

# AGÊRATOS



## CORE-RULEBOOK

*Tremaine Cross*



# Agératos Preview

## Welcome to this preview of Agératos.

Following is the core rulebook's introduction followed by a two page overview of the rules – also found in the main core rulebook.

All in all, this should serve as a good overview of the entire Agératos rule system.

Before you go on however, a clarification:

Agératos is **NOT** a setting, it is a rule system.

There is no fully developed setting in the core rulebook but it does contain a number of small settings detailed enough to get you started in your *Saga* (the game term for your story).

A key advantage of Agératos is that its mechanics deal with you and your RPG group as **Authors** of your *Saga* rather than dealing with the contents of that *Saga*.

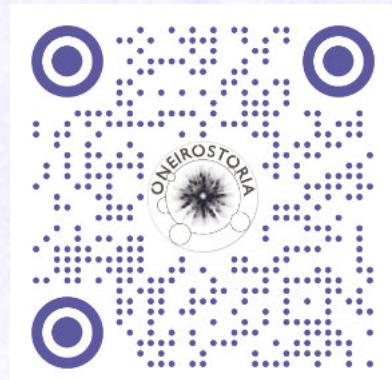
The *Saga* contents come about purely through your narration and roleplay. Thus, Agératos can be used for fantasy, sci-fi, horror, althist, superhero—any setting, genre, or story.

Truly, the only limit is your imagination.

There is a chapter in the core rulebook called **Planting Seeds** that has a comprehensive set of discussions and ideas for creating your own settings, and a tool for randomly creating them.

These may then be developed by yourself and your RPG group through the collective storytelling aspect of Agératos.

Fully developed settings will follow such as *Chained Reverence: Echoes of Belief* – head to the website at [oneirostoria.com](http://oneirostoria.com) for more details, or join our Discord server at:



# Introduction

## Narrative Storytelling and Role-playing Games

The purpose of any role-playing game (RPG) is to tell a story, one that has no predetermined outcome or script.

Rather, it is authored by you and others deciding on, talking through, and acting out its content with the intent to author your own, unique story.

Alongside the story narration there is a gaming component, where mechanics adjudicate the outcome of actions and game events.

In Oneirostoria, these gaming systems are called **A.E.O.Ns**: Adventure Engines for Originating Narratives.

In this book, the A.E.O.N. is known as **Agératos (ah-GEHR-ah-tos)**.

And, in Agératos, the stories you create are known as **the Saga**.

Agératos consists of a core set of gaming mechanics – the **Narrative Framework** – and some optional gaming mechanics – the **Overlays**.

The Narrative Framework focuses on narrative creation rather than specific settings, and so can be used to set your *Saga* in any setting or world you wish.

Overlays are used to either adjust some mechanics to your liking or to portray the specifics of your setting – cybernetics, magic, etc.

These settings can either be of your own devising or ones provided elsewhere.

E.g., Oneirostoria's *Chained Reverence: Echoes of Belief*, details the world lore of Ysælor, as well as the Overlays needed to portray its inhabitants – both the deified Revered and the mortals they rule over.

## Playing an RPG

Unfortunately, RPGs can be as diverse and unpredictable as imagination itself, however, there are normally some basics that most have.

To begin, you create a character: your means to interact with the game world; their actions and survival in your hands.

Using the provided gaming mechanics, you define their capabilities: are they strong, smart, altruistic, or selfish?

Do they command an old but reliable starship, weave magical strands of ethereal energy to cast powerful spells, or both!

They are your **Player Character (PC)**.

There is also an individual in your RPG group that is in charge; they do not design their own character.

Rather, they portray the myriad of characters yours will meet during the story and detail any world events.

The characters they portray are known as **Non-Playing Characters (NPC)**.

Ultimately this individual controls the game and is often all-powerful, and to ensure no one forgets this, they are given a special title: Dungeon Master, Referee, Game Master, Storyteller, or Director, to name but a few.

While the title varies from game to game, most role-players understand the term Game Master, or GM.

That said, Agératos uses its own special term for its GM: **the Monad**.

All others of your RPG group, are known as the **Players**.

Together, you are known as the **Authors**.

# Introduction

Authors is a key term to understand, as, unlike in many other RPGs, the Monad is not an all-powerful force.

Agératos' focus is on an Author's ability to affect the Saga, including the Monad.

