

Final Destination Roleplaying Game

Entirely unofficial. Written by Ben Wright chthonic.games@gmail.com. Revision August 2005.

You are Death

You have a design for every living thing. You alone determine when and how they will die. Your pattern is a thing of beauty and passion, and you exist only to ensure that it is followed.

Your Players are Alive

Somehow, some people have escaped their pre-ordained deaths. They have corrupted the pattern, and cling to the foolish hope that they may yet cheat you. You must return them to the pattern as best you can, and ensure that they interfere no further.

Your Pattern is Rigid

You should select a pattern that determines in what order characters will die. It should be a unique order following some logical rule. It should be able to handle the introduction of new characters, and may be related to the First Vision (see later). Examples include: Seating order, alphabetical order of given names, age order, order they died in the First Vision.

You should keep a record of each character's basic information, including anything that could be part of the pattern. This will prevent you from having to quiz the players as to their characters' attributes and avoid giving the game away as to what the pattern is.

Your Players Seek the Pattern

In order to survive, the players will have to work out what the pattern is. For this reason, you should not make it too obtuse. Finding out about the pattern drives the game forward and you should not place arbitrary obstacles in their path to discovering it. They may work out the pattern by default, by simply noting the order in which you attempt to kill them, but this in itself does not solve the pattern. They will not know, in that case, where new characters will appear in the order.

The Pattern has an Inside and an Outside

Most people in the world are inside the pattern. This means they cannot avoid it, and will die at the appointed time. Those outside the pattern can attempt to avoid it, using their resourcefulness and courage. They may also interfere with the pattern and bring people outside it, sometimes through their simple existence.

For example, a person outside a pattern might buy the last copy of a magazine in the newsagent. A person inside the pattern might then travel to a different newsagent to buy it, arriving home late and thus avoiding a gas main explosion that, in the pattern, claimed their life. This person is now outside the pattern.

This is the reason why you are determined to kill those outside the pattern- for while they live they continue to corrupt it.

Your Players are Resourceful

A character has the following descriptive information:

- Full name
- Age
- Height
- Occupation

And anything else you deem necessary for the game. They also have scores in the following categories:

- Hearing
- Smell
- Vision

- Dexterity
- Speed
- Strength

- Signs
- Premonitions

The first three represent how well they perceive the world around them- they are called Senses. Smell includes the sense of taste. The sense of touch is of little value in this game, but should you require it count it as Hearing or Vision as you see fit. The second three represent physical attributes- called Skills. Dexterity describes fine manipulation- like untying knots or reaching for a set of keys down a drain. Speed simply describes running speed. Strength includes any attempt to apply brute force to a problem. The last two scores are significantly different from the others. They represent a character's supernatural connection to your pattern. Signs determines how well they can spot the hidden clues your pattern makes in the world around them. Premonitions determines how many times they may see the future before it happens (more on that later).

When a character is first played, they have one dot in all categories except Premonitions. They may spend 6 dots improving Senses and 6 dots improving Skills. The maximum for each score is 6. They then have two additional dots which may be spent increasing either, or be kept 'for later'. If a player opts to keep one or two dots for later, let them note it on their character sheet. Players are not aware of the existence of their Signs or Premonitions score initially- if they keep any 'for later' they are actually spending points on these scores. For your reference, record if any player kept dots for later. If a player kept one dot for later, it is added to their Signs score. If they kept two points for later, they become either two dots in Signs or one dot in Premonitions, as you see fit. When Signs and Premonitions are revealed to a player, they may note down their scores. Future characters played by that player will also have their Signs and Premonitions scores known. Signs becomes revealed to a player the first time they pass a Signs roll. Premonitions becomes known to the player after their first Premonition (not counting the First Vision).

Characters created after the start of the game may not keep any points 'for later'- they must all be spent on Senses and Skills. Their Signs and Premonitions scores will always be 1 and 0 respectively when they enter play. Players should be comfortable with the character creation rules, as they may be called upon to create a new character at short notice.

