



## The Bullet Journal Role Playing Game

Version 1.0  
[EmeraldSpecter.com](http://EmeraldSpecter.com)

This is the initial public release of my “bullet journal role playing game” hack, a means of increasing personal productivity and helping with self improvement.

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## INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to bullet journaling by accident while clicking around on the Internet one night in late 2016. The links led me to the founding website, [bulletjournal.com](http://bulletjournal.com), and that's where I learned the bare bones of how the system worked. As with anyone, I started looking into this and since I was a couple of years behind the times there were plenty of websites, YouTube videos, and Pinterest ideas that I had to look through... and imagine how much I found!

My initial bullet journal was specifically designed to help me be more active with my website, [EmeraldSpecter.com](http://EmeraldSpecter.com), and discovered in less than three weeks that a bullet journal wasn't the answer. Any activity that needed to be done on the website weren't needed daily, which is how I really need to operate when it comes to bullet journaling. I needed to be "in the habit" of doing this daily, so that bullet journal died a quick death.

Purchasing a Leuchttmer1917 dotted journal (green), the suggested journal to use, I begin journaling my life in general. That started on January 1, 2017 and I'm still going strong six months later. After failing a day here and a day there, on February 17, 2017 I came across an ad on Facebook that showed me what would help me move into the future with my bullet journal... by gamifying the process!

The website that the ad linked to was for a program that would help teachers gamify their classrooms, called ClassCraft ([classcraft.com](http://classcraft.com)), and knew that is what I wanted to do for my bullet journal. I'm a big fan of the wuxia media (Chinese romanticized hero martial arts), so I decided that I wanted to RPG the journal with that as my focus. I also saw the slang for bullet journal was bujo, and what sounds more wuxia than BuJoRPG?

Before starting anything with the BuJoRPG, I started making lists of what I needed, things to build to make work with what I needed, and a means of keeping it connected to the original point of bullet journaling. With help from my lovely wife, we came up with some experience point totals for "things I'd like to be doing" and damage I'd take in hit points from "things I am avoiding doing but should" to come up with version 0.1.

The system has come a long, long way since then.

I've been changing the version number with every major tweak, with the biggest changes happening between version 0.3 and version 0.4, where the framework of the system I'm currently using was born. Formatting changes, moving some thing around, making tweaks as I go, and resetting my point totals a couple of times for the purpose of play testing, I am ready to release this version 1.0 (hopping over 0.8 and 0.9) to bring this product out to you.

I am actively working on making this system better, easier to use, and more effective. There have been multiple suggestions (by me) to have parents use this for children who need some focus, and once you read the instructions I'm hoping that will all become more clear.

Enough introduction now... time to get to the rest of these rules.

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## DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

### Hit Points (HP) vs Experience Points (XP)

If you're new to role playing games, then you are probably new to the concept of hit points and experience points. In the BuJoRPG, specifically, hit points are the "punishment" mechanic and experience points are the "reward" mechanic. I'll be referring to them as HP and XP from here on out.

HP is a penalty system designed to get you to be doing things that you should already be doing, daily, but either don't get done daily because of a lack of motivation or you simply forget about because something else came up. The reason HP only penalizes is that you have no reason not to be doing the action, therefore, a reward for doing something that is a requirement doesn't happen... because you should already be doing that action.

Some of the examples of what I believe should be done on a daily basis: loading the dishwasher, unloading the dishwasher, folding the laundry, washing the laundry, cleaning the car (interior), scooping the litter box, clearing the kitchen counter, putting away toys, and taking out the garbage. This is by no means an all inclusive list, you simply take the suggestions and branch out from there to suit your own specific needs. Keep in mind that NOT doing these things will only be penalized because you should be doing them already.

XP is a reward system designed to encourage you to complete tasks daily that you would like to develop into habits. A habit is the basis for what BuJoRPG is all about, because we're trying to be better people using this system. The XP is a reward because you want the encouragement, and should really only be used to develop the habit... using the same habits in perpetuity won't result in a better you, it only results in you gaming the system. You'd only be cheating yourself. I personally believe that if you have been awarded XP for something for more than 45 days, you should probably replace that with something new because you have acquired a new habit without prompting.

Some of the examples of what I believe could be developed on a daily basis into a habit: check emails, exercise, write 500 words, learn a language (phrase or just a word), go for a walk, go for a run, list/schedule next day's activities, and make a grocery list (in case you need to pick up something on the way home). Again, this is by no means an all inclusive list and I would even go so far as to say that the list doesn't even scratch the surface. I cannot possibly anticipate everything you'd like to develop into a habit (like quitting smoking or learning to quilt), so use that list as a jumping off point.

