

# Qiangdao

## Way of the Gun

Game Fu Edition

A Game of Guns and Fu in the Wide Open West  
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Written for Game Fu 7

*Ingredients Used:*

- 1.) Players control character advancement.
- 2.) Reverse dice pool resolution, where all dice in a pool have to succeed. Penalties add dice, bonuses remove dice.
- 3.) *Genre Blend:* Western (Harsh life on the lawless frontier, Shoot or give up the gun, A man lives or dies by his word) + Wuxia (Enlightenment through training, Fantastic martial arts, Eternal search for secret techniques)
- 4.) The entire game, sans title page, must fit onto a 3 page document (front/back) (letter sized, minimum font size of 10pts).
- 5.) *Images:* Obtained from <http://www.cowboyclipart.net/>



## SECTION ONE: THE GAME

### WAY OF THE GUN

*Qiangdao: Way of the Gun* assumes you know what a roleplaying game is. To play, you will only need a small pile of six-sided dice (ten at most for extreme cases).

### CHARACTER CREATION

Characters in *Qiangdao* have four attributes:

*Fight* - Combat ability of all sorts. Though *Qiangdao* focuses mainly on firearms, especially the classic six-shooter, this attribute also contributes to the ability to fight with blades, bows, fists and improvised weapons. There are more than just gunslingers in the West.

*Talk* - Interaction ability of various types. Charming, deceiving and intimidating all fall under this attribute.

*Survive* - Abilities used to get by in the harsh lands of the West. Not just hunting, tracking, and riding, it also covers one's ability to perceive and one's physical prowess.

*Know* - Book learning and acquired knowledge, such as languages, cultures, sciences, crafts and so on.

Each attribute will have a rating describing how strong a character is with that particular set of characteristics: Poor, Average and Excellent. These ratings determine how many base dice the player rolls for actions taken with that attribute. The better a rating, the less dice the player has to roll.

A character's rating with each attribute is refined with *specialties*, which are specific areas of application that a character has more practice with. Specialties are also rated: Trained, Skilled and Expert. These ratings allow a character to ignore penalty dice imposed by difficulties. Specialties include individual types of weapons (pistols, longarms, brawling, improvised weapons), certain types of interaction (charm, seduction, intimidation, deception), particular survival skills (tracking, riding, perception) and individual knowledge sets (native tribal culture, blacksmithing, leatherworking, chemistry).

Almost every character will have a certain number of possessions, tools that make life easier. These include weapons, tools of a trade, mounts and so on. Some items and possessions will be better than average quality, and will have a quality rating that allows the person using them to ignore penalty dice of certain types. These ratings are Good, High and Legendary.

Lastly, *Qiangdao* characters have developed special abilities that allow them to surpass normal human capacity. These powers are called Techniques, and are both the means of a wanderer's survival and the very thing wanderers search for. Techniques come in three levels of power: Initiate, Adept and Master.

To create a *Qiangdao* character, follow these steps:

1.) Distribute one rating of Excellent, two of Average and

one of Poor among the four attributes. Keep in mind, not every character is or should be an Excellent fighter.

2.) Choose one specialty at Skilled and three at Trained. Must have one Specialty per stat.

3.) Choose four items/possessions, one of High quality and three of Good quality. Must have one item per specialty.

4.) Choose four Techniques, one of Adept level and three of Initiate level. Must have one Technique per specialty.

### PLAYING THE GAME

*Qiangdao* uses a simple dice mechanic involving a pool of d6s. Most simple actions will not require rolls. Should there be some measure of doubt, the player will roll a number of d6s (called the base dice) determined by the character's rating with the appropriate attribute, modified by any penalties or bonuses. Penalties add more dice to be rolled. Specialties, item quality, bonuses and some Techniques allow the player to disregard certain numbers of penalty dice. (Some very powerful Techniques may even allow the player to remove base dice before rolling.)

#### *Base Dice by Attribute Rating*

Poor: 3 dice

Average: 2 dice

Excellent: 1 die

#### *Penalty Dice by Hindrance Level*

Minor: 1 die

Moderate: 2 dice

Major: 3 dice

#### *Penalty Dice Ignored by Specialty, Quality or Bonus Level*

Trained / Good / Minor: 1 die

Skilled / High / Moderate: 2 dice

Expert / Legendary / Major: 3 dice

All dice are rolled. Should no dice read "1", the action is a complete success. Should any dice read "1", the number of dice so showing determines what happens:

1: Complication / partial success.

