

Pirates



Adventure on the High Seas



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☠ Getting Started ☠

To start I suggest sitting down and discussing the type of game you all want to play. Do you all want to start as pirates? Do some of you want to role-play becoming a pirate? Do you all want to be landlubbers of some description? Do you want to play pirate hunters? Only your group can answer these questions and it will obviously have an effect on the types of Pirates the players create. Also discuss morality, some players may want to be blood thirsty killers while others will want something more sanitised.

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Nomenclature

I've changed around some of the nomenclature so that it fits the genre a little better although you are obviously free to ignore these simple changes. Characters are now known as Pirates (with a capital P), the group as the Crew (note capitals again), the Beat the odds roll becomes Roll the bones, FU Points become Plot Points, and Drives and Relationships have been subsumed into broader Subplots, but I'll explain that one a little later.

Finally I've introduce a name for the concept of Limited and Fragile Conditions. Limited Conditions are basically short lived, lasting only one or maybe two turns before disappearing naturally, for example being Beccalmed. A Fragile Condition is a Condition that is consumed once it has granted a Bonus or Penalty die, for example temporary wealth, a Pirate may have a sudden surplus but once it's spent, it's gone. Basic Conditions remain, and unless Fragile and Limited Conditions are explicitly mentioned it is a regular Condition just as you've used in the past.

☠ Avast ye Scoundrel! ☠

OK, so character creation is a little different for this hack of FU not very, just a little, so I'll outline it a little further than other hacks.

What Kind of Pirate be Ye?

Choose a character concept, this can be anything from a Bloodthirsty pirate to a Refined Governor. You should be guided by the decisions the Crew made earlier.

What can Ye do?

Next we need to select some Descriptors per the normal FU rules. The Descriptors have changed a little here to reflect the nature of the genre.

Background

This is the Pirate's life prior to them signin' 'On account' (becoming a pirate). This Background needs to be defined a little, discuss amongst the group what this Background influences and write four 'Definitions' underneath the Background. These are the instances when the Background grants a Bonus die, it is important to note that you can only ever gain one Bonus per Descriptor even if two Definitions apply to the same task.



Role

This is the pirate role that the Pirate is capable of performing well. There is a list of Pirate Actions that each premade Role can accomplish but this does not stop you from creating your own, simply write it in and Define it with four Definitions as you did with the Background. Two Roles are required per Pirate.

Flaw

Finally select an appropriate Flaw as per the usual FU rules. There are some great potential pirate-like Flaws, really ham it up!

Gear

Select two pieces of gear as you would normally. One item can be a parrot, monkey, whatever on the Narrator's authority.

What's yer Plan?

This section deals with Subplots. Subplots are those elements of the Pirate that draw them into adventure, they can be Drives (and I suggest one is) with all of the usual Drive elements of Obstacles and Effort, or Relationships, or whatever else may drag the Pirate into adventure. I suggest three to five subplots, obviously the more subplots, the more the Pirate has to achieve and a wider pool of adventure options for the players to choose from. Completed Subplots can be easily replaced with new ones, especially ones that increase the drama, so you've defeated Baron Raymondo, now you must face Montalban.

I suggest the players also write down five succinct quotes, something to hang their Pirate persona from. I mean most players are going to create some sort of catchphrase, so why not get them down now?

So, Who be Ye?

Now name your Pirates, select appropriate nationalities and religions. Nationality and Religion can run hand-in-hand, on a really broad brush basis most English are going to be Protestant, Spanish will be Roman Catholic, French will likely be Catholic too, with the Dutch as Protestant. Of course they don't have to run this way, maybe that's why they are pirates! Of course if you wish to bypass this potentially thorny issue then everyone is a religious and simply don't record it on the Pirate sheet.



PIRATE CREATION OVERVIEW

Decide on a Pirate Concept

Create one Background

Select or create two Roles

Create one Flaw

Create two items of Gear

Create three to five Subplots

Create up to five Quotes

Name them, select a Nationality and an optional Religion

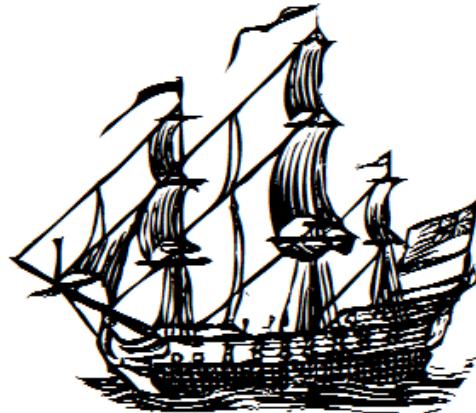
☠ Life on the High Seas ☠

This chapter deals with life onboard ship and everything sea-based.

She be a Real Beauty

I think a very simple ship system is required to fit in with the FU philosophy, and therefore I present the following options.

Each Ship has two Descriptors. These Descriptors can be almost anything, from the Shallow draught of a Sloop to the Acres of Sail of a Galleon. These Descriptors come into play just as Pirate Descriptors, effectively a Ship and its Crew become a character with regards to Rolling the Bones.



To help out here are some sample Descriptors and the types of Ship on which they are applicable:

Sloop and similar small craft

Shallow draught, Highly manoeuvrable, Sail close to the wind, Easily capsized, Exposed to the elements

Brig and other medium sized ships

Ocean going vessel, Batten down the hatches, Good visibility

Galleon and other large vessels

Acres of sail, Sturdy hull, Tear through a storm, Luxurious living, Look out as far as the eye can see

Masts

As well as the Descriptors each Ship is also rated per the number of Masts it has, from 1 Mast for the smallest vessels all the way up to 5 Mast Ships-of-the-line and similar. For each Mast the ship receives 10 shipbuilding points, these are only important in the creation of the ship, although a little re-jigging can be done at the discretion of the Narrator. Each shipbuilding point can be spent on the following maximums:

15 Crewmembers living space

1 unit of Cargo space

2 Guns

At least a tenth of the points must be spent on Crewmembers living space. This ensures a healthy body of men not over-exerted by a simple voyage. It can get by with a skeleton crew of a minimum 5 Crewmembers per Mast, or 10% of the maximum Crewmembers as determined by the shipbuilding process, whichever is greater.

