

Chronicles of the Four Dragons

Foreword

CotFD is a rules-light roleplaying game inspired by Japanese fantasy anime. Since there is only so much space, there is no lengthy description of what roleplaying is. We expect you to know the drill.

In order to play this game you need a couple of friends, this document, a few pencils and regular six-sided dice.

The Dragon Empire

CotFD is set into the Dragon Empire, a vast nation based on medieval Japan and China. For many centuries it has been ruled by the Dragon Emperors who are descendants of the Four Elemental Dragons themselves. For a long time the empire prospered but recently things are starting to get out of hand. Barbarians attack the empire from the outside, while corrupt bureaucrats and local warlords attack it from within. But new heroes have arisen. They wield the power of the four elements and fight to restore peace and order in the Empire!

The Four Elemental Dragons

The dragons are more than mere winged reptiles. They are not gods either. They are the four basic elements in physical form. They usually don't interact with mortals but ward over all creation. In times of dire need they grant part of their power to mortal champions. Even then the Dragons don't directly communicate with their champions.

Chapter I: Basics

Dice rolling

When rolling dice in CotFD, six-sided dice are used. But instead of adding the numbers together you count "successes". Each time a die comes up with a 5 or 6, it's a success. You usually need only one success to accomplish a task. If you don't roll any successes at all, your action failed.

The number of dice you have to roll for each action is called the "dice pool". The dice pool normally consists of a skill, an attribute and modifiers. Modifiers normally come from equipment or general circumstances.

Actions

Everything you do in CotFD that needs a roll of your dice or at least your character's concentration is called an *action*. You can perform one action per combat round.

Contested actions occur when two characters are in contest with each other. The classic example is the thief trying to sneak past a guard. Both characters make their rolls. The one who gets most actions wins.

Free actions don't take up any time, so you can perform several of these during a combat round, and you're still able to do one normal action.

Chapter II: Characters

Characters in CotFD are described by various statistics. These include inborn abilities called Attributes (for example: Strength or Intellect) or learned ones called Skills (like Melee or Lore). Both skills and attributes are usually ranked from 0 to 5.

Attributes

A character's attributes are directly tied to his connection to the four elemental dragons. Humans combine aspects of all elements in them, but some favor one element more than the others. The player characters in this game are champions of the four dragons and usually excel in the attribute closest to their patron dragon.

Each attribute corresponds to one of the elements and each character class excels in one of the attributes.

There is *Strength*. Strength is the attribute of *Earth* and the main stat for *Warriors*.

The second attribute is *Agility*. Agility is the attribute of *Air* and the most important stat for *Archers*.

Vitality is the third attribute. It's the attribute of *Water* and is the main stat for *Monks*.

The last of the attributes is *Intellect*. Intellect is the attribute of *Fire* and is the most important stat for *Sorcerers*.

Derived Stats

There is a group of stats that is derived from a character's attributes. They are calculated at character creation and can later be improved by experience. After character creation the derived stats usually don't change when their related attribute is improved or decreased.

Health is a measure of how many wounds a character can sustain before he is incapacitated or even dies. It's calculated by adding *Strength* and *Vitality* together. There are two Health tracks on the character sheet. One for lethal and another for non-lethal damage.

Another derived stat is *Initiative*. The higher your initiative is the earlier you are allowed to act in combat situations. Initiative is calculated by adding *Agility* and *Intellect* together.

Speed is 3 meters/round for all characters. Its only reduced by encumbrance and heavy armor.

Chi is a measure of the amount of elemental power a character can store in his body to use for his powers. It's equal to a character's *main attribute* and his *Vitality* together.

Skills

Aside from attributes every character has a couple of skills. Skills are learned abilities that can be easier acquired and improved than the attributes. Each skill has one corresponding attribute. There are no skills based on *Vitality*.

Feat of strength (Strength). Catch-all skill for all feats of strength, like lifting a weight, breaking a door down, climbing a rope, etc.

Melee (Strength). This skill allows the character to use all kinds of melee weapons from daggers and swords to staves and clubs.

Unarmed (Strength). This covers fighting without weapons.

Armor Use (Strength). This skill allows the character to wear heavy armor. Each point in *Armor Use* reduces the *Armor* penalty by one.

