



# **SMASH THE SYSTEM**

*Erik Bernhardt*

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Written by  
Erik Bernhardt

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**SMASH THE SYSTEM** is a game where you play as characters who sneak into the domain of the corporate oligarchs, discover conspiracies, sabotage the machinery, steal files, and eventually bring the whole thing crashing down.

**To Play, you will need:**

- These rules
- Some pencils and lined paper
- As many 6-sided dice as you can scrounge up

## CORE MECHANIC

Whenever a character does something that might be noticed, they have to stack X-Y amount of dice, where X is based on how much noise the action might create, and Y is the character's relevant skill value.

Note that once a player decides to do an action that requires stacking dice, they must stack them. There are no take-backs if it looks like the tower's about to fall over.

When the dice tower collapses inadvertently, players count the number of 1's. These are "failures." This corresponds to how many people heard the character / how big a problem this is.

Every time the dice tower is knocked over, the player must rebuild their tower with 3 dice.

# CHARACTER GENERATION

For character generation, grab a piece of notebook paper. At the top, write your “handle”, the cool code-name you use when in the company of your fellow Smashers. This is what folks will call you.

Below that, write your pronouns. This is what people say when they want to refer to you.

Next, write your look. Put down something distinctive about your character. A hairstyle. A cool patch on your jacket. Something that marks you out as *you*.

## SKILLS

For skills, let's use a version of the *Fate SRD*. Draw a grid of 5 x 5 boxes, each one big enough to write in a single word. Number them going up from +1 at the bottom to +5 at the top.

OK, look at the skills list below this and start adding some to your grid. Generally, you might want to balance it so you have some Recon skills, some Stealth skills, and a healthy amount of Action skills. You should choose:

- 1 +4 skill
- 2 +3 skills
- 3 +2 skills
- 4 +1 skills

By the end, you'll have a pyramid. The rule for getting more skills is that you can't “tip over” the pyramid, meaning that if you have only 3 +1 skills, you can't have 4 or more +2, +3, or +4 skills.

## RECON

- Look-Out - Seeing threats coming
- Research - Checking records, visiting the library, and finding stuff out.
- Planning - Making sure everything is where it needs to be / getting resources ready
- Social Engineering - Getting people to tell you things they probably shouldn't.
- Tracing - Using computers to figure out where other computers are and what they control.
- Stake-Out - The art of waiting in the same place for a long time.

## STEALTH

- Shadowing - Following someone without being noticed
- Soft-Shoe - Quietly moving from one place to another
- Hiding - Finding and staying someplace where you're hard to notice
- Disguise - Hiding in plain sight
- Misdirection - Making someone look the other way
- Bluff - Talking your way out of tricky situations

## ACTION

- Brute-Force Hack - For quick, one-off hacks
- System Penetration - For longer term, more invasive hacking
- Mechanics - For disarming things, taking stuff apart, etc
- Decryption - Getting information someone doesn't want you to have
- Pickpocket - taking things off of folks
- Locksmith - manually breaking open things
- Smashing - Breaking and entering. But. Y'know. *Quietly*.
- Climbing - Getting over fences, getting into vents, etc.
- Acrobatics - Contorting yourself into all sorts of fun shapes. Useful against laser-grids.

- Burgling - Finding and taking valuables.

## PREPPING A SESSION

Before a game, the GM should prepare a “blueprint” for the site that the PC’s are going to infiltrate. This doesn’t need to actually be a blueprint itself, it just needs to be a list of obstacles, problems, or opportunities for mayhem that may be present at the site.

The GM should be sure to include at least (3) objectives in the blueprint, representing things that the PCs are trying to achieve. Essentially, the reason why they’re even at that particular location.

In later sessions, the players should decide beforehand what location they will attack next, and what their objectives will be once they get there.

## THE PLAN

In this phase of the game, the PCs do some reconnaissance on their target. They try and figure out what they’ll be facing once they’re inside, where their objectives are located, and what they should bring along / set up beforehand.

Start by grabbing a piece of paper, drawing a circle, and writing “entry point”. Then, draw 1d3 lines coming off of it.

As normal, players stack dice depending on the risk of “exposure” that each action takes. In general, each action should reveal one piece of information: a section of the floorplan, the location of a security system, a guard’s patrol route, etc. When this happens, add a new circle to one of the existing lines, write in the obstacle or objective the GM revealed, roll 1d3, and add that amount of lines coming off this circle. Note that these lines can link back to other, previously entered circles.

There are no “soft” or “hard” resets in The Plan phase. Once the tower crumbles, The Plan phase comes to an end, as the players fade into the night before anyone’s the wiser.

If the players decide to “call off” the plan phase before the tower crumbles, the location is initially set to “no alert.” If, instead, the tower crumbles, the location will start at “low alert.”

Once the players are done planning, the GM can add more to the blueprint. For these added circles, label them with a ? for an unknown obstacle, and a star for an unknown objective. Aim for no more than 10 or so circles in total. The GM may also, at their discretion, erase up to three lines, to make it a bit harder to move around the site. But don’t make it impossible to access an obstacle or objective!

## THE JOB

Once the Plan phase ends, the real fun begins. Players begin infiltrating their target location, seeking to accomplish their objectives. This is the main “bulk” of the game. The players will narrate their actions, sneaking in, stealing and breaking stuff, avoiding cameras and obstacles, that sort of thing. Whenever there is a risk of discovery, players stack the dice, though now the consequences for failure are more dire.