### How Do I Regain Hit Points?

I've talked about losing HP but not yet about how to regain that HP or what happens once your HP is gone. Let's start with what happens when you are out of HP.

In the event you fail to complete the Musts enough to where your HP drops to 0 or below, you are no longer in a position to earn XP. The HP damage is high enough at each level to ensure that you put forward the effort in completing the Musts, as they are really what absolutely needs to be done.

When your HP drops to, or below, 0, you are unable to acquire XP for seven full days. Damage is cumulative, so even when you are at or below 0 you can still take more damage. Each HP loss is counted and every time you exhaust another full HP load, you add another seven days. (This means if you lost 400 HP and you lost 400 more, that's a total of 14 days.)

Do not despair, though. The system is designed to help you improve and that means that the necessity of continuing to journal is still present. You're building habits, after all, and stopping just because you lost HP shouldn't deter you from continuing to journal.

There are two ways that HP is refreshed. The first way is to level up. If you're 100 HP from 0 but you gain enough XP to gain a level, your new HP is where you start at for the following day. The second way is to simply wait 30 days (or when the month changes), when your HP resets and you can move forward with your journaling.

Everything is designed to move you forward, so don't stop just because of a speed bump.

### Musts, Dailies, Achievements, and Quests

I utilize a few "category names" for things that I've built into this system. There are four major categories to talk about and I'll give the best definition I can for what each one does.

Musts are the things that you should already be doing but aren't necessarily already doing. The Musts category is where you'd take your HP hits when you fail to accomplish the items under this heading. In order to prevent your Musts from being a gigantic list of overwhelming items, I suggest the list only be four items long. Ask yourself: what are the four things I absolutely have to do on a daily basis? Once you come up with that list, you won't be overwhelmed by things that have to get done... and I can tell you from play testing that too many items on the list doesn't leave any time for much of anything worth while.

Dailies are the things that you want to develop into habits. The Dailies are the items you are going to reward with XP in order to foster turning that into a habit. You shouldn't have a Daily item listed on your Dailies for more than 45 days, as that will already be a habit and you should find a new habit to develop. As with the Musts, you should only have about four Dailies in order to not overwhelm yourself because, again, the list can be so long you don't have time to do anything else. Learning from other games, each item on the Daily list will be XP and completing the total list should provide a bonus of XP, incentivizing you to accomplish ALL the habits and not just a couple.

Achievements are the things you want to track that you'd like to have exact numbers for, something you want to know how much of that thing you do. Tracking steps on a step counter is really the easiest example I can provide, whereas you would otherwise just have "walked" instead of having that wonderful 10,000 steps. The Achievements will each have a "benchmark" to hit in order to earn XP, and a "milestone" to earn a multiplier for XP. In the case of steps, if you walk 100,000 steps you get 100 XP, whereas if you walked 1,000,000 steps you'll get a "x2" multiplier to all future 100,000 steps marks.

Quests are the things you would like to be developing into habits, or learning, that can't be done on a daily basis. I am going to go back to using "learning a language" here as you can learn more complex things in that language as a Quest that would be near impossible to learn on a

daily basis. Quests have benchmarks, too... like “learn a phrase in Vietnamese” is 100 XP, with the next benchmark being “learn 5 more phrases in Vietnamese” is 500 XP. There are a limited number of benchmarks, just enough to earn rewards for doing the Quest but not perpetual to encourage too small steps to achieving the goal. An important note is that once a Quest benchmark has been achieved, that benchmark can no longer get done again. So my “learn 5 more phrases” example would ONLY be the 500 XP, not 1,000 XP for the benchmark and repeats of the first benchmark.

### Achievement Milestone Multipliers

I mentioned above that the Achievements will have milestones that can provide multipliers for future completions of Achievement benchmarks. After some extensive testing, I have come up with the following:

| <u>Achievement Milestone</u> | <u>XP Multiplier</u> |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Copper                       | x2                   |
| Silver                       | x5                   |
| Gold                         | x10                  |
| Sapphire                     | x15                  |
| Ruby                         | x20                  |
| Emerald                      | x25                  |
| Diamond                      | x30                  |

I’ve given the milestones labels to make them a little more fun, rather than just making them yet another number. As you advance, you will need higher XP earning potential, which is the reason for the Achievement Milestone Multipliers.

