Simple Lifepaths

A character generation
expansion for
The Riddle Of Steel

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Introduction

This supplement to The Riddle of Steel expands the character generation process by splitting it into childhood, education, early adult and later life, bringing more depth to characters as they are built up and progress through their life before the game starts.

This is the initial part of the expansion. For later versions, a deeper lifepath system including careers and background events to give more life to a character's past. Integration of Gifts & Flaws is also possible to detail when and how a character acquired these.

Introduction

This character generation expansion builds on the core rules, so you will need the main TRoS rulebook. You can also use the additional skills and skill packets from the Companion.

It was an explicit design goal that characters generated with this system should be as close as possible to characters created using the simpler system in the core rulebook. There may be small differences, especially because a point-based system is used for the skills and the skill packets are not all equal in "worth". However, several cross-checks have been made to ensure that the differences are small. If you find any flaws that were overlooked, please e-mail tom@lemuria.org with the details.

You can use this lifepath system for both attributes and skills, or just for one of the two. The choice is entirely yours.

	Skill Points			
Priority	Childhood	Education	E. Adult	Later Life
A	6	32	30	4
B	5	28	28	3
C	4	26	24	2
D	3	18	14	1
E	2	12	6	0
F	1	6	3	0

Table 1

	Attribute Points			
Priority	Childhood	Education	E. Adult	Later Life
A	12	24	8	3
B	11	22	7	3
C	10	20	7	2
D	9	18	6	2
E	8	16	6	1
F	7	14	5	1

Table 2

Life Phases

A character's life before becoming a hero is divided into four phases, which during character generation are handled sequentially as the character grows up.

Skills all start at 10 (untrained) for the purpose of these rules, so a -2 gain will give the character a skill of 8.

Attributes all start at 0, though you should apply racial modifiers right at birth. This will give child characters attributes below the allowed minimum of 2 and in some cases even negative. Do not worry about this now. Children do not fall under the same rules as adults, and the values will become normal long before character generation is complete.

All points used during the various life phases are cummulative, both for skills and for attributes.

The number of points available in each phase depends on the priorities selected for attributes and skills and can be found in the two tables on this page.

Childhood

This is roughly the time between the character's birth and 5th birthday. During this time he learns basic skills such as his native language and up to four others that depend on the environment he grows up in. If you are using the Social Skill Packets from the Companion, these offer an excellent guideline for skills available to characters during childhood.

During childhood, skills can be improved by no more than -2 to a value no lower than 8. Attributes can gain be raised no more than 2 points.

Education

The educational life phase is where the child is taught a trade, sent to school or a private teacher or otherwise prepared for life. It roughly covers the period from the 5th to the 14th year of his life.

Choose a skill packet from the list, either out of the core rulebook or the Companion. This should be the trade that your character has initially learned in his life, usually this is the trade of his father. A farmer's son will be educated as a farmer or at least something close to that, even if he becomes a soldier later in life.

During education, skills can be improved by no more than -3 and can not be lowered beyond a skill level of 6.
Attributes can be raised by up to 3 points.

For skills, the character can either learn skills from the skill packet chosen for this life phase, or improve skills that he has already acquired earlier.

Early Adulthood

During his early adult life, a character has practiced his learnt trade and acquired additional skills, or continued his education in a different phase or aspect. Many warrior types begin their soldier career at this age, with the early adulthood covering roughly the time between the 15th and 18th year.

Again, choose a skill packet from the list in the core rulebook or the Companion. Your character can either learn skills from that second skill packet, or improve skills that he has acquired during childhood or education.

During early adult life, skills can again be lowered by up to 3 points, but not lower than to a value of 5.
Attributes can be improved by +1.

Later Life

These are the final years of the character before he begins his adventurer career. If you want to make a very young character (around 18-20 years of age), you can leave this phase out. You will have slightly less points available, but your character is younger.

You can also play an older character by repeating this life phase. Each time you apply a later life phase, your character ages about four years. So for a single pass, a character of about 22 years, you will have the exact same number of points in attributes as in the core TRoS rules, while for older characters you get slightly more points, but you get older. Do not forget that at age 40, you must begin to make aging rolls. It is not recommended to use more than 3 later life phases, which would give you a character of 30 years.

During each phase of later life, skills can be lowered at most -1. Values below 4 are only allowed with Seneschal approval.
Attributes can be raised by +1 during later life. If you go through multiple phases, ask your Seneschal if he allows values above 7.

Example

This is a full example showing an entire character generating according to these new rules. We will also compare the final result with the same character built according to the core rules. The numbers in brackets are always the improvement that was applied during that life phase.

