



Version Hoof-Print-Five (2.5)

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Unknown Ponies

This game, set in the world of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, is primarily about "blank flanks", young ponies who have not yet discovered their special talents and therefore gained their Cutie Marks. They are *unknown* because they do not yet know themselves. Ideally, this game is about the process of self-discovery each colt or filly undertakes through the process of growing up.

However, this system will work fine for generating older ponies; it simply loses some of its charm if the process of finding a Cutie Mark through play is skipped.

For purposes of this system, the terms *fillies* and *colts* refers to juvenile ponies, either without Cutie Marks or having just acquired them, and the terms *mares* and *stallions* will refer to ponies who both possess Cutie Marks and are capable of living on their own. No other assumptions regarding age or size are intended.

Failure is Awesome

A recurring motif within *My Little Pony* is that learning only occurs through failure and overcoming adversity. Put another way, "Good judgment is a result of experience; however, experience usually gained as a result of bad judgment." Failure is not inherently bad, because it teaches us what to do the next time we try. The only way to advance in skills (and therefore find one's Cutie Mark) is to fail. Therefore, failure is *awesome*.

Game Mechanics & Legal Disclaimer

Unknown Ponies: Failure is Awesome uses the core mechanics of the *Unknown Armies* RPG, created by Greg Stolze & John Tynes. While these mechanics are used without their permission, this game is being distributed for free, and the writer (Erin Palette) is making no profit from this. Therefore, the writer believes she is operating in good faith. Further, she does not claim ownership of any concept that appears in the pages of [this free PDF](#) which contains the core mechanics of *Unknown Armies*. As she does not wish to appear to be plagiarizing their rules, she will not copy them here, and instead suggests that readers refer to the PDF for more explanation or, even better, buy the book online.

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It's just a game, guys. I have no money, am not trying to steal yours, and suing me wouldn't get you anything.

Character Creation

First you much decide if you are creating an earth pony, a pegasus or a unicorn.

- **Unicorns** receive +10% to their Mind attribute and the skills *unicorn telekinesis* (Speed) and *unicorn magic* (Mind).
- **Pegasi** receive +10% to their Speed attribute and the skills *flying* and *weather control* (Speed).
- **Earth Ponies** receive +10% to their Body attribute and 50 free skill points (see **Skills**, below).

Attributes

All beginning PCs (pony characters) start with attributes of 40% (50% if adult ponies). With the permission of the PM (Pony Master), you may reduce one of your attributes by up to 20% order to raise another attribute by the same amount, or raise two attributes by half that amount. It is recommended that nopony have an attribute lower than 30% or higher than 70% during character creation.

Examples of Body (strength & stamina)

- **30s:** Granny Smith
- **40s:** Fluttershy, the Cutie Mark Crusaders
- **50s:** most ponies
- **60s:** Rainbow Dash, most earth ponies
- **80s:** Applejack
- **90s:** Big Macintosh

Examples of Speed (quickness & precision)

- **30s:** Derpy Hooves
- **40s:** the Cutie Mark Crusaders
- **50s:** Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie (when she isn't teleporting or breaking the 4th wall)
- **60s:** Applejack, most pegasi
- **70s:** the Wonderbolts
- **80s:** Rainbow Dash

Examples of Mind (knowledge & willpower)

- **30s:** Derpy Hooves
- **40s:** Rainbow Dash, Pinkie Pie, Applejack
- **50s:** most non-unicorn ponies
- **60s:** Rarity, Fluttershy
- **80s:** Twilight Sparkle
- **90s:** Princess Celestia

Examples of Soul (artistry & social interaction)

- **30s:** Twilight Sparkle
- **40s:** Rainbow Dash
- **50s:** most ponies
- **60s:** Rarity
- **70s:** Fluttershy
- **80s:** Derpy Hooves (why else would people love her so much?)

Skills

Everypony receives certain skills for free at 25%:

- **Body:** General Athletics (sports/jumping/etc), Struggle (wrestling/fighting/etc)
- **Speed:** Dodge, Gallop, *Unicorn Telekinesis*, *Flight*, *Weather Control*
- **Mind:** Basic Education, Notice, Hide, *Unicorn Magic*
- **Soul:** Charm, Lie

These skills may be re-named to better suit a pony if desired (for example, Fluttershy is more likely to have Flail About rather than Struggle, whereas Rarity might have Uncouth Violence.)

Skills in *italics* are race-restricted and cannot be learned by ponies of other races without specific PM permission.