### Levels

What would an RPG be without levels to acquire? The heart of advancement is seeing that you have accomplished the next level and looking forward to what you need to do in order to achieve the next level.

The level system is designed to show you progress and gives you something abstract to achieve. Moving from level to level is the most basic mechanic for the BuJoRPG. Each level has an XP benchmark to reach, which also provides the HP base and how much HP damage you take for the Musts category. Below is the table for the basic leveling system, all information included. There is (in version 1.0) a level 50 cap, but future releases could increase that for more levels.

| Level | XP Needed | HP Base | HP Damage |
|-------|-----------|---------|-----------|
| 1     | 0         | 50      | 15        |
| 2     | 500       | 100     | 25        |

|    |         |        |        |
|----|---------|--------|--------|
| 3  | 1,000   | 100    | 50     |
| 4  | 1,500   | 150    | 50     |
| 5  | 2,000   | 200    | 100    |
| 6  | 3,000   | 300    | 100    |
| 7  | 4,000   | 400    | 150    |
| 8  | 5,000   | 500    | 150    |
| 9  | 6,000   | 600    | 200    |
| 10 | 7,000   | 700    | 200    |
| 11 | 9,000   | 900    | 300    |
| 12 | 11,000  | 1,100  | 400    |
| 13 | 13,000  | 1,300  | 500    |
| 14 | 15,000  | 1,500  | 600    |
| 15 | 17,000  | 1,700  | 700    |
| 16 | 21,000  | 2,100  | 800    |
| 17 | 25,000  | 2,500  | 900    |
| 18 | 29,000  | 2,900  | 1,000  |
| 19 | 33,000  | 3,300  | 1,100  |
| 20 | 37,000  | 3,700  | 1,200  |
| 21 | 45,000  | 4,500  | 1,500  |
| 22 | 53,000  | 5,300  | 2,000  |
| 23 | 61,000  | 6,100  | 2,500  |
| 24 | 69,000  | 6,900  | 3,000  |
| 25 | 77,000  | 7,700  | 3,500  |
| 26 | 87,000  | 8,700  | 4,000  |
| 27 | 97,000  | 9,700  | 5,000  |
| 28 | 107,000 | 10,700 | 6,000  |
| 29 | 117,000 | 11,700 | 7,000  |
| 30 | 127,000 | 12,700 | 8,000  |
| 31 | 145,000 | 14,500 | 8,000  |
| 32 | 160,000 | 16,000 | 9,000  |
| 33 | 175,000 | 17,500 | 9,000  |
| 34 | 200,000 | 20,000 | 9,000  |
| 35 | 225,000 | 22,500 | 10,000 |
| 36 | 250,000 | 25,000 | 10,000 |
| 37 | 275,000 | 27,500 | 15,000 |

|    |           |         |        |
|----|-----------|---------|--------|
| 38 | 300,000   | 30,000  | 15,000 |
| 39 | 325,000   | 32,500  | 15,000 |
| 40 | 350,000   | 35,000  | 15,000 |
| 41 | 400,000   | 40,000  | 20,000 |
| 42 | 450,000   | 45,000  | 20,000 |
| 43 | 500,000   | 50,000  | 20,000 |
| 44 | 550,000   | 55,000  | 25,000 |
| 45 | 600,000   | 60,000  | 25,000 |
| 46 | 700,000   | 70,000  | 35,000 |
| 47 | 800,000   | 80,000  | 35,000 |
| 48 | 900,000   | 90,000  | 40,000 |
| 49 | 1,000,000 | 100,000 | 40,000 |
| 50 | 1,100,000 | 110,000 | 45,000 |

Since this system is designed to be fluid, there may be alterations to these base numbers in the future, but the beginning point is what was decided based on the play testing done at the time of this release. Rather than hold off to come up with the “perfect numbers” on this chart, I decided to release when I had a solid foundation.

### Integrity Towards Improvement

The first rule of BuJoRPG is to be honest with yourself. Did you miss Monday logging? Then Monday is down the drain and you can't get the XP from that day, though you still take the full hit of HP from what you missed doing. Cheating the system only serves to cheat yourself, and the point of the BuJoRPG is to aid you in self improvement.

This is a game, yes, but this is the game of life and you shouldn't cheat yourself.

