

# THE GUTS+ SYSTEM



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BY  
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# WHAT'S GUTS+?

We can't all be super-powered demigods on an epic quest to save the universe. Most of us are just normal people dealing with weird challenges or tricky situations. When you don't have access to supernatural abilities, it takes **GUTS** to work through them!

The GUTS+ System is a role-playing game system that allows you to live out wild adventures without straying too far from your own abilities in the real world while still leaving plenty of room to explore what's possible with tremendous growth! Improve your character's qualities to excel at certain activities and overcome more and more incredible tasks! Work with your Game Master and your fellow players to solve big problems **together!**

Interaction with the game world and all the characters in it is at the forefront of the GUTS+ System, and its generalized mechanics allow for nearly infinite settings and scenarios. The GM decides what's possible and what's available in the game world, and you can help sway their decisions. There's even a unique magic system to explore if you're looking to add a little bit more of the mystical to spice up your game world!

It's not always gonna be easy, but now  
you've got the **GUTS** to do what it takes!

# WHY GUTS+?

**The GUTS+ System aims to give you as much freedom as possible:**

It lays out a full set of rules without a specific setting or storyline so you can build your own or modify one you like. The goal is to provide easy-to-remember rules that let the Game Master build the world and decide the outcomes so players can focus more on collaborative storytelling, interpersonal relations, and free-form play.

**GUTS+ stands apart with its "quality" system:**

Rather than having set skills, GUTS+ focuses on individual, customizable qualities giving your character the ability to do things, and if they don't have one specific to the action, their success at performing tasks is dependent upon their base qualities:

**Gumption, Utility, Thought, and Slyness.**

**Plus a unique conflict resolution system using only six-sided dice:**

Roll one die for each level your quality has, and each die is interpreted individually to determine the outcome. So if your quality is level 4, roll 4 dice, and the GM interprets the roll rather than taking a total or average.

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## TOOLS & RESOURCES USED

- The Homebrewery
- Imgur
- LunaPic
- GIMP
- Pixabay
- Pngtree
- Endless Skies

Individual art sources are listed on the pages of use.

# THE GUTS+ SYSTEM

**W**elcome to the wonderful world of GUTS+, where players work together to progress the story within the game world. The GUTS+ System is a tabletop role-playing game system intended to allow the maximum amount of freedom and play with the smallest amount of

overhead and setup while still providing a reliable set of rules to help give your games structure.

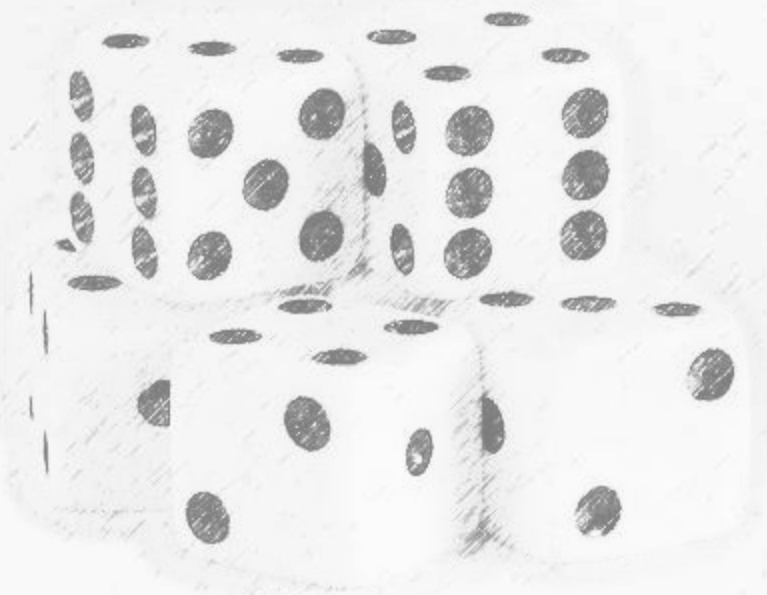
The name "GUTS+" is an acronym for the four base character stats, called "qualities," in the game: "G"umption, "U"tility, "T"hought, and "S"lyness, "plus" additional custom qualities that each player chooses to round out their character. The concept of the GUTS+ System is inspired by the spirit of the Earthbound/Mother series from Nintendo, and is therefore open to quirky or silly facets while still allowing serious themes and moments. This provides a fair amount of flexibility to either build whatever kind of world you want or tell a story in existing worlds using established tropes.

Gameplay is heavily narrative-based and role play (playing as your character) is encouraged. Most of the rules are simply a framework of how the game world works—the specifics of how the world works typically mirrors real life. Playing with a Game Master (GM) who is comfortable either improvising frequently to give players the smoothest narrative experience possible or railroading their players into following a specific path for the sake of keeping the story solid is ideal.

This chapter will walk you through the process of creating your character and navigating the game world. The rest is pretty much up to your Game Master and you simply need to play within the world that your character has been placed into. The last chapter covers what it means to be Game Master and how to build the world your players play within.

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# CHARACTER CREATION

**Y**our character is your avatar in the game world, and it's also what makes playing the game fun and interesting! When you create your character, it's important to try to build them based on how the character would actually be within the world... you'll see what I mean.

First, get your Character Sheet so you can fill it out with your character information.

## BIOGRAPHY

To create your character, first you need a backstory, a personality, and an appearance. It's often fun to model your character after yourself, but you can do whatever you'd like that fits within the specified game world.

### BACKSTORY

The backstory can be as simple or in-depth as you like, but in-depth stories can help you know how your character would act in any given situation. Did something tragic happen in their past, or did life come easy for them? Were they bullied when they were young, or were they the bully? There are lots of different angles you could approach this from, and this can always be expanded as necessary later.

### PERSONALITY

Once you have a backstory in place, it's often easy to decide what kind of personality your character would have as a result of the backstory. Did their tragic backstory make them pessimistic or hopeful for a better future? Did them being bullied influence their sense of justice or tear down their perception of their worth? Don't overthink it too much, just try to be true to what you think your character would be like.

### APPEARANCE

Finally, your character's appearance determines how they will be seen by other characters, how they fit in a room, and potentially how many injuries can be sustained. Be as detailed as you want, but at least choose their height, weight, and body type. Smaller characters will be able to squeeze into tighter spaces but won't be able to see over tall walls, while larger characters will be able to stand their ground more easily but not be able to hide very well.

Next, use your character's body type to determine whether you should modify the base injury chart (pg 10) for your character. The base chart will probably suffice for most characters, but if your character has more appendages than a basic humanoid (i.e. wings or a tail), be sure to add those to your injury chart. The same applies if your character has fewer appendages than the base injury chart provides. Just consult with your GM about what such customizations might require before you commit it to ink.

## QUALITIES

Once you know a little bit about your character, it's time to choose your qualities. There are four base qualities that every character has:

- **Gumption:** The character's go-getter-ness—their willingness to rush in, their ability to last, their overall drive.
- **Utility:** The character's handiness—their ability to do things, their breadth of skill, their overall competence to perform.
- **Thought:** The character's brains—how much they know, their general awareness of their surroundings, their overall smarts.
- **Slyness:** The character's ability to go with the flow—their sneakiness, their conversationalism, their overall elegance.

You must also create at least one custom base quality of your choice based on your character's biography. This can be anything from "Technology" (to gain extra proficiency in using computers) to "Acrobatics" (to gain the ability to be extra graceful) to "Multilingualism" (to gain the ability to communicate in different languages)—anything that makes sense for your character. In addition to the first, mandatory custom quality, you can create up to 2 additional qualities that fit your character's background or personality. If you want to choose the Essence quality (pg 16), it must not be your first custom base quality.

All qualities start at level 1.

Once you've picked your custom qualities, it's time to increase your qualities' levels using a pool of 3 points. Apply your points to increase the level of certain qualities in a way that makes the most sense to your character. For example, if your character is a poet, their Thought and Slyness levels might be higher than their other qualities, whereas a mechanic might have high Utility. You may add a maximum of 2 points to any one quality; no quality can be higher than level 3 when creating your character.

## SKILLS & PROFICIENCIES

Your character's skills and proficiencies are directly tied to the qualities you have chosen above. If one of your character's additional qualities is "Knives," for example, then the quality's level is tied to how skilled your character is at using knives and influences what your character can do with them. If your character is trying to perform an action or use a tool that they do not have proficiency with, then one of the GUTS qualities will stand in at the GM's discretion.



## CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

What your character is wearing plays an important role in both the narrative and the number of items they can carry with them.

While you are creating your character, you can choose whatever clothing you want for your character, so long as it fits their personality. Be sure to take advantage of this freebie to get the best advantage—your GM may or may not provide the opportunity to get new clothes during your game.

You may also choose any accessories your character is wearing, so long as they do not enhance any abilities and are only to complete their appearance. Anything your character is wearing does not take up inventory space.

### CLOTHING

Clothes are wearable items that can be worn on the torso, legs, and feet. As a general rule, if you can wear it in real life, your character can wear it in game, with some general assumptions included (for example, specifying socks doesn't matter if your character is wearing shoes unless they're special socks that make your character happy).

Simple clothes like jeans or shorts and a t-shirt with tennis shoes are good, basic clothes, and they provide you with the default inventory space and no other real advantages beyond being unencumbered in your movement. Cargo shorts or a dress will influence your inventory space as well, providing more or less space, respectively, but gaining other benefits and hindrances at the same time.

### ACCESSORIES

Accessories are things (like jewelry, hats, bags, or even armor) that enhance your character's qualities and narrative influence in some way. Depending on the accessory, the places that your character can wear them is limited to their intended use. For example, your character can wear one necklace at a time, so if you want to add a new necklace's ability but your character already wearing one, you can't use another necklace as a bracelet or belt.

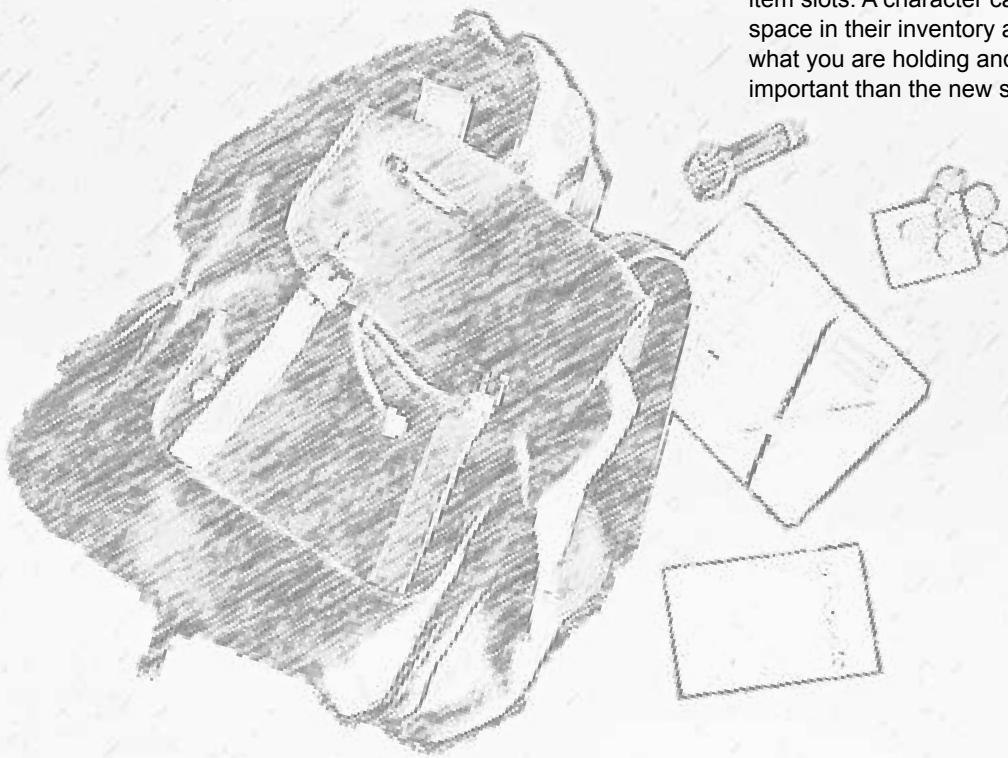
The characters that the GM places along the way in your game may react differently to different accessories, so be sure to dress for the occasion!

### POCKETS & BAGS (INVENTORY)

Your character's inventory is a limited collection of items that they are able to carry with them. By default, your character can carry a total of 10 items. Their inventory excludes whatever they are wearing (i.e. clothing and accessories). While you are creating your character, you may choose up to a total of 5 simple items for your character to be holding.

You can add to your inventory space by giving your character a bag of some kind. Bags (purses, backpacks, etc.) are worn by your character as an Accessory, and they allow you to carry an additional 10 items in your inventory. It is not necessary to distinguish what items are in your Bag rather than your Pockets, but you may separate them on your character sheet if you wish. The type of bag being used is merely cosmetic, but remember that accessories can affect how other characters interact with your character in the game world.

If your character has more than one of a particular item, you can specify how many of that item they have by simply writing the number in next to it without taking up additional item slots. A character cannot hold more items than the space in their inventory allows, so you will have to manage what you are holding and drop items that might be less important than the new shiny thing you want to take!





# CYBERPUNK, MID-LEVEL

Name: Gus Starjacker Experience: 53  
Age: 29 Build: Cyborg Height: 5' 11" Weight: 220 lbs.

## QUALITIES

Gumption: 2 Utility: 4 Thought: 3 Slyness: 2  
Technology: 3 Hacking: 1

## APPEARANCE

Clothing		Accessories	
<b>Torso</b> White T-Shirt	<b>Head</b> Cybernetic Eye	<b>Neck</b> Universal Data Jack	
<b>Legs</b> Blue Jeans	<b>Arms</b> Cybernetic Left Arm	<b>Back</b> Black Backpack	
<b>Feet</b> Black shoes with pop-out wheels	<b>Waist</b> N/A	<b>Legs</b> Leg Braces for stability	

## DESCRIPTION

A caucasian man with chin-length, curly blonde hair, round, dark, close-set eyes, a small, pointed nose that curves up, and thin, perpetually chapped lips on a long face. He walks in a half-lumbering, half-slithering way because of his leg braces.

## BACKGROUND

Gus has been interested in computers his whole life, and has worked on many unfinished projects. His parents kicked him out of the house at age 16 because they didn't want to care for him anymore, and he has lived alone in an apartment on the seedy side of town. He jumped on the opportunity to augment his body with cybernetic enhancements, but kind of regrets his hasty decisions now that his only options for work involve hacking and infiltration work.

## PERSONALITY

Gus is perhaps more confident than he should be, though he doesn't mean anything by it. He's not *trying* to be a jerk, he just never learned that the way he talks makes him sound like one. Gus is fairly self-sufficient, but mostly because he forgets to take care of himself sometimes.

## INVENTORY

Pockets	Bag
Pocket Computer	Pocket Computer Charger
Candy Bar	A tangle of cables and wires
Half Sandwich	Multitool
Data ID Card	Collapsible Nightstick
	Portable Battery



# FANTASY, HIGH-LEVEL

Name: Pinkatrink "Picky" Speldencracker

Experience: 21

Age: 26 Build: Stocky Height: 3' 5" Weight: 74 lbs.

## QUALITIES

Gumption: 3 Utility: 3 Thought: 5 Slyness: 6 Rebellion: 2

Essence: 7 Climbing: 2 Luck: 1

## APPEARANCE



### Clothing

### Accessories

<b>Torso</b> Alligator Studded Leather	<b>Head</b> Blue Fleece Hood	<b>Neck</b> Amulet of Second Chances
<b>Legs</b> Loose Blue Pants	<b>Arms</b> Gloves of Climbing and Swimming	<b>Back</b> Traveler's Pack
<b>Feet</b> Brown Leather Moccasins	<b>Waist</b> Belt Pouch for Coins	<b>Legs</b> N/A

## DESCRIPTION

A female half-gnome-half-dwarf pyromancer with long, brown hair, orange eyes, and pale skin. She walks carelessly, rarely watching where she steps.

## BACKGROUND

The daughter of hyper-religious parents, Picky ran away from home after learning about the wide variety of gods and their influence on magic. After discovering her own essence, she devoted her life to the pursuit of knowledge about essence and the magic it can perform.

