



OVA

OPEN VERSATILE ANIME ROLE-PLAYING GAME

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*“ Our imagination
may be the most brilliant of all energy that humans
have ever possessed.”*

-OSAMU TEZUKA, FATHER OF JAPANESE ANIMATION

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INTRODUCTION

You hold in your hands the culmination of years of research, effort, and love. Within these pages, OVA endeavors to provide everything you need to play your very own anime inspired game. It's easy to learn, fun to play, and flexible enough for whatever your mind comes up with. So whether you're a die-hard anime fan, an avid gamer, or maybe just getting into both, we hope you find a little something in this book that's just right for you. (And hopefully your friends! We do want you to play, after all.)

TO THE OTAKU

Were you attracted by the anime artwork on the cover? Or did the pun in the title catch your attention? For whatever reason this book called to you, rest assured you did not pick it up in error. Within these pages you'll find a game that allows you to fulfill some of your greatest dreams and fantasies: to become the characters you have fallen in love with time and time again. The rules are easy to pick up, so you can begin creating and playing your perfect character in minutes. OVA is also teeming with high quality artwork from some of today's premier anime-style artists, so the game will prove to be a joy to read as well as play.

TO THE REST

You may be confused by anime, by role-playing games, or even by both. Still, something about this book caught your attention. A friend recommended it to you, or you just had an impulse to take a look. In any case, you will find that there are many good times to be had with this book. You might even enjoy it enough to expand, exploring the roots of the unique fandoms that inspired OVA. But for now, let's break you into what it all means.

TO THE GAMER

Like the otaku, you might have been attracted by the cover. Or maybe the rules highlights on the book's back intrigued you enough to take a further look. If so, OVA won't fail to deliver. The Ricochet rules system is simple and concise. This is not to cater to neophytes, but because it can, and *should* be. Actions, skill conflicts, and combat all resolve quickly and without fuss, unified by a simple, unchanging mechanic. The rules themselves are presented clearly with numerous entertaining examples for all the key concepts. And despite the heavy anime influence, the Ricochet rules are versatile enough to use with any campaign.

WHAT IS ANIME?

The simplest definition of anime would be “Japanese animation.” Yet this doesn’t seem to explain much at all. It is not the fact that anime is Japanese, or even that it’s animated, that gives it such an enduring worldwide appeal. To better define anime, let’s start with a short history.

HISTORY

It is largely agreed that anime began when Osamu Tezuka, inspired by the work of Walt Disney, created a comic book and cartoon series called *Tetsuwan Atom* (Astro Boy) in the early 1960s. Since that time, while Western animation leaned towards black and white stories geared to children, anime grew more complex and diversified. Eschewing the episodic structure of Western cartoons, anime was able to tell larger, more

intricate stories over the course of many episodes. They also took advantage of the medium to create big effects for comparatively small budgets.

Numerous genre-defining anime were produced throughout the 70s and 80s, including *Mobile Suit Gundam* (1979), *Rose of Versailles* (1979), and *Uresai Yatsura* (1981), but very few made it overseas in this time period. Those that did were often edited beyond recognition, removing the more complex elements that made them unique to begin with. Among a few notable exceptions was *Robotech* (1985). Despite being the combination of three separate series, *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982), *Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross* (1984), and *Genesis Climber Mospeada* (1984), the TV series largely kept the stories intact. *Robotech*, and shows like it, developed a great fan base that would foster a more open

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view on Japanese animation in America. "Fan-sub" (fan-subtitled videos) of the original anime became common, and led to the formation of many anime trading clubs.

Robotech was popular enough to inspire American game makers to produce several "giant robot" tabletop games and RPGs.

In the late 80s and early 90s, American companies began to produce direct-to-video anime releases. These found wide-spread popularity among anime fans, contributing to an already fast-growing niche in North America. Such series as *Bubblegum Crisis* (1987), *Record of Lodoss War* (1990), and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995) are still popular today. The feature length films *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) even found limited theatrical release.

