

# Chronicles of the Four Dragons

Earth · Air · Water · Fire by Michael Wolf



## Foreword

*Chronicles of the Four Dragons* (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.

To play you need a couple of friends, this document, a few pencils and some regular six-sided dice. A character sheet is included on the last page.

## The Dragon Empire

CotFD is set in the Dragon Empire, a vast nation based on medieval Japan and China. For many centuries it has been ruled by the Dragon Emperors, descendants of the Four Elemental Dragons themselves. For a long time the empire prospered, but recently things have started to get out of hand. Barbarians attack from the outside, while corrupt bureaucrats and local warlords attack 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 do not interact with mortals but watch over all creation. In times of dire need they grant part of their power to mortal champions. Even then the Dragons do not communicate directly with their champions.

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
|  | <b>Earth</b><br>Strength · Warrior  |
|  | <b>Air</b><br>Agility · Archer      |
|  | <b>Water</b><br>Vitality · Monk     |
|  | <b>Fire</b><br>Intellect · Sorcerer |

## Chapter I: Basics

### Dice rolling

When rolling dice in CotFD, six-sided dice are used. Instead of adding the numbers together you count **successes**. Each die that shows a **5 or 6** is a success. You usually need only one success to accomplish a task. If you roll no successes at all, the action failed.

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

#### THE CORE RULE

Dice pool = Attribute + Skill ± modifiers. Every 5 or 6 is one success.

### Actions

Everything you do in CotFD that needs a roll of the 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 with the most successes wins.

**Free actions** do not take up any time, so you can perform several of them during a combat round and still 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) and 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 their connection to the four elemental dragons. Humans combine aspects of all elements, but some favour 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 element, and each character class excels in one of them.

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

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

**Vitality** is the attribute of Water and the main stat for Monks.

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

## Derived Stats

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

### DERIVED STATS

**Health** = Strength + Vitality. There are two tracks on the sheet: lethal and non-lethal.

**Initiative** = Agility + Intellect.

**Speed** = 3 metres per round for everyone. Only encumbrance and heavy armour reduce it.

**Chi** = main attribute + Vitality.

**Health** measures how many wounds a character can sustain before being incapacitated or even killed. **Initiative** decides who acts first in combat. **Chi** is the amount of elemental power a character can store in their body to fuel their powers.

## Skills

Aside from attributes, every character has a number of skills. Skills are learned abilities that are easier to acquire and improve than attributes. Each skill has one corresponding attribute. There are no skills based on Vitality.

### STRENGTH

**Feat of Strength.** Catch-all skill for feats of strength: lifting a weight, breaking down a door, climbing a rope.

**Melee.** Use all kinds of melee weapons, from daggers and swords to staves and clubs.

**Unarmed.** Fighting without weapons.

**Armor Use.** Wear heavy armour. Each point reduces the armour penalty by one.

**Toughness.** Each point improves Health by one.

### AGILITY

**Acrobatics.** Catch-all skill for feats of agility: balancing on a tightrope, acrobatic moves.

**Ranged.** Use ranged weapons, from throwing daggers and javelins to bows and crossbows.

**Craftsmanship.** Craft and repair items. Choose a craft (blacksmithing, leatherworking, carpentry, ...). Can be taken several times.

**Stealth.** Sneak, hide and move unseen.

**Legerdemain.** Pick pockets, pick locks and perform stage magic.

## INTELLECT

**Lore.** Knowledge of the various lores. Choose a field: history, religion, monster lore, weapon lore, geography, ... Can be taken several times.

**Healing.** Heal the sick and wounded. A successful check doubles a patient's healing rate for the next day.

**Perception.** Attention and mindfulness.

**Eloquence.** Persuade or bluff people. Also used when diplomacy or etiquette matter.

**Elemental Attunement.** Each point improves Chi by one.

## Class

Each player character chooses one of four basic classes. Each class has one major attribute and grants special abilities called **powers**.



**Warrior** MAIN ATTRIBUTE: STRENGTH

A melee fighter trained in all kinds of weapons and armour. Most warriors rely on strength to overcome obstacles. They draw their power from the earth.



**Archer** MAIN ATTRIBUTE: AGILITY

A ranged fighter, unmatched with bow and arrows. Extremely agile, which helps them dodge attacks and move with catlike grace. Archers draw their power from the air.



**Monk** MAIN ATTRIBUTE: VITALITY

The monks of the Order of the Water Dragon are a secluded people who live in mountain monasteries praying and meditating. In times of need they defend the helpless and heal the sick. They draw their power from the water.



**Sorcerer** MAIN ATTRIBUTE: INTELLECT

Masters of fire magic and keepers of lore, usually travelling the lands in search of magic artefacts. Most common people fear them. Sorcerers draw their power from fire.

## Character Creation

Character creation is an easy step-by-step process.

