

CARTOON ACTION HOUR

SEASON 3



Primer



Greetings! My name is Bravesteel. I was the lead protagonist of *Galactic Heroes*, a short-lived cartoon from the 1980s. And I'm here to give you a quick rundown of the ***Cartoon Action Hour: Season 3*** game system.

How dare you fail to introduce *me* -- Kargorr the Conqueror, also known as Kargorr the Despot, Kargorr the Magnificent, Kargorr the All-Powerful, Kargorr the...

Alright, alright. I'm sure they get the point. Kargorr, who never acquired any of the titles he was boasting about, was my arch enemy on the show. Now, he acts as my co-host in the rulebook.

Feh. It's the other way around. *I'm* the host and you're my co-host. Don't try to elevate yourself higher than you actually are, you half-witted buffoon!

Keep dreaming, Kargorr. Anyway, this document isn't intended to give readers all the rules; rather, the intent is to showcase the basics and even hit upon some of the less central elements. Let's get going, shall we?



Defining Characters

Traits

Every character has a list of Traits that reflect what he or she is particularly good at. Traits can represent inborn abilities, skills, knacks, knowledge, perks, equipment, vehicles, companions, powers, magic or anything else that makes a character who he or she is.

Aren't you going to give these imbeciles the list of Traits, you twit?

Of course not... because there *is* no definitive list of Traits. When you make a character, you get to come up with your own Traits. If you want your character to be a gifted athlete, give him or her a Trait called (you guessed it) GIFTED ATHLETE. If you envision your character to be a leader, go with LEADER. If your character is to be a master of the martial arts, jot down MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS. This allows you to bring your ideas to life without having to conform to a rigid, unbending Trait list.

Bah! Players need to be controlled like the sheep that they are! I demand a Trait list!

Ratings

Each of a character's Traits is measured by a rating. The higher the rating, the better he or she is in that area. Most normal humans have ratings of between 1 and 4. Anything higher than that is considered superhuman, augmented, enhanced or otherwise beyond the reach of normal humans.

Special Rules

Special Rules are rules that can be given to a Trait to alter how it functions in the game. For example, the "Situational Boost" bolsters a Trait's effectiveness under certain conditions (while underwater, at night, against metal targets, etc.).

Qualities

Qualities are miscellaneous tidbits that can help or hinder the character during the game.

One Quality (known as the Signature Quality) defines the character's role, archetype, profession or gimmick. Think of it as the little blurb beneath the character's picture on the back of the old action figure packages that gave kids a nutshell idea of what the character was all about ("Computer Specialist", "Evil Overlord", "Commando", etc.).

The character's other Qualities (known as Standard Qualities) tend to be narrower in scope and often tie in to the character's personality or background ("Afraid of Crowds", "Was Once a King", "Risk Taker", "In Love with [insert name]", etc.).

Star Power

Characters possess a Star Power rating of between 1 and 4 that defines their place in the show's hierarchy. Star Power affects numerous aspects of a character both during character creation and during the game.

Checks

Making Checks

Whenever the GM feels that the outcome of an action or situation would be made more interesting by adding a random element, he can require a check. A check is simply a roll that must be made to determine success or failure.

To make a check, roll a d12 and add the most appropriate Trait rating to it (or add nothing should the character be without an applicable Trait). If the result is equal to or higher than the Difficulty Number (DN), the character's action is successful.

Difficulty Numbers

So, how is the DN determined?

Naturally, the DN should be much lower for villains than for heroes! This is because heroes are boring and nobody wants to see them succeed. They must be squahed, thwarted and made to look like fools at every turn!

You're hopeless! For what it's worth, Kargorr is wrong. DNs aren't determined by whether the character is a hero or villain. Instead, those numbers are based on what type of check it is:

Opposed Checks

When the action is contested by another character, the contesting character chooses an appropriate Trait and makes a check with it. The result is the DN for the acting character. Alternatively,

the GM can just add 6 to the Trait rating to get the DN.

