Six Shooter

What is Six Shooter?
All alcoholic and firearm referances aside, **Six Shooter** is a simple, almost minimalist, Roleplaying system. While most systems focus on specifics and die rolls, we prefer to focus on the roleplaying and action. If you try to play this as a die rolling combat simulator, not only are you going to have a very hard time, but you are going to get very bored, very fast.

Why a Minimalist System?
I really don't like refering to systems as "minimalist" systems. It seems to imply that something important is missing, or that the author is just to lazy to fill it out. But, for all intensive purposes, **Six Shooter** is a minimalist system. What this means is that all of the nit-picky details have been left to the person running the game (Game Master or GM). Early Roleplaying games were actually spawned from tabletop war games. Thus they were (and most still are) very combat rule intensive. You needed to be very strict and fair as to how combat was played out, while still seeming as realistic as possible. Classes and experience levels were the rule of the day, and most encounters were resolved blow-for-blow. In a roleplaying game, it is assumed that everyone is on the same team. If I can decide the outcome in a few rolls, I can simply describe any significant events as I see fit. Minimalist systems try to increase the level of roleplaying, and decrease the level of rule searching, and die rolling. So, to answer the question that has already run on far to long, this is a minimalist system, because I want to roleplay, not rollplay. (And I'm to lazy to try and remember all of the stupid rules. As it stands, I make up half of the rules to most of the games I GM anyways. Why stop now.)

What do I need to play?
Go start looting your board games, because the only dice you need are a fist full of sixes. Ten should be enough for most situations, if your willing to share. (If you've ever played Shadowrun, you have more than enough dice.) Character information can be tracked on any scrap paper. You could use notecards, but you will probably fill them up with skills rather quick. I suggest notebook paper. You'll need pencils, obviously. The only other thing you need is your imagination (oh, that sounds corny).

I tried a battle, and it was over really fast. After one round, my team was in total chaos.
Good. No seriously. Most old school RPG gamers are used to battles taking hours on end. **Six Shooter** throws out the old, "I hit you, now hit me" clishé. A minute into play, or less, things start to actually happen. Players are put into tight situations, and you have to think on their feet. One die roll can take your advantage, and stuff it up backwards. Chaos is fun. Enjoy it.

The Skill Roll
The basis of any RPG system is the skill roll. This is some sort of die roll that decides whether a player succeeds at a given task. It could be an attempt to attack an opponent, climb a rocky cliff, or talk the inn keeper into a more reasonable price for your room. Any task that questions a characters chances for success is handled with a simple die roll.

In **Six Shooter**, skill rolls are handled with, oddly enough, six-sided dice. Each character is built out of various skills. Each skill has a level. Any skill that a character does not have, but could conceivably attempt is at a level of 1. Level 1 is untrained. A noble knight attempting to pick someones pockets, even though he has never tried it before, is untrained and has a pickpocket skill of 1. A character has a skill level of 0 if he is completely incapable of using that skill without some special training or ability. Our noble knight is incapable of casting a fireball spell, no matter how hard he tries. Every level beyond 1 refers to how skilled the character is. Level 2 represents a basic understanding, level 3 is for a novice, and so on.

Levels beyond 6 are for true experts.

If a character is called on to test his skill, he rolls a number of six-sided dice equal to his skill level. For each die that rolls with a 4 or higher, the character has scored one success. This **Target Number** can raise or lower, dependant on outside influences, but the default is 4. Sometimes, a single success will not be enough. If the task is more challenging, than the GM also rolls some dice. The number of dice is decided by how challenging the task is. For each die greater than or equal to 4 that the GM rolls, one of the character's successes are negated. If all of his successes are cancelled, than he fails. If the player rolls all ones on his dice, then it is a **critical failure**. It counts as a failure, with some mildly-nasty additional effect decided by the GM.

