

# *THE ORIGINAL*



## *ROLE PLAYING GAME (THE FLATTENED REMIX)*

*BY MARCUS L. ROWLAND*

*ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY T. CRAIG DRAKE*

THIS IS A FREE "LIGHT" VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME; IT CONTAINS THE FULL RULES AND TWO ADVENTURES, BUT OMITTS ANOTHER ADVENTURE AND ADVENTURE OUTLINES, A WARGAME BY MATTHEW HARTLEY, CUTOUT CHARACTERS, SCIENTIFIC DISCUSSION OF THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL WORLD, AND THE NOVEL ON WHICH THE GAME IS BASED. THE FULL GAME IS SOLD IN AID OF MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS) AND IS AVAILABLE VIA DRIVETHRU RPG AND E23.

**BASED ON FLATLAND BY EDWIN A. ABBOTT**

# *THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND*

*ROLE PLAYING GAME*  
*(THE FLATTENED REMIX)*  
BY MARCUS L. ROWLAND

BASED ON  
FLATLAND BY EDWIN A. ABBOTT  
FLATLAND ILLUSTRATION BY EDWIN A. ABBOTT  
ALL OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARCUS L. ROWLAND  
ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY T. CRAIG DRAKE

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Double sided printing: For best results print the front cover, this page, and the table of contents single sided, then print all even pages from page 4 (Introduction, numbered as 1) onwards with all odd pages from page 5 (numbered as 2) onwards on the other side of the paper. When assembled the odd-numbered pages should be to the right, like any other book.

Sections of this book that have been greyed out on the table of contents have been omitted from this remix - buy the full game to see them!

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## INTRODUCTION

**I**MAGINE a world of two dimensions; a world in which length and width exist but the concept of height is a dangerous heresy, where the words “up” and “down” are almost meaningless and everything is based on plane geometry.

In 1884 Edwin A. Abbott introduced this world in *Flatland*, a novel and treatise on multi-dimensional geometry. But *Flatland* is much more than that – it’s a political and religious satire, a comedy of manners, and an exploration of the nature of thought. By modern standards it isn’t always the most gripping of works – Abbott’s style is sometimes a little turgid – but there is still much to enjoy. It was extraordinarily influential in its day, leading to several imitators, parodies, and sequels. Since then immense ingenuity has gone into solving the problems Abbott didn’t cover; the minutiae of two dimensional biology, chemistry, and physics, from the nature of two dimensional chemistry and atomic structure to electronics and the most complex and sophisticated forms of engineering.

In 1998 I was asked to contribute to the programme book for Baroquon, the 1999 British Roleplaying Society convention at New Hall in Cambridge. I’d been thinking about a *Flatland* game for some time, and took the opportunity to write the first (much shorter) version of this game as a way of exploring the possibilities of the setting. I based the rules on my earlier *Forgotten Futures* RPG (1993), making some simplifying assumptions and adding new rules reflecting the world I was describing.

The game wasn’t an instant runaway success, but I began to get feedback suggesting that the idea interested people. As a result I expanded and tidied up the rules, added another scenario, and eventually published it as part of the *Forgotten Futures* CD-ROM, a collection of games writing with supporting articles by Victorian and Edwardian authors. It has not previously been available as a separate publication.

In 2005 RPG writers were asked to contribute scenarios to a charity product in aid of victims of the 2004 tsunami. My contribution was a generic adventure based on this setting; *Flatlander, The Thickening*.

For various reasons the charity project was cancelled, and I eventually I decided to rewrite and expand the *Flatland* RPG, incorporating *Flatlander*... and some other new material, and sell it as a PDF in aid of charity. Since the original Tsunami appeal achieved most of its goals I’m donating my income from this game to Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), a charity

that will undoubtedly spearhead rescue work in any future disaster of this type.

Welcome, then, to *Flatland*; a world of length and breadth but lacking in height, in which geometry is the overwhelming natural force, and characters are actually *meant* to be two-dimensional. I hope that you’ll enjoy your visit.

Everything needed to play is in the first few pages and the adventures. The rest of the text covers use with some other games, recommended reading and sources, and some ideas on the science of the setting – background concepts that aren’t needed in play but may interest readers or suggest plot ideas. All of the science, especially the biology, is highly speculative. The appendix describes some of the problems and possible solutions, but you don’t need it to play the game.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**T**HE original version of this game would have probably never been written if the Baroquon ’99 committee hadn’t asked me to contribute to their program book.

Charles Stross suggested Médecins Sans Frontières as a suitable charity for this project.

Recently another *Flatland* RPG has been published, *Edwin Abbott Abbot’s Flatland (Inflated)*, Red Anvil Press (2005). Another game is in development from Polymancer Studios Inc., and some FUDGE guidelines for the setting have appeared on line. I hope that most of the material here will be useful with all of these systems. Finally, my thanks to T. Craig Drake for his notes on converting characters and scenarios between this game and *Flatland (Inflated)*, and to Matthew Hartley, who provided the wargames rules.



Edwin A. Abbott (1838 - 1926)

## WELCOME TO FLATLAND

**F**LATLAND describes a strange two-dimensional world, a plane section through a three (or more) dimensioned “multiverse” inhabited by geometric figures; sentient squares, triangles, etc., growing to a maximum of around eleven inches long. Most have no idea of the possibility of a third dimension, and anyone believing in such things is branded a lunatic.

Abbott describes one Flatland nation, The State, in detail. It’s a religious dictatorship with a huge and complex bureaucracy. Every aspect of life is regulated, and the status of citizens is determined almost entirely by the number of lines in an individual's body:

- 1 Females, needle-like straight lines.
- 2 Soldiers and peasants (sharp Isosceles triangles, there is actually a third line as base).
- 3 Equilateral triangles, tradesmen and merchants.
- 4-5 The professional classes.
- 6+ The aristocracy and priesthood.

Figures with unusually high numbers of lines, so close and regular that they approach the circular, are the religious caste. God is believed to be a perfect circle, the figure with an infinite number of lines.

Figures with three or more sides are usually equilateral to within a tiny fraction of a degree; irregular figures are treated as freaks and potential criminals, and often executed. Even Isosceles have two equal sides. Sons of regular figures usually have one more side than their fathers, so that the wife of a Square will give birth to Pentagons, who will in turn father Hexagons. Similarly, the children of Isosceles tend to be closer to regular than their fathers; if such a child is exactly 60 degrees at each corner it is ceremonially taken from the parents and fostered with a family of regular triangles.

---

A typical Flatland city scene as seen by its inhabitants  
Vertical scale is, of course, greatly exaggerated

Flatlanders see everything as horizontal lines of varying degree of brightness; the closer and more alive the brighter. Since they can't see “over” (“up” has no meaning except as a geographical dimension equivalent to North) or past any solid object, it is difficult for Flatlanders to discern the precise shape of objects; they must measure angles and infer the parts they can't see or feel. Criminals sometimes take advantage of this fact by moving as they are being examined, to pretend that they have more or less sides, or conceal irregularities.

Visibility is limited to around three feet by a fine omnipresent Fog, which paradoxically is a great help to the Flatlanders in estimating angles and shapes visually; it dims more distant objects, and a trained eye can use the angle of vision, plus the degree to which an object is dimmed, to determine true angles. This skill takes years to learn, and is mainly the province of the aristocracy.

At one time coloured paint was used to brighten the outlines of Flatlanders, but it was too easily abused as camouflage or disguise, which led to social unrest and ultimately an abortive revolution. It is now universally forbidden. It is possible that monochrome paints, which highlight or dim lines without adding colour, may be used for more subtle disguises.

Flatland has warm and cool regions, dry deserts, and other forms of “terrain”, including “mountains” (areas where Flatlanders have unusual difficulty moving) and “forests”. An unknown but relatively weak force pulls objects South; rain falls horizontally (there is naturally no other way for it to fall!) and always from the North. Houses are usually pentagonal with the two Northern sides as roof and openings in the other faces.

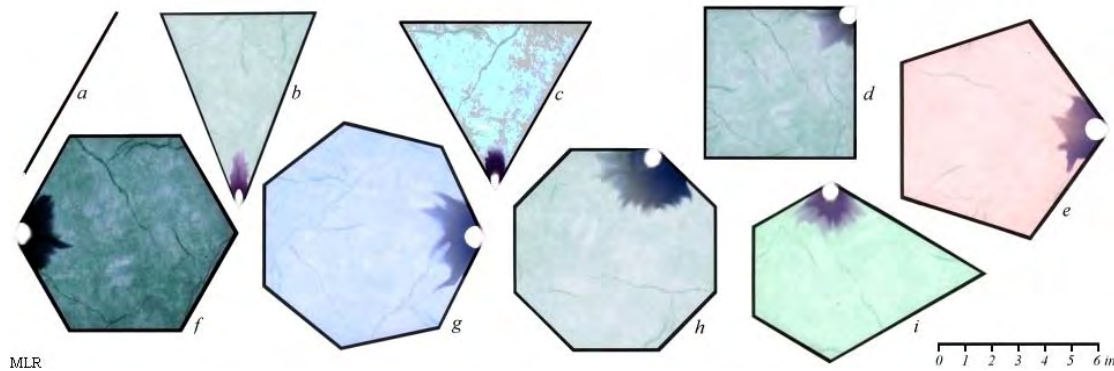
Flatlanders don't have heads; one of the angles contains the mouth and neural matter that functions as eye and brain. They are shown as a shaded area around a circular mouth in the illustrations on later pages. In Isosceles they're located in the sharpest angle. For more on anatomy see the scientific appendix.

Flatlanders can apparently manipulate objects by adhering to them and moving them, allowing (for example) a Hexagon to wield a sharp metal triangle as a weapon.

**Note:** No limbs are described or shown in Flatland, but referees may prefer to assume that Flatlanders have arms, allowing use of weapons, tools, etc. without complicated contortions. Possibly they exist but are considered vulgar, since they break up the lines of the body. They are not shown on illustrations of characters. Whatever the truth may be, the rules below do not restrict the use of tools.

Since Flatlanders are two-dimensional, anything that pierces their hard outer layer is likely to kill them; once it is broken the outer skeleton tends to fall apart, exposing the flesh underneath. This leads to uncontrollable bleeding, unconsciousness, and death. The best doctors can break the outer layer and reset it, to cure minor irregularities and increase the number of sides of the children of the higher aristocracy, without killing the patient, but this is a very risky procedure. Doctors may also be able to cure small injuries, if they are not instantly fatal.

## THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME



Typical natives of Flatland

[from left to right, above then below] (a) A girl of good family (her internal anatomy is so narrow as to be invisible) (b) An obvious member of the lower orders, probably a servant or artisan (c) A poor but honest tradesman (d) A Square, narrator of Flatland (e) Doctor Pentagon, the learned physician (f) Squire Hexagon, a wealthy landowner (g) Sir Sefton Septagon, baronet (h) Count Otto von Octagon of Polygonia (i) A sinister irregular figure. Note that the colours shown are invisible to Flatlanders and change according to the viewing angle – their bodies are thinner than the wavelength of visible light with density varying with their diet and physical condition; as a result they diffract light unpredictably. All of the anatomy shown, other than the external lines, is also invisible to them since it rapidly disintegrates if damaged. Flatland doctors have inferred some details but are often wrong.

Any sharp object is dangerous; females, being relatively stupid and extremely sharp, are a particular hazard and must give warning cries and undulate from side to side whenever they go outdoors, since they are very difficult to see from ahead or behind. They must also use special entrances to enter houses, leading to chambers where they cannot easily impale anyone.

**Note:** It may be helpful to visualise Flatlanders as being made of lengths of a straight, thin, and brittle material (like chitin) enclosing a film of organic material, thinner than the liquid in a soap bubble. If there is another opening - e.g. if a side is broken – the supporting frame falls apart, and unless the victim is very lucky the flesh underneath is damaged so badly death is inevitable.

Because of these risks, and a culture that emphasises Regularity above all else, Flatland society is hidebound and dull. Nevertheless circumstances can arise which call for boldness, wit, and the qualities of an adventurer.

## CHARACTER GENERATION

### CHARACTERISTICS

EVERYTHING that's important about any native of Flatland is determined by his or her number of sides. Women and the thinnest Isosceles under 5° are both counted as one side for game purposes. They and the higher aristocracy are best run as NPCs.

For a campaign emphasising action SIDES, the number of sides the character has, is determined by rolling 2D6+2, dividing by 3, and rounding up for a range of 2-5 SIDES with an average of 3-4 SIDES.

For a higher-flying campaign roll 2D6+1, divide by 2, and round UP for 2-7 SIDES with an average of 4-5.

Referees may instead assign SIDES arbitrarily; for example, in a military adventure it's likely that nearly all characters will be Isosceles triangles, with some higher ranks regular triangles or squares. In a political scenario at least one character will need to be an octagon or better to have any effective say in affairs of state – but may be accompanied by servants or underlings with fewer SIDES, who may have their own adventures. An effective team might consist of an Octagonal diplomat accompanied by lesser bureaucrats and some servants, bodyguards and spies.

As will become obvious high SIDES result leads to an impressive number of skills, low SIDES limits intellect and skills, but greatly improves toughness and combat abilities. It isn't fair, but Flatland isn't a fair place.

SIDES indicates status and determines MIND (intelligence) and BODY (innate toughness, speed and combat ability) as shown on the table below:

SIDES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
MIND	1	2	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	7
BODY	8/4 <sup>1</sup>	6	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	2

All characters have MIND+2 points to spend on skills. They may also spend them to buy advantages, or take up to TWO disadvantages to buy extra points.

<sup>1</sup> Women are sharp but otherwise relatively weak – they attack with BODY 8 but defend themselves and use strength- and speed-related skills with BODY 4. If you prefer female characters to have a more active role there's no reason why not – and there could be more intellectual and less robust women, using the MIND and BODY for a higher number of SIDES. Regardless of MIND society treats them as inferiors with SIDES 1, and BODY is halved for defensive and other purposes (round up) None of this applies to thin Isosceles.

## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

**F**LATLANDERS may buy various advantages; if a number is shown, this is the minimum SIDES where the advantage is available:

- 1pt **Symmetry:** Your angles are very close to the ideal for your SIDES, well within the permitted deviation; females regard you as good-looking. [3]
- 2pt **Perfect symmetry:** You are treated as though you have status of SIDES +1, females regard you as extremely handsome (and may make excuses to feel your angles, even though this is generally considered to be extremely impolite...) [3]
- 1pt **Good sight:** You can see further than usual through the Fog and gain +1 on Visual Recognition if you buy the skill.
- 1pt **Military honours:** You are sometimes treated with almost as much respect as an equilateral! [2 only]
- 1pt **Wealthy:** You don't need to work for a living [3]

Flatlanders may also take up to TWO disadvantages to gain points; if a number is shown, this is the minimum SIDES where the disadvantage is relevant. Any advantages and disadvantages taken must affect different aspects of the character, e.g. Symmetry and Insane are acceptable, Symmetry and Minor Irregularity are not:

- 1pt **Son of an irregular figure:** You are not irregular, but may have "bad blood" and are treated with suspicion by anyone aware of your heritage. [4]
- 2pt **Minor irregularity:** If detected you would be forced into the civil service as a clerk of the 7th class and supervised wherever you go, but it isn't obvious without a careful inspection and comparison with standard angles. Somehow this has gone undetected so far. [4]
- 3pt **Major irregularity:** You would be executed immediately if detected, and must buy the Disguise skill and use it often to avoid discovery. You are probably a criminal. [4]
- 1pt **Poor Sight:** You have trouble coping with objects more than a few inches away, and can't learn Visual Recognition.

- 2pt **Involuntary movements:** You suffer from some involuntary condition in which you occasionally move uncontrollably, and may endanger those around you (or yourself). Females and Isosceles are executed if this flaw is detected, others may be imprisoned.
- 2pt **Sharp:** You are very sharp (BODY 7) but stupid (MIND 1). You are probably best fitted for a military or police career, or for crime. [Isosceles ONLY]
- 1pt **Eccentric:** You have one unusual belief, opinion, or mode of behaviour. You are considered strange, and are often treated as though you have fewer SIDES than you do.
- 2pt **Insane:** You would be confined if detected. One rare delusion is a belief in an extra spatial dimension.
- 1pt **Reversed:** You have somehow been rotated through the third dimension; now you see left as right (or east as west) and vice versa. Think of yourself as an alien abduction victim. You do not necessarily understand extra dimensions, but may be treated as "evidence" by those who do.

## SKILLS

**S**KILLS are derived from SIDES (S), MIND (M) or BODY (B), to which up to three points may be added; with the exception of Brawling and Stealth, if no points are spent on a skill the character does not have that skill. No skill may be improved above 10. If a bracketed number is shown that is the minimum SIDES needed before training in the skill is available.

For example, if a skill has a base value of M and the character has MIND (2), its value will be zero if no points are spent on it, 3 if one point is spent, 4 if two points are spent, and so forth.

Brawling and Stealth begin with the base value shown even if no points are spent; for example, the character above automatically has Stealth (2) if no points are spent on the skill.

Some of the skills shown on the next page are illegal, others considered vulgar or worse. For example, Recognition (feeling) is impolite at best amongst the aristocracy.



<b>Artist</b>	M	Often illegal; painting is especially frowned on, since it can be used for disguise.
<b>Brawling</b>	B	Fighting with the points of your body. Begins at BODY without spending any points.
<b>Business</b> [3]	M	Any financial or organisational work.
<b>Disguise</b> [3]	M	Ability to appear to have more or less than your true number of sides, and hide irregularities. Illegal, enhanced by artistic skills.
<b>Doctor</b> [4]	M	Knowledge and licence to practice.
<b>Law</b> [4]	M	Knowledge of Flatland's legal systems
<b>Mathematics</b> [3]	S	Limited to simple plane geometry, accounts, etc. At high levels a vague understanding of additional dimensions is possible
<b>Military Arms</b>	M	Use of cannon, guns, explosives, etc.
<b>Recognition (Feeling)</b> [1-5] Polygons of 6+ SIDES may not train in this skill but can acquire it by experience	M	The ability to correctly determine the SIDES another Flatlander has, spot any irregularities etc. by feel. Less accurate than visual recognition; the Aristocracy (6 SIDES and up) are not allowed any training in this skill.
<b>Recognition (visual)</b> [4+] Compulsory for 6+ SIDES, may be acquired by experience with fewer sides.	S	The ability to correctly determine the number of sides etc. by sight. Adventurers with SIDES of 5 or less may only spend 1 point on this skill, since formal training is restricted to the aristocracy.
<b>Scholar</b> [3]	S	Detailed knowledge of MIND/2 related topics.
<b>Scientist</b> [3]	M	Knowledge of Flatland's natural laws etc.
<b>Stealth</b>	M	Hiding, camouflage, sneaking, etc.
<b>Thief</b>	M	Locksmith, forgery, etc. Illegal.
<b>Weapons</b>	B	Use of sharp triangles, lines, etc. as weapons. This cannot be added to Brawling skill; it is an alternative, most useful to the aristocracy.

## DOING THINGS

**Y**OU don't need to roll any dice to leave home and go to work, eat lunch, or attend to the everyday details of your job. Dice rolls are reserved for more challenging situations. If a character must do something unusual or difficult, the referee should set a Difficulty number which must be overcome by a skill or characteristic, rolling two six sided dice using the table below.

If the number rolled is less than or equal to the number on the table, you succeed. 12 is **always** a failure, 2 is **always** a success.

Attacking	Defending									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	7	6	5	4	3	2	2	2	2	2
2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	2	2	2
3	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	2	2
4	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	2
5	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
6	11	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3
7	11	11	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
8	11	11	11	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
9	11	11	11	11	11	10	9	8	7	6
10	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	9	8	7

Movement speed is also rolled on this table. All Flatlanders can move their own length (about 6-10" for adults) per round. To move at double this speed is Difficulty 2. To treble it is Difficulty 4. Quadruple speed is Difficulty 8.

Combat and other attempts to use one skill or characteristic against another are also resolved by rolling on this table; for example, if a sharp Isosceles with Brawling 9 attacks an Equilateral with Brawling 6, on an 10 or less the Isosceles is the victor, otherwise he misses. If the Equilateral attacks first he succeeds on a 4 or less. Surprise and other factors may reduce skills etc.; the referee should decide if this has occurred. Once combat (or any other contest of skills) has begun, everyone involved rolls simultaneously.

