



HIVEMIND is a game which players take on the trials of members of a Hive, or instead play as the Hive itself in a more competitive take on the game.

In order to play, you will need a deck of cards, some paper, and something to write with.

For the RPG.net "Iron Chef" challenge, by Sicant

Ingredients: Unique mechanic tied to the setting, economic crisis, unrest, cloning.

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INTRODUCTION

For the members of the Hives it will be a cold day in the Waste indeed when not a single creature stirs. The sky-spanning flowers and trees have long since died, taking with them the lesser creatures. Those in the Hives still live on, their stored resources slowly dwindling. Optimism is perhaps the rarest resource of all in the Hives, as the seers and advisors calculate the days left for the food to last.

The Waste was not always so, and in times before it thrived with lush vegetation and stupid beasts feeding on the plants. The eusocial creatures quickly began to dominate the land, working together to catch the feeders and scare away the predators. They were able to forge many a great nation, some winding deep beneath the earth and others spanning high above it.

When the flowers began to wilt, the Hives thought of it naught. They were the invincible rulers of the land, and it was merely a seasonal change. They hunted still, and held their festivals and enjoyed a rich age. Even when all the flowers died, they still lauded the trees and the more rugged plants. But in time, even those died. Soon after, the Hives had hunted all the beasts that remain on the land, and they retreated in to their colonies, cursing the dreaded land as the Waste.

A few are still sent out from the Hives in to the waste, but their journeys are often too expensive to fund in these times. Occasionally a search party is sent out to go beyond the Waste, and lauded as heroes. They all know that fewer mouths is the goal, but still travel on for the good of the Hive. None have returned, though many Hives have spotted one another. They see other dwindling nations, seeing them with a mix of fear and desire. A few have already sent the first parties to attack other Hives for their last stores. The day when the first warriors meet is coming quickly, faster even than the end of the food.

You will be playing the last Hives of the waste, either as a citizen or the Hive itself. Perhaps you will be one to revive the Waste, or more likely you will strike the killing blow to the dying land.

HIVEMIND

The shared trait between the Hives is their eusociality, which is conveyed through complex chemical signals that rival telepathy. All Hives have a Queen, the sole being capable of mating. The others are exact clones of others bred for the same function. HIVEMIND is fantastical, in that the Queen literally does commute telepathically with all her residents. There really is one Hivemind that all members are a part of, being fed signals of what to do. There are individual thoughts by some members, but they are more often suppressed by the sheer intensity of the unified Hivemind.

If characters are playing members of a Hive, that means they have a telepathic communication with the Hive and the other members of the party at all times. If playing a Hive, this means you can pull off impossible bureaucratic feats, because you have incredible sovereignty.

MAKING A HIVE AND IT'S MEMBERS

The first step to either type of game is making a Hive. For quick-play, there are several provided at the end of the .PDF, based on real eusocial creatures.

Obviously, you need a Hive to start out. You could write paragraphs about it, but generally an idea about what you want your Hive to be will suffice. If you are running low on ideas, here are some questions you might want to answer.

What is your Hive called?

What do the members of the Hive look like? [Do they wear clothes? Are they humanoid? Do they have hair?]

What does the Hive itself look like? [Is it underground? Is it built up like a castle? Is it shoddy and natural looking? Does it hang from a branch? Do you need to be able to fly to reach it?]

Representing the Hive is done by noting its current supplies and size, as well as noting traits shared by the individuals in the Hive.

Distribute 10 points between SIZE and FOOD. Size represents the number of Hive-members, while Food represents how many supplies the Hive has left. One point of food will feed one point of size for 10 days.

The next is to distribute 2 points between BODY and MIND. A higher Body corresponds to bigger, more powerful members while a higher Mind corresponds to a more developed Hivemind.

The last is to add a Special Power that the members of your Hivemind share if you plan to play as members of the Hive. Rules for Special Powers will be covered after the conflict rules.