Example: Tito is testing his climbing skills. First he climbs a low tree. Since this is easy enough, the GM decides Tito only needs one success to climb the tree. He rolls his climb skill of 4 dice, and gets [2, 4, 6, 1]. Two dice are greater than or equal to 4, so he succeeds with one to spare. Next he attempts a rocky cliff face. The GM decides that this is a more challenging test, and rolls two opposing dice. Tito rolls [1, 4, 5, 6]. The GM rolls [5, 5]. Two of Tito's successes are cancelled out, leaving him with one success. Go Tito. Last Tito decides to tackle a wall of ice. The GM sets the difficulty to 5 dice. Tito rolls [1, 2, 3, 5], one success. The GM rolls [2, 4, 4, 5, 6], four successes. This negates Tito's success and then some. Tito didn't stand a chance. Maybe he should go home and practice. Had Tito rolled [1,1,1,1], the GM may have decided to have him fall off of the wall, resulting in injury (both in body and pride).

Skill Contests
Should a skill need to be tested against another characters skill, you will invoke a **skill contest**. Each character chooses an acceptable skill, and rolls their skill level in dice. Each character counts his successes, the character with the most wins. Ties result in some neutral effect. If no tie can be possible (or is highly improbable), than both roll again, until a winner is decided.

Example: Jumble and Jamble are having a foot race. Jumble has a skill rank of 5 in "Jogging," so chooses it for his roll. Jamble has an "Evade the Cops" skill of 5, so it becomes his choice skill. Both roll 5 dice, and both result in 3 successes. The GM decides that since races rarely come down to a perfect tie, a second roll would decide the winner. Again, both roll, and bother achieve 2 successes. This continues for three more rolls, so the GM declares the race a "true tie," and the race becomes the talk of all the town.

Multiple participants
The third type of skill roll would be against the other team as a whole, or against a group. These are known as **handicap challenges**. These include running from an angry mob, casting a wave of fire over a group, or a whirl-wind slice against enemies surrounding you. To handle this, select a single character as the leader. If the skill effects several targets (FIREWAVE!!!), then the character initiating the effect chooses the leader for the other team (picking the center of the FIREWAVE!!!). If several characters are effecting a single target, the group picks the leader. So, in basic terms, the aggressor picks the leader. Each other character involved rolls their skills also, but only their rolls of 6 count as successes. These successes are then added to the leaders. Gang tactics can help make up for a lack of skill with pure numbers, while blasting multiple opponents can be difficult if you bite off more targets than you can chew.

Characters
Characters are the center of your RPG stage. You as the player are writing their stories with every decision you make. **Six Shooter** makes character creation completely freeform and open. If you want to play a deadly shadow-stalking ninja, or a gun toting cyborg, all you need is the GM's okay and your in. What makes your character, is the way you roleplay it. Many systems focus to hard on the rule aspect, and don't leave the player with open room to develope the character they want. For example, if I wanted a knife wielding juggler, I would have to contend with the fact that knives are weaker than most other weapons, and my juggling skills aren't good for much other than cheap entertainment, if I can even include it at all.

Skills
In **Six Shooter** your character's only statistics are his skill set. These skills can be anything you want your character to do. If your GM approves it, you can use it. Though your GM will probably only disallow a skill for one of three reasons (and he should tell it to you, not just "No, you can't use it")

1. *Too broad*. A skill such as kill stuff, magic, or science covers to much territory in most game settings.
2. *Inappropiate.* A passifist character with Sword Fighting. A caveman with Firearms training. There is a line between interesting and out of character. Be ready to back up your skill choices.
3. *Setting*. If the GM wants to run a survival horror campaign, he doesn't want a bunch of hardened marines taking on his zombies with sub-machine guns and explosives. He was probably thinking more along the lines of farmers and accountants wielding power-tools.

To start things off, your character is given 10 advancement points (AP) to spend on starting skills. To raise the level of a skill, you pay the amount of AP equal to the skills current level. For example, it would cost 2 AP to raise a skill from 2 to 3. It would cost 3 AP to raise a skill from 1 to 3 (1 for 1 to 2 and 2 more for 2 to 3). For character creation, don't let any skill start higher than level 3.

