

# Coming of Age

A Tale Telling Game for 1 to 6 Players

*We are more than we appear.*

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Version 2.2.2 - Dec 22nd, 2011

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## A Few Words ...

Coming of Age is a game that you and your friends play by taking on the roles of characters who are coming of age, and telling the tales of those characters as they overcome adversity, both personal and external. Together you will decide what sort of setting and characters most interest you, and then together you will tell the story as those characters overcome their failings and realize their destinies.

A coming of age story isn't the same as your standard heroic tale. At the beginning of the story your characters aren't particularly

capable. Early on your character might wish to charge a dragon or make the love of your life fall for her, but she is more likely to hesitate out of fear or inexperience or trip on her feet or words. But as the game goes on she will be tempered by challenges, learning from defeat to become the person you destined her to be.

Though a coming of age story seems to be about an external threat or adventure, the meat of it is in the inner struggle for each character to overcome their failings and weaknesses. In Coming of Age, failure can be good if you

learn something from it. And though success is sweet, when it is undeserved and not fought for, it can slow your character's growth into her new self.

If you're not too familiar with this sort of game, don't worry about it. The most important thing to remember is that as you play *Coming of Age* you will describe what happens to your character and the world around her. You can do that by acting her out, you can tell it like a story, or even jump between the two.

The second most important thing is that all of you playing the game can and should help each other. When someone is getting stuck deciding what trouble to

## The Basics

*Coming of Age* doesn't have a default setting. Instead each game is based around a setting chosen by the players. Thus, one game of *Coming of Age* can be about adolescents stranded in the wilderness fighting to survive and the next about heirs to greatness being introduced into high society.

There are only two important details about any *Coming of Age* setting. First, all the players must

face or how to describe what happens with his character, if you've got an idea, give him a suggestion. Hopefully he'll return the favor.

If you are familiar with this sort of game, that last paragraph still applies. But also be aware, *Coming of Age* does some things differently. There may be things that are missing from the kinds of role-playing games you've played. By and large, those aren't important for *Coming of Age* to play well. If you really miss them, take a look at *Bits and Pieces*, towards the end for some options and strategies that might make things more familiar.

agree on the basic idea. Second, there must be a group in the setting who are in the process of coming into their own. Those will be the characters you will all play. Don't worry if you get stuck, this book is full of examples.

As important as the setting are the dice. Like many games, *Coming of Age* uses dice to determine some of what happens. When talking about dice, I'll write

d4 for a four-sided die or d20 for a twenty-sided die. This game uses lots of dice of different sizes, often called polyhedral dice. To tell the difference, it often helps to get dice that are different colors.

There are three types of dice in *Coming of Age*:

- Self dice - representing your character's destiny.
- Issue dice - representing your character's flaws and inner difficulties.
- Trouble dice - representing outside adversity facing all of you.

Self dice are one d20, one d12, and one d8 for each player. Issue dice are three differently colored sets, each set having a d12, d8, and d4. Issue dice are shared by everyone. Lastly, trouble dice should be several dice of all sizes (from d4 to d20), and visually distinct from self and issue dice.

Self dice represent the competency of the characters, named after titles, compliments, or virtues your character might one day receive. Issue dice represent the weaknesses and faults of the character, the very things that she is trying to overcome. Over time,

your issue dice will drop in size, from d12 to d8 to d4, and disappearing altogether when your character conquers that weakness.

Trouble dice are shared: they represent external problems, obstacles, and goals. They come in two subtypes, fixed dice are persistent problems. Like a recurring annoyance, a dangerous place, or some other fixture of your tale, fixed dice can't be defeated; they can only be avoided. Goal dice, on the other hand, can be beaten, acting as problems to be solved or opponents to defeat.

As you play *Coming of Age*, you take turns choosing your character's action. As you do so, you select the dice you will be rolling. First, the trouble dice you are working against and the self die that represents how you are striving against that trouble. Then add all your issue dice, since your inner obstacles are always present.

First roll your Self die, this will be the die roll that all other dice are trying to beat, by rolling higher.

Then you roll your trouble dice to find if any of them beat your self die's roll. If they do not, it looks like you will be succeeding baring your issues arising, you

get a reward for getting this far. Lastly, you'll roll your issue dice, if none roll above your self die, then your character has defeated the trouble, and can even cross out a goal die, gaining a further reward. If an issue rolls higher than your self die, you have been defeated by the highest rolling issue, undermining what could have been victory.

If a trouble die beats your self die's roll, then you were defeated by that trouble. You will also roll your issue dice next, but instead of them risking changing

## **Continuity**

At the center of telling the coming of age tale of your character is the idea that the world of all the characters will retain a certain consistency, that events will flow from one moment or description to the next. Coming of Age relies on this continuity to help bring the characters and hence you the players together. Because the troubles are shared among you, how you describe the changes in those troubles and in the wider world of the game directly affects what your fellow players can do.

While often taken for granted,

things, the highest rolling issue is reduced, since your defeat teaches your character a lesson about that issue. In some ways this is the best outcome, because here your character has the opportunity to grow and take a real step to her destiny.

Regardless of the outcome, you always describe something happening when you take an action, even if it isn't quite what you intended. And don't forget to ask and accept suggestions from the other players.

continuity isn't automatic. Most of the time, each of you will respond to each others ideas and incorporate them into your actions and description. But sometimes a player will forget some detail important to you, like the fact that the demon knight has entered the castle, meaning that to overcome the knight may require entering the castle as well. If that happens, tell him. Politely remind him of the fact, and if it changes what he was planning to do, try to give an alternate suggestion. Be open to clarification by others, they might have different ideas of what

had happened. Most importantly, work together to resolve the gap.

It may seem odd, but one of the keys to keeping the continuity working in *Coming of Age* is to not plan too far ahead. You already know where your character is headed, because of her

## Number of Players

*Coming of Age* is very flexible to the number of players. In its simplest you can play by yourself, buying and confronting trouble and mapping out the growth of your character. For solitaire play, I recommend writing down a short line or sentence for each action, to help keep you honest about describing what happens.

On the other side, *Coming of Age* for more than four or five people can become difficult for everyone to follow what is going on, so special care should be taken to make sure that everyone

## Settings

The first step in starting a *Coming of Age* game is for all the players to decide roughly what setting to use. Do you want sword and sorcery? Perhaps you want modern crime drama? Or

self and issue dice, the purpose of the game is to discover how she gets there. The dice, and more importantly your fellow players will surprise you. And that's what you should look forward to as part of playing *Coming of Age*.

can hear and understand each other. These sorts of games often work better with a Director (see *Optional Rules*).

