

Time to Kill

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The Game

In Time to Kill you are one of the most feared beings on earth, the ninja: a mysterious, masked assassin dressed in black, armed with deadly weapons and strange, mystic rituals.

Your mission? Infiltration. Assassination. Escape.

Number of Players

2+

You Need

Pencils

Paper (for the Character Record Sheet and the Fate Record Sheet)

Stones or tokens of some kind (one of which must be a different color)

A cardboard "GM's screen" or some kind of barrier

Four FUDGE dice (six-sided dice marked each marked with two positive sides, two negative sides and two blank sides – you can substitute normal six-sided dice if you don't have FUDGE dice, just use 1-2 for negative, 3-4 for neutral and 5-6 for positive)

One six-sided die

Other Worlds

Although this game uses the world of the ninja as its inspiration, it can easily be adapted to other sources. Feel free to update or change the setting details to incorporate Mafia hit men, Cold War spies, medieval thieves, military special ops teams or cyberpunk operatives.

Abilities

All ninja have the following abilities at a rating of neutral (meaning that the ninja has no particular specialty with any of the abilities).

Combat Abilities

Armed– Attacking with weapons such as saps, daggers or swords.

Hand-to-Hand– Unarmed combat

Ranged – Attacking with thrown weapons, slings, bows, or guns

Athletics – Jumping, climbing ability, dodging attacks

Non-Combat Abilities

Knowledge – Specialized knowledge and ancient wisdom

Craftsmanship – Ability to create or destroy devices

Awareness – Powers of perception and the mysterious "sixth sense"

Willpower – Resisting pain, remaining awake/conscious

Stealth – Ability to hide, move silently and craft disguises

Character Creation

You have five points to create your character. Spending one point raises a non-combat ability from neutral (0) to positive (+). Combat abilities cost two points to raise from neutral (0) to positive (+). You may reduce one non-combat ability to a negative rating (-) in order to raise another non-combat ability to a positive rating.

You don't need to give your character a name, a history or a personality as they're not essential to playing the game. For all intents and purposes, you are simply "the ninja," and your background is shrouded in secrecy.

Time

All missions must be completed in a limited time for them to be successful. Wait too long and your target may slip away. Worse, you could be discovered.

Time in the game is represented by a pool of stones, poker chips or similar tokens (for these purposes we'll call them stones). Each stone represents an abstract "time unit." Stones should be placed in a container of some sort (a bag works well). The container should be opaque and one of the stones should be a different color than the others. This stone is called the "target stone" and will be explained later.

The number of stones in the container will vary from mission to mission but the more stones in the bag, the easier (and longer) the mission will probably be. A small number of stones represent a quick mission or one where time must be of the essence.

Fate

Fate is how the Game Moderator creates situations on the fly for the player to overcome (or to take advantage). At the beginning of the player's turn, the GM rolls four FUDGE dice behind his screen and secretly arranges them in order of the four Fates:

Opposition – Opposition represents any enemy forces that the character might face. These forces could be human (bodyguards), animal (guard dogs) or mechanical (traps). The Opposition may also define the level of security present (a few well-trained guards, a horde of faceless goons or one lethal countermeasure). They all share several qualities: they can be altered/triggered by the ninja's presence, they represent a lethal threat to the ninja and once detected, the ninja must flee or fight. Positive Opposition means that the guards are asleep or altogether missing. Neutral Opposition means that opposition is present but ignorant of the ninja's presence (for the time being). A negative Opposition rating means that the guards are highly vigilant, perhaps because the ninja was detected!

Concealment – Shadow and silence are two of the ninja's most potent weapons. Concealment measures how easy the ninja is able to hide. The ninja will find it easy to hide in a positive Concealment area. A negative Concealment result could mean that the area is a well-lit empty chamber lined with echoing marble floors. A neutral result is actually more dangerous than a negative result because the ninja isn't completely sure that he can stay concealed...

Terrain – Terrain defines the layout of the grounds and surrounding area. A positive Terrain result means that the environment is well-suited for the ninja's activities (rafters, escape routes, rough-hewn stone walls). A negative Terrain result means that the terrain is at odds with the ninja's purposes (sheer walls, checkpoints, balconies, wide-open spaces). Neutral Terrain offers no real advantages or hazards,

Circumstances – Circumstances is the most devilish of the Fates. This rating is a measure of randomness and unpredictability. A sudden rainstorm erupts from the sky, a random passerby walks past the ninja's hiding place, a secret door opens when the ninja leans on a hidden panel...these are all examples of Circumstance. Positive Circumstance shifts events in the ninja's favor. Negative circumstance does just the opposite. A neutral result means that nothing unpredictable occurs.

Creating the Fate Record Sheet

To create a Fate Record Sheet, draw four boxes on a piece of paper and label each box after one of the four Fates (Opposition, Concealment, Terrain and Circumstance). Hide it behind the GM's screen. When you roll the FUDGE dice, place each of the dice in one of the Fate boxes. This will give you a rating for each Fate.