But when anime like *Dragon Ball Z* (1989) and *Sailor Moon* (1992) began airing on TV in the mid 90s, it spun into something much bigger. Anime had reached a larger audience than ever before, and people loved it. As time progressed, more and more anime found its way onto American airwaves. Shows like *The Big O* (1999), *Card Captor Sakura* (1998), *Cowboy Bebop* (1998), *Gundam Wing* (1995), *.hack//Sign* (2002), and *Pokémon* (1997) became run-away successes.

More than ever, kids, adults, and long-term fans alike are discovering the world of anime. In addition to the influx of anime on television, DVD sales often top charts. Anime's influence can be seen in all matters of American pop culture, from advertisements, to music videos, and even to T-shirts. The Japanese culture invasion is definitely in full-force.

But what is it that makes these anime so captivating?

THEMES

A lot of anime's popularity can be attributed to its flashy disregard for expectations and sheer diversity. Japanese animation has the unparalleled capacity to combine dis-

parate genres into a unique new form of entertainment. Slapstick comedy in the vein of *Silly Symphonies* plays out side-by-side with tear-jerking drama; over-the-top gun-toting action meshes with artistic flair; and the line between fantasy and science-fiction ceases to exist. Using this versatility, anime crafts stories unlike anything else in the world.

Anime is also famous for its trademark visual style. Though large, expressive eyes and wild multicolor hair are immediately obvious, Japanese animation is also famous for its detailed and complex designs. These artistic creations often take center-stage, helping fuel an intense fanbase around not only the show, but the art itself.

There is really a little something, somewhere, for everyone. Anime tells stories that appeal to men, women, adults, children, art enthusiasts, action buffs, thinkers, escapists, and everything in between. Now with OVA, you can tell your story!

WHAT IS AN RPG?

A role-playing game is much like the make-believe games of our childhood. Popularized in the 1970s by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson's *Dungeons and Dragons*, role-playing games take the simple concept of "let's pretend" and updates it for a more mature audience. By adding rules and impartial randomizers (like cards and dice), role-playing games make it possible to answer problematic questions without bias. Did the cop *really* shoot the robber? Could the robber *really* have robbed the bank to begin with?

When you play a role-playing game, you and your friends take part in creating a fictional world together. Unlike other games, there is no competition, no winners, and no losers. The point is simply to have a good time.

Everyone participates in one of two groups. Most of you will become "Players," while one person becomes the "Game Master."

PLAYERS

As a Player, you get to make your own unique persona to play in the Game Master's world. With the rules in this book as a guide, you craft the character's past, personality, and talents. These statistics will aid you in portraying your character in the game. By describing actions, imitating speech, and doing whatever else comes to mind, the character can really come alive.

Depending on the chosen setting, you could be a fierce warrior, a geeky gadgeteer, a brooding ex-soldier, or even a high-school student. The possibilities are boundless.

After creating your fictional characters, you and your friends form a "party" to take on the challenges that the Game Master sets forth. But like any story, the characters are apt to disagree on how to handle them. What happens next is up to all of you!

GAME MASTERS

The Game Master's role is a little more complex than that of the Players'. Somewhere between storyteller and referee, the Game Master (or "GM") creates the world the Player Characters (PCs) live in. Besides describing the world itself, it is a GM's job to portray all of the people the Players may meet, so-called Non-Player Characters (NPCs). He or she controls the flow of the story, dictates encounters and challenges, and creates the drama. The Game Master also serves as arbiter of the rules, determining the difficulty of tasks, the result of conflicts, and the answer to any rules quandaries.

More information on Game Mastering can be found in the Game Master's Section



PLAYING THE GAME

Together, the Players and the Game Master take part in an “adventure.” The term represents a cohesive segment, or episode, of the characters’ lives. Adventures are played in one or more sessions of several hours. Gaming groups often make a point of continuing the same plot over an extended “campaign” made up of many adventures. No way to play is better than another. You should find a balance that suits you.

WHAT YOU NEED

Obviously, you’ll need a few friends (at least one) and a copy of this rulebook. But here’s a quick rundown of the other things you need for the OVA Role-Playing Game.

- o **Pencil or Pen** or anything that writes, really. Besides using this to write down your character’s statistics before the game, it will also come in handy for jotting notes during the action.
- o **Paper** and optionally a copy of the the Character Record found in the back of this book.
- o **Six-Sided Dice** that you can probably find in any old board game. The more the better. We recommend the cool “dice blocks” from www.chessex.com.

