 momentum (or more) represents a major advantage.

LOSING MOMENTUM

You can lose momentum as a choice when making moves, or as an outcome of a move—particularly on a weak hit or miss. If a move tells you to suffer a specific loss of momentum (phrased as “suffer -X momentum”), you reduce your momentum track by the value indicated. The options you choose in a move, or the assets you leverage, may alter this penalty.

If you lose momentum as a result of a narrative outcome without a defined value, such as when you make the Pay the Price move, you should suffer a reduction appropriate to the narrative circumstances.

- ♦ **For a minor disadvantage or complication**, suffer -1 momentum.
- ♦ **For a major disadvantage or complication**, suffer -2 momentum.

Some moves and assets give you the option to suffer a loss of momentum in exchange for temporary advantages. If you take this option, adjust your momentum track by the amount indicated.

BURNING MOMENTUM

Burning momentum is a powerful option to build on your success and deliver a decisive result or avoid dire failure. When you have positive momentum, after you roll your move, you may cancel any challenge dice that are less than your current momentum value. This gives you an automatic hit.

If both challenge dice are less than your momentum value, you may cancel them both for a strong hit. If you burn momentum when only one of the challenge dice is less than your momentum value, the result of the other die stands—giving you a weak hit.

For example, your momentum track is at +6 and your action score is 4. You roll a 5 and an 8 on your challenge dice. You may burn momentum to cancel the 5, but not the 8. This shifts your result from a miss to a weak hit.



Hot to Burn Momentum

Burning momentum is never required. Even if you score a miss on a move and have enough momentum to cancel the challenge dice, you can choose to suffer the failure and save your momentum for a more crucial moment.

After you burn momentum, you must **reset your momentum**.

RESETTING MOMENTUM

After you burn momentum, you must adjust your momentum track to your momentum reset value. The default reset is +2. This value may be lowered when your character suffers from a debility. Debilities are conditions such as wounded, shaken, or unprepared. They are marked on your character sheet as a result of a move or a narrative event.

- ♦ If you have one debility marked, your momentum reset is +1.
- ♦ If you have more than one debility marked, your momentum reset is 0.

There is a box below the momentum track where you can record your current momentum reset.

SUFFERING NEGATIVE MOMENTUM



What Negative Momentum looks like

When your momentum is less than 0, and it matches the value of your action die, you must cancel your action die. You still check the success of your move by comparing your stat plus your adds to the challenge dice, but you won't have your action die to help you.

MINIMUM MOMENTUM

Your momentum cannot drop lower than -6. This is your minimum momentum. If a move tells you to lower your momentum, and your momentum is already at its minimum, you will instead make the Face a Setback move. As a result of this move, you reduce your health, spirit, or supply (or some combination thereof) by that amount, or undermine your progress in a current quest, journey, or fight.

Make moves such as Secure an Advantage to increase your momentum.

MAX MOMENTUM

Your max momentum starts at +10, and is reduced by 1 for every marked debility. There's a spot on your character sheet to record this value. You can't increase momentum over your max. If you are at your max and a move gives you an option to increase your momentum, you can't take that benefit.

PROGRESS TRACKS

A progress track is used to measure your pace and determine the outcome of a goal or challenge in specific situations.

- ♦ When you Swear an Iron Vow, a progress track represents the challenges you overcome on your way to achieving your ultimate goal.
- ♦ When you Undertake a Journey, a progress track represents how far you've gone and how favorable the travel has been.
- ♦ When you Enter the Fray, a progress track represents your advantage as you weaken or wound your foes in combat.
- ♦ When you establish a new relationship with a character in your world and Forge a Bond, you mark your bond on a progress track.

Progress tracks are drawn as a row of ten boxes which you fill in—or mark—as you make headway toward a goal. When you initiate a challenge, these boxes are empty.



An empty progress track

Since making progress on your quests may stretch over many sessions, your character sheet includes progress tracks for vows. Your character sheet also includes a progress track for your bonds. For journeys and fights, you can sketch out your progress tracks on whatever is convenient.