If you are playing members of a Hive, you now have the hive the group will be a part of. All that is left is to pick your Role in the Hive.

A Role is similar in construction to a Hive, in that it has 4 points to split between BODY and MIND, and one Special Power. If you want your character to be able to fly, spend one point of BODY and you can. Example Roles are provided in the back of the .PDF, as with the example Hives.

Members of the Hive also have an Individuality trait, which measures how far they have strayed from the Hivemind. Individuality starts at zero, and rises during play. The benefits and drawbacks of individuality will be covered in the conflict rules for Hive members.

CONFLICT - Hive Level

The Hive-level game focuses on the Hives attempts at survival in the harsh days of the Waste. They must contend with the changing situations of the dying land and the fevered attacks of their rivals both.

The game is played in a series of rounds, with an event card drawn and a time given for the Hives to talk amongst themselves about it, work out 'diplomatic' relations, and otherwise plot their actions. The round ends when every Hive has written down what action they are taking, and each is resolved. Events last only one round. Upkeep happens at the end of every round, where one point of food must be spent per point of size the Hive wants to keep. If a Hive has no Food, the unified Hivemind dies.

All actions will require a "Body" or "Mind" check. Simply draw a card and add Body or Mind to the value. Aces are counted as Ones, while Jacks, Queens, and Kings are counted as 11, 12, and 13 respectively. If there is a tie, draw another card for both parties.

EVENTS

♠ Spades ♠

A - Destructive rain falls on the Waste.

[-1 Size]

2 - Nutritious survivors of a dead Hive wander the land.

[+1 Food if attacked, +1 Size if sheltered]

3 - Vengeful survivors of a dead Hive wander the land.

[Body check at difficulty 3 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Size]

4 - The Waste begins to sink.

[Mind check at difficulty 4 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Size]

5 - A meteor falls in to the Waste.

[Attacking players get a +1 bonus.]

6 - A carnivorous plant appears in the waste.

[+2 Food if attacked]

7 - Bandits from dead Hives raid food stores.

[Body check difficulty 7, failure results in -1 Food]

8 - Heat in the Waste causes members of the Hivemind to go mad.

[Mind check difficulty 8, failure results in -1 Size]

9 - Mercenaries appear from dead Hives.

[Hives may lose 1 Food to gain 2 Size]

10 - The nights grow longer, and colder.

[Body check difficulty 10, failure results in -1 Food]

J - A dying Hive makes it's last stand.

[Body check at difficulty 11, or -1 size]

Q - The air of the Waste becomes thick and humid.

[Attacking players get a -1 penalty]

K - A gigantic beast has wandered in to the Waste.

[+5 Food if attacked]

♣ Clubs ♣

- A** - A plague taints food-stores.
[-1 Food]
- 2** - A dying Hive offers its loyalty to anyone who will save them.
[May exchange Food for Size on a one to one basis]
- 3** - The ground of the Waste becomes infertile.
[Farming players get a -1 penalty]
- 4** - Copycat creatures begin infiltrating Hives.
[Mind check at difficulty 4 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Food]
- 5** - Sandstorms begin in the Waste.
[Any action other than Holding takes a -1 penalty]
- 6** - Survivors of a dead Hive rant about the coming end.
[Mind check at difficulty 6 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Size]
- 7** - Slavers come from a distant land with crooked deals.
[Hives may lose 1 Size to gain 2 Food]
- 8** - Strange flowers begin to grow, but not all are immune to their poisons.
[Body check at difficulty 8 for all Hives, -1 Size if failed, +1 Food if met]
- 9** - A strange wind muddles the unification of the Hivemind.
[-1 penalty to Mind checks]
- 10** - A terrible noise begins confusing members of the Hive.
[Mind check at difficulty 10 for all hives, failure results in -1 Size]
- J** - A gentle rain soothes the Waste and the Hives.
[+1 Size or +1 Food]
- Q** - A strange fog covers the Waste.
[Attacks and Raids double their damage]
- K** - A full moon appears in the sky.
[+2 bonus to Mind checks]