Starting the Mission

Explain the basic mission to the ninja. Don't be too specific. Simply describe the general objective and any details you want the player to know. Make sure to adequately explain the specific victory conditions of the mission (for example, the target must appear to die in an accident). Then, assign the mission a certain length of time and place that many stones into the container. Remember to put the target stone in the container when you add the stones. This is the mission Time.

Note: at this time, I have no idea how long a mission should be. Twenty to thirty stones?

Preparation

At the beginning of the mission, the ninja may make preparations for the mission. This is done by removing stones from the container, one stone at a time. These stones are put aside and can then be traded in during the game for advance information or special supplies (as explained in the section on Shifting Fate). In effect, the ninja is taking time from the mission to gather equipment and intelligence to use once the mission has started. If the target stone is drawn during the Preparation stage, put it back into the container and end the Preparation stage (the mission priority has been elevated and the mission **MUST** be started now, there's no time to waste!).

Shifting Fate

When traded in, the stone is removed from the game and any Fate is shifted up one result (a negative becomes neutral, a neutral Fate becomes positive). Shifting Fate can only be done before that Fate is revealed to the player.

Turns

Rather than being a freeform exchange between the GM and the player, Time to Kill uses "turns." During a turn, the GM makes a Fate roll, the ninja makes a move and Time is removed from the game. This is repeated until the mission ends.

Step 1: Fate

The first step is for the GM to make a Fate roll. Roll for the four Fates and arranged them as you wish. Once arranged, Fate may not be moved around. At this stage, the Fates are kept secret but the ninja may spend a stone to reveal one Fate.

Step 2: Shifting Fate

The player may now Shift Fate in response to the GM. This is done by cashing in one of the player's stones (the stone is removed from the game) and announcing which Fate is being altered. The GM should then change that Fate by shifting it up one result. If the Fate was already positive, it remains positive. Else a negative Fate becomes neutral and a neutral Fate becomes positive.

The player should describe how Fate is being shifted. Perhaps the ninja has brought along special equipment or knows secret information about the mission? You may also choose instead to state one fact about the Fate that was shifted and how it's now more beneficial to your character.

Step 3: Narration

Using the results from the Fate roll, the GM described the scene to the player.

Step 4: Action

Now it's the ninja's time to act. The ninja has several options:

- 1) Wait. If the ninja chooses to wait, a stone is removed from the container and given to the player. The player may then use this stone on his next action if the action involves a die roll. Step 5 is skipped. If the stone drawn this way is the target stone, the player **MUST** act. The target stone is then replaced into the container (see the section on Target Stones for more information).
- 2) Act. If the ninja chooses to act, the player should describe the action taking place. Then the GM reveals the Fate best associated with that action. If two or more Fates are involved, the GM should combine them into a single Fate (positives add to the overall Fate, negatives subtract from the overall Fate). Then the player rolls a six-sided die and consults the Action Table:

Fate	Ability	Result
-	-	Failure, no roll needed
-	0	Failure on a roll of 1-5
-	+	Failure of a roll of 1-3
0	-	Failure on a roll of 1-5
0	0	Failure on a roll of 1-3
0	+	Failure on a roll of 1
+	-	Failure on a roll 1-3
+	0	Failure on a roll of 1
+	+	Success, no roll needed

If the player has a stone as a result of waiting and then decides to act, the player can cash in this stone to re-roll the result. If the result was an automatic success or failure, the stone is lost regardless.

Also, keep track of how many die rolls you make. This is important.

Step 5: Resolution

Whatever happened during the Action phase is now resolved. If the ninja failed, whatever ability was used during Step 4 is downgraded by one rating. If a Combat Ability is at negative and is then downgraded, the ninja is fatally wounded. If a Non-Combat Ability is at negative and is then downgraded, the ninja can no longer use that ability for the duration of the mission.

Step 6: End of Turn

At the end of the turn, another stone is taken from the container and removed from the game. The turn cycle then goes back to Step 1.

Target Stones

When the Target Stone is drawn, it means that the target is in sight and the ninja may attempt to finish the mission during Step 4. If successful, the player has won the game (that is, unless part of the victory condition was also to escape). If the player fails or opts not to carry out the objective then and there, then an additional stone is removed and the target stone is replaced.

Rushed Actions

You may choose to rush your action, meaning you skip Step 6 but must downshift a Fate on the next turn (moving it one step closer to negative).

Running out of Time

If the player ever removes the last stone (not counting the target stone), he runs out of time and fails the mission. The ninja must commit suicide to regain his honor and the game ends.

The Price of Failure

The code of the ninja is as follows: if detected you must escape. If you cannot escape you must commit suicide. If you cannot commit suicide, he must fight.

Victory

If the ninja carries out the mission successfully, it's time to be rewarded. All penalties incurred during the mission are removed. All stones gained during the mission are also removed. For each die roll made during the game, gain one point. The number of points you've gained divided by the number of missions you've completed gives you your overall ranking. During character creation, you may add your ranking to the number of points you get to spend.