

Otherwise, you get one point on the down side.

- A confrontation may be **won**. You ended with the upper hand in the confrontation. If you initiated the confrontation, you managed to pull it through. If you were drawn into play, you successfully countered it. You get one point on the up side.

You will have to use somewhat different tactics depending on the relationship to the target and how aggressive you are. If you are cautiously hostile, you would want to get a good relation and a bad ability into play. In that case, you would get up side points in two cases of three, and the opponent gets down side points in two cases of three. If you're aggressive, it doesn't matter what abilities you get into play. You gamble on winning the confrontation, thus gaining one up side point for you and your opponent gains one down side point. If you are friendly towards the opponent, you must be very cautious. You might consider getting good abilities into play on both side and try to get the confrontation into a draw. That way, both players would get up side points.

The effects of publicity

The publicity levels are guideline of how to role-play the abilities.

- Other peoples' **hidden abilities** may not be used as facts. You may only hint about them, spread rumors and the like, but never state them as facts.
- Other peoples' **private abilities** may only be used as facts if the relationship is going both ways, that is, if there is a relation from that person back to you.
- Other peoples' **obvious abilities** may be stated as facts if they are in your presence.
- Other peoples' **public abilities** may always be used as facts.
- You may always state **your own abilities** as fact at will. This always allows other people to use them.

The publicity levels also govern when abilities may get into play.

- You need a reason to get other peoples' **hidden abilities** into play, and you need to motivate how it is done.
- Other peoples' **private abilities** need a reason and motivation as above, but the demands are not as rigid.
- Others' **obvious abilities** may be used whenever they are in your presence. They

may also be used if the abilities are mentioned.

- Others' **public abilities** may always be used.
- You may use **your own relations** at will.

How to do everything else

There are no rules for action resolution in *Aki*. *Aki* isn't "that kind of game". The answer to the questions "how do you attack someone" or "how do you kill someone" is simply "you don't".

In the few cases you want to see if a certain action succeeds, use common sense. If the action would need training or experience to perform, then the action succeeds if the character has a suitable ability. Beyond that, there are no rules for action resolution, no rules for combat or killing other people.

Note that if you're using *Aki* as a part of another role playing game, you can always use that other game's rules for action resolution.

Administration

As the episode closes, you will have to do some administration. A player who succeeds in accomplishing his temporary goal receives five up side points. A player who succeeds in accomplishing any of the three big goals receives ten up side points. The player then has to decide on a new goal to replace the old one.

Next, calculate the result. The result equals up side points minus down side points. Enter the result in the box, and then remove all points in the balance. The result must then be balanced out by spending them.

- If the result is **greater than zero**, you may get new good abilities, make existing good ones more public, or remove the bad abilities.
- If the result is **less than zero**, you may get new bad abilities, make existing bad ones more public, or remove good abilities.
- It costs five points to make an ability one level **more public**.
- It costs five points to get a **new ability**. New abilities always start as Hidden. If you want it more public, you have to pay for additional publicity levels.
- You may remove **an ability**. It costs 10 points to remove a Hidden ability, 20 points to remove a Private ability, 30 points to remove an Obvious ability, and 40 for a Public one.
- **You must use as many points as possible.**

Additional points remain to the next episode. You may have to check between one and four boxes on either the up side or the down side.



Triple Dogma award winner 2004

Best rules • Most creative • Best graphic design



© 2004 Krister Sundelin. All rights reserved. Don't pass this game on. It's mine! My own! My precious!

Aki is probably unlike any other role playing game that you've ever played. It is about relations and intrigues in a perfectly ordinary high school as portrayed in several *shoujo manga* (i.e. Japanese comics aimed at younger women). As a result, the game does not share the audience with the comics; instead, it is aimed at grown-up and serious gamers.

Aki can be played independently, but you can also use the mechanisms here as a part of any conventional role playing game. You will only need the game, paper, pen and the character sheets to play **Aki**. No dice are necessary.

CHARACTERS

The characters in this little drama are perfectly ordinary guys and gals in a perfectly ordinary high school, somewhere in the suburbs of a perfectly ordinary Japanese city, as portrayed in a perfectly ordinary *shoujo manga*. There is nothing special about the characters, except that they don't have any supernatural powers, do not hunt vampires, are not vampires, never cross paths with (or are) space princesses or space pirates, or anything similarly weird. They are perfectly ordinary, but that might be regarded as really extraordinary as far as role playing goes.

Goals

Each character has three goals: one social, one curricular and one career-related. Each character will define one temporary goal for each episode. This goal will be defined during the episode, and may change between sessions.

Abilities

Abilities are measured in four levels, describing not how powerful the ability is, but how public it is.

- **Hidden:** The character tries to hide this ability.
- **Private:** You may note the ability if you manage to come into the character's private sphere.
- **Obvious:** You will note this ability when you see the character.
- **Public:** The ability is openly talked about, and may even appear in the tabloid press.

Abilities may become more public. The ability may change value from Hidden to Private, from Private to Obvious and from Obvious to Public. However, the ability's value may not change in the other direction. If something is public, it is very hard to make it unpublic again.

There are two kinds of abilities, **Attributes** and **Relations**.



Attributes

Each character has a number of **attributes**. Attributes describe the character. They may be anything as long as they describe the character somewhat in terms of how he appears, how he is, what he knows and how he behaves. A good guideline is that most attributes equals an adjective or adverb.

