BETTER CHASES

HEY! Skip the clunky rules in the DMG! Use this simple minigame instead!

Better Chases

Relive the adrenaline that James Bond experienced in the opening chase scene of Casino Royale, the parkour-fueled District 13, or any chaotic predicament that Jackie Chan found himself in. When a chase scene breaks out it should be a thrilling and cinematic affair. Each frantic attempt to avoid an obstacle leads you either one step closer to escaping, catching your prey, or crashing and burning spectacularly.

In these rules, you will find: position and distance between participants are greatly abstracted; costly actions encourage you to sacrifice for your team; your movement speed is relevant to your success; and scenery-defining obstacles provide a structure of skill challenges for quick encounter resolutions.

When do I use this?

While it may not seem intuitive at first, a core concept of this system is: not all chases are chase scenes. These rules should be rolled out when a chase merits the drama of describing the excitement in greater detail, carrying the party through a large and diverse area, where the environment continually throws obstacles in their path. These rules are designed with the players in mind as perusers.

Short Sprints

If a moment calls for a short chase across a small area or a space devoid of obstacles, it can be resolved thusly: whichever side has the greater movement speed, wins. If they have the same movement speed, both sides roll initiative to determine who succeeds.

How does it work?

A chase scene is a series of skill checks and saving throws that occur over a number of rounds. Those involved are split into quarry and pursuers. At the start of each round, the GM rolls for the quarry's attempt against an obstacle, which will determine the target DC the pursuers must beat. All pursuers roll at the same time and record any failures or successes, then a new round begins and the process repeats.

SETTING UP

Before starting your chase scene, make sure to print the movement cards, player cheat sheets and the chase tracker attacked to this document.

Determine the quarry and pursuers. When a chase begins you must first determine who is running away (the quarry) and who is chasing after them (the pursuers). If the quarry is multiple creatures, the dungeon master should treat them as a single unit which stays together and only rolls once each round for the entire group.

Determine the number of failures available. The goal of the players is to succeed on a number of checks before they fail three times. These successes represent the players catching up to their quarry or escaping, while their failures mean they're running out of steam and are at risk of dropping out of the chase.

> **Variant: Constitution failures.** Rather than use the standard three failures option, this variant allows each pursuer failures equal to their Constitution modifier, with a minimum of one.

Decide the number of successes required. The number of successes the players must acquire will determine the difficulty of the chase, with three successes being standard, four is of medium difficulty, and five being much harder. This will also determine the maximum length of time that this chase scene will last.

RUNNING (HAR HAR) THE CHASE

If you're at all familiar with the skill challenge format, this variation should be simple gameplay loop to follow, though with a few twists.

Play in simple rounds. A chase is broken up into rounds, which will each play out the same way. You, as the GM, will first introduce an obstacle which the quarry must roll to overcome. Their result will be announced as the DC pursuers must beat, who then all roll at the same time. All successes and failures are recorded before the next round begins.

Observe the difference between the movement speeds of the pursuers and quarry. Each round, when the pursuers attempt their rolls, they each must determine whether they're rolling with advantage, disadvantage, or as normal. A pursuer rolls with advantage if they have a greater movement speed than the quarry's movement speed being used this round. If a pursuer has a movement speed lower than the quarry's, they roll with disadvantage. If a pursuer has the same movement speed as the quarry, they roll as normal.

> **Variant: Natural-born hunters.** Regardless of their movement speed, Rangers never roll at disadvantage in any terrain on their skill checks or saving throw during a chase, and always roll at advantage in their favorite terrain.

Decide which skill checks or saving throws are appropriate each round. An obstacle may call for a skill check or a saving throw, but sometimes it may make sense for one group to attempt a skill check while the other must make a saving throw—it is up to you to decide what makes sense for each obstacle.

> *A huge glass pane is being carried across the street, directly in front of the quarry. They must make a Strength (Athletics) skill check to crash through. The pursuers must make a Dexterity Saving Throw to not slip on the shattered debris.*

Trying other tactics

Your players may want to do something else during their turn besides focusing on just sprinting. If a pursuer attempts one of the following options, they suffer one automatic failure in the chase and forego rolling to overcome the current obstacle. I'm going to put that rule in a fancy box, so you can't ignore it:

> **Don't forget!** If a pursuer attempts one of the following options, they suffer one automatic failure in the chase and forego rolling to overcome the current obstacle.

Help an ally. When a pursuer attempts to help an ally they must be in range to do so. If they want to use a touch-based effect, both pursuer must have the same number of successes. If they want to use a ranged effect, both pursuers must be within one success of each other. The effect only lasts this round.

There will be times where a pursuer will come up with a solution to bypass an obstacle, such as casting a fly spell on an ally to let them glide over a rickety canyon bridge. It is often best to allow such instances with an automatic success for the buffed pursuer rather than just bestowing advantage.

Attack the quarry. When a pursuer attempts to attack the quarry, they must be one success away from catching up to them. When they do so, they can roll an attack as normal.

Slow the quarry. Like attacking the quarry, but if the effect reduces the quarry's movement, redetermine any cases of advantage or disadvantage for all pursuers this round. The effect only lasts this round.

Halt the quarry. Like attacking the quarry, but all pursuers except the one that caused the effect automatically succeed the check this round. The effect only lasts this round.

Ending the chase

Presuming neither the pursuers nor quarry voluntarily give up during the chase, there are generally only two possible outcomes in this minigame.

Dropping out of the chase. After all the pursuers have rolled, tally up their successes and failures. If a pursuer gains three failures, they drop out of the chase scene and gain a level of exhaustion—they no longer need to roll for the remainder of the scene. If all pursuers drop out of the chase, the quarry successfully escapes.