CHALLENGE RANKS

When you engage in a fight, initiate a journey, or swear a vow, you give your challenge a rank. In increasing order of difficulty, the ranks are troublesome, dangerous, formidable, extreme, and epic. You (or the GM) will choose a rank appropriate to the situation and how quickly or easily it should be resolved. Troublesome is used for simple challenges. A typical challenge is dangerous or formidable. Epic and extreme challenges require great effort and luck to overcome.

MARKING PROGRESS ON PROGRESS TRACKS

You will perform specific moves to advance toward your goal. For example, as you travel across perilous lands, you Undertake a Journey and mark progress as you successfully reach waypoints in your travel.

Similarly, when you fight, you Strike or Clash to inflict harm on your foe. To move forward in your quest, you use the *Reach a Milestone* move. These incremental moves let you amass advantages to have the best chance of success when you are ready to resolve your challenge.

Whenever you successfully move toward your goal, you partially or fully fill in a box on your progress track. You fill progress boxes with lines—called ticks. A full progress box consists of four ticks in a star-shaped pattern. When a move tells you to mark progress, fill in the appropriate number of ticks or progress boxes based on the rank of your challenge.

TROUBLESOME		DANGEROUS	FORMIDABLE	EXTREME	EPIC
					
3 of 3 full boxes Mark 3 progress		2 of 2 full boxes Mark 2 progress			

Marking Progress for Bonds

If you are marking progress on your bonds progress track, you always mark 1 tick unless a move tells you otherwise. Bonds are not given a challenge rank.

PROGRESS MOVES

There are four moves, called progress moves, which utilize progress tracks to resolve the outcome of a goal or challenge.

- ♦ To resolve a quest, Fulfill Your Vow.
- ♦ To end your journey, Reach Your Destination.
- ♦ To decide the outcome of combat, End the Fight.
- ♦ When you retire from your life as Ironsworn, Write Your Epilogue.

PROGRESS ROLLS

You don't make an action roll when you make a progress move. Instead, you tally the number of fully filled progress boxes (those with four ticks). This is your progress score. Then, roll your challenge dice and compare your progress score to the value of the dice.

As with an action roll, if your progress score is greater than both challenge dice, it's a strong hit. If you beat one of the challenge dice, it's a weak hit. If you fail to beat either die, it's a miss. The progress move will tell you how to resolve the challenge based on the outcome of your roll. Also, keep an eye out for a match, which represents a surprising twist or unusual complication.

In the example below, you would compare your +6 progress score to your challenge dice when making your progress move. The seventh progress box is only partially filled in, and won't count toward the progress score.

 What a progress score looks like

When deciding whether to make your progress move, you need to weigh your chance of success against the risk of continuing to make preparatory moves. One thing to remember: It's not necessary to fill your progress track before making your progress move. In fact, a weak hit or miss on a progress roll can lead to exciting new story possibilities.

Momentum and Progress Rolls

Momentum is ignored when you make a progress move. You cannot burn momentum on a progress roll, and you do not suffer from negative momentum.

SHARING PROGRESS TRACKS WITH ALLIES

When you and your allies are working together to resolve a challenge—a quest, a journey, or a fight—you share a progress track and mark progress together. When you make a progress move, only one of you rolls the dice. The result will stand for the group.

HARM

Harm represents physical damage and fatigue. You inflict harm on your foes in combat, and you Endure Harm when you are attacked or fail to overcome a physical hazard or ordeal.

INFLECTING HARM

When you successfully attack a foe using the Strike or Clash moves, you inflict harm. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If you are unarmed or using an improvised or simple weapon (such as a shield, stick, club, staff, or rock), you inflict 1 harm. You may have an option to inflict additional harm through the choices you make in a move.

Each point of harm you inflict is marked as progress on your foe's progress track, as appropriate to their rank. For example, each point of harm equals 2 ticks when fighting an extreme enemy, or 2 full progress boxes when fighting a dangerous enemy.

ENDURING HARM

When you face physical injury or hardship, make the Endure Harm move. As part of that move, you reduce your health track by the amount of harm suffered. There are five ranks of harm.

