

ROLLING the BONES

Alternative Dice Rules for *Lost Souls*

Introduction

In the Action Results Table, *Lost Souls* has a fast, flexible, and elegant task-resolution system. Column Shifts (page 68 of the *Lost Souls* PDF) are a quick and easy way to simulate the effect of outside factors on an action attempt, but they place certain results out of reach. For example, a -1 column adjustment makes an Awesome result impossible, even if the player rolls '00'. On the other hand, any positive column shifts completely rule out Catastrophic results.

The optional rules presented here are an attempt to model the way circumstances and conditions can affect a player's attempt to accomplish a task, while still allowing for the full range of Action Results Table outcomes.

To do that, this article introduces the idea of *bonus dice* and *penalty dice*.

Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice

Bonus dice and penalty dice are extra ten-sided dice (d10s) which are rolled *in addition* to the two d10s which make up standard percentile dice (d%). Some of these extra dice may take the place of the 'tens' die, depending on circumstances.

Bonus dice and penalty dice are analogous to column shifts. Just like a positive column shift, *bonus* dice make it easier to *succeed* at an action. And *penalty* dice, just like negative column shifts, make succeeding *more difficult*.

Bonus Dice

If a bonus die comes up as a *higher* number than what comes up on the tens die, then it *replaces* the tens die. This increases the odds of generating a higher percentile roll.

Example- Perkins is attempting to break into a haunted house by picking the padlock on the front door. He has come into possession of a well-made set of lock picks, and the Narrator decides that these will make Perkins' job easier. The Narrator gives Perkins's player one bonus die on the Unlock roll.

The player rolls two ten-sided dice (the percentile dice), as well as one extra d10- the bonus die.

The dice come up as follow-

Tens die: 6

Ones die: 9

Bonus die: 8

The bonus die is showing a higher number than the tens die. Therefore, the bonus die replaces the tens die, and the roll becomes an 89.

If the bonus die had come up with a 2, or a 4, or any number lower than 6, then Perkins' player would have kept the original tens die, and the percentile roll would have been 69.

Penalty Dice

If a penalty die comes up as a *lower* number than what comes up on the tens die, then it *replaces* the tens digit. This increases the odds of generating a lower percentile roll.

Example- While investigating the junkyard lair of a murderous possessed automobile, Mandy attempts to sneak past a guard dog. Unfortunately for her, the narrator decides that the Rotweiler/Rhodesian

Ridgeback's cruel owner keeps the beast half-starved, so that it's always sniffing for fresh meat. Because of the mutt's heightened alertness, the narrator rules that Mandy's player must roll a penalty die on her Stealth attempt.

Mandy's player rolls 3d10: the two d%, and the penalty die. The dice come up like this:

Tens die: 9

Ones die: 9

Penalty die: 0

The penalty die is lower than the tens die, so it must be used. It's taken what would have been an Awesome success and knocked it all the way down to a Catastrophic failure! The dog catches Mandy's scent immediately, and races towards her.

Hopefully, she won't get any penalty dice on her Running roll...

The ones digit is *never* replaced. Bonus and penalty dice are compared to, and potentially take the place of, the tens die *only*.

Multiple Bonus/ Penalty Dice

It's possible that extremely favorable conditions might give a player multiple bonus dice on a d% roll. Conversely, extreme hardship may force a player to roll more than one penalty die on a task attempt.

In these cases, simply compare the highest result on *all* of the bonus dice to the tens die and, if it's higher, replace the ten's die with that particular bonus die. Do the same with the penalty dice, replacing the tens die with the lowest one (if it's lower than the tens die).

Multiple bonus or penalty dice are *never* added together. Each one is compared *separately* to the tens die.

In general, Narrators should use *five* as an upper limit on the number of bonus or penalty dice to assess.

Competing Bonus/Penalty Dice

Some circumstances might lead to bonus and penalty dice being assigned to the same roll. As an example, let's consider Perkins and that lock he's picking. He gets a bonus for those fancy lock picks of his, but what if it's a dark and stormy night? The Narrator might decide that the rain and the poor lighting are each worth a penalty die. So now, Perkins has one bonus die (from the lock pick set), and two penalty dice (from the rain, and from the darkness). How does that work?

Bonus and penalty dice cancel each other out on a one-for-one basis. So, in this case, the bonus die eliminates one of the two penalty dice. This still leaves one penalty die, so Perkins makes his d% roll with one penalty die attached. The Narrator rules that Perkins' tools are so good that he doesn't even need to see what he's doing, but that the cold rainwater is making his hands numb.

Use with Existing Rules

Column Shifts

All of the existing *Lost Souls* material is written using column shifts. In order to replace shifts with bonus/penalty dice, simply read any mention of positive column shifts as the same number of bonus dice, and negative column shifts as penalty dice.

Example- On page 89 of the Lost Souls PDF, the entry on the Sanity skill gives a number of adjustments for Sanity Checks. These modifiers are all expressed as column shifts:

The topmost entry reads '+2 columns: Disgust. Example: Find a mangled corpse.' To use the bonus/penalty die rule, simply convert the two positive column shifts into two bonus dice. So a player whose character suddenly stumbled upon a mutilated cadaver would make Sanity roll with four dice: the two percentile dice and the two bonus dice. The higher of the two bonus dice would be compared to the tens die and, if higher, replace it.

On the bottom of the Sanity Check adjustment table, we find '-4 columns: Mind numbing horror.' In this case, the player would roll six d10 in totals: d%, and four penalty dice.

Cooperative Rolls

On page 68, *Lost Souls 3rd Edition* lays out the rules for characters assisting one another. Only slight modification is needed to convert these rules to the bonus/penalty system.

The rulebook says to have both players roll, then modifier the higher action result with column adjustments based on the lower roll. Instead, decide which character will take the lead, and which will assist.

Have the assistant roll first. If his roll is good or better, the character he's helping will get a bonus die on his roll. If the assistant rolls inferior or worse, the lead character will have to roll with a penalty die.

The lead character should probably be the one with the higher skill or attribute, but game circumstances might dictate differently:

Example- Rupert is in an airplane and the pilot has just suffered a fatal heart attack. Rupert has an awful Drive skill, no experience with aircraft, and the plane's headed into a storm! Frantic, he calls Antoinette on the plane's radio, knowing that she's an experienced pilot. Antoinette tries to 'talk him in'.

Even though she's the better pilot, Antoinette will have to be the assistant here, since she can't directly control the plane. Rupert will have to make his Drive roll, modified by whatever bonus/penalty dice Antoinette manages to earn for him (as well as any penalty dice the Narrator assesses for the weather conditions and Rupert's inexperience). Happy landings...

Combat

Penalty dice can be used to model certain combat situations, too. For example, if a player wants to try to shoot an attacking zombie in the head, in the hopes of putting it down faster, the narrator could have him roll one or more penalty dice on the attack. This makes the attack more difficult, but if it succeeds, the narrator could increase the weapon's damage multiplier by one for each penalty die the player chose to roll.

Karma and Bonus Dice

Players can use Karma can be used to buy bonus dice for their characters, the same way they'd purchase column shifts (*Lost Souls PDF*, p. 71). Every two points of Karma buys one bonus die, up to a maximum of three dice.