AP Advancement
As your character plays through a couple of games, your GM will pass out advancement points. There is no set rules for what deserves AP, but here are some suggestions.
- Showing up - 1 point to everyone how came to play.
- Completing Objectives - If you tell your players they can have an AP if they shut up the town drunk, they'll do it.
- Good Roleplaying - Staying in character helps play progress, Really staying in character can bring play to a screeching halt as everyone doubles over in laughter.
- Bribes - Hey Will, you gonna eat them Cheetos. Uh, I'll give you one AP if you don't mention this part.
AP spending should only spent outside of play, such as at the beginning or end of a session, or during a break.

Organic Advancement
This is the part of **Six Shooter** I personally love the most. Under some situations, a character can advance during mid play. When rolling a skill test, if the dice create a chance for a straight or flush, he has a shot at advancing. He then rolls one more die (this die does not count toward success or failure) called the **organic die**. If the organic die completes the straight or flush, than that skill advances one level instantly. A **flush** is when all of the dice show the same number. A **straight** is when each die is in a consecutive order (ie. 2, 3, 4, 5). The straight need not be complete to roll the extra die, as long as the die could complete the straight. For example: Grog rolls a Club roll of [3, 4, 6]. This would be a complete straight if the organic die comes up 5, raising his Club level from 3 to 4 instantly. When rolling an untrained skill (level 1), you can always roll an organic die, because there is always a chance for a straight or flush with one die. If for some reason you are forced to roll more or less dice than your skill level (someone cast a stupid spell on you, your wearing super ranger-hero armor, etc.) you may not roll an organic die. Only people testing the limits of their sane mind get that right. The GM has the right to disallow an organic die roll, if he feels that the roll is pointless, or simply being used to abuse the system. A real play example would go something like this.

Player: I punched the wall and rolled a flush, my punching skill goes up.
GM: Yeah, sure... not?
Player: Why not?
GM: If you'd like, you could roll to see if your stupidity goes up. The wall isn't going to make you a better puncher.
Player: Sure it would.
GM: Fine, If you would like to punch it for a few more weeks, I'll consider it training and you can spend some AP on it instead.
Player: I like it better when Jim is the GM.
Jim: We can arrange something if you go get me a Mountain Dew.
Player: Huzzah!

Combat (and other overly rated, dramatic events)
Sometimes you don't want to finish off an encounter with one roll. Combat is the primary example, but perhaps you also would like to draw out your characters verbal debate with the high council. Even at this level, **Six Shooter** refuses to handle the event blow-for-blow. The point of combat is to be exciting, not some boring exchange of blows, until someone is dead. Drawn out events, like combat, are generally

handled with a series of skill contests, each attempting to gain an advantage over the other to assist in an ultimate goal. Your goal could be to kill everyone on the other team (or maybe just the leader). It could be to set a bomb and run. You might be trying to shoot a pair of proton torpedoes down an exaust shoot. Or, maybe you just want to be the first to race your car around the finish line (with the assistance of missiles, bombs, and oil slicks no doubt). No matter what the the situation, if you don't have a goal, your wasting your time. Here are some steps to help move combat along.

1. Determine your goal. Without one, your in a boat with no ore (Hey, that's a good goal. "Find Ore." Oh, I'm such a good GM).
2. Determine how goes first. No, don't roll initiative. I hate rolling initiative. It's like a road sign telling you that for the next several hours your gaming group will be accomplishing absolutely nothing. Use your brain. If your group just got ambushed, they obviously aren't going first. If it's really up in the air, flip a coin. Just get this thing off the ground and start fighting. Don't worry what order your players go in, that's their problem to solve, not yours.
3. A character chooses a skill that fits the situation. Engage someone in melee with your sword skill, try to sneak behind the enemy flanks, lay down cover fire to hold the enemy at bay. What ever you do, it will result in a skill roll (and for god sakes, some roleplaying) unless the action is mundane (drink a potion, faint (not feint), do the hokee pokee. This skill roll is opposed by some challenge. If it is against an opponent (shooting at someone, seduction, kick to the groin), then the opponent rolls an acceptable counter skill (matching shooting with dodging, swords with swords, seduction with kick to the groin). GM has final say on what is acceptable. If it is not against any specific opponent(s), then it is matched with a challenge, as with normal skill rolls.
4. Determine which side created the most successes, and the result of the skill being used by the winner. (See **Skill Effects** below). If it's a tie, than there probably won't be any effect (it depends on the situation, this is roleplaying). Also, the winner gets one Advantage Die. This can be represented with a coin, glass counter, strip of paper, or another die, if you have one. These dice are spent to reach your goal (see **Reaching for the Goal** below).