Combat is resolved very simply, due to the nature of Flatlanders; if any attack succeeds, and the roll is 1 or more below that needed to succeed (e.g., if the



Equilateral above rolled a 3 or 2), the victim is instantly killed. If the roll is exactly that needed to succeed, the victim is wounded. It is entirely possible for both combatants to kill or wound each other simultaneously.

Wounds damage to the outer layer of the character's body but do not rupture it completely. If a wound goes untreated, it may set badly leaving one side of the victim Irregular. Roll 2D6; if the result is the victim's BODY or less it will set correctly after 1D6 days, if the result is more than the victim's BODY it will set Irregularly after 2D6 days, if the result is a 12 the wound will deteriorate and the victim will die after 1D6 days. Wounded characters cannot fight, their sides would give way instantly if they tried.

Anyone with the Doctor skill can set wounds by rolling his skill versus the SIDES of the victim; if the roll succeeds the wound is set correctly and heals in a few hours, if the roll fails it appears to heal at first but sets Irregularly after a few hours, on a 12 the victim dies.

Wounds that set Irregularly can be reset, but the same rolls are made and there is the same risk of death.

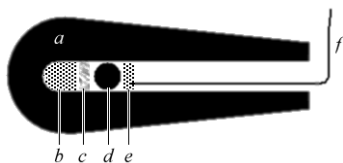
## WEAPONS

**W**EAPONS are mostly useful for higher figures, whose BODY and Brawling skill leave something to be desired. They are used with the Weapons skill, not Brawling. Some Isosceles and Regular triangles carry weapons too, partly as an affectation and partly because they allow a second attack to be made. If this happens – if for example, an Isosceles is using his point and a sword – the character should use whichever skill is *lower* for both attacks.

Cudgels and clubs can be used to bruise or knock out rather than kill. Any kill result should be treated as a knock-out, any wound as a bruise. The Weapons skill is needed to use them.

Firearms are a recent invention and still very dangerous... to the user. They make a ranged attack with the firer's Military Arms skill. In most armies Isosceles are "volunteered" to load and fire, although Higher Figures may aim them. Gunners are often deaf.

Firearms can't be breech loading, or have holes for a primer or fuse, since they must consist of a single piece of metal. Any gap would split the metal in two. Usually a compression ignition system is used. The "barrel" (a) is filled with a charge of powder (b), then finely shredded tinder (c),

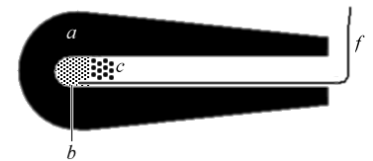


the shot (d), a steel disc that is rammed down the gun until it is wedged in place, and another smaller charge of gunpowder (e). When this powder is detonated by fuse (f) the initial charge pushes the shot down the barrel. This compresses the air inside the barrel; the increased pressure gives the tinder enough oxygen to start to burn, and it in turn ignites the main gunpowder charge. The gun fires a fraction of a second later.

The double explosion causes a lot of stress to the gun, and powerful recoil. Occasionally firearms explode instead of firing (on any roll of 11+). There are four main types of military firearm; "cannon", "muskets", multiple-barrelled "muskets", and "pistols". Rocket weapons have also been tried, but never put into service, since they are even more dangerous than cannon; they explode on 10+. If a weapon explodes it "attacks" the firer with the "skill" shown.

An alternative is to run a fuse down the barrel to the charge (b), with loosely packed small disks (c) in front of it. This can be effective against troops; loading is faster but accuracy is low, and cannon still explode on a roll of 11+. Think of these weapons as the equivalent of cannon firing grapeshot. A smaller version is used like a shotgun.

The type of weapon determines the range and a bonus to the skill.



Weapon	Range	Bonus / Explode	Notes
<b>Cannon or Rocket</b>	12ft	+1 / 6	Damages fortifications etc., destroys 1"x1" stone, 2"x2" wood etc. 1 shot / 4 rounds.
<b>Cannon with small disks</b>	9ft	None / 5	Useful against troops only. 1 shot / 3 rounds
<b>Musket</b>	8ft	+2 / 3	Recoil attacks the firer with "skill" 2. 1 shot / 3 rounds
<b>Shotgun</b>	6ft	None / 3	Recoil attacks the firer with "skill" 1. 1 shot / 2 rounds.
<b>Multi-barrel Musket</b>	6ft	+1 / 4	Makes 3 separate attacks; Recoil attacks the firer with "skill" 3. 1 volley / 4 rounds.
<b>Pistol</b>	3ft	+1 / 2	Recoil attacks the firer with "skill" 1 1 shot / 3 rounds.

# THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME

## ~ CHARACTER RECORD ~

NAME:

QUOTE:

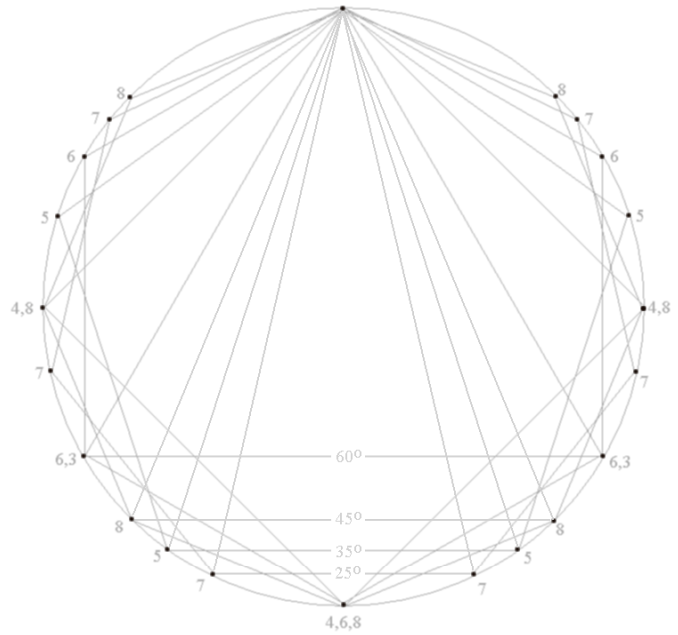
SIDES

MIND

BODY

BONUS  
POINTS

~EQUIPMENT~



~SKILLS~

BASE

VALUE

ARTIST

M

BRAWLING

B

BUSINESS [3]

M

DISGUISE [3]

M

DOCTOR [4]

M

LAW [4]

M

MATHEMATICS [3]

S

MILITARY ARMS

M

RECOGNITION (FEELING)

M

RECOGNITION (VISUAL)

S

SCHOLAR [3]

S

SCIENTIST [3]

M

STEALTH

M

THIEF

M

WEAPONS

B

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

~ ADVANTAGES [SIDES] ~

COST

SYMMETRY [3]:

1

OR PERFECT SYMMETRY [3]:

2

GOOD SIGHT:

1

MILITARY HONOURS [2 ONLY]:

1

WEALTHY [3]:

1

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

~ DISADVANTAGES [SIDES] ~

GAIN

SON OF AN IRREGULAR FIGURE [4]:

1

OR MINOR IRREGULARITY [4]:

2

OR MAJOR IRREGULARITY [4]:

3

POOR SIGHT:

1

INVOLUNTARY MOVEMENTS:

2

SHARP [2 ONLY]:

2

ECCENTRIC:

1

OR INSANE:

2

REVERSED:

1

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES:

# THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME

## ~ CHARACTER RECORD ~

NAME: **Professor Hex**

QUOTE: **"With proper funding we're only five years away from a cure for irregularity!"**

SIDES

**6**

MIND

**5**

BODY

**3**

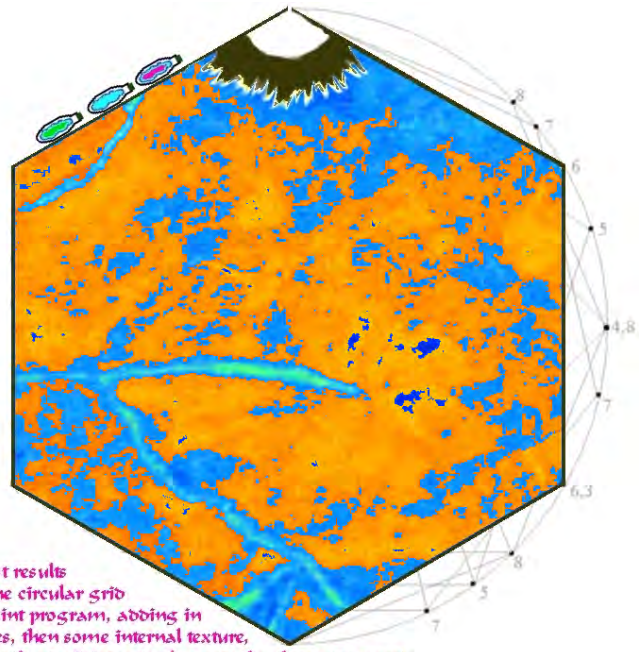
BONUS  
POINTS

~EQUIPMENT~

**Bottles of patent medicine.  
Surgical kit and first aid  
equipment, carried by an  
assistant.**

**Library of tablets on medicine  
and medical law. Laboratory and  
hospital ward for Isosceles  
patients.**

**Several assistants, at least one of  
them evil.**



~SKILLS~

BASE

VALUE

ARTIST

M

BRAWLING

B

BUSINESS [3]

M

DISGUISE [3]

M

DOCTOR [4]

M

**7**

LAW [4]

M

**6**

MATHEMATICS [3]

S

MILITARY ARMS

M

RECOGNITION (FEELING)

M

**6**

RECOGNITION (VISUAL)

S

**7**

SCHOLAR [3]

S

**7**

SCIENTIST [3]

M

**6**

STEALTH

M

THIEF

M

WEAPONS

B

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

~ ADVANTAGES [SIDES] ~

COST

SYMMETRY [3]:

1

OR PERFECT SYMMETRY [3]:

2

GOOD SIGHT:

1

MILITARY HONOURS [2 ONLY]:

1

WEALTHY [3]:

1

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

~ DISADVANTAGES [SIDES] ~

GAIN

SON OF AN IRREGULAR FIGURE [4]:

1

OR MINOR IRREGULARITY [4]:

2

OR MAJOR IRREGULARITY [4]:

3

POOR SIGHT:

1

INVOLUNTARY MOVEMENTS:

2

SHARP [2 ONLY]:

2

ECCENTRIC:

1

OR INSANE:

2

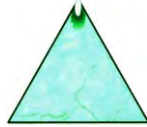
REVERSED:

1

OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES: **Professor Hex is a member of the nobility, and a surgeon who specialises in treating Irregularity. He runs a free clinic for Isosceles, which his peers regard as eccentric altruism; he feels that by helping them towards Regularity he will ultimately benefit all Flatlanders. He charges Higher Figures steep fees for his services to pay for the clinic. He insists on treating Isosceles who fall outside the normal legal limits of narrowness and regularity, and has appeared in court to secure their release when they would otherwise be executed. He has a dark secret – years ago his botched surgery on an injured child turned an innocent pentagon to a life of crime. Today that child is Scarside Al Gebra, the notorious gangster. Hex hopes that Gebra doesn't remember him.**

## ADVENTURE: THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE



**T**HIS is an introductory adventure which should be playable in an hour or two. It pits the adventurers against a despicable but easily-solved crime, and a melodramatic villain in the best Victorian traditions.