So while, the Monad may begin by outlining the Saga's premise, once begun, all Authors can introduce or remove characters, events, and situations to it.

Thus, you all equally contribute to the creation, portrayal, and ultimate fate of your own game world and setting.

If RPGs are completely new to you, or you have only played more traditional character-centric RPGs, fear not.

To help you understand Agératos' style of collective authoring, this book will detail numerous examples.

So, like so many before me, I've taken a liberal, very liberal, approach to language to come up with a 'fancy name' for the Game Master.

As for the word 'Monad':

In some Gnostic traditions, the Monad is the Supreme Deity – the One or the Absolute – from which all existence emanates.

In Leibniz philosophy, the monad is the most basic element from which all other things are derived: without them, nothing else can exist.

There are other meanings, but less relevant.

In all Oneirostoria A.E.O.N.s – Adventure Engines for Originating Narratives – they are you and I.

That is, anyone who draws inspiration from the world around them, possessing the imagination to create characters, stories, and Realities.

We are, after all, the reason any fictional world or story exists: it is our imaginations that not only drives humanity forward each day, but also inspires us all to create, to feel, and to dream.

Latin	Greek	Phoenician	Hebrew	Arabic
A	Α	𐤀	א	ا
B	Β	𐤁	ב	ب
C	Γ	𐤂	ג	گ
D	Δ	𐤃	ד	د
E	Ē	𐤄	ה	ه
F	Ϝ	𐤅	ו	و
G	Ϛ	Ϛ	ז	ز
H	Ϛ	Ϛ	ח	ح
I	Ϛ	Ϛ	י	ي
J				
K	Ϛ	Ϛ	כ	ك
L	Ϛ	Ϛ	ל	ل
M	Ϛ	Ϛ	מ	م
N	Ϛ	Ϛ	נ	ن
O	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
P	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
Q	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
R	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
S	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
T	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
U	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
V	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
W	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
X	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
Y	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ
Z	Ϛ	Ϛ	ׁ	ׁ

# The Narrative Framework

The Narrative Framework is so called as it provides the narrative structure for all Sagas, including gaming mechanics – its use is necessary for every Saga.

It is about empowering you, the Author, not your character, to guide the Saga towards your desired outcomes.

Although your character provides a means to interact with the Saga's world, it is ultimately you, the Author, who creates and narrates its content.

Thus, the Framework only focuses on the identities of your Player Character: emphasising who they are, while paying less attention to what they can do.

That is, detail is not given to the *how* of your character, but rather the *has* – has your character influenced the Saga or been influenced by it?

Once the *has* is determined, the *how* can then come to life through your narration, role-playing, and storytelling.

To help with this concept, the Narrative Framework draws a lot of inspiration from literary concepts.

As an Author, you use **Authorial Agency** to guide the Saga, **Focus Points** to shift the narrative spotlight, engage in **Conflict** to overcome adversity, or seek to predict future Saga events via **Foreshadowing**.

**Author** n. /'ɔːθər/ The creator of a story, including its narrative, characters, and dialogue.

**Agency** n. /'eɪ.dʒən.si/ The capacity of an entity to act and make choice.

**Proactive** adj. /prəʊ'æk.tɪv/ The behavior of taking initiative in anticipation of problems or needs.

**Reactive** adj. /ri'æk.tɪv/ Responding to situations or stimuli after they happen.

## Third person omniscience

In many RPGs, the GM is omnipotent and views the world akin to that of a third person omniscient narrator.

This helps them serve as the force that portrays all the world and its challenges.

Yet, you are limited to the viewpoint of a first person narrator.

That is, you interact with story events only through your character's point of view and are limited by their capabilities.

It is through your character's actions, and only those actions, that you are able to influence the story.

However, Agératos is different.

While you still primarily interact with the Saga through your character's perspective, there are also times where you can pull away, altering events akin to a third person omniscience narrator.

That is, you can take **Saga Control**.

During Saga Control, the Monad may only intervene to maintain the Saga's setting and theme.

Any Saga Changes you make that align with these conditions cannot be stopped, unless another Author challenges you.

# The Narrative Framework

## Ends, not means

Agératos' gaming mechanics focus on who has Saga Control, and the outcome of events rather than the means taken to reach them.

So, once you take Saga Control, you are free to describe events how you wish—keeping to the setting and theme.

If we take combat as an example; although the term combat is not quite right for Agératos, but more on that later.