Normal Checks

When the action isn't directly against another character (jumping over a chasm, lifting a boulder, etc.), the GM chooses an appropriate base difficulty number and adds it to the roll of a die to determine the DN. Alternatively, the GM can just add 6 to the base difficulty number to get the DN.

Other Factors

Qualities

If one of the character's Standard Qualities would either be helpful or detrimental, the GM can add 2 to the Trait rating or to the DN, respectively. If the former is the case, the Trait cannot grant a bonus for the rest of the episode. If the character's Signature Quality would prove helpful, the player rolls a Benefit Die along with the normal die, choosing the highest of the two rolls.

Flubs and Boons

If you roll a natural 1 (i.e., the die actually lands on "1") while making a check, a flub occurs. The action automatically fails and you may not alter it using Oomph. Furthermore, if the flub happens during an action scene, the character automatically gains a Setback Token; he or she falls on their face, drops their weapon, gets hit by a counter-attack, becomes tangled up in some vines, etc.

If you roll a natural 12 (i.e., the die actually lands on "12") while making a check, a boon occurs. When this happens, double the character's Star Power score and add it to the check's result.

Action Scenes

What is an Action Scene?

Anyone who has ever watched a retro-toon can tell you that action of some kind is never too far away. Whether it's a thrill-a-second chase, a sprawling battle between armies, a one-on-one fight, a race against time or some other segment of the story designed to get the viewer's adrenaline pumping, action scenes were plentiful. Not only were they plentiful, they were also vibrant, dynamic and fast-paced!

In **Cartoon Action Hour: Season 3**, sequences of this nature are called action scenes. Whenever the excitement begins, the Game Master will announce that an action scene has begun.

Crucial Checks

When the success or failure of a check could cause a character to either receive or deal a Setback Token, it is called a crucial check. Generally speaking, anything that could harm or hinder a character will be a crucial check, which means that most of the ones made during an action scene should qualify.

The following instances are examples of crucial checks:

- A character attempting to attack another character
- A character attempting to capture another character
- A character attempting to pursue a fleeing character
- A character attempting to trick or outwit another character
- A character attempting to confuse, frustrate or befuddle another character

- A character attempting to traverse dangerous terrain (leaping from one vehicle to another, hopping from rock to rock, climbing a cliff, etc.)

Conversely, these instances probably shouldn't be crucial checks:

- A character attempting to pick up an item
- A character attempting to spot a hard-to-see object
- A character attempting to push open a heavy door

Standard Crucial Checks

Some crucial checks are standard checks (leaping from one airship to another, bounding over a chasm, etc.), wherein failure means that the character making the check gains a Setback Token.

- For standard crucial checks, the character must make a standard check and if he fails, he gains a Setback Token.

Opposed Crucial Checks

Most crucial checks are opposed checks (attacks, attempts to outwit each other, chases, etc.), wherein one specific character gains a Setback Token if he fails. The *acting character* (i.e., the one whose turn it is) is attempting to force a Setback Token on the *reacting character* (i.e., the one he's attempting to give a Setback Token to).

- For opposed crucial checks, the characters must make an opposed check. If the acting character succeeds, the reacting character receives a Setback Token. If the reacting character succeeds, he doesn't gain a Setback Token.

Gah! Your ceaseless prattle has denied me a chance to get a word in edgewise!

Setback Tokens and Defeat

Setback Tokens

During action scenes, characters acquire Setback Tokens. Setback Tokens don't necessarily represent damage that the character has suffered (although that can certainly be the case as well). Rather, they can represent any type of impediment imaginable, from a character becoming subdued by vines to a character getting so flustered that he can't even see straight. Anything that sets a character back is worthy of resulting in a Setback Token; hence the name.

Whatever the case may be, each Setback Token gained by a character brings him one step closer to failure.

