

COS

The CosPlay Roleplaying Game by Jared A. Sorensen

COS is a costume-oriented roleplaying game. Except where noted, COS is played like any other traditional RPG. There is one Game Master, several players, character sheets, dice and various accoutrements.

It is NOT a LARP!

To play, everyone in the game needs some paper, writing implements, 10-sided dice, poker chips (or some other "small units" – candy works well) and most important of all, a costume.

Yes, even the Game Master.

Costumes and Costume Appraisals

All players in COS must wear a costume and play the game in costume.

Yes, even the Game Master.*

*Unlike the players, the Game Master must wear a specific costume. The following costumes are approved for the role of Game Master. The Game Master should be addressed by this new role whenever a player wishes to speak to the Game Master.

- ❖ **The Dahrk Lohrd:** Horned helmet, demonic mask, a black cloak or cape, spiky accessories, a scary-looking melee weapon.
- ❖ **The Wizard:** Pointy hat, cape festooned with stars and moons, a staff or magic wand.
- ❖ **The King:** Purple or red robes, a crown, a scepter.
- ❖ **The Grim Reaper:** Black cloak or robe (with hood), a skull face/bony hands, a scythe or sickle.
- ❖ **God:** Long white robes and a long gray or white beard. Those who wish to portray alternate deities may choose to do so without penalty or ridicule.
- ❖ **"The Game Master":** Voluminous robes, cloak or cape, an abacus, really large novelty dice, some kind of staff or pointing device. A copy of these (or any other rules) is also a nice touch.

Players should have a copy of the Costume Appraisal Form for each participating player (except for themselves) and one Character Sheet for their personal use.

The Costume Appraisal Form will have the following fields.

COSTUME APPRAISAL FORM
Player _____
Costume _____

Strength (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Toughness (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Quickness (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)

Originality (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Likeness (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Craftsmanship (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Coverage (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)
Coolness (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10)

When filling out a Costume Appraisal Form, examine each player's costume (feel free to have that player model his or her outfit) and write down your rankings for that costume on the form.*

*What's with the numbers? Well, because people have different...um, writing styles, it will make it easier for the Game Master to tally the total scores. You're free to write down the actual numbers on your own Character Sheet though.

Strength, Toughness and Quickness (1-10)

These three rankings measure the Character Attributes of the costume. All three are fairly self-explanatory. Rank each one on a scale of one to ten, using the player's costume to gauge each attribute. Remember that these attributes reflect the inspiration for the costume rather than the Strength, Toughness or Quickness of the costume's material. Remember that a score of 5 is average. Higher 6-10 is above average, 1-4 is below average.

Originality (1-10)

First of all, determine the costume's Originality by comparing the costume to the other players' costumes (including those of both the Game Master and yourself).

Start with a base score of 10 and follow these steps in order:

If someone else in the game has a similarly-themed costume, subtract 2 from the costume's Originality. Themes include: horror, sci-fi, anime, furry, historical, etc.

If someone else in the game has a costume using the same source, subtract 2 from the costume's Originality. Sources include: specific movies, comics or TV series or a specific time period.

If another costume else in the game is the same type of character, subtract 2 from the costume's Originality. Types include: pirates, vampires, cat-girls, space bounty hunters, robots, etc.

If someone else in the game is wearing the same costume, that costume has an Originality of 2. Example would be multiple versions of identical characters or multiple generic characters using the same store-bought costume.

If the player in question has played COS before and wore the same costume, subtract one point from the costume's Originality.

Likeness (1-10)

Likeness is a measure of how much the player's costume matches the character concept. A high Likeness costume looks exactly like whatever it's supposed to resemble. A low Likeness costume is either incomprehensible ("What are you supposed to be?") or just not all-that similar to the source character (i.e.: a large bearded man dressed as Sailor Moon).

Craftsmanship (1-10)

Craftsmanship rates how well-made the costume is. If it's junky or super-delicate and prone to having pieces fall off it on a regular basis, give it a low Craftsmanship score. If it's sturdy and well-made, give it a high Craftsmanship score.

Coverage (1-10)

Coverage is a measure of how much of the player's physical body the costume covers. If the "costume" contains skin (like a barbarian or a mermaid or a hot anime babe), treat that as part of the costume. A high Coverage score means that the player's body and face are completely covered (or the player is naked). A low Coverage score means that the costume is limited to a mask or props.

Note that a costume comprised solely of a full mask/helmet would warrant a Coverage rating of 3, as would a costume that uses the player's natural features (with minor cosmetic details like a fake moustache, eye-patch or hat). Torso/arms and Legs/feet are also worth 3 points each if covered. To get a perfect 10, the costume must cover virtually all of the player's body and must feature some kind of hand-held prop (like a devil's pitchfork, a katana or a rubber snake).

Coolness

Coolness describes how interesting, flashy, weird, wild or fun the costume is. This is perhaps the most subjective rating and could vary wildly from player to player depending on what they think is "cool."

Final Rankings

When you have finished ranking all five areas, turn your Costume Appraisal Form into the Game Master. The Game Master should average each set of scores (total each set of scores, divide each total by the number of Costume Appraisal Forms) and write down this average next to appropriate field on the player's Character Sheet. The Game Master may, at his or her discretion, adjust any of the final scores by +1 or -1. Scores may not go above 10 or below 1.

Characters and Character Sheets

CHARACTER SHEET

Player _____
Costume _____

Attributes

Strength ___ / ___ / ___
Toughness ___ / ___ / ___
Quickness ___ / ___ / ___
Other ___

Costume

Originality ___
Likeness ___
Craftsmanship ___
Coverage ___
Coolness ___
Costume Pool ___

Let's take a look at the various parts of the character sheet, shall we?