Using a score is simple- roll one dice for each dot. If any dice comes up as a 5 or 6, it is a success. Some rolls become 'difficult'. If a roll is difficult, only a 6 is a success. Sense and Skill rolls should only be made during an attempt on a character's life. At other times, use the score itself as a guide to whether a character can perform a particular action.

Your Pattern has Rules

You may only attempt to kill the character who is next in your pattern. They are known as the Intended. Attempts on the Intended's life are constructed of improbable coincidences. A door may stick, a car mysteriously cut out, a piece of electrical equipment begin sparking or all three. You manipulate chance to achieve your goal- the death of the Intended. The anatomy of an attempt must follow this sequence:

- Conception
- Signs
- Senses
- Skills
- Aftermath

You begin by deciding how the Intended will die. You should decide upon a loose concept, such as 'died in a fire', 'decapitation', 'asphyxiated' or 'involving a coach'. You should leave yourself leeway to adapt the concept to fit how events pan out or to catch a character when they believe themselves safe. However, you may derive satisfaction by making the attempt dramatically appropriate- through irony or reference to the First Vision.

Once this is established, there is an opportunity for Signs. Pick any player other than the Intended. Have them roll (or roll for them if they are not aware of it) their Signs score. If they succeed, they notice an unusual sign in the world around them that reveals some clue as to your current attempt. It may be a book falling open at a particular chapter, a reflection of a non-existent object or the play of shadows on the wall. This Sign should be annoyingly vague and ripe with foreboding. After a certain stage in the game, the players will supply the foreboding themselves. The Sign will normally not explicitly reveal who the Intended is or how they will die. A Sign might be a flock of pigeons, a man with hooks for hands or a passing coach. The Sign may itself be a skilful piece of misdirection, as long as it is somehow a significant part of the attempt. If the player fails the roll, their character simply does not notice the Sign. If you are uncharacteristically benevolent, you may give more than one Sign for an attempt or allow an automatic success to get the ball rolling. Characters may try to communicate the Sign's content to one another. Allow them to do so unless there is a sensible reason why they couldn't.

Once the Sign has occurred, whether seen or not, the attempt begins. Coincidences occur that conspire to bring about what was in the Sign and the death of the Intended. This may be immediate, or may take hours to come to fruition. Once events are in motion, each character who is present where the Intended is, including the Intended, may make a Sense roll appropriate to what is happening. If they are not completely naïve about their predicament (through surviving previous attempts or a successful Signs roll) they may choose to concentrate their attention on one particular part of their surroundings (such as a cupboard or a gas cylinder). If they concentrate on something that is a part of your attempt, they automatically succeed at their Sense roll. If they concentrated on the wrong thing, they may still make a Sense roll but it becomes difficult. A successful Sense roll reveals what is happening at the outset of the attempt- such as an unlit gas stove, a toppled candle or a man carrying a box of false limbs. The Sense rolls all happen in an instant.

After Sense rolls have been passed or failed, the attempt reaches its climax. Three Skill rolls are required during an attempt- each happens quick succession. A successful roll avoids death or injury, the latter not necessarily on the part of the Intended. Only the Intended is in imminent danger of dying, but the players may not know who the Intended is. Announce what the first part of the attempt is and who exactly is in danger of being hurt. The first player to try to act makes the roll. If no character comes to the aid of your stated target promptly, they roll for themselves but the roll is difficult. If they are not able to avoid the danger by themselves, they automatically fail. Any character who passed one of the previous Sense rolls makes rolls normally. Characters who did not

pass have to make difficult rolls. After the first roll is made, you then elaborate on the situation and set up the next event, which may be against the same character. Each failure has one of the following consequences, as you see fit:

- The Intended dies (if they were under immediate threat or making the roll)
- The character attempting the roll becomes injured
- The character under threat becomes injured
- A group of characters suffer their first injury- but no more serious wounds are dealt.