♥ Hearts ♥

- A** - A living tree is found in the Waste.
[+1 Food]
- 2** - The ground of the waste becomes incredibly fertile.
[+2 bonus to Farming]
- 3** - A lost patrol warily returns.
[Mind check at difficulty 3 for all Hives, +1 Size if successful]
- 4** - There's something in the water these days.
[Body checks are at +1]
- 5** - Docile creatures return to the Waste.
[Body check at difficulty 5 for all Hives, +1 Food if successful]
- 6** - The Waste looks rather dead still.
[Reshuffle the deck]
- 7** - A swarm of creatures is flying above the waste.
[Body check at difficulty 7 for all Hives, +1 Food if successful]
- 8** - A rival Hive has been growing in power, and it plans to control the Waste.
[Body check at difficulty 8 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Size]
- 9** - A rival Hive has bred a new type of warrior, that's hard to put down.
[Mind check at difficulty 9 for all Hives, failure results in -1 Size]
- 10** - An aggressive Hive goes out early, leaving its food behind.
[+1 Food to all Hives that take an Attack action this turn]
- J** - A dying tree falls in the waste, and with no one alive to hear it.
[No event]
- Q** - The Waste makes a low rumble when you put your ear to it.
[Mind check at difficulty 12 for all Hives, success results in +1 Food]
- K** - Everyone seems to be in surprisingly good spirits.

[No Upkeep this round.]

◆ **Diamonds** ◆

A - The Hive sees unexplained expansion.

[+1 Size]

2 - The Waste begins to crumble.

[-1 Size]

3 - Far spreading seeds sail through the Waste.

[+1 Food]

4 - Far spreading seeds latch on to Hives, burrowing through their walls.

[-1 Size]

5 - Unexplained tunnels are discovered.

[Draw two cards for Body or Mind checks this turn. Take the higher one.]

6 - Residents of a dormant Hive return, changed.

[Body check at difficulty 6 for all Hives, failure causes -1 Size and -1 Food]

7 - There are signs of tough times ahead, as the skies of the Waste dim.

[Mind check at difficulty 7 for all Hives, failure causes -1 Food]

8 - The Waste grows dangerous as the ground cracks and forms cliffs.

[Must pass a Body check at difficulty 8 if taking an action beside Holding]

9 - The ground shakes constantly, drowning out most sounds.

[+2 Bonus to attacking players this turn]

10 - There's a noted lack of hope in the Waste for the Hives.

[Body and Mind checks are made as though an Ace was drawn]

J - A surprising bounty appears, which Hive will reach it first?

[Highest result on a Body check made by all Hives gets +2 Food]

Q - There is a clutch of lost warriors roaming the Waste.

[Highest result on a Mind check made by all Hives gets +2 Size]

K - The last day of the Waste marches closer.

[Pay Upkeep twice this turn]

Actions

Attack

Raid

Spend 1 Size, and make a Body Check against another Hives Mind Check. Success moves 2 Food from the defending player to the attacking player.

Crush

Spend 1 Size, and make a Body Check against another Hives Body Check. Success removes 2 Size from the defending player. If a Hives Size is reduced to Zero in this manner, the attacking Hive receives their remaining Food.

Defense

Hold

When taking a Hold action, you may draw an additional card when making a Check to prevent an Attack Action.

Farming

You may try to tame the dying Waste, by making a Mind Check against a card drawn from the deck. Success grants +2 Food.

Misc.

Regroup

You may exchange Size and Food on a one to one basis the round you take this action.

Protect

You may make a Check for another player this turn. [The other

player must allow this]

The game ends when a Hive has 15 Food or there is only one Hive left standing.