The adventurers are guests or servants of Sir Septimus Septagon, Bart., who owns a country estate a few hundred yards (equivalent to several miles) from the nearest village. Another guest is his distant cousin, Count Otto Von Octagon of Polygonia, ambassador of a neighbouring state. Most of the surrounding farms belong to Squire Hexagon, landlord of the village.

Yesterday travelling representatives of the Sanitary and Social Board found that an Isosceles family in the village had finally produced a True Equilateral Triangle child. Naturally there was great rejoicing throughout the area, and the child was ceremonially taken from his parents for the long journey to the nearest town, where he would be adopted into a Regular family. He was escorted by a Priest, several Squares and Pentagons, and four Isosceles guards.

Soon after they left the village the travellers were attacked by bandits, a group of a dozen or more Isosceles led by a dimly-seen figure who appeared to be at least a Pentagon. The survivors can't agree on his size or angles and suspect that he was that stock evil stereotype, an Irregular Figure. The bandits drove off the escort, killed three Squares and a Pentagon, and kidnapped the child. It's the latest of several recent thefts in the area; in previous robberies money and other valuables were stolen, mostly from peasants.

While the fate of one small child might seem unimportant by the harsh standards of Flatland, especially when Squares and a Pentagon have already been killed, the principle of graduation from Isosceles to Equilateral is fundamental to social stability. Isosceles far outnumber the other forms, and only accept their lowly status because they know that their children may eventually become Regular. Anything that disrupts this process is likely to lead to riots. Word is spreading, and there is unrest amongst the local Isosceles.

When the news reaches Sir Septimus he quickly realises the seriousness of the situation; after all, he's probably brighter than most of his guests. He offers a reward of 50 gold pieces for the arrest of the felons and the safe return of the child. Count Otto is also alert to the possibilities, and orders his footmen to guard his room. If the adventurers go to the village or any

neighbouring farm during the morning, they'll find Squire Hexagon and his Beadles (Isosceles policemen, little more than thugs), searching for the criminals and child. Any Isosceles or Equilateral PCs are interrogated. The search leaves homes wrecked and finds nothing; afterwards many small valuables are missing. After lunch Squire Hexagon and his lackeys visit Sir Septimus' estate, and make a cursory search of the mansion's grounds and outbuildings; again, nothing is found and minor valuables and food are later missed.

The village consists of a couple of dozen old-fashioned square houses, a church run by Father O'Dodecadon which currently houses the survivors of the Sanitary Board party, a small shop, and an inn. The residents are an assortment of Isosceles and Equilateral peasants, farmers, and tradesmen, and their wives and children. The inn, the Covered Rectangle, is a low dive much frequented by the sharper sort of Isosceles, and has a reputation for drunken violence. In the evening the Beadles often drink there.

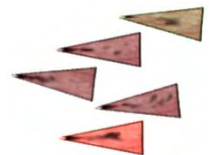
The child's father, Jebediah Triple, owns the village shop; he is very close to Equilateral, and until the kidnapping gave himself airs above his station. Afterwards he is in despair, fearing that he will never father another equilateral.

In fact the villain is Squire Hexagon, who is heavily in debt and plans to hold the child to ransom. He is Regular, but has perfected a trick of disguising his voice and gluing two long false sides to his body, giving the appearance of a stretched kite-like shape. The child is imprisoned in the cellar of his house. The Beadles are his accomplices, and the weak link in the plan; they have more money than they should, and when drunk make cryptic remarks about their prospects.

Needless to say more of Hexagon's thugs guard the house, and there are also some guard "dogs" loose in the yard, trained to attack strangers; there should be one more "dog" than the number of adventurers.

**Guard "Dog":** SIDES [2], BODY [6], MIND [-]  
Brawling [7]

Notes: Animals with Isosceles body plan. They look a lot like Isosceles children, but bark loudly and attack in packs. They're dangerous (because they are sharp and difficult to see as they attack) but stupid – any reasonable tactic, such as tricking them into running into a wall, should work.



Hexagon plans to "find" a ransom note the following day; it will demand 250 gold and say that the child will be tortured until he is no longer Regular if the ransom

isn't paid. The money is to be left behind a milestone on the road to the city. Naturally Hexagon immediately puts a few token coins towards the ransom, expecting Septagon, the Church, and the boy's father to pay the rest, and offers to deliver it to the woods. In fact he'll simply hide the money and return. Once he has it he'll kill the boy and feed him to the "dogs".

Solving this crime shouldn't be unusually difficult, but several red herrings can delay things. Count Otto's nation might be suspected of stirring up this trouble to weaken public support for the government; relations are cool at the moment, though still superficially friendly. The Beadles might pretend to believe that one of the adventurers is guilty. Troops might arrive to deal with the bandits, and muddy the trail. The Isosceles might finally revolt. And so on. Whatever happens, the adventurers should arrive in the nick of time to save the child unless they blow things completely, and earn the thanks of his father and the Church and State – whether they want to attract the attention of the Church and State may be another matter, of course...

**Squire Hexagon:** SIDES [6], MIND [5], BODY [3]  
Brawling [4], Disguise [7], Recognition (v) [8],  
Weapons [5]

*Equipment:* Stout cudgel,  
money, two trained "dogs"  
(as above) accompany him at  
all times.

*Quote:* "By all that's regular,  
I'll rend you line from  
angle!"

*Notes:* Hexagon is a rakehell who inherited his family's estate and wealth, and squandered most of the latter on gambling and a series of unwise investments. He lives life to the full with frequent drinking bouts, wild parties and other excesses. Ham things up as much as possible; if Hexagon wasn't two-dimensional he'd twirl his moustache, as it is he plays the "drunken village squire" to the hilt, with many a "damn me" and "by thunder" and threats to disembowel anyone harming "The tiniest fraction of that innocent child".

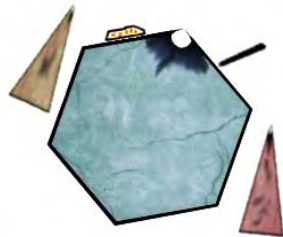
**Beadles:** SIDES [2], MIND [1], BODY [7]  
Brawling [9], Thief [2], Weapons [3]

*Disadvantage:* Sharp

*Equipment:* Cudgel,  
stolen knick-knacks.

*Quote:* "Squire Hexagon  
wants a word with yer."

*Notes:* Violent isosceles  
petty thugs with no redeeming qualities.



## REWARDS AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

**A**FTER each adventure you can give each character some points to spend on additional skills, or on improving existing skills. These points might reward good role-playing, remembering the limitations of two-dimensional characters, achieving the goals of the adventure, making the referee laugh, or whatever else seems to be worth rewarding. Since Flatland is not an egalitarian society, the maximum number of points to be given to each character is their SIDES x 2. Points should only be awarded if the character (or player) did something to earn them; a player who contributes nothing to the game and lets others do all the work and take the risks should not be rewarded.

To improve a skill by one point, spend the points value of the skill. E.g., if a character has Brawling [5], spend 5 points to raise it to Brawling [6]. Spend another 6 points to raise it to Brawling [7].

To add a new skill, spend the minimum points value of the skill. E.g., if a MIND [4] character wants to add Mathematics, the initial value is 5 (MIND + 1), so it costs 5 points. The player must explain how the new skill has been acquired.

Optionally skills may be taken at lower values for fewer points. No skill may be improved past 10.

Another use for points is to buy elective surgery (it usually costs a lot of money too, unless a free clinic is available, but without spending points failure is certain).

**Isosceles** characters may spend 10 or more points on the services of a physician, who will attempt to compress their sides to Equilateral. The referee should secretly determine the skill of the physician (Roll 1D6+1), and the success or failure of the operation; the initial Difficulty is 10, reduced by 1 for every 2 points spent. If the operation fails the patient loses the points and gains nothing; on 11-12 the patient dies. If successful, the patient becomes Equilateral, with consequent changes to BODY, MIND, Brawling ability, etc. The process takes 6 months for normal Isosceles, a year for those with the Sharp disadvantage.

**Regular triangles** and **higher figures** may similarly attempt to double their number of sides surgically; at least 5 x SIDES points must be spent, with Difficulty reduced by 1 for every additional SIDES points spent.

*Eg, A. Square wants to become an Octagon; it will cost 20 points at Difficulty 10, 24 points at Difficulty 9, etc.*

For both operations failure kills the patient, full recovery from a successful operation takes a year.



## ADVENTURE: WHERE ANGLES DARE

**T**HIS is a military adventure for a party of experienced Isosceles soldiers and their Regular or Square officers. You are strongly advised to read the entire adventure before running it.

### INTRODUCTION

**F**LATLAND is divided into a number of nations, one of the largest and oldest being The State, a political and religious dictatorship and the home of A Square. The other nations aren't much different in their callous disregard for the lives of the lower classes, although some dress up their governments as holy empires, monarchies, republics, etc.

The adventurers should all be experienced Isosceles soldiers, or their Regular or Square officers, in a remote province on the Western border of The State; some sample characters are provided at the end of the adventure, alternatively generate them using the rules above, but add an extra 4 points for skills for Isosceles, 2 for Regulars, 1 for Squares.