Player

This is where you write your name, obviously.

Costume

This is where you write down the name of your costume. This can be general ("Giant Robot") or specific ("Mark V X-0 Robo") or really specific ("Enormotron-Zeta").

Attributes

Each attribute (except for Other, which is special) is rated using three numbers. The first number describes you and is determined by you. Write down a number between one and ten that describes how strong, tough and quick you are. Most players will have average scores of 5. Some players will have scores as high as 6 or as low as 4. An extremely small number of players may actually dip as low as 3 or as high as 7 in any of the three attributes.

The second number describes your costume and has been determined by the Game Master and the other players. Write this down.

The third number is the difference between the first number and the second number and is written down as a positive number. If there is no difference between the two numbers, this rating will be 0.

Other, the "special attribute," is equal to your lowest player-defined score. So if your own personal attributes are 5, 5 and 4, your Other score is 4.

Costume Rankings and the Costume Pool

Your Costume Pool is equal to the sum of all five Costume ratings on your Character Sheet (a number between 5 and 50). The Game Master, if in costume, always has a Costume Pool of 50. If not, the Game Master's Costume Pool is cut in half (and thus reduced to 25).

Playing the Game

The hardest parts (creating the costumes, ranking the costumes and writing down all the Character Sheet stuff) of the game are now over.

When playing the game, the character sheet and the game system make a distinction between you the player and the character you portray while in costume. You don't have to pretend you're you – you can fully immerse yourself in the character...that's okay. But there are rules that must be followed: the COS System.

The COS System

Whenever a player wishes to perform an action in-game, figure out if the action deals with Strength, Toughness or Quickness.* Once this is done, the player should roll a 10-sided die and score equal to or less than their relevant attribute. If the roll is successful, the player gets to describe what happens.

*Where the heck are the Perception, Intelligence, Willpower and Charisma attributes? Well, this game doesn't really worry about this. Assume that your character is as astute/perceptive/charming as you are. If you're really in a bind and NEED to roll a die, use your Other attribute.

If the roll is unsuccessful, the player gets a second chance (this is where the costume comes into play)! First of all, the player must spend a number of points from his or her Costume Pool equal to the difference between the two attribute scores (the difference, remember?). Then, the player rolls a die and uses the second attribute rating to judge whether the roll was a success or failure. As long as the player spends the required number of points, he or she can re-roll failures.

Besides having to spend points, there is another catch: when using your costume's attributes, you must act like the character represented by your costume. This also means that your actions and behavior is limited by that of your costume. If you're a Ninja, you have to act Ninja-like. If you're a Wookiee, you can't speak English while "in character."

If you ever want to perform an action that you yourself are incapable of doing (like fixing a starship or turning into mist), spend a number of points equal to your Other attribute and roll equal to or under the relevant attribute (this could be any of the three regular attributes but it will usually be the Other attribute).

Combat

Combat is brutally simple.

The attacker rolls and the defender rolls. Whoever rolls higher wins the combat. The attributes used in the roll determine what happens.

Strength is used for weapon attacks.

Toughness is used for physical (hand-to-hand) attacks.

Quickness is used for ranged (missile) attacks.

Other is used for...other attacks (like weird mental powers or spells).

The same attribute is used to defend against an attack. Quickness and some Other attacks may only be used at a distance. Strength, Toughness and some Other attacks may only be used when the combatants are near one another. It's perfectly permissible to mix n' match attributes (for example, using Strength to throw a car and Quickness to dodge out of the way) but you're getting tricky when you do that.

If the attacker rolls higher, then the defender loses a number of Costume Pool points equal to the difference between the two attributes. If the defender rolls higher, then no points are lost. If the two rolls are tied, then the defender decides whether to have no damage dealt (and no points lost) or to have both the attacker and the defender suffer damage according to the difference between the two attributes.

The attacker and defender then switch roles or the fight ends.

Naturally, costume attributes can and will come into play during fights if the combatants spend the requisite number of points. This could change the attribute score and it also calls for a re-roll, which could benefit or hurt the player.

Dying

You can't die, that's stupid.

At worst, you'll lose the fight and look like a schmuck. At the very worst, you'll also be out all of your Costume Pool points. But those come back pretty easily so it's not all bad.

The Game Master's Role and the Game Master's Roll

The Game Master plays NPCs and opponents...that's his (or her) job. Being the Game Master does have its privileges. First of all, the Game Master can assign NPCs with any attribute score from 1-10 without getting input from the players. The GM is strongly advised and encouraged to be fair and make sense (an old man will have low attribute scores across the board while a 5000 year old mummy will probably have a high Toughness, an average Strength and a low Quickness).

If the Game Master ever fails a roll, he or she has the option of spending 5 points from his or her own Costume Pool to re-roll. The Game Master must then invoke the "Terrible Power of the Game Master" and call upon "Dark Forces" and other such dire magicks with a dazzling array of sweeping hand motions and other such theatrics. Then, the Game Master re-rolls and must score a 5 or lower. If this re-roll fails, the Game Master can once again spend 5 points to try and roll a 5 or lower.

Regaining Costume Pool Points

Points are regained at the end of scene (roll a die and collect that many Costume Pool points) or at the Game Master's discretion (Game Master Costume Pool points are regained in a similar way, but at the players' discretion). You may never have more points in your Costume Pool than you had when you started the game.

The Setting

COS is really meant to be played within existing settings. In other words, you and your friends dress up as Darth Vader, Pikachu, a punk vampire, a pirate and a buxom lounge singer and play Deadlands (or whatever). It's that kinda game.

COS is also perfectly suited for Halloween games or convention play.

Again, it's that kinda game.

The End

That's it!