Though a modest list, your gaming group might very well spice it up with their own additions. Music, character miniatures, snacks and drinks, or even *gasp* costumes can also be staples of a gaming group.

SAMPLE OF PLAY

What follows is a sample of how a real gaming session might run. It is not a definitive guide to be followed to the letter, but rather, an example that will give you an idea of how role-playing games work. It may even give you a few ideas for what you want to do in your own game.

We join Alexis, Dahlia, Oreo, and the Game Master, Brett, in a session currently in progress. Their characters are in hot pursuit of a mysterious man in black across the rooftops of Tokyo.

Brett (GM): “As the chilly night wind blows ever stronger, pounding you with the otherwise gentle snowdrift, the man in black escapes through the roof access.”

Dahlia (as Karis): “Come on! We have to go down after him before he gets away!”

Alexis (as Raine): “Right. Let us go!”

GM: “You all hasten down the roof access stairs. The frantic, haphazard footfalls of the man echo up towards you, but before you reach the bottom, a door slams. The landing reveals a long sterile hallway lined with identical doors.”

Karis: “Great, what now?”

Oreo (as Shou): “Let’s just knock on all the doors and see which one answers?”

Raine: “Ugh. Why are you even here anyway? You’re such a child!”

Shou: “Yeah? You’re such a woman!”

Raine: "And what's *that* supposed to mean, you-"

Dahlia (to the GM): "While they're bickering, I want Karis to look around for clues."

(The Game Master sets a secret difficulty for the task)

GM: "Okay Dahlia. Because of your +1 Perceptive Bonus, you get to roll three dice for this."

Dahlia (rolling dice): "A four, a two...and another four! I add the doubles...That's eight, right?"

GM: "After looking around the hall, Karis easily spots small puddles of water in front of the second left door. Melted snow."

Oreo (to the GM): "Shou bursts through the door in an attempt to surprise whoever's behind it!"

Alexis: "Oh, that's subtle, Oreo."

Oreo: "Hey, I'm just playing the part."

GM: "The rapid entry reveals a blank, dark room. Whoever came in here made sure to turn the lights off. Even the light from the hallway fails to reveal much."

Oreo: "D'oh!"

Karis: "Where's Arasuni when you find him?"

Alexis: "There's probably a simple solution to this." (to the GM) "Brett, Raine feels by the door for a light switch."

GM: "After a moment of fumbling around, the florescent office lights flicker to life."

(Dahlia and Oreo slap their heads.)

GM: "However, the resulting view is less than bright. The back of the room remains partially dark, the overhead light there either broken or burned out. A desk lies on its side, and the man you have been chasing holds a female office worker at gunpoint. 'D...Don't do anything! I'll shoot!' His voice is shaky, but the black muzzle of his gun emphasizes his intent."

Oreo: "D'oh!"

Alexis: "Stop saying that!"

Karis: "What are we going to do?"

Raine (in a hushed tone): "Maybe you can try to disarm him with your boomerang?"

Dahlia: "Hey, that's a good idea. I'll go for it!"

GM: "This is going to be really risky. Even with his obviously unstable state, it doesn't take much time to pull a trigger. I'll set the difficulty at 12. With all your bonuses...you can roll 5 dice, Dahlia.

(Dahlia rolls 5 dice): "1...4...2...5...and 5! Drat, only 10! But I can't afford to miss this...I want to use some Drama Dice!"

GM: "Well, you have plenty of Endurance. Go for it."

(Dahlia keeps rolling additional dice until she gets another five.): "Yes!!"

GM (counting up the additional dice rolled): Okay, don't forget to mark off 5 Endurance for each of those. 15 total.

GM (to the Players): The boomerang sails across the room, efficiently disarming the man in seconds. He clutches his hand as his hostage pushes past you and escapes into the hallway. The man shakes his head. "Okay, I give up! Just don't hurt me! I'll tell you anything you want! I—" Suddenly he stops speaking. As his eyes roll back in his head you realize a shining yellow light pierces his chest. The light withdraws, and he falls limp to the floor. An immense figure appears from the shadows. Shrouded in a cape as black as night itself, only a sword made of pure yellow light and a single glowing red eye seem to give him any form at all. A deep voice booms, "How predictably useless."