Catching the quarry. If a pursuer has reached the number of successes needed to catch up to the quarry, the chase ends. Any pursuer who only partially succeeded or dropped out of the chase will join them soon, which the next section will elaborate on.

After the chase scene

When at least one pursuer gains the required amount of successes to catch up to the quarry, the chase ends. But the adrenaline-fueled chase may only be a precursor to another dramatic scene between prey and predator. There will often be moments where not all the pursuers caught the quarry at the same time—they might be out-numbered and isolated. The quarry can utilize this dramatic moment to do one thing.

Capture. The quarry presents their clear advantage in strength or numbers to the isolated pursuers. If the lone pursuer comes quietly, the quarry will not immediately harm them. The isolated pursuer may have a chance to secretly leave a trail for their allies with a Sleight of Hand check.

Take the upper hand. The quarry strikes back immediately, attempting to overwhelm the isolated pursuer in combat. All other pursuers will join the combat at the start of the second round.

Bargain. The quarry attempts to secretly sway the isolated pursuers with coin, information, or a debt. A successful Persuasion, Intimidation or Deception check from the pursuer could sweeten the quarry's offer. If the isolated pursuer accepts, the quarry escapes before the other pursuers arrive, none the wiser.

Coerce. The quarry may see potential allies in the isolated pursuer and attempt to recruit them into their fold. If the isolated pursuer goes with the quarry, they all escape before the other pursuers arrive. The other pursuers can attempt to track the quarry with a Survival check against the quarry's Stealth check.

Surrender. The quarry wishes no harm onto themselves and will surrender to save their skin. Before the other pursuers arrive, the isolated pursuer may ask one thing that will be answered as truthfully as possible.
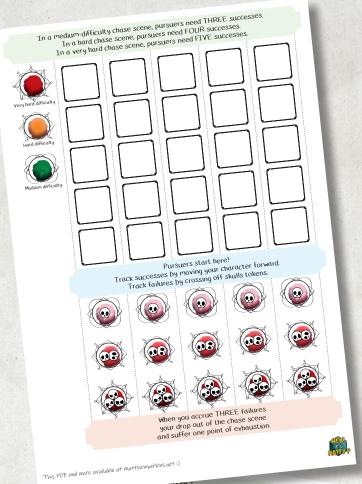
Credits

Writer: Sun (@SunGone)

Gold Patrons: Andrew Blanchard, Antonio IP, Bill Henderson, bob bobby, Booker Elliot, Brian Smith, Cam, cameron wheelehen, Chaotic Vito, Christopher LeFever, Craig Savage, Dane Legare, David Dyer, Erin Bonich, Grenade_37, harmen van lith, Humberto Hoffmann, Jace Northe, Jacob Meyer, Jamie MacPherson, JauntyJay, Jean-Sebastien Levesque, Jerry Ottinger III, Jessica H, Jim, Justin Rossman, Kay Niekut, Kevin Donville, krishna chivukula, Koli_Deveras, Kurt Mueller, Kyle Somers, Luke Hermann, Lonely Steam, Mario Zetina, Marsha Alexander, NDG90, Noriko Miyagami, Patrick Gober, Paul S, Pinpal, Ricardo Valadares Gontijo Lanna Valle, Ryan Heckel, Sergio Collins, SonOfSofaman, Steve Yahner, tage castle, The 2nd most Epic Wizard from Mt. Skullzfyre, THeOmniKing, xFreshyJx, Zachary Shapiro

Everything Else: Matthew Perkins (@heyitsMattyP)

Linework on handouts has been designed using assets from Freepik.com

Originally published 10/8/2023
Latest version 10/8/2023

These three handouts included!

You and the quarry have the **SAME** speed

You are **FASTER** than the quarry!
Roll TWICE and take the HIGHER result

You are **SLOWER** than the quarry...
Roll TWICE and take the LOWER result

In a medium-difficulty chase scene, pursuers need THREE successes.
In a hard chase scene, pursuers need FOUR successes.
In a very hard chase scene, pursuers need FIVE successes.

Very hard difficulty

Hard difficulty

Medium difficulty

Pursuers start here!
Track successes by moving your character forward.
Track failures by crossing off skulls tokens.

When you accrue THREE failures your drop out of the chase scene and suffer one point of exhaustion.

This PDF and more available at matthewperkins.net :)

You're in a chase scene!
Here are your options.

Each round, you decide whether you are **Desperately Dashing** or **Doing Something Else.**

When **Desperately Dashing**, you're focused on catching the quarry.
Your character's movement speed determines your chances of success.

If your movement speed is the **same as the quarry's**, roll as normal.
If your movement speed is **higher than the quarry's**, roll with advantage.
If your movement speed is **lower than the quarry's**, roll with disadvantage.

When **Doing Something Else**, you're not focused on catching the quarry.
Choose one of the following options and suffer an automatic failure.

Help a close ally for one round
If you must touch an ally to use an ability, you must have the same number of successes as your ally. The game master decides what advantage this bestows.

Help a far ally for one round
To use an ability that has a range, you must be only one success higher or lower than your ally. The game master decides what advantage this bestows.

Attack the quarry
Make a standard attack roll and damage roll. You must be one success away from catching the quarry.

Slow the quarry for one round
If you have an ability that impedes the quarry's movement, make a standard attack or casting roll. Redetermine if any pursuers gain advantage due to the quarry's reduced movement speed. You must be one success away from catching the quarry.

Stop the quarry for one round
If you have an ability that stops the quarry's movement, make a standard attack or casting roll. Everyone except you succeeds against the current obstacle You must be one success away from catching the quarry.

And remember: if you fail too many times, you're out of the chase!

This PDF and more available at matthewperkins.net :)