A failed roll means the attempt to avoid the circumstance failed- the stuck window couldn't be forced, the rope was tied too tightly to the Intended, the bridge collapsed before they reached the other side. Each failure should escalate the problem- in particular characters' own actions should conspire to place them in danger. The attempt ends after three Skill rolls or the Intended's death. If you are feeling particularly vicious, you will use the first two rolls to injure the Intended or another player so as not to end the attempt early. Or you could simply kill the Intended with the first roll to demonstrate your power.

Once the dust has settled, there is the aftermath. Make sure players are aware of their characters' injuries. Encourage distress/despair at their dire straits. They may want to seek medical attention, or go somewhere safer. Allow them. Neither is really much use. If the Intended survived, then the Pattern has 'skipped' them. They are safe until their turn comes round again. Note who the next Intended will be, and begin planning anew.

Here is a detailed example:

- [Concept] The GM settles on a 'falling tree' as the concept for his attempt.
- [Signs] Brian and Cathy are in the local library trying to find information about lethal accidents and their survivors- having not yet worked out the pattern. As Brian is scouring the shelves, Cathy notices a child's construction toy in the play area. One of the plastic trees slowly topples without provocation, landing on a plastic man (This is a passed Signs roll). She tells Brian, who immediately uses his mobile phone to ring Agnes and the others at the hotel.
- [Interlude] Agnes tells him that Dave, the lumberjack, had just stormed out in disbelief. Cathy remembers where Dave works- and Agnes agrees to bring the others in a van to meet Cathy and Brian there. Cathy and Brian arrive first to see Dave just about to fell a tree. As their car skids to a halt alongside Dave's logging wagon he looks up at them in surprise.
- [Senses] Brian, Cathy and Dave make Vision rolls. Dave is looking the wrong way so attempts a difficult roll. He fails. Cathy is looking at the tree he is felling, which is correct, and scores an automatic success. Brian is looking in the general area- and succeeds on his roll. Brian and Cathy see the tree about to fall on Dave.
- [Skills] Brian chooses to act first- feeling heroic. He attempts to barge Dave out of the way of the tree. He succeeds at his Strength roll, knocking Dave to the ground (roll number 1). As the tree hits the ground, it catapults a short log towards Cathy. Brian and Dave are on the ground, unable to help. Cathy fails her Speed roll (roll number 2) and is injured. The log bounces off her shoulder, cracking her collarbone. Her Strength is reduced by one (see rules on injury later). The log then lands under the wheel of Agnes' van just as it arrives on the scene. Agnes has to make a Dexterity roll (which is difficult as she wasn't present for the Senses rolls and thus didn't succeed at it). She fails (roll number 3). The van slips on the log, slides through the mud and into the back of Dave's logging wagon. The chains on the back of the wagon break, and Brian is buried under cold, hard lumber as Dave looks on in horror.
- [Aftermath] Brian was the Intended all along- the GM used a cunning ruse to get him into the woods. If he'd failed his barging roll, the GM would have had him die underneath the tree- because it would be funny. If, for some reason, Brian had kept well away from the woods, the

GM would have had to think harder, possibly concocting an attempt involving choking on a tree-shaped air freshener. Cathy has lost a point of strength (see later for the exact rules on injury)-making her weak and less able to survive or help in future. Dave is wracked by guilt and blames himself for Brian's death.

Your watchwords are inventiveness and cruelty. Remember that well.

Your Players Will be Wounded

When a character is first injured, they lose one point from a Sense or Skill permanently to reflect their first injury. You decide what the most appropriate loss is. The second time they are injured, they are seriously hurt. One of their Senses or Skills is permanently reduced to 0 to reflect this. Again, you decide what the most appropriate loss is. If the character is injured again, then one of two things happens. If they are the Intended, they die- preferably in spectacular fashion. Otherwise, they receive another major injury. If a score is reduced to 0, then the character has lost a crucial ability. The effect on Senses is obvious. A character with 0 Dexterity may not use their hands properly any more. Characters with Speed 0 can no longer walk, and characters with Strength 0 are feeble and can do little for themselves. These injuries cannot be healed in the timespan of a game. Seeking medical attention merely places the characters in a new and dangerous location.