The number of players will also loosely determine the time it takes to play your tale from creating your characters to a natural conclusion. In solitaire play, you will likely take between an hour and two. For three to four players, the time will likely be between two and three hours. For six players the tale may take more than three hours.

maybe school children fighting zombies? There are many options, but several factors are essential. First, the protagonists need room to grow. So teenagers fighting crime works well, but a special

ops teams doesn't unless they are completely out of their element. Second, the characters should all have reasons to know each other, even if it's just because they all live in the same town, go to the same school, or work in the same bar.

*Jan, Peter, Anna, and Dave have gotten together to play Coming of Age. When it comes to choosing the setting, they have very differing ideas.*

*They pass around a sheet of paper, each writing down an idea for the setting. Jan has just watched the Goonies and writes, "Geeky kids in modern day, searching for treasure." Peter writes, "Assassins in training." Anna writes, "Med school grads doing their first internship." Dave writes, "Academy of Magic."*

*They pass the paper around, each*

*voting for a setting other than their own. Jan votes for Med school grads. Peter votes for Academy of Magic. Anna votes for the Goonies. Stuck with breaking or making a tie, Dave asks if the med school grads could be in a hospital in the future, perhaps with alien patients and doctors. No one has a problem with this, so the setting becomes "Med school grads doing their first internship in space!"*

If you're looking for inspiration, the next section has a few setting sheets, pages with a short setting description and suggestions for self, issue, and trouble dice. You can use these as lists to pick from, as a starting point to build from, or even as an example for playing another setting entirely. Remember that these sheets aren't exhaustive, so try to come up with new ideas to mix with the existing ones.

## Space Police Cadets

Coming of age as a police cadet has never been easy. But with space pirates and maniacal computer given exams, it has never been more interesting.

### Potential Self Dice:

- Chief of Police
- Relentless Detective
- Ace Pilot
- Best Dressed Alien
- Bringer of Peace
- Hero of Cadia IV
- Smooth Negotiator
- Brightest Mind
- Deductive Genius
- Death Incarnate
- Ambassador
- Friends Above and Below
- Loving Parent
- Crack Shot
- Master of Politics

### Potential Issues:

- Naive
- Forgetful
- Clumsy
- Unobservant
- Self-Doubt
- Excessive Exuberance
- Doesn't Understand Humans
- Airhead
- Teen Angst
- Parental Shadow
- Need to Rebel
- Need to Conform
- Bad Timing
- Computers Hate Me
- Terrified

### Potential Troubles:

- Final Exams (goal)
- Talia, the new girl (goal)
- Vince, the new guy (goal)
- Food Fight! (goal)
- Surprise Inspection (goal)
- Pirate Infiltrators (either)
- Romance in the Air (either)
- Heroically Wounded (either)
- Talkative Computer (fixed)
- Astrogation Class (fixed)
- Professor Chaf (fixed)
- Corrupt Principal (fixed)
- Space Pirate Incursion (fixed)
- Venusian Flu (either)
- Academy Security (either)
- Doufnar, Space Hero! (either)

## Squires of Sword and Sorcery

Someday they will be heroes and villains, their exploits told in smoky taverns and the great halls of kings. But that day is not today. Now they face their first real challenges, learning whether their training has been of any use, as they begin to show the first glimmers of greatness.

### Potential Self Dice:

- Invincible Duelist
- Mother to Princes
- Archmage of the Swamp
- Hero of Kroag's Den
- Defender of the Faith
- Fist of Gods
- Warmaster
- Of Terrifying Aspect
- Arcane Inventor
- Siege Commander of Thul
- Serpentfoe
- Hunter of Beasts
- Teller of Truths
- Loyal Adviser
- Infamous Lover

### Potential Issues:

- Sickly
- Terrified
- Wizard's Curse
- Obsessed with Romance
- Obsessed with Fighting
- Obsessed with Studying
- Uncontrolled Shapeshifter
- Disrespectful
- Obsessed with Money
- Overenthusiastic
- Lazy
- Dishonorable Lineage
- Servant Mentality
- All Thumbs
- Terrible Luck

### Potential Troubles:

- Squire's Tournament (goal)
- Training Course (goal)
- Demon Knight (goal)
- Vicious Bandits (either)
- Traitor in Your Midst (goal)
- Visiting Knight (either)
- Love is in the Air (either)
- Magic Storm (either)
- Dark Wizard (either)
- Castle Guards (fixed)
- Castle Dungeons (fixed)
- Rival Squires (either)
- Teilek, King's Adviser (fixed)
- Balash, Court Wizard (fixed)
- The Axe of Ages (either)
- Sir Kelor, Instructor (fixed)

## Rite of Passage

You've been prepared by your people for a special ordeal. You will face challenges, struggling against the elements and the dark things that dwell in the wild lands. But when you return, you will be a child no longer.

### Potential Self Dice:

- War Leader
- Shaman
- Gifted Medium
- Aspect of the Bear
- Wisewoman
- Storyteller
- Master Crafter
- Beloved Father
- Truth Seer
- Trickster Reborn
- Dutiful Husband
- Fastest Runner
- Hunt Leader
- Great Builder
- Chosen of Gourash

### Potential Issues:

- Irresponsible
- Uncooperative
- Ignorant
- Fearful
- Sickly
- Hesitant
- Leaps Before Looking
- Foolish
- Unaware
- Homesick
- Troubled by Spirits
- Pampered
- Too Clever
- Domineering
- Bloodthirsty

### Potential Troubles:

- Ordeal of Fire (goal)
- Ordeal of the Beast (goal)
- Rival Initiates (either)
- Gourash's Challenge (goal)
- Shadowy Pursuers (goal)
- Spirit Quest (goal)
- Dalar, the Winter Wolf (either)
- Enemy Ambush (goal)
- Lost in the Spirit Realm (goal)
- Mount Tyuth (either)
- Thunder Storm (fixed)
- Dark Reflections (either)
- Wild Lands (fixed)
- Hostile Spirits (either)
- Proof of Maturity (either)
- Old Man Yutal (fixed)

## **Magic Academy**

You are students in a magical academy held secret from the mundane world. Here they teach the four arts of magic: the wand, the cauldron, the seal, and the sword. But it is a place ripe for corruption by subtle enemies. Only you can keep them at bay. Of course, you also need to pass your examinations...

You can build your own magical academy or club using Appendix 1.

