Initiative and Actions

As you have undoubtedly gathered by now, a "Round" is a measure of time and a turn within the game. How many times a character can attack, perform actions, cast spells and more is always defined in the space of one Round. So exactly when is a Round used? If the character is going up to get a flagon of mead at the local inn, does that need to be broken up into Rounds? The answer is "maybe" and is determined by the Storyteller. Normally, the use of Rounds is reserved for combat, but the Storyteller can choose to start breaking up time into Rounds for any reason they see fit.

Marks

A Round is broken up into 30 "Marks," similar to how there are 60 seconds in a minute.

Playing actions in a Round can be very simple, or it can be involved to add a greater level of depth. This is referred to as a "Simple Round" and a "Full Round" respectively.

Before we can move on, we need to describe Initiative. Each character rolls an Initiative Score that determines when they get to act during a Round. At the beginning of each Round, this roll is made, and the Storyteller takes note of the order of play.

Very Simply

You may, especially when just beginning, choose to forego any Initiative Roll. Simply, each Character has their Initiative, which is Intellect and Agility average rounding up. This is when they act and how many Marks they have to act.

Doing this, however, seriously limits what a character can do in a Round and prevents any variability.

Initiative

There are three terms that are important to remember:

- Your character's Initiative– Which is part of your character (like an Attribute)
- An Initiative Roll – What you roll to determine when you act in a Round
- Initiative Score – This acts as fuel from which your character uses to perform actions

A character's Initiative Characteristic is the average between their Agility and Intellect, rounded down. The Player rolls 1d10 and adds that to their character's Initiative Characteristic - this is called an Initiative Roll. An Initiative Roll determines at what point the character gets to perform his first action. If you roll a 10 on the 1d10 for Initiative, roll 1d10 again and add that to your Initiative Score for that Round. The Maximum Initiative Score for any character is 30, no matter what bonuses or rerolls are added.

This Initiative Score is "spent" to take Actions, make attacks and so on. The actual score of the Initiative Roll is the place within the 30 Marks of a Round that a character can act. The Round always begins at Mark 30 and then decreases by 1 until everyone has acted. When that Round is over, everyone rolls Initiative again and a new Round begins at Mark 30.

There are several things a character can do in combat, each taking a certain number of Marks to perform. It is important to note that most actions a character takes happen at their Initiative Mark within a Round. If you roll a 17 for Initiative, then your first

attack happens at 17. Some actions take time, like casting a spell. In such cases, the action starts at the Initiative Score and then take effect after the stated number of Marks.

Initiative Modifiers

Initiative is modified by Armor, equal to half (round down) of the Evade Modifier.

Delaying

Sometimes, you may want to wait and see how things pan out before you act. Your character may always delay their actions once per Round, and it announced on your Initiative Roll. If you do, you then go at half your Initiative Roll (round up or down, your choice).

The Simple Round

As stated earlier, a Round can be a simple affair or more involved to add a little bit more depth. A Simple Round works when a character's Initiative score comes up, and the character takes all the actions they are allotted for that entire Round at once.

This means if the character has three attacks, all of them take place during that single Initiative Mark. If the character wants to move their Land Speed, then perform a Quarter Action and then a Free Action, it all happens at the same time. Of course, a character needs to have the Initiative in order to take all the Actions in the first place.

The Full Round

The Full Round captures time between Actions. While a fair bit more complex, and not as easy to track, it can be important in some cases. Here, a Player takes their first Action on their character's Initiative Score. Subsequent Action then take place the number of Marks later, equal to the last Action they took. For instance, if a character has an Initiative Score of 25 and moves 5 Units (5 Marks) then sets to shoot a

ranged weapon (Quarter Action or 5 Marks), and then attacks (Full Action or 15 Marks). The character would move at Mark 25 and finish moving at Mark 20, then set for a ranged attack at Mark 20 and be ready by Mark 15, and take their single shot at Mark 15.