CONFLICT - Hive Members

The meat of the game is located here, where the members of the Hives fight out the last days on the Waste. A game where the group is inherently unified, part of a single mind. The conflicts that pan out might be a journey to the edge of the Wastes, or perhaps storming the enemy Hive as an elite unit.

The rules for Hive members come up whenever the result of a situation is unknown. There are four types of conflict to be addressed.

Basic Tests

Basic tests are simply against a static difficulty set by the GM, from one to fifteen. Players draw a card and add either Body or Mind trying to get a higher result. If multiple players are attempting the same task, they may exchange cards as they see fit. [This is noted as the EXCHANGE power on character sheets]

[For example, a group of excellent Warriors with Body 6 are moving past a steep cliff [difficulty 7] with their advisor whom has Body 2. The advisor draws only a two, while another warrior draws a six. While the advisor would normally fail, the warrior exchanges cards, and both succeed]

Many Contestants, One Winner

If multiple PC's or NPC's are attempting to do the same goal better or faster than others, everyone involved simply draws a card and adds Body or Mind as usual. The Exchange power may be used still.

[The Advisor and Warrior find themselves in a footrace with an enemy hive for a lone flower they found at the top of the cliff. The enemy Hive members get a total of 12, while the Warrior draws only a four [for 10 total] and the advisor draws an eight [for 10 total as well]. The advisor switches cards with the warrior, giving him a 14 and allowing him to reach the flower first]

I Live Or Die By This Card

This type of resolution is used when someone wants to harm someone else. Perhaps they want to intimidate them, destroy their will, knock them unconscious, or outright slay them.

All PC's and NPC's involved draw three cards, declaring one for Initiative, one for Attack, and one for Defense. Mind adds to initiative, and in physical combat add Body to Attack and Defense.

Players may exchange cards as usual, BUT only cards they declared for the same function. [For example, you could exchange initiative cards for each other, but not an attack card for a defense card.]

After exchanging is done, go in order of highest initiative to lowest. Each player may declare an attack, which they compare to a foes defense. If it is higher, it does a point of damage. Characters can take two points of damage without harm, but if they take the third the character who put them there narrates the outcome. Narrating the beheading of your foe in a single stroke is just as valid as knocking them out with the flat of your blade.

If a character wants to escape a conflict, they must win a contested body check at a

minus three penalty. Characters who fly do not suffer this penalty.

Too Many To Count!

If ever there are too many characters in a conflict to count [18, because you couldn't draw enough cards], it is split in to multiple conflicts or acts only as a backdrop. There are no mass battle rules, per se.

Special Powers

Hive members will have four special powers, one from their Hive, one from their Role, Telepathy, and Exchange. Here are a few example powers for Hives and Roles below.

HIVE POWERS

Working as One

Hive members may forgo their Mind or Body bonus to a draw and add it to another Hive members draw instead.

Waiting for the Perfect Moment

Hive members may opt to take a Zero on a draw in a conflict, and store a card for later use. Any other Hive members in the same conflict may use the stored card.

Destroy us All

Hives with this edge fail as a team or not at all. If ever a member would take a third damage, they may transfer it to a willing Hive member within the same conflict.

Perfected Hivemind

Hives with this power work in flawless unity. In a conflict, add the highest Mind score possessed by a Hive member participating to all Mind checks.

ROLE POWERS

Warriors Honor

In a combat conflict, the Hive member may add his Body bonus to another for a single check.

Noble Guidance

The high ranking Hive-member directs the Hivemind, and can share the card they possess without exchanging it.

Workers Unity

Workers add a +1 bonus to Hive members involved in the same conflict as themselves, up to +4 at most.

Drone Compliance

If you have exchanged a card, you may draw another and exchange it with someone other than yourself.

INDIVIDUALITY

As mentioned earlier, Hive members also have an Individuality attribute, which governs their removal from the Hive. At any point in time, the player may choose to take a point of Individuality and draw another card. Additionally, they get a point to spend on either Mind or Body.

