

BLOOD & SALT a game about sailing into dark waters

Choose your number: are you more SALT than BLOOD?

BLOOD

5

4

3

2

SALT

BLOOD: social skills and self-control
(authority, persuasion, constitution)

SALT: combat and seafaring skills
(guns, navigation, swimming)

How do others call you?
(underline one, or none)

LORD/LADY
FATHER/MOTHER

DOCTOR
COMRADE

YOUR NAME

Who are you? (underline one in each column)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. SECRETIVE (what/whose secret do you keep? who is looking for it?) | 1. CONSTRUCT (you are a tireless automaton with boundless strength. who created you? how did you become free?) |
| 2. REPENTANT (what sin did you commit? is your penance genuine?) | 2. REVENANT (your appearance and resilience terrify mortals. what keeps you here? unfinished contracts? borrowed time? someone else's will?) |
| 3. STOIC (what trauma has desensitized you? what can unravel you?) | 3. ENTREPRENEUR (you are a devil who has bartered in souls for endless aeons. what else do you trade in? who is in your debt?) |
| 4. RAVENOUS (you can never stop yourself. what do you crave?) | 4. CARTOGRAPHER (your maps disclose wonders and shortcuts) |
| 5. CURSED (some call it superstition, delusion. what cursed you? why?) | 5. SAGE (your journey has a purpose, what do you hope to uncover?) |
| 6. INFAMOUS (who honors you? who fears you? what started it?) | 6. ENGINEER (you are a talking rat and your paws can fix anything) |

What is your prized possession? (underline one) What do you seek? (underline one)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. AN EXPERIMENTAL GUN (it malfunctions differently each time) | 1. TRACK A MEMORY (a person? a treasure? a past life?) |
| 2. A FIERY SIGIL (raw magical power etched onto your bones) | 2. BREAK AN OATH (who did you promise? when will they collect?) |
| 3. A VORPAL SAW (it cuts through flesh, bone, stone, and metal) | 3. DESTROY FALSE IDOLS (and those that profit from them) |
| 4. THE VOICE OF A DEAD GOD (when it speaks, they listen) | 4. SILENCE (when did you start hearing voices? what do they want?) |
| 5. A FRIEND IN EVERY PORT (a cryptic benefactor? a guild?) | 5. AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN (what do you need to say?) |
| 6. A CAGED MONSTER (it sings to its kind and attacks all others) | 6. BECOME CAPTAIN (what is your grudge against your captain?) |

BLOOD & SALT players' guide

ROLLING THE DICE

When you do something risky involving combat, self-control, social or seafaring skills, roll **1d6** to find out how it goes. Roll **+1d6** if you are prepared and **+1d6** if your skills or items give you an edge. The GM tells you how many dice to roll, based on your character and the situation. Roll your dice and compare each die result to your number.

If you're using BLOOD (social skills or self-control), you want to roll under your number. If you're using SALT (combat or seafaring skills), you want to roll over your number.

0 SUCCESSES: FAILURE. It didn't work. The opponent may get what they want. The GM describes how things get worse.

1 SUCCESS: SUCCESS AT A COST. You barely manage it, but the GM introduces a complication, dilemma, or cost.

2 SUCCESSES: SUCCESS. Good job! You get what you wanted—nothing more, nothing less.

3 SUCCESSES: SUCCESS WITH STYLE. You succeed and gain an extra advantage, determined by the GM.

If you roll your number exactly in any die, you gain BLOODSALT. You gain some apocryphal insight into the situation. Ask the GM a question and they'll answer you honestly. Some good questions are:

What are they really feeling?

What should I be on the lookout for?

Who's behind this?

What's the best way to ____?

How could I get them to _____?

What's really going on here?

(A roll of BLOODSALT counts as a success.)

HELPING: If you want to help someone else who's rolling, say how you try to help and make a SALT or BLOOD roll. If you succeed, give them **+1d6** on their upcoming roll.

If you're not taking an action relevant to BLOOD or SALT, you automatically succeed at a cost. You do not roll any dice for this. The GM describes the possible cost, and you decide whether you wish to follow through with it.

CRYPTIC AND BIZARRE SETTING

After reading the character sheet, you may be more confused now than when you started off. Some descriptions do not make sense, and the language is far from straightforward too. Am I a devil metaphorically? Is there magic in this world, and is it good or bad?

All the character prompts in Blood & Salt are ambiguous and unclear by design. Work out with your GM what it all means, and think of explanations or practical uses for your choices. Use the questions provided on the sheet to flesh out your character's backstory, and make up more on your own. Brainstorm with the group how to answer the questions, and try to find additional connections with other players' characters.

Embrace the weirdness when describing or role-playing your character. Make up quirky mannerisms or a nasty scar (physical or emotional). However, be respectful of other players' sensitivities. During setup, ensure that there are boundaries on the themes that can be explored during play and stop immediately when others are uncomfortable. If you do not like where the GM or another player is taking the story, simply say so with no explanation or argument; your group should respect it. Consider using the X-card by Stavropoulos or other tools to ensure group consent when delving into darker aspects of the world.

MAKING A CHARACTER

Use the different lists to guide you on what type of character you want to play. You can make your choices very targeted in order to create a strongly themed character or mix and match to create a complex character with contrasts (e.g., why does a Sage want an Audience with the Queen?). Alternatively, you can roll **4d6** and allocate them as you wish among the lists.

Choose your number after this: do you want to play a charismatic character with no self-defense skills? Choose 5. A hardened, slightly mad sailor? Choose 2.

Don't try to maximize the "power" of your character since the game system is not really about winning (or surviving, for that matter) but on telling good stories. Think of weird backstories and brainstorm with your GM and your group on how your collective choices mesh together and help form the world. Your characters ultimately shape the stories around the table.

Blood & Salt is an adaptation of the Lasers & Feelings RPG by John Harper. It is created by Antonios Liapis (2022) but feel free to take any part of it and expand, rewrite, adapt as you see fit—as long as it's for a non-commercial application and the author is attributed.



Blood & Salt is inspired by the Sunless Sea computer game (Failbetter Games, 2015). Some concepts and word jumbles are inspired by the game and are used as prompts for GMs and players to use, tweak, replace. The author of Blood & Salt is not affiliated with the publisher of Sunless Sea. This document does not use any copyrighted material, and no monetary profit is made from it.