A Ship can also suffer one Condition for every Mast it possesses.

For example here is a 3 Mast trading vessel, perhaps a Dutch Fluyt:

45 Crewmembers (3pts)

15 Skeleton crew (3 Masts x 5 > 10% of 90)

24 Cargo hold space (24pts)

6 Guns (3pts)

3 Conditions

As another example here is a military 5 Mast vessel, a mighty Ship-of-the-line:

360 Crewmembers (24pts)

36 Skeleton crew (10% of 360 > 5 Mast x 5)

10 Cargo hold (10pts)

32 Guns (16pts)

5 Conditions

Once the ship has been designed it should be recorded on the Ship sheet, or is easily noted on a piece of paper or index card.

Boats

Anything smaller than a Ship is a Boat, a simple rowing boat or makeshift raft not capable of sustaining just one Condition. The size and other make-up of the boat is left to the narrative importance. If a Pirate wishes it to be slightly larger for some reason, like changing a 5 berth boat to a 6 berth to save a loved one (or even themself!), they can spend a Plot Point to influence the Narrator's decision.



Sail the Ocean Blue

So, now we have our Ships how do they sail? First we need a map of the Caribbean, or any other area you wish to adventure. Helpfully (for us!) PEG have a Caribbean map download available from their website www.peginc.com that includes a square grid, it is intended for their own Pirates of the Spanish Main game but it serves us perfectly too. The Narrator copy also has the prevailing winds for the Caribbean area, and it is up to him which map to show. Personally I tell the Crew of the prevailing winds but show the uncluttered map for clarity and keep the wind map for myself.

For ease of play I assume all Ships can travel two squares per day with the wind, and only one square per day in any other direction. A ship can try and travel faster using any applicable Descriptors it might have which adds an additional square of movement, diagonal movement is fine. I tend to be quite harsh, larger vessels tend to suffer far more when travelling into the wind and the Ship's Descriptors should reflect this fact. A common Limited Condition is to be Be Calmed negating all movement this day, and hence possibly the next.

The only Ship I track tends to be the Crew's, visibility is limited to the eight squares surrounding the Pirate's vessel, except where a Descriptor may come into play similar to the ship's movement above. Detected ships are usually placed in one of these eight squares.

To land at a port or beach simply travel to that square on the map, the Narrator may of course make things more difficult for you, a narrow entrance, or unseen reef, or shifting sand banks for which there is more in the Gazette later which details which ports have well known navigational issues.

Combat

So we've determined everything from the type of ship to how to move around the Caribbean, now we need rules for Gunnery and Boarding actions.

To initiate ship combat the two ships should occupy the same square on the map, make a careful note of which ship enters the square with the wind advantage or weather gauge, if any, this can play a major part in the outcome of the battle.

In combat we need to know a little more about the relative distance of the ships. To do this there are six distance bands:

- Out of sight
- Extreme
- Long
- Medium
- Close
- Board-to-board

Most combats start at the Extreme or Long range band, Narrator's (or random) discretion. Each ship then tries to manoeuvre into the range band they are most comfortable, for merchant ships this likely to be Out of sight, while pirates usually want Board-to-board so they can board and loot the prize!

Each turn the Crew roll whatever Descriptors they can bring to bear against the Descriptors of the opposition vessel, the vessel with the weather gauge can count this in their Descriptors.

For each Yes answer the Crew's Ship can move towards or away one range band from the opposition vessel, for a Yes, and... result this can increase to two range bands. Similarly for a No or No, and... result the opposition vessel can move its required direction either one or two range bands.

Once an opposition ship is in range of the Ship's Guns a broadside may be attempted. This involves manoeuvring for position followed by the volley, if possible. Start by applying any Descriptors appropriate to manoeuvring, including the weather gauge, to see if a broadside is possible. Then you need to compare the relative firepower's of the two ships, if one ship has an advantage this counts as a Bonus or Penalty die in any cannon fire situation, or if it is a substantial imbalance two Bonus or Penalty dice may be given. Again any Yes indicates a solid Condition, with but...s indicating a Limited or Fragile Condition at the Narrator's discretion as appropriate, and and...s indicating a further Condition.

EXAMPLE

This may seem a little complicated but here's a quick example to show you how it works:

The Crew are aboard The Reaver, a 2 Mast ship with Lightning speed, and Tight turn as Descriptors.

They spy a 3 Mast trading vessel down wind and give chase. They easily catch the trader on the Caribbean map and have the Weather gauge for the ensuing encounter.

The starting distance is Extreme with The Reaver attempting to close the gap to board while the trader is running scared for Out of sight. The Reaver collects two Bonus dice and Rolls the Bones for Yes, but... reducing the range to Long but temporarily acquiring the Condition 'Snagged lines'.

The Crew decide not to fire as they wish to retain the prize intact. The merchantman is hopelessly out gunned but desperate to outrun the pirates tries to manoeuvre for a broadside. The merchantman is at a severe disadvantage and the Crew need to roll 2 Bonus dice to avoid the merchantman. Rolling the Bones yields a Yes result meaning that everything continues as normal.

The next round The Reaver only has one Bonus die but Rolls the Bones for a Yes, and... result reducing the distance to Close. In order to soften up the merchantman they decide to give it a good broadside, taking everything into account they roll 2 Bonus dice for a Yes result and roll a Bonus die for the actual firing inflicting a Holed Condition.