Optionally, the adventurers can be civilians attached to the regiment; a square as doctor or quartermaster, for example, an octagon as Chaplain. Incidentally, Regular and higher figures serving with the military are treated with suspicion by their peers and superiors.

All military forces resemble those of the early Napoleonic period; a rabble in arms led by a few officers who have the power of life or death over their men. "Cavalry" are especially sharp Isosceles; other units carry firearms, but they are extremely dangerous. The typical soldier is thus primarily a brawler. There is no equivalent of a navy; rainwater always flows South, evaporating as it flows, so there are few standing bodies of water. Accordingly the army has adopted many traditional naval customs such as rum, unnatural practices and the lash.

### BRIEFING

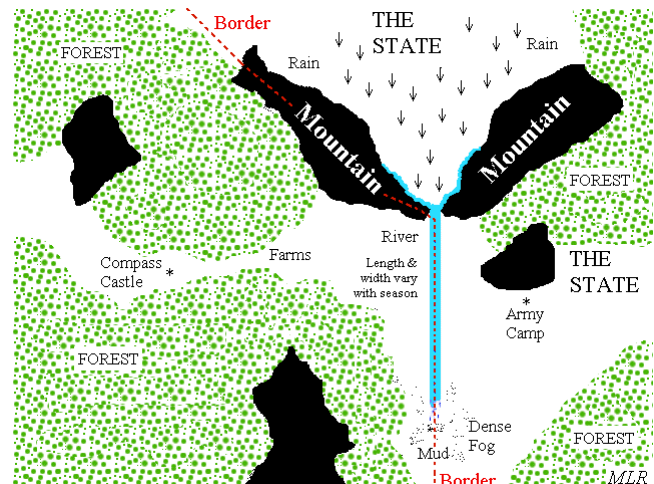
**T**HE adventurers are summoned to the barracks office by Colonel Quadratic, their commanding officer, who briefs them on the current military situation.

For weeks there has been unrest in the neighbouring state of Polygonia; an unknown rabble-rouser has been

stirring the Isosceles. A few days ago a peasant revolt deposed the ruler, Euclid 416 (known by his number of sides; he's actually the seventeenth in his line of succession), who has a reputation for eccentricity. He's generally known as Mad King Euclid, and there are rumours that he has a slight irregularity; certainly portraits never show his left side. His current whereabouts, and those of several other members of the court, are generally unknown. Minor nobles have been imprisoned or executed.

Naturally the General Assembly of The State views these events with great alarm. It feels that the revolt must somehow be suppressed before it spreads. The best way to do this would be to return King Euclid to his throne; "He may not be entirely - ahem - sound, but he has the right ideas about the lower classes. Usually involving slow dismemberment by all accounts..."

Spies have learned that King Euclid and his family are being held in Compass Castle, built a few years ago to protect the border; it's a long way from the capital of Polygonia, but in easy striking range from The State. Nobody knows much about the castle, since the Polygonians executed spies who went anywhere near the place; it is alleged to have a sharp point for every degree of the compass, but such lethal fortifications would be as dangerous to its defenders as to any enemy. In reality it's probably more like a sharpened pentacle, or something of the sort; dangerous to besiege, but a small group of soldiers should be able to get through the defences relatively easily, and make a quick raid to rescue the King.



"That's all there is to it, really" says the Colonel. "Set off as quick as you can, get in, grab His Regularity, and get back over the border. Then we'll invade with King Euclid at the head of our army. I wish I could be

with you, but it's no mission for gunnery, and I'd just slow down fast young lads like you. Ah, if I were just a few years younger..." He sobs audibly, and sips his port. He might even offer some to any officers that happen to be present, if they can somehow suggest it subtly.

The adventurers don't really have any choice; they're in the army, and as the old saying goes, if they can't take a joke they shouldn't have joined.

Colonel Quadratic insists that they take at least ten other ranks (generic Isosceles troopers), and will allow them a maximum of ten for each officer and NCO in the party. Civilians accompanying the expedition don't count as officers. They can't take artillery, the route is difficult and speed is essential.

Players can be shown the map on the previous page, but should be made to understand that there can be no such thing in Flatland; the first line drawn would block all of the others from view. Instead they have been given a list of bearings and distances to various prominent landmarks. Encourage them to develop plans for getting in and out of Polygonia, and warn them of the main advantages and snags of each route, without getting too specific. For example, someone might say that there might be wild animals in the woods, but won't go into details about the bandits, "wolf" packs or "bears". See later sections for details.

## REFeree's INFORMATION

**T**HE revolution isn't all it seems; it was engineered by Mad King Euclid himself, as a means of ridding himself of most of the Polygonian aristocracy - he is a megalomaniac and hates his relatives, and the other aristocrats have been critical of many of his activities.

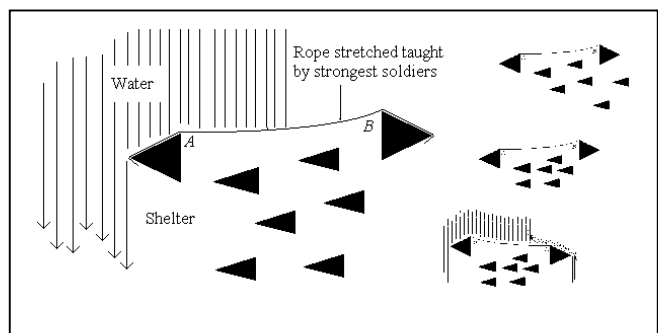
The rabble-rousers who started the revolution were *agents provocateurs*, members of his secret police. Although he is superficially a prisoner, in reality the "rebels" will eventually announce that he has been "rehabilitated" and is now the best possible person to lead the way to "the perfect egalitarian society", which will bear an uncanny resemblance to a hereditary dictatorship.

Euclid does plan to give a small share of the estates of the aristocracy to the peasants; he calculates that if he hands out 5-10% as a sweetener most of it will be quickly spent, with the money going back to companies which are not affected by the revolution - by an odd coincidence he owns most of them. The rest can easily be clawed back by raising taxes slightly over the next few years. He intends to spend the rest on more fortresses, grandiose palaces, the secret police, and other essential public works.

## ON THE ROAD

**C**OMPASS CASTLE is four day's march from the camp, by the shortest possible route, but in practice it is likely to take more like five or six days; the area is forested and mountainous, and rain falling from the North onto the mountains is funnelled into a river which marks the border and blocks the direct route.

In Flatland rivers always flow south, slowly evaporating as they flow. Their length depends on the season. This one is several yards wide, an apparently impassable barrier now stretching far south of the direct route. In fact crossing it is simple, if the adventurers can work out how. The diagram below shows the method taught in military colleges. It will succeed, unless the adventurers do something stupid, but the technique is rarely used and even the brightest officer must roll MIND versus Difficulty 6 to think of it. If it fails everyone in the water will be swept South at great speed; if a roll of BODY versus Difficulty 4 is made the



### Fording a River

Any obstruction will divert a river; the point of an Isosceles, a gun, or a stone large enough that it won't be swept away by the river. Since there is no way for the water to flow over or under it, the area south of it will immediately become sheltered and dry. To cross the river, erect such a barrier and set out towards mid-stream.

The normal method is to stretch a rope taut between the strongest soldiers and cross under its shelter. Care must be taken to avoid blocking the entire river at once, and to minimise the amount of water blocked by the rope; if it is too long, it may snap or the soldiers may be unable to hold it.

In the example illustrated soldier A moves into the river, with the rope angled so that the water runs down it and in front of him. The other soldiers huddle underneath the rope, and may help to support it. When all are under it soldier B moves South until water is running along the rope and cascading down ahead and behind them, to minimise the load on the rope. After this the party advances across the river. At the far bank soldier A anchors the rope and soldier B moves South again until the water is flowing back into the river and the way ahead is clear, then forward and south until he and the soldiers under the rope have reached dry land.



character emerges some way down stream, coughing and spluttering. If the roll fails the character drowns.

If the party is unusually large (eg, there are 20 or more NPCs) or noisy some bandits should attack as they finish crossing the river. Use a large band with the same statistics as the “beadles” in the introductory adventure. Any attack should primarily have nuisance value, but try to kill a few NPC Isosceles troopers. Any attempt to follow the bandits back to their lair or wipe them out will add another day or two to the journey. It should also fail, since the bandits will vanish back into the mist and forest. Optionally they will also try to sucker the expedition into an ambush at a point where they are trapped by rocks or trees. This time the bandits will be reinforced by a larger party with firearms, and will try to kill as many of the invaders as possible.

The alternative is to go South until most of the river has evaporated as thick fog, leaving a residue of silt and mud behind it. “Wading” through this isn't difficult, but it's unpleasant and the detour adds a day to the journey. Use the bandits to attack the adventurers here if they seem to be getting careless, are being over-cautious and slow, or there are 20 or more NPCs in the party.

Once past the river, the adventurers have a choice of travelling through the forests, which reduces the chance that they will be seen but slows them and adds a good chance of getting lost, or going across a clear “plain” towards the castle. If they have diverted south to cross below the river, reaching the “plain” will add a few more hours to the journey.

The “plain” largely consists of peasant farms, occupied by ragged Isosceles and their families, who will flee at the first sign of trouble. Various domesticated animals and crops will be left behind, and will probably be stolen by the NPC troopers. Before long the expedition will be slowed for an impromptu butchering session. The soldiers will also try to loot, and will find alcohol in some of the farms. If the officers aren't careful some will soon be too drunk to move. A few women will be left behind; they are too dangerous to move in a hurry. If one is harmed in any way she should run amok and kill a few more troopers, including any adventurers stupid enough to stand in her way. Remember that Flatland women are extraordinarily dangerous; virtually invisible, unless they choose to cry and undulate, and lethally sharp. Think of them as living harpoons and you won't go far wrong.

If any peasants are captured they'll deny any knowledge of a revolution; since they are the lowest form of Isosceles and a long way from the capital their ignorance is possibly understandable. In fact some will be lying; there are a few revolutionaries in the area, alert

for any sign of royalist activities. They will try to escape and beat the adventurers to Compass Castle. Since they are very stupid it shouldn't be difficult for the more astute adventurers to realise that they are lying.

