

Houses and Wands

Houses and wands is a Harry Potter themed RPG, intended to be simple to play, fast to run, and about the main things the characters actually do in the books; sneaking out after lights out, waving wands at people and speaking in fake latin, and following as few rules as possible. The game itself requires one person to run it (the Headmaster) and a few players, each playing a different lead character, and [all the rules are on the double sided handout](#). You also require two ordinary six sided dice; whenever something a lead does leads to rolling, roll both dice and add the relevant house statistic. On a 10+ you succeed completely, 7-9 you get most of what you wanted and can pick which parts, and on a 6 or less there are *Consequences*. Also every time you total 6 or less you gain an Experience Point (XP).

By default all the leads are in the same house and year (discuss in advance which -o any can work) - and the simplest time to play the game is under the reign of Umbridge, but any time is possible. This game is designed to work just as well with the Marauders as it is with Dumbledore's Army or the Golden Trio, and if you want a dark game use Snape and the Carrows.

The default rule for spellcasting involves waving a pencil around and speaking in fake Latin - in a silly game this is fun, and in a serious one more immersive if you can play it seriously. If you can't and want to play a sensible game, drop the requirement and just declare your spells.

Character Creation

Characters are designed to fit on a post-it note, with only four stats; one for each house. Slytherin to manipulate or hurt people, Gryffindor to keep people in the midst of danger, Ravenclaw to investigate or to sneak, and Hufflepuff to help others out and to do all the things that need doing from day to day. To design a character simply go through the following seven steps:

- Choose a Name
- Choose an Age and Year
- Choose a Gender
- Describe your Build, Hair, Eyes, and Hands
- Do you have a familiar? If so what? And what is it called?
- Order the four houses Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Slytherin. Give +2 to the first, +1 to the second, +0 to the third, -1 to the fourth. (This doesn't have to match the house you are in).
- Choose 1 specialty or activity - gain +1 to all rolls involving this specialty or gain an extra trick?. Only one speciality can be used on a given roll.
- Choose 1 weakness - you may at your choice automatically fail a roll involving your weakness (before rolling) and take a *Consequence* in return for an Experience Point (XP), and the GM may offer you an XP to set a scene involving your weakness.

Good examples of specialties are the Twins affinity for *Pranks*, Hermione's affinity for *Books*, Harry's skill at *Defence Against the Dark Arts*, Tonks being a *Metamorphmagus*, Draco Malfoy's *Money*, or even Remus Lupin's being a *Werewolf* and each of the other Marauders being an *Animagus*.

Weaknesses include such things as *Mudblood*, *Werewolf*, *Ignorant of the Wizarding World*, *Poor*, *Death eater In Training*, and anything else you can think of.

Whenever you get 5 Experience Points (from rolling a total of 6 or less or invoking your *weakness*) you can either raise a stat by 1, gain another *Specialty* or gain a *Magic Item* of the GM's choice that works like a speciality (examples from the books include the Invisibility Cloak, the Nimbus 2001/Firebolt, and the Time Turner). The advantage of a magic item is that you can use one in addition to a Speciality so Harry's *Firebolt* stacks with his *Quidditch* speciality. Each stat can be raised a maximum of once.

Moves

When you are declaring that you are doing something and it lines up with a move the GM will tell you to roll 2d6 and add your relevant stat. Most of the magical moves also trigger by mundane means although at a penalty. Note that only the MC absolutely needs to know what the moves do, and may only present the options that follow directly from what you are trying to do. It's worth remembering that despite the reputation of the houses, Stealth is more Ravenclaw than Slytherin; can you imagine a stealthy Crabbe or Goyle? Or even Harry being stealthy without his cloak?

When you wave a pencil around and speak in fake Latin and are trying to...

Hurt or stop someone roll +**Slytherin**. On a 10+ pick 3, on a 7-9 pick 1

- You hurt, curse, or impede them
- You *take them out* (counts as two choices)
- They don't successfully hurt, curse, or impede you back
- You don't attract attention

If you try to *Hurt Someone physically* (i.e. without magic) use the above move at -1

Protect or rescue someone roll +**Gryffindor**. On a 10+ choose two.

- The immediate threat is averted or driven off (MC choice)
- The person you were rescuing is unhurt
- People you don't want to find out don't
- The rumours paint you in a positive light

On a 7-9 choose two

- You don't attract unwanted attention
- You get more than a partial success
- You haven't left yourself or whoever you were protecting open to a follow-up

When you try to *Protect or rescue someone non-magically* use the above move at -1

Find something out roll +**Ravenclaw** On a 10+ choose 3, on a 7-9 choose 1. Gain +1 on your next roll that acts on the consequence of any action you take from what you found out.