The now panicked merchantman tries one last attempt to attack the pirate vessel but with 3 Bonus dice the pirates Roll the Bones for a solid Yes, and... manoeuvring result which the Narrator decides is a further Condition of 'Snapped rudder' leaving the poor merchantman in a poor state, hoping it will save their lives they instantly raise the white flag of surrender.



One final note on ship combat, each turn that a battle ensues you may move the ships an appropriate number of squares on the Caribbean map, always at the slowest vessels speed. This means that a ship close to port may be able to evade long enough to make it back to safety.

Of course if port, and safety, is back towards the attacker this means travelling towards them and evading it at close range. This will be particularly hazardous if it involves going against the wind, perhaps even suicidal! Also don't think pirates hold all the aces here, try pitting a two Master up against the Royal Navy's finest and see who comes out smiling!

To make the record keeping easier there is a Range chart in the appendix with some simple ship counters, helpful when you are attacking the numerous Treasure fleet!

Crew

So you have your ship, and your Pirates what about your crew? Well here's how to design them. Your original crew make-up needs to be designed before play between the Crew and the Narrator. First you need to decide numbers, I can't give hard and fast rules here as this will all depend on the ship design and the nature of the beginning session so you will need to decide between you how many crewmembers are onboard, invariably this is unlikely to be 100% of the ship's capacity but can be as low as 50 or even 40% if this greater than the Skeleton crew. If you really cannot decide roll 1 die x 10% plus 30% for a total of 40 to 90%.

Next you need to determine who the Captain is, this can be one of the Crew by all means but it would be inadvisable to 'lord it' over the other players otherwise they may find themselves on the wrong of a plank heading for a marooning! If the adventure warrants it this can equally be a Narrator Character, but the Crew should definitely harbour aspirations of Captaincy.

Now you have a number of crew you need to give them two Descriptors at least one of which must be a Flaw! There are some classic Flaws for pirate crew like Bloodthirsty, Lazy, Gambling, Insubordinate, Spendthrift, Gluttony and Greedy just to name a few, have fun! The Narrator should strive to work these into the plot as often as possible, for comic relief as much as a hindrance.

There is a space on the Ship sheet to record details of the Ship's crew including names, ages and nationalities if the Narrator so wishes.

Specialists

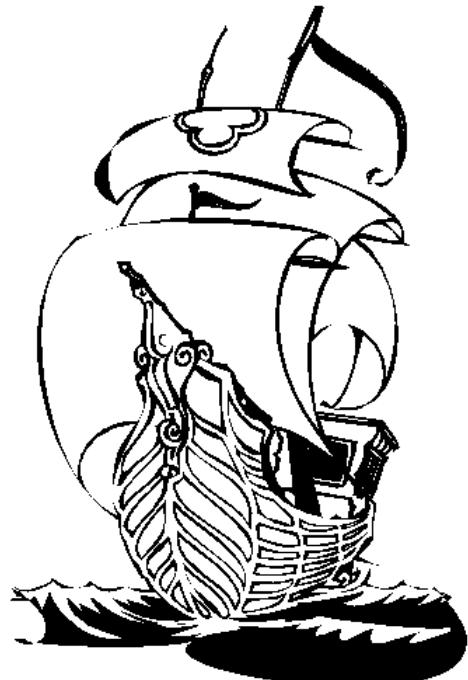
A Specialist is an experienced crewmember able to grant the whole Ship a Bonus die when his Role is called into action through the leadership and training in his field.

You need to determine if there are any Specialists onboard, initially I suggest not having any Specialists onboard the Crew's ship, Specialists are experts in their field and being given one at the outset belies their potential importance.

Of course things aren't just that simple, each Specialist should also have Flaw. In fact the Narrator is free to create an entire Pirate profile if he so wishes, but should bear in mind that they should never overshadow the Pirates.



Of course any Pirate with an appropriate skill can be a ship's Specialist too.



SHIP CREATION OVERVIEW

Decide on the number of Masts the Ship has

Create two Descriptors that highlight the Ship's Qualities (or Flaws)

Spend the Masts x 10 Shipbuilding points on:

15 Maximum Crew (at least 10% of the Shipbuilding points)

1 Cargo hold

2 Guns

Calculate the Skeleton crew required, the greater of 10% of the Maximum Crew or 5 x Masts