The peasants don't really know much; they've been told that all Isosceles will be given equal rights, and that the wealth of the aristocracy will be distributed to the poor. They haven't actually seen much of this; rebels came through the area last week, and did kill a couple of unpopular landlords, but they also burned cottages and did a fair amount of looting. But then doesn't everyone? For now most of the peasants are content to wait, a few are helping the revolution.

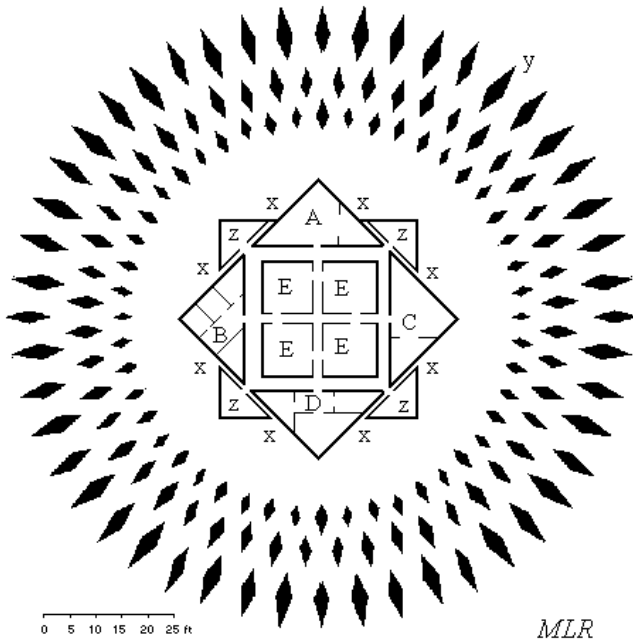
If the adventurers head into the forest, they will soon be unable to see more than a few inches in any direction. Flatland trees can't spread upwards, so have to spread outwards. All trees have fractal shapes; energy for photosynthesis comes from the sourceless light that illuminates the world, so they maximise their perimeter to collect air and water, not light.



Their surface is soft to the touch, since the outer layers are microscopically thin filaments. The local species aren't dangerous; some species found in other parts of Flatland do have spines and other natural defences such as poisonous hairs. Nevertheless, they are a serious obstruction to visibility, and the endless undulations of their outer layers confuse the Flatland eye.

The forests are very dense, and getting through them is a long slow slog, with occasional detours to avoid areas where the trees are simply too closely packed to pass. The journey should be enlivened by at least one encounter with a pack of 3D6+6 “wolves” (as the “dogs” in the first adventure), and by meetings with occasional foresters (busy carving trees into manageable chunks) who should be played as the peasants above. If you haven't already used the bandits, this is as good a place as any for an ambush...

Eventually the adventurers should realise that they are approaching Compass Castle, although they won't actually be able to see anything because of the fog. The farmland ends abruptly, as do the trees, and there is an eerie silence, broken eventually by the shriek of some animal in pain. If the adventurers move towards the noise, they'll find a “sheep” impaled at the end of a sharp concrete lozenge, painted grey and almost invisible in the mist, one of the 144 that form the outer defences of Compass Castle.



### Compass Castle

- (A) Officers Mess ~ (B) Guard Room and Cells  
(C) Kitchen and Canteen ~ (D) Armoury and Stores ~ (E) Barracks  
(x) Cannon ~ (y) Fortifications ~ (z) Munitions stores

## COMPASS CASTLE

**T**HE castle is one of King Euclid's pet projects, the last word in modern design. It's a huge military folly, a fortification nearly 40 feet wide (equivalent to several hundred feet in human terms), surrounded by three concentric rings of 48 concrete lozenges, arranged to make any sort of charge almost impossible. It's in the middle of the best invasion route towards the Polygonian capital – in war it would be a base for cavalry operations against invaders, and an invader would be forced to waste time and troops neutralizing it.

Inside the rings is a massive fort with eight cannon and a garrison of 256 Isosceles (lower ranks and NCOs), eleven Regular Triangles (Lieutenants and Captains), and five Squares (3 Captains, 1 Lt. Colonel, 1 Colonel). The building has the plan of two squares, superimposed at 90 degrees to give eight triangular facets; four (NE, NW, SE, SW) contain munitions "bunkers", four larger internal triangles contain the Officer's mess (N), guard room and cells (W), kitchen and mess hall (E), and armoury and store rooms (S). Inside them is a square of four large rooms, the barracks. As shown on the plans, the only access to the building is via passages between the munitions bunkers and other buildings. Heavy steel doors block all openings

if an alarm is sounded; doors could not be shown at this scale. The guns are always manned, and at hourly intervals the perimeter is patrolled by four Isosceles with "dogs" (statistics as in the introductory adventure).

King Euclid 416 occupies the largest of the cells, guarded by three secret policemen posing as leaders of the revolution. They and the senior officers are the only Polygonians aware of the real situation; the other guards, including the junior officers and NCOs, think that Euclid is a prisoner and are looking forward to his execution. The secret police are making careful note of anyone who seems excessively keen on killing him; they will naturally be purged or otherwise disposed of at the earliest opportunity.

There is no easy way to get in; that's what the adventurers are there for. The best answer might be to get one or two Isosceles into the castle, possibly disguised as the perimeter guards, to scout out the layout and locate King Euclid. Remember that Flatlanders can't draw maps; any line, however thin, blocks their sight completely. They can only describe the building in terms of angles (which all Flatlanders naturally measure extremely well) and distances. Any NPCs assigned to this job will somehow give the game away, e.g. by talking in a State accent, alerting the garrison. Once the layout is known, it should be possible to force an entry, possibly by taking over one of the guns and blowing a gap in the wall, or by detonating one of the munitions bunkers. The two northern guns are the most vulnerable to attack; to keep rain out there is no opening to the building behind them, so reinforcements will take longer to arrive if there is trouble.

Whatever happens, a good proportion of the defending force should survive, and many of the soldiers commanded by the adventurers should be killed, but the adventurers should be able to escape with King Euclid unless things go very wrong. Make it clear that if the adventurers stay to fight they will be killed. King Euclid's "jailers" and the castle's senior officers should fight to the death; it is important that they are all killed or wounded. Afterwards the defenders are disorganised, giving the adventurers a little time to retreat and start back towards the border.

King Euclid goes with his "rescuers"; he doesn't want to be hurt, and he should be well outnumbered once the party has left the castle - if not, it's time for the garrison to wipe out the last adventurers before lynching him. Euclid plays the captive King to the hilt, and pretends stupidity to keep the adventurers from discovering his schemes; he knows that he will be killed if the guards catch up with him without their officers.

By sheer coincidence a border patrol arrives at the castle an hour after the adventurers “rescue” Euclid; they've been out hunting bandits. There are 16 sharp Isosceles troops with a lieutenant and NCO. They are loyal to the “revolution” and after finding out what has happened will set off in pursuit. They have four tracker “dogs” with them, trained to follow any trail, and Euclid's scent is all over his cell.

## THE GETAWAY

**W**ITH King Euclid (hopefully) rescued the adventurers should plan to beat a hasty retreat; if they don't, they are almost certainly going to be killed, and this should be emphasised if they seem to be hesitating. King Euclid will make it very clear, if nobody else seems to have grasped the concept. There aren't nearly enough soldiers in the rescue party to take over the castle, and there isn't really anywhere else to go this side of the border.

There are four main routes back to The State:

**Due East across the plain and ford the river:** Fast, but pursuers will be able to follow relatively easily. Also, river crossings are risky. If the adventurers didn't approach the castle this way they will encounter the peasant farms described above on the way out, and the officers may have to watch out for looting, drunkenness, and other problems.

Unless the adventurers stop en route, or prepare an ambush, the pursuing patrol will catch up with the adventurers as they are starting to ford the river. If there is a fight run it fairly, but don't help the adventurers; they should have expected pursuit.

If they try to cross without a fight, a fluke shot takes out one of the Isosceles working the rope, and everyone is swept downriver. King Euclid doesn't drown (he's too big a nuisance to waste), everyone else must take their chances. Survivors wash up on the State side of the river, downstream from their pursuers. The Polygonians can't immediately follow since they don't have a rope. Instead they head downstream towards the mud “flats” and cross the river there.

**East across the plains then South to cross the mud flats:** Avoids the river crossing, but is slower and there is still a risk of pursuit. There may still be problems with peasants, looting, etc. Unless the adventurers stop or prepare an ambush, the pursuing patrol catches up with them as they are preparing to cross the mud “flats”. King Euclid will not be happy about this crossing, and will insist that the soldiers clear a route for him so that

he doesn't get muddy. The pursuers arrive with Euclid still arguing on the West side of the mud flat. If the adventurers don't stop to fight, the patrol follows them into The State, and pursuit continues until one side or another is wiped out.

**East through the woods, across the mud below the river:** This is slower than the direct Easterly route, but the trees should obstruct pursuit. Unfortunately, as the adventurers may already know, there are dangerous animals and bandits in the wood. If they don't know, they should find out if they take this route...

Run the wolf encounter described above, and possibly another brush with the bandits. If they have been through the woods before let them alone for a while then hit them with one of the larger predators of the area; a “bear”.

**Bear:** SIDES [16 (special)], BODY [9], MIND [1]  
Brawling [10]

Notes: An animal with a circular body edged with triangular spikes; to non-Flatlander eyes it resembles a spur or rotary saw blade. It is larger than the average Flatlander, and almost completely fearless. It will only retreat if it is wounded.



Once past these hazards the run through the woods is almost pleasant; if the adventurers stop to rest the pursuing troops will catch up, but if they don't slow down the adventurers shouldn't even realise that they are pursued until they are nearly at the river, when they hear a disturbance in the forest behind them. This gives them a few rounds to set up an ambush before the soldiers emerge. Resolve things as above.

**Due North through denser forest into The State, then around the mountains back to base:** Possibly the best route for throwing off pursuit, but the forest is rumoured to be dangerous. Nobody in the State knows much about it. If questioned, King Euclid confirms that there are “wolves”, “bears”, and “boar” in the woods, all dangerous but excellent hunting.

Run several encounters with “wolves”, and one with a “bear” as above. Bandits may also make an appearance. The Polygonians don't catch up with the adventurers until they have crossed the border and are crossing the desolate rain-swept plain North of the mountains. Then resolve things as above.

However the adventurers leave Polygonia, they will be pursued until they are killed, or most or all of the enemy patrol is wiped out. Nobody will help them until they reach their camp.