- ♦ Troublesome (1 harm): An attack by a minor foe, a painful injury, or a tiring effort.
- ♦ Dangerous (2 harm): An attack by a skilled foe or deadly creature, a nasty injury, or a demanding effort.
- ♦ Formidable (3 harm): An attack by an exceptional foe or mighty creature, a serious injury, or an exhausting effort.
- ♦ Extreme (4 harm): An overwhelming attack by a monster or beast, a grievous injury, or a debilitating effort.
- ♦ Epic (5 harm): An attack by a legendary foe of mythic power, a horrific injury, or a consuming effort.

When you are fighting a foe, they inflict harm based on their rank. Sample foes are in chapter 5.

If you are at 0 health, a miss on the Endure Harm move puts you at risk of suffering a debility or dying. You can recover health through rest and recuperation, using moves such as Heal, Make Camp, and Sojourn.

STRESS

Stress represents mental burdens and trauma. When you face mental shock or despair, make the Endure Stress move. As part of that move, you reduce your spirit track by the amount of stress suffered. There are five ranks of stress.

- ♦ Troublesome (1 stress): An unsettling incident or frustrating failure.
- ♦ Dangerous (2 stress): A distressing incident or upsetting failure.
- ♦ Formidable (3 stress): A horrifying incident or demoralizing failure.
- ♦ Extreme (4 stress): A heart-rending incident or traumatic failure.
- ♦ Epic (5 stress): A soul-shattering incident or the loss of all hope.

When you are opposing a foe, they can inflict stress (such as a terrifying visage or demoralizing taunt) based on their rank. Sample foes are in chapter 5.

When you Endure Stress, you reduce your spirit track by the amount of stress suffered. If you are at 0 spirit, you are in danger of suffering a debility or falling into desolation.

You can recover spirit by relaxing when you Make Camp, finding fellowship when you Sojourn, or when you Forge a Bond.

Unlike harm, you do not inflict stress on others—at least not mechanically. If you attempt to frighten or demoralize another character, make an appropriate move to see what happens.

ASSETS

Assets are a key component of your character. They give you additional options and bonuses when making a move, and may include their own special moves. When you create your character, you select your starting assets. When you Fulfill Your Vow and gain experience, you can Advance to spend your experience on new assets or upgrade current assets.

You can mix-and-match assets however you like. There are no designated assets based on character classes or roles. However, you should avoid picking the same asset as another player.

ORACLES

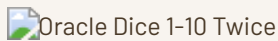
Some moves may prompt you to roll on a table to generate a result between 1 and 100. There are also a set of creative prompts in chapter 6, which you can use to reveal details, trigger events, and guide the actions of other characters in your world. These oracles help answer questions in solo or co-op games, or provide inspiration for the GM in guided play.

ROLLING ORACLE DICE

Whenever you are prompted by a move or an oracle table to generate a result between 1 and 100, roll two ten-sided dice.  Oracle Dice 1 - 100

One of your oracle dice may include tens digits on its faces. You'd read this result as 83.

You can also use two D10s of different colors, and decide before rolling which represents the tens digit and which is the units. You'd read this result as 36.



SEEKING ANSWERS

If you are playing solo or co-op, you can Ask the Oracle to help guide your game session and trigger ideas when you need to know what happens next. Its most basic function is to answer a “yes” or “no” question. Combined with your own instincts and creativity, this move—and other random prompts—can push your story in surprising and exciting directions.

If you are playing with a GM, they are the oracle. When you see a prompt to Ask the Oracle, turn to your GM. The GM is free to leverage random tools and creative prompts to come up with the answers.

Keep in mind that—even when playing with a GM—Ironsworn is about shared storytelling. Offer suggestions. Talk it out. The GM is the final arbiter of what happens next, but everyone at the table should participate in building the world and creating the narrative of your game.

MORE RANDOMNESS

You’ll find a set of random tables in chapter 6. These provide inspirational prompts and random results for common situations. You can also use whatever random generators you prefer, including those drawn from another game, online generators, or visual tools such as tarot cards.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

These random generators will never replace your own imagination and intuition. If it’s interesting, dramatic, and pushes the story forward, make it happen. Too much reliance on random generators to answer questions about “what happens next” can kill the momentum of your game or make it feel disconnected and incoherent.