In many RPGs, you would declare what you want your character to do and then make a skill check to determine success.

However in Agératos, you determine Saga Control before any declaration of intent or narration takes place.

You may think of this as Authors making skill checks at the start of each turn.

If you win, you take Saga Control, and earn a certain degree of gaming progress.

Now, you can narrate Saga events within the boundaries of this gaming progress.

Remember, as a third person narrator, this can be more than your character's actions, and include surrounding events.

Thus, you may narrate your character doing a series of acrobatic flips and kicks, reinforcements arriving, or even a traitor in the enemies' midst turning on them.

Each description indicating the manner in which progress was made during the combat... but not bringing the combat to an end – an important distinction that the Narrative Framework will go into.

Mechanics to justify these narrative descriptions are unnecessary, like an acrobatics check for your character or a morale check of the enemy.

Determination of success has already occurred, and thus you can focus on allowing your narrative descriptions to add flair and atmosphere to the Saga.

Taking the example of a star ship being boarded by hostiles, you take Saga Control during a combat turn and can thus narrate:

*As I race to reach the airlock on time, the ship's hull is rocked by the incoming shuttle—I'm too late!*

*The 'hostiles', as we have taken to calling them, are here.*

*An explosion rips through the corridor, as the airlock bursts open and laser fire fills the air.*

*Yet, without missing a beat, I engage.*

*Evading the hail of laser bolts with the grace and agility I display in all my actions, I strike the first hostile hard to their gut and they crumple to the floor.*

*Spinning, barely avoiding the butt of a rifle, I go low, sweeping at the legs of another hostile before striking them swiftly as they fall.*

*A third tackles me: I'm slammed hard against a wall, a laser bolt barely missing my face.*

*Thoughts race through my head: "I cannot let them take the ship!", "We cannot let the delegates die, they must survive."*

*Pushing the hostile off me – it's cold, featureless helmet betraying no sense of emotion – I drop into a low stance, and force them backwards driving towards the airlock.*

*I push on, using the hostile's body as a shield against the continuing spray of laser fire.*

As you can see, sometimes quite a lot can happen during a single turn; however, also note that there are still 'hostiles', the threat is still present, and the combat was not brought to an end.

# The Narrative Framework

## Playing Cards

Unlike many other RPGs, Agératos does not require any dice to play.

(An Overlay does allow for dice use).

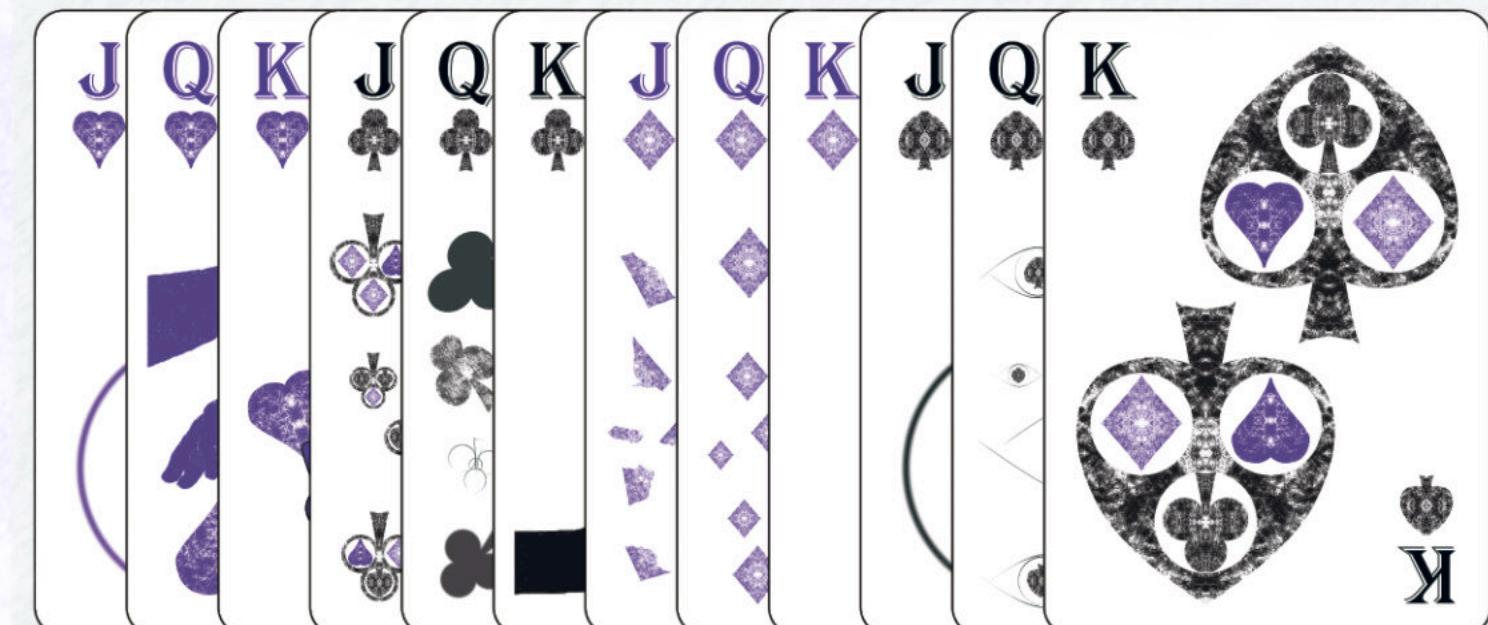
Instead, playing cards offer both the fickle nature of luck and the foundation for strategic decision-making.