Unicorns

Unicorn Telekinesis is a measure of how much weight a unicorn's magical horn may lift, and how skillfully objects may be manipulated with it. Another term for this skill is *ponykinesis*.

Unicorn Magic represents the unique abilities every unicorn possesses (Rarity's gem-finding, Trixie's glamour, etc). This ability is highly specific to each unicorn and therefore is tied to that pony's Cutie Mark. Blank Flanks are not prohibited from having this skill, but its use should be kept to a minimum until such time as a Cutie Mark forms. It may, however, be rolled when a unicorn is attempting to discover her Cutie Mark.

Pegasi

Flight handles both speed and agility while flying, and may be used in place of both Dodge and General Athletics while airborne.

Weather Control is used to manipulate clouds and other atmospheric ephemera as if they were tangible. Possessing this skill grants the ability to walk on clouds.

Earth Ponies

Instead of racial skills, earth ponies gain 50 bonus skill points (the equivalent of having two skills for free). This points may be added to existing skills* or used to create new skills. Blank Flank PCs may not exceed 35% in any one skill at character creation, as 40% is the minimum for a Cutie Mark.

Adult Ponies

Mares and stallions gain all of the above, and in addition gain an extra number of skill points equal to their attribute rating. Therefore, a pony with a Body of 60% would receive an additional 60 points which could only spent on Body skills, 30 points in Mind skills for a Mind of 30%, etc.

****Remember: Skills may never, ever, exceed the attribute to which they are paired.***

Note: There is some overlap between Body and Speed, specifically in terms of running or sports. Body should be used for pure strength and stamina, whereas Speed should be used for hand-eye coordination and going fast. Unless you are an athletic pony like Applejack or Rainbow Dash, this won't be an issue. If it does become an issue, consult with your PM.

Emotional Triggers

Now it's time to create your pony's motivations.

- **Anger trigger:** This is what makes your pony angry and causes her to react with hostility or jealousy. A successful Mind roll helps overcome these feelings, allowing the pony to act rationally... for a time.
- **Fear trigger:** This is what causes your pony to run away, cower in fear, or have a nervous breakdown. This does not have to be a personal fear of something; it can just as easily be a fear for someone else's safety or happiness. A successful Mind roll will help the character "buck up" and push aside the fear for a short time.
- **Noble trigger:** This is what your pony believes in with all her heart, and will lay down her life for it if necessary. This should interact with your pony's Cutie Mark in some manner: Fluttershy's love for animals leads her to take risks in caring for them, while Twilight Sparkle's love of education (and lecturing) resulted in her overall fascination with learning magic.

These are primarily role-playing tools. By knowing what your pony loves, hates, and will suffer for, you (the player) will better understand how she relates to the Elements of Harmony on the Friendship Track (see below).



Failure is Awesome, AKA Gaining Experience

Skills

Whenever a character wishes to perform an action (if she has no skill for that action, give her a 10% chance of success), have her roll percentile dice. If she succeeds, BRAVO! The reward of success is success itself. However, if she fails – which is far more likely – her skill increases by 1% as a result of learning from that failure.

Cutie Marks

A pony's special talent is developed largely through role-playing and whim of the dice. Most players will have their pony characters' talents already in mind when creating them, and this is fine. Other players may have no idea what their ponies' special talents are, and this is also fine. As the game progresses, players may find that they are constantly rolling for a specific skill, or are drawn to a specific role in the group.

In either case, when they have reached a suitable skill rank (such as 40%) or when something impressive happens (like a 01 roll, or a matched success during a dramatically appropriate moment), then that pony is assumed to have earned her Cutie Mark.

Upon receiving a Cutie Mark, the associated skill is considered an Obsession skill, and the player may choose to flip-flop all rolls related to this special ability. (See PDF for more explanation.) In instances where a 01 or successful doubles are rolled for an obsession skill, a **Cutie Mark Critical** occurs with accompanying special effects (like a Sonic Rainboom, or using The Stare on a dragon).

In instances where a 00 or unsuccessful doubles are rolled, a **Cutie Mark Critical Failure** occurs, and the pony experiences some degree of nervous breakdown or personality shift (such as Fluttershy's berserk rage at the Grand Galloping Gala, or Rainbow Dash curling up into a ball at the Best Young Flyer Competition).

The Friendship Track

Even though the Mane Six are the holders of the Elements of Harmony, they don't have a monopoly on friendship. Every pony can benefit from doing acts of kindness, honesty, generosity, loyalty or humor.