### **Potential Self Dice:**

- Dragon Hatcher
- Discoverer of Is La
- Trollfriend
- Finder of the Lost Seal
- Enemy of the Dark
- Loyal Friend
- Prince of Wizards
- Potion innovator
- Successful Novelist
- Swordmistress
- Invented the Magicmobile
- Deputy Minister
- First in Class
- Transmutation Instructor
- Forged the Peace of Nock

### **Potential Issues:**

- Magic is the Answer
- Too Shy
- Obsessed with Boys
- Ambiguous Destiny
- Teen Angst
- New to Wizardry
- Second Class Citizen
- Can't Stop Talking
- Easily Confused
- Superiority Complex
- Unreliable Magics
- Cursed
- Romantic Confusion
- Recovering from Trauma
- Arrogant

### **Potential Troubles:**

- Ixana, Dark Sorceress (goal)
- Mid-Term Exams (either)
- Spring Ball (either)
- School Curfew (fixed)
- Transformation Potion (goal)
- The Antlered Beast (either)
- Curious School Nurse (either)
- Artifex Class (either)
- The Three Swords (goal)
- Guardian Statues (fixed)
- Parents (fixed)
- Exchange Student (either)
- Academic Squabbling (goal)
- Secret Romance (goal)
- Quest of Blackstone (goal)
- Labyrinthine Library (fixed)

## Scions of the Superspy

The mysterious superspy known only by a number has foiled many nefarious plots, and broken many hearts. Each of you comes from one such dalliance. But something has gone wrong the superspy is missing, the world is in peril, now it's time for you to live up to your heritage.

*Suggested by Cassie Konkle and Briana Schmiedekamp.*

### Potential Mothers:

- Mimi La Troube - French-Canadian Gambler and Hustler

#### Self

- High Roller
- Invented "Lo Mein to Go" Con

#### Issues

- Searching for the Big Score
- Doesn't Know When to Quit

#### Troubles

- Marcel La Troube
- Gambling Debts

- Capt. Yekaterine Federov - Former KGB Cryptographer

#### Self

- Brilliant Mathematician
- Master of Deception

#### Issues

- Always Suspicious
- Lost in the Numbers

#### Troubles

- Leningrad Code
- KGB Remnants

- Dr. Becky Wellhead - American Nuclear Scientist

#### Self

- Nobel Prize Winner
- Chief of anti-WMD Operations

#### Issues

- Lost In Thought
- Technobabbler

#### Troubles

- Dr. Ivana Milovich
- Dirty Bomb Network

- Rasamee Sookdhis - Thai Sniper in Chinese Intelligence

#### Self

- Decorated Sniper
- Master Chef

#### Issues

- Perfectionist
- Oblivious to the World

#### Troubles

- The Titanium Chefs
- Jacque Minette

• Kitty Grand - Former British Heiress and Huntress

**Self**

- CEO of HMDR International
- Famous Conservationist

**Issues**

- Haughty Nobility
- Nature Obsessed

**Troubles**

- Blue Crossed Loon
- Potential Sutors

• Gloria Tatas - Bolivian Agent, Raised in the Ukraine, Master Poisoner

**Self**

- Rodeo Superstar
- Collector of Venoms

**Issues**

- Overly Careful
- Can't Stop With a Taste

**Troubles**

- Jackie Cojones
- Assassination Job

• Nanami Mami - Ninja by Day, Flower Arranger by Night

**Self**

- Master of Assassins
- Artist's Eye

**Issues**

- Bound by Honor
- Bloodthirsty

**Troubles**

- The Perfected Lotus
- Corporate Ninjas

• Verena Kurtz, East German Archivist and Secretary

**Self**

- Translator of Linear B
- Loyal Assistant

**Issues**

- Overly Honest
- Stuck in the Books

**Troubles**

- The Mazerach Code
- Society of the Golden Horn

• Jenny Èntendre - Surviving sister of the Èntendre twins, Famous Haitian Acrobats

**Self**

- Brilliant Performer
- Linguistic Genius

**Issues**

- Cultural Confusion
- Soft-Hearted

**Troubles**

- Grandfather Mikhail
- The Show Must Go On

• Lt. Mona Bhoot - Logistics Officer in North Indian Command

**Self**

- Fantastic Dancer
- Master Planner

**Issues**

- Rigid Procedures
- Doing Too Much

**Troubles**

- Missing WMD
- Arranged Romance

- Sugar Brown - Micronesian diver and tour guide

### **Self**

- Oceanographer
- Sweet Talker

### **Issues**

- Risk Taker
- Hopeless Romantic

### **Troubles**

- Shipwrecked Treasure
- Aunt Candy

### **Other Self Dice:**

- Irresistible to Men
- Has the Perfect Gadget
- Unflappable
- Impeccable Dresser
- Combat Expert
- Perfect Chameleon
- Tradecraft Instructor
- Cannot be Deceived

### **Other Troubles:**

- **The Mastermind d12** (fixed)
- **The Henchmen d8** (fixed)
- Attractive & Available (either)
- Machette Vic (goal)

- Edith Jenkins - Welsh Military Nurse and Bio-weapons Expert

### **Self**

- Indomitable Spirit
- Encyclopedia of Medicine

### **Issues**

- Works in Theory
- Slow to React

### **Troubles**

- Troublesome Patients
- Unknown Pathogen

### **Other Issues:**

- Distracted by Boy Toys
- Confusing Double Life
- Your Father's Shadow
- Inexperienced
- Existential Crisis
- Idealize Your Father
- Angry With Your Dad
- Impractical Plans

- Lorelai Tubbs (goal)
- W.R.A.I.T.H. (either)
- The Watkins Device (goal)
- MI6 Interference (fixed)

**Mothers:** Each Scion will have a mother who was once a femme fatale, love interest, or incidental conquest in the many adventures of the Superspy. Some possible mothers are listed above, but this is by no means exhaustive.

**The Villains:** The Mastermind and his or her Henchmen are free fixed dice, so you can pair them with goal dice representing their plots or your current guess for who they are. Mastermind starts for free at d12 and the Henchmen starts at d8. Defeating the goal die you have selected to be the mastermind at d20 resolves the global crises and starts one last round by all the other players tying up loose ends as to end the game.

## **Bureau of Time - First Mission**

The Bureau of Temporal Reconnaissance and Defense holds the line against criminal cartels who smuggle across the time lines and parallel worlds, dark conspiracies of temporal hegemony, and nefarious aliens from the far future. Always light on agents, your probationary team been sent out on a routine mission, but in BTRD there is no such thing as routine.