- 0 failures: Whew! That was a close one. I guess no one heard that?
- 1-2 failures: A nearby guard is alerted that a noise was made. Essentially the “?” state
- 3-4 failures: One or two nearby guards are alerted and begin actively searching for the character. The “!” state
- 5-6 failures: A nearby guard radios in a disturbance and the entire area goes on high alert
- 7+ failures; The guards are zeroing in on your position. Time to run!

When a player ends their turn in a room in which guards are in the “alerted” (? or !) state, the player must make some sort of Stealth check to remain unseen while the guard searches the room. If the player fails this check, the player must immediately move to a different room and the overall “Alert Status” is increased a level as the guard radios in that they’ve spotted one of the PC’s.

## **GUARD "AI"**

One of the benefits of a tabletop RPG is that we don't exactly need hard-and-fast rules for how guards react when players do stuff. But, for the sake of consistency, here are some guidelines.

Guards in the "Unaware" state will usually stay fixed in a room or move along a static patrol route.

When a guard is triggered into either the ? or ! state, they will move towards whatever triggered them into that state. If they heard a noise in another room, they'll move towards that room.

Once they reach the source of the disturbance, they will look around for a bit before returning back to their initial post and downgrading back to the "Unaware" status. Exactly what they do is described in the "Guard Status" chart.

## **QUICK-STACK**

If a PC takes an action that would conceivably take more than a few minutes (i.e. hacking into a security system, climbing up a wall, or picking a lock) and the amount of time it takes them to perform the action matters (say, because a guard is patrolling nearby or has only been distracted for a short period of time), the player in question does what's called a Quick Stack.

As in a normal action, the GM calls out the difficulty of the action and the player subtracts their skill value from the difficulty. The GM then has a stopwatch at the ready, and, when the GM calls "GO", the player starts to stack their dice. When the timer hits 10 seconds, the GM says "STOP", and the player stops. For each round of "Stop/Go", 1 minute passes in-game.

## **SOFT RESET**

A Soft Reset occurs whenever the players do something that would presumably lower the risk of detection. Deactivating an alarm, disabling a motion sensors, or knocking out cameras. When this happens, the players can freely "discard" their dice tower with no penalty.

## **HARD RESET**

A Hard Reset is when the players do something BIG, designed to fuck up the System, smash the State, or generally make a ton of fuckin' problems. All players INTENTIONALLY knock over their tower in an epic moment of System-Smashing glory. Then, they count the number of 6's. Dice knocked off the table automatically count as 6's.

The number of 6's rolled corresponds to how much damage the character's did to the System. At this point, the game transitions to a Chase, where the players try to get away from the System.

- 1-3: A small crack in the oligarchy
- 4-5: An exposure of misdeeds, a critical file
- 6+: You've brought the company to its knees!

## THE CHASE

The players and GM each begin to build a dice tower as quick as they can, up to 10 dice. When they stack 10 dice, the player or GM shouts “BREAK!”

All players and the GM then pause building their tower and turn to the player who shouted “BREAK!”

The player then narrates a short action / vignette of their character avoiding the cops / parkouring over a fence / etc.

If the GM shouted “BREAK”! They narrate some moment where the System caught up to one of the PC’s and imposed some penalty or injury on them. When this happens, put a minus next to your top-most row of skills. That row of skills now counts for 1 less than usual. If you already have a minus, go to your next top-most row. If all your rows are filled with minuses, you’ve been caught by the guards. Time to plan a rescue mission!

Once the players have shouted “BREAK!” a number of times equal to the amount of players, they have successfully escaped the System to fight another day.

## THE AFTER-PARTY

After the job’s done, it’s time to party. The player characters get together and throw a proper shindig. This can be wild and debaucherous, or it can

be a quiet time alone with friends. The important thing is to blow off steam and revel in the glory of a system well-smashed.

During the party, players take turns recounting their adventures and narrating how they celebrate.

- If a player narrates how they blow off steam, they gain 1 XP.
- If a player describes something cool they did during the job, they gain 1 XP. If they embellish it a little, they gain 2 XP.
- If a player describes something cool they did with another player’s help during the job, they both gain 1 XP.
- If a player narrates something they did to take care of, cheer up, or help mend the injuries of another player, remove one injury from that other player.

Do two rounds of these vignettes, or more if you want to speed up how fast the players gain XP. When a player has a total of 10 XP, they may spend it to “rank up” a skill by +1 (moving it up the grid) or to add a new +1 skill on the bottom row.

# DIFFICULTY CHARTS

Difficulty	Noise
3 - Easy	A quiet, simple action. Sneaking across a carpeted room. Turning off a light. Hopping a short fence.
5 - Medium	A somewhat quiet, but more complicated action. Hacking an unlocked computer terminal. Climbing up into a vent.
7 - Hard	A loud-ish, complex action. Hacking a complicated security system. Dancing through a laser grid.

Difficulty Bonus	Guard Status
-1	Asleep or unconscious.
0	Unaware but conscious.
+1	Aware. The “?” state. A guard will remain in this state for 2 turns after reaching the source of the disturbance.
+3	Aware and actively searching. The “!” state. A guard will remain in this state for 3 turns and will move to nearby rooms after reaching the source of the disturbance.

Alert Status	Condition
Green	All-clear. As far as the corporation knows, business as usual.
Blue	Somewhat suspicious. The corporation suspects that a security feed might be faulty, or maybe an animal ran across a sensor.
Yellow	Suspicious. The corporation believes someone is trying to do <i>something</i> , but they’re probably an amateur.
Orange	The corporation is on alert, and is actively searching for the party. The corporation believes they’re up against professionals, but they can still contain the situation.
Red	The corporation is on high-alert, has called the police and is going into full lock-down. The party has 1 more turn left before they are forced to flee and “The Chase” automatically begins.