## PERSONALITY

Despite her small size, Picky is very outspoken and will always speak her mind. She has never once considered her own size before attempting to do something she wants to do.

## INVENTORY

### Pockets

### Bag

Poison Staff (Left Hand)	Potion of Healing
Lucky Dagger	Bundle of Gemstones
Roll of Hemp Rope (50ft)	Vial of Acid
Rose made of Dragon Scales	Bottle of Ink
Potion of Healing	Quill Pen
	Bundle of 50 sheets of paper

## ESSENCE

### Aura

### Range

Hot

20 ft.

## SKILLS

### Basic

### Honed

### Master

Harden

Burst

Explode

Sense

Ignite

Touch

Melt

Heat

# PLAYING THE GAME

## THE BASICS

Role playing is a bit like collaborating with a group to tell a story with special rules in place that prevent the story from going too far off the rails. The GM sets up the world and the situation, and it's up to you and your fellow players to work through that situation together using your characters.

Oftentimes, the GM will start a play session by describing a scene and some kind of circumstance that would bring your characters together for an adventure. It's up to you as the players to ask questions both in character (IC) and out of character (OOC) and fill in the blanks so you can be as successful as possible when moving forward.

When your character asks questions and tries to perform certain actions, the GM will sometimes ask you to make a success check. Depending on what you are trying to roll success for, your qualities may influence the outcome, raising the number of dice you roll based on your quality's level—the GM should tell you which quality to use if you don't know. You may occasionally roll for success *against* a non-player character (NPC). The character being rolled against is the "defender."

As you continue playing, your characters will grow stronger, and the game will get harder. Just keep moving forward, and you'll win eventually! Or maybe your game isn't about winning and the goal is to keep playing and exploring the game world—it's entirely up to you and your GM!

## HANDLING CONFLICT

Conflict is the cornerstone of plot. The game you are playing will likely have a lot of different conflicts, often happening at the same time, as well as a lot of different kinds of conflicts. Whether you are trying to find someone's lost cat or trying to work against a dictator, there are many different ways to go about handling conflict.

Conflicts are handled using a combination of die rolls and logical appeals made to the GM. When an appeal is not accepted by the GM, you must roll a number of six-sided dice (D6s) to determine your success. The Success Scale in the next section explains how success is determined. When you begin, you will only be rolling 1 D6, but as your character grows stronger, you will roll more to keep up with the rising difficulty level.

Many role-playing games make heavy use of combat to overcome conflicts, but it might not always be the best option. Try different things to see what the best outcome might be. The GM should be flexible enough to handle whatever you throw at them and respond accordingly. If you come across someone acting strangely, instead of trying to beat the information out of them, maybe try to ask them what's wrong.

## SUCCESS SCALE

How successful your character is at performing a certain action is determined by what number you roll on a D6. Typically, the DM will have you roll using a particular quality your character has, which means that you roll as many D6s as that quality's level (for example, if your quality is level 4, you roll 4 dice). The number of dice you roll increases your chances at success (or failure) in both categories.

There are 2 types of success rolls: checks and contests.

### CHECK

Check rolls are what determine your success at performing actions that do not involve other (unwilling) living creatures. Each individual die you roll is measured by this scale, which allows the GM to interpret the results based on what was rolled the most.

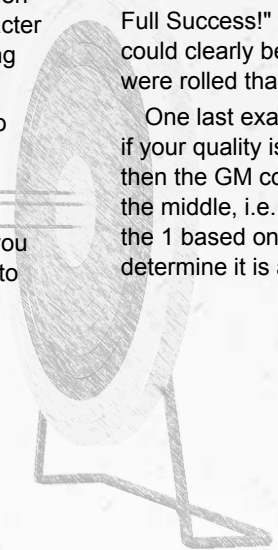
The scale for success is:

Die Value	Result
1	Negative impact
2	Failure
3	Near success (GM decides)
4-5	Full success
6	Positive impact

The GM is responsible for preventing your Check roll from being just a math problem—just because a certain roll might average out to 3 doesn't mean the GM will always interpret it as a 3. They are interpreting success based on several things in addition to the values of your rolled dice. The outcome is determined based on the current scenario, action being attempted, and your character's qualities and biography, so if you disagree with their interpretation of the roll, speak up!

For example, if the Quality you are rolling to check is level 3, you would roll 3D6. If your die values were 4, 6, and 1, that equates to 1 Full Success, 1 Positive Impact, and 1 Negative Impact, which the GM could interpret as "Well, the Positive and Negative Impacts cancel out, which leaves a Full Success!" Or if you rolled 5, 2, and 4, then the result could clearly be a success because more successful dice were rolled than failures.

One last example in how these rolls could be interpreted is if your quality is level 2 and you roll 2D6 resulting in 1 and 5, then the GM could interpret that success as somewhere in the middle, i.e. a Near Success, or they could simply ignore the 1 based on what your character is trying to do and determine it is a Full Success.



## CONTEST

If you need to perform an action against an unwilling creature, you will need to make a Contest roll against them. Both you and your opponent roll the relevant number of dice, and you subtract their roll's total value from yours (i.e. the defender subtracts their roll from the aggressor's). The success scale is as follows:

Difference	Result
Less than -2	Negative impact
-1 or -2	Failure
0	Near success (GM decides)
1 to 3	Full success
More than 3	Positive impact

For example, if you are acting against an opponent and you roll a 4 and a 2 making your total 6 while your opponent rolls a 3 and a 1 totaling 4, subtract your opponent's roll from yours, which leaves 2 as your result. Your action would have Full Success, allowing the GM to progress the situation appropriately. If, alternatively, your opponent is acting against you, but they roll 3 while you roll 6, subtract your roll from your opponent's, which leaves -3. Your opponent would have a Negative Impact failure, which would cause the GM to make something bad happen to your opponent instead.

**Note:** if you're not proficient at doing math in your head, you can make the math easier by matching up the defender's dice to the aggressor's dice to see how much is left over. For example, the aggressor rolled a 3 and a 2 but the defender rolled a 5 and a 1—the 5 die can cover the values of both the 3 and the 2, leaving 1, resulting in a -1 Failure for the aggressor's Contest roll.

## "NEAR SUCCESS"

Whenever you roll a 3 check or a 0 contest, the result is at the discretion of the GM. They may take the opportunity to advance the situation somehow or they may decide that you need to roll better next time based on the context. Feel free to plead your case with the GM, though!

## USING QUALITIES

When rolling to determine success, the GM will tell you the base GUTS quality to use for your roll, and you can appeal to the GM to pair another relevant quality with the roll depending on the action you are taking. If the quality is relevant, use that quality's value for your roll instead. In some cases, the GM will allow you to add the other quality's points to the base quality and roll as many dice as that allows, up to a maximum of 10 dice.

The GM will also give you advantages or disadvantages based on what qualities are used in certain situations. Often times, these advantages will be used to influence their interpretation of your roll, but other times, they might ask you to modify your roll by adding or subtracting a certain number of your rolled dice. For example, an action like pushing a boulder would require a Gumption roll, but without a quality like "weight lifting" or something similar, the GM might give you a certain amount of disadvantage to subtract from one or all of your rolled dice. Using your "weight lifting" quality, would remove any disadvantages.

## ROLLING DOUBLES

If any 2 dice are rolled with the same number higher than 1, you have the option to roll an additional bonus die for each double rolled. For Check rolls, distribute the total value of the extra dice among the dice you rolled to increase their value and bring it closer to a successful result. For Contest rolls, simply add the value to your total roll to increase your chances at success.

1's are excluded from this option, and rolled dice that have been used as a double set cannot be used to create another double, i.e. if you roll three 2's, you only get 1 double set from that group. You can also opt to not use a bonus die if you prefer.

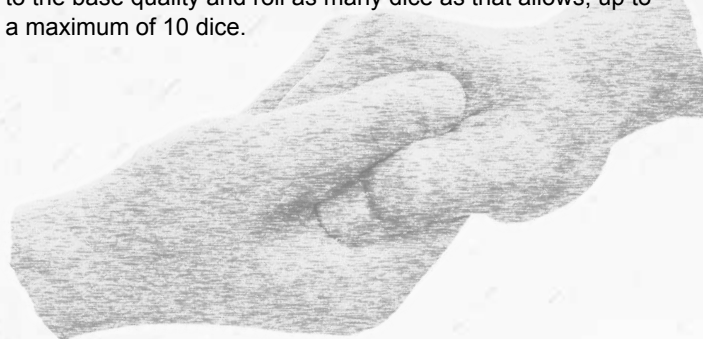
## ASSISTING

If another character is trying to do something and your character is near them, you may assist them with what they are trying to do by making a Check roll using the same or equivalent qualities that they are using, but with *half* of the dice you would normally roll for that Check, *rounded up*. If *any* of the dice you roll creates a double with one of their dice (*even a 1*), they can use your die to roll a bonus die from that double and modify their roll. They can roll bonus dice for each double your dice create with theirs, and 1's are not excluded.

For example, if one character is trying to repair a broken wire using their Utility quality, you can assist them by rolling half of your Utility quality. Let's say their Utility is level 3 and they roll 2, 1, and 4, and you want to assist them. Your Utility quality is also 3, so you roll 2 dice (half of 3 rounded up), which land on 1 and 3. The 1 you rolled is paired with the 1 they rolled, allowing them to roll a bonus die to allow them to improve their overall roll.

## VOLUNTARY FAILURE

If you prefer, whether for story/character purposes or otherwise, you can choose to skip a roll and opt to receive a failure. The GM will play out a failure scenario, and you can take one Experience Point for each die you would have rolled. A Voluntary Failure cannot result in a Negative Impact failure, so you do not gain learning experiences, but it is still a good way to get experience when you know a success in a certain situation would not really make sense for your character.



## COMBAT

If you do choose to handle your conflicts with violence, combat is a fairly straightforward (and dangerous) affair. Rather than taking orderly turns, combat takes place in roughly five-second "free-for-all" intervals with characters taking 1 turn per round whenever you or the GM feels it makes sense for the character to act. The GM will keep track of who has taken turns and announce when each round ends and the next one starts. Choosing when your characters attack can help you make tactical decisions that can dramatically affect the outcome of the fight.

The only time an orderly sequence of turns occurs is at the *beginning* of combat: roll Gumption to find how quickly your character reacts to the situation and take your first turns in order from highest to lowest Gumption roll. If there is a tie, the GM will decide who goes first. After this first turn, the free-for-all turn order begins.

When you take your turn, you can do the following in any order: move, perform 1 active action, and perform 1 passive action.

## MOVEMENT

Your character can move a *reasonable* distance from their current position on their turn. Keeping in mind that a turn takes place at a point within a single 5-second interval, you can move your character however far they might be able to move. If a character is knocked down, their movement is taken to get up unless they stay on the ground to crawl or roll away from something. The GM will let you know if your proposed movement is too far for the given turn.

Movement can occur before and after an action is taken if there is enough time.

## ACTIVE ACTIONS

An "active" action is an action that requires some kind of effort, i.e. something that requires a Check or Contest roll. Whether it's trying to scale a wall, crack a code, or attack another character, that's an active action. When using your active action, you must clearly declare what you are trying to do. If you are attacking, declare who or what you are attacking, what you are using to attack, and where you are trying to hit your target (or let the GM decide if you don't care), and make a Contest roll (pg 8) against them.

Generally, physical attacks will require a Gumption roll while ranged attacks will require Utility, but the GM will tell you what roll is needed in each case.

Note that you can also choose to take any other action aside from attacking if you wish. Maybe you can defuse the situation instead! Or perhaps you have the ability to heal a partner's injuries—that's also something you can do on your turn!

## PASSIVE ACTIONS

A "passive" action is something that doesn't take any time or extraordinary effort to perform, i.e. something that does not require a Check or Contest roll. Whether it's checking the environment for something you can use to your advantage, handing a friend a helpful item, or turning off a light switch as you pass by, that's a passive action. When declaring your passive action, your GM must confirm that it is passive, and if it is, they will tell you the result. Even though passive actions generally don't need a Check roll, your GM may sometimes assign one, for example a Thought roll when trying to look for weak spots on an enemy—depending on how well your character is able to perceive in the moment, they may or may not be able to find something that stands out.

## WEAPONS

In order to use a weapon, your character must have the weapon with them and have enough space in their Inventory to hold it. Beyond this, the effect of the weapon is governed by logic and the Success Scale. For example, using bare fists may not be very effective against metal unless you've got a really good reason as to why it actually would be, but a knife *might* be able to cut through some wood.

## TAKING DAMAGE

When you are attacked and take damage, your character will receive injuries depending on where, how, and how badly they were hit. Injuries you take can lead to serious consequences later down the line, including losing limbs or even dying! See Health (pg 10) to learn about the health and injuries systems in GUTS+.

## REACTIONS

If you are attacked and your aggressor wins the Contest roll, you can tell your GM if you want your character to react in a way that may be more advantageous to them. For example, if your character is receiving a blow to their head, you can say you want them to throw an arm up to take the blow instead. Depending on the context, your GM may allow this reaction, make you roll a Check of some kind, or deny the request.

## COMPLETING COMBAT

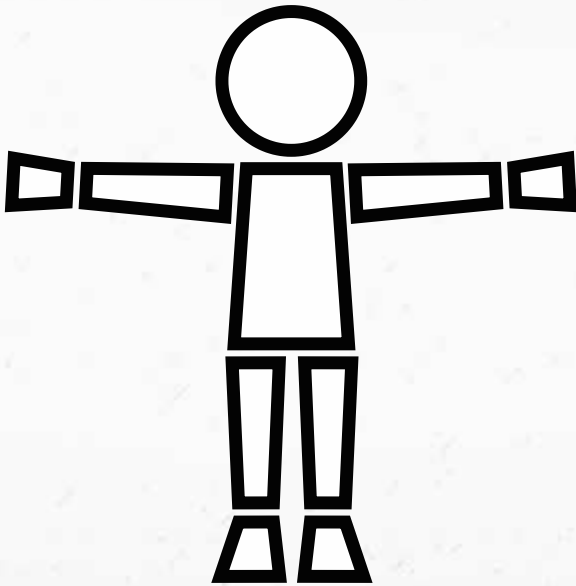
Combat goes until the GM declares that the aggression has passed. This could be by knocking your opponents out or making them run or otherwise convincing them to stop fighting. Alternatively, the party can always attempt to run from a dangerous situation; depending on the opponent's nature, they just might let you go.

## HEALTH

Most role-playing game systems utilize a "hit points" (HP) system, but in GUTS+, a character's health is determined by the number and type of injuries sustained by various parts of their body and various status conditions they gain. Your character can be injured by combat or other dangerous situations, while conditions can be gained from anything from pushing your character too hard or failing an attempt to do something.

## INJURIES

The following chart shows the default areas of the body that can be injured:



Each part of the body on the chart can take two (2) injuries before that body part can no longer be used. Whenever you take an injury, draw a single line through the body part on your character sheet. If you receive an injury to the same body part again, draw a second line through the first to cross it out. When a body part has been crossed out, your character becomes unable to use it until they can heal (see Recovery on page 11). Be careful, though! If your character's body part is crossed out as a result of something dangerous like being cut with a sword, your character can lose that body part permanently!

Your character will gain the "unconscious" status effect and will be unable to act until they recover if they lose use of their Head or they lose the use of a 3 body parts other than their head at once. If they are not recovered before enough time passes, they can die, so be careful! The GM will tell you how long is too long.

## PROTECTION

If your character is wearing clothing or accessories that could protect them from injuries, add a circle or shape near the part of their body to represent their protection. Whenever receiving injuries to that part of the body, mark the injury to the protection first. After the protection has been marked twice, your body part begins gaining injuries if it is damaged again. Your character will need to set aside enough time to focus on re-adjusting their protection after it is damaged before it can protect them again. Your GM will decide how long they will need, but in most cases it will not take much time. After re-adjusting or fixing your protection, remove the marks from it on your character sheet.