## CONCLUSIONS

**I**F THE adventurers get King Euclid across the border and back to their base he'll form a "court in exile". More secret police will "escape" to join his "cause", and he'll use delaying tactics to put off the invasion and wage a propaganda war against the "rebels".

After a few weeks there will be a "spontaneous mass uprising", a few Isosceles scapegoats will be killed, and Euclid will return in triumph. He will hold a grudge against the adventurers for wrecking his original simple scheme, and they should beware falling into his hands. He should be used as a recurring source of problems, but will always work through agents. Getting proof of Polygonian involvement won't be easy. Nevertheless this is a success for the adventurers and should be rewarded.

Amoral players may think of giving (or selling) King Euclid to the Polygonians, as a bribe to let them escape or for cold cash. If this occurs they must fabricate a story, and make sure that there is nobody left to dispute it. They will probably claim that Euclid was killed or recaptured in battle. The Polygonians take Euclid off, talking cheerfully about impaling him. Unfortunately he somehow escapes, and turns up to denounce them a few days later... Fast talking adventurers may be able to explain this away as a misunderstanding, but their superiors will always have reservations, and Euclid will seek revenge via his agents as above.

If Euclid is actually killed his son (Euclid 459) inherits. He has the faults of his father, but lacks his organisational genius. He is already in The State, on a "good will tour", when the "revolution" begins; his father wanted him out of the way in case things went wrong. He will alienate so many royalists that the counter-revolution fails, leaving Polygonia as a real egalitarian state. He will then form a government in exile, while The State arms to fight the Polygonian menace. It's time for a long bloody war. Euclid 459 and his loyalists should add extra problems for the adventurers; The State will want to help with any of their plots that might restore normal government to Polygonia, and the adventurers will somehow always be the first choice for missions behind the enemy lines, regardless of their success or failure. Unfortunately Euclid's plans tend to be wildly optimistic, and his allies extremely unreliable; so-called freedom fighters will turn out to be bandits or in the pay of the rebels, resistance cells have been infiltrated by the egalitarians, etc.

The adventure beginning on page 16 assumes that Euclid achieves his goals and returns to Polygonia. Scenarios for Flatwar, the wargame on page 29, take this adventure as their starting-point.

## CHARACTERS

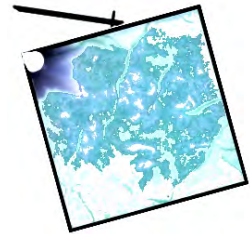
**Colonel Quadratic:** SIDES [4], MIND [3], BODY [4] Brawling [4], Business [4], Law (military) [5], Mathematics [4], Military Arms [5], Recognition (v) [4], Weapons [5]

*Disadvantage:* Eccentric (believes gunnery is the highest form of military art). Slightly deaf.

*Equipment:* A regiment and its equipment and supplies. Sword.

*Quote:* "...and then the disc from me gun smashed right through their line of battle, only inches from their general himself..."

*Notes:* Traditionally all gunners are mad. In Flatland, where artillery is almost as dangerous to the user as the target, they are at least eccentric. Now assigned to an infantry regiment, Quadratic is an efficient administrator, but has very little idea of the needs of his men - unless they want bigger guns...



**Typical soldiers:** SIDES [2], MIND [1], BODY [7] Brawling [9], Military Arms [2], Stealth [2], Thief [2], Weapons [2]

*Disadvantage:* Sharp

*Equipment:* Musket, bayonet, rations, etc.

*Quote:* "Duh... Sergeant, I don't understand..."

*Notes:* Armed rabble. As thick, metaphorically speaking, as a whole sawmill of short planks. These statistics should be used for all NPC soldiers (including Polygonians) below the rank of Sergeant, other than cavalry (thin, dumb, no weapons).



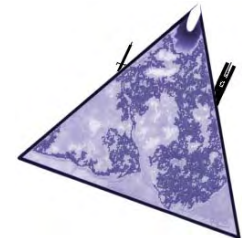
**Secret Police:** SIDES [3], MIND [2], BODY [5] Brawling [8], Military Arms [5], Recognition (f) [5], Recognition (v) [4], Stealth [4], Weapons [4]

*Equipment:* Pistol, Dagger.

*Quote:* "It's essential to the revolution that the King must be kept alive to answer for his crimes. By the way, Comrade, what is your name? Your revolutionary zeal must be... rewarded."

*Notes:* Formidable opponents.

They claim to be Isosceles leaders of the revolution, and pretend not to be completely regular, but they are actually working for the King, and disguise their true regularity. Think of them as Gestapo officers.





## THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME

**King Euclid 416:** SIDES [416], MIND [7], BODY [2]  
Brawling [3], Business [9], Disguise [10], Recognition (v) [9], Stealth [8], Weapons [5]

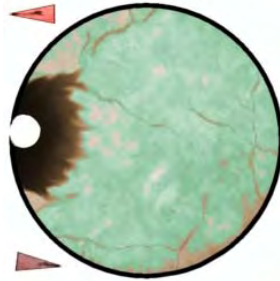
*Advantages:* Rich, Circle

*Disadvantages:* Insane (homicidal megalomaniac), Minor irregularity (one side is slightly shorter than it should be).

*Equipment:* none

*Quote:* "Ve are not Irregular. Ve perhaps have a small hunting injury, but it is not chentlemanly to mention such things."

*Notes:* Euclid is immensely fat, slow, and always accompanied by two "lap dogs" (BODY [1] versions of the "dogs" and "wolves" described above), which yap incessantly and will nip at anyone he dislikes without causing real damage. He is extraordinarily intelligent, compared to everyone around him, but pretends stupidity to lull his captors into a false sense of security. He claims that his irregularity (which is almost invisible but can just be seen in the right light) was the result of a hunting accident, but hates it to be mentioned and will do his best to arrange the death of anyone who does so, if he can get away with it. He also hates to be referred to as "Mad King Euclid." The high Circles of the State, with thousands of sides, view him with disdain.



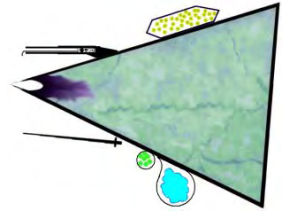
**Lieutenant Sharp:** SIDES [2], MIND [2], BODY [6]  
Brawling [8], Military Arms [5], Stealth [3], Thief [3], Weapons [5]

*Advantages:* Good sight, Military honours.

*Equipment:* Sword, musket, bayonet, loot

*Quote:* "Form up by the ranks and fill your weapons... main charge.. tinder.. shot.. more powder... and fuse. Now wait until you can see the gleam of their eyes..."

*Notes:* Sharp is an Isosceles and career soldier; his whole life is dedicated to the army and whatever loot he can get out of it, his hobby between campaigns is womanising.



**Sergeant S'Harper:** SIDES [2], MIND [1], BODY [7]  
Brawling [9], Military Arms [3], Stealth [3], Thief [2], Weapons [4]

*Disadvantage:* Sharp.

*Equipment:* Spiked club, triple-barrelled musket, whiskey.

*Quote:* "Chaaaarrgggge!"

*Notes:* S'Harper is a career soldier; he's too stupid to do much else. He is totally fearless and loyal to Sharp, but despises most other officers. He drinks to excess. The "S" in his name is silent.



## SAMPLE ADVENTURERS

**Captain Trinity:** SIDES [3], MIND [3], BODY [5]  
Artist (camouflage) [5], Brawling [7], Doctor [4], Military Arms [4], Recognition (f) [5]

*Disadvantage:* Poor sight

*Equipment:* Sword, pistol

*Quote:* "Well, who are ye' and what do ye' want?"

*Notes:* Trinity is a reasonably good officer, and has even learned a little medicine to tend to the wounds of his men; wounds that he sometimes inflicts in the heat of battle since he is short-sighted and occasionally attacks the wrong target. He is generally liked by the men, who are mostly much more stupid and make similar mistakes in combat.



**Gunga Thin:** SIDES [2], MIND [2], BODY [6]  
Brawling [7], Stealth [5], Thief [5], Weapons [4]

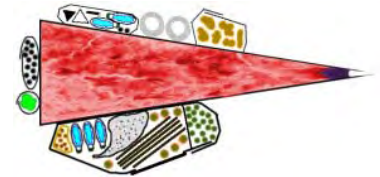
*Advantage:* Good sight

*Disadvantage:* Eccentric (constantly swearing)

*Equipment:* Lock picks, rope, water, food

*Quote:* "Ruby? What \*\*\*\*\* ruby?"

*Notes:* Gunga Thin is an Isosceles native bearer, originally from the Eastern border of The State, attached to Sharp's regiment. He is the servant for all the officers. He is reasonably loyal, but primarily interested in loot and other "perks" of army life. He isn't an official member of the army; his status falls somewhere between servant, mascot, and pack animal. And in a pinch he's probably edible...



## USE WITH FORGOTTEN FUTURES

**T**HIS game can be run using the Forgotten Futures rules by making a few simple changes to characters statistics.

- SOUL should be equal to SIDES/2, maximum 7.
- The Military Arms skill in this game should be replaced by the FF versions of Marksman or Military Arms skill, as appropriate.
- The Weapons skill in this game should be replaced by the FF Melee Weapon or Martial Arts skill, whichever is most appropriate.
- The Effect of Brawling is BODY. Melee weapons are at BODY + 1 or more, depending on their type. If an attack succeeds and its Effect overcomes the victim's body, the victim dies; otherwise the victim is Injured, as above, and cannot fight.

Unless you are planning a VERY weird adventure, it is probably not practical to allow Flatlanders to interact with the three-dimensional world. Flatland should be an entirely separate universe. However, two of the Forgotten Futures releases suggest ways for characters to enter the Flatland universe, or vice versa:

*FF V* included a means of psychic dimensional travel, the Psychic Idealiser, which would allow adventurers from any setting to enter this universe. If this occurs they should enter the minds of Flatlanders with the same MIND or SOUL (SIDES /2) - whichever is higher. Flatland is such an alien world that most adventurers will have great difficulty functioning at all; none of their skills will work properly, and the lack of a third dimension is difficult to comprehend. There would also be considerable difficulty building another Idealiser, since a two-dimensional world makes electrical circuits work very differently to any normal universe. If another Idealiser is built it's possible that the spirits of Flatlanders could tag along, taking over human bodies at the next stop; needless to say they would have immense problems comprehending the three-dimensional world.