Each time a pony performs such an act, she receives a point along the Friendship Track in the element to which it corresponds. When five points are earned along the Friendship Track, either in a single element or spread out among multiples, that player has a choice: either save them for later use, or erase them to put a point into the sixth element, Magic.

Example: Rarity offers to make a new dress for Fluttershy. When the dress is finished, Rarity gains a point of Generosity. Since this fills her track for that element, she can erase her Generosity track to earn a point in Magic if she so wishes.

If a pony decides to spend her points, they are recorded on the Magic track and can be used for special things (see below.) However, if she decides to keep them (or has less than 5 points), they may be spent in ways which advance the plot or aid in role-playing.

It is important to note that Friendship Points may be gained by *player* action as well as *pony character* action. Giving someone else your last slice of pizza will earn you a point in Generosity, whereas making a joke that cracks up the entire table will get you a point in Laughter.

- **Generosity:** Gained whenever the player or character gives of herself *without expectation of reward*. This gift can be of time, effort, or items of value. Points may be spent to encourage acts of generosity among NPPs (non-player ponies). One point is a small thing, like sharing an apple. Three points is significant, like lending your home for a party. Five points is major, like giving your adopted nephew your magical ring, sword and mithril coat...
- **Honesty:** Not just "telling the truth," honesty is also about hard choices and honest (hard) labor. Honesty is earned when you say or do something *that will penalize you in some way*. (Honestly telling the time doesn't count; honestly telling somepony that their saddle makes their flank look large does.) Points may be spent to encourage honesty and hard work among others. One point is for something minor (help me practice my tricks), three for significant (make a clubhouse), and five for major (harvest Sweet Apple Orchard).
- **Kindness:** Frequently a catch-all for when the Pony Master can't decide which element an act should fall under, kindness is properly used for acts of *sympathy, empathy, and tender loving care*. Points may be spent to encourage NPPs to be kind to the PC in return. One point is enough to guarantee kind behavior from a stranger, three from someone mildly antagonistic, and five from a major antagonist.
- **Laughter:** Silliness, humor, breaking the tension with a joke -- these are the hallmarks of laughter. Anything that encourages ponies (and non-ponies!) to *gather in fun and fellowship* earns a laughter point. Points may be spent to create planned or impromptu social situations. One point can generate a birthday party for a friend out of nothing, three points is a song and dance that affects a neighborhood, and five points can utterly disarm most Big Bads with howls of riotous laughter.
- **Loyalty:** Best described as teamwork, loyalty is the trait that encourages others to *band together and work in cooperation*. This is different from honesty in that it is more about precision (Speed) and coolness (Soul) than about hard work (Body). Points may be spent to help others accomplish the difficult or impossible. One point is minor (looking good in front of other ponies), three points is significant (coordinating a parasprite roundup), and five is major (having an entire town work together to wrap up winter.)

It is important to note the the Pony Master has the right to say "no" to any proposed expenditure of Friendship Points. If this happens, the points are not spent.

Magic

The Magic track is different from the others. It is not earned independently; it is instead the *gestalt* (sum) of the other elements. As the prophecy states, "When the five elements of harmony are present, the sixth will appear."

A Magic point may be spent in three ways:

1. It may be traded in for a 1% increase in the attribute of your choice.
2. It may be used to improve rolls in the following manner:
 - convert a successful roll into a Cutie Mark Critical;
 - convert a Cutie Mark Critical Failure into a regular failure;
 - convert a regular failure into a regular success.
3. It may be used to dramatically amplify the effects of magical skills (*unicorn magic, unicorn telekinesis, weather control or flight*), or to activate a skill which the PM deems too powerful to be used without cost (such as Pinkie Pie's candy gadgetry and 4th Wall-breaking cartoon antics).

While the applications of number 3 are open to Pony Master interpretation and approval, numbers 1 and 2 are not.

In Conclusion

While I will undoubtedly be proven wrong, at this time I believe I have addressed everything necessary to create a character for *Unknown Ponies: Failure is Awesome* and play him or her in a game. Rules for combat can be found in [Unknown Armies](#) and will not be repeated here.

Special thanks to:

- Greg Stolze & John Tynes for creating such a wonderful and flexible system;
- Lauren Faust for creating an awesome and fun cartoon;
- Hasbro for letting the fan community flourish;
- Jamie Chambers & Benjamin Worley for helping with the Friendship Track;

Playtesters:

- Jeff “Dabinett” Williams
- Jennifer “Scarlet Shimmer” Paradis
- Alexander “Lockheart” Kerezman
- Adam “Nightsky Star” Dickstein