Your Players Live Between Attempts

Characters will have their own petty agendas in life- family, work and friends. At first they will try to live normal lives. Encourage these displays of weakness as it helps split the characters up and thus makes them vulnerable. Even if they try to avoid normal contact, people they know will seek them out. You can then present them with a stark choice- let their friend die or introduce them to the nightmarish world outside the Pattern. You may have them make Signs or Senses rolls when someone fated to die is around them- and leave them to decide whether to act or not. Never let the players forget that their torment is happening in parallel with normal life- and that people they interact with will expect them to behave like ordinary, sane persons.

Your Players Will Need New Characters

When a character dies, the player should be given a new character as soon as possible. It is preferably to give them a character that has been 'saved' on-screen, as it were. If there are no previously used characters available, the player can create one on the fly. Maybe they saw a news report where another character's mad ravings about 'death stalking him' struck a chord. Maybe they saw something impossible happen to kill a friend and are now terrified. Players should spend the minimum of time waiting to rejoin the action.

Your Players Experience Premonitions

A premonition is a valuable tool. A player with a point of Premonitions can sometimes see the next attempt with much more clarity than is revealed by Signs. Premonitions are startlingly clear, and indistinguishable from real life. A character undergoing a premonition is unaware of reality around them. If a character has a point of Premonition, then they can turn one entire attempt you make into their premonition after the fact. In effect, they rewind play to before the start of the attempt and the players can try again. As long as the only thing that changes is the position of the characters, physical events proceed exactly as they did before. The characters, being somewhere else, will avoid injury and death. If one of the characters changes the course of physical events (by turning off the gas, say) then the attempt will pursue a new course, trying to get to the Intended a different way. Of course, only the character who has the premonition knows the information it contains, so will have to try and act themselves or communicate to the other characters what's going to happen. Unless the situation is significantly different, all skill rolls have the same result as last time. New skill rolls made with the benefit of a premonition always succeed.

Premonitions points are spent automatically whenever the character is involved in an attempt on the Intended that goes badly (for them).

Here are three alternatives as to how a premonition might affect the previous example.

Dave has the premonition:

Seeing the tragedy, Dave runs towards Brian as Brian runs towards him. They both dive over a hillock, as Brian no longer needs to tackle Dave to the ground (an automatic Speed check as it is made with the benefit of a premonition). The tree falls and catapults the small log into Cathy, injuring her as before (the roll stays as it was because the situation for Cathy is no different). Agnes crashes the car as she did before and the big logs fall off the wagon. Brian is not under them this time.

Brian has the premonition:

Brian, half-way to Dave, changes his intention and kicks the small log out of the way (an automatic Strength roll as it is a new action made with the benefit of a premonition). The tree falls, injuring Dave so he loses one point of Speed. Brian has changed the attempt, so it follows a new course. The small log is not there any more, but the tree branches snatch the chainsaw out of Dave's hands. Agnes pulls up safely (an automatic Dexterity roll as the Brian's action removed the danger). As Brian is giving the thumbs up to Cathy and Agnes he makes a difficult Speed roll (as he doesn't know what's wrong). He fails, and Cathy and Agnes watch in horror as the chainsaw buries itself in the back of his neck, killing him instantly.

Agnes has the premonition:

Brian tackles Dave to the ground. The log hits Cathy, injuring her. Agnes brakes early (automatic Dexterity roll) and avoids the log. This would change the course of the attempt, but as it was the final Skill roll the attempt is over.

There is one special rule involving premonitions. If a player tries to change events without good cause (having a premonition, or being warned), then all subsequent rolls they make with that character are automatic failures, and they cannot be saved next time they are the Intended.

Whatever the outcome of the premonition, the Premonition point is lost. If you feel premonitions are too complicated, do not play with them.