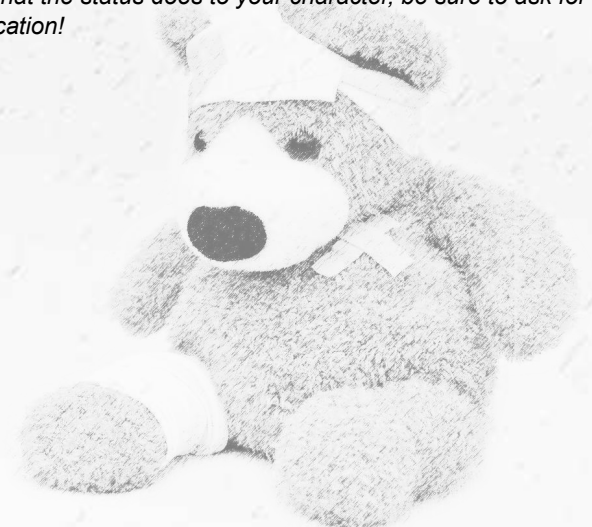
## STATUS CONDITIONS

Less serious than Injuries (but still often not great), your character can also be afflicted by a variety of status conditions. These can be mental things like "afraid," "discouraged," and "embarrassed" or physical things like "blinded", "fatigued", and "nauseated," which affect how you play the game in different ways. Some will affect the values that you roll while others will affect what your character is able to do in the game world. The exact way they affect your character mechanically is determined by your GM, but the most important factor to keep in mind is that your character should behave appropriately when burdened with these conditions. If your character is "disturbed," keep that in mind when you interact with other characters or react to the game world.

Status conditions can stack on top of each other as well as intensify. Some GMs will give you a new status effect to replace an intensified one (eg. "afraid" to "terrified" to "panicked") and others will simply give you numbered levels (i.e. "afraid x2"). Keep in mind what combinations of conditions might do to your character and try to play it out as it might happen in real life.

Optionally, you can voluntarily apply permanent status conditions to your character if you want to play a character with a disability. Work with your GM to figure out what exactly this might mean for how you play the game and ignore regular recovery times.

**Note:** *there is no master list of status conditions beyond the table of suggestions in the Status Effects section of the Game Master chapter (pg 28), so if you are unsure what the GM means by a particular status effect or if they forget to tell you what the status does to your character, be sure to ask for clarification!*



## RECOVERY

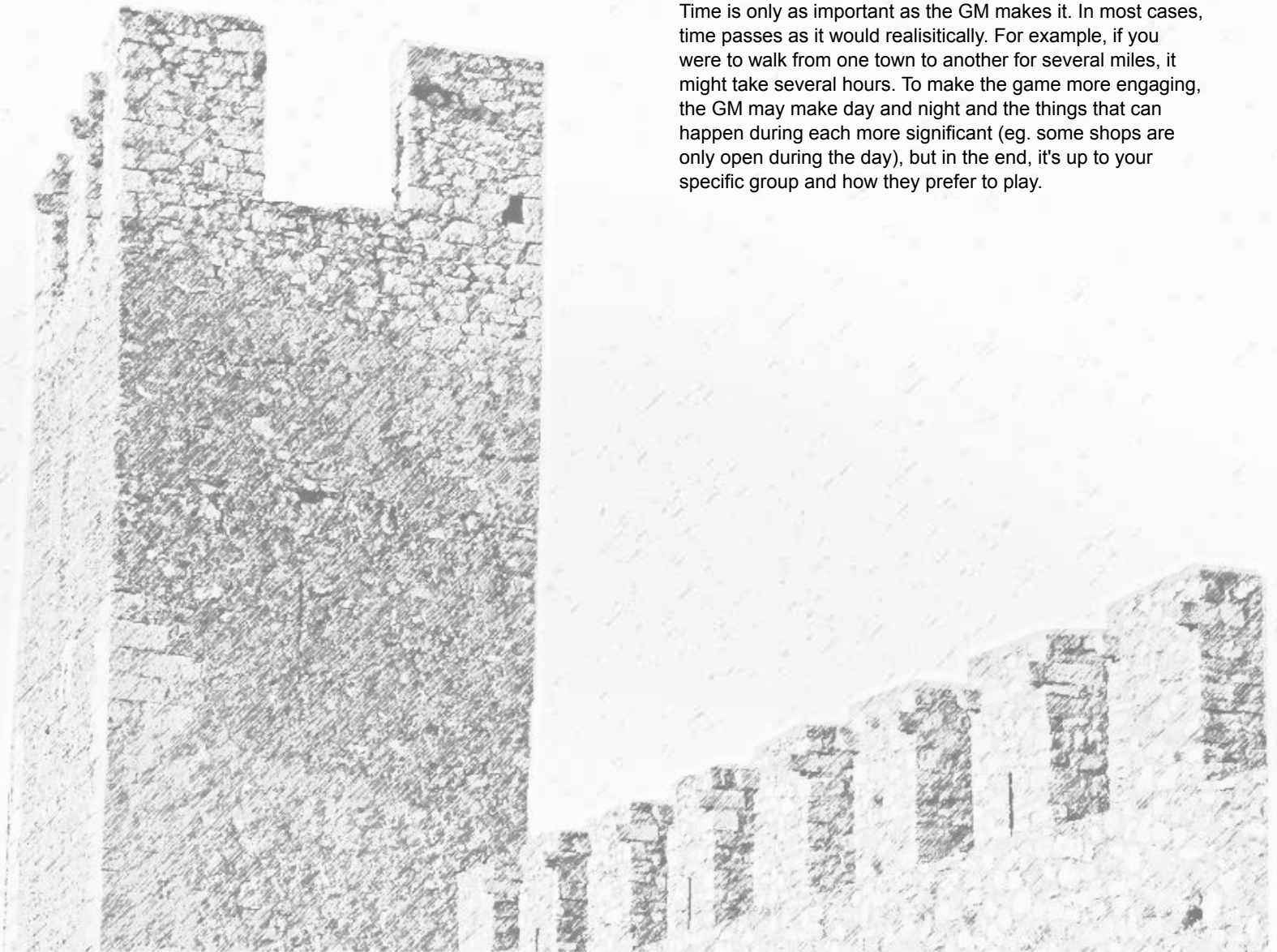
Recovering from an injury is a relatively slow process if not deliberately focused on. Your GM will tell you otherwise, but in general, a single injury that is left untreated will heal at the rate of 1 injury per in-game day—you choose what injury you wish to be healed—while a double injury will heal at the rate of 1 injury per 5 in-game days.

If you wish to focus on allowing your injuries to heal, resting will allow your injuries to heal twice as fast: 1 single injury per 1/2 day and 1 double injury per 2 1/2 days. If you or someone in your group has any sort of medical qualities or tools, then they can help treat your wound to speed up recovery even more. Some treatments will be instantaneous while others might speed it up to just a couple of hours for recovery. Eating food can also help heal injuries.

Different still, status effects are removed either when the GM says so or when the cause of the effect has been removed for a reasonable amount of time. If the GM doesn't lift the status after a reasonable time, they might have forgotten, so just ask if your character still has it!

## THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Time is only as important as the GM makes it. In most cases, time passes as it would realistically. For example, if you were to walk from one town to another for several miles, it might take several hours. To make the game more engaging, the GM may make day and night and the things that can happen during each more significant (eg. some shops are only open during the day), but in the end, it's up to your specific group and how they prefer to play.



## EXAMPLE GAMEPLAY

To help give you an idea of what a play session might look like, here is a short fictional narrative of a GM and a single player using the example Maria character from page 4.

### GM

Maria awakens to find herself on the floor of a pitch black room with her back against a wall and a throbbing pain on the back of her head. The only thing visible is a small pinprick of light an unknown distance away.

### Player

Maria stands up and walks carefully to the little light.

### GM

Make a Utility check to see if you can make it without stumbling.

### Player

Ok... I rolled a 3 and a 5.

### GM

That's a success! Maria makes it to the pinprick of light in just a few steps and finds that it's an illuminated light switch. It's not casting enough light for her to see anything else.

### Player

Maria flips the switch to turn on the lights!

### GM

When Maria's eyes adjust to the light, she sees that she is next to a solid door, and an L-shaped counter is in the opposite corner of the room. The counter has 4 cabinet doors underneath and a set of cabinets with 4 more doors on one wall above the counter. The rest of the room is empty.

### Player

Ok, Maria tries to open the door.

### GM

The door is locked, and it doesn't budge even when Maria tries to jiggle it.

### Player

Of course... Alright, she goes and checks the cabinets, starting with the bottom ones.

### GM

Maria walks over and opens the cabinets under the counter, revealing a toy truck, a step stool, a screwdriver, and a note.

### Player

Hmm, she reads the note. What's it say?

### GM

The note is written in red crayon, and it reads "Truck battery too high. Can't get out without it."

### Player

Uhh... That's it?

### GM

Yep, nothing else is on the note.

### Player

Alrighty then. Maria will grab the step stool and use it to open the upper cabinets.

### GM

Ok, when Maria opens the first upper cabinet, a bat flies out! In the split moment that you see it, its eyes appear to be glowing red. It flaps out into the room, then heads directly toward you! It's going to make a Gumption contest roll against you... That's a 5, so you've got to beat that.

### Player

Oh shoot! Ok... I got a 2 and another 2, so 4... But wait, that's a double! My extra die is... 6! Nice! That's 10 total.

### GM

Ok! That's a negative impact for the bat, then. The bat swoops down to attack, but Maria is able to get out of the way with plenty of space to spare, and even swats the bat away, which sends it careening into the wall. It smacks into the wall and falls onto the counter, unmoving.

### Player

Yikes. Alright, how about the rest of those cabinets, then? Any more bats?

### GM

No more bats, but Maria finds a D-cell battery and a small, disconnected speaker with two wires coming out the back.

### Player

Hmm, alright, I'm gonna grab the battery, then go back down and grab the toy truck, since the note mentioned those things. Can I put the battery in the truck?

### GM

There's a screw on the battery compartment, but I'll assume you just used the screwdriver that was also there to open it and put the battery in. Nothing happens. Maria does see an on/off switch, but roll a Thought check, please.

### Player

That's a single 3. And I'll just go ahead and turn the thing on.

### GM

The truck comes to life, its back wheels spinning while its front wheels turn from side to side. Nothing else appears to happen.

### Player

What the heck? Ok, I wanna look more around the room. Is there some other way out? Like an air vent or something?

### GM

Maria sees that there is an air vent in the ceiling above the door.

### Player

Ok, perfect! Maria is going to use the step stool and screwdriver to unscrew the cover so she can climb in.

### GM

Oh! Uh, alright... Roll Utility to see how you do with the screwdriver reaching up from the step stool...

### Player

Easy, that's a 6!

### GM

Ok then! Maria is able to just reach the vent with the screwdriver and catches the cover and screws as they fall.

### Player

And now, she's going to position the step stool in just the right way so she can vault off it, kick off the wall and get out through the vent with her Parkour quality!

### GM

Well alright then! Roll Parkour!

### Player

That's a 5 and another 5! And my bonus die is 2, so I'll split that evenly, and I'm outta here with 2 sixes!

### GM

As you say, Maria jumps and pulls herself up into the air duct, and I guess that's technically an escape!

# GETTING STRONGER

**R**ather than using general level numbers to determine what can be done by a character, skills are determined exclusively by the selected qualities a character has, and each individual quality can level up. Increasing a quality's level improves not only the success rates of attempts to use a quality, but also the abilities that the quality affords.

In addition to these levels, Experience Points also help to improve your character. The more Experience Points you get, the stronger and more varied your character becomes.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

Experience Points are a reflection of your character's growth. You can earn Experience Points from doing things that result in learning experiences for your character. Every time you reach 100 Experience Points, you have a choice to either increase an existing quality's level by 1 or add a new quality at level 1. If you create a new quality for your character, you are free to create anything you desire, following the Character Creation rules (pg 2). After increasing or creating a Quality, reduce your Experience Points to 0.

You can only earn Experience Points when performing a Check roll, because that is when your character is using the quality as normal, which can lead to growth and learning. Contest rolls are excluded because that is an attempt to put your quality to the test against another living thing. (Also, it's much easier to fail a Contest roll, which would lead to gaining too much Experience too quickly.)

## GAINING EXPERIENCE

Your GM will reward Experience Points for doing challenging things. Whether you successfully get your character through a dangerous situation or you insult a world leader and get into trouble, your character earns valuable experience from doing these things and can work toward improving themselves.

Additionally, your character earns 1 Experience Point for each Check roll that includes a failure-level (1 or 2) die rolled for a Check roll according to the Success Scale (pg 7). Only the dice themselves matter for this, not the result of the roll. For example, if you roll 3D6 and get 2, 5, and 4, your roll is successful, but you earn 1 Experience Point because one of the dice you rolled was a failure. Likewise, if you roll 5D6 and get 1, 1, 4, 4, and 6, you'll earn 1 Experience Point even though you succeed.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES

In contrast to general Experience Points, Learning Experiences for a quality are only earned based on the *result* of the Check roll rather than on the dice rolled.

Badly failing an attempt when using a quality gives your character a Learning Experience: whenever your Check roll results in a Negative Impact, add 1 Learning Experience to the main quality you were using to roll the Check.

*Note: you only receive 1 Learning Experience no matter how many dice you rolled for the Check.*

When you get 10 Learning Experiences on a given quality, that quality is immediately increased by 1 level to reflect that your character is learning how to use that skill better, and the Learning Experiences for that quality are reduced back to 0.

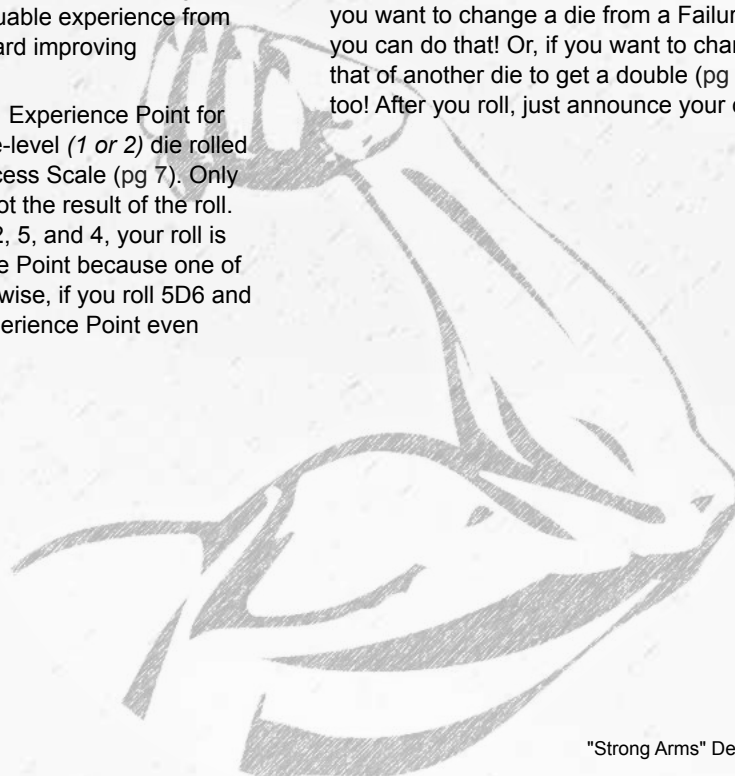
## GROWTH LIMITS

Each quality's level can increase to a maximum of 10. When a quality reaches level 10, it cannot be increased again—you must focus on other qualities instead, but your character can still earn Learning Experiences for that quality. When a given quality has reached level 10 and all 10 Learning Experiences are filled in, your character is considered to have Mastery in that quality. No further growth can be made on that quality.

*Note: you can roll additional D6s for doubles rolled even after you roll the 10 max.*

## QUALITY MASTERY

Your character achieves mastery in a quality when the quality has reached level 10 *and* all 10 Learning Experiences for the quality are filled. When your character has mastery in a quality, that allows them to change the value of any 1 die they roll using that quality for both Check and Contest rolls. If you want to change a die from a Failure to a Positive Impact, you can do that! Or, if you want to change the die's value to that of another die to get a double (pg 8), you can do that, too! After you roll, just announce your change to the GM.