Toughness (Strength). Each point in *toughness* improves a character's *Health* by one.

Acrobatics (Agility). Catch-all skill for all feats of agility, like balancing on a tight rope, or doing acrobatic moves.

Ranged (Agility). This skill allows the character to use all kinds of ranged weapons from thrown weapons like throwing daggers or javelins to bows and crossbows.

Craftsmanship (Agility). This skill allows the character to craft and repair items. The player must choose which craft he has specialized in (for example: blacksmithing, leatherworking, carpentry, etc.) You can take *Craftsmanship* several times if you know several crafts.

Stealth (Agility). This skill allows a character to sneak and sneak.

Legerdemain (Agility). This skill allows the character to pick pockets, pick locks and to perform stage magic.

Lore (Intellect). This skill represents a character's knowledge of the various lores. Like craftsmanship the player must specify with field of knowledge the character specializes in. Possible lores are history, religion, monster lore, weapon lore, geography etc. The skill can be taken several times.

Healing (Intellect). The character is trained in healing the sick and wounded. A successful skill check can double the healing rate of the patient by 2 for the next day.

Perception (Intellect). This skill represents a character's attention and mindfulness.

Eloquence (Intellect). This skill is a measure of a character's ability to persuade or bluff people. It is also used when diplomacy or etiquette are important.

Elemental attunement (Intellect). Each point in this skill improves a character's *Chi* by one.

Class

Each player character has to choose one of the four basic classes. Each class has one major attribute and grants a character special abilities called powers. The available classes are Warrior, Archer, Monk and Sorcerer.

Warrior

The warrior is a melee fighter and is trained in the use of all kinds of weapons and armor. Most warriors rely on their strength to overcome obstacles. They draw their power from the earth. Their main attribute is *Strength*.

Archer

The archer is a ranged fighter, unmatched with bow and arrows. He's also extremely agile which helps him to dodge attacks and move with a catlike grace. Archers draw their power from the air. Archers focus on *Agility*.

Monk

The monks of the Order of the Water Dragon are a secluded people. Usually they live in mountain monasteries praying and meditating. But in times of need they use their knowledge to defend the helpless and heal the sick. They draw their power from the water. Their main attribute is *Vitality*.

Sorcerer

The sorcerers are the masters of fire magic. They are also keepers of lore and usually travel the lands in search of magic artifacts. Most common people fear them though. Sorcerers draw their power from fire. Their main attribute is *Intellect*.

Character creation

Character creation is a pretty easy step-by-step process.

1. *Concept and class:* You start by thinking about a character concept. Imagine how your character looks like and what he's like. What are his motivations. Does he have any quirks? When you have a clear image of your character in your mind, choose a class that fits.
2. *Attributes:* The next step is assigning the attribute points. Each character **starts with 1 point** in each attribute. The maximum is 5, and characters can't have more than 4 in any attribute after character creation. You get to distribute 7 points on your attributes.
3. *Derived stats:* When you're happy with your choices, calculate Health, Chi and Initiative.
4. *Skills:* Then you can distribute 10 points on your skills. You can't put points in every skill and you are not allowed to start with any skill higher than 3, so choose wisely. After that you're almost done.
5. *Powers:* You start with the rank 1 power of your class.
6. Fill out your character sheet. The last step is choosing your equipment. Some GMs like to assign the starting equipment, other just hand out some money and let the player character buy it during character creation. Normal character should start the game with 50 silver pieces.

Chapter III: Powers

The player characters in CotFD are champions of the Elemental Dragon and so they have access to supernatural powers. These powers are element-based and are powered by a character's Chi. When a character runs out of Chi, he cannot perform any supernatural tasks until his Chi has recovered. Each power is activated by making a successful skill check. The activation cost in Chi of each power is equal to its rank! The skill needed is given in the power's description.