### **Potential Self Dice:**

- Poly-Linguist
- Master of Arms
- Doctor of Temporal Physics
- Averted the Yarshok Incident
- Perfect Timing
- Senior Time Pilot
- Inspector Temporal
- Healthy Family Life
- Inter-Temporal Diplomat
- Human Computer
- Steady Headed
- Past and Future King
- Gifted with Gab
- Unstoppable
- Councillor of Dreams

### **Potential Issues:**

- Forgetful
- Attracted to . . .
- Hero Worship
- Provincial
- Something to Prove
- Hesitation
- Time Slippage
- Over-Attention to Detail
- Craves Danger
- Excessive Curiosity
- Raised in the Past
- I Don't Belong
- Married to the Rules
- Inflated Ego
- Dangerous Nostalgia

### **Potential Troubles:**

- Weight of History (fixed)
- Demanding Future Self (goal)
- Enigmatic Device (goal)
- Paradoxical Romance (goal)
- Alluring Natives (goal)
- Causality Eddies (both)
- Imperial Agent (goal)
- Branch Commander (fixed)
- Smuggling Ring (goal)
- Temporal Raiders (goal)
- The Quiet Ones (both)
- Time Line Changed! (fixed)
- Enraged Dinosaur (goal)
- Alien Infiltrator (goal)
- Cartel Enforcer (goal)
- Chronon Maelstrom (both)

## Playing the Game

Now that you've all agreed on a setting, you're ready to start building characters and creating troubles.

### Building Characters

The first step in describing your character is to get a copy of the character sheet and write down your character's name and setting. Since *Coming of Age* is a game about potential, your characters are described in two other ways, self dice and issue dice, which you name by filling in the boxes.

First, you must choose the destiny that one day your character might be achieve. Think of titles like: Mafia Don, Archmagus, or Protector of the People. These all suggest an accomplishment. They also can also imply many things, such as who you know and what you can do. These self dice represent your character's destiny.

Each character has five self dice. The highest is a d20, indicating the most important self die describing what your character will become. The d12s are meant to flesh out the core of that future career. Destiny as a Dashing Duelist is one thing, but it has a different connotation if you will also be

destined as the Life of the Party, a Hunter of Beasts, or an Infamous Lover. Finally, the d8s add the last dimension, leaving room for final details, such as the general's musical talent or knowledge of engineering.

Avoid doubling up the self dice; each should be distinct. Also, consider referring to specific places, people, and things. Protector of the Southside suggests that Southside will play a role in the game to come. Likewise Husband of Lady Margaret indicates that Lady will feature in the course of the game. These sorts of self dice are fairly flexible, as exactly what happens in Southside, or what being a husband to Lady Margaret might entail, can be developed during play.

Once you've considered who your character will become, you should consider what personal failings stand in their way. Choose three faults or problems to become your character's issues, each starting at a d12. Issues, unlike trouble, is an internal difficulty for your character. Cowardice, ignorance, shyness, depression, inexperience, or an unhealthy ob-

session are all examples of issues. Issues can be more physical, such as bad vision or frailty. They might be more social as well, such as being distrusted or a second-class citizen.

You will overcome issues over the course of the game. At first they will dominate your character's actions, leading to failures and complications, but these complications will enable your character to grow, as the trouble she encounters force her to face her problems and grow beyond them.

*Jan, Peter, Anna, and Dave are ready to start choosing their self dice. Anna quickly picks her d20 as "Gifted Surgeon", her two d12s as "Well Respected" and "Exceptional Teacher", and her two d8s as "Always Cheerful" and "Wiz at Space Golf". Dave picks his d20 as "Prestigious Alien Researcher". Peter inquires whether Dave's character is an alien or researches them. "Both." he replies. Building on that, Dave picks his d8s as "Space Traveler" and "Black Belt in Centauri Judo" and his d12s as "Savior of the Kroneck" and "Diagnostic Expert". He doesn't know who or what the Kroneck are, but that doesn't matter; he'll figure*

*that out as the game goes on.*

*Jan and Peter are having a little more trouble. Jan wants to be a cold and somewhat abrasive doctor-in-training. She's just not sure how to put that as self dice. Anna offers "Makes the Hard Decisions", and Peter suggests just taking "Abrasive Personality". Jan takes both, the first at d12 and the second at d8. From there, she decides to take "Director of Medicine" as her d20, and then a d12 as "Politically Savvy" and her last d8 as "Harsh, but Fair".*

*That leaves Peter, who has been focusing more on the other players' characters than his own. Not sure of what he wants to play, he asks the others. Jan suggests a womanizing troublemaker, Dave suggests a pediatrician, and Anna suggests a veteran medic working to become a doctor. Peter shuffles those ideas together and decides on his d20 as "Brilliant Pediatrician", his two d12s as "Faced Fire" and "Irresistibly Attractive", and his two d8s as "Loved by the Nurses" and "Respected by the Paramedics".*

*With the self dice finished, the four players are ready to figure out their issues, all of which start at d12. Anna*

takes “Lack of Confidence”, “Easily Distracted”, and “Clumsy”. Dave takes “Can’t Relate to People”, “Self Serving”, and “Uneducated”. Jan takes “Desire to be liked”, “Shy”, and “Cheated in Med School”. The others point out that “Cheated at Med School” isn’t really an internal issue, it might be trouble if it comes up, but Jan’s character won’t just learn to get over it. Dave suggests “Loose Ethics” as the last issue and Jan puts it down.

Peter looks over his selection. He has taken “Foul Temper” but he really wants to have “Shy” and “Lack of Confidence” as well. He asks the other players if there’s any problem with doubling up on issues, and no one seems to mind, so he selects those as well. With this done, each of them has developed a character and they’re ready to buy some trouble and start playing.

### **Creating Trouble**

Once you’ve built your character, each player gets 10 story points to use in collaboratively building the troubles for their tale and in encouraging the other players. Troubles are also described as dice, and are purchased by one or more players using their story points. You should place a trouble

sheet in the middle of the table to record these dice.

There are two types of trouble dice. First, fixed dice represent persistent aspects of the setting, such as a treacherous forest or difficult school work, or anything you want to be a fixture in the tale. The important thing about these dice is that they cannot be won, only avoided. This means that they act as backdrops for the other dice: Goal dice. Goal dice represent specific people and situations that present trouble for a character and can be overcome.