# OPTIONAL MAGIC SYSTEM

**M**

agic in GUTS+ depends entirely on the concept of essence. Every living creature is able to utilize their essence, but it requires a great amount of focus and control to use it. If you take the time and energy necessary to learn how to use your essence, you can manipulate it to do a

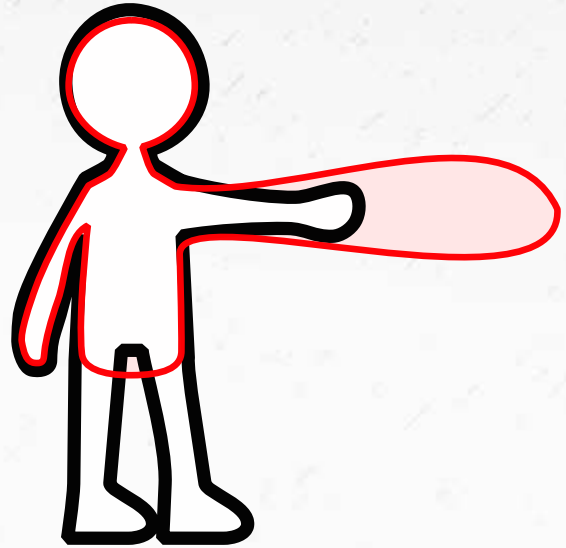
variety of interesting things. This chapter goes into detail about essence and explains skills that essence grants to those who can manipulate it.

## Essence

Every living thing has a soul, or "essence," that is tightly connected to their body. It is completely invisible but absolutely there, yet few people know about it because its bounds are your own body's bounds. Essence is what fills the spaces between your cells and makes you feel alive. There are a number of different makeups of essence, some more dense or hotter or colder than others, but all essence is composed of the same, tangible substance that is interwoven into the very being of its owner.

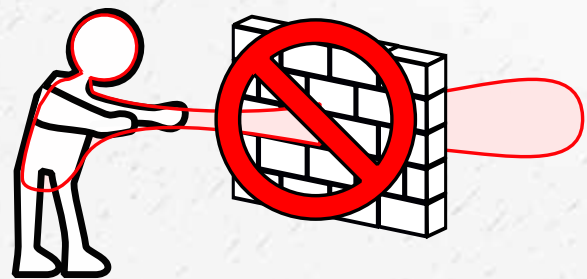


Being a part of your body, you can learn to control it if you can focus enough to recognize it. It takes a lot of work and brain energy, like focusing to move a prosthetic with your mind, but as you practice, you can definitely notice that something is moving around within your body, just under your skin. With enough practice, you can even stretch your essence away from your body a short way.



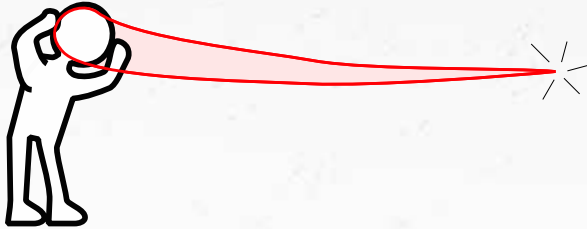
Notice how the essence in the picture is not surrounding the legs. That's because it acts as a single, unified piece that cannot be broken or separated, so what is expanded outward must come from somewhere else. This starts from the feet because your essence originates from and is tethered to your head.

Essence, though it seems ghostly, is fully corporeal, even though it is completely invisible and cannot be felt unless it is deliberately made to be felt. This combined with the fact that it is a whole, unbreakable piece means that it cannot pass through things.

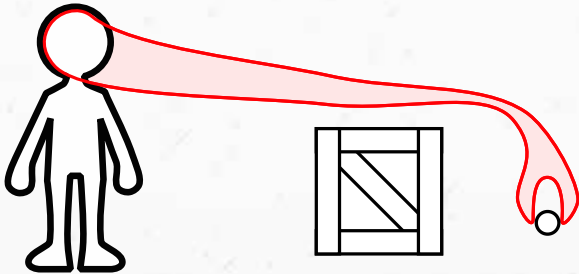


Essence must go around obstacles to reach things behind them, and if anything interrupts the movement of the essence (i.e. someone walks in front of you while you are stretching it toward something), it immediately vanishes from the point of the obstruction, retracting into your body and leaving the extent of your essence at where the obstruction begins.

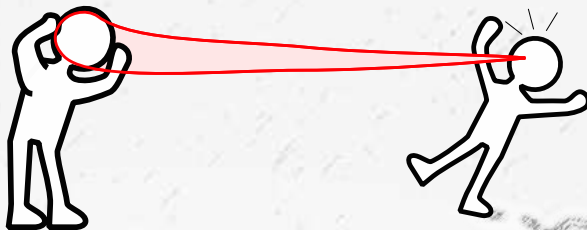
At first, your essence is round, blunt, and soft, like a large, unwieldy giant teddy bear's hand that's invisibly and unsensibly coming from your body, and the size of your essence greatly limits its reach (at most, you could reach about half the length of your body before getting uncomfortable). But as you practice, you can make your essence denser, providing yourself with more to stretch, and you can hone its shape. It takes a lot of practice, especially since it is completely unseeable even to you as you use it, but eventually you can form it into finer shapes and points.



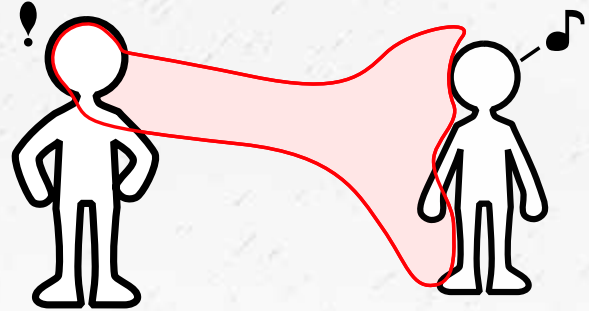
The more you practice controlling it, the more useful it can become. You can increase its density in any area of it to make it able to touch the physical world and manipulate it in ways that can help you pick up objects from afar.



You can even do more traditional "magic" things if you hone it enough. For instance, start fires with friction, draw water out of the air, etc. as long as you have practiced it enough and figured out how to manipulate the physical world with your essence. You could even theoretically learn to get your essence so small and manipulate it so finely that you could kill someone from afar.



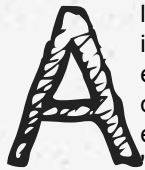
Because of its physical nature, however, it does not allow you to read minds or anything like that. You could, however, use it to sense someone else's essence and learn how to distinguish emotions. Even though you can't see your essence, you can feel what it interacts with, though not in the nerve→brain sort of way that our bodies feel.



With enough focus, control, and training, you can do just about anything, leading to more traditional fantasy magic. You could use some kind of language to help yourself focus, leading to "magic words", though you wouldn't strictly *need* to. Essence is naturally limited in scope and power, but its power is already there for you to utilize if you just focus hard enough.



# USING ESSENCE



Although essence is innate in all living creatures, it is necessary for a person to focus on it enough before they are able to manipulate it. In order to allow your character to manipulate their essence, you need to give them the special "Essence" quality, which behaves differently than other qualities. Read on to learn how to set up and use your character's Essence in your game, but remember that it is entirely up to you and your Game Master whether essence and its magic will exist in your game world, so be sure to check before planning your character around it!

## DEFINING YOUR ESSENCE

Once your character gets the Essence quality, whether at character creation or added later, you will need to set up your character to learn what they are capable of.

**Remember:** Essence cannot be your character's primary custom quality.

## FINDING YOUR AURA

Roll 1D6 to determine the Aura of your character's essence. An essence's Aura explains the nature of the essence, and in turn defines what your character will be able to do with their essence when they grow more comfortable using it. In other words, the Aura specifies what kinds of magic your character will be able to use.

Use the table below to find the Aura that your character's Essence possesses and write it on your Character Sheet:

Die Value	Aura	Element / Power
1	Hot	Fire / Heat
2	Cold	Ice / Water / Sharpness
3	Heavy	Earth / Strength
4	Fast	Lightning / Energy
5	Slow	Nature / Time / Precision
6	Soft	Light / Empathy

An essence's Aura does not necessarily reflect a character's personality; rather, it is simply a defining characteristic of the essence itself, leading to different abilities after gaining control over it. As essence has been studied over time, it has been found that given enough time and mastery, Auras generally allow essences to manifest in ways related to the associated Element / Power listed above.

*Fun fact:* Notice how most Auras are associated with a traditional Element but none of them represent Air? Essence **itself** is associated with Air!

**Note:** If you want to choose an Aura rather than rolling for one, you are free to do that as long as your GM and fellow players don't mind.

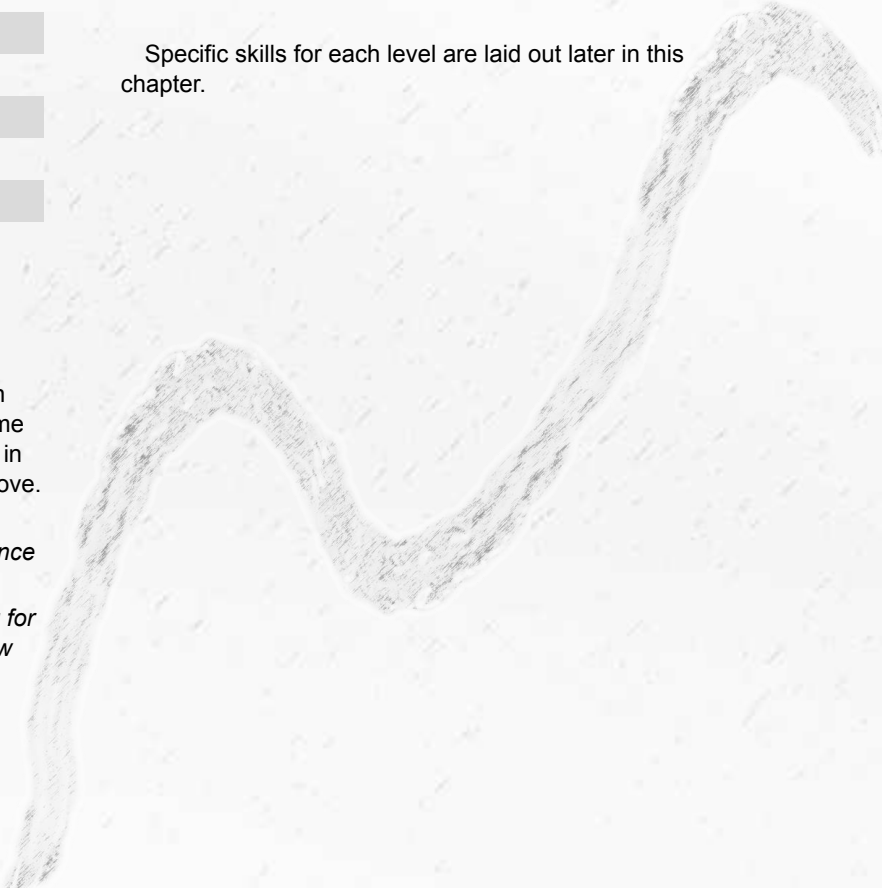
## UNDERSTANDING DENSITY

Your character's Essence quality's level represents the "Density" of their essence—the higher the Density of their essence, the more there is to manipulate. What this means is that as your character grows more and more skilled with controlling their essence, their essence will grow within them, allowing them to do more things with it. Using the terms of other RPG systems, this might be understood as your character's magic level.

Using the Essence quality, you will be able to find what skills a person with the same type of Aura at that level of essence Density is capable of learning/using and choose what your character is able to do. Each level of Density affords your character a certain number of skills they can use their essence for.

Density	Basic Skills	Honed Skills	Master Skills
1	1	0	0
2	2	0	0
3	2	1	0
4	3	1	0
5	3	2	0
6	4	2	1
7	4	3	1
8	5	3	2
9	5	4	2
10	5	4	3

Specific skills for each level are laid out later in this chapter.



# MANIPULATING YOUR ESSENCE

Using essence follows the same rules as other qualities (pg 8), but a negative impact failure gives your character the "strained" status condition. On a successful roll, you can use the skill you were attempting to do anything that the skill could logically allow. For example, the Honed Skill "Grab" (pg 19) can be used to hold things in place as well as simply pick them up.

Prolonged use (i.e. maintaining an action using essence for longer than 1 turn if in Combat or for longer than 5 seconds outside of Combat) can also place strain on your character's mind. Every time your turn begins while you are maintaining the manipulation of your essence, make a Check roll (pg 7) using your Essence quality. If you fail the check, your character gains the "strained" status condition.

In addition to this, attempting to manipulate an object up to twice what your essence's Density allows (i.e. attempting to lift something that weighs more than your essence can comfortably lift—not going beyond your essence's range), you must roll an *additional* Essence check. If you fail this check, your character gains the "strained" condition *and* is unable to perform the action. If the object is more than twice what your essence's Density allows, the action cannot be performed at all.

## RANGE

As your character's essence gains more Density, it will be able to be extended further. The ranges listed below are relative to your character's head and allows for a rounded tip with a 1-foot diameter when extended away from you.

Density	Range
1-2	5 Feet
3-4	10 Feet
5-6	15 Feet
7-8	20 Feet
9-10	25 Feet
Mastery	30 Feet

While you are able to stretch your essence as far as the table above specifies, the closer your Essence is to you, the denser and therefore the more powerful/effective a skill can be.

## STRAIN

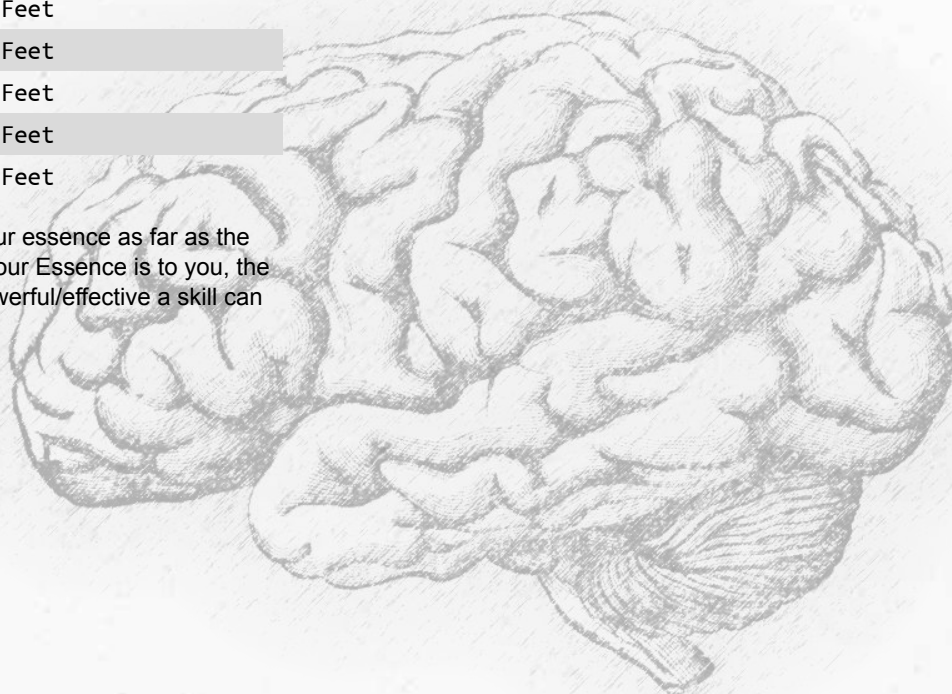
When your character is strained (from either badly failing their Essence Check or from over-exerting their essence) yet they try to use their Essence quality again, they risk receiving an Injury (pg 10) to their head. If a character already has the "strained" status condition and they do something that would normally apply the "strained" condition, they receive 1 Injury to their Head, ignoring any protection they might be wearing!

Normally, the "strained" condition goes away after 1 full round during Combat (unless the GM says otherwise) or until the scene or location changes when outside of combat (at the GM's discretion). If you choose to use Essence while strained, the "strained" condition does not go away until you allow your character the time they need to recover from it. So whether you succeed or fail your Essence roll, you must wait an *additional* round or scene before it can be removed.

## MASTERY

Normally, essence can only extend as far as its range and is immediately shortened/cut off if a solid object passes between the user and its target. If you have achieved Mastery (pg 13) on your Essence quality, your essence will automatically stretch up to half its range around any obstacles that get inbetween the user and its target to prevent the connection from being broken.