Each class may learn its own Way and the Way of the Void. Way of the Void works differently than the other powers and is explained in a later supplement.

| Rank | Way of Earth | Way of Air | Way of Water | Way of Fire |
|----------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Strength of Earth | Agility of the Wind | Vitality of Water | Burning Intellect |
| 2 | Dragon's Skin | Haste | Healing Wave | Fiery Gaze |
| 3 | Earthquake | Hail of Arrows | Tsunami | Dragon's Breath |
| 4 | Avatar of Earth | Avatar of Air | Avatar of Water | Avatar of Fire |

Way of Earth

1. *Strength of Earth*
The character draws upon the Earth to improve his strength temporarily
Skill: Feat of Strength
Effect: Strength is temporarily increased by the number of Chi paid
Duration: 1 combat round for each success
2. *Dragon's Skin*
The character's skin hardens and it almost looks as if he was covered in scales.
Skill: Armor Use
Effect: Armor is temporarily increased for each success
Duration: Can be maintained for 1 Chi/round
3. *Earthquake*
The character smashes his melee weapon onto the ground. The ground starts to tremble stronger and stronger until it actually explodes around the character. Everyone around him takes damage.
Skill: Melee
Effect: Everyone in a radius of 2m per Chi paid gets damage equal to the successes rolled. No defense possible.
Duration: Instantaneous
4. *Avatar of Earth*
The character's body transforms and takes on aspects of the Dragon of Earth. His skin gets hard as rock and his hands turn into stone claws.
Skill: Toughness
Effect: For the duration of that effect, the character's strength is increased by 4 even extending the usual limit of 5 and he can only be damaged by Air-based attacks. His

unarmed attacks cause lethal damage now.

Duration: Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round

Way of Air

1. *Agility of the Wind*
The character draws upon the Wind to improve his agility temporarily
Skill: Legerdemain
Effect: Agility is temporarily increased by the number of Chi paid
Duration: 1 combat round for each success
2. *Haste*
The character summons a gust of wind that makes his movements faster for a short period of time.
Skill: Acrobatics
Effect: Speed is doubled and two actions may be performed per round
Duration: Can be maintained for 2 Chi/round
3. *Hail of Arrows*
The character uses his bow to shoot a hail of arrows made out of pure elemental air at his enemies.
Skill: Ranged
Effect: Everyone in a zone of 2m per Chi paid gets damage equal to the successes rolled. No defense possible. The zone can be placed by the character everywhere in the maximum range of his ranged weapon.
Duration: Instantaneous
4. *Avatar of Air*
The character's body transforms into elemental air and begins to float. He's surrounded by a constant gust of wind.
Skill: Stealth
Effect: For the duration of that effect, the character's agility is increased by 4 even extending the usual limit of 5 and he can only be damaged by Earth-based attacks. He can also fly with his normal Speed.
Duration: Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round

Way of Water

1. *Vitality of Water*
The character draws upon the elemental dragon of Water to improve his agility temporarily
Skill: Toughness
Effect: Vitality is temporarily increased by the number of Chi paid
Duration: 1 combat round for each success
2. *Healing Wave*
The character uses his Chi to mend the

wounds of his comrades.

Skill: Healing

Effect: Heal one point of lethal damage for each point of Chi paid. Additional successes grant free healing.

3. *Tsunami*
The character smashes his fist on the ground calling upon his elemental patron. Suddenly a enormous wave of water erupts from where the character stands. Everyone around him is carried away by the wave. Defense against this is impossible.
Skill: Unarmed
Effect: Everyone in a radius of 10m per Chi paid gets carried away by the wave for a distance equal to the successes times 10 m. Victims of the wave have to make Feat of Strength tests in order to stay afloat. If they fail, they take drowning damage.
4. *Avatar of Water*
The character's body turns into elemental water and he starts to glow faintly from within.
Skill: Acrobatics
Effect: For the duration of that effect, the character's vitality is increased by 4 even extending the usual limit of 5 and he can only be damaged by Fire-based attacks. While in that state he heals all his allies for 2 point per round who are within 5m around him.
Duration: Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round

Way of Fire

1. *Burning Intellect*
The character draws upon the elemental dragon of Fire to improve his intellect temporarily
Skill: Lore
Effect: Intellect is temporarily increased by the number of Chi paid
Duration: 1 combat round for each success or for one scene outside combat
2. *Fiery Gaze*
The eyes of the character glow like red-hot embers and the character can see the true nature of things.
Skill: Perception
Effect: For the duration of the effect the character can see through any illusion. He can also see a persons aura (which reveals the target's emotional state).
Duration: 1 combat round for each success
3. *Dragon's Breath*
The character opens his mouth and

breathes out deadly flames that devour even the mightiest foe.