Assign one Role to the Crew

Create one Flaw for the Crew

Decide on the Ship's Captain

Discuss and design the Ship's Specialists, if any

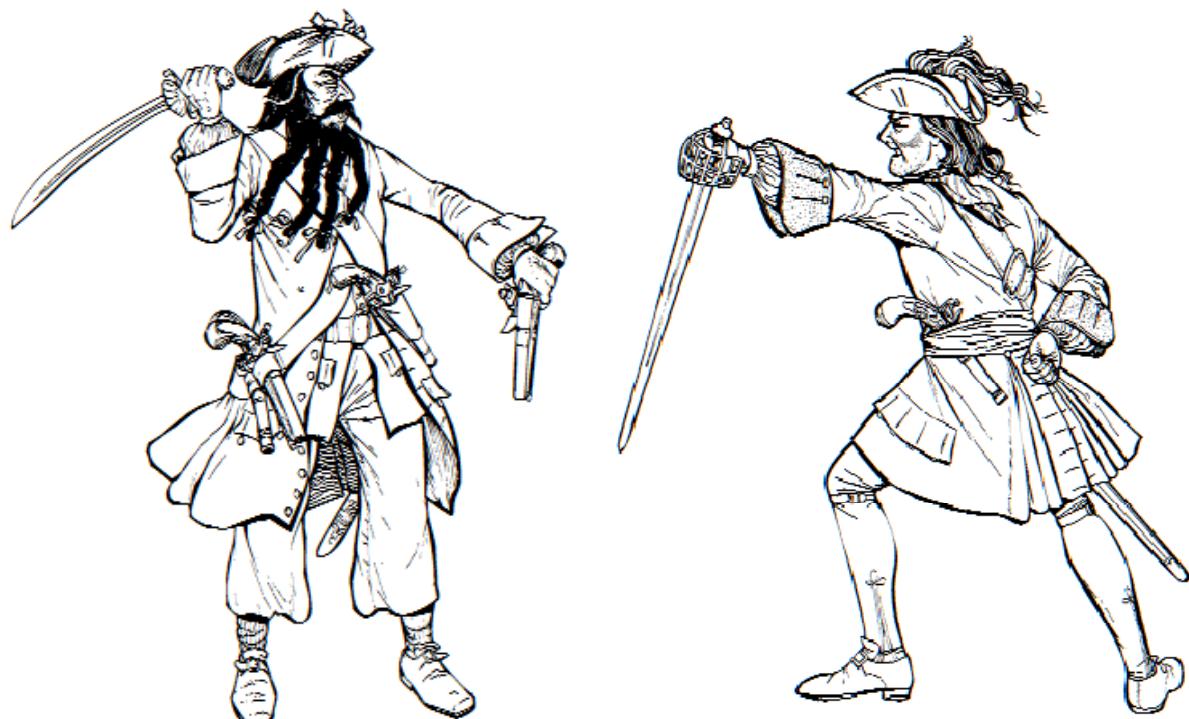
☠ Live by the Sword... ☠

This is a very short section detailing a few more hard and fast rules so that combat can run more smoothly, a and a section on optional fencing schools or academies.

There are a few options for running combat in FU all related to the scale of action involved, these are:

Scene based Combat

This is one roll to determine the outcome of the whole fight. It is very simple and lets the game proceed as quickly as possible, suitable for those combats which aren't significant. Even here there are two ways of phrasing these fights:



Do we defeat them?

This is the standard question usually raised by Pirates, however there is a problem here if this is simply meant to be a little bump in the adventure, what happens if the Pirates roll a No result? This in theory leaves the opposition on their feet and what then? Of course this is a very valid method of running combat and every adventure needs a little diversion, but this is not always a desirable outcome for anyone.

Do we defeat them without trouble?

Subtley different, this question *always* ensures the opposition is defeated, it is simply a matter of whether any complications arise. Of course not everyone will be happy with a simple mechanic like that, but it neatly sidesteps the problems outlined above. Any No result can be interpreted as any type of Condition the Narrator chooses.



Exchange based Combat

In this system when the Pirates Roll the Bones any Yes result means the Pirates lands a telling blow while any No result means that the enemy gains the upper hand. The but... results can be used to scale down the severity of the Condition to a Limited or Fragile Condition, say by disarming or putting them on a uneven footing, things that will hamper them for a while or until they can remove it with an appropriate Roll the Bones result.

In this style of combat three ordinary Conditions is usually enough for a Pirate or significant enemy to be 'Taken out'. For lesser enemies a reduced number of Conditions can be required as necessary.

Blow-for-Blow Combat

This is the most detailed system, every swing of the axe or thrust of the sword requires a Roll the Bones check. This makes offensive and defensive Descriptors more applicable rather than being rolled into a general 'combat' Descriptor.

As for the exchange based system, three ordinary Conditions is about the right number to simulate an exciting fight with the but results indicating a Limited or Fragile Condition, as modified for the importance of the opponent.

Which system the Crew decides for more detailed combat is a matter of opinion and can change during the adventure, just make sure everyone agrees which is being used first.

☠ Prepare t'board ye Lubberly Swabs ☠

Eventually the Crew will want to board, or repel, another ship. The starting position needs to be the ships 'Board to board' per the ship range. The initial rush to the other ship should always be role-played out as this is the most dangerous part of the operation. The first person on the ship, if they survive, was always given the first, free choice of the booty so this encouraged reckless behaviour. Once aboard there are a number of ways this can be handled laid out below:

Attached

In this system the crew is divided amongst the Pirates and becomes part of that Pirate 'team'. These are then offset by the opposing team and Bonus and Penalty dice allocated owing to size of the respective teams and their Crew Descriptor.

Example

3 Crew and 76 crewmembers board a merchant brig of 42 hands. Each Pirate therefore has 25 crew backing them up, while being opposed by 14 men. Captain McCarthy therefore has a serious advantage when facing against his opponent and a Bonus die (possibly two if the Narrator is feeling generous) due to strength of numbers in addition to his normal Descriptors.

Detailed

In this system the number of crew is much more important. Effectively each multiple of 15 (1 point in the shipbuilding phase) is counted as a separate 'Condition' with the crew acting as a single character, or group of characters depending on how the Narrator deems it to be split. So for a standard 3 Condition fight the crew would be divided into teams of 45. Always round up to keep the number simple.

Example

2 Crew and 67 crewmembers versus 89 opposing seamen. This represents 5 points of crew, against 6 points. The Pirate's crew luckily are Swordsmen granting a Bonus die against the opposition although lost with the Penalty die for lower numbers. They now fight off as two separate forces, one with 5 Conditions and the opposing force with 6.

Example 2

The same make up as above except the Narrator breaks the crew into 30s, making two 3 Conditions teams and one 1 Condition versus three 3 Condition teams. The crew get their Bonus die due to their Descriptor and the third team suffers a Penalty die for overwhelming numbers (29 versus 7). They are now effectively 3 separate fights.

Narrative

This is the most loosely defined system whereby the Narrator effectively predetermines the result, or allows the action of the Pirates to determine the outcome. Some don't like the arbitrary nature of this style.

Example

4 Crew and 128 crewmembers versus 298 marines. Unfortunately the Crew decided to attack a large naval vessel and are hopelessly outnumbered. The Narrator decides this is a fight they can't win but can escape from if they make the right choices and perform well. In the first round all Pirates see off their opposite number and the Narrator decides this bodes well, the crew are holding their own against the overwhelming numbers. Second round the Pirates fare a little worse, one taking a Condition and two others a Limited Condition, the tide of battle is definitely turning against the crew. At this point the Pirates may see it's hopeless and try to depart elegantly, or fight for another round at which point it will be hopeless, although with a chance of escape if they narrate well.