Individual Setback Tokens have no actual effect on the character. However, a character can only safely acquire a number of Setback Tokens equal to his Star Power score. If he acquires more than that, he is Defeated (see Defeat below) and may not participate further in the action scene.

Defeat

In **Cartoon Action Hour: Season 3**, when a character goes down for the count, it's referred to simply as Defeat.

As mentioned earlier, gaining an amount of Setback Tokens higher than the character's Star Power score causes the character to be Defeated. A Defeated character no longer participates in the scene. The Defeat can be described any number of ways. Here are some examples, but keep in mind that the possibilities are endless.

- The attack targets loose boulders, which roll onto the character, trapping him.
- The attack knocks the character unconscious.
- The character becomes so flustered that he cannot contribute to the scene in any meaningful way.
- The attack flings the character into a wall, which crumbles on top of him.
- The attack cuts down a tree, which topples over onto the character.
- The character is tricked into thinking the enemy has gone elsewhere and thus follows the trail away from the location in which the scene is taking place.
- The attackers dog-pile the character, capturing him.
- The attack's impact causes the character to be sent back into vine-laden trees and he gets tangled up in them.
- The character being chased is caught by the pursuer.
- The attack forces the character to flee (villains only!).
- The attack sends the character over the edge of a cliff, delaying him long enough for the villain to get away.
- The attacker goads the character into moving onto a trap door that leads to a secret prison cell by way of a grav-tunnel.

Defeat is for sissies! I, for one, have never been defeated in combat. Not once!

I have one word to say to you, Kargorr: Ziggle. Even the cute companion kicked your tail!

My defeat at Ziggle's hands was a fluke! A fluke, I tell you!

Insta-Defeat

It is entirely possible for any character to be taken completely out of the scene with only one crucial check. This is emulated in the game rules with Insta-Defeat. A character is in danger of being Insta-Defeated any time he gains a Setback Token as the result of an opposed crucial check.

If the acting character succeeds in the check and his or her check result is higher than the reacting character's DN by an amount equal to or greater than the reacting character's Star Power x2, the reacting character is Insta-Defeated. Thus, a character with Star Power 3 would be Insta-Defeated if the final DN is at least 6 higher than his or her DN.

Oomph

About Oomph

Oomph is an expendable resource that separates heroes and villains from other characters in the series. Points of Oomph can be spent to bend the game rules in various ways, all of which are described in the rulebook.

Starting Oomph

Each PC starts every episode with a number of Oomph equal to his Star Power score. The player can spend his character's Oomph as he sees fit (see below).

The GM doesn't have a constant pool of Oomph to draw upon. Instead, he receives an Oomph pool on a per-scene basis. The exact amount is equal to the number of PCs in the scene, plus the Star Power of the GMC with the highest Star Power involved in the scene. The GM can spend the Oomph in his pool to benefit all GMCs. The GM's Oomph pool dissipates entirely once the scene ends.

Earning Oomph

Players can earn Oomph in a variety of ways, though the primary way to do so is by roleplaying in accordance with the conventions of the retro-toon genre. Other methods of gaining Oomph

include when the GM decides that the character's Qualities would be detrimental or when the player comes up with a clever idea.

The GM has more limited means of gaining Oomph than players do, though we can't go into that here due to a lack of space.

Likely excuse! The truth is that you simply want to keep us villains down! I shall make you pay for that!

Sure you will.

Spending Oomph

Players can spend Oomph on a whole slew of things, from re-rolls and avoiding Insta-Defeat to editing scenes and automatically avoiding laser blasts fired by lowly minions (hey, those blasts never seemed to hit heroes in the retro-toons no matter how many shots were being fired!).

Leftover Oomph

If a PC has any points of Oomph remaining at the end of an episode, they are converted into Leftover Oomph on a one-for-one basis. Furthermore, if the PC participated in the After-Show Message of the episode, he or she automatically gains a free point of Leftover Oomph.

Leftover Oomph can be used to improve your character's abilities between seasons... representing a brand new version of the character's action figure!