



Strike!

TACTICAL COMBAT AND HEEDLESS ADVENTURE

A Roleplaying Game
by Jim McGarva

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The Basics

Fundamental Questions

Why play this game? Because you want to roleplay with your friends and end up with a story that none of you would have made on your own.

Okay, but why play *this* game? Because you want to spend your time describing cool stuff and not thinking about rules or numbers or stats. Because you want tactical combat that plays quickly and makes the field of battle important.

What do we do in this game? The obvious answer is “anything you want,” but that’s not very useful. The default assumption is that you are going on an adventure where you fight things. Along the way, you may explore and interact and discover and investigate and do any number of other things. We play to find out what happens when things go awry.

What is the setting? The game rules can be applied to any setting, and options and advice are given here for adapting this game to different settings. That doesn’t mean that the game is universal: characters in *Strike!* go on adventures. The rules work best for the adventure genre, regardless of the setting.

So the next question is “What do we do and who does what?”

All Together

In the first session, everybody together agrees on a situation and setting to play in. Decide what the initial focus of the game is and what sort of action the player characters need to be involved in—that’s the situation. Flesh out a few locations, antagonists, and other characters. It’s perfectly reasonable to have one player with a strong vision do most of the work here or to have a brainstorming free-for-all. It doesn’t really matter how you do it as long as the end result is something everybody wants to play. For more detailed advice on Setting creation, see page 64. Everyone needs to agree on what rules they’ll be using and what modifications, if any, need to be made to the rules to make the setting work.

Take a second here to make sure everyone is clear on the tone before you move on. At this point, pick one player to be the GM (Game Master), and the others begin making characters together.

The Role of the GM

The first task as GM is coming up with a few good twists and surprises, working out the plans of all the antagonists, and coming up with stats for any enemies the players are likely to fight in the immediate future. There is time between sessions to work on this, so it’s important just to focus on the short-term parts for now.

The GM has some special responsibilities and you can find more detail about these starting on page 56. The role does entail more work, but the game is flexible and simple enough that anyone can manage it without needing to spend more than a few minutes between sessions. Some people really enjoy spending time preparing for their upcoming games, while others prefer to just show up and improvise. This game can accommodate both types.

The Players: Character Concepts

Before you can get started, you must have a character. The rules for character creation come later, but the first thing to start with is a strong concept. Your concept is allowed to say something about the setting, even to the point of challenging the setting’s assumptions. Your character can be totally unique. For example, in a fantasy world without telepathy, your character can be the only telepath. In a setting without androids, you can be the only one. While you can challenge setting assumptions with your concept, you cannot violate the genre or tone of the game. If you are playing a serious, realistic historical game then you cannot play a telepath or android.

You can be anyone.

It should go without saying that your character can be of any culture or creed, any gender, and have any sexual identity you like, regardless of the setting, genre or tone. Even in realistic historical games, history tells us that there were people from distant lands traveling the world, there were people who did not fit the common ideas of the time, and there were people who defied both rules and expectations. Your character can be any or even all of those.

The players need to make sure that their characters tie into the situation and have some relationship to one another. The GM can comment and contribute to this, but they have their own work to be doing. When the players are finished making their characters and all is ready, the GM sets the first scene and off you go! Once the game begins, everyone together is responsible for keeping the tone of the game and enforcing the rules.

The Role of the Players

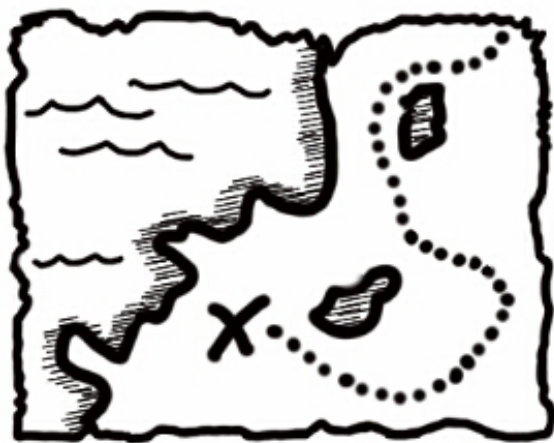
Players are expected first and foremost to be engaged and be interested. You should have plans and goals for your character and you should care about your friends’ characters too. You interact with the game by giving voice to your character, making decisions for your character, and describing your characters’ actions. In playing your character, there are three priorities: making the character seem real, making the character interesting, and trying to succeed for the character. How you play your character depends on how you rank those priorities.