## EXAMPLE LAYOUT

| JUNE 1         |   |           |       |
|----------------|---|-----------|-------|
| <b>MUSTS</b>   |   | PREV HP   | 600   |
| X              | LAUNDRY                                     |           |       |
| X              | DISHES                                      |           |       |
|                | LITTERBOX                                   | 200       |       |
| X              | WORK TUB                                    |           | HP    |
| - TOTAL        |   | 200       | 400   |
| X              | HABIT TRACK                                 |           |       |
| X              | PROMOTE                                     |           |       |
| X              | LIST / SCHEDULE                             |           |       |
| X              | LEARN VIETNAMESE                            |           |       |
| 20             | DAILIES                                     | BONUS     | 30 50 |
|                |   |           | XP    |
|                | 29,995                                      | 100,014   | 100   |
|                | 251   | 33/45     |       |
|                | 65 & SUNNY                                  | 41/45     |       |
|                | 1   | 30/45     | 75    |
|                | 21 MIN                                      | 00:29     |       |
|                | 918   | 918       |       |
| ACHIEVEMENTS   |   |           | 175   |
| QUESTS         | 1   | TOTAL XP  | 100   |
| <b>SUMMARY</b> |   |           |       |
| 50             | DAILY                                       |           |       |
| 175            | ACHIEVEMENT                                 |           |       |
| 100            | QUEST                                       |           |       |
| 6,763          | PREVIOUS XP                                 |           |       |
| 7,038          | TOTAL                                       | LEVEL 10! |       |
| <b>TO DO</b>   |   |           |       |
| X              | UPDATE WEBSITE SCHEDULE                     |           |       |
| X              | BRING HOME COOKIES                          |           |       |
| X              | BACON BRAWL SEASON FINALE TONIGHT           |           |       |
| -              | LEARNED TO SAY "GOOD MORNING" IN VIETNAMESE |           |       |

| JUNE 2         |                  |          |     |
|----------------|------------------|----------|-----|
| <b>MUSTS</b>   |                  | PREV HP  | 400 |
|                | LAUNDRY          |          |     |
|                | DISHES           |          |     |
|                | LITTERBOX        |          |     |
|                | WORK TUB         |          | HP  |
| - TOTAL        |                  |          |     |
|                | HABIT TRACK      |          |     |
|                | PROMOTE          |          |     |
|                | LIST / SCHEDULE  |          |     |
|                | LEARN VIETNAMESE |          |     |
|                | DAILIES          | BONUS    |     |
|                |                  |          | XP  |
|                |                  |          |     |
|                |                  |          |     |
|                |                  |          |     |
|                |                  |          |     |
|                |                  |          |     |
|                |                  |          |     |
| ACHIEVEMENTS   |                  |          |     |
| QUESTS         |                  | TOTAL XP |     |
| <b>SUMMARY</b> |                  |          |     |
|                | DAILY            |          |     |
|                | ACHIEVEMENT      |          |     |
|                | QUEST            |          |     |
| 7,038          | PREVIOUS XP      |          |     |
|                | TOTAL            |          |     |
| <b>TO DO</b>   |                  |          |     |

This is a sample set up of a single page in the bullet journal that I am using (there are 27 dots across and 39 dots down). I put the values in red so that you could more easily identify what I'll be pointing out in this example.

The Musts I am using are what I was using at one point in my own bujo. Laundry must be started, or drying, or folded/put away in order to receive credit for this. If there is no laundry, there is no mark AND no penalty. Dishes means there are none, the dishwasher should be loaded, or the dishwasher should be unloaded. Litter box means I scoop daily. Work tub is a container I use at work that needs to be "prepared for tomorrow," so on days off this one doesn't apply.

I purposely used missing the Litter Box as the example, to show how I would apply the HP damage to my own level.

My own Dailies include filling out my Habit Tracker,

Promote (some promotional thing for my website), List/Schedule the "To Do" for the next day, and I added "Learn Vietnamese" so I had a fourth item in the list to use for this example. Each item gives me 5 XP per item, equalling 20, and I get a 30 XP bonus for completing the whole list.

The Achievements that I personally use are also listed with the icons. Steps, Weight, Weather, Podcast, Exercise, and Writing are what they represent. I will explain the benchmarks later, but I hit the Steps and Podcast benchmarks in the example (100,000 steps and 30 podcasts). I normally don't hit multiple Achievements in the same day, though it is possible.

Quests was way more detailed before I decided to pair it down considerably. There are several Quests I have set up but I haven't completed more than one in a single day, so I just reduced the format to just that in the example. The last thing on the page, the "Learned to Say Good Morning in Vietnamese" is what the Quest item was completed (for 100 XP).