Skill: Eloquence

Effect: Everyone in a 45° cone with a length of 5m per Chi paid gets damage equal to the successes rolled. No defense possible.

Duration: Instantaneous

4. *Avatar of Fire*

The character burns with elemental fire and starts to float, his arms having turned into phoenix wings. With a flap of his wings, he holds his enemies at bay. And in death he brings life.

Skill: Elemental attunement

Effect: For the duration of the effect any enemy attacking one of his allies in a 10m radius gets fire damage equal to the rolled successes (no defense possible). The character can only be harmed by water-based attacks. When he's killed his corpse instantly explodes into ashes and any of his comrades in range are fully healed. At the next sunrise, the sorcerer is reborn at the place of his death (with all of his items).

Duration: Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round

Chi Regeneration

Chi regenerates at 1 point/hour of rest or completely after a full night's sleep.

Chapter IV: Combat

Combat in CotFD works in rounds. The sequence of actions is determined by the Initiative of the characters. A character with higher Initiative acts before a character with lower Initiative. In case of a draw, a roll of one d6 decides who may act first.

Attacks, Defense and Damage

Combat is handled much like contests of skill. The attacker uses his combat skill dice pool (Strength + Melee for melee weapons, Strength + Unarmed for unarmed combat, Agility + Ranged for bows). The dice pool is also modified by the weapon used. Most weapons grant one or more bonus dice.

The defender can now decide how he wants to defend himself. Characters can only defend against attack they are aware of. Ranged attacks can only be defended by dodging. Possible defenses are parrying (Strength + Melee or Strength + Unarmed) and dodging (Agility + Acrobatics). Please note that unarmed fighters can only parry armed attacks if they wear appropriate gear.

When the defender has more successes than the attacker he avoided a hit. In the other case, the attacker has hit and may cause damage. The damage he caused is equal to his margin of success.

The damage caused may be reduced by armor.

Weapons range

Each ranged weapon has a short and a long range listed in its description. Shooting at a target beyond long range is impossible. When attacking a target between the given short and long range there's a two dice penalty on the to-hit roll.

Armor penalty

Certain armors are heavy and reduce a character's movement speed and Agility. This can be countered by training in the Armor Use skill.

Lethal and non-lethal damage

There are two types of damage: lethal and non-lethal damage. Unarmed combat usually deals non-lethal damage. An unarmed fighter can use additional successes to cause lethal damage. Every 2 successes cause 1 point lethal damage then.

There are two damage tracks on the character sheet. One for lethal and one for non-lethal damage. Each lethal damage also causes one point of non-lethal damage. Each time your character receives damage you cross out the appropriate boxes.

When your non-lethal damage track is all filled out, your character is incapacitated.

When your lethal damage track is all filled out, he's dying and needs medical attention.

Natural Healing

A character who still has more than half his Health recovers 1 point/hour. A character who dropped below half his health must rest for one day per point of Health lost. A dying character needs medical attention and needs 1 week to regain 1 point of Health.

Chapter V: Equipment

| Weapon | Damage | Skill | Price |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Fist | +0 Non-Lethal | Unarmed | -/- |
| Dagger | +1 Lethal | Melee | |
| Staff | +1 Non-Lethal | Melee | |
| Short sword | +2 Lethal | Melee | |
| Long sword | +3 Lethal | Melee | |
| Two-handed sword | +4 Lethal | Melee | |

| Weapon | Damage | Skill | Range (in m) | Price |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Throwing Dagger | +1 Lethal | Range | Str, / Str. x 2 | -/- |
| Short bow | +2 Lethal | Melee | 25 / 50 | |
| Long Bow | +3 Lethal | Melee | 40 / 80 | |
| Crossbow | +4 Lethal | Melee | 50 / 100 | |

| Armor | Armour rating | Penalty | Price |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|
| Cloth armor | +0 | +0 | |
| Soft Leather armor | +1 | -1 | |
| Hard Leather armor | +2 | -2 | |
| Scale armor | +3 | -3 | |
| Plate armor | +4 | -4 | |
| Heavy Plate | +5 | -5 | |