First, making your character seem real doesn’t necessarily mean “realistic” but can depend on the tone of the game. Create a consistent personality and make your character’s decisions line up with it. If this is your top priority, you’ll come to the table with a personality in mind and make your decisions based on that. If it’s not your top priority, you’ll make decisions based on the other two priorities and in that way you’ll discover your character’s personality in play.

Second, making your character interesting means making decisions that aren’t always optimal and that can put you in conflict with the other players’ characters. This usually dovetails very nicely with giving your character a consistent personality with consistent complications.

Third, trying to achieve your character's goals is important, but if you make it more important than making your character real or interesting then you will run into problems. If your character's success is the most important thing to you, you'll be tempted to push for stretching the rules at a number of points—trying to use Skills where they don't strictly apply, trying to make the Skills you learn as general as possible, or violating the tone of the game, to name some examples. You should want good things for your character, and want them to succeed, but that can't be all you care about. In this game it's easy to make your character successful in an unrealistic and unsatisfying way by breaking the tone whenever it's convenient, by ignoring any of your character's flaws whenever they would be inconvenient, and by pushing the other players to let you stretch the rules just this one time (every time). If you are the GM, it's important to be strict about stretching the rules and about the tone—if you go too easy then your players will be happy in the short run but feel less satisfied in the long run.

So what do you do if somebody has proven not to be able to handle keeping a consistent tone or has otherwise been bending the rules? First, give them the benefit of the doubt and treat it the same way you'd treat somebody dealing themselves first in poker or talking in a movie theatre. You could say, "Hey, I know you mean well, but there are rules. They exist for a reason. We don't do that in this game." If everyone involved is an adult, that's all it should take. If that doesn't work, then maybe a more involved discussion is necessary.



The Basic Rules

This game is an instance of exception-based design, which is to say that there are basic rules that apply in general, but individual characters and creatures are expected to have abilities that let them break those rules. When there is a conflict between a rule for a specific character or situation and a general rule, the specific rule governs.

Don't demand nonsense!

The rules of the game are an abstraction and sometimes slavish devotion to them leads to nonsense. Don't do that. Use the rules in the spirit they were intended.

Outside of combat, most tasks are handled through roleplaying—you describe what your character does, and the other players and the GM add details and embellish. You make jokes and kibitz. Anyone who tells you that you have to be in character one hundred percent of the time is taking the game too seriously. At some point you reach a spot where your character runs into opposition or where you're not sure if your character can do something. That's when you go to the dice. There are two kinds of rolls: standard Skill Rolls and Opposed Rolls. You make an Opposed Roll when your character is struggling against another character. The rules for Opposed Rolls come later; first let's talk about standard Skill Rolls.

For a standard Skill Roll, the first thing you do is decide what you want to achieve (your intent) and how you want to achieve it (your task). Based on your task, you and the GM decide what Skill is appropriate to roll. Sometimes there are multiple options that the GM finds appropriate, and in that case you get to choose which Skill to use. For instance, writing a short keylogging script could easily be Hacking or Programming. For contrast, making a computer game would be Programming, not Hacking.

Once you have decided what Skill you are using, either you already have it on your character sheet (you are Skilled) or you don't (you are Unskilled). Roll a die and consult the following tables to determine the outcome.

	SKILLED	UNSKILLED
6	Success with a Bonus	Success and learn Skill or with a Bonus
5	Success	Success
4	Success	Success with a Cost
3	Success with a Cost	Twist
2	Twist	Twist
1	Twist with a Cost	Twist with a Cost

That's right, the difficulty of the task does not factor in the results, Advantage and Disadvantage (see below) notwithstanding. There's no difference between lifting a heavy object and lifting a heavier object. That's because this game is not concerned with simulating the physics and realities of the game world in the mechanics. The simulation should be going on in your descriptions, in the actions you try, in which actions require rolls, and in the outcomes you narrate. It is everyone's responsibility to make the world and your characters seem real to the other players.