Length of Combat

Another element that may be used to govern boarding and large scale battle actions is the length that combat is allowed to continue. I've laid my thoughts out below:

One roll

All factors are brought into consideration and one roll is made. This governs the outcome of the whole fight. It is obviously very quick but does suffer from lack of detail, how many of the victors are taken out? How comprehensive is the victory?

Open ended

The fight continues as long as it is entertaining and one side has not been decimated or suffered from a catastrophic loss of morale. This can obviously lead to very long combats indeed, however the speed and ease of the FU system will make even long combats very entertaining and fast so this is still a very valid choice.



Fixed rounds

This is the half way house of the above two combat lengths. Rather than allow a large labourious battle drag on for a couple of minutes, restrict the number of rounds and use the situation at the end of the rounds to be indicative of the outcome.

☠ Live by the Heart... ☠

Swashbuckling is not just rushing around armed with a sword, it also involves the fine art of amour. To replicate such a system I present the following optional rules, of course a 'professional courtesan' doesn't need to be seduced by a dashing sea captain she's well recompensed for her endeavours.

The system is basically a way to win the heart of a fair maiden and can be ignored completely, it constitutes a number of steps which must be negotiated in order to win the lady over.

These steps are:

- The introduction
- A dance
- A gift
- A private talk
- A kiss
- Proposal
- Marriage
- Consumation



Judicious use of rivals, the maiden's temperament, the Pirate's standing, the value of the gift, and the parent's attitude should all be used by the Narrator, if they feel it appropriate. The Narrator may also skip steps, if the lady is at sea for instance a dance may not be possible.

At each step the Pirate is required to successfully Roll the Bones using whatever Descriptors and Conditions the Narrator believes work in benefit or hinderance to the task. A successful roll with 'and' may skip a step completely while a No is left to the discretion of the Narrator to determine the outcome.

Of course the above can be left to role-play completely, but this should provide a useful guide nevertheless.

☠ Shore Leave ☠

This section aims to keep things simple, while still having enough information to keep the game interesting.

Trading

This whole trading section is optional, some Crew's will want to know what ill gotten gains they've accrued to the final peso de ocho (piece of eight), others just won't care and can hand wave the entire situation, if your Crew falls into this category I've got some helpful guidelines further on that will enable you to do this with more confidence.

Cargo

I have included the following simple cargo types:

- Food
- Goods
- Slaves
- Luxuries
- Spice

You can of course add and subtract from this list at will, want Sugar and Tobacco? Livestock? Just add them in. If you just want 'Cargo', go ahead there is nothing to stop you. Slaves? Well I felt I had to include this, the 'Golden triangle' simply demanded it, of course slaves don't have to be a part of your game, just as any of the other cargo types have to be included.

What follows are rules for cargo costs and selling prices, for those that want fine detail:

Food	Stock 1	Price 1d x 50
Goods	Stock 3	Price 1d x 100
Slaves	Stock 6	Price 1d x 200
Luxuries	Stock 10	Price 1d x 200
Spice	Stock 12	Price 1d x 300
Cargo	Stock 6	
Ships	Price 800 + (2d x 100)	per intact Mast

Stock roll 1 to 4 dice depending on the location size and wealth level, deduct the Stock figure and this is the amount of Cargo currently available to buy, if it's zero or negative there isn't any.

Price is the amount of Doubloons required to purchase each unit of Cargo or how much the Crew will receive for each unit of Cargo it sells. If the current location has high enough demand, i.e. no current Stock then the price will be increased by 1d6 per unit before the multiplication calculation.

Cargo is for those not interested in recording the minutiae of trade transactions. Roll Stock as normal (i.e. 1 to 4 dice depending on size and wealth) it Costs 1 (Doubloon, Piece of eight, Guinea, Gold coin, simply Wealth or Money, whatever) per unit. Selling price is 2 per unit unless there is no stock in which case it is 3.

Dividing the Plunder

All money is the Ship's until the crew divide the plunder. It is common for important personnel (Specialists) to receive more share than others with the Captain sometimes taking 3 shares to the common pirates' 1. If the crew is not intending to divide the plunder just yet record any money on the Ship's record sheet for latter.

In the detailed system this can be done with the actual monetary values simply add all the crew's shares together, counting Specialists as 2 and Captain as 3 before working out the Pirates' proportion. After dividing the plunder the crew will go and spend their ill gotten gains immediately and so will be penniless for game purposes, the Pirates may do as they wish.

For the simpler system each Pirate receives the Ship's plunder multiplied by their share. So if *The Reaper* had Plunder totalling 25, a Pirate Captain would receive 75 (25 x 3).

Whatever system used the Ship will retain roughly 10% (or any amount to make the calculations easier!) for future campaign expenses. In the simpler system this will be simply be 5 Plunder retained.

Narrative Plunder

The Pirates can nearly always afford what they immediately require for their Roles and Background, a Noble would have fine clothes for instance, while a Navigator would have his sextant. When they attack a ship and take the Plunder, don't record it just assume it is masses of Doubloons, Pieces of eight, Guineas, Livres, Ducats, Jewels whatever. When the Pirates next make port at a suitable location, so a Jesuit Mission is unlikely, the crew can blow the lot in a orgy of revelry. To make it more interesting get the Crew to describe their Pirate's antics and that of the crew. Whatever the situation the Crew are always brought back to normal levels of wealth for the next situation.

The Narrator can always describe slim pickings if he is so inclined so that there is only ever one blowout per adventuring session, alternatively he can describe wealth beyond their dreams and see the Pirates get creative about how they blow it all, they can always invest of course, especially if it is substantial, or there is the literary favourite of burying it somewhere!