*FF VIII* (based on Enid Nesbit's fantasies) included magic rules and devices and creatures capable of granting wishes or transporting their users to any destination. These rules are now an optional part of the main Forgotten Futures rules. A garbled wish, or the magical equivalent of a transporter malfunction, could easily land characters in Flatland. Naturally their forms would change to conform to the local natural laws, so that the adventurers would be in their own bodies, but

their bodies would be temporarily transformed into triangles, squares, etc.

If you're using these rules MAGIC remains at its original level *for defensive purposes* if a wizard is transported to Flatland, but the physical laws of Flatland are so different that MAGIC and Wizardry are otherwise both are used at -1 until the character has had time to acclimatise.



## USE WITH EARLIER VERSIONS OF THE FLATLAND ROLE-PLAYING GAME

**T**HE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE-PLAYING GAME is a major expansion and rewrite of The Flatland RPG included on the Forgotten Futures CD-ROM. While most of the changes don't impact on the previous rules, some affect game balance and may be important if you plan to reuse old adventures etc.

- On average randomly generated characters have fewer sides.
- Characters can now take two disadvantages, not one – consider this when recycling old characters and NPCs. You may want to add extra skills and flaws.
- Female characters can now have variable BODY and MIND, but SIDES will always be 1; they will always be *treated* as dangerously unstable mental inferiors, regardless of the facts. Their default BODY is 8 when attacking, but only 4 for other purposes, due to inherent brittleness.
- Brawling and Weapons skills can now be combined, but if they are both used at the same time the *lower* of the two skills is used: this was always one of the author's house rules but by an oversight wasn't previously mentioned.
- Firearms are more dangerous – to their users! Guns and rockets are now a little more likely to explode; it's a 1 in 12 chance for guns, a 1 in 6 chance for rockets. It's new technology and still has teething problems. Minimum reloading times have been added for all guns, and details of two new guns have been added.
- The maximum points award for success has been raised to SIDES x2 to speed character advancement.
- Characteristics of some NPCs and sample characters have been changed. Usually this does not affect play.
- The optional advantage "Thick" may be used.

## USE WITH FLATLAND (INFLATED)

**T**HIS section is based on material very kindly provided by T. Craig Drake, author of the KaSE *Edward Abbot Abbot's Flatland (Inflated) RPG* published by Red Anvil Press, and covers conversion between *The Original Flatland Role Playing Game* (OFRPG) and the KaSE system.

Attribute conversion is straightforward:

BODY & MIND		Social	
OFRPG Stat	KaSe Stat	OFRPG SIDES	KaSe Stat
1-2	1	1	1
3-5	2	3-4	2
6-7	3	5-8	3
8+	4	9+	4

**Emotional & Spiritual:** Depending on the style of the campaign, the number of remaining attribute points from Chargen should be applied to the Emotional and Spiritual Stats. If the campaign has no specific campaign style, then this number should be 10. Thus, for example, if a converted OFRPG character ends up having 2 in Body, Mind and Social stat, they should have 4 points to place into their Emotional and Spiritual Stats as they see fit.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** When the advantage listed does not have a corresponding advantage in the KaSE system, assume that in KaSE any advantage listed for OFRPG gives a +1 Attribute bonus under circumstances related to that attribute. For example, Wealthy would give a +1 Social benefit for purposes of paying for things and living in polite society.

**Skills:** Generally speaking, a skill will give a +1 bonus to the appropriate attribute in the appropriate circumstance. The table below should be used as a guideline for which OFRPG skills correspond with which KaSE attribute.

OFRPG Skill	KaSE Attribute
Artist	Emotional
Brawling	Physical
Business	Mental
Disguise	Social
Doctor	Mental
Law	Mental
Mathematics	Mental
Military Arms	Mental or Physical
Recognition (Feeling)	Physical
Recognition (Visual)	Mental
Scholar	Mental
Scientist	Mental
Stealth	Physical
Thief	Mental
Weapons	Physical

**A Square's House**  
Abbott's illustration redrawn



A PROSPEROUS FLATLAND HOME

I looked below, and saw with my physical eye all that domestic individuality which I had hitherto merely inferred with the understanding. And how poor and shadowy was the inferred conjecture in comparison with the reality which I now behold! My four Sons calmly asleep in the North-Western rooms, my two orphan Grandsons to the South; the Servants, the Butler, my Daughter, all in their several apartments. Only my affectionate Wife, alarmed by my continued absence, had quitted her room and was roving up and down in the Hall, anxiously awaiting my return. Also the Page, aroused by my cries, had left his room, and under pretext of ascertaining whether I had fallen somewhere in a faint, was prying into the cabinet in my study. All this I could now SEE, not merely infer; and as we came nearer and nearer, I could discern even the contents of my cabinet, and the two chests of gold, and the tablets of which the Sphere had made mention.

Flatland (Chapter 18)



## FURTHER READING ETC.

### **Flatland (Edwin A. Abbot, 1884)**

The book is included in this PDF, but there are many other sources including printed versions published by Dover, by Penguin in their Modern Classics series, by Princeton University Press, and at least ten other companies. An HTML version is included on the Forgotten Futures CD-ROM, others can be found on several web sites, for example:

<http://www.geom.uiuc.edu/~banchoff/Flatland/>

<http://www.alcyone.com/max/lit/flatland/>

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ea/FL.HTM>

### **An Episode of Flatland (Charles Hinton, 1907)**

Set on a disc-shaped world, which has gravity, height and width but no depth and natives living on its rim, this story has more “realistic” science than Flatland and goes further into the mathematics of two-dimensional worlds. Excerpts are available on line. Hinton's Scientific Romances (1886, 1902) explores other mathematical and scientific ideas, and was responsible for the first use of the term Scientific Romance.

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/chh/hinton.html>

### **Sphereland (Dionys Burger, 1965)**

Flatland sequel, in which descendants of A Square discover that Flatland is actually on the surface of a vast sphere. Like Flatland it was written to explore ideas of higher spatial dimensions, adding concepts such as the expansion of the universe.

### **The Incredible Umbrella (Marvin Kaye, 1980)**

Fix-up collection of stories about a magical umbrella used to transport its owner to a succession of fictional worlds including Flatland. Includes a vivid description of the reactions of a human mind suddenly trapped in a Flatland body. Rare. Especially interesting if you plan to run a campaign involving magic or visitors from our world.

### **The Planiverse (A.K. Dewdney, 1984, reprint 2001)**

This book describes a disc-shaped world with intelligent life on the rim. It's by far the best source for the physics, chemistry, and biology of a two-dimensional world, and includes plans for two-dimensional machines including computers, musical instruments, aircraft, and a computer, a two-dimensional periodic table, and anything else that might be found in such a world. It's one of the major inspirations for this RPG.

Dewdney has also edited an annotated edition of Flatland.

### **Flatterland (Iain Stewart, 2002)**

Begins with a look at Flatland from a different perspective – the narrator is a grand-daughter of A Square a hundred years later, the technology of Flatland has moved on and is similar to that of our own world today – then heads off into “spaceland” and beyond in a freewheeling exploration of modern mathematics. Stewart has also edited an annotated edition of Flatland.

**Rudy Rucker** has written several stories dealing with worlds of varying dimensions including the novel **Spaceland**, a homage to Flatland. He is the editor of a collection of Hinton's work. He also edited **Mathenauts: Tales of Mathematical Wonder** (1987), a collection of SF stories on mathematical themes.

## Stage and Screen

### **Flatland (Film, 1965)**

Short animated film directed by Eric Martin and featuring the voice of Dudley Moore. It was well received but costs \$29.95 (\$75 for institutions) for the 11-minute DVD.

<http://www.der.org> - Note: IMDB information on this film confuses it with a 1982 animation by Michelle Emmer.

### **VAS: An Opera in Flatland (Steve Tomasula, 2002)**

Focuses on gender issues raised by the book.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/16508.crl>

### **Flatland (Film, in production)**

Another animated film currently in production. The web site includes a sample clip, which unfortunately suggests that the version of Flatland depicted is flawed; for example, passengers travel on top of flat railway cars which move on top of flat tracks, so there is obviously a third dimension. To be sold as a DVD including educational material and the full text of the book.

<http://www.flatlandthemovie.com/>

## Role Playing Games

### **Fudge Flatland (M.A. Williams, Fudge Factor, 2005)**

A short article on running Flatland adventures using the Fudge RPG rules. Includes a good summary of Flatland's history, sample characters and two short scenario outlines, which can easily be adapted to this game.

<http://www.fudgefactor.org/2005/08/fudge-flatland.html>

### **KaSE Edwin A. Abbot's Flatland (Inflated) (T.Craig Drake, Red Anvil Productions, 2005)**

Another Flatland RPG, sold as a PDF. It is possibly closer to the original book in style.

[http://edge.rpgnow.com/default.php?manufacturers\\_id=637](http://edge.rpgnow.com/default.php?manufacturers_id=637)



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Illustration by Fred T. Jane for *Olga Romanoff* or *The Siren of the Skies* by George Griffith, one of the books accompanying Forgotten Futures

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Welcome to Flatland. Enjoy your stay...



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Whether your adventures take you to the criminal classes of The State and an encounter with legendary gang leader “Scarside” Al Gebra, across the border to Polygonia and an attempt to rescue Mad King Euclid, or into the glamorous world of politics and diplomacy with the multi-faceted polygons of the aristocracy, there’s something here for you. Best of all, by buying this game you’re supporting charity:

**ALL OF THE AUTHOR’S INCOME FROM THIS GAME WILL BE DONATED TO  
MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES (DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS)**

THE ORIGINAL FLATLAND ROLE PLAYING GAME expands material originally published as part of the *Forgotten Futures* CD-ROM, completely rewritten and updated. It includes the novel, complete rules for the setting, three adventures and four adventure outlines, a complete wargame by Matthew Hartley (*Tusk*, *Aeronef*, etc.), full-colour cut out character figures, extensive background material, and much more. The PDF contains everything you’ll need to play, with the exception of six-sided dice and (optionally) playing cards and a chessboard for the wargame.

If you have any comments or suggestions about this game please send email to [forgottenfutures@ntlworld.com](mailto:forgottenfutures@ntlworld.com)

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