2: Failure.

3: Botch / mishap

4: Disaster

Obviously, the more dice the player rolls, the greater the chance for failure. However, even with large dice pools, the character will succeed more often than not, true to the larger-than-life heroes of Western and *wuxia* legends.

### LIVE BY THE GUN, DIE BY THE GUN

Combat is a major part of both Western action stories and *wuxia* epics. In *Qiangdao* combat builds on the basic rolling mechanic.

*Initiative*, or who moves first, is determined by who is involved in the combat. Player characters always move

before minor opponents (minions, "mooks", etc.). Against major opponents, whoever has the highest Fight rating moves first and then in descending order, with ties going to the players and moving around the table.

An attack is an attempt to do damage. The player of the character making the attack (or the GM, for opponents) declares how much damage the attack will do if it succeeds, measured in *damage dice*. This adds a number of penalty dice to the attack roll equal the number of damage dice to be inflicted:

Bruise/scratch: 1 die

Hurt: 2 dice (max damage for unarmed attacks without techniques)

Wound: 3 dice

Incapacitate: 4 dice

If the attack roll succeeds (no 1s are rolled), the target accumulates the damage dice in addition to any taken from previous hits. If the attack is a complication, it inflicts one less die of damage (meaning a bruise/scratch attack does no damage).

If the target is hit, the player of the target (or GM) rolls all accumulated damage dice. Some Techniques will modify this roll. A success means the target is fine for now and can keep fighting. Less than a success means the following:

*Complication*: Impaired; must add 1 penalty die to all attacks and attribute/specialty rolls. (Cumulative.)

*Failure*: Knocked out of the fight.

*Botch*: Out, severely wounded, will die without attention.

*Disaster*: Death

A character's weapon does not affect this damage. Weapons have their own special traits (see the Weapons Chart).

## TECHNIQUES

Techniques are special powers that allow characters to enhance their capabilities and exceed normal human ability. Techniques are the carefully-guarded secrets that allow wanderers to brave and overcome dangers no other will face. They are also the goal of many -- searching out new and ever-more-powerful Techniques is a way of life in and of itself.

There is no end to what Techniques can do, but they are organized into three levels of power. Even the weakest Techniques are amazing; the most powerful are almost beyond description. There is no set list of Techniques. A player will create a character's Techniques using guidelines, allowing for maximum flexibility. In general:

*Initiate* Techniques allow a character to ignore one penalty die or one damage die. For example, reloading a weapon with existing ammunition at high speed, ignoring a penalty die to a shot for doing so; allowing the character to jump ten feet in the air; dulling the pain of a minor wound, ignoring a single damage die; enhancing the character's ability to

make a convincing speech, ignoring a penalty die for greater intended effect.

*Adept* Techniques move one step beyond, allowing the character to ignore two penalty or damage dice. Examples include reloading with existing ammunition without moving; jumping twenty feet; deadening the pain of two damage dice; making it easier for a character to convince an unfriendly gathering of something, ignoring two penalty dice.

*Master* Techniques allow the user to ignore even the greatest difficulties, ignoring three penalty or damage dice and often giving the character the ability to perform impossible stunts. Examples include taking a shot without having any ammunition available; ignoring three damage dice, overcoming the worst of wounds; jumping thirty feet or more straight up; swaying an entire unfriendly town to your side, all at once, ignoring three penalty dice.

Techniques should be written on scraps of paper or note cards, one for each. When a Technique is used, the paper or card should be turned face-down to indicate its use. A face-down Technique cannot be used again. A certain amount of time must pass before it is turned face-up once more.

*Initiate*: Turn face-up at the beginning of the next round of combat (i.e. one round later), or after thirty seconds of non-combat time.

*Adept*: Turn face-up after the round after the next (i.e. two rounds later), or after one minute of non-combat time.

*Master*: Turn face-up three rounds later, or after five minutes of non-combat time.

A character may use any number of Techniques in a round. *Qiangdao* is about fast action, not nitpicky record keeping.

## RECOVERY

Wounds can linger, even for the hardest of warriors. Damage in *Qiangdao* is treated somewhat cinematically, but there is no "instant healing". Damage dice are removed from a character at the rate of one per four hours of rest, if a character is taking it easy (not moving around or taking any strenuous action), or three over a full night's sleep of eight hours. This does not mean the wounds fully heal, only that the character has come to terms with the damage and shock.