Keep it moving. Ask a question. If an answer leaps to mind, go with it. If you’re not sure, Ask the Oracle. Then, play.

BONDS

As you explore your world and complete quests, you create bonds with people and communities by making the Forge a Bond move. Bonds give you advantages for specific moves when interacting with those you have bonded with. For example, if you attempt to Compel someone, and you share a bond with them, you add +1 to your roll. The moves tell you when having a bond provides this advantage.

Bonds also help determine your fate when you retire from your life as an adventurer. The more bonds you create, the more connections you have with people and communities, the better your chance to live out your days peacefully in the company of others.

Your character sheet has a special progress track for bonds. When you successfully Forge a Bond, mark 1 tick on this progress track. When your adventures are complete and you Write Your Epilogue, tally your bonds and make a progress roll to wrap up your character’s story.

OTHER CHARACTERS

The mechanics of Ironsworn are almost entirely character-facing—meaning they reference the capabilities and actions of your character. Other non-player characters and creatures (NPCs) don't have mechanical detail. In fact, they may only have a single stat—their rank—for tracking progress against them in a combat scene. Further, NPCs do not make moves. You won't roll dice for them to determine the outcome of their actions. When you attempt to influence them, oppose them, resist them, or aid them, make moves as your character. If you have questions about an NPC's motivations or what they do next, Ask the Oracle.

ALLIES AND COMPANIONS

If you are playing a co-op or guided game with other players, their characters are referred to in these rules and in moves as your allies.

A companion is a special type of asset. Unlike normal NPCs, they can provide mechanical benefits through their abilities, and they have a health track to record harm. If the text of a move refers to a companion, it means a companion asset.

EQUIPMENT

In Ironsworn, you won't worry too much about equipment. Your supply track is an abstract representation of your general readiness, clothes, ammo, food, water, and mundane gear.

You are armed and armored as appropriate to your vision for your character. If you wield a weapon, you can inflict harm with it. If you are armed with a deadly weapon (such as a sword, axe, spear, or bow), you inflict 2 harm. If you are unarmed or using an improvised or simple weapon (such as a shield, stick, club, staff, or rock), you inflict 1 harm.

Other equipment provides narrative benefit. It enables you to make moves where that gear is important, or perhaps allows you to avoid a move altogether.

For example, you need to make your way down a steep rock face. Without assistance, you'd make a Face Danger move to see what happens. If you had rope, the climb is not particularly risky or uncertain. In that case, you might skip the move and just narrate the result.

Specific assets can make equipment more important and relevant to your character. For example, combat talent assets represent your expertise in a particular weapon or fighting style. When you wield an appropriate weapon, you gain the benefit of the asset.

Apart from assets, you can make note of equipment at whatever level of detail you like, but don't fuss over it. If you're wondering whether you have a particular mundane item, you can Ask the Oracle.

THE FLOW OF PLAY

Like most roleplaying games, you play primarily from the perspective of your character. What are you doing? What are you trying to achieve? What opposition and challenges do you face? Your quests, and the characters and situations you encounter, will guide the fiction and the choices you make.

When you have questions about what you find, how other characters in your world respond, or what happens next, you can go with what feels right (if you're playing solo or co-op), or ask your GM. When you are seeking inspiration or want to put it in the hands of fate, you make the Ask the Oracle move. Use the yes/no questions and random prompts to generate interesting twists and new complications you might not have thought of on your own. Above all, if it's interesting, dramatic and fits the fiction, make it happen.

If you are doing something covered by a move, refer to the move to resolve your action. If it tells you to roll dice, do it.

Scoring a strong hit on a move means you are in control. You're driving the narrative. What do you do next?

A weak hit or a miss means you don't have control of the situation. Instead of acting, you react. What happens next? If you're playing with a GM, she'll determine how the world responds. Otherwise, you rely on your intuition and occasional oracle rolls to drive the narrative.