While you are often reliant on the random chance inherent in dice rolls, cards give you more flexibility in deciding when you wish to seize Saga Control.

Don't worry though, you'll still have a chance, in a way, to use the hordes of dice we all know you have...

Now, at least one deck of cards should be used for every three Authors; remember, an Author refers to both the Monad and to Players. You may use more if you wish, such as a single deck each, or even each Author using multiple decks.

However, it's worth noting that cards do not belong to any one Author. That is, they will move around within your RPG group during play.



The standard mechanics are written with the 52-card French-suited deck in mind, used with the following considerations:

- Suits are ignored (bar some Overlays).
- Pip (Numeral, Number) cards have values as presented.
- Aces have a value of 1, and are pip cards.
- Court cards (Face, Royalty) have no value, instead they have special applications.
- Joker (Jester, Bower) cards are not used.

Other styles can be used, provided you all use the same style and the decks contain the equivalent of pip and court cards.

Cards are only used during adversarial situations, or when you and other Authors clash over Saga Control.

In these moments, when you cannot decide the outcome through storytelling and role-play alone, cards and mechanics are used in what is known as **Conflict**.

# The Narrative Framework

## Conflict

Conflict is a gaming mechanic for resolving adversarial Saga events, such as combat, competitions, harsh conditions, debates, haggling, even moral dilemmas.