Skill Effects
When you succeed in a skill roll during combat (and other overly rated, dramatic events), you don't simply just win. The skill is used to gain some advantage over your target (or the targets over you, should they beat you at your own game). Some skills have limited use and effects, but most are limited to your imagination. Here are some effects, and how they may convert into game terms. Don't stop here though.

Disarming/Weakening: Some effects will weaken a characters skills. Backing him into an corner, trapping him with logic, etc. This is the primary offensive tool. If such a skill succeeds, the skill the opponent used against you is temporarily lowered by the number of successes not negated.
He may no longer roll organic rolls until he regains his normal skill level. If the skill is reduced to zero, it is **disarmed**, and can no longer be used.

Defense: These skills are strictly for defense. These include blocking, evading and the like. While offensive skill are limited in when they can be used (a sword can be ruled to be useless against a gun). The defensive skills are far more broad, but can do little more than negate opposing successes. They gain no benifit from additional successes (aside from the Advantage Die for winning).

Setup Moves: Other skills can be used to gain an advantage with out even touching swords. A stealth move for example, sets you up on the enemies flank, or gets you to the bomb unnoticed. Setup moves can have situational advantages (no one knows I've already started disarming the bomb), or they can reduce your target number by one for the action you are setting up (BACKSTAB!!!).

Damage: No skill does outright damage, without spending at least one Advantage Die. The GM may rule that a horde of weak enemies could be killed with a successful offensive skill, though. For example, you are being attacked by twenty-eight zombies. The GM rules that each success not cancelled results in one dead zombie. However, you should still have a different goal in mind, such as get the **** out of there. Killing zombies just helps to clear a path, or something like that.

Multiple targets: If you use a skill that challenges a group, then the effect can be on either just the leader, or

the whole (or random parts there of) group, as the GM sees fit. Either way, you do earn an extra Advantage Die for each additional target, if you win.

Reaching for the Goal
Ah, the goal. So commonly passed over in RPG sessions. I wish I had a dollar for everytime a player forgot why they were fighting the ogre to begin with, or what they were suppose to do once they actually broke into the compound. With out some motive, your players are actors in nothing more than die porn. Chucking dice and tracking numbers, while stringing things together with some poor accuse for a story. I've discovered this phenominom to be the number one cause of players giving up on roleplaying. So, in **Six Shooter**, if you don't have a goal or purpose, you are going to have a rough time resolving anything.

In Combat (and other overly yada whatever), you have a goal. Killing things, getting somewhere, proving a point, honor to be won, etc. When you succeed at an action, your team gains advantage dice towards this goal. Goal resolving actions cannot be accomplished without them. Thus, spending Advantage Dice works as follows. If you have at least one Advantage Die, you may spend a portion of them to announce an attempt at resolving your goal. Many goals may need several steps to complete, so save some dice. Roll your normal skill roll plus an amount of dice equal to number of Advantage Dice spent (meaning no organic roll on this one). If you have uncancelled successes, you have succeeded. Some goals may have a number of successes needed to complete, for example, to escape, each character must succeed at the goal. For example, to hack into a mainframe, you may need multiple success (though they need not all be on one attempt).

Example: Fighter and Black Mage are lost in some forest. Suddenly, a giant comes plodding along trying to eat them. The goal is for the giant to not be able to eat Black Mage (Fighter probably shouldn't let Black Mage pick the goals). After much biting and nashing of teeth, Fighter and BM have amassed 4 Advantage Dice. On his next chance, Black Mage declares his Hadouken attack (Level 6). Black Mage rolls 10 dice (6 skill + all 4 Advantage Dice) and comes up with 6 successes. The giant, unable to come up with any magic countering skills, uses "Take it Like a Man, eh, Giant" (level 4), resulting in 3 successes. The effect of Hadouken is total obliteration of all free standing structures in a three mile radius, at the cost of loosing all spell casting ability for the rest of the day (Yeah, really specific. See **Really Specific Skills** below for more info) . Fighter and Black Mage now no longer have the giant, or the forest to contend with. Had BM not used the Advantage Dice, the GM may have simply ruled that the forest is gone, but the giant is just dazed. You must use Advantage Dice to resolve the conflict, unless you can come up with no conceivable (or otherwise) reason for the conflict to continue.