Crew

One reason to make port is pick up experience, and not so experienced sailors. After every Dividing the plunder the crew will lose approximately 1d x 5% of the crew, maybe more and sometimes even none.

However there are always 1d to 4d, depending on the size of the settlement, more willing to sign 'On the account'. If this is a significant number of new personnel the Narrator should consider the effect on the Ship's crew Role and Flaw. The Crew can of course be part of these discussions if the Narrator wishes.

Specialists may also be available, this is left entirely to the discretion of the Narrator, as are the type and Flaw.

☠ Tales of Derring-Do ☠

This is the obligatory Narrator section. I won't insult you with how to write adventures and run campaigns but I will try and give genre specific advice where I think it helps.



Swashbuckling

I'll start with swashbuckling, I believe this to be a delivery of a game rather than the game itself, oh sure FU will certainly help, it's quick and easy, but swashbuckling is something else.

So what makes a game swashbuckling?

Panache

Everything should be done in style no cowering behind crates, instead swinging from chandeliers, pulling carpets, jumping from rope to rope in rigging, that's swashbuckling. Encourage this from your Pirates, perhaps with Plot Points so that when they try that mad stunt they have a safety net. The Crew should feel safe that they won't get their head blown off in the build up to a boarding action.

Humour

Every game can do with a bit of humour, hopefully there are enough cues with the Pirate Quotes and the nature of the genre that humour should flow naturally. I don't think most groups have anything to worry about here, but if it is a problem always try and introduce a humorous scene or Narrator Character in the session somewhere, like a lisping noble who spits over everyone he speaks to, or a 'good time' girl who claims to have special powers, unfortunately they are of petty larceny. Sometimes even a silly name in this genre can work, an Inn called the Fawcett Inn for example run by Mr Fawcett (I actually know of this pub!).

Story

This is the big one and can be broken down thusly:

Pacing

Everything should be quick and done tomorrow, or in the nick of time. Make the Pirate's act quickly and keep the action flowing, if you think I've given a ruling but can't find it, just fudge it for FU's sake! By the way nothing written here is set in stone by any means, I've had little time to playtest this (and mostly none at all) so take what works and drop the rest.

Grand plots

There should always be a Crew goal, driving them to greater heights and adventures. Trying to stop a despot, or a ghostly ship, or remove a curse, or Davy Jones, or find the fountain of youth, or win a pardon, or find true wealth, or whatever. A grand plot will add drive to a campaign, and so some of the Pirate's individual Subplots all connect this grand plot in some way, what a coincidence! Not! Tie it all together.

Good vs evil

A pirate campaign could get pretty dark, pretty quickly. The Pirate's should all err on the good side, they should have clear goals that aren't evil, and behave themselves perhaps a little more than true pirates. By all means sack a

village but draw the line at assaulting innocents, I'm fairly sure I don't have to mention this to most groups but there are always players who want to seem to push boundaries. If you do end up in a bad situation don't forget that evil always get its retribution in swashbuckling media and role-playing should be no different. 'What's that 3 pirate hunters I hear you say, well perhaps word got out about your activities in Curacao'. Don't forget this also holds true for enemies, they should be despicable and get what's coming to them!

Character focussed

Hopefully the Pirate creation guidelines and the advice here should be making this one obvious, especially for a sandbox style of game. But to reiterate once more, mine your Crew's sheets, they hold everything your Pirate's want and are therefore a goldmine of ideas. Also remember to link things together where possible, Port Royale's Governor's missing son, that finely clad gentleman you pulled from the water, could they be linked? YES! Now how did that happen? And who's going to comfort the son's fiancee?

Don't also forget that this is not necessarily the Pirate's wishes, it's the players, so when they start wildly speculating jot a few of their ideas down for later, you'd be amazed at what they link together for you.

Losing

Thankfully FU has this built in to some degree. Basically in swashbuckling the hero's sometimes lose, they get captured and left on some mechanical deathtrap while the villain goes for afternoon tea, or left to rot in some cell. Some players hate this, so try and manage their manage their expectations. For example my young daughter got captured in one adventure and had a sulk, until I reminded her that all good heroes get captured, Jack Sparrow, Wesley/The Dread Pirate Roberts, Luke Skywalker, even Guybrush Threepwood! It's just a good excuse to let Pirate's do other cool stuff, like bribing a guard or picking a lock, or applying leverage in the right spot.

Sandboxing

OK, so you're pumped to be running a pirates campaign, but wait a minute what do pirates do! Oh no, ship fights, hundreds of Caribbean islands and the people and the potential enemies, all those choices, I'll never be able to do it!

Of course you can it just takes a little preparation and some good winging it skills, or if you feel you lack those, a ton of random tables!

A pirate campaign can be run entirely from the tables presented in the appendix, along with some of the Narrator help sheets. I'll explain what I've done:



Location Tags

The Caribbean is a big place with hundreds of settlements how do I keep a record of those? Start by using the Locations sheet. This is a place to record every detail of every island and location, sound impossible, not so, jot down a few Tags for each location, a lot of the work has been done for you, you just need to add those islands that come up in your games. I do this by putting a dot on my Narrator map and a letter, I then have a sheet with these additional islands detailed in alphabetical order.

So say the Pirate's get marooned on island P just south of Hispaniola. I put my dot and write P and then assign Tags - Native village, Voodoo priest and Buried treasure on a whim (I could have randomly generated these). So what now? It follows the Pirates will meet the Natives somehow and the Voodoo priest, is this good or bad for them? That's up to you, so how does the treasure come into this? That's up to you too. The burying pirate may return suddenly, the Natives may be scared of it or guarding it, or dug it up and have a fortune in jewellery on. So many possible ways it could play out and that's just from three Tags. Whatever you decide note this all down in simple form and put it in the

Notes section, then when, if, they return it can be exactly as the players left it, or it can be different which leads them in to a separate adventure.