- 1 Concept and class.** Think about a character concept: how they look, what they are like, what motivates them, any quirks. When you have a clear image, choose a class that fits.
- 2 Attributes.** Every character starts with 1 point in each attribute. Distribute **7 more points**. The maximum is 5, but no attribute may exceed 4 after creation.
- 3 Derived stats.** Calculate Health, Chi and Initiative.
- 4 Skills.** Distribute **10 points** among your skills. You cannot put points in every skill, and no skill may start higher than 3. Choose wisely.
- 5 Powers.** You start with the rank 1 power of your class.
- 6 Sheet and equipment.** Fill out the character sheet. Some GMs assign starting equipment; others hand out money and let players shop. A normal character starts with **50 silver pieces**.

## Chapter III: Powers

The player characters in CotFD are champions of the Elemental Dragons and have access to supernatural powers. These powers are element-based and fuelled by a character's **Chi**. When a character runs out of Chi, they cannot perform supernatural feats until it recovers.

Each power is activated by a successful skill check. The Chi cost is **equal to the power's rank**. The skill needed is given in the description.

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

| RANK | EARTH             | AIR                 | WATER             | 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

Warriors draw upon the strength of mountains.

#### 1. Strength of Earth

The character draws upon the Earth to improve their 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 until it almost looks covered in scales.

**Skill:** Armor Use

**Effect:** Armour is temporarily increased for each success.

**Duration:** Can be maintained for 1 Chi/round.

#### 3. Earthquake

The character smashes their melee weapon onto the ground. The ground trembles stronger and stronger until it explodes around them. Everyone nearby takes damage.

**Skill:** Melee

**Effect:** Everyone in a radius of 2 m per Chi paid takes damage equal to the successes rolled. No defence possible.

**Duration:** Instantaneous.

#### 4. Avatar of Earth

The character's body takes on aspects of the Dragon of Earth. Skin hard as rock, hands turned to stone claws.

**Skill:** Toughness

**Effect:** Strength is increased by 4, even beyond the usual limit of 5. The character can only be damaged by Air-based attacks. Unarmed attacks cause lethal damage.

**Duration:** Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round.



### Way of Air

Archers ride the wind and strike from afar.

#### 1. Agility of the Wind

The character draws upon the Wind to improve their 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 their movements faster for a short period.

**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 shoots a hail of arrows made of pure elemental air at their enemies.

**Skill:** Ranged

**Effect:** Everyone in a zone of 2 m per Chi paid takes damage equal to the successes rolled. No defence possible. The zone can be placed anywhere within the maximum range of the ranged weapon.

**Duration:** Instantaneous.

#### 4. Avatar of Air

The character's body turns into elemental air and begins to float, surrounded by a constant gust of wind.

**Skill:** Stealth

**Effect:** Agility is increased by 4, even beyond the usual limit of 5. The character can only be damaged by Earth-based attacks. They can fly at their normal Speed.

**Duration:** Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round.



### Way of Water

Monks guard life, and know how to flow around a blow.

#### 1. Vitality of Water

The character draws upon the elemental dragon of Water to improve their vitality 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 their Chi to mend the wounds of their comrades.

**Skill:** Healing

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

**Duration:** Instantaneous.

### 3. Tsunami

*The character smashes their fist on the ground, calling upon their elemental patron. An enormous wave erupts from where they stand and carries everyone away.*

**Skill:** Unarmed

**Effect:** Everyone in a radius of 10 m per Chi paid is carried away for a distance of successes × 10 m. No defence possible. Victims must pass Feat of Strength tests to stay afloat; on a failure they take drowning damage.

**Duration:** Instantaneous.

### 4. Avatar of Water

*The character's body turns into elemental water and begins to glow faintly from within.*

**Skill:** Acrobatics

**Effect:** Vitality is increased by 4, even beyond the usual limit of 5. The character can only be damaged by Fire-based attacks. All allies within 5 m are healed for 2 points per round.

**Duration:** Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round.



## Way of Fire

*Sorcerers burn away illusion, and their enemies.*

### 1. Burning Intellect

*The character draws upon the elemental dragon of Fire to improve their intellect temporarily.*

**Skill:** Lore

**Effect:** Intellect is temporarily increased by the number of Chi paid.

**Duration:** 1 combat round for each success, or one scene outside combat.

### 2. Fiery Gaze

*The character's eyes glow like red-hot embers and they can see the true nature of things.*

**Skill:** Perception

**Effect:** The character can see through any illusion and can see a person's aura, which reveals their emotional state.

**Duration:** 1 combat round for each success.

### 3. Dragon's Breath

*The character breathes out deadly flames that devour even the mightiest foe.*

**Skill:** Eloquence

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

**Duration:** Instantaneous.

### 4. Avatar of Fire

*The character burns with elemental fire and starts to float, arms turned into phoenix wings. With a flap of the wings they hold enemies at bay, and in death they bring life.*

**Skill:** Elemental Attunement

**Effect:** Any enemy attacking one of the character's allies within 10 m takes fire damage equal to the rolled successes (no defence possible). The character can only be harmed by Water-based attacks. When killed, the corpse explodes into ashes and every comrade in range is fully healed. At the next sunrise the sorcerer is reborn where they died, with all their items.