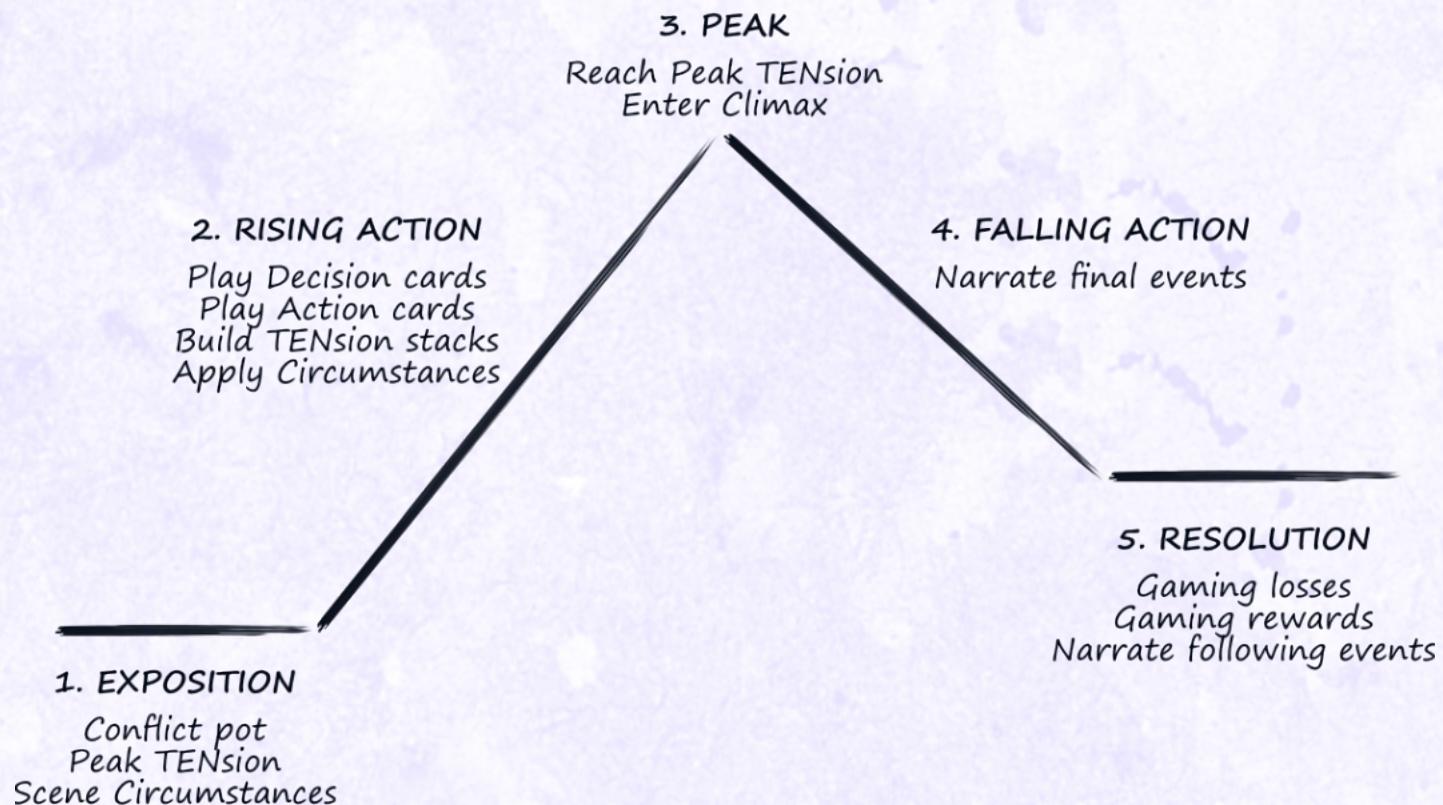
This is the only time within the Narrative Framework that cards are used.

However, it should only occur when your narration and role-playing are insufficient to resolve the issue.

During Conflict, turns take place where you build **TENSion**: a mechanic tied into the narrative progression you can make.

The building of TENSion also allows you to apply **Circumstances**, gaming modifiers to the value of playing cards to either help yourself or hinder others.

## CONFLICT STRUCTURE



At their most basic, the mechanics are:

- You have 5 cards in your hand.
- Each Conflict turn, you place 1 card facedown in front of you: a **Decision Card**.
- When all Authors have selected their own Decision Cards, they are revealed.
- The highest value card gives who played it brief Saga Control and builds **TENSion**.
- The lower value cards are discarded.
- When an Author has enough TENSion, they bring about **Conflict Resolution**.

Keep in mind, this is an overview of the basic rules; there are also Action Cards, Proactive Agency, Reactive Agency, Circumstances, Climax, and more.

The full mechanics will be explained later in this book; they are designed to be minimal with the focus very much on the collaborative narration of your Saga.

# The Narrative Framework

**Focus** n. /'fəʊ.kəs/ The centre of activity or interest.

**Conflict** n. /'kɒn.flɪkt/ Disagreement or struggle between parties of opposing principles or actions.

**Foreshadowing** n. /'fɔ:ʃædəʊɪŋ/ A literary device that uses descriptions, mood, and themes to hint at possible future events.

## Flaws and Shortcomings

You may think it odd to discuss the flaws of a system during its introduction.

However, it is important to understand what something is not, just as much as what it is.

After all, no rule system will ever be perfect: no Author or RPG group will like every system, and no system will suit every Author or RPG group.

Your reasons for enjoying RPGs and what you hope to get out of them are as unique and diverse as anyone's.

So with that said:

**Agératos** is not a system of structure.

It primarily relies on understanding overarching concepts and ideas, rather than lists and numerical data.

For instance, if anything in Agératos could be considered its Soul, its beating heart, that would be Focus Points.

These allow you as an Author – not your character – to enact Saga Changes (among many other things).

The amount required? It depends!

Costs are **dynamic and contextual**, being dependent on established Saga events.

Saga Changes deviating from previously established events have a higher cost, whereas changes enacted with the right narrative justification cost less.

That is, you are rewarded for keeping the narrative consistent: if the Saga proceeds with rhythm and logic then Saga Changes can have a low, even zero, Focus cost.