- You don't trigger an unexpected side effect or unintended consequence
- You can ask "What is this intended to do?"

- You can ask “How can I make it work better?”
- You can ask “How can I stop it or make it work worse?”
- You can ask “How can I use this now?”

You may also trigger the above move in the library (or with a Potions kit).

Repair, build, or heal something roll +**Hufflepuff**

- On a 10+ halve the expected time or cost and there are no negative consequences. This level of success will cure a *Hurt* or *Curse*, or deal with most forms of *Impeded*.
- On a 7-9 you will be offered a bargain or choice for non-trivial constructions. This will suppress a *Curse* for two rolls or provide a work round for most forms of *Impeded*.

When you without magic try to

Manipulate a GM-run character roll +**Slytherin**

- On a 10+ after some negotiation you can get to offer what they want and they will do it. If you didn't pay last time they aren't stupid and may treat this as a 7-9
- On a 7-9 you need to pay up in advance

Discover something you aren't meant to know or get somewhere you shouldn't Roll +**Ravenclaw**

On a 10+ you discover something relevant or unexpectedly useful or get where you were trying to. Also choose 1

- You find an unexpected bonus
- No one you don't tell knows

On a 7-9 you get some information that is either relevant or useful, or get where you intended to but pick one:

- You are noticed
- It leads to dangerous actions
- You leave something important behind

Stay firm or keep going in the face of opposition Roll +**Gryffindor**

On a 10+ Choose

- Add 1 to your next roll
- Ask a question about the situation

On a 7-9 either you hold firm or keep going cautiously or you take a *consequence* and choose an option from the 10+ list

Help others out Roll +**Hufflepuff**

On a 10+ you help them out - if on a roll they gain +1 retroactively or +2 on a roll they haven't yet made.

On a 7-9 to help them you must expose yourself to risk, cost, or consequences.

Quidditch

You will probably want to play a game of Quidditch - if you do as a team game, I recommend using the

[Muggle Quidditch](#) rule that the Snitch is worth 30 points, not 150. To play you keep the game moving as normal and ask the players what they are trying to do. Hunting the Snitch is +Ravenclaw, dodging a Bludger or saving a goal as Keeper is +Gryffindor (and the Bludgers definitely count as Dark Arts to any DADA specialists), helping someone or passing is +Hufflepuff, beating a Bludger at someone (if a Beater) is +Slytherin, as is feinting them out and most dirty tricks (for fouls you might want to not attract attention). Keep track of the scores, and remember that the other team's NPC players are probably a little better than the rest of the team the PCs are on.

Remember actually catching the snitch is normally multiple +Gryffindor rolls once you've actually seen it as the other team tries to throw everything they've got into stopping you. The actual catch requires a 10+ on a +Gryffindor roll - a 7-9 it escapes back into the crowd, and on a miss if the other Seeker is nearby they catch it.

To score a goal, you need to first take the Quaffle into a shooting position and then get it past the opposing Keeper as for a normal move (feinting would be +Slytherin, sneaking +Ravenclaw, etc.). On a 10+ you score and on a 7-9 keeping the Quaffle requires taking a *Consequence*. On a 6- you lose possession in addition to taking the *Consequence*. If someone else distracts the Keeper so you fly through an open goal, there's no need for this final roll.

Potions

Potions (like Polyjuice) for most practical purposes are plot devices. +Ravenclaw rolls are needed to find the relevant ones for plans (there will be a potion), +Hufflepuff to brew - but you'll need a share of Slytherin and probably Gryffindor too to get the potion ingredients. Swallowing a brand new potion you've never made in Potions class also probably takes +Gryffindor to *Hold Steady*.

Curse or Injury

Sometimes people get hurt or magically inconvenienced. There are three basic types of hurting someone at Hogwarts:

- *Hurt*. You need a spell to recover from hurt. If you are *Hurt* twice you are *Taken Out* until you are treated in the Hospital Wing.
- *Cursed* (for instance Bat-bogey). Take -1 to all rolls until you either end the effect or the scene ends - anyone rolling against cursed targets gets +1. Multiple Curses don't stack.
- *Impeded* (e.g. Disarmed or Obliviated, or even broken glasses). Describe the effect. Work round it or undo it to overcome it.

There are two more severe levels that get in the way.

- *Blighted* (normally via a *Consequence*) -1 to all rolls and impeded however it impedes you until you're cured (normally at the Hospital Wing)
- *Taken out* (for instance Full Body Bind). Out of the scene or until someone rescues you

The role of the MC

The players run their characters; it's the MC's job to run the rest of the world including teachers and other students, and to decide most of what happens. The world follows logically from everyone's actions, and should be kept both consistent and entertaining. The following agendas should help guide you to producing the magically real world of Hogwarts.