**Duration:** Can be maintained for 4 Chi/round.

### CHI REGENERATION

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

## Chapter IV: Combat

Combat works in rounds. The sequence of actions is determined by **Initiative**: a character with higher Initiative acts before one with lower Initiative. In case of a draw, a d6 roll decides who acts first.

### Attacks, Defence and Damage

Combat is handled much like a contest of skill. The attacker uses their combat dice pool: **Strength + Melee** for melee weapons, **Strength + Unarmed** for unarmed combat and **Agility + Ranged** for bows. The pool is also modified by the weapon used; most weapons grant one or more bonus dice.

The defender then decides how to defend. Characters can only defend against attacks they are aware of. Ranged attacks can only be defended by dodging. The possible defences are **parrying** (Strength + Melee or Strength + Unarmed) and **dodging** (Agility + Acrobatics). Unarmed fighters can only parry armed attacks if they wear appropriate gear.

### RESOLVING AN ATTACK

If the defender rolls more successes than the attacker, the hit is avoided. Otherwise the attacker hits and deals damage equal to their **margin of success**, which armour may reduce.

### Weapon range

Each ranged weapon has a short and a long range. Shooting beyond long range is impossible. Attacking between short and long range carries a **two-dice penalty** on the to-hit roll.

### Armour penalty

Heavy armours reduce a character's movement speed and Agility. Training in the Armor Use skill counters this.

### Lethal and non-lethal damage

There are two types of damage. Unarmed combat usually deals non-lethal damage, but an unarmed fighter can spend additional successes on lethal damage: every 2 successes cause 1 point of lethal damage.

There are two damage tracks on the character sheet. Each point of lethal damage also causes one point of non-lethal damage. Whenever your character is hurt, cross out the matching boxes. When the non-lethal track is full, the character is **incapacitated**. When the lethal track is full, they are **dying** and need medical attention.

### Natural healing

A character with more than half their Health left recovers 1 point per hour. A character who dropped below half must rest one day for every point of Health lost. A dying character needs medical attention and takes one week to regain 1 point.

## Chapter V: Equipment

### Melee weapons

| WEAPON           | DAMAGE        | SKILL   |
|------------------|---------------|---------|
| 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   |

### Ranged weapons

| WEAPON          | DAMAGE    | SKILL  | RANGE (M)     |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|---------------|
| Throwing dagger | +1 lethal | Ranged | Str / Str × 2 |
| Short bow       | +2 lethal | Ranged | 25 / 50       |
| Long bow        | +3 lethal | Ranged | 40 / 80       |
| Crossbow        | +4 lethal | Ranged | 50 / 100      |

### Armour

| ARMOUR             | RATING | PENALTY |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| 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      |

#### QUICK REFERENCE

**Roll** attribute + skill ± modifiers in d6; 5 or 6 = success.

**Hit** if attacker successes beat defender; damage = margin of success, minus armour.

**Defend** with Strength + Melee/Unarmed (parry) or Agility + Acrobatics (dodge).

**Ranged** between short and long range: -2 dice. Beyond long range: impossible.

**Powers** cost Chi equal to their rank. Chi returns 1/hour of rest, all after a night's sleep.

**Health** = Strength + Vitality. Non-lethal full: out. Lethal full: dying.

*Chronicles of the Four Dragons by Michael Wolf. Layout and artwork overhauled edition.*

# Chronicles of the Four Dragons

## CHARACTER SHEET



CHARACTER NAME

PLAYER

CLASS

PATRON DRAGON

CONCEPT / QUIRKS

MOTIVATION

### ATTRIBUTES (START 1, +7 POINTS, MAX 4)



**Strength**

EARTH



**Agility**

AIR



**Vitality**

WATER



**Intellect**

FIRE



### DERIVED STATS

**Health**

Strength + Vitality (+ Toughness)

**Initiative**

Agility + Intellect

**Chi**

Main attribute + Vitality (+ Attunement)

**Speed**

3 m / round

**3 m**

### HEALTH TRACKS

**LETHAL**

**NON-LETHAL**

### CHI (COST TO ACTIVATE A POWER = ITS RANK)

**CURRENT**

### STRENGTH SKILLS

Feat of Strength



Melee



Unarmed



Armor Use



Toughness



10 points at start, max 3 each. Pool = attribute + skill.

### AGILITY SKILLS

Acrobatics



Ranged



Craft: \_\_\_\_\_



Stealth



Legerdemain



10 points at start, max 3 each. Pool = attribute + skill.

### INTELLECT SKILLS

Lore: \_\_\_\_\_



Healing



Perception



Eloquence



Attunement



10 points at start, max 3 each. Pool = attribute + skill.

### POWERS (YOUR WAY · RANK 1 AT START)

**1**

RANK 1 · COSTS 1 CHI

**2**

RANK 2 · COSTS 2 CHI

**3**

RANK 3 · COSTS 3 CHI

**4**

RANK 4 · COSTS 4 CHI

### WEAPONS & ARMOUR

WEAPON

DAMAGE

RANGE

ARMOUR

RATING

PENALTY

### EQUIPMENT, SILVER (START: 50 SP) & NOTES