Say a sea battle takes place outside Cartagena, how does this affect the settlement's relations towards you, it depends on Cartagena's current nationality and the nationality of the ship attacked, they won't like it if a Spanish warship has been sunk for example. Put a Negative in the Relationship box and you know that you're not welcome. But if it's Dutch? Well keep a record of who's at war with whom, there are only four major nations so it's not difficult to record and have that influence the reaction.

Pre-game Preparation

I suggest rolling up the random tables ahead of time as far as possible, just write them down in a simple list or use the Encounters sheet for people. Then you have access to someone's name, nationality and concept at your finger tips rather than making your Crew wait while you roll up yet another Narrator Character.

This also offers you another opportunity to sway the adventure. Let's say your Crew encountered an overzealous Governor but still managed to escape from the city, well thankfully that's the last they see of him! Guess what, next time you need a Dutch Governor guess who'll it be? That's right simply add his details on to the Encounter sheet and he's there waiting for you to drop him back in. If it's a poorer settlement then he's obviously been punished for letting them escape, that's a bad grudge to hold, if it's richer then it's not damaged him too badly but maybe he's managed to conceal it, he wouldn't want that secret out would he?

So there you have it, just by putting a seemingly innocuous Narrator Character back on the list you are entangling them in the Crew's adventure. So every time they encounter someone make copious use of the Notes section and make sure there's a future encounter.

It doesn't take much to build up a reputation and interlocking web of relationships and intrigue, and it's good fun!

Your first Time Out

For your first game session you have to get all the separate Pirates onto the same ship. Look at all the Pirate backgrounds and where they are most likely to meet, for example a Governor's daughter is unlikely to be frequenting port inns, and more likely to be encountered on a prize ship. Next see how you can weave these all together fairly quickly, a great idea is smack bang into an action scene. You get to decide initial sides, location etc. just chuck them all in and when they're the last ones standing (because the *will* be the last ones standing)

they all agree to join together. Some players may get snarky about this, but remember this is just the beginning, five-ten minutes later they'll have forgotten about it. In fact you can be even more explicit about it, if one player seems out of place tell them they get introduced shortly. Most player's will readily accept this as long as the wait is not long.

If all that fails I suggest for your first game you put them all together in a typical piratical inn in Tortuga, or Port Royal or any other appropriate town. Make them select a really short term goal, why they're in the inn and why they want to get away, this can be related to their longer term goals if they wish but has to be short term, say information. The inn's packed because a pirate captain is recruiting for a new crew for a daring mission and the Pirates want to be part of it. The example characters later on are ideal for this initial setup.

If that fails to float your boat how about the Pirates are all onboard when there's a mutiny! Now there's a ship with no captain and leadership, let them describe their part in the mutiny, if any, and they're away!



☠ Pirate Advancement ☠

Some Crew's wish to advance beyond accumulation of wealth, titles, influence, fear, romance and personal goals and want to see their Pirate get better. Well here's a simple system allowing Pirate advancement while hopefully avoiding it getting out of hand.

At the end of the current adventure and your Pirates have divided the plunder and narrated how they have spent their ill gotten gains, the Crew decide who gave the most entertaining narration of excessive consumption and they receive an Adventure Point. The Narrator also decides who played the largest part in the adventure and stayed true to character without derailing the whole evening, who basically played the best Pirate in-game. They get an Adventure Point too.

Now once a Pirate has accumulated five Adventure Points they can select a new Descriptor or item of Gear as appropriate for the adventure just undertaken and return back to zero Adventure Points ready to start anew.

Also at the end of an adventure any Pirate may declare a change in character, this is replace one Role with another, although this must be justifiable, they can't become a Navigator when they've skulked around the Spanish Main for the entire evening! It can also be a change in Gear, or if a Subplot has played out during the adventure the Narrator is free to either assign a new one of his choosing (as appropriate to the ending of the old one), let the player decide on a new Subplot, or allow the Pirate to live a less complicated life and write it off without replacement.

Also feel free to change a Pirate's Flaw, is it working out? Has something happened that might bring something else to the fore, like having their leg chewed off by a giant Kraken? The player is also free to change it if something significant has happened to justify it.

☠ Location Tags ☠

Here are some example location tags, these are not exhaustive just a flavour of the sorts of things that can be included:

Abandoned colony	Abandoned native city
Armourer	Beautiful lady/Strapping fella
Buried treasure	Conflict
Crowded	Deserted
Difficult harbour	Diseased
Fencing school/Master	Filled with sailors
Fine tailor	Fort
Garrison of soldiers	Jesuit mission
Large population	Large port
Natives	Naval port
Offering amnesty	Offering Letter of Marque
Offering mission	Pirate haven
Plantations	Poor merchant
Prosperous	Rich merchant
Ruins	Ship graveyard
Shipwright	Shoals
Skilled gunmaker	Slums
Small population	Spy
Trade restrictions	Tyrannical Governor
Struggling	Supernatural
Surviving	Houngan
Wanted criminal	Weaponsmith

☠ Pirate Roles ☠

Below are a number of example Pirate Roles, feel free to make up your own:

- Carpenter - Repair barrels, parts of the ship, and sawing off injured appendages if required
- Deadlights - Spotting a sail on the horizon, notice a faint smell,
- Gunner - Shooting a cannon accurately, leading the hands to fire in time and reload quickly
- Houngan - Invoking loas, making puppets and fetishes, using the power of the ju-ju to hex and curse
- Horseman - Jump a fence, tame a wild horse, drive a cart at speed through port
- Merchant - Assessing a cargo's value, getting a good price, avoiding being duped
- Native - Finding drinking water, hunting game, fishing, throwing a spear through someone
- Navigator - Finding port, going in the correct direction, reading maps accurately
- Noble - Having contacts, being literate, able to afford things, getting invited to the best parties
- Quartermaster - Being literate, keeping discipline, divvying plunder
- Sailor - Reefing the mainsail in a hurricane, climbing ropes
- Scholar - Knowing obscure facts, being literate,
- Sneak - Getting past guards, picking pockets, breaking and entering
- Surgeon - Maybe saving someone's life, brewing potions and poisons, cauterising wounds correctly
- Swashbuckler - Swinging from rope and chandeliers, balancing on a beam, and jumping out of windows
- Swordsman - Skewering a lubber, beheading a buccaneer, hold off hoards of scum

☠ Sea Tables ☠

These tables enable you to roll up random encounters at sea. After using them, try to think about where the encounter takes place and try and use an appropriate ship from the list generated prior to the adventure. Some have been left deliberately vague for your own interpretation.

