

Puppies & Pawprints

A Roleplaying Game of Adorable Adventures



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Puppies & Pawprints: The Basics

Puppies & Pawprints is a roleplaying game in which characters pretend to be puppies. Adventuring puppies! As an underlying conceit, this game assumes that puppies are secretly intelligent and capable of communicating amongst each other, more like little kids playing make believe than actual animals. They might scare off a mean neighborhood cat, find their master's lost keys, or investigate the terrifying mysteries of the vacuum cleaner.

Running the Game: The Puppy Master

While the players are in charge of being puppies, the Puppy Master (PM) is in charge of everything else. He sets scenes, describes the environment, controls non-player characters, and rewards players for their actions with Puppy Points.

Structure of the Game: Scenes and Stories

A game of *Puppies & Pawprints* is divided up into multiple scenes. A scene is a segment of on-screen action in which the characters interact with a specific piece of the setting or group of characters. Once the Puppy Master decides that the players have resolved the action or roleplaying of a scene, that scene ends, and they move on to the next. Examples of a single scene include having a fight with the pit bull across the street, begging master for treats, or working out a plan to ambush the vacuum cleaner in its closet. By moving through scenes, players work through the narrative of the story!



Character Creation

Step 1: Pick a Breed

The first step to making your puppy character is deciding what kind of dog she is. Is she a lovable golden retriever, a fearsome chow chow, or a yappy chihuahua? A character's Breed provides them with benefits when they take actions appropriate to it—a bloodhound gains bonuses when tracking, and a pit bull gains bonuses when biting down on someone's leg and not letting go.

Some players may wish to play animals that aren't puppies, like cats or turtles. Luckily for them, *Puppies & Pawprints* is flexible enough to pretend that those animals are puppies. If your Puppy Master approves, you can pick that animal as your Breed, and gain appropriate benefits.

Step 2: Assign Ability Scores

Puppies & Pawprints uses a set of four Ability scores for making dice rolls and resolving contests. These abilities are:

- **Grr!** - This ability represents a puppy's strength, temper, and overall scariness. Puppies use Grr! for fighting, pushing big things around, and being intimidating.
- **Cute** - This ability represents how adorable a puppy is. Puppies use Cute for social interaction both with humans and other animals.
- **Clever** - This ability represents both how smart a puppy is, and how good it is at perceiving the world around it. Puppies use Clever for seeing and smelling things, understanding the complexities of the human world, and working out puzzles.
- **Tiny** - This ability represents a puppy's agility, dexterity, and smallness. Puppies use Tiny for avoiding getting hurt, wriggling through tight spaces, and performing feats of puppy agility.

For starters, each player gets a single point in all of the Abilities. Next, they distribute eight points among them, however they like. The highest that an Ability can be raised is to 5, and no player can have more than one Ability rated at 5. That's all!

Running the Game

Most of the time, when a player wants to do something, it just happens! You don't need to roll for eating food, or rolling around, or barking really loud. These things are pretty easy, and don't really matter to the story. The only time the Puppy Master should call for a roll is when an action is important to the story. Before anyone picks up the dice, the PM should envision what success or failure will mean in this scene—if a roll doesn't have consequences, it shouldn't be a roll!

Rolling Dice

When the Puppy Master decides to call for a roll, he should tell the player what Ability to use, and how hard the high they need to roll to succeed. The player then rolls one six-sided dice (d6), and adds the relevant Ability rating to the result. The total is compared against the difficulty to see if she succeeds.

Breed Bonuses

When players take actions that fit their puppy's Breed, they can decide not to roll. Instead, they treat their total result as being equal to their (Ability + 3), letting them take the average of a d6 roll. Determining whether an action fits a puppy's Breed or not is left to the Puppy Master's judgment in ambiguous situations—but be generous! Because Breed benefits don't let a character do any better than they normally could, there's no real harm to handing them out frequently.

The Consequences: Oh No! Points

Succeeding on a roll is always happy. Whatever you were trying to do, you did! On the other hand, failing a roll is never good. Each time a character fails a roll, they take an Oh No! point. Once a player has built up a total of five Oh No! points, something bad happens to their puppy, taking them out of play for the rest of the scene. They might be sent to the corner, lost in the woods, or nursing a scratch from the mean old cat—but whatever they're doing, they can't take actions or interact with the scene in any way. The official term for this is Being in Trouble. Luckily, all Oh No! points are lost at the end of the scene, allowing all characters that were in Trouble to return to play.

Good Dog: Puppy Points

Puppy Points are rewards for players, a special kind of point that they can spend to make good things happen. The Puppy Master may reward a player with a Puppy Point whenever they describe their action in a way that's especially cute, funny, or dog-like. A player can only earn one Puppy Point each scene, but they remain until spent.

Spending a Puppy Point has one of the following effects:

- The player may add a +2 bonus to a single roll.
- The player may make a roll using an Ability that would not normally be allowed. She must provide some explanation for how this works—if a player decides to substitute her Tiny for her Cute, she must describe how her puppy's small size somehow works to its advantage in being adorable.
- The player can remove a single Oh No! point that they've gained in the scene.



Puppy Mastering

Being a Puppy Master is a pretty important job! You create the imaginary world of the game, providing players with an environment in which to be adorable and have fun. The biggest part of this is providing the players with challenges and obstacles, things for them to overcome with the power of friendship and barking. Anything challenge your players need to roll in order to bypass—be it a fence, an upset human, or a mean cat—counts as an obstacle. Luckily, there's only two big things you need to know when running the game: setting the Difficulty of a roll, and deciding the Challenge of an obstacle.

Difficulty

The Difficulty of a roll is the total a character needs to roll in order to succeed. This can be a passive Difficulty, for when the obstacle is a challenge to be overcome, or an active Difficulty, for when the obstacle is actively trying to harm or interfere with the puppies. The difference is unimportant, except descriptively—either way, the consequences for failure are an Oh No! point. The guidelines below should help in setting Difficulties based on the Abilities of your players.

- Difficulty 1-3: Easy. Characters that use a Puppy Point or Breed benefit will always succeed.
- Difficulty 4-6: Moderate. Even characters that didn't invest highly in an Ability have a good chance at making these rolls, especially with Breed benefits or Puppy Points.
- Difficulty 5-8: Hard. Characters will need good ratings in an Ability to succeed, and characters who didn't put any points in an Ability at all may not be able to win at all without Puppy Points and good luck.
- Difficulty 9-11: Very Hard. Even characters with high Ability scores will have to rely on good rolls and Puppy Points here. Use sparingly!

Challenge

An obstacle's Challenge decides how many successful rolls are needed to overcome it. Most obstacles are only Challenge 1, needing a single success to bypass—using a Cute roll to beg for treats, or using a Grr! roll to scare off a cat. Obstacles with high Challenges are those that dominate scenes, serving as the focus of the narrative for a large portion of playtime.