Also, you should note: all mechanics empower you as an Author, not your character, who exists solely as your means to interact with the Saga.

So, while your character may be central to your enacted Saga Changes, they do not have to be – the Narrative Framework being about you as an Author.

It is you that uses Authorial Agency and Focus to enact Saga Changes; you engage in Conflict and employ Foreshadowing.

In short, while there are mechanics and numbers, they are minimal, with you encouraged to ignore them entirely if they get in the way of narration.

# The Overlays

## Your Saga, Your Way

Overlays modify the concepts and mechanics of the Narrative Framework. You may use them according to the requirements of your RPG group – in fact, they can be applied or removed at any time during your Saga if you so wish.

However, they must be used by all or none in your RPG group, so their use should be discussed with everyone. Also, while some make minor adjustments, others can alter the Narrative Framework in significant ways.

## Protagonist Overlay

The Protagonist Overlay is a substantial change to the Narrative Framework, designed to provide a more traditional character-centric approach to your Sagas.

You can think of it as shifting your capacity for making Saga Changes from the **Author level** to the **Character level**.

Now, your character must be central to all your Saga Changes, and they are given form through numerical values.

They are given the *how* of their existence.

They have detailed skills, strengths, weaknesses, allies, phobias, injuries, and other characteristics – collectively, known as **Vicissitudes**.

These are applied through either the **Active Voice** or **Passive Voice** – literary concepts still a strong influence.

Indeed, while the Protagonist Overlay may use more mechanics and numbers, its focus is still on the role-play side of RPGs.

Essentially, the Protagonist Overlay focuses on the structure and substance of your character, giving you both the narrative tools and quantitative metrics to see them evolve during the Saga.

## Minor Overlays

While the Protagonist Overlay forms a substantial change to the Narrative Framework, the following are relatively simpler ones.

### Bibliomancy Overlay

Replaces playing cards with random words selected from books.

With literary concepts influencing Agératos as they do – shifting the narrative via Focus, engaging in Conflict and Foreshadowing – this Overlay asks: “Hey, why not go the whole way!”

### Dice Overlay

A small Overlay that replaces the use of playing cards with that of dice – you get to use all those hordes of dice you have!

### Mantle Overlay

This Overlay gives all Authors their own Player Character by transforming the Monad’s role into a **Mantle**.

During the Saga, any Author may don this Mantle at different times.

The purpose for this is two-fold: firstly, it is to acknowledge that different Authors have different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to storytelling.

Secondly, if you lack experience in being the Monad, or equivalent (GM) in other RPGs, you can gain some while being supported by those with more.

### Wild Card Overlay

This Overlay, puts the Monad’s control into the hands of random card draws.

Thus, you may either engage in the Saga alone or add an unpredictable influence over your group Sagas.

# Seeds of Desire

## Saga Seeds

As Agératos deals with you and your RPG group as Authors, its concepts and mechanics can be used for all settings, genres, and stories.

If you as a person can conceive and narrate it, then it can be in your Saga.

Want to play space marines in a gritty world of adrenaline pumping action? Then narrate your Saga that way.

Want to play toys that spring to life when unobserved to protect a child from the monsters under their bed, all to explore themes of childhood innocence? Then narrate your Saga that way.

Want to play 482m tall multi-headed, multi-limbed, inter-dimensional beings? Then narrate your Saga that way.

Agératos can truly be used for any setting you can imagine as it deals with the storytellers, not the story. Its ‘stats’ and mechanics focusing on which Author has Saga Control and how much narrative influence that control gives them.

Additionally, as Agératos is about collective storytelling where collective imagination develops your Sagas, they can begin with nothing more than a simple story idea – a **Seed**, if you will.

Seeds can contain as much or as little information as you’d like – the more information, the more ‘pre-defined narrative justification’ your Saga has.

Later in this book, is the **Planting Seeds** chapter: an in depth set of discussions and ideas for creating your own settings as well as tools to randomly generate them.

Ultimately, Agératos empowers you to bring any story you can imagine to life, making each Saga uniquely yours – all you have to do is imagine.

## S.O.S

The next two pages contain a summary of Agératos designed as a useful handout for new Players.

This is also found at the back of this book in the **Section Of Summaries (S.O.S)**, where you will find all manner of rule summaries, character sheets, and other useful resources.