Trouble dice cost half their highest value in story points. So a d8 costs 4, a d12 costs 6, and a d20 costs 10. Fixed dice go up to a d12, while goal dice go up to a d20. Raising an existing die costs the difference in the costs, so raising a d8 to a d10 costs 1, while raising a d12 to a d20 costs 4. You can purchase new dice or raise an existing die at any time. You can even bring a goal die back from being overcome by raising its size and describing how that trouble has returned or changed. However, you should discuss and purchase a few trouble dice at the beginning. It helps to get things flowing.

Jan, Peter, Anna, and Dave all have ten points to spend on trouble dice. While thinking about troubles, Jan and Peter start to lay out dice for the game. Jan puts out a set of red dice from d4 to d20, and another orange set next to it. Those will be the trouble dice, since they are of a wide range of sizes, so she puts them next to the trouble sheet. Meanwhile, Peter hands out different colored trios of dice: a d20, a d12, and a d8 to each player. Those will be the self dice, since each player only ever rolls one self die at a time. Lastly, Jan puts a white, a gray, and a black trio of d4, d8, and d12 near the middle of the table. Those will be the issue dice, as they go down in size. Each player assigns one of those colors to each of their issues, writing it down on the side to keep track.

At the same time, Anna has decided on a trouble die, a "Sadistic Supervisor" which she decides is fixed (since she doesn't want the supervisor to be removed by defeating it). She spends three of her story points to set it at a d6, hoping that the others will add to it. Jan and Dave both agree to add one point to the supervisor, making it finally a fixed d10. Dave has decided on a goal die instead, specifically a "Transport Accident"

filling the ER on the characters' first day. He spends five points on this, making it a d10 goal die.

Peter then buys a "Cheating Scandal" based on his troubles in Med School. He plans to build things up, so he only spends four on it, making it a d8 goal die. That leaves Anna with seven story points left, Peter with six story points left, and Dave with four. Jan decides there's enough trouble for her at the moment, and keeps her remaining nine story points in reserve. That's fine, since she can spend them at any time during the game.

### **Taking Turns**

Once you are ready to play, choose someone to go first. Starting with her you take turns, going around in a circle. Each turn one player's character makes a significant action. Usually this involves trying to confront one or more trouble dice using an appropriate self die. Take the self die, the trouble dice, and any issue dice that aren't explicitly irrelevant (which usually means all of them). Roll the self die, then the trouble dice, and finally the issue dice. Eventually you may want to roll them all at once, but at

first it is easier to see what is going on if you roll them in groups.

If the self die isn't exceeded by any of the trouble dice, you gain a story point. If at least one trouble die exceeds the self die, then reduce the highest (or one of the highest) rolling issue dice by one step, from d12 to d8, from d8 to d4, or from d4 to no die. If all of your issue dice are already gone, you instead lower another character's issue die, telling how your difficulty shows them something. Once you've done this, you can describe the outcome of your action:

- If your self die rolled equal to or greater than all other dice you are victorious. Describe how your attempt to overcome the trouble succeeded. You may cross out any one goal trouble die you rolled, gaining an additional story point. If you do so, describe how your success overcomes that goal (perhaps only temporarily).
- If the self die is less than a trouble die, you failed to beat that external adversity. Describe how you failed, but learned something in the process, remember you reduced

the highest rolling (or one of the highest rolling) issue dice by one step. Even if you have no issue dice left, you still teach someone else in your failure.

- Otherwise, you beat your trouble, but were beaten by your issues, so describe how you failed in your attempt, due to your inner failings, the highest (or one of your highest) issue dice. Usually this makes the situation more complicated.

When a roll is completed, any other player may choose to spend a story point to give you another chance to roll. Both outcomes apply; treat this as a refocusing of your efforts, a sort of extended screen time. You should do this for other players as a reward for an interesting action; after all, a good story deserves a good reward. After any additional rolls, the player to your left takes his turn.

At times, players find their characters at odds. In this case, if both of you agree, you may roll another character's self die as one of your trouble dice. This die are treated as fixed, but provides a story

point award if defeated. If your self die is above all other dice, including the other character's self die, then you may reduce any one issue die of that character. You have literally taught him a lesson. In any case, the outcome involves description from the involved players, working together to say what happened.

*Jan, Peter, Anna, and Dave have played a few turns already, and now it's Jan's turn again. Jan's character Beka is trying to work on two patients at once, due to the Transport accident, while her Sadistic Supervisor is keeping an eye on her, looking for any mistakes. Jan takes a red d10 (supervisor) and an orange d10 (accident) as her trouble dice. She decides to use Beka's Makes Hard Decisions, a blue d12, and also takes her three issue dice, all at d12 as well (black, gray, and white).*

*She then rolls all six of these dice. She rolls a 3 on her self die, which is the lowest of her dice. Her issue dice rolled highest, 11, 8, and 11, respectively. But, what matters is that her self die was beaten by her trouble dice, particularly the accident, which rolled a 9. Because trouble dominated Jan reduces one of her*

*highest issue dice, either Desire to be Liked or Loose Ethics. She decides to reduce the former as she's learning that being likeable just doesn't cut it. Jan describes how Beka runs from one patient to another, rapidly losing her calm, until, as she's working on stabilizing a woman with a leg full of splinters, her other patient starts to die.*

*Since it's Peter's turn next, he responds, "Great, I run to the the dying patient." He decides his character, Geoff, will roll much the same dice (no one else has had a chance to lower their issue dice yet), except he will use his self die of Brilliant Pediatrician, deciding on the fly that the coding patient is the woman's young daughter. He rolls a yellow d20 as his self die, and rolls a 12 on it, automatically beating all the other dice, since none of them can roll above a 12. So Peter gains a story point and crosses out the Transport Accident, gaining another story point. Peter describes reaching the girl side by side Beka, as another doctor is about to give up on her. He cries out, "We're not letting her die!" and starts to resuscitate again, succeeding through sheer willpower. He describes how the patients are handled and things*

*come back to a relative calm. He then spends a story point to bring back the Transport Accident, this time as a d12, mentioning how another wave of trauma patients come into the space dock a few minutes later.*

*Anna calls out, "Let's hear some more!" and spends a story point to give Peter another turn. He goes to another child hurt in the accident and attempts to work a*

*miracle. Unfortunately, he rolls an 8 on his self die: above the two trouble dice, but not his issue dice 10, 5, 9, respectively. Geoff would have succeed, except for his Foul Temper. As he is working, he takes out his aggression on a nurse, and while distracted his patient gets worse. Although Peter doesn't succeed, he does get a story point since he defeated the trouble dice. Now its Anna's turn to come to the rescue.*

## Bits and Pieces

Coming of Age is a fairly simple game. In many ways it is like a set of tools. There are many ways to use them to create your own coming of age tale. Different settings are just the tip of the iceberg. Optional rules and strategies, as well as ways of using trouble dice you might not have considered, can all be found here.