Agendas

- Keep things exciting and magical
- Keep things fast moving
- Be a fan of the PCs
- Think magically real
- Allow the PCs their victories ... and defeats
- Let darkness spread - but keep the light alive
- Everyone has a name ... and a goal.
- Play to see what happens
- After each action you make, ask one of the players "What do you do?"

When the players roll a 6 or less there will be a *consequence* - and one the PCs don't like. You are also encouraged to give *consequences* whenever the players give you a golden opportunity by having done something spectacularly thoughtless in character. It will happen, and take advantage of them when it happens - the world will just feel hollow otherwise.

Suggested *Consequences*

- Take things in the worst possible way
- Follow the logical consequences
- Add a logical magical effect
- Split the PCs up
- Bring someone in
- Show them the consequences. Ask.
- Hurt them - if with magic, the more ridiculous the better
- Put them in the wrong place at the wrong time
- Introduce a magical event
- Cross a Weasley Twin Prank or Peeves
- Have someone act without thinking
- Turn the PCs moves around on them
- Anything else that feels as if it fits the situation

Running the Game and setting difficulties

Running the game is slightly different from running most tabletop RPGs - for one thing the MC never rolls the dice. And as a rule the MC should never name the *consequence* or other rules that don't directly affect the PCs - instead just say what happens (so instead of saying "Split the PCs up" you say for

example “Harry, the corridor collapses behind you. Hermione there’s a quarter of a ton of rock between you and Harry - your magic isn’t strong enough to shift it. What do you do?” With no modifiers to speak of, the difficulty is set with extra difficulty rolls (normally +Gryffindor) and harsher outcomes. So to take two examples.

1: Luna is facing one of her dorm mates who’s just stolen one of her lucky charms. She’s been hanging around Harry far too long and has decided to hex her fellow Ravenclaw into dancing (which will make him drop the charm). She draws her wand, waves it while intoning *Ottonis numquam resisti aliqua*, and rolls two dice and adds her Slytherin score. On a success her target is dancing and she can pick up her lucky charm. Simple as that. And if she fails she probably takes something like a Jelly Legs hex in return.

2: Harry Potter is facing down Lord Voldemort. The death eaters are all scary and can destroy the future of our PC (or even kill them) so Harry needs to roll +Gryffindor to even take the field. And a further +Gryffindor for Voldemort himself. And Voldemort is an expert duellist and gets off the first spell - +Gryffindor to get out of the way. After making it through that barrage of three Gryffindor rolls and hopefully not facing a hard move (any spell cast by Voldemort is going to *hurt*) Harry finally gets to make an attack. And if he goes straight for the take-out with a Full Body Bind, Voldemort can probably cancel it wandlessly while bound anyway.

Taking Voldemort on directly is hard work. It’s meant to be.

NPCs, of course, never roll in this system. If an NPC tries to hex a PC narrate that and ask the PC “What do you do?” Doing nothing is, of course, a Golden Opportunity. Generally firing back or dodging is rolling +*Slytherin* - with the result “They don’t successfully hurt, curse, or impede you back” meaning they miss. A straight dodge is +*Gryffindor* and keep going unharmed. And a curse of an enemy from behind after stealthing with *Ravenclaw* so they have no idea you are there shouldn’t require a roll.

The First Session

Print yourself a copy of [each of the handouts](#). Give any players who want one a copy of the player handout (there is no need for any of the players to know what the moves do - when they try to take the action you tell them what to roll then offer them the outcomes)

Houses and Wands is meant to play fast and concentrate on the most exciting parts of the Potterverse. To open the first session, after everyone has created their character (something that should take minutes at most) and establishing who is the current Head start in the middle of the scene. Tell them something like “It’s an hour after Lights Out and after discovering something interesting you are trying to get back to your dorm on the far side of the castle without anyone noticing you. You hear footsteps walking towards you along the corridor you were just about to take; a teacher’s from the sound of it. What do you do?” And ask them what they do each time you describe something new. The story is about them. (As a rule of thumb, give them one teacher, one group of students they don’t like much, and one physical shifting staircase/missing corridor to see what they do. Test them even if the consequences aren’t grave).

What information did they find? Did you have something in mind? If not *ask them* when they've made it back. There's no shame in asking your players anything you like - and build on it. They only picked up a clue if it's something big and relating to magical artifacts - if it's something relating to pranks give it to them. The implementation comes later. And above all setting them somewhere they shouldn't be gives them the personalities of people who are going to make trouble, and gives them a chance to show you how they approach things. Setting the scene for the rest of the game.

And whatever you do don't over prepare. The PCs are the stars of the show. Let the world respond to them and them create much of the plots. Don't have an intended outcome.