I have all the Summary items from boxes above (which is the reason they are included in the format), and in this example I've also gained a level! I highlight the level increases (depending on the level, the color changes) so that I can more easily see where I gained levels at in my bujo.

The To Do list is just some random items for the List/Schedule to be completed.

At present (as of writing this), I hand draw the format in the example above. Since "Set Up Next Day" is actually one of my Musts (not in the above example), I end up preparing the next day so that if I'm short on time I am not scrambling to completely format the information AND fill it out at the same time. (In times of shortage of time, I usually forgo the "Set Up Next Day" item for that specific day.)

If you have a better way to record the information, or maybe you want to use the second column of your page as a notes portion instead of putting the very next day on the page, feel free to customize all you want. I am providing a framework, not a finished product. You need to use what works for you and not be completely restricted by what I am showing you that I am using.

## SET UP

This part is going to be a basic “questionnaire” to help you get started in setting up your own BuJoRPG. You can use “three” instead of “four” questions for the Musts and Daily sections if you want to start out a little slower, but having tested as much as I have, more than five is too many and will eventually cause you problems trying to keep up.

**Musts:** What are the four things you need to do on a daily basis that you aren’t actually doing on a daily basis?

Some suggestions for common items might be:

- laundry
- dishes
- yard work
- car maintenance
- dusting
- vacuuming
- setting up the next BuJoRPG day
- go for a walk
- picking up your room

These items are designed to be suggestions, but if one or more of them fits your needs, use them.

**Dailies:** What four things do you want to develop into habits that you don’t already have as habits?

Some suggestions for possible items might be:

- learn a language
- do homework
- list/schedule items (for next day, or the future)
- eat healthier (a healthy meal replacing one unhealthy meal)
- promote website
- fill out habit tracker
- clear emails

These items are designed to be suggestions and I couldn’t possibly know what else you want to do in your own life, so use whatever you’d like to develop into a habit.

**Achievements:** What items do you want to do daily (or near daily) that would be better served using individual tracking?

For examples, look at what I use in the example layout above. You could certainly also include things like scarves knitted if you knit, but something that serves more benefit to you as an individual count.

**Quests:** What two things do you want to learn or complete that you can’t necessarily do daily?

Some examples of this might be:

- learn a language
- write a novel
- build a shelf

Once you determine the two (or however many) things, you need to establish “benchmarks” for these. Benchmarks for the examples above could be (language): Learn a Phrase (100 XP), Learn 5 More Phrases (500 XP), Learn 10 More Phrases (1,000 XP), Learn Basic Syntax (5,000), Be Able to Converse Reasonably (50,000 XP)... benchmarks for (novel): Write 1,000 Words (100 XP), Write 5,000 More Words (500 XP), Write 25,000 More Words (1,000 XP), Write 50,000 More Words (5,000 XP), Complete Novel Before Editing (50,000 XP)...

You can see the pattern here. Benchmarks for Quests CAN NOT be done twice, they are there for helping you advance and not as a crutch. If you need more levels, add them. Don't reuse the things you've already accomplished (which is why I kept writing “more” in the subsequent benchmarks).

Get the format from the example into your bujo and you're ready to start earning XP!

Everyone starts at Level 1, so start making self improvement changes that make your life better. Before you know it, you'll be making so many improvements that you'll be overjoyed with your progress.

## FEEDBACK

If you set this up and see something you'd like to see included, by all means let me know! Using a feature that you have a better idea to tweak? Send me the info! Want to provide a template to the basic BuJoRPG set up? Send that template in and I'll put it up for release!

The important thing to remember is that this is literally version 1.0. There WILL be future updates, as I have already started working on the next "enhancement" of one of the subsystems. I will also be releasing templates, designed format graphics and "titles" for all of your BuJoRPG. These things will be released as well on [EmeraldSpecter.com](http://EmeraldSpecter.com), where you'll always be able to find older versions of the system. I never want someone to be forced to use a version newer than the one that works best for them.

You can contact me, DJ Allen, at [emeraldspecter.com@gmail.com](mailto:emeraldspecter.com@gmail.com). I am @EmeraldSpecter on both Twitter and Instagram.

The first template that I'll be releasing will be the "wuxia" template. I have loved Chinese martial arts movies for a long time and along with the fancy "design" elements I'll be working on for release, I will also be giving out the "belt colors" I use for my Levels.

Beyond that template, I've only got vague ideas. I'd love to hear your suggestions!