For example, if someone walks in front of you while you are trying to Grab something, your essence can automatically stretch around that person so the connection between you and your target is not broken.



# SKILLS

**T**he skills listed here are intended to reflect your character's growth of and control over their Essence rather than act as discrete actions that can be performed. As their essence's Density increases and they learn more skills, envision that as your character enhancing their control over their essence in a way that allows them to perform that skill by learning to manipulate it in certain ways. If your GM allows it, skills can be merged, weakened (unless otherwise specified), or altered to fit certain situations beyond what is described, so long as the Density allows the possibility.

This chapter lists all of the skills available to the each skill level and Aura type.

## BASIC SKILLS

Basic essence skills require that your character knows that their essence exists and that they are able to manipulate it. While they may know what the Aura of their essence is and what Auras are in theory, they do not have a firm grasp on how to utilize the Aura to do different things.

### ANY AURA

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#### **GIVE**

Extend your essence so it comes in contact with another essence and share your feelings with the target. The target feels the feelings as distinct and external from themselves, vaguely coming from your direction.

#### **HARDEN**

Push your essence outward and move its substance into one area to create a hardened surface for protection or other uses. With a high enough Density, you can extend it to surround your whole body, but in most cases, it can fill a cube the volume of half your essence's range in size at a point somewhere within half your essence's range.

If the hardened essence is used to support something in midair, it can only hold half of your essence's range in pounds (i.e. at 3 Density, which gives essence a range of 10 feet, it can carry 5 lbs). Supporting any weight higher than this inflicts the "strained" status condition on the owner of the essence.

#### **sense**

Extend your essence as far as your range allows and feel when something comes in contact with it. You can either extend it in a straight line or expand it outward from yourself for a shorter range.

#### **TOUCH**

Extend your essence outward in a form comparable to a soft, 1-foot wide teddy bear hand to push objects. Depending on the weight of the object, you may or may not be able to move it (see Harden for reference—the final word belongs to your GM). You may move your essence away from you, up, down, left, or right—you may not pull an object.

#### **WAVE**

Flow your essence like a wave to send a single light gust of air out from it. The gust is noticeable but only strong enough to rustle some paper or blow out a weak candle.

### COLD AURA

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#### **COOL**

Flow the substance of your essence so it pulls heat away and cools the area by a noticeable degree. Can cool things off, but not enough to freeze it.

### FAST AURA

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#### **STATIC**

Excite the substance of your essence so it generates static electricity. This static electricity can be localized or spread across your whole essence.

### HEAVY AURA

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#### **PRESS**

Bunch up the substance of your essence and push it downward over objects to affect the weight of things. Can apply up to twice your essence's range in pounds of pressure upon the target.

### HOT AURA

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#### **HEAT**

Excite the substance of your essence so it heats up to a noticeable degree. Can help keep things warm, but not hot enough to light something aflame.

### SLOW AURA

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#### **SLOW**

Flow the substance of your essence around yourself or an object within range to make the target's perception of time slow down by up to your essence's range times, i.e. if your range is 15, then for each 1 second your target experiences, 15 seconds of real time.

### SOFT AURA

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#### **READ**

Expand your essence outward to read the feelings of another essence. The other essence does not perceive this contact unless they are expecting it (eg. when using the Sense skill).

## HONED SKILLS

Honed essence skills require that your character has practiced with and can control their essence fairly well. They are coming to grips with what the Aura of their essence is and know what that means for their essence manipulation.

### ANY AURA

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#### BURST

Launch your essence outward at high speed in any direction up to half of your essence's range to push an object with twice your essence's range in pounds of force. It only pushes in the specified direction and does not cause blunt damage.

#### GRAB

Extend your essence outward and shape the end like a simple claw that can be closed to hold an object (not yourself). You may lift or move an object whose weight is up to your essence's range in pounds. You may move the held object in any direction if it is not too heavy.

Trying to lift an object heavier than your limit requires a Check roll. On failure, you gain the "strained" status condition and are not able to lift the object. Objects heavier than twice your limit are not movable.

#### GUST

Flow your essence like a continuous wave to send out a consistent gust of wind. The wind is strong enough to blow over non-grounded items up to half of your essence's range in pounds.

#### HIT

Extend your essence as far as your range allows and swing it like a club with as small as a half-foot diameter. You can move your essence fast enough to cause some bruising.

#### SHOW

Excite the substance of your essence into a barbed mass and extend it so it comes in contact with another essence to share visions with the target for the duration. The target knows that the visions are external and not from their own mind.

If upon recognizing the vision, the target wishes to resist and they have the Essence quality or another relevant quality that is not Thought, the Essence Check roll becomes a Contest roll against the target's quality. Upon a successful resistance, your essence is pushed away from the target's and cannot share the vision.



### COLD AURA

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#### CONDENSE

Cool the air around your essence until water condenses from the air. This water can be further manipulated or frozen. If paired with another skill like Burst or Push, the water or ice can be launched.

#### FREEZE

Flow the substance of your essence so it pulls heat away and quickly cools the area to water's freezing point. If the target is water based, the portion in direct contact with your essence instantly becomes completely frozen.

As you continue flowing your essence, it continues pulling heat away, so if there is more heat below the surface, it will continue pulling heat and freezing down to a depth of about 2 feet. For example, with enough time, you could completely freeze a person solid, but you could only freeze about 2 feet of the surface of a lake if you spent enough time on it.

### FAST AURA

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#### SHOCK

Excite the substance of your essence to build up enough static electricity to create a considerable electric shock that arcs off of your essence onto the target. Cannot create a sustained electrical field.

#### SPEED

Position your essence in such a way that it pushes your limbs and body, allowing you to move faster than you would normally be able.

### HEAVY AURA

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#### CRUSH

Bunch up the substance of your essence and push it downward over or around objects to apply a great amount of pressure to the target. Can apply up to five times your essence's range in pounds of pressure upon the target.

#### INFLATE

Send a small amount of your essence into hole or some other tight space and quickly send the rest of your essence's substance into that space, expanding your essence and splitting open the material your essence entered.

### HOT AURA

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#### IGNITE

Excite the substance of your essence until it heats up enough to generate a flame the size of your character's head. The flame remains at the tip of your essence and can be moved around.

#### MELT

Excite the substance of your essence until it heats up enough to melt most plastics. It only affects what you want it to heat up, and can be held on a spot to increase the heat. While it cannot melt iron, it can soften most softer metals. Your essence can also cause burns on contact.

## **SLOW AURA**

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### **PROGRESS**

Engulf an object in your essence and increase the passage of time for anything in contact with or within the bounds of your essence without affecting time around it. Time for affected objects passes at roughly 1 day per turn/5 seconds.

If the target's essence also has a Slow Aura, they can resist the flow of time by turning the user's Check roll into a Contest roll. If the user fails the Contest, their essence is pushed away by the target. If they are successful, time for the target instead only passes at 1/2 day per turn/5 seconds.

### **SHAPE**

Expand your essence outward and form it into any shape larger than 1 inch and use it to interact with anything in range as a solid object. Your Essence remains invisible, but it can be shaped into objects with points/tips as small as 1 inch in diameter.

## **SOFT AURA**

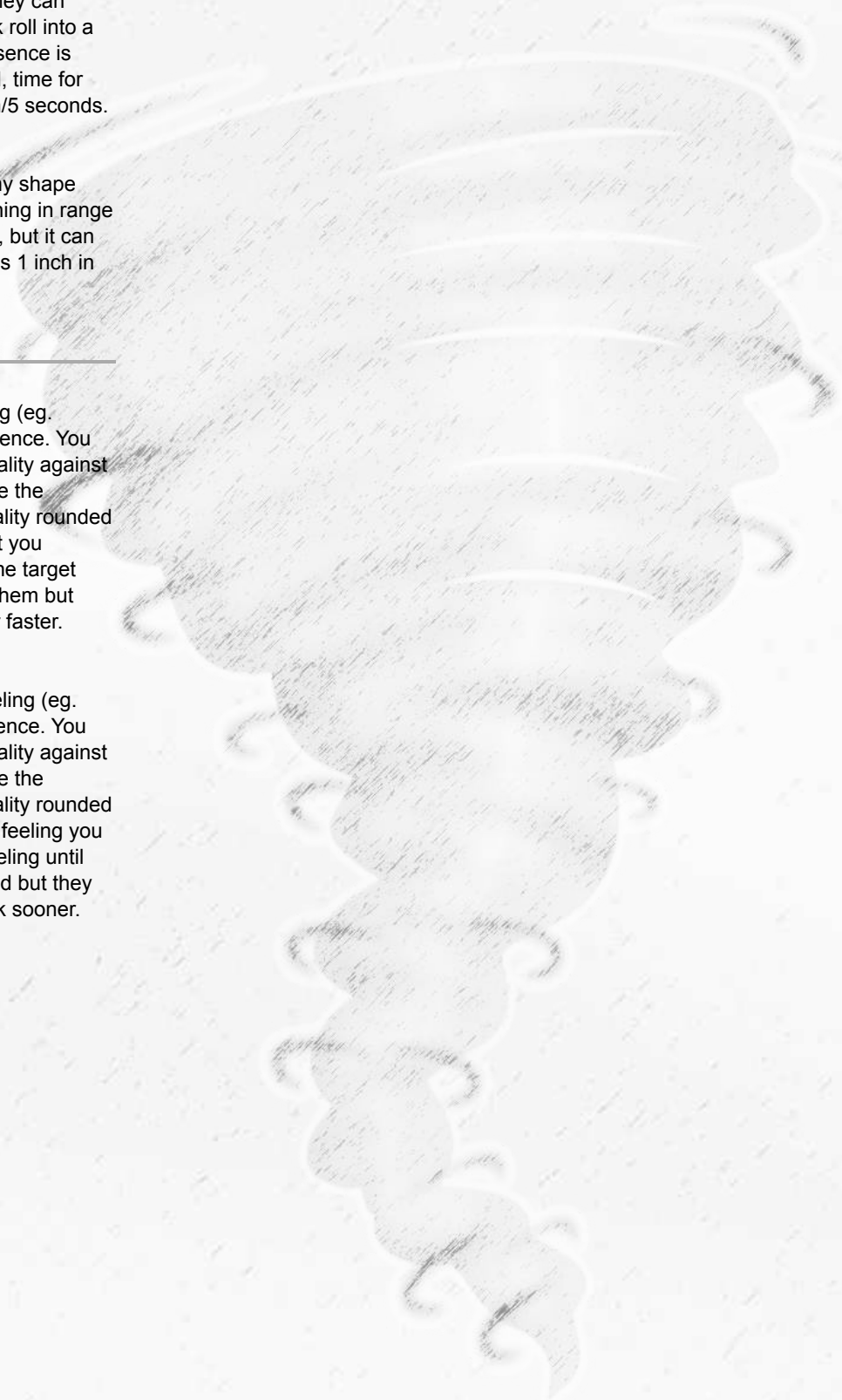
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### **SUGGEST**

Expand your essence outward to push any feeling (eg. happiness, sadness, fear, etc.) upon another essence. You must make a Contest roll using your Essence quality against the target's Essence quality, or if they do not have the Essence quality, against half of their Thought quality rounded up. If you succeed, the target begins feeling what you pushed upon them, and the feeling lingers until the target can naturally recover, i.e. if fear is pushed upon them but they realize there is no danger, they may recover faster.

### **TAKE**

Expand your essence outward to remove any feeling (eg. happiness, sadness, fear, etc.) from another essence. You must make a Contest roll using your Essence quality against the target's Essence quality, or if they do not have the Essence quality, against half of their Thought quality rounded up. If you succeed, the target no longer feels the feeling you removed, and the target continues without the feeling until something activates it again, i.e. if fear is removed but they see an immediate danger, they may get fear back sooner.



## MASTER SKILLS

Master essence skills require that your character has a full grasp and understanding of their own essence. They are know exactly how the Aura of their essence works and can use it effectively as they manipulate their essence.

### ANY AURA

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#### ENGULF

Wrap your essence around an object (not yourself) to hold it in place and move it around. You may lift or move an object whose weight is up to twice your essence's range in pounds. You can lift the object into the air, manipulate the object being held, and even restrict airflow to the object. If the object you are trying to move is unwilling, you need to make a Contest roll against it: your Essence quality against its Gumption or equivalent strength-related quality. If you succeed, you can move the unwilling target's body or limbs.

Trying to lift an object heavier than your limit requires an additional Check roll. On failure, you gain the "strained" status condition and are not able to lift the object.

#### INSIST

Excite the substance of your essence into a barbed mass and extend it so it comes in contact with another essence to make the target believe it is experiencing anything you wish it to for the duration. Make a Contest roll against the target: your Essence quality against its Thought quality. If you succeed, your target believes it is currently experiencing whatever situation you are putting its mind in. On failure, the target knows that something has tried to alter its mind and gains an additional die to roll for each successive attempt, i.e. if you've failed 2 times and try again, the target gets 2 additional dice on top of their Thought roll, even if it surpasses 10 dice.

#### PUSH

Extend your essence outward in any direction to push an object (or yourself) with up to your character's weight in pounds of force. It only pushes in the specified direction and does not cause blunt damage, but you can keep a sustained push for as long as you wish. You can use this skill to either propel yourself away from any surface or any object away from you.

#### STAB

Bring your essence together into a point and thrust it as far as your range allows to stab into a target. You can move your essence fast enough to pierce soft wood or flesh. This can cause up to 2 Injuries at the GM's discretion, depending on the circumstances, though it typically will only cause 1. If paired with a skill like Push, it can penetrate harder materials.

#### WHIRLWIND

Swirl your essence fast enough to create a powerful spiral of air in any direction. The wind is strong enough to blow over non-grounded items up to twice your essence's range in pounds.

## COLD AURA

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#### FROST

Flow the substance of your essence to absorb all warmth in the air up to twice your essence's range. All air is frozen, dropping the temperature of the area, and your essence holds onto the heat it absorbed for the duration. The heat absorbed can be given to targets to help ease the new chill of the air, dispersed over time, or it can be expelled to boil the water in the air in a 1 foot-wide spout that travels in a straight line.

#### SAP

Flow the substance of your essence around a target to pull any amount of moisture out of it and the surrounding air. You can then manipulate the water to do whatever you would like. If only the air is targeted, the air becomes extremely dry, but if a living thing is targeted, it can be dried to a husk on a successful Contest roll: your Essence quality against the target's Gumption quality. The extraction of water is *not reversible*.

#### SLASH

Form your essence into a sharp edge and swing it to cut through a target in a straight line. The blade can cut through any physical substance and can be controlled to cut through only the target and nothing else. At the GM's discretion, this can sever limbs and cause permanent Injuries, but it cannot cut through another essence.

## FAST AURA

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#### ENERGIZE

Surge the substance of your essence around a target (or yourself) to increase its speed. This can be taken in several ways including increasing the speed of cell production to decrease healing time or leaving a lingering effect of speed to make the target move much faster than normal.

If used on yourself, you can swing a limb fast enough to create small vacuums in the air and run up to four times faster than normal. If used on someone else, they can move about twice to three times as fast as normal. If targeting cells, you can incite them to increase production by a noticeable amount, i.e. a cut will clot, close, and heal in a matter of seconds. The effectiveness and how it specifically affects your target is determined by the GM.

#### LIGHTNING

Excite the substance of your essence to build up enough static electricity to create powerful bolts of lightning that arc off of your essence onto a spherical space with up to a 10 foot radius like a Tesla coil. The affect is instantaneous and devastating—the power of the electricity cannot be controlled. The bolts will connect with any metal objects first and any living things if there is no metal present, and the bolts will pass through anything that could act as a conduit on the way to its targets.

If a living creature comes in contact with the lightning, it is as if they were struck by lightning and, depending upon the circumstances, can cause up to 2 Injuries to any part(s) of the body that the GM feels is appropriate given the environment for each target within the affected space.

## MAGNETIZE

Excite the substance of your essence to build up enough static electricity to create a spherical electrical field up to half your essence's range in size expanding outward from your head. It can create a sustained electrical field for the duration and can be controlled to specific voltages. Any magnetic objects around you are pulled toward you with the equivalent power of an electromagnet with the same voltage, and electronic devices may be damaged.