All they have to do is cross out one of their powers. As long as they have telepathy they can still benefit from their Hive members powers. Though, they do begin to have strange thoughts not linked by the single mind. Strange thoughts that will likely drive them to take further Individuality points.

If a character takes four-points of Individuality, they are no longer connected to the Hive. Members of their own Hive will not recognize them as such, and treat them as imposters. They will likely be attacked on sight by anyone who does not have a point or more of Individuality themselves.

PLOT IDEAS / RUNNING A GAME

A game of HIVEMIND is not meant to last more than a single session. A game should test the unity of the group, and focus on their powers; all of which only help when they work together. A ready made HIVEMIND plot generator is already provided, in the Event cards for the Hive-level play. Other plots might include searching for a MacGuffin to cure the Wastes, a perilous journey beyond the edge of the Waste that tests what the players will stay as a group through, or an invasion based game about attacking another Hive that faces just as many difficulties.

When creating opposition, choose a number of foes and split six-points between Body and Mind, as per usual. If you want a particularly tough foe, such as the Queen of a Hive, consider splitting more than six-points or having others aiding the individual. Since Hivemind is only intended for short-sessions, don't be afraid if your players die. They can easily play a clone of their last character if they die too early, as they are in a Hive after all. However, consider also transferring Individuality if such an option is taken, to make the choice of leaving the Hive more severe.

EXAMPLE HIVES & ROLES

Size: 6 Food: 4

Body: 0 Mind: 2

Power: Working as One

The ant-kin are small warriors that are fiercely reliant upon one another. They have deep crimson to black skin, and a few bear translucent wings. They burrow underground in complex tunnel structures, careful to hide the Queens chamber. Many of the warriors have large jaws for crushing opponents, and hooks in their hands for climbing towards an enemy encampment.

Size: 3 Food: 7

Body: 1 Mind: 1

Power: Waiting for the Perfect Moment

Those of the termite blood have bright orange skin, and are known to eat anything living or dead within their path. Known survivalists, they suffered least of all in the change to the waste. They build their Hive from mounds of earth, stretching stories high in an intimidating fortress. They fight in a similar manner to the ant-kin.

Size: 5 Food: 5

Body: 2 Mind: 0

Power: Perfected Hivemind

The banded yellow fur clashes with the black skin of the bees, almost all of whom are capable of flight on a set of translucent wings. They make their Hive on the few trees that still stand, and are cautious of the Termite-kins voracious appetite. They prefer to fight with an attached stinger, rather than their jaws.

Body 4

Mind 0

Power: Warriors Honor

Warrior

Body 0

Mind 4

Power: Noble Guidance

Noble

Body 3

Mind 1

Power: Workers Unity

Worker

Body 1

Mind 3

Power: Drone Compliance

Drone

Character Sheets

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY:

MIND:

FOOD:

SIZE:

DESCRIPTION

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY:

MIND:

FOOD:

SIZE:

DESCRIPTION

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY:

MIND:

FOOD:

SIZE:

DESCRIPTION

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY: _____ **MIND:** _____ **ROLE:** _____ **INDIVIDUALITY:** 0 0 0 0
_____ **DAMAGE:** 0 0 0

POWERS: Telepathy Exchange

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY: _____ **MIND:** _____ **ROLE:** _____ **INDIVIDUALITY:** 0 0 0 0
_____ **DAMAGE:** 0 0 0

POWERS: Telepathy Exchange

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY: _____ **MIND:** _____ **ROLE:** _____ **INDIVIDUALITY:** 0 0 0 0
_____ **DAMAGE:** 0 0 0

POWERS: Telepathy Exchange

HIVE:

PLAYER:

BODY: _____ **MIND:** _____ **ROLE:** _____ **INDIVIDUALITY:** 0 0 0 0
_____ **DAMAGE:** 0 0 0

POWERS: Telepathy Exchange