Karis: "Shadowman!"

Shou: "Shadow-who?"

Shadowman: "I should've expected you, girl. I see you have some friends...but it's no matter. You should know I am far more dangerous than a simple man with a gun."

GM: "As if to exemplify his point, he lifts a single heavy gloved hand. Groaning noises grind against your ears before the entire roof shatters to pieces. Harsh wind sends flurries of snow spiralling around the room, along with the remaining pieces of shrapnel."

Shadowman: "Come! Let us play in the snow!"







CREATING A CHARACTER

Charged by your favorite anime and a little imagination, you're probably more than ready to start your own adventure. But before you can jump into the action of the OVA Role-Playing Game, you need to write down a few things. So grab a pencil and a sheet of paper, and let's get cracking.

STEP 0: DISCUSSION

Although you are probably eager to get started, it would be a good idea to talk with the Game Master (and perhaps the other Players) before going on to the first step. You can find out the rules the Game Master is using and get a general feel for the kind of game being played. The Game Master can also help you throughout the process, assisting you with understanding the rules and any problems you might have.

Brett, a Game Master with a long-running gaming group, invites Jade to join in his latest OVA campaign. He tells her that it's a fairly light-hearted game, and he is open to any kind of character. Jade has never played the OVA Role-Playing Game before, so she asks the Game Master for assistance making her character. Brett is more than happy to oblige.

STEP 1: THE CONCEPT

Before you delve into the rules, you will have to make some decisions on who your character might be. You don't have to make a complete detailed biography right now, but a general idea before you start will be helpful as you go through the process. Keep in mind that your character can be anyone you want. Don't feel restricted to certain archetypes or building a "combat-effective" character. The important thing is making the character you want to play.

After some thought, Jade decides to play a character similar to the heroines from her favorite magical girl anime. Fukiko, with the help of her flying feline companion, Azyrus, emulates her favorite shoujo comics and fights evil while trying to have a normal life. Although she only has the basics of a character idea, Brett assures her this is plenty to start the process.

STEP 2: THE ABILITIES

Likely among the most important decisions you will have, choosing Abilities decide what your character can and can't do. For now, ask yourself about what he or she can do. What is the character good at? What special attribute or power does he or she have? Run through the list and make a note of the Abilities that you think apply to your character. For each Ability you write down, jot a number 1 to 5 next to it. This number is your "rank," representing your level of skill in that area. 1 means the character is competent or above average, while a 5 makes the character almighty in that area. Keep in mind most Abilities should be 1 (Good) or 2 (Excellent). Level 3 is considered a masterful rank, and characters should have very few of these. Level 4 is incredible, a rank obtained only by a select few people in the world. This Level is very rare, and only characters who exhibit the extremes of a talent should have it. Level 5 is extraordinarily rare, a rank reserved for completely awing, super-natural abilities. Almost no character should start with an Ability at this level.

Since Fukiko has the ability to transform, Brett suggests that Jade try to list some of her "natural" abilities first. Keeping this in mind, Jade gives Fukiko "Hobby: Shoujo Manga" and "Quick" at +2, both fairly good rankings. Since Fukiko is young, Jade decides she has little other skills. She scribbles in "Animal Companion: Azyrus" which the Game Master helps her assign as +2. They can create his exact statistics later. Now it's time to handle her Transformation Ability. Jade gives her "Transformation" at +4, an astounding level to help make up for her shortcomings. Scanning the Abilities list, she gives Fukiko "Barrier" +3, "Combat Skill" +4, and "Heal" +2. She also gives her "Power Move" at +2, and with Brett's help, devises a suite of special combat moves. Jade notices that her Transformation Abilities are one point too many (9) for her Level in Transformation. Brett assures her this is fine and to wait for the next step.

STEP 3: THE WEAKNESSES

Nobody's perfect, and that includes your character! All good characters have one or more flaws that make them unique, endearing, and believable. Theoretically, you *could* make a character without any Weaknesses at all, but she would be a very boring character indeed. Take a look at the Weaknesses list and write down any that apply to your character. Next to it, write a number ranging from -1 to -3. -1 is Moderate, -2 is Bad, and -3 is Awful!