## HEAVY AURA

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### BUILD

Swirl the substance of your essence to collect dust and other particles within your range and crush them together into a solid cube with sides the size of your essence's range in inches.

### COMPRESS

Bunch up the substance of your essence around a target and apply enough pressure to crush it into a solid sphere. This pressure can also be applied evenly across a surface to flatten it or used to crush air into a directed blast.

### EMPOWER

Surge the substance of your essence around yourself to increase your physical strength. You can lift or move objects up to your essence's range in pounds on top of what you are physically able to lift. Increase the number of dice you roll for Gumption or other Strength-related quality Check rolls up to the maximum number of dice (10) for the duration.

If you utilize a modified check, your strength is sapped an amount equivalent to how long you used the skill: remove 1 die for each turn/5 seconds you used the skill from your next Gumption or Strength-related quality roll.

## HOT AURA

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### EXPLODE

Excite the substance of your essence until it heats up enough to ignite the air, then enfold more air until enough ignited air is gathered together to cause a large explosion of fire in a sphere up to half your Essence's range in diameter. All air within the affected area is removed until surrounding air rushes in to fill its place.

### INCINERATE

Excite the substance of your essence to generate enough heat to completely burn a target within half of your essence's range to ash. If the target is meltable, it is liquefied before being burned away. Surrounding objects or creatures cannot be protected from the radiant heat and could be burned or catch on fire.

### MAGMA

Swirl the substance of your essence around the air, dirt, or another flammable/meltable object to create a stream of either flames (if using air or flammable objects) or magma (if using meltable objects or dirt) that can be launched at a target. The object(s) used as fuel is completely consumed.

## SLOW AURA

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### FOCUS

Flow the substance of your essence around yourself or a target within half of your range to heighten its focus and enable extreme control over its movements. Increase the number of dice you roll for Utility or other Precision-related quality Check rolls up to the maximum number of dice (10) for the duration.

If you utilize a modified check, your fine muscular control is reduced in relation to how long you used the skill: remove 1 die for every 2 turns/10 seconds you used the skill from your next Utility or Precision-related quality roll.

### PAUSE

Expand your essence outward from your head into a thin bubble to surround everything within a diameter up to your Essence's range in size. Time is slowed to a stop for everything touched by your essence except for what you choose for the duration.

You cannot use other essence skills while using this skill, and another essence can push yours aside.

### STITCH

Expand your essence outward and engulf any object to manipulate it at an extremely fine level. Using this skill, you can stitch a cut back together, remove a blemish from a surface, or fuse a broken object back together.

## SOFT AURA

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### CONTROL

Expand your essence outward to convince another essence that it is your closest, most compliant friend. You must make a Contest roll using your Essence quality against the target's Thought quality. If you succeed, the target believes that it is your friend and will do anything for you that it would normally only do for its closest friends. The effect remains for up to as long as your essence's range in minutes after your essence has been withdrawn—the time does not count down while your essence stays in contact with the target.

### GLOW

Excite the substance of your essence until it begins to glow. The shape of your Essence becomes visible as it emits a pale, bluish light from its entire surface, and lights up the area around it without heat.

### IMPLANT

Excite the substance of your essence into a barbed mass and extend it so it comes in contact with another essence to completely affect your target's memory. Make a Contest roll using your Essence quality against the target's Thought quality. If you succeed, you may either implant a false memory into your target's mind or alter a specific memory within the target's mind—altering a memory includes removing it completely. Changes made to the target's memory is permanent.

If you are trying to alter a memory but the target does not have the specified memory or if the memory specified is too vague, this skill will fail and have no effect on the target.



# THE GAME MASTER

Everything before this chapter is important for anyone playing GUTS+ to know, but here, we will walk through the concepts of how the game world works, how to build your own game world, and what the role of the Game Master (GM) entails. As GM, your role is architect, narrator, decider, intermediary, friend, enemy, and anything else that is required for the players to navigate the game world. It's a big responsibility, but it's also a lot of fun!

## YOUR OWN WORLD

GUTS+ is a role-playing game *system*, which means that it only provides a framework and general rules for how to play within a game world. As Game Master it's *your* job to control that game world for your players to play within, and most of the time, it'll be your responsibility to provide that game world as well.

### WHAT IT MEANS

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Whether or not you've created a world before, it's easy to understand that it's not a small or particularly easy task. It's important to understand what creating a world implies before you dive in and start creating them.

### THE BURDEN

Worlds have things, places, and people in them, and it's your job to specify where all of those things, places, and people are within the world. Things, places, and people within worlds have different appearances and behaviors, and it's your job to be able to describe them. Places, people, and even some things have different personalities, and it's up to you to keep that consistent enough to make your players feel comfortable exploring.

The best worlds have persistence and change over time. As GM, you're responsible for controlling how your world behaves whether the players are involved or not, but it's most important to be able to allow things in your world to respond to your players' actions. Creating a world that not only exists but *reacts* is essential to controlling a GUTS+ game, and it takes a lot of work, imagination, and note-taking.

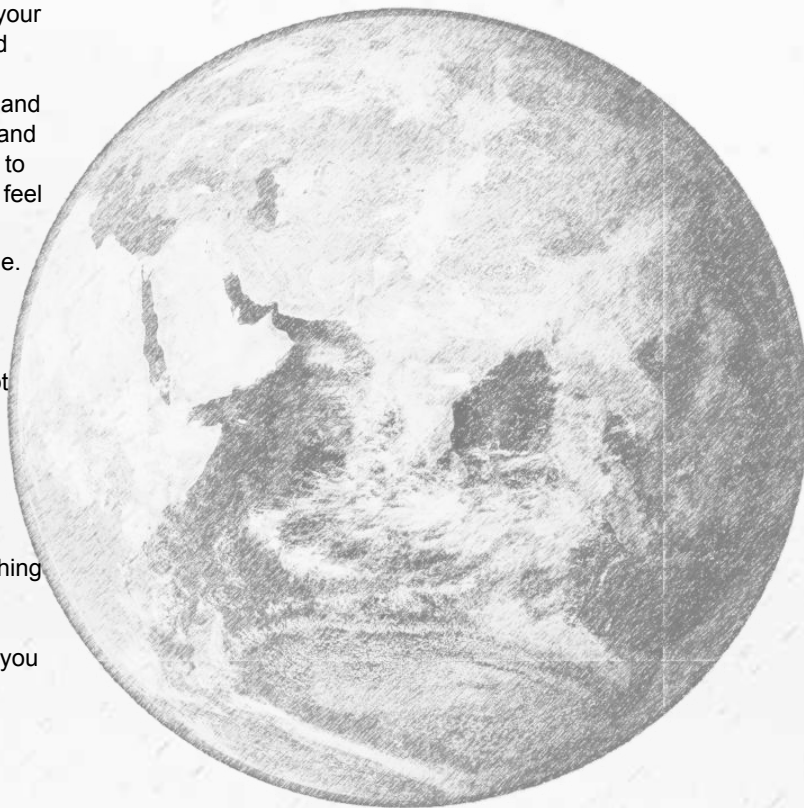
By accepting the job as the GM, you are telling your players that you will guide their experience in a way that allows them to play, even if playing includes doing something you don't expect. Using the world you've set up, the personalities of the characters you've created, and the physics and possibilities of the world your players are in, you need to make the world react to what happens.

### THE FREEDOM

At the same time, you are free to create your own world! That world can be anything you want—whether it's completely built from scratch with its own evolutionary history or whether it's a clone of the city you live in with some slight changes, it's your world to create. As GM you can be as creative and wild or as orderly and mundane as you want when it comes to creating your world. You can even choose to include a magic system or any other alternative you might want!

Using a place that already exists that you are familiar with is a great way to get a quick start on creating your game world. If you live in a particular neighborhood of a large city, that can provide an easy framework to build upon—you can even use people you've seen walking around as an easy place to start for building non-player characters for your players to interact with! The amount of detail and work you put in is completely up to you, and it's very much recommended that you use an existing framework when creating your first worlds.

What is and is not in your world is ultimately completely up to you, and that can be very freeing.



## BUILDING YOUR WORLD

Once you understand what your world needs to be able to do for you and your players, you can start piecing together your world. This process will be different for everyone, some people preferring to think big first and work down to the specific details and others preferring to build one piece or room at a time. There's no right or wrong way to do it, but it's important to find a way that works best for you so you don't burn out or lose your mind.

## THE BIG-PICTURE PROCESS

Here is one method of creating a world that might be helpful to new world builders:

1. Start with an environment you know well, maybe a house or a neighborhood, depending on how much work you want to do.
2. Try to think of everything you know about the environment you've chosen—rooms, nooks, crannies, and where things are placed in those spaces.
3. Strip out or tidy up things you don't want to have to keep track of—crumpled up paper in the trash, messy closets filled with things, or other things like that.
4. Think of some people who live in that environment, if anyone, and how they act within it.
5. Flesh out those peoples' personalities, even if just a little bit, create character sheets for them, imagine what they might do regularly in your environment, and place them where they belong.
6. Marvel at your little world.

Getting started is that simple.

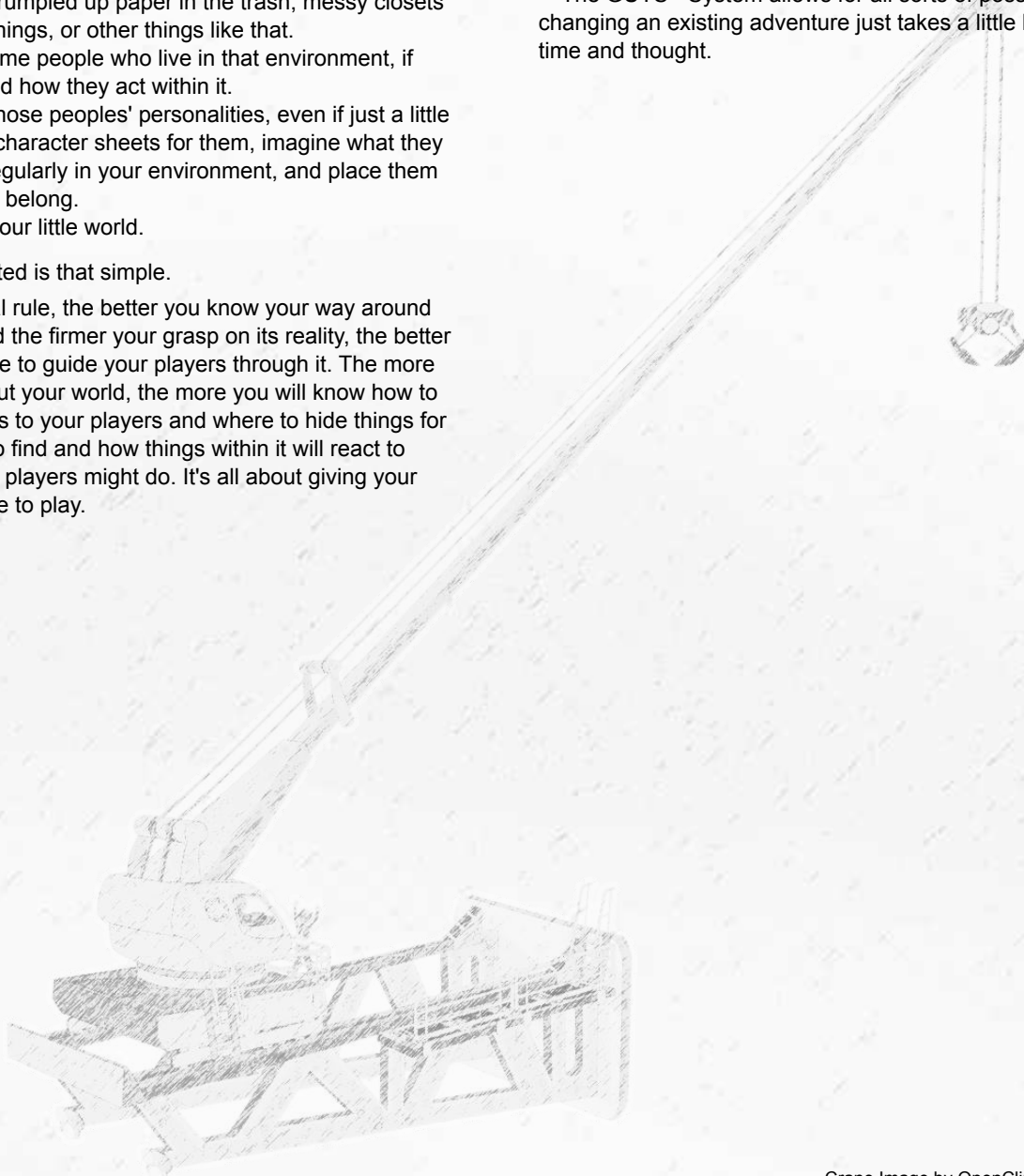
As a general rule, the better you know your way around your world and the firmer your grasp on its reality, the better you will be able to guide your players through it. The more you know about your world, the more you will know how to describe things to your players and where to hide things for your players to find and how things within it will react to whatever your players might do. It's all about giving your players a place to play.

## MODIFYING ANOTHER WORLD

The GUTS+ System is provided as a blank slate, but sometimes that's more intimidating than freeing. Fortunately, it's designed to be very flexible, which means that existing settings or scenarios shouldn't be too hard to adapt to a GUTS+ adventure! It might take some extra work, but the overall principles should remain the same, only changing some of the mechanics.

For example, if you want to use something from a system like Dungeons and Dragons®, then the maps, conversations, and stories should remain relatively unchanged, but you'll need to modify how some of the specific checks are made and decide how spells work. This is where your power as the GM comes in! If a hidden compartment has a particularly high difficulty check, you could require a Positive Impact Thought roll to see if they find it! Or if someone plays a magic user, you can give them spell slots to use instead of using Essence! Many of the spells have some flavor text that explains what they do, so you can use that to help you understand what it would be able to do so you can determine the results rather than having them just deal damage.

The GUTS+ System allows for all sorts of possibilities, and changing an existing adventure just takes a little bit of extra time and thought.



## CRAFTING A QUEST

Once you have a world for your players to play within, it's important that you give your players something to *do*, otherwise you've simply given them a different version of what they're already experiencing every day!

### SCENARIOS AND SITUATIONS

An easy way to get your players involved in the world is to either place them into a specific scenario with a goal or fabricate a pressing situation for them to get their characters out of.

Depending on how you've built your world, it may be easy to come up with something like this. Maybe your world's government is on the brink of collapse, and it's up to your players to either topple it or stabilize it. Maybe your characters are literally standing inside of a collapsing building and they need to work together to escape. You can then work forward or backward from there: what caused the government to collapse and how can we fix it? What caused the building to collapse and how can we prevent more from being destroyed? Many great quests start with a simple question like these.

### NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCS)

As the GM, you need to control all of the characters in your world that aren't being controlled by your players, and if you want your players to move down a certain path or pursue a certain goal, it's up to you to get your NPCs to point your characters in the right direction. Each NPC your players will interact with should have its own character sheet so you know what its qualities are if you need them to perform any actions—your NPCs should be subject to the same rules as your players unless you have a real good reason not to. Having even the most basic of information for NPCs your players interact with, like a list of qualities and their levels, will be helpful to you, and depending on how they interact, you can even decide to turn them into more significant characters later!

For reference, your average adult will likely have fairly low stats unless they are particularly stubborn or academic or something like that. Generally only leading industry professionals or people who have devoted their lives to a craft will have qualities with levels higher than 5.

## THE QUEST

The most basic of quests are a simple string of scenarios and situations laid end to end, but as more of these basic situations line up, more resources become available for you as the GM to build connections between them. If you build connections between the building your players are in collapsing and your government collapsing, then maybe you'll get the idea to add a rebel group that's destroying buildings. Maybe your players agree with the rebels and decide to join them; now you have a whole lot of possibilities open up! Suddenly the government is the enemy, and your players have to deal with the rebellion being crushed. What would the government in your world do? That creates new scenarios and situations to string your players along to an overarching goal.