After this summary is the first of the **Playthrough Examples**: turn-by-turn examples of the Conflict mechanic. This first one however uses a streamlined version of the mechanics to help you understand the basics of using playing cards in Agératos.

# Agératos Overview

## Authorial Agency

You are a co-Author of the Saga, rather than just the player of one character; you do create and portray a single character, but they exist as your means to experience the Saga, not affect it.

As an Author, you have one 'stat':

- **Authorial Agency**, rated **1-20**.
- Start with 10 points.

This is a measure of your presence in, and influence over, the Saga. Its value can change, and at zero, your character leaves the Saga.

## Sub-Agencies

For Conflict (adversarial events), Authorial Agency is split into two sub-'stats':

- **Proactive Agency**, rated **0-10**.
- **Reactive Agency**, rated **0-10**.

Proactive Agency helps to quickly *win* Conflicts, but costs Focus.

Reactive Agency helps to slowly build to a *win*, and costs nothing.

## Character Design

To design your character:

- Write a Character Synopsis.
- Distribute 10 points between:
  - **Proactive Agency**.
  - **Reactive Agency**.

## Prologue

The Saga begins with a **Prologue**:

- No rules, except the Monad has absolute control.
- For setting up future Saga elements: mysteries, machinations, and MacGuffins!
- Not for rewarding yourself.

## Saga Structure

As an Author, you can contribute to the overall Saga narration, adding or removing characters, events, or other elements.

The only restrictions are that you must have **Saga control** and all events are in keeping with the Saga's setting.

There are three ways for you to gain Saga control:

- **Focus**.
- **Conflict**.
- **Foreshadowing**.

## Narrative Justification

The Focus cost for you to take Saga control, the requirements to *win* Conflict, and the difficulty of Foreshadowing, are all affected by **narrative justification**.

That is, the Monad uses the existence of previous Saga events to judge how plausible and likely proposed new events are.

The more plausible and likely an event is, the lower/easier things are for you, and of course, the opposite is true.

Previous events include your character and their Synopsis, so, while they are not given 'stats' directly, their existence, actions, and equipment are important.

## Focus

You start with **5 Focus points**.

To take Saga control, the Monad decides how many Focus points are needed factoring in the plausibility and likelihood of your desired Saga change.

# Agératos Overview

## Conflict

Conflict is used to resolve adversarial situations in the Saga.

It costs 1 Focus to enter Conflict: you can win this back – and more – if you do well enough.

Conflict is played out in turns, with your cards played as either **Decision** or **Action** cards.

The goal of Conflict is to build stacks of cards – **TENsion stacks** – until their value is at least **ten**, at which point they are *completed*.

Completing stacks also allows you to apply **Circumstances** – modifiers to Decision card values.

To win Conflict, you need a certain number of completed TENsion stacks, called **Peak TENsion**.

Each turn:

- You play one Decision card.
- If its value is the highest out of every Author's, you gain Saga control for the turn and keep the card to build TENsion.
  - All others are discarded...
- For 1 Focus, you may **seize** any discarded Decision card using an **Action card**, but only if:
  - Your Action card's value is equal or less than your **Proactive Agency**.
  - The values of your Action card and the Decision card **total exactly ten**.
- If your discarded **Decision card** is not seized, you may **save** it, but only if its value is equal or less than your **Reactive Agency** – costs zero Focus.

## Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a long-term aspect of Agératos, and so the Monad may decide to not use it if you are playing a quick single session.

If they do choose to use Foreshadowing, read on:

In Foreshadowing, you attempt to predict future Saga events and if accurate, you are rewarded.

You may make two types of **Predictions**: **Direct** and **Indirect**.

Each type must be purchased with Focus points, albeit in slightly different ways.

Once purchased, they slowly diminish as the Saga progresses; for you to be rewarded, the predicted event must occur within this time frame.

This is not governed by game world or real world time, but rather as the Saga progresses and is measured via **Narrative Beats**.

These Narrative Beats occur due to Focus expenditure and Conflict.

As for the Predictions themselves:

Direct Predictions are public, with others able to join you in the risk and reward; via collaboration, you try to enact the predicted event in time.

Indirect Predictions are hidden from others, except for a cryptic hint that you give – you cannot reveal to them its true nature!

Neither can you enact the predicted event yourself; instead you must subtly guide another to do so for you, and if you succeed, both of you are rewarded.