Should a character accumulate six damage dice at once, this "recovery" rate slows. A full night's rest is necessary to remove any dice, and eight hours of sleep will remove only one die. A character must have five or less damage dice to enjoy the faster recovery rate.

These recovery rates apply only to major characters -- the players' characters and important NPCs, including opponents/villains. Minor characters, including enemy minions, recover only at the rate of one damage die per day of rest.

## SECTION TWO: THE SETTING

### A HARSH FRONTIER

It is a place of wild beauty, of soaring snow-capped mountains, endless prairies and painted deserts. It is a land where the native tribes war and trade with settlers from foreign lands. It is a land of boundless opportunity for both prosperity and death. It is the West.

The West has attracted hardy souls of all sorts looking for freedom, new lives and the opportunity to make their own way. Though there are growing islands of civilization, from places like Dodge City on the eastern edge of the Great Plains to the coasts of California and cities like San Francisco, the West is still largely an open country, full of hazards. Even in settlements the law is often a questionable presence, and many have to make their own justice.

### WANDERERS

Tales paint the West as a land of high adventure. In *Qiangdao*, it is exactly that. The West is home to men and women who have no home but where they lay their heads at night, who cross the land to and fro in search of many different things. These are the wanderers.

What makes wanderers unique, beyond their travels, are their strange, unearthly abilities. Wanderers know secrets learned from ancient tribal shamans, from immigrants who have traveled over the broad Pacific Ocean, and from long periods of isolation. They have developed powers beyond mere mortals. A wanderer who knows the right secrets can take down enemies even while blind, or ignore the pain of terrible wounds. A wanderer with the right Techniques can travel across the desert with little water or easily survive a frigid mountain night.

Some wanderers use their abilities for selfish or evil reasons, but many have turned to the causes of right and justice, journeying to and fro across the West to seek out those in need. Always, however, wanderers are seeking new knowledge, new Techniques to enhance their powers.

### CLEAN UP THIS TOWN

One of the most common and most treasured tales of the West is that of wandering adventurers riding into a town gripped by fear. Perhaps the town is beset by a marauding gang, or has been taken over by a tyrannical man who uses his money and his thugs to make everyone do his bidding. Often, one of these adventurers wears a tin star, the badge of the Sheriff, who is tasked by law to do what he or she would do anyway -- clean up the town.

This edition of *Qiangdao* focuses on these tales. The player characters may enter as a group or as individuals who happen to meet by chance. They could be a Sheriff and helpers, or even a gang of their own who are willing to side with the cause of justice... for a tiny fee, of course. Or perhaps fate has simply brought them all together at this place in this time for one purpose.

### BLAZING SADDLES

Towns do not tend to spring up out of nowhere.

They arise near crucial resources -- railroads, mines, good water, crossroads, excellent farming and grazing land. These resources allow towns to thrive and grow, but they also attract those who would intimidate, harm and even kill to control them. These are the villains of the piece, and it is against these that the players' characters will test their abilities.

Villains can come in multiple styles, but in *Qiangdao* they tend to come in one of two types: gangs, or "black hat and cronies". A gang will be a group of individuals much like the players' characters, often wanderers themselves who have chosen to use their abilities for selfish reasons. A "black hat" will be a powerful individual who can use Techniques, stronger individually than the characters, who is surrounded by minions, a.k.a. "cronies" or sometimes "mooks". These minions are perfectly capable of terrifying a townspeople, but are easily handled by a typical wanderer character. The danger of minions comes in their numbers.

Whether a gang or a black hat and his minions, the villains will have been terrorizing the town for some time by the time the characters arrive. The characters will see signs of the "occupation" almost immediately -- fearful townsfolk, an extra edge in the local saloon, a few brazen armed individuals strolling about as if they own the place. Inquiries as to the local situation can lead to two different discoveries: furtive whispers of trouble, or a confrontation with one of the villains. Enough questions can lead to both. Once the characters bump into the villains, the details of the situation will rapidly come to light. The characters will have to decide what they are going to do, and if they are truly on the side of justice, this will usually revolve around removing the source of the trouble in one way or another.

### A QUESTION OF LAW

The law, especially regarding assault and murder, is a tricky thing in heroic tales, especially in the West. Blazing gunfights end in wounds and death, and even Sheriffs will take down the bad guys without blinking.

*Qiangdao* is about heroic action and amazing abilities, not about niceties of the law. The West is a wild place, and the characters operate as they see fit. It's open season on the bad guys, because the bad guys certainly won't hesitate to do the same. Innocent townsfolk are protected by their very natures -- surely heroic wanderers won't go about killing them for no reason. A wanderer who starts hurting and killing the innocent rapidly becomes one of the villains.