Each attribute has a publicity value, as described above. Attributes may be good or bad. If they are a benefit for the character, they are good. Otherwise, they are bad.

Attribute suggestions:

Quick cell phone chatter, Sexy, Cute, Party Guy, Rich, Gangsta, Well-mannered, Spoiled, Egoistic, Shallow, Sporty, Well-trained, Hacker, Traditional, Martial Artist, Chique, Shy

Relations

Each character also has a number of **relations**. Relations are always directed at another person, and describe what your character think of that other person. The relation is made up of an adjective or an adverb, to whom the relation is directed, and the publicity value. Hence, there are two values in a relation: the target and the publicity.

You may have several relations to each person. Each relation to that person described one aspect of your relationship to that person. You may have relations towards non-player characters.

Relations may be good or bad. If the relation makes your character hostile towards the other person, then it is a bad relation. Otherwise, it is good.

Relation suggestions:

In love with, Best buddies, Member of same gang, Loyal towards, Afraid of, Rival to, Related to, Co-employed with, Suspicious towards, Dislikes, Despises, Blackmailed by, Indebted to

The Balance

The last value in the game is **the balance**. The balance consists of two parts, the **up side** and the **down side**. You may get points on both sides as abilities come into play.

When the episode has ended, you sum up the balance to a result. The result consists of the up side points minus the down side points. The result may be zero, greater than zero or less than zero. If the result equals zero, the session is effectively over. No need to worry. If the result is greater than zero, you must get rid of the excess by getting good abilities, making good abilities more public, remove bad abilities or any combination thereof. If the result is less than zero, you have to get rid of the "debt" in similar ways, by getting bad abilities, making bad abilities more public, removing good abilities or any combination.

Create a character

To play **Aki**, you need a character. First, define who the character is, in terms of name, gender, age, siblings, mum, dad, and the like.

Second, define the character's **goals**. Remember, you need one social, one curricular and one career-related goal.

Finally, define the game values of the character. You get ten points to buy good abilities and ten points to buy bad abilities.

You pay for the publicity levels. One point gets you a Hidden ability, two points gets you a Private ability, three points a Obvious ability and four points a Public ability.

You pay for good abilities from the pool for good abilities, and you pay for bad abilities from the pool for bad abilities.

You must have at least one attribute and at least one relation. Otherwise, you may distribute your points as you wish.

When both pools are empty, and you have a total of ten points worth of publicity levels in good abilities and ten points worth of publicity levels in bad abilities, the character is finished and the game may begin.

PLAYING THE GAME

You play **Aki** in **episodes**, where each episode spans over a couple of hours. A few minutes for book-keeping ends each episode. The episodes are called "episodes", not "missions", "assignments" or "adventures", as the episodes do not contain any adventures and you rarely or never get any missions from anybody.

Aki is player-driven. The game master acts mostly as a moderator or referee to call judgment on the use of abilities if the players don't agree, to keep order at the session, and to play any other character that the players don't play.

Episodes

A typical episode begins with the **opening**. The opening is supposed to get all players going. During the opening, each player will have the chance to get one (1) relation into play. You may never open an episode with the same relation with which you opened the previous episode. This rule exists to prevent that the episodes get too much alike. If this had been an anime episode, the mandatory j-pop song would be played at the end of the opening and the opening credits would roll by.

After the opening comes the **middle part**. In the middle part, the relations in play from the opening will evolve and deepen. As the opening ends, each player will have a temporary goal. As long as any player lacks a temporary goal, the episode may not proceed to

the end. If necessary, the game master will have to assign a temporary goal to the character.

The last part is the **end**. In this part, most relations that came into play in the opening will be closed, at least to a level of equilibrium. At least one player should fulfill his temporary goal.

"In play"

To get abilities "in play" is paramount to **Aki**. It is not hard to get abilities into play. You simply combine one of your own relations with one of someone else's relations or attributes. This is called "an ability pair". The relation used must be one directed towards the character whose ability you wish to use. If you don't have a relation towards that person, you may not use his abilities. If you have more than one relation towards the person, you may choose which one to use. When you have the relation "in play", you role play it with the attribute as the "ante".

You may never deliberately get your own attributes in play. Attributes may only get into play by someone else using it as a part of an ability pair. You may only use relations yourself.

When you wish to get an ability pair gets into play, simply tell the game master and the other player which abilities you want to get into play, and then role-play it. Sometimes, the game master may judge that an ability pair has come into play as a result of two players role-playing.

You may get non-player characters abilities into play as if the non-player character were an ordinary character. The game master may also do this towards the players, as if he were playing a character like the players. This option may be used to get the players going. By getting the characters' abilities into play, their balance will shift and they will have to do something about it.

There are three possible outcomes of having abilities in play. Which one depends on how the confrontation was role-played. Most of the time, it should be rather obvious what the outcome is, but if it isn't, the game master will have to call judgment.

- You may **lose** the confrontation. The other gets out of the play in a better status. If you initiated the play, the opponent countered it, and if you were drawn into play, you didn't manage to counter it. If the play is lost, you get one point on the down side of the balance.
- A confrontation may result in a **draw**. There is no clear winner of the confrontation. In this case, it is your part of the ability pair that defines the result. If your part of the pair was a good ability, you get one point on the up side.