### Settings

- **Black Ops Retirement** (setting) - The best at what you do. No secret mission, no cunning conspiracy, no maniacal villain too tough. All of that can't prepare you for what you face now, settling into a normal, mundane life.
- **Diamond Edge** (setting) - The world is changing, and those who don't keep up won't see tomorrow. You're on the edge of the nano-tech revolution: governments fear you and corporations want to recruit you. Or at least that's who you plan to be in a few years.
- **Family Matters** (setting) - Growing up in a family can be tough, especially if your family is the Family. Will you embrace the life or run from it? Or will you go straight for the top?
- **Heroes of the Revolution** (setting) - You were leaders and soldiers struggling with your friends and allies to free your country. Then you died. But others carry your memory on to greatness. In the end they will forget your failings, and you will become a legend, a Hero of the Revolution.
- **In the Wilds** (setting) - Stranded together in the wilderness, you must be resourceful and clever if you are to stay alive. Without the comforts of civilization what will you discover about yourself? And what will you discover about each other?
- **Introductions** (setting) - High society and high culture have their own rituals to mark adulthood. For the pampered, they come all too fast. Will you do your family proud? Or will you find another path?
- **New Recruits** (setting) - The vets tell you that nothing will

prepare you for when you go under fire. Maybe you'll be a hero, maybe you'll just make it through. But one thought that keeps you going, you and your buddies are going to make it out together.

- **On the Street** (setting) - London is a hole in the ground haloed with choking smog, and more kids get lost there everyday. But if you have to choose between the workhouses and the street, you'll choose the street. If you're clever enough, you'll do more than survive, you'll make it big.
- **Sharks in Training** (setting) - Chaladni, Morris, and Zech are the most prestigious firm of defense attorneys in the city. You're the new hires, and the partners say half of you won't make it past your first case.
- **The Next Day** (setting) - Yesterday was a horrible day. Your town was destroyed with power you've never seen before. Your friends and family are dead or, worse, enslaved. Only a few of you are left. And it's up to you to face the

next day.

- **Unlikely Heroes** (setting) - The local dark lord is starting a nefarious plan that bodes ill for all. The people of the land cry out for someone to save them. But all they got was you, a rag-tag band most wouldn't call heroes. But it doesn't matter, because it's time to save the day.
- **Wild West** (setting) - Young and idealistic, you converge on a town of troublesome folk, train robbers, and crazy prospectors. Your team is the new law in town. You just have to get everyone else to believe it.

### Optional Rules

- **Avoiding Issues** (option) - If you don't think an issue die applies to your action explain why before you roll. If no one objects, you can omit it from the roll. Remember that if you do so, you can't reduce the die as part of the outcome. This option makes it easier to achieve victory, but makes it tempting to put off learning and improving until later. Be warned.

- **Blanks** (option) - If you want to discover more about your character during play, consider starting with only your d20 self die and one issue die named. Then when you want to use another self die, or one of your unnamed issue dice causes you to fail or gets reduced, decide right then and there what that die is named. This can help if you're having trouble naming all the dice before you play, or if you want the various character's plots to be more intertwined. This is related to the Revise option below.
- **Director** (option) - Many role-playing games have someone who (instead of playing a main character) helps to facilitate the game by playing the part of supporting characters and generally keeping things flowing. You might find some of that useful. If so, consider having one player be the director. She can still play a character, but she gets the authority to hurry along slow descriptions or ask questions to help other players be more creative. Of course,

she also gets the responsibility to keep things moving and fair. In *Coming of Age* all the players are encouraged to do this, but the director in particular is assigned to pay special attention.

- **Endgame** (option) - You may have noticed that as issue dice drop and trouble is defeated the game moves towards a natural ending. Typically the game ends when the players feel that the tale is concluded. But if you want a specific rule, there are two good options for triggering an endgame. One option is starting after any one player has dropped all her issue dice to 0. Another option is when a number of d20 goal dice are defeated equal to the number of players. In either case, that player has just had her last turn this game. Then let each other player take his last turn in order, working to resolve any dangling threads.
- **Pacing** (option) - A regular game of *Coming of Age* will take about 3 hours, maybe a little more if you have more than five people. You can spread this out over

multiple sessions if someone makes notes about the situation when you leave. But if you just want a longer paced game, consider adding two or four steps between each size of issue die. That way, you must learn three or five lessons before the die reduces in size. This will mean significantly more trouble will appear and be defeated. Adding two steps will about double the time, while adding four could as much as quadruple it.

- **Revise** (option) - Sometimes you may regret a choice for a self or issue die. If so, bring it up on your turn and ask the other players and if no one objects, change it. Generally you shouldn't do this for a self die you've used frequently or an issue die that has already started dropping. This is related to the Blanks option above.
- **Sequels** (option) - This option is a way for you to play a sequel to a game of Coming of Age you just finished. First, remove any character who has two or more issue dice at 0.

Those players will create new characters, or build a new version of their prior character as a starting character for the sequel. Then take the remaining characters and copy to a new sheet their self and non-0 issue dice. Raise those issue dice by one size each (up to d12). Then if your character had an issue die at 0, give her a new issue die at a d12. Each player then chooses one trouble die to keep, copying it over to a new trouble sheet. Lastly, the returning characters gain 10 story points, less 2 for each d8 issue die they have. So if your character has two d8s, she gets 6 story points to start with.

## Strategies

- **Continuity Tricks** (strategy)
  - One of the subtle but important parts of Coming of Age is that the description of one character sets the situation around those the troubles for the other players. This can be surprisingly useful. Separating two troubles geographically can help make people choose between them. In the same way, if you push

troubles together other players will find it easier to confront all of them, and harder to avoid some. These sorts of tricks can be very effective, but should be used carefully. It's easy to push to hard and make things seem contrived or annoying, so be careful with this.

- **Escalation** (strategy) - If you have an important trouble die, it's a good idea not to start it much higher than d8. You might want it to be a bigger danger, but part of what makes troubles significant is the scope of their influence on the game. By starting lower you have more room for escalating the trouble, so when it becomes time to raise it to d20 more players will be interested. And don't forget this strategy tends to give you more bang for your story points.
- **Failing Too Much** (strategy) - If you find you are failing too much, consider the most unsatisfying outcome is when you defeat your trouble, but lose to your issues. You might have a better time either Los-

ing and Learning or Victory strategies.