Player characters are free to do as they wish, including challenging each other to tests of skill or even punching it up in a saloon brawl, so long as they do not actively seek to harm the innocent. A character who wantonly terrifies or kills has become a villain and is handed over to the GM. Beyond this, the only guiding morality is and should be "what would an action hero do?"

### HEARTS AND BULLETS

Bullets will fly, men will die, and there will be blood. But the West, like its counterparts in Western and Wuxia fiction, is also a place of high romance, and if the players are comfortable with that, adding in a little love can spice up

the adventure quite nicely.

Love is a constant throughout humanity. No matter the culture, no matter the time, love is one thing that all humans feel and desire. It gives men and women the impetus to exceed all their known limits and can drive them to rash and mad acts. It is an incredible motivator. Love can be used in an adventure as a goal for a character, such as catching the eye of the serving girl at the saloon, or as a driving force, such as when the villains kidnap a townsman's wife to force him to obey them.

### THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE REALLY BAD

Listed here are some convenient archetype templates for the GM to use or modify.

#### Townsperson

*Fight:* Poor

*Talk:* Average

*Survive:* Poor

*Know:* Average

*Items:* Tools related to any one trade (Good)

*Techniques:* None

#### NPC Sheriff

*Fight:* Average

*Talk:* Average

*Survive:* Average

*Know:* Average

*Items:* 6-shot revolver (Good), Horse (Good)

*Techniques:* None

#### Minion/Thug/Crony/Mook

*Fight:* Average

*Talk:* Poor

*Survive:* Average

*Know:* Poor

*Items:* None, OR one at Good for a "sergeant" crony

*Techniques:* None

#### Gang Member

*Fight:* Average

*Talk:* Average

*Survive:* Average

*Know:* Average

*Items:* Two at Good OR one at High

*Techniques:* Two at Initiate level (one Fight, one other)

#### Black Hat

*Fight:* Excellent

*Talk:* Excellent

*Survive:* Average

*Know:* Average

*Items:* Two at Good, one at High OR one at High, one at Legendary

*Techniques:* Three at Initiate level, two at Adept level OR two at Initiate level, one at Master level

## SECTION THREE: MISCELLANY

### WEAPONS CHART

A character's choice of weapon is mainly about style in *Qiangdao*, but if the GM wishes a weapon can have individual traits that make it mechanically different from others.

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Traits</u>
Revolver	Can make second attack at the same time at +2 dice difficulty to attack roll
Rifle	Can attack over longer distances without penalty
Shotgun	+1 damage die on successful hit, but short range
Knife	As pistol, but handheld only
Bow	Can attack over distance silently

### CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

If the GM wishes for characters to grow over continuing stories (hence the availability of more powerful Techniques than starting characters can have), there needs to be a way for characters to grow and change through experience. *Qiangdao* does this by awarding experience to the group upon successful completion of a story. This experience is then divided among the characters by group agreement -- usually evenly, sometimes with more being given to characters who took upon themselves more difficult tasks or whose players roleplayed well within the themes of the game.

At the end of the story, the players will receive a pool of experience points equal to the number of players, multiplied by a factor of how difficult the GM thought the adventure was:

*Easy:* x1

*Average:* x2

*Difficult:* x3

*Deadly:* x4

The players then must decide how these points will be split among the group. The GM may help moderate any disputes, but will not make the decision.

Adding new traits or advancing existing ones costs a certain number of points. Generally a player may only advance a trait if the character successfully used it during the story, or suffered a botch or disaster result when attempting to use it (one learns from great failure as well as success).

*Raising an Attribute*

To Average: 4

To Excellent: 8

*Raising or Adding a Specialty:*

Add at Trained: 2

Raise to Skilled: 4

Raise to Expert: 6

### *Raising or Adding a Technique*

Add at Initiate: 8

Raise to Adept: 12

Raise to Master: 16

A special note on Techniques is necessary.

Techniques require either instruction from someone with the Technique the character wishes to learn, or extensive practice and meditation. These take time, especially self-instruction. In addition to spending the experience points, the character must also "spend" a full story/adventure for an Initiate Technique, two for an Adept Technique, or three for a Master Technique. The character may continue to participate, but must wait through those stories, not adding any other Techniques nor adding or raising Attributes or Specialties, and does not gain any experience during those stories. After the required waiting period is over, the character may return to gaining and using experience as normal.