Jade helps to define Fukiko's character by giving her various personality flaws fitting a young girl. Besides Ageism at -2, Fukiko gets Crybaby at -1 (only mildly annoying), and Easily Distracted, Frail and Naive at -2, all fairly significant flaws. Jade decides that Fukiko needs something to transform and gives her Focus: Neko Transformation Locket at -2. Jade realizes on her own that she can also give a flaw to her Transformation to make up the extra points. She writes down Bizarre Appearance: Cat Features at -1.

STEP 4: HEALTH & ENDURANCE

In all likelihood, your character is going to be (willingly or not) dragged into some kind of physical conflict. For these fights, it is important to know both your character's Health and Endurance. Health represents your character's toughness, the ability to take hard knocks and keep going. Endurance is your vitality, health, and energy, representing your ability to not tire or give up despite severe injury. Unless you take certain Abilities or Weaknesses that affect these, both Health and Endurance are assigned the number 40. Various actions and attacks can drain from both of these totals. (See Combat for more information)

Because of her Frail Weakness, Jade reduces Fukiko's Health to 20. Without any other Abilities and Weaknesses to modify it, her Endurance remains the default 40.

STEP 5: FINISHING TOUCHES

Okay, now that you have gotten all the basics down for your character, he's completely playable. You could join a session right now. However, you can (and should) go further with your character. Give him an appearance. Make a background that explains why he is who he is. Tell exactly what he is like to be around. In the long run, this information will make your character deeper, and possibly open up new avenues for you to role-play with. To organize this information, you might want to use the following form.

Jade spends some time and creates a detailed biography for her character, including her origin, goals, and personality traits. She also adds a "Shape Change" Ability and applies attributes to her companion, Azyrus. Now she is completely ready for a game of OVA. What adventures await for Lovely Savior Myu Myu?

Background: Who is your character? Where does he come from? What is the story behind her? What does your character hope to obtain?

Appearance: What does your character dress like? What is her build, hairstyle, and eye color?

Personality: What does your character act like? How does he react to different situations? Does she have any particular quirks or habits that make her distinctive?

Possessions: Does the character have any item that she holds particularly dear? Are there any important weapons or gadgets that are part of his profession?

Powers: Does your character have any special talents? A distinct fighting style? Can he do something most people cannot?

Schticks: Are there any habits that set your character apart from everyone else? Does her hair always blow dramatically in the wind, or does he always adhere to strict military code?

FLUFFING

If you have trouble creating or describing your character, or if you just want to go a step further, you may want to try filling out the following list. Of course, not all of the entries may apply to your character, and you may want to add some of your own. Filling out forms like this is known as “fluffing.”

All of the Sample Characters use this method.