John is the son of a lesser noble, and will be trained as a knight in order to inherit his father's lands one day.

The priorities chosen are Attributes B and Skills C.

John is raised as the child of a noble family, of course, and receives the "noble" social skill packet (Companion, p. 43). Together with the 4 skill points that he gets at priority C for his childhood ths grants him the following skills:

Native Language	8 (-2)
Riding	9 (-1)
Etiquette (court)	9 (-1)

He also gets 11 points for attributes. Since there are 10 attributes, he sets all of them to 1, except for WP which is set to 2. John is raised in a strict and unforgiving environment and learns early on "to be a man".

John's education is that of a courtier as he is introduced to life at the small court of his father. He gets 26 skill points at this phase, with a limit of -3, i.e. 3 points on each skill chosen. He learns:

Native Language	6 (-2)
Riding	6 (-3)
Etiquette (court)	6 (-3)
Games	8 (-2)
Dancing	8 (-2)
Diplomacy	8 (-2)
Read & Write	8 (-2)
Intrigue	7 (-3)
Law	9 (-1)
Sincerity	9 (-1)
Appraisal	8 (-2)
Search	9 (-1)
Ridicule	8 (-2)

Note that he has improved Native Language even though it is not in the courtier skill packet. Since he already learned that skill during childhood, he can invest further points in it. The same holds true for riding and the etiquette skill, but then these are on the skill packet as well.

For his attributes, John grows a lot during these years, gains 22 points to distribute and his attributes at age 14 are:

ST	3 (+2)	WP	5 (+3)
AG	3 (+2)	Wit	3 (+2)
TO	4 (+3)	MA	2 (+1)
EN	4 (+3)	Soc	2 (+1)
HT	4 (+3)	Per	3 (+2)

Now a young man, John is finally taught the warrior arts, he chooses knight as his second skill packet. He gains another 24 skill points, but must respect the lower limit of 5 (only skills that were improved are listed):

Riding	5 (-1)
First Aid	7 (-3)
Hunting	7 (-3)
Heraldry	8 (-2)
Battle	7 (-3)
Strategy	7 (-3)
Tactics	7 (-3)
Etiquette (tourn.)	8 (-2)
Dancing	7 (-1)
Games	7 (-1)
Ridicule	7 (-1)
Search	8 (-1)

For his attributes, John gets another 7 points and ends up being a fairly tough young man:

ST	4 (+1)	WP	6 (+1)
AG	4 (+1)	Wit	4 (+1)
TO	6 (+2)	MA	2
EN	5 (+1)	Soc	2
HT	4	Per	3

Now for the final stage, four more years ahead of him, John can spend a few more points, 2 on skills:

Battle	6 (-1)
Hunting	6 (-1)

And 3 points on attributes, which he puts into WP (bringing that to the max of 7), MA and Per.

Comparison

Compared to a character built using the core rules, John has the exact same number of points to spend on attributes, so the result must naturally be the same one way or the other.

While it is possible in this system to build a character with two (or even more) attributes "high", i.e. at a value of 7, the Seneschal should be asked to approve this choice before the character is allowed into the group.

For skills, here is a direct comparison. In the core rules, a priority of C results in a 7/7 for the two skill packets.

The table on the right shows that while there are many small differences, most of them are +/- 1 point. The pronounced differences could certainly be much smaller if John had not been designed as a gritty character who did not do too well on his initial courtier career. Had he spent less points on language and riding, he could have been closer to his brother who was built using the core rules.

Skill	Core	Lifepath
Native Language	7	6
Riding	6	5
Etiquette (court)	5	6
Etiquette (tournament)	7	8
Read & Write	6	8
Persuasion	8	-
Ridicule	7	7
Games	6	7
Dancing	7	7
Diplomacy	8	8
Intrigue	7	7
Law	8	9
Sincerity	6	9
Appraisal	8	8
Forgery	8	-
Search	9	8
First Aid	6	7
Hunting	7	6
Heraldy	6	8
Battle	6	6
Strategy	7	7
Tactics	8	7

Table 3

Addendum

This is very much a work-in-progress. I'm putting it out there to create feedback. The introduction lists the next steps I want to take with this expansion, but the base system has to be solid first.

So please, if you find this intriguing, create a few characters with it and if you spot any rough edges or flaws, let me know at tom@lemuria.org.

Future versions of this expansion, hopefully with the points promised in the introduction, will be available on my website:

    http://web.lemuria.org/tros/