Ties

In the case of a tie, the character with the higher raw Initiative goes first. If the Initiatives are the same, then the higher Agility, then Intellect. If they are all the same, then simultaneous actions

Carry Over

Initiative can carry over into the following Round if there is a certain number of Initiative Marks it takes to complete. This IS NOT the case with attacks and movement. If you run out of Initiative, you can't finish your attacks that Round or move your full distance.

This particular situation arises very often when it comes to casting spells. Covered more in the magic chapter, all spells have a Casting Time, which is measured in Initiative Marks. A spell may take 15 Marks to complete. It is very likely that a wizard starts casting a spell in one Round, but not finish the spell until a later Round. When characters carry over actions into the following Round, they still may act again during that subsequent Round. The way this is done is by taking however many Marks that character's action bled into the next Round and subtracting it from their Initiative Roll.

Neither method is necessarily better than the other, albeit, different. It is important for the Players and the Storyteller to know that outcomes can be wildly different depending on how you play the Round. The game is "meant" to be played in the Full Round version, but the Storyteller and Players can use either system they want depending on their own tastes. It may be wise when you begin playing Tara-Corax to use the Simple Round. Once everyone is intimate with how the game is played in the other aspects, people can elect to institute the Full Round system.

Actions in Combat

When in combat, actions are grouped into four categories: Free, Quarter, Half, and Full. These only apply to when a Character is in combat and Initiative is being used. When out of combat, the Storyteller determines how long actions take.

Free Actions are those things a character can do constantly and take no concentration. These take no Initiative and can be done whenever the Player wants. This also covers reactionary items. If a character has some skill or Ability that reacts to a certain situation, these also are considered Free Actions. Some examples are:

- Simple speaking
- Using a reactive ability
- Performing on-going/passive Skills (like Combat Casting or Endurance)
- Looking around briefly (no Observation or Detection)

Quarter Actions are those a character can perform that require little focus or are (generally) muscle-memory based. Each Quarter Action takes 5 Marks to perform. Some examples are:

- Move into melee and set yourself
- Set yourself to shoot a ranged weapon after moving
- Complex speech, like giving directions or answering a question
- Performing a Skill that requires little time or focus (like Size Up or Intimidate)
- Dropping one weapon and readying another
- Drawing a weapon or easily reached item
- Recover from falling down or stand up from prone

Half Actions are those things a character can do that require a good deal of concentration. Performing a Half Action uses 10 Marks. Some examples are:

- Drink a potion
- Performing Skills that require some concentration (like Observation or Acrobatics)
- Activating a non-attacking magical item
- Sheathing a weapon

Full Actions are those activities that require utter concentration to get right or are all consuming to a character. A Full Action takes 15 Initiative Marks. However, a character can always perform a Full Action once per Round, even if they don't have enough Initiative Score IF AND ONLY IF they have performed no other Action that Round. Some examples are:

- Perform a full number of attacks per Round of melee attacks if already in melee
- Perform a single melee attack if moving into melee
- Perform a full number of attacks per Round of ranged attacks if not acted
- Perform a single ranged attack if acted previous
- Perform a Maneuver with a weapon
- Performing a Skill that takes 10 or less seconds, but requires full concentration (like Read Scrolls or Monster Lore)
- Activating an attacking magical item
- Casting a Spell (other mechanics apply, starting to cast a Spell counts as a Full Action)
- Pulling something out of a sack
- Become *Hidden* through a Skill

There are 5 exceptions/modification to this rule: Attacking, Moving, Casting a Spell, Skills and Abilities.

Abilities can vary greatly depending on what it is. Most Abilities state what kind of Action they are, or if they can be used in combat. Some abilities do not state such, but are clearly something that takes a good deal of time or are passive in nature, e.g. all of the Aurima's Abilities. Some Abilities do not state anything because their application varies. For instance, the Human's Human Spirit Ability may be a Free Action in the case of re-rolling an attack, or it may be passive as in re-rolling a Check of a Skill that takes a long time. The Storyteller makes the determination on all cases not specifically covered.