Wounding and Killing
There may come a time when your character gets in a spit he cant avoid. Or, you may need to kill an enemy in a bloody trail by combat. For normal characters, wounding works like so. Out of combat, you may be wounded by traps and the like. Failure to avoid a trap may result in a **wound**. A wound is serious damage that increases your default target number by one. Thus your first wound raises your default target number from 4 to 5. A second wound raises it to 6. A third wound is... well, bad. In combat, you may only wound a challenging opponent (not a pushover lacky) with the spendature of one or more advantage dice. On a successful roll, each uncancelled success equates to one wound level. Healing wounds takes time, or magic, or some appropriate skill. GM has final say.

Really Specific Skills
Every know and then, your going to create a skill that is in some way limited in its application. These are going to be those skills you spent way to much time thinking about, and probably are ignoring most of the intent of this system to begin with, but I'll let that slide. If you want to do something specific with a skill, for pete's sake, write it down. If you create an ice spell that has some strange, imprisoning effect on an opponent, while giving him hypothermia, and creates prismatic lights around the battlefield, but can only be cast when the temperature is below 20 degrees Celcius, than you've got way to much free time. But, its your character, and if the GM lets it go, I won't come down to your house and pound on the door furiously. Just, please, write it down!

Event Cards
If your play sessions still don't have near enough chaos and disorder now, I still have more for you. These

little beauties are known as **Event Cards**. Basicly, you take notecards, construction paper, expensive baseball rookie cards, or what ever else makes you happy, and write life altering events on them. You then distribute them to your players at the beginning of play. They may not share what's on them with the other players (then they could cooperate, and we don't like that). During play, players may play a card to cause what is on it to happen. These can be anything your sick and twisted mind can come up with. My sick and twisted mind has some examples for you below:

Outta ammo: A character or characters of your choice runs out of ammunition, gun gets jammed, bowstring breaks, earths magnetic alignment shifts in your favor, etc. They cannot use ranged weapons until the problem is resolved.

I emplore you to reconsider: One character of your choice suddenly sees your point of view. They are not your mind puppet, but they will do what they can to help you, or at very least, will not interfere.

Possession is 9/10 of the law: One character or player accidently misplaces an item that you accidently find, pick up, and keep. This card does not protect you, should said item find its way back to its original "possessor."

Just for such an occasion: You pull out some item the you just happened to have packed, just incase you needed it. After use, the item is then "lost" (if not already) among your other things, never to be hear from again. This card has no effect on car keys, social security cards, or large sums of money and valuables that you never had anyways.

Would you die already: A character or monster that you have wounded twice, but haven't been able to score the third one, for some pathetic reason, is dead. In return, it gets a long and over-budget death sequence that the players must either take part in, or sit and watch (though if you want it to end anytime soon, you probably shouldn't get too involved).

Emergency: A character or monster of your choice has an... emergency. He must somehow "relieve" himself. Until then, his default target number becomes 6 instead of 4, along with any other obvious "situational disadvantages."

Conclusion That Nobody Ever Reads
Well, that's about it. I'd add more, but I've been pretty long winded as it is. It's kind of ironic, really. I have been studying roleplaying systems and rules, as a hobby, for years now. I have documents loaded with various rules and tidbits scattered both on disks and paper from my research, as well as several full rulebooks. When I decided to make my own system, I was going to take all of my favorite parts from each system. Instead, I threw out almost everything I've ever learned in books and rules, and wrote this nearly entirely from my own GMing experiences. And still, my friends would rather play Dungeons and Dragons. (Which, dispite what everyone tells me, is Satans game. I think he plans on filling our heads with complex, yet strangly worthless rules, weaken our bodies with day long battle sessions in dark rooms, and then drawing actual, compitent people into satanism, instead.) Ah, wasted youth.