Continuing the snowball down the hill, you can keep building larger and larger problems for your players to solve and keep making your world react. You can continue doing this until you decide that your players have reached an appropriate peak, where you can tie together any loose ends you want and make it look like you had planned everything that happened the whole time!

Or if you don't like being out of control, you can plan an entire quest with all its locations and events ahead of time. This is appealing to many GMs, but it's important that you still be flexible enough to answer to unexpected things your players might do or describe unplanned places they might go!

In the end, a quest is just a series of events that tie together, and it's up to you to tie it together into something your players will enjoy.



## GUIDING THE GAME

So you have your world, and you have your scenario. It's time to start playing your GUTS+ game! Much of being the Game Master is creating the illusion of knowing where things are going and being one step ahead of the players, but if you know how your world reacts to different actions, then you can *actually* know what happens next and always be ahead! As the GM, you also have the power to stop actions that you don't want to happen, but be aware that doing so can make your players feel restricted.

## S. O. I. L.

As the GM, you are both the gardener and the garden from which your game's story grows. Whether you want to grow a beautiful story flower or a towering epic tree, it's important for you as the GM to cultivate your S. O. I. L. skills:

### SIGNPOSTING

To ensure that your group of players always knows what options are available to them, it is important to become good at signposting.

Signposting is the skill of explaining details in such a way that the players know how to interact with something or know that something can be interacted with to learn more about it without explicitly telling them. This can be as simple as only describing interactable or interesting items in the room or as complex as describing the room in full detail but making the interesting items more tantalizing than anything else. It can also be something like an obvious tick in an NPC's dialogue.

As long as the players know what is available for them to do, you are doing signposting right.

## OUTLINING

Outlining is the key to not burning out as a GM. In a lot of games, you have a map and a game world and story all planned out. It takes a lot of work and time, and it can all fall apart if your players insist on going a way you hadn't planned for. On the other side, if you build a story that clearly follows a very linear path, your players will feel like they don't have any agency in the game. This can all be solved without over-planning every element of the game and getting exhausted.

Outlining is the skill of taking specific story beats and locations and stringing them together so loosely that the path to reach them does not matter and feels natural to the players. It also includes creating enough intermediary spaces to allow players to explore freely without feeling like they are being railroaded, even if they partially are. Using your outline, you can move the world around the players, creating the path you want the players to follow while still allowing them to explore freely.

Let's say, for example, that you have a start location, a middle location, and an end location that you want your players to visit. If you create intermediary spaces where your players can wander if they need to, then you can place your middle and end locations anywhere your players go. So if the players want to go east, then you as the GM can know that the end will be that direction. If they double back and go a little bit farther west, you can simply move that end location to wherever it needs to be. In other words, all roads lead to the end.

This obviously becomes tricky when you have a clear end goal like an evil scientist's tower or a corrupted guardian giant that's visible from the distance, but if you're creative enough, you can either convince your players to go confront it or otherwise make the path they take always curve toward the end location as they keep moving.

## IMPROVISING

Improvisation is an important skill to have because it not only lets you better utilize your outline, but also allows you to quickly react to whatever your players do in the game. Being able to take a cue from the player and return a reasonable response will create many interesting and memorable scenarios.

This is why creating fleshed out NPCs and knowing your game world well is so important and helpful! The better you know your creations, the better you will know how your creations will respond to any given thing.

## LEARNING

"Learning" refers not just to understanding the rules of the GUTS+ System, but also to learning who your player characters are and their backstories so you can leverage the game world to include them better. It also encompasses keeping track of what has happened in your game so you can bring consistency to the game world.

Taking notes and planning interesting things based on your player characters interactions with the game world will make the whole experience better for everyone involved.

## INTERPRETING OUTCOMES

Ensuring that the game continues moving at a comfortable or interesting pace is another important part of being the GM. In order to keep the game moving at a favorable pace, it is important that you are able to not only use your S. O. I. L., but also know how to interpret player rolls and how to fairly determine the outcomes of situations.

## ASSIGNING ROLLS

As your players interact with your world, they will hopefully try to make their characters do different things. Whenever their characters try to do something that could potentially not work out or could cause problems, they need to roll some dice, and it's your responsibility to tell them what they need to roll.

Because there are only 4 basic GUTS qualities (pg 2), it's important to understand what each quality entails and what kinds of actions they generally govern:

- **Gumption:** The character's go-getter-ness—how well the character does things that require a "push" rather than fine skill; things like feats of strength or jumps to clear a gap or or take a hit or things like that.
- **Utility:** The character's handiness—how well the character does something that requires skill or fine manipulation; things like tying a knot or building a tower out of building blocks or or aiming a weapon or things like that.
- **Thought:** The character's brains—how much the character knows, their general awareness of their surroundings, their overall smarts; things like trying to get information from a book or noticing someone sneaking up on them or remembering a detail or things like that.
- **Slyness:** The character's ability to go with the flow—how well the character does things that require grace or social precision; things like trying to perform or hide or persuade someone or things like that.

For example, if someone is trying to build a bridge out of scrap wood, you would make that player roll Utility to see how well the bridge they built performs its job.

Once you understand the GUTS Qualities, you can move on to looking at your players' characters' custom Qualities. For example, if the character in the bride-building example above had a custom Quality "Bridgebuilding" or "Construction" or something like that, then it would make more sense to have the player roll that instead. Depending on the character's background, maybe you even allow them to roll Utility + Bridgebuilding to give them a better chance at success! It's your choice, but it's important to know what custom qualities your players' characters have in case they don't speak up.

**Note:** *If a character attempts to do something that would be impossible for them, do not allow a Check roll.* For example, if a computer-illiterate person tries to hack a mainframe, they wouldn't even know where to start and therefore should not be allowed to have a chance at success!

## USING THE SUCCESS SCALE

The Success Scale is laid out in the in the first chapter (pg 7) as the scale that each rolled die falls against in order for you as the GM to interpret not only how successful the character is at whatever they were trying to do, but also what happens based on their success. A good rule-of-thumb to follow is that if a player's dice have more than half showing a single number, that's the level of success they should receive. In cases where there's a wider split of values, success generally should weigh heavier than failure unless the circumstances suggest otherwise.

In many cases, it's much more interesting to treat attempts as being successful, but use the dice as the outcome of that attempt—the character *did* manage to deactivate the machine, but it triggered an alarm that alerted the guards before they were able to shut it down completely. Ultimately, the interpretation is up to you.

**Remember:** *only assign your players a roll if something interesting or consequential will happen if they fail. If there's no consequence for failing, then it's just a waste of everyone's time.*

## COMBAT

Upon reviewing the Combat section in the Playing the Game chapter (pg 9), you'll find that you are responsible for keeping track of turns as well as assigning the rolls your players need to make in any given situation. It can be tricky, but if you're organized enough and keep good enough track of what's happening in the fight, it shouldn't be too challenging.

## AWARDING EXPERIENCE

Experience Points (pg 13) are necessary for your players' characters to grow stronger. Whenever a character does something challenging, interesting, or maybe even something dangerous or unwise, reward them with Experience Points. The number of points you give for any situation is up to you, but keep in mind that a character can either increase a quality's level by 1 or get a completely new quality when they reach 100 Experience Points. If your players have just finished combat, you can award them with experience points equal to the total of the defeated enemies' quality levels. Outside of combat could be a little bit trickier. You can decide ahead of time how many points they'll receive. For example if they've done something challenging like reassembling a radio, that could earn 5 points, while something life-threatening like surviving an avalanche could earn them 20+ points. Alternatively, you can total up the values of their rolls during the challenge and award that if you don't think it's too much for the task!

If you'd like to target a reward to a specific quality, you also have the power to award Learning Experiences when the character accomplishes a particularly difficult task. For example, if they figure out in-game that someone is actually the bad guy, you can award a Thought Learning Experience when it's confirmed. Likewise, if they have a difficult conversation or successfully negotiate something big, a Slyness Learning Experience can be awarded. It's up to you when and how many, but this can help reward players for doing difficult things well.

## STATUS CONDITIONS

Status conditions are optional conditions that you can place upon your players' characters to inflict them with challenges beyond injuries and strain. Read more about what status conditions imply in the Status Conditions section (pg 10). As that section says, what status conditions exist and what they mean in the game world are completely up to you!

Status conditions can be intensified if they are inflicted upon a character multiple times. You can keep it simple by just adding a number to the status or you can come up with words for greater intensities, for example "afraid" to "terrified" to "panicked." The choice is yours, though having different words can potentially help your players know how to act under each condition.

To help you out, below are some examples status conditions you can use and what their conditions could be.

Status	Effect
Afraid	The character subtracts 1 from any Gumption roll
Discouraged	The character subtracts 1 from any Utility roll
Confused	The character subtracts 1 from any Thought roll
Embarrassed	The character subtracts 1 from any Slyness roll
Tired	The character can roll 1 fewer die for Gumption rolls, to a minimum of 1
Nauseated	The character can roll 1 fewer die for Utility rolls, to a minimum of 1
Tinnitus	The character can roll 1 fewer die for Thought rolls, to a minimum of 1
Blurry Vision	The character can roll 1 fewer die for Slyness rolls, to a minimum of 1
Greater Intensities	
Terrified	The character subtracts 2 from any Gumption roll
Depressed	The character subtracts 2 from any Utility roll
Baffled	The character subtracts 2 from any Thought roll
Humiliated	The character subtracts 2 from any Slyness roll
Exhausted	The character can roll 2 fewer die for Gumption rolls, to a minimum of 1
Sick	The character can roll 2 fewer die for Utility rolls, to a minimum of 1
Deafened	The character can roll 2 fewer die for Thought rolls, to a minimum of 1
Blinded	The character can roll 2 fewer die for Slyness rolls, to a minimum of 1

**Note:** these are just some examples of what kinds of conditions could be applied to a character. You are free to create your own conditions, use your own wording, and decide how long they last. Status conditions are mainly a loose framework to add additional value to the game and can be applied however you see fit.

Status conditions can also be used to inflict a character with a non-Injury-level state like "hurt right hand" or "sprained left ankle" to raise the stakes of a situation by limiting the player's use of a body part without making it extra serious. Injuries are much more dangerous than status conditions, so use conditions when a character is not in serious danger.

## STRAIN

If you are using the Optional Magic System (pg 14), then you should have seen that a failed attempt to use their Essence quality or an over-exertion of a character's essence will inflict them with the "strained" status condition. If a character is "strained," then they cannot use their Essence quality again without risking an Injury to their Head until the condition has been removed. Typically this condition should last one round in combat (i.e. they cannot use Essence for 1 turn) or whatever you deem reasonable outside of combat (eg. until a scene or location change).

If the character attempts to use their Essence again while "strained" and they succeed, they can perform their essence skill but do not lose the "strained" condition until they have waited the appropriate amount of time again. If they fail while "strained," then they should receive 1 Injury to their Head.

## REMOVING STATUS EFFECTS

Status conditions should normally be removed within a reasonable amount of time after the source of the effect has gone away. If you have a reason why it might persist, by all means, keep the condition applied to the character in question, just be sure to communicate to the player that it has not gone away.

**Tip:** It can be hard to remember what conditions you've applied to characters sometimes. Try to write down what you've applied to different characters in a place that you'll see regularly so you can be reminded if the condition needs to be removed.



# INJURIES

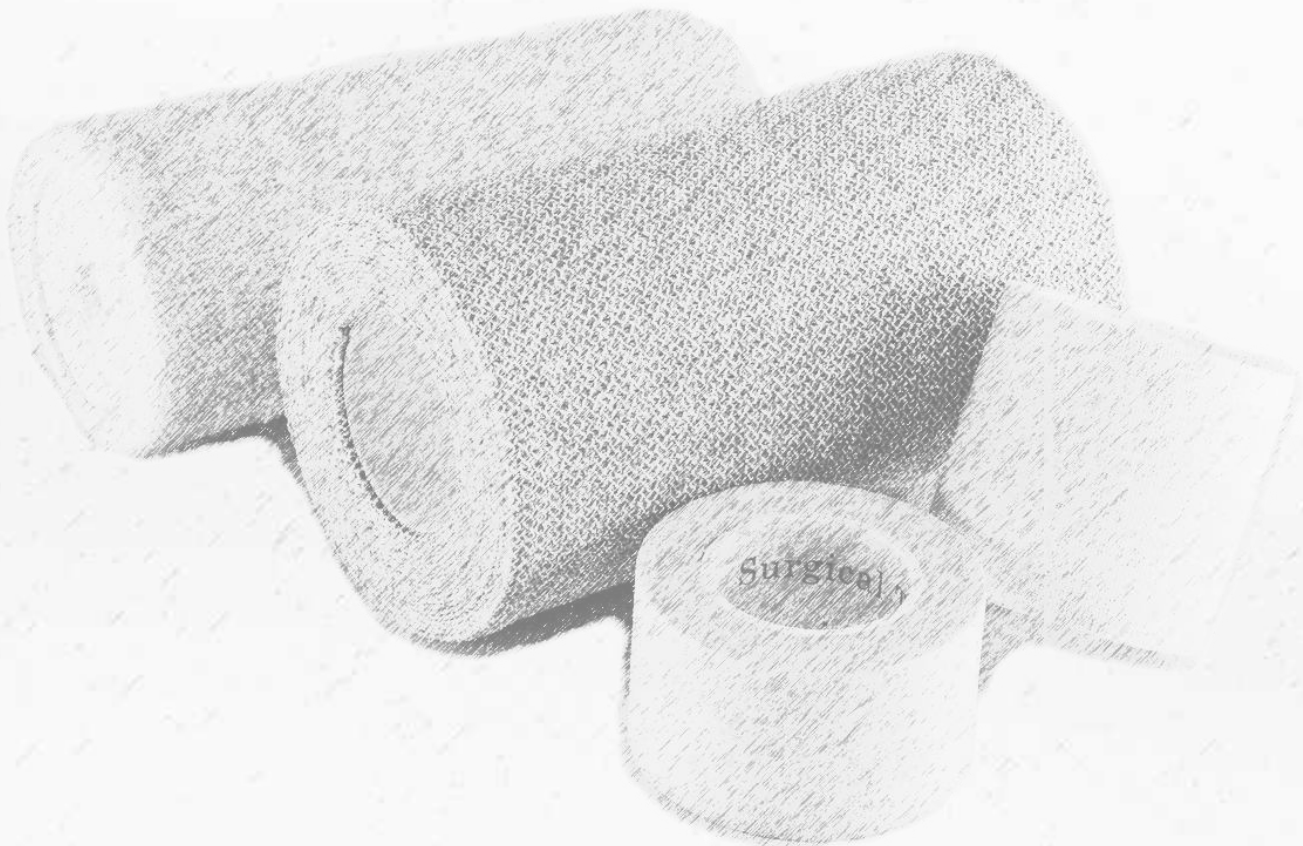
Injuries (pg 10) are no joke! Read up on what the Playing the Game chapter says about them so you can understand just how serious they can be for a character. If a character receives 2 Injuries to any body part, they lose the use of that body part. Keep this in mind when the player tries to do something that an injury would prevent their character from doing. Injuries should only be applied when a character is faced with something dangerous or lethal like a collapsing cave or a foe with a sword, and they should not be given lightly.

Also keep in mind that if a character has a protective accessory or piece of clothing, that protection will spare their body from an injury twice (see Protection on page 10). Allow leniency with protection—just because a shield is strapped to the character's left arm doesn't mean it can't also protect their head, torso, or any other part of their body. When a piece of protection has been used 2 times, any further injuries are applied to the character's body part. Usually what this means is that the protection has been hit to the point that it has shifted into a position that it cannot be used from, and the character must take an active action (if in Combat) to re-adjust the protection before it can be used again. If the damage to a piece of protection is extensive, for example a knife cuts a padded glove, then the protection will need to be *repaired* instead of simply re-adjusted. In this case, the character must wait until after combat for it to be usable again.

# REMOVING INJURIES

The passage of time can be a tricky thing to simulate in the game world, but if you keep track of it well enough, you can help yourself provide a realistic timeline of when a character's injuries might heal. As mentioned in the Recovery section (pg 11), a single untreated Injury takes 1 in-game day to heal while a double Injury/disabled body part can take up to 5 in-game days, and if the characters take the time to do something to help the injury heal, it can reduce the time needed by half or even remove it straight out depending on the treatment provided. Just try to keep track of injuries and use your best judgment to determine how much time has passed for an Injury to be removed.