Concept: A few words that describe your character

Age: How old your character is

Sex: Male or Female

Association: Factions or organizations the character is a part of

Height: How tall your character is

Weight: How much your character weighs

Hair Color: Color of your character's hair

Eye Color: Color of your character's eyes

Occupation: How your character makes a living

Hobbies: What your character likes to do

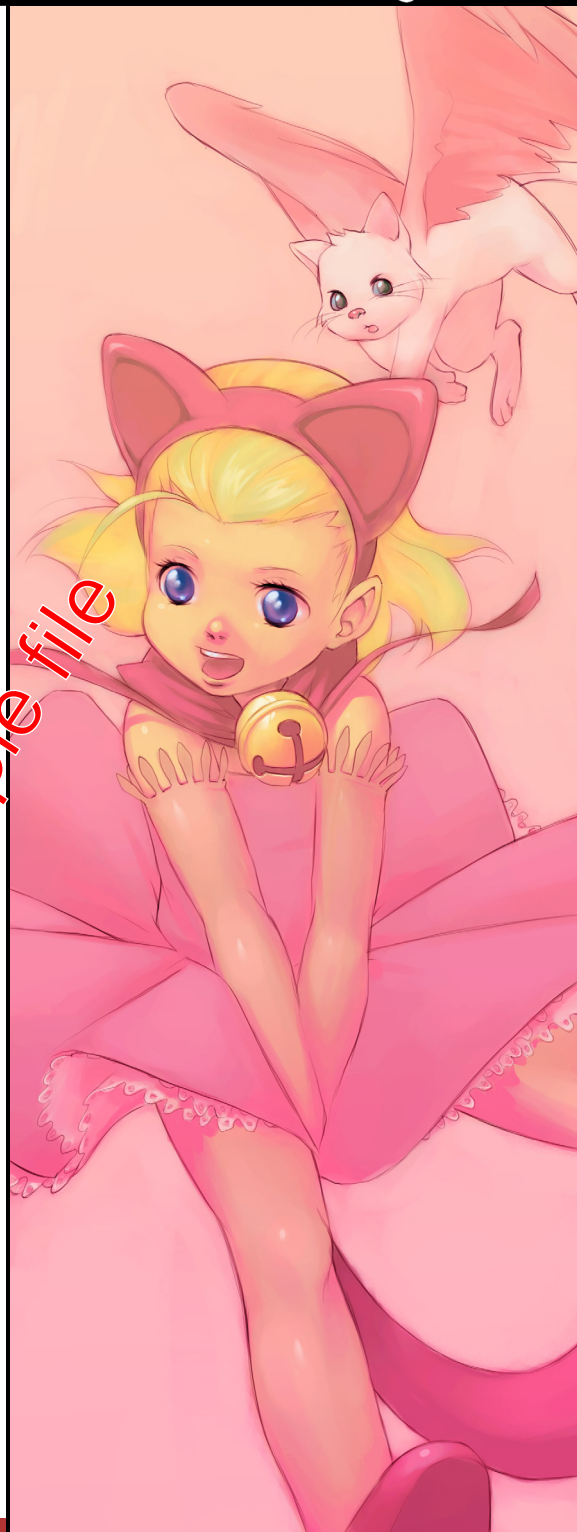
Favorite Food: Your character's favorite food

Allies: Your character's best friends

Rival(s): Other characters you have a bone to pick with (or vise versa)

Love interest(s): Who the character loves

Loved by: Who the character is loved by



LIMITING THE CHARACTER

This system is meant to be extremely flexible. You can create any character you would ever want to play without any restrictions or hassles. Sometimes though, you might want to limit yourself to keep from making a character too “good,” or your Game Master may want all the Players to have similar levels of power. To do this, you and your Game Master must first decide on one of the following rules. Even if the Game Master has not mentioned it, make sure to ask him if he plans to use any of these rules before making your character.

GROUND ZERO

This rule is based on keeping your character's total of Abilities and Weaknesses as close to zero as possible. Just add all Ability bonuses and subtract all Weakness penalties to see your Character Total. At most, your character should not be above or below zero by more than five points (or another number, at the Game Master's discretion).

Most of the sample characters in the OVA Role-Playing Game favor the Ground Zero rule.

POWER CEILING

With this rule, every character starts with a default number of points to spend on Abilities but may gain more equivalent to the total level of Weaknesses they take. However, the points spent on Abilities can never exceed a Power Ceiling set by the GM. For example, if the Game Master gave each character 5 default points and a Power Ceiling of 20, you could spend 5 points on Abilities and increase this with up to 15 points of Weaknesses. Even if you take more Weaknesses, you cannot have more than 20 points of Abilities.

POINT SCALE

This third rule encourages Players to keep their characters in the “middle ground”

rather than the extremes by applying prohibitive point costs to high levels in Abilities. A Level 1 Abilities costs one, 2 costs two, 3 costs four, 4 costs eight, and 5 costs an incredible fifteen points! Weaknesses apply the same costs as listed above, only they are subtracted from the total. The Game Master can either set a ceiling to the number of points that can be spent, like the Power Ceiling rule, or combine Point Scale with the Ground Zero rule.

COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS

It is usually appropriate to apply the following limitation on starting characters, regardless of what other rules that might be used: A character's basic Abilities should never give a total of more than +5 to any of the following: Attack Roll, Defense Roll, or Basic Damage (Not including Power Moves and similar Abilities.)