Like Abilities, Skills vary greatly in the amount of time they take. Generally, Skills state if they have a specific use that has a mechanical attachment to an Action type. In most cases, the amount of time they take is situational. Crafting a weapon is not allowed in combat, but something like Know Item may be in the right situation. As with Abilities, the Storyteller makes a call on how long Skills take based on how they are used and what the character is trying to do.

Casting Spells has its own mechanic. Starting a spell counts as a Full Action, but may take more (or less) than 15 Marks. If it takes more, then it may Carry Over into the next Round. Or, the character may still have some Initiative Score to use after it goes off. If a spell's Casting Time is less than 15 Marks, then it is treated as a normal Full Action, and the character cannot take another action until 15 Marks has passed.

Movement is a free-flowing Action and can be done whenever the character has unused Initiative Score. A character can move 1 Unit for 1 Mark of Initiative Score, up to their Land Speed Score.

Attacking is one item that rebels from this concept slightly. When a character takes an attack, it happens at that Initiative Mark. If a character has subsequent attacks, they take place evenly spaced within that 15 Marks of time (in the case of a Full Round). For instance, a bowman may have 3 attacks, each taking 5 Marks. On an Initiative Score of 20, the first shot happens at Mark 20, the second at Mark 15, and the last at Mark 10. The character can act again at Mark 5.

Obviously, there are some uneven numbers here, so refer below.

- 1 Attack: First attack on Initiative Score
- 2 Attacks: First attack on Initiative Score, the second 7 Marks later
- 3 Attacks: First attack on Initiative Score, each subsequent comes 5 Marks later
- 4 Attacks: First attack on Initiative Score, each subsequent comes 4 Marks later
- 5 Attacks: First attack on Initiative Score, each subsequent comes 3 Marks later

Below is a chart that assumes a 20 Initiative Roll, and when each attack would happen.

Number of Attacks	1st Attack	2nd Attack	3rd Attack	4th Attack	5th Attack
1	20				
2	20	13			
3	20	15	10		
4	20	16	12	5	
5	20	17	14	11	8

A deeper question would then be: if a character can always take a Full Action no matter what and subsequent attacks take a certain amount of time, what happens if a character runs out of Initiative Score? For instance, a Dwarf rolls an Initiative Score of 12, and has 3 attacks. The first would go off at Mark 12, the second at Mark 5, the third at Mark -2. In this case, the Dwarf could not get all attacks off that Round, and forfeits that last attack. The in-game explanation is he was a little flat-footed and just wasn't fast enough to finish their set of attacks.

Channeling

A Channeling action is when a character uses ALL Initiative in a Round and can make no other Action, including a Free Action. They may break the Channel at any time, but can only move and perform Free Actions afterward.

Setting

As you may have noticed, moving into melee and moving and shooting is also particular. When a character moves into melee, they must "Set". That is, they need to bring their defenses up, position correctly and get ready to react and strike.

Melee combat fluid, and only requires a character to Set if they moved in the same Round. If a character moves in melee and uses up their Initiative Score, and the next Round comes; as long as they did not move in that new Round, they do not need to Set. For ranged attacks, any time a character moves or performs any non-Free Action (except attacking), they must then Set before they can attack at range. This does not apply to Throwing Weapons (Fast Throwing Weapons, Heavy Throwing Weapons and Precision Weapons). with these weapons, characters are free to move and attack without Setting.

While Combatants and Battlemages have Abilities that circumvent this, the general rule is that in order to move into melee and then attack in the same Round, you'll need a good Initiative Score. If a character is able to do so, the Round they move into Combat is limited to a single attack, no matter their normal number of attacks per Round. If a defender and someone moving into melee with you, you do not need to Set.