Daily event table

1-5 No event

6 Event!

Event type

1 Land ho!

2-5 Ship ho!

6 Unusual

Ship ho!

1-4 Merchant

5 Naval

6 Other ship type

Other ship type

1-3 Convoy (Roll again for general type)

4-5 Pirates

6 Something else

Ship size

2-4 Tiny

Masts

1

5-6 Small

2

7-9 Medium

3

10-11 Large

4

12 Very large

5

Unusual event

1-3 Ship problem/benefit

4-5 Crew problem/benefit

6 Very unusual!

Naval mission

1-4 Patrol

5 Peace

6 War

Nationality

1-2 Spanish

3 English

4 French

5 Dutch

6 Other/Independent

Destination

First die

1-2 Nearest

3-4 Second nearest

5 Third nearest

6 Further

Second die

1-4 Friendly port

5 Neutral port

6 Hostile port

☠ Plunder ☠

Cargo type

2-5 Goods

6-8 Food

9 Spice

10 Luxuries

11 Slaves

12 Unusual

Special cargo

1-5 No special cargo

6 Special cargo

Cargo amount

2-10 Result x 10% of Cargo hold

11-12 Roll again but +50% Price

☠ Names ☠

Below are some sample names that can be used in a pinch, try rolling twice or even more for different combinations or tweaking the names, say Revenge to Vengeance for example.

Pirate	Naval	Merchant	Inn/Tavern
11 Adventure	Achilles	<Name>	<Name>
12 Basilisk	Crown		<Place>
13 Beauty	Dauntless	<Place>	Anchor
14 Black	Defiance		Arms
15 Blessed	Diligence	Advance	Black
16 Caribbean	Discovery		Blue
21 Charming	Dolphin	Delivery	Bones
22 Comfort	Duchess		Captain's
23 Dolphin	Duke	Endeavour	Coins
24 Dragon	Eager		Crowns
25 Fortune	Endeavour	Fancy	Dog
26 Flying	Enterprise		Dolphin
31 Fury	Formidable	Glory	Doubloon
32 Glory	Glasgow		Gold
33 Golden	Glory	Gold	Good
34 Good	Hercules		Hangman
35 Great	Hornet	Golden	Happy
36 Happy	Hunter		Head
41 Horizon	Indomitable	Grace	Headless Horseman
42 Lady	Interceptor		Homeward
43 Liberty	Invincible	Indian	Hope
44 Little	Mercury		King
45 Lucky	Neptune	Maid of <Place>	Lady
46 Mermaid	Portsmouth		Lions
51 Nemesis	Princess	Profitable	Mariners
52 Pearl	Queen Elizabeth		Mermaid
53 Princess	Ranger	Success	Queen
54 Ransom	Rapid		Red
55 Reaper	Redemption	Temperance	Rest
56 Renegade	Resilient		Royal
61 Revenant	Resolute	Trader	Sailors
62 Revenge	Royal		Skull
63 Sinner	Swift	Triangle	Three
64 Swift	Triumph		Voyage
65 Wench	Victory	Venture	Wench
66 Wicked	Voyager		Wicked

Name	Concept														
Nationality	Religion														
Background	Subplots														
Role															
Role															
Flaw															
Gear															
Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Trapped <input type="checkbox"/> Dazed <input type="checkbox"/> Scared <input type="checkbox"/> Blinded <input type="checkbox"/> Injured <input type="checkbox"/> Tired <input type="checkbox"/> Hungry <input type="checkbox"/> Dying														
Plot Points	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Roll</th> <th>Result</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>6</td><td>Yes, and..</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>Yes, but..</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>No, but..</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>No, and..</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Roll	Result	6	Yes, and..	5	Yes	4	Yes, but..	3	No, but..	2	No	1	No, and..
Roll	Result														
6	Yes, and..														
5	Yes														
4	Yes, but..														
3	No, but..														
2	No														
1	No, and..														
Notes	Quotes														

Ship name

Masts

Nationality

Guns

Ship

Hands

Ship

Crew

Crew flaw

Cargo

Conditions

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Becalmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Fouled rigging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungry | <input type="checkbox"/> Holed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigued | <input type="checkbox"/> Mutinous | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinking |

Plot Points

Roll the Bones

Roll	Result
6	Yes, and..
5	Yes
4	Yes, but..
3	No, but..
2	No
1	No, and..

Specialists

Notes

Gazette

Encounter sheet

Name	Concept	Nat	Notes	Rec
I1				
I2				
I3				
I4				
I5				
I6				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
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64				
65				
66				

International relations tracker

	Spanish	French	English			
Dutch	War Peace	Hostile Peace	War Peace	Hostile Allied	War Peace	Hostile Allied
English	War Peace	Hostile Allied	War Peace	Hostile Allied		
French	War Peace	Hostile Allied				

Captain's reputation tracker

	Terrible	Poor	Accepted	Good	Great
Dutch					
English					
French					
Spanish					
Brethren					

Relationship tracking pieces



Ship indicators for map



Ship combat chart