- **Indirect Action** (strategy) - You're not required to make your character the center of her actions. After all, she could influence subtly, acting through others and causing her plans to occur with complex chains of events. For these sorts of actions, describe the influence as part of what happens, but focus on supporting characters, like friends, allies, and family members. Lots of indirect actions can lend the game a strategic feeling, where the characters are above getting their hands dirty. One peculiar application of this strategy is characters acting after Death.
- **Instant Return** (strategy) - This highly recommended strategy exploits the fact that you can spend story points at any time to instant return a trouble die you just defeated. Since you get two story points for defeating a goal die, and it usually only takes one to raise that die and return it, this effectively costs you nothing

(until you want to raise the goal die to a d20, in which case you might want to ask some help). This is easily described by giving your trouble a set-back, causing a change in tactics or approach.

- **Losing and Learning** (strategy) - If your issue dice aren't dropping fast enough, it's time to prioritize losing and learning. Find ways to use your lower self dice, and select the largest trouble dice you can. A few actions like these should ensure your poor character gets some scars, and some lessons to go along with them.
- **Reveal** (strategy) - If you name some of your self dice with proper names like Hero of Block Seven or Master of the Jin Rah, you've given yourself the opportunity to reveal what that means as you play. Thus, if the giant squid is attacking your city, you could decide that your battle with it occurs in Block Seven or that the secret technique needed to defeat it is the geomantic art of Jin Rah. This naming style provides a great

deal of flexibility and lets everyone discover something unexpected during play.

- **Versus** (strategy) - The rules allow you to include another player as an trouble to your actions. This means that if you work with another player you can play out a back-and-forth duel, each taking the other's self die as a trouble die. This duel could be a battle of wits, competition over a romantic opportunity, or a physical fight. In any case, this strategy gives a great way to tie two characters together.
- **Victory** (strategy) - If you really want to win, there is no substitute for taking your d20 self die and going after low trouble dice. Of course, if you find yourself falling to your issues again and again, you might want to consider Losing and Learning for a little while first. That way your hard knocks will come with benefits.

### Using Trouble

- **Advantages** (trouble) - Advantages are things like allies, equipment, or special training.

Oddly enough they appear as troubles, not when they are used, but when they are missing or unhelpful. A fixed die of Outside Our Territory can be a good way to show the advantage the heirs to a crime family might have close to home. Likewise, a goal die of Magic Sword Shattered brings to light the power of that sword. Ultimately, coming of age is about inner growth. That means that material advantages become most important when they aren't present.

- **Death** (trouble) - It may seem that characters in Coming of Age can't die. This isn't quite right. Your character can die if you choose to have it occur during one of your actions. If you do, you should purchase a fixed die representing the state of death. This doesn't remove you from taking actions. It just means they'll tend to be Indirect Actions (see above). Death might even be a goal die, if you plan to return from the dead during the course of play. Of particular note, the premise of

the Heroes of the Revolution (also above) setting includes all the characters being dead.

- **Disease and Poison** (trouble) - Disease and poisons make excellent trouble dice. If they are fixed, they represent plagues or conditions which cause difficulty for the characters. Perhaps they risk becoming reinfected or poisoned repeatedly. As goal dice they can add significant drama, as characters struggle to find a cure whether they are infected or not. And sometimes you might decide they result in Death or Injury.
- **Injury** (trouble) - Injuries and wounds make interesting trouble dice. As fixed dice, they cause difficulty for the injured character and any other character that might be hampered by it. As goal dice, they present something that can be overcome (by hard work or perhaps supernatural means). Characters in Coming of Age rarely have negative consequences from their actions, but every once and a while an injury can help make a game more interesting.

- **Locations** (trouble) - Locations are nearly always fixed trouble dice. They are places you can be that cause trouble or are difficult to deal with. But sometimes a location can be a goal die, if it's a prison you're trying to escape or a labyrinth in which trying to get to the middle.
- **Named and Unnamed** (trouble) - One neat trick with trouble dice is that multiple dice can apply to the same specific trouble. If you have a fixed die as your commanding officer, and a goal die as a hidden traitor, and you discover that he is the traitor, both dice apply. This means that you can defeat him as the traitor even though you can't defeat fixed dice. That means it's a good idea to have a mix of proper names and more generic trouble dice.
- **Perils** (trouble) - Much like disease and poison, perils such as drowning, falling, death traps, and infernos are represented as trouble dice, often as goal dice so they can be overcome. Thus defeating the peril and avoiding death. Or perhaps Death and Injury do occur.
- **Romance and Relationships** (trouble) - Trouble dice work well in parallel. One way to do this is to have a relationship be a goal die, such as Romance or Ask Him Out. Then during your actions you can describe how you do this with one of the existing trouble dice, fixed or goal. This gives other players the flexibility to try a similar relationship with other troubles, or even the same one, which could lead to a Versus competition.
- **Situations** (trouble) - After people, situations are the most common type of trouble dice. Often, situations are intended to be resolved by the characters, making them goal dice. Sometimes, however, a situation that is long term, such as Kingdom at War or largely immune to the characters, such as Hurricane, can be a fixed die. Those sorts of situations will most likely be backdrops to the actions of the characters.

# Coming of Age: Character Sheet

Scion Name:

Mother's Name:

Scion Blurb:

Story Points

## Self Dice

d20

d12

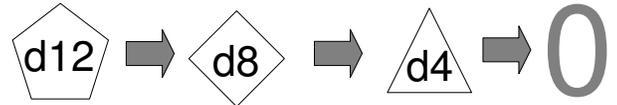
d12

d8

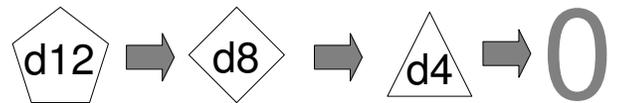
d8

## Issue Dice

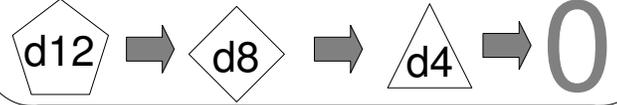
color:



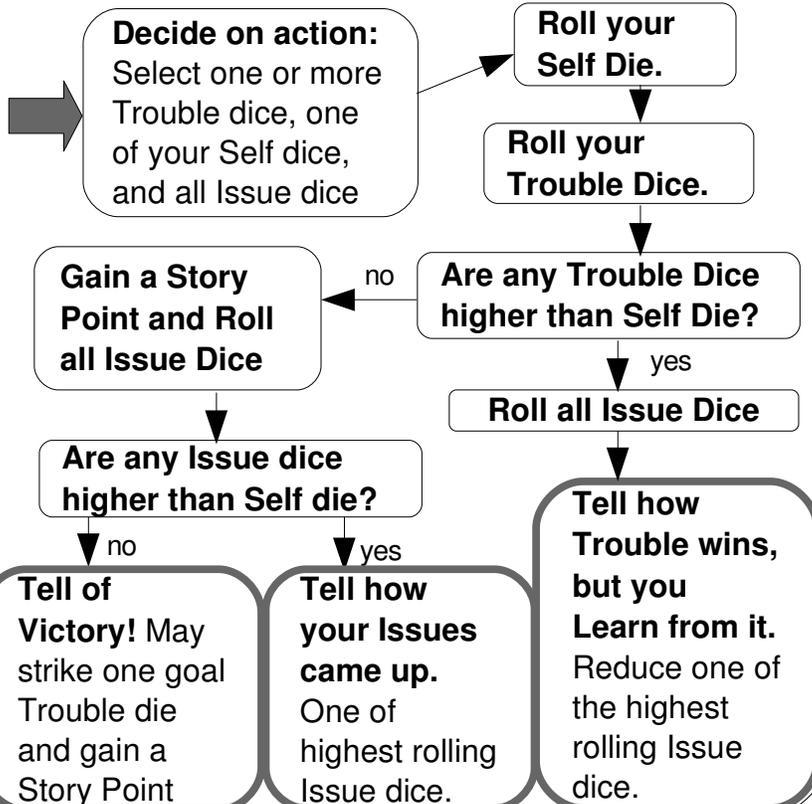

color:




color:



## Action Flow Chart



## Options

### After a Player's Turn:

Spend a Story Point for that player to continue her action, using the same dice.

### At Any Time:

Spend Story Points to raise Trouble dice.

### Player vs. Player:

With permission use another player's Self die as a Trouble die. If you achieve Victory, you may reduce one of their Issue dice and gain a Story Point.

**Trouble wins with no Issue dice above 0:** Gain a story point and, if possible, reduce another character's Issue die, and tell how your difficulty teaches something.



## Appendix 1: Creating a Magical Academy

### 1. Vital Statistics:

- (a) Academy Name
- (b) Choose a Magical Academy, or a Mundane one with Magical Clubs
- (c) Academy Location
- (d) Academy Motto or Seal
- (e) Choose boarding or commuting
- (f) Age range - starting age and graduation age
- (g) Is it a public academy? - all children passing some test in the area are sent here, usually run by some agency or ministry.
- (h) Is it a private academy? - this school requires some payment or lineage, exceptional students may be accepted regardless.
- (i) Is it run by some group? - the school is run under the auspices of some group: religious, political, even military.
- (j) Is it known or hidden? - is the school: well known, known and avoided, an unmentioned part of the community, or a well kept secret.

### 2. Classes (see Class List below)

- (a) Choose 3 Required Classes - These classes are required for all students each year and represent the most important part of the school's education.
- (b) Choose another 5-10 electives - The other course the academy offers.

### 3. Activities (see Activities List below)

- (a) Choose three popular activities. - These activities are popular and competitive.
- (b) Choose another 2-10 activities that the academy supports.

### 4. Houses or Clubs - Choose if your academy has Houses or other major social groupings. If your school is a mundane academy, at

least one of the houses or clubs should be magical. If so, pick a magical class speciality. If so, for each house or club choose:

- (a) House Name
- (b) House Virtue
- (c) A Specialty Class or Activity

### **Magical Classes**

- Alchemy - Making potions, elixirs, salves, and transforming objects.
- Artifex - Making, maintaining, and charging magical items.
- Cosmogeny - Traveling, orienteering, and perceiving in our universe and others.
- Cursing - Hindering and manipulating chance.
- Divination - Finding information through any number of means.
- Elementalism - Manipulating the inanimate elements of the natural world.
- Geomancy - Altering magical environments, setting up large magical effects, finding sources of power.
- Glamour - Altering mental states, emotions, and perceptions.
- Healing - - Perceiving health, preventing illness, curing pains.
- Hortimancy - Altering, controlling, and developing plants and related creatures.
- Monster Hunting - Methods for finding, capturing, and slaying magical monsters.
- Necromancy - Affecting and controlling the dead and causing decay and death.
- Shapeshifting - Altering one's own form, and sometimes others.
- Summoning - Calling beings from this or another universe.

- Warding - Resisting different forms of attack, preventing access to areas and people.
- Zoomancy - Altering, controlling, and developing animals and related creatures.
- Grimorie - Casting spells from books and other records.
- Runic - Use of runes, magical inscriptions with their own power.
- Unworking - Disrupting and breaking down magics.
- Arcane Language (Draconic, High Trollish, Left-wise-speak, ...)
- History of Magic - Origins and past of magic and the people who use it.
- Philosophy of Magic - Ethics, practices, and deep theory of magic.

### **Activities**

Note: Activities marked with a \* are not generally available outside of Magic Academies.

- Magical Sports (flareball, water hockey, track and teleport, ...)\*
- Magical Dueling\*
- Fencing / Kendo
- Mundane Sports (football, field hockey, track and field, ...)
- Chess
- Computer
- Camping
- Magical Gaming (sorcerer's chess, Politicians and Pundits, ...)\*
- Mundane Gaming (chess, go, Dungeons and Dragons, ...)
- Drama
- Choir
- Band

- Automotive
- Fan Club (bands, TV shows, ...)
- Debate
- Politics (Liberal, Conservative, Pan-Sapien, Arcano-Supremist, ...)
- Drill / Marching
- Special Interest (mundane or magical classes not taught at your academy)

### **Mundane Classes**

- Astronomy
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Health
- Shop (wood, metal, ...)
- Mathematics
- History
- Geography
- Economics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Art
- Literature
- Writing
- Native Language
- Foreign Language
- Religion

# Coming of Age: Magic Academy Sheet

Academy Name:

Magical / Mundane

Location:

Boarding / Commuting

Age of Admittance:                      Graduation:

Public / Private / Military / Religious / Political

Who Runs It?

Well-Known / Quiet / Feared / Secret

Academy Motto / Seal

Houses / Magic Clubs

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Virtue \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty \_\_\_\_\_

Classes

Req \_\_\_\_\_

Req \_\_\_\_\_

Req \_\_\_\_\_

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Activities

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