First Vision

The First Vision is a special premonition that begins the game. Pick one of the characters, ideally one with high Signs or a point of Premonition who can influence the events about to take place. The characters need not be in a group, or even know each other, although they do need to all be involved in the accident that is about to happen.

The events of the First Vision trace a path of absolute destruction that kills all the characters. Characters cannot influence what happens, they merely listen as you describe the chaos. The accident should be huge- a plane crash, a big road accident, a gas explosion or something equally powerful. It should not happen all at once. There should be stages to the accident, so the characters have plenty of time to realise what is happening to them. Do not kill them quickly when you can make them suffer. It should be elaborate, and the kind of accident that makes the national (if not international) news.

Once you have described this carnage, tell your chosen player that they suddenly find themselves where they were before the accident happened. Tell the other players that they have seen none of this, but the first player is clearly agitated. The first character then does something that saves the characters (although does not prevent the accident entirely). You may dictate the first character's

actions if they are slow to save themselves and everyone else.

Here is an example:

Dave, Agnes, Willy and Samantha are on a bus. The bus stops outside Willy and Samantha's school. Cathy is waiting behind the bus in her car, and Brian is walking his dog nearby. Dave gets off the bus first, and walks up the street towards a diner. Willy and Samantha get off and walk into the school playground, hopping through puddles caused by a burst water main. Agnes, a teacher at the school, goes straight inside to her office, facing the playground. The bus pulls away, and Cathy follows it.

Suddenly, a speeding car barrels out of a side street, loses control in the puddles, hits a power line and slams sideways through the school gates. Dave and Brian stop and turn at the noise, and Cathy slams on her brakes. The car, meanwhile, carves a wave of destruction through the playground. It hits Samantha, throwing her through Agnes' office window. Willy almost gets out of the way, but gets pinned to the school wall by the car with his legs crushed. Agnes tries to help Samantha, but a sliver of glass has pierced her neck and she's bleeding to death quickly. The bus has driven off, leaving Cathy to thank her lucky stars she avoided the accident. Then a police car, chasing the first car, ploughs straight into her. She's carried across the road and her car ends up sandwiched between the police car and the school playground wall. She's stunned, but otherwise unharmed, and crawls out through the broken windscreen and onto the pavement. As she's on her hands and knees in the water, a dog licks her face. She turns and sees what's left of Brian underneath her car wheels. She throws up, just as the power line falls into the water. Cathy is electrocuted. The dazed driver of the speeding car stumbles out, and staggers away. Willy is left trapped, and he notices petrol leaking from the car. He sobs, and tries to pull himself out, but the pain in his shattered legs is too much. A spark from the power line ignites the pool of petrol, and the car explodes, killing Willy instantly. The explosion rips through the school, and is followed by another explosion from the school's gas supply. The school partially collapses, and Agnes is pinned to the floor by a falling ceiling beam. As she lies trapped, she realises it has broken her back and she's paralysed. She is looking up at the ceiling, where another beam is about to fall on her. As she lies, helpless, she hears Samantha gurgle her last. The beam above her drops a foot suddenly, and Agnes screams. Her cries are choked by a fall of plaster dust, and as she tries to blink it out of her eyes the beam falls squarely on her face, killing her. Some distance away, Dave watches the horrific events. He sees the escaping driver run in front of a tanker, which swerves, jackknifes, and ploughs sideways up the road towards Dave. He turns to run, but the tanker hits two buildings either side of the road and splits open. Dave is thrown off his feet by the tanker's contents hitting him in the back. He rolls onto his back, the scent of petrol in his nostrils, just in time to see a spark from the school land in the edge of the petrol slick. He watches the flames race towards him...

Suddenly, Dave finds himself back on the bus, about to get off. He is drenched in sweat and tears. He goes and stands half in half off the bus, refusing to let anyone get off or the bus pull away. He argues with the driver and the other passengers. Brian stops to watch what's going on. Cathy beeps her horn because of the delay. Suddenly, the speeding car appears and events play out exactly as they had before, except that the characters are safe. The jackknifing tanker misses the bus by inches and splits open further up the road.