There are 3 instances that Setting is required:

- If attacking in melee if moved that same round, unless
  - Using the Frenzied Charge Ability
  - Using the Mounted Charge Ability
  - Using the Lansing Charge Ability
  - If moved by way of the CAR

- Before using the Combat Casting Skill.

- If shooting a ranged attack preceded by a non-Free Action, unless
  - That last Action was a ranged attack
  - Using a Throwing Weapon
  - Taking a Desperate Shot
  - Using the Firing Assault Ability
  - Using the Stand and Fire Ability

Desperate Shot

Moving and shooting is a very difficult thing to do. Even the very best struggle to be accurate when moving. Generally, a character must Set themselves if moved in order to accurately shoot. It is an option to move and then shoot without setting. However, if done, any Natural roll of 5 or less on either attack die results in a miss, no matter the bonuses or range. In any case, if a character moves, their next ranged attack is limited to a single shot with no bonuses from Mastery Styles or Preferred Weapons.

Casting in Combat

Now we have a Mage with Initiative 14 and Land Speed 10.

Round 1 he rolls a 7: He is a little close for a Spell, so he moves 6 Units back (6 Marks) and starts to cast a spell with Casting Time 20 (Full Action, 15 Marks needed to cast any spell, but this one has a longer Casting Time than 15, so we use the larger). The spell goes off at Initiative Mark 25 of the next Round.

He rolls Initiative again with a 6, for a total of 20, but -5 because the spell goes off 5 Marks into this Round, so his Initiative Score is 15. The spell goes off and someone enters melee with him. Since they moved into melee with our Wizard, he can take a full set of attacks (Full Action, 15 Marks). Leaving him with 0 – perfect. He somehow drops his opponent that same Round.

Next Round, he rolls a 9, or Initiative 23: He wants to cast, but sees there are a few enemies around him, so has to Set (Quarter Action, 5 Marks) so he can activate Combat Casting. He starts to cast a spell with casting time 10 (Full Action, 15 Marks before he can act again), and the spell goes off at Initiative Mark 8 and he can act again at Mark 3.

During this time, something happens, and he needs to move while casting. He makes a Combat Casting Skill Check of 11. The Skill says he can move 1 Unit per 3 RO over a Target Number of 2, so, he can move 3 Units. The Skill further says this movement counts against his Land Speed total but is considered a Free Action while casting. So, he moves 3 Units for free and the spell goes off at Mark 8. He cannot act until Mark 3 because casting a spell if a Full Action.

At Mark 3, he wants to move some more and uses the rest of his Initiative to move all he can. In this case, it is only 3 Units. His max of 10 Land Speed had 3 moved in Combat Casting, leaving 7 left. So, he moves 3 Units for 3 Initiative leaving him with 0, perfect again.

Moving into Combat

We have a Warrior with Initiative 9 and Land Speed 8.

First Round, rolls a 4 and goes last: Someone comes into his CAR. As a Free Action, he moves (10 units) into Melee and sets automatically. He attacks only once, because he moved into melee that Round.

Next Round rolls a 10, followed by a 6 and goes first: Performs a full set of attacks (Full Action, 15 Marks) and drops his opponent. Someone else is in his CAR, and he moves there for free (10 units) but can't attack that Round because he only has 10 Initiative Score left. Instead, he drinks a potion.

Next Round he rolls an 8: His opponent attack and misses allowing him to *Counter* as a Free Action. Then, attacks (Full Action, 15 Marks) and again drops his opponent and then move 2 units.

Next Round rolls a 7 and Charges (Quarter Action, 5 Marks) a target 8 Units away granting a free attack and then sets himself (Quarter Action, 5 Marks), leaving 6 Initiative left, which he forfeits.
In this example of 4 Rounds, the Combatant was able to move into melee with 3 opponents, attacking 3 times and moved a total of 30 Units - heavily aided by his Phylum Abilities.

Next, let's look at a Rogue doing the same thing. This Rogue has an Initiative of 12 and a Land Speed of 13.