If characters receive injuries during combat that would inhibit their fight but would just be painful afterward, you can downgrade the Injury to a Status Effect to help you keep track of what injuries are healing without it being an immediate danger to them. For example, if someone was hit in the arm with something large and they get an Injury, after combat you could remove the Injury and give a status of "Bruised Right Arm" with the description of "It will be easier to receive an Injury if damaged again", with the consequence being that something less dangerous like getting kicked in the arm could inflict an Injury even if that arm was blocking the kick.



## SAMPLE SITUATION

Here is a one-off session that you can use to get started if you're having trouble coming up with your own situations. This chapter contains the setting and the details of the situation, the threat, what supplies are available, and how things within the environment react to the threat. Using this, you can jump right in to a play session and see how your players handle the scenario.

**Recommended # of Players:** 3–5

## STORY

You are the small crew of a supply ship that has just completed the most recent run to get supplies for the asteroid colony you live on—essential supplies that the colony will not survive without. Things like food, water, spare parts, and other essentials are all boxed up and tied down in the Cargo Bay, and the crew is in hypersleep as they make their way home.

Suddenly, about 8 months into their 1 year trip home, the crew is awakened by the AI assistant on the ship, Brain of Supply Ship, or B.O.S.S. for short. Upon checking why BOSS awakened them, the crew finds that there is a disruption in the cargo bay and that there is pressure being lost.

## SETTING

The setting is a realistic science fiction space ship *without* artificial gravity comparable to the International Space Station. Technology on board is similar to modern touchscreen technology, i.e. no holograms or gesture control, but voice and touch commands are available at every door. BOSS is about as intelligent as IBM's Watson or a very advanced smartphone personal assistant AI—it can answer questions and provide related information about the ship and control all of the ship's systems. Bright but low-energy LED lighting lines the ceiling and floor of the main hall and circles the perimeter of each room, letting off a consistent white glow in all rooms of the ship except for the Command Module, which has dim blue lights that keep the room dark without removing all visibility.

The supply ship has 10 rooms total: at the front of the ship is the **Command Module**, down the center of a ship is a comfortably-wide cylindrical hallway flanked on the left and right by 5 doors plus two doors above and one below, and at the opposite end of the hallway is the **Cargo Bay**. Going from the Command Module and looking down the hall, the rooms on the right are the **Hypersleep Chamber**, the **Restroom**, and the **Kitchen**, and on the left are the **Recreation Room** and the **Supply Room**. Above is the **Compressor Room** and the **Engine Room**, and below is the **Airlock Chamber**. See the maps on page 34 for the ship's layout.

## DETAILS

These details are things that the crew knows about the ship and their situation:

- Air and oxygen is provided by the Compressor Room.
- Air ducts line the ceilings of all the outer rooms. They circulate air and oxygen and behave like regular air ducts, simply moving air around, i.e. they are not pressurized.
- Power for the ship is provided by the Engine Room.
- The Command Module is where BOSS is centralized.
- Each door on the ship has a touchscreen control panel with a direct link to BOSS and can display the status of the room.
- All of the supplies in the Cargo Bay are boxed up in cases and securely strapped to the floor so they don't shift during zero-gravity flight.
- The Supply Room contains most things that a nonviolent supply ship would need, eg. repair materials, odds and ends, containers, etc.
- The Kitchen contains all the pre-packed food for the trip, enough food to feed the whole crew for about 1 month.
- The crew does not require food while in hypersleep.
- The Airlock Chamber seals both the door leading to the Main Level and to outer space, and it needs to be pressurized/depressurized appropriately before opening.
- It will take 2 more months to get back to the colony.
- The crew and their cargo are the only thing standing between their friends and family and certain death.

## SETUP

Allow your players to create their characters' biography and have them each choose a role: **Engineer**, **Manager**, **Medic**, **Pilot**, or **Technician**.

In this situation, nobody has pockets / inventories and instead is given a special item that only they can use. Everyone is wearing the same style of jumpsuit, but players can choose what color the jumpsuit is if they want. Beyond the provided stats and special items, the characters' names, appearances, personalities, and backstories are entirely up to your players. Encourage them to flesh out their characters a bit.

## ENGINEER

The Engineer manages the hardware and machinery of the ship. If it's physically broken, it's the Engineer's job to fix it.

**Gumption**   **Utility**   **Thought**   **Slyness**   **Fixing**

2            3            1            1            3

**Item:** Universal Multitool

*A device shaped like a drill that can be adjusted into any number of tools that a ship could need.*

## MANAGER

The Manager is in charge of the supply run operation and has access to all the knowledge available about the planet you just visited. It's the Manager's job to keep everyone cooperative.

**Gumption**   **Utility**   **Thought**   **Slyness**   **Planning**

1            1            2            3            3

**Item:** Datadex

*A rugged tablet computer that contains all known information about the planet the crew just got their supplies from.*

## MEDIC

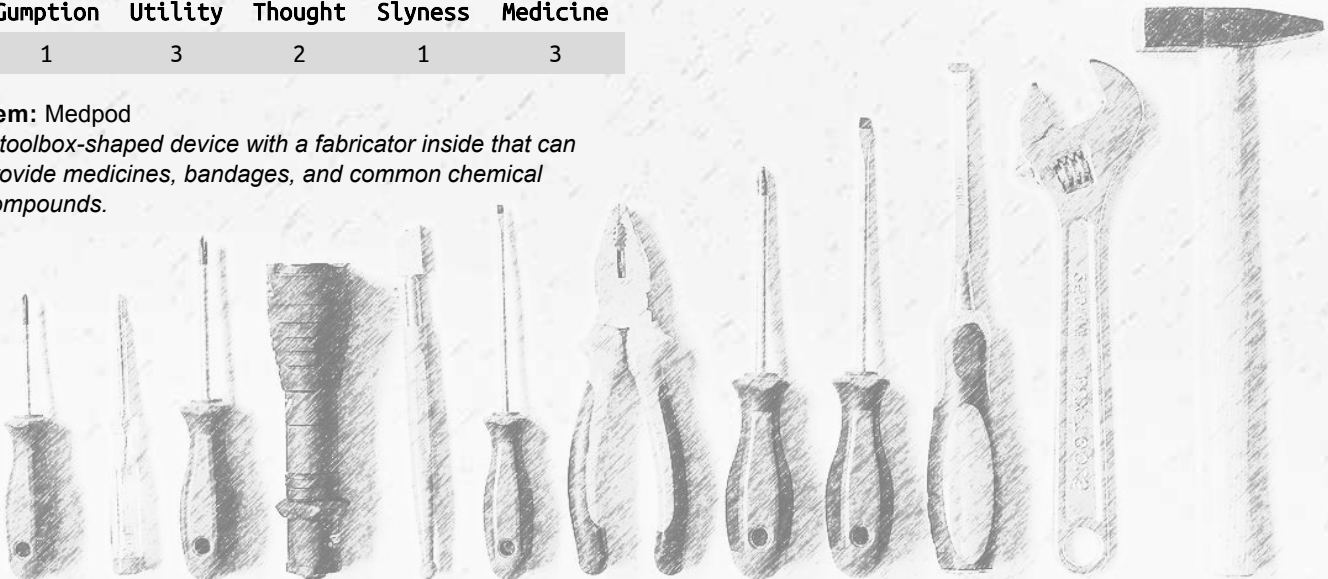
The Medic is in charge of keeping everyone healthy. If someone's hurt, the Medic knows how to help.

**Gumption**   **Utility**   **Thought**   **Slyness**   **Medicine**

1            3            2            1            3

**Item:** Medpod

*A toolbox-shaped device with a fabricator inside that can provide medicines, bandages, and common chemical compounds.*



## PILOT

The Pilot interfaces directly with BOSS in the Command Module. If there's anything wrong on the ship, the Pilot knows how to get the information from BOSS.

**Gumption**   **Utility**   **Thought**   **Slyness**   **Command**

3            2            1            1            3

**Item:** Command Module Key

*A rod approximately 2 feet long that plugs into a pedestal in the command module. Holds a charge that can be discharged once in the form of a stunning short-range arc of electricity before needing to be recharged.*

## TECHNICIAN

The Technician manages the software of the ship and can override and customize BOSS as needed. If the computer controls it, the Technician can tweak it.

**Gumption**   **Utility**   **Thought**   **Slyness**   **Technology**

1            2            3            1            3

**Item:** Digipad

*A roughly brick-shaped device with a touch screen, pop-out mini keyboard, and a universal cable for connecting to modern devices. Can be used to interface with the ship's software directly, bypassing BOSS, if given enough time.*



## THE GAME

You will decide where the creature emerges from the air duct and how it moves around the ship. At that point, you need to show the creature eating through *something* so your players can see that it does not lose momentum when trying to eat. If you'd like help deciding where it emerges, number the main rooms (not the Command Module or the Cargo Bay) 1 through 5 and roll a die. The number you roll is either the room where the creature emerges or the door it is heading toward from the hallway. If you roll 6, roll again.

You will also use BOSS's voice and alerts to warn players where breaches may occur so they're not lost when looking for the creature. The Manger's Datadex does provide piecemeal information about how to handle certain things the creature can do, eg. the type of acid it produces cannot eat through glass, etc., but it's up to your players to think about searching for this information.

## WIN CONDITIONS

Your players need to figure out how to meet the following win conditions. It's your choice whether you want to communicate these win conditions explicitly or whether you want your players to try to figure them out based on the circumstances laid out for them:

- The crew is able to prevent loss of oxygen and cargo.
- The crew is able to prevent the creature from being a problem for the rest of the trip.
- The crew is able to maintain their food supply for the trip.
- The ship is able to continue its trip as close to on schedule as possible.

If any of these win conditions are not met, your players will need to either work out some way to make up for the loss or accept defeat for things that cannot be made up for.

## OTHER NOTES

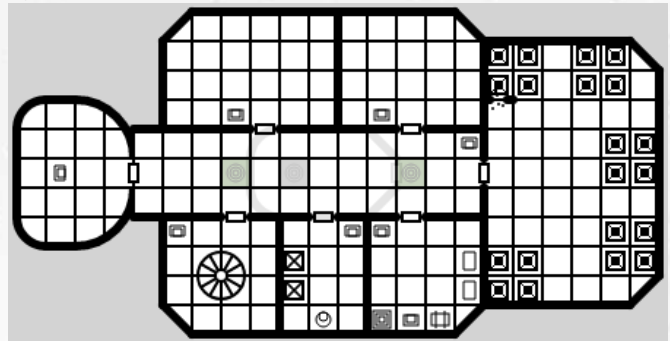
- The Recreation Room is your wild card room. You can have it contain treadmills or TV screens or whatever you like. It is the least consequential room.
- The Supply Room contains just about anything your players might want or need in the moment, *within reason*.
- The appearance of the Command Module can be just about whatever you'd like. Whether it's got a nice window for viewing space or it's full of screens that display BOSS in a similar way to the MCP in Tron, it's up to you!
- Try to keep the pressure up—if there's a lull, then it's time to have the creature cause some problems.

## MAPS

1 Square ≈ 3 Feet

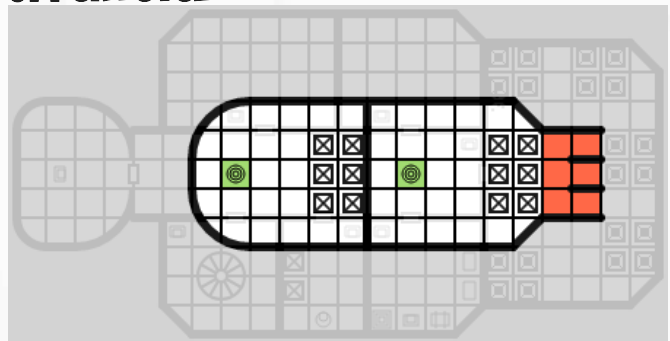
←Front of Ship← ↻ ↷Back of Ship→

### MAIN LEVEL



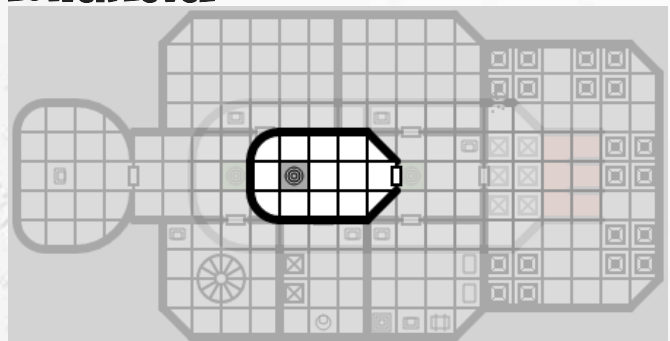
Clockwise from the left: Command Module, Recreation Room, Supply Room, Cargo Bay, Kitchen, Restroom, Hypersleep Chamber

### UPPER LEVEL



Left to right: Compressor Room, Engine Room

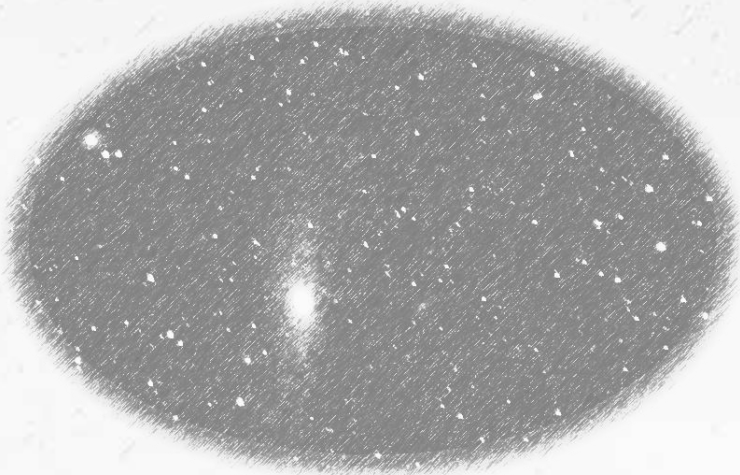
### LOWER LEVEL



Airlock Chamber

## FILES AVAILABLE ONLINE

These files and the code for recreating it in Gridmapper are available in the Game Master's Handbook on the GUTS+ website at <https://guts.plus/rules/game-masters-handbook/sample-situation/>



# FINAL WORDS



ello, this is Robbie Antenesse, creator of the GUTS+ System. I made and fine-tuned this RPG system because I wanted something that was different from other systems out there and that was intuitive to use. It's taken a long time to get it just right, and there may be further changes in the future, but I think

this version of the rules is simple yet robust enough to use for full-fledged campaigns—I personally use it in several of my own!

Building the rules and special cases has been a lot of fun, and I hope you like the little nuances like rolling doubles and assisting. Those are features that came up in several play-testing sessions and have become an essential part of the system. The Success Scale may be used in similar ways in other role-playing games, but I think the level of player contribution that GUTS+ allows with it is special.

The optional magic system and the concept of Essence is also something that I'm really proud of because I haven't seen anything like it before, and I think it works pretty well. I do worry that it's maybe a little too vague, but I hope that game masters and players alike will be able to grasp the idea and utilize it to interesting effect rather than having rigid rules to follow.

Following that train of thought, I also worry that the emphasis on game master control may be a little daunting or not specific enough, but I think that the freedom is something that a lot of game masters (and players) will enjoy. It allows for a lot of interesting possibilities, and it enables players to advocate for their characters. In general, I feel that a game master who controls the world and the enemies but cheers for the players is the best kind, so allowing the game master to interpret rolls based on a feel for how many of each number was rolled rather than a calculation of the average value helps with that.

I really hope you enjoy using the GUTS+ system and that it helps make your role-playing fun and interesting. Be sure to check the official GUTS+ website at <https://guts.plus> for any updates about the system or new content that might be published later on!

Sincerely,  
Robbie Antenesse  
May 6, 2019

## SPECIAL THANKS

A lot of friends have helped me figure this whole thing out, and I think it's important that I thank them here.

- **In-Person**

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