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Statistic (role-playing games)

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A **statistic** (or **stat**) in **role-playing games** is a piece of **data** which represents a particular **aspect** of a **fictional character**. That piece of data is usually a **(unitless) integer** or, in some cases, a **set of dice**.

For some types of statistics, this value may be accompanied with a descriptive adjective, sometimes called a *specialisation* or *aspect*, that either describes how the character developed that particular score or an affinity for a particular use of that statistic (like *Specialisations* in *Ars Magica* or *Attribute Aspects* in *Aria*).

Most games divide their statistics into several categories. The set of categories actually used in a game system, as well as the precise statistics within each category, vary greatly. The most often used types of statistic include:

Attributes describe to what extent a character possesses natural, in-born characteristics common to all characters.

Advantages and disadvantages are useful or problematic characteristics that are not common to all characters.

Powers represent unique or special qualities of the character. In game terms, these often grant the character the potential to gain or develop certain **advantages** or to learn and use certain **skills**.

Skills represent a character's **learned abilities** in predefined areas.

Traits are broad areas of expertise, similar to **skills**, but with a broader and usually more loosely defined scope, in areas freely chosen by the player.

There is no standard nomenclature for statistics; for example, both *GURPS* and the *Storytelling System* refer to their statistics as "traits", even though they are treated as attributes and skills.

Many games make use of **derived statistics** whose values depend on other statistics, which are known as *primary* or *basic* statistics. Game-specific concepts such as **experience levels**, **alignment**, **character class** and **race** can also be considered statistics.

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Types

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Attributes

[edit]

Main article: *Attribute (role-playing games)*

An **attribute** describes to what extent a character possesses a natural, in-born **characteristic** common to all characters in the game. Attributes are also called **statistics**, **characteristics** or **abilities**.

Most RPGs use attributes to describe characters' physical and mental characteristics, for example their **strength** or **wisdom**. Many games also include social characteristics as well, for example a character's natural **charisma** or **physical appearance**. They often influence the chance to succeed in **skill** or other tests by addition to a die roll or by determining the number of dice to be thrown. As a consequence, usually a higher number is better, and ranges can be as small as 1–5 (for numbers of dice) or as great as 1–100 (when adding to results of **percentile dice**). In some games, attributes represent linearly increasing ability (i.e. in *Tunnels and Trolls*, a character can lift 10 lbs per point of Strength) whereas in others a small increase can represent a major gain in ability (i.e. in *DC Heroes/Blood of Heroes* system, +1 to Strength doubles a characters' lifting capacity).

Some games work with only a few broad attributes (such as *Physical* or *Mental*), while others have a greater number of more specific ones. Having too many attributes is considered a sign of undue complexity in a game^[*citation needed*]; most games have about 4–10 of them^[1].

Most games try to give all attributes about the same usefulness to a character. Therefore, certain characteristics might be merged (such as merging a Charisma-type and a Willpower-type attribute into a single Personality attribute), or split into more attributes (such as splitting physical "Comeliness" from Charisma in the original *Unearthed Arcana*), or even ignored altogether (for example, Intelligence and Charisma in a *hack and slash* adventure). In many games, a small set of primary attributes control a larger number of **derived statistics** such as **Armor Class** or **magic points**.

During **character creation**, attribute scores are usually determined either randomly (by rolling **dice**) or by distributing **character points**. In some games, such as *World of Warcraft*, attribute scores are determined by the character's race and class. Because they represent common, in-born characteristics and not learned capabilities (as skills do), in many games they are fixed for the duration of the game. However, in some games they can be increased by spending **experience points** gained during the game, or as part of the process of "**levelling up**".

Advantages and disadvantages

[edit]

See also: *Character flaw*

An **advantage** is a physical, social, intellectual, or other enhancement to a character. In contrast, a **disadvantage** is an adverse effect. Advantages are also known as **virtues**, **merits** or **edges** and disadvantages as **flaws** or **hindrances**, or by the abbreviation "**disads**".

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