First Round he rolls a 9 and moves into combat 8 units away (8 Marks) and then sets himself (Quarter Action, 5 Marks), leaving 8 Initiative left, which he forfeits.

Next Round he rolls a 5 and performs a full set of attacks (Full Action, 15 Marks), dropping his opponent. With his last 2 Initiative, he moves 2 units towards another target.

Next Round, rolls a 10 and then a 4 for a total of 26. He moves another 5 Units to get into melee (5 Marks), sets himself (Quarter Action, 5 Marks), and then makes a single attack (because he's moving into melee this Round) (Full Action, 15 Marks).

Next Round rolls a 6 and makes a full set of attacks (Full Action, 15 Marks), dropping his opponent and then moves 3 towards another opponent.

Here, our Rogue attacked 3 times on 2 opponents and moved a total of 7 Units. Obviously, Combatants are far better suited for tearing through the battlefield from opponent to opponent.

Kiting

We have a Rogue with an Initiative of 15 and Land Speed of 15 as well.

Round 1, he rolls a 9, so Initiative of 24: He can move 4 Units (4 Marks), set himself (Quarter Action, 5 Marks) and take a single shot (15 Marks).

Next Round, he rolls a 7, Initiative Score of 22: He fires a full volley (meaning, takes all allowed attacks per Round) (Full Action, 15 Marks) and then moves 7 Units.

Next Round rolls an 8, Initiative Score of 23: Again, he sets (Quarter Action, 5 Marks), attacks only once because he moved (Full Action, 15 Marks) and then can move 3 units.

Next, rolls a 6 and moves 1 Unit, sets (Quarter Action, 5 Marks) and attacks once (Full Action, 15 Marks). Thus, in 4 Rounds he was able to attack 4 times (although, 3 of them were single shots) and move 15 units.

Same character.

Rolls a 9, Initiative Score of 24: Shoots a full volley (Full Action, 15 Marks), and does nothing after.

Next Round, rolls an 8 and again fires a full volley (Full Action, 15 Marks) and then moves 8 Units.

Next Round, rolls a 2. He'd like to set and fire, but doesn't have enough Initiative, so moves 12 Units and sets (Quarter Action, 5 Marks) instead.

Next Round rolls a 7 and fires a full volley (Full Action, 15 Marks) and then moves again 7 Units.

Why the Full Round?

We'll take a Combatant with Initiative 15.

Round 1, he rolls a 5, for a total of 20 Initiative Score. It is his turn, and he chooses to move 5 Units, so someone enters his CAR, and then moves intercept for free, automatically Sets and gets a single attack (because he moved) with his remaining 15 Initiative.

In a simple Round, this would all happen at the same time. All of the Combatant's actions would occur before anyone, or anything else, could react at Initiative Mark 20.

Let's say his target was a Wizard. The mage has Initiative 15 and rolled a 9 for a total of 24 that Round.

The Wizard casts a spell with Casting time 10, so the spell goes off at Mark 14.

If we break down the Combatant's Round, he moves 5 Units starting on Mark 20 and done on Mark 15. On Mark 15 he moves to intercept and Sets. Still on Mark 15 he attacks.

In a Simple Round, the Wizard would have gone and gotten their spell off. In a full Round, the Combatant would have hit the Wizard before the spell went off, possibly fizzling it.

Here's another example.

We have the same Combatant that gets 3 attacks per Round in melee. He's in melee with some big nasty monster that gets one big attack.
The Combatant gets a 20 Initiative Score and the monster a 12.

In a Simple Round, the Combat would get all 3 attacks at Mark 20, killing the monster before it could strike back.

In a Full Round, the Combatant's first attack would happen at Mark 20, the next at Mark 15, and the 3rd at Mark 10. At Mark 12, in-between the Combatant's 2nd and 3rd attack, the monster would go, possibly clobbering the Combatant.