Notice that there are still many casualties- particularly in the school. The characters are the lucky few who avoided death. There will be questions to be asked, such as how Dave knew what was going to happen. There are other people on the bus, who might have been saved- and they would make excellent new characters once the original ones start to die.

If you want a first vision as intensely realised as this, you may need to pregenerate the starting characters. If you players know what the game is about, they may participate in describing the First Vision.

Notice that the order of death in this First Vision was Brian, Cathy, Willy, Samantha, Agnes then Dave. If this was your pattern, Brian would be the first Intended, perhaps involving a tree. A crushing death would be dramatically appropriate as that was his death in the First Vision, but you may have to take what you can get.

You may, if you wish, write the First Vision down and show it to the player who say it ahead of play, to keep the game flowing and the other characters guessing. You may wish to make the first death an NPC, to give the characters a fighting chance when it is their time.

Your Players May Better Themselves

There is only one way to improve a character's scores, and that is to bring people outside the pattern. Every time a character does something that prevents the death of an NPC (after the First Vision) they get a fate point. Fate points are spent as follows:

- Skills may not be improved after character creation.
- Senses may be improved as long as the character is not injured in that Sense. Each fate point increases a Sense by 1, to a maximum of 6.
- Signs may be improved, as long as the character has successfully passed a Signs roll already. Each fate point increases Signs by 1, to a maximum of 6.
- Premonitions may be improved, as long as the character started with a Premonition point and has already spent at least one Premonition point. Each Premonition point costs 2 fate points.

Your Players May Find Help in Unexpected Places

If you wish, you may introduce a mysterious character who seems to know a lot about the characters' predicament. He is a mortuary assistant. Very little is known about him, and he keeps it that way. He will help the characters, but only with information. He will tell them that the pattern exists, although he will be dismissive of their chances of outwitting you. He may offer tantalising hints as to how they can 'win', although he may simply be lying. Exactly what he is should not be made explicit, but here are some possibilities:

- He was outside the pattern, but cut some kind of deal with you to return to the pattern alive.
- He exists outside the pattern, but has become so skilled that he survives the dozens of attempts you make on him daily.
- He was outside the pattern, but saved so many people that the pattern changed.
- He exists outside the pattern, but takes great care not to bring anyone else outside it- meaning he's way down on your list of priorities. The more fuss other people outside the pattern make, the longer it will take you to get round to him.
- He is your avatar, because it's more fun when your victims know what's going on.

Your Timetable of Despair

There are several stages to the game, as follows:

- Prologue- the First Vision, as described earlier.
- Beginning- The characters (and maybe players) will not know what's hitting them. Kills will be easy, and you should not treat them too harshly yet. The attempts will be subdued- possibly they could be explained by mundane malice or genuine accident. The Pattern will slowly become apparent. Characters deaths should be rare- to give the Pattern space to be noticed.
- Realisation- The characters will realise that they are being hunted. They will attempt to find out how and why, possibly discarding supernatural causes for some time. The attempts become more improbable and more dramatic.

- Crescendo- The characters have discovered the Pattern. They know who will be next, and can plan accordingly. Normal life is mostly impossible, and they are in a permanent state of alert. You may begin trying to kill more than one character in an attempt, as long as you follow the pattern. The first time you do this will come as a horrible shock. Relish the moment.
- Climax- You no longer need to pay any lip service to realism in the the murders you perform. Stuffed toys will become deadly. Tetanus will kill in seconds. Appliances can explode- even if they are not powered. If a player loses a character, they do not receive a new one.
- Epilogue- If any characters survived, they have earned a temporary reprieve. Maybe they even believe themselves safe. They have proved themselves worthy adversaries. You are the winner, of course, as you will claim them all eventually. You may tell your players that the one who lost the least characters is the winner.