Advantage and Disadvantage

When your character has a strong edge working in their favor on a Skill Roll, you are said to have Advantage: you may roll two dice and take the better result. If they have a strong drawback working against them, you are said to have Disadvantage: you must roll two dice and take the lower result. If you have Advantage and Disadvantage, you simply roll one die as usual. **These are not cumulative**—having Advantage from three sources is the same as having it from one. If you have Disadvantage from three sources and Advantage from one source, they cancel out—roll one die.

Success

When you succeed, you get your intent. What you wanted to happen happens. The GM and other players can embellish or add details, but **they can't add anything that takes away your victory**.

What is "Success with a Bonus"? First, you succeed as normal. Then the Bonus depends on what you were trying to do, how you were doing it, and countless other factors. It could be that you find out some useful information, that you make a friend, that you get a useful object, or almost anything else. It could be that your Success was beyond what you had aimed for or it could be a boon that is tangential or unrelated that you gain in the course of your Success. **You, the successful player, choose the Bonus you get.** The GM and other players may have a say or insist on modifications if your idea doesn't quite work for whatever reason, but this is your chance to contribute something cool. Three guidelines to ensure your idea doesn't get vetoed: your Bonus needs to be in keeping with the tone of the game; your Bonus should not invalidate important aspects of the game or of any player's planning; your Bonus should not dwarf your initial Success. You won't go wrong by giving yourself Advantage to an appropriate future roll.

If you roll Unskilled and get a 6, you may choose between the short-term benefit of getting a Bonus as above or the long-term benefit of learning the Skill. When you learn the Skill, write it on your sheet.

You learn best when you take on tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult. When you have Advantage on an Unskilled roll, you may only learn the Skill if you roll two 6s or a 6 and a 5. A 6 and any other number still counts as a 6, but you must come up with a Bonus instead of learning. When you have Disadvantage on an Unskilled roll, you may learn the Skill when you roll two 6's or a 6 and a 5, although the latter case still counts as a 5 for all other purposes. So if your goal is to learn a Skill, your best chance is to have neither Advantage nor Disadvantage or to have both. Either one alone cuts your chances in half.



Twists

A Twist means that something threw off your plans. Your task may or may not have been successful, but something somewhere has gone wrong. It may or may not be your fault. It might not even be a bad thing, though it often is.

When you get a Twist, the GM gets to narrate how you came to the Twist—in the course of their narration they might say something your character does. This is part of the game. If the GM oversteps their bounds, speak up and talk to them like an adult, but in general your job as a player is to roll with it and make it real. Maybe your character screwed up. People do that. You don't get to say "no, my character would never make a mistake like that!" Sorry, the dice disagree. That's part of life and part of the game. Remember, you don't know everything there is to know about your character and part of the fun of playing a character is finding out new things about them. Twists are a vital part of that process. Some Twists can be planned—a good GM often has a surprise ready in their back pocket—but they are usually improvisational.

I like surprises, so one of my favorite moments in gaming is when everybody knows what should happen, it's obvious to everyone at the table where the story is going, but the dice disagree. Then everyone needs to figure out what this new direction is.

What happens when things go awry

Once the players have formulated and articulated their intentions, we generally have a good idea of what a string of Successes looks like. If the players are lucky enough to get those Successes, we find out what it Costs them. But most often we play to find out where the plan goes off the rails, how it goes off the rails, how badly, whether it can be recovered, and what the effects of this derailment are on the players. Twists are fundamental.

Costs

A Cost is something that gives you a Disadvantage going forward. Where Twists are typically narrative, Costs give you a specific mechanical penalty. There are three kinds of Costs: Conditions, Flaws, and Favors.

A Condition is *something inherent* that prevents you from performing at your best. For example, maybe in lifting the portcullis you get a Success with a Cost—you've raised it, but gain a Condition. So you're Winded or Exhausted. The GM decides what Condition is appropriate.

A Flaw is a *known problem* with an item or with information. It's not a surprise: you know the specific deficiency, although you may not know how to correct it. When the Flaw is relevant to what you are doing, the GM will give you Disadvantage. You may also choose to use the Flaw to automatically get a Twist without rolling and in return you receive an Action Point (described on page 10).

When you owe somebody a Favor, it means they agreed to help you so long as you help them in the future. Slightly more generally, a Favor means that *a character feels that you owe them*. You and your friends have Disadvantage asking that person or any of their associates for further help until the Favor is repaid. Failing to fulfill a Favor in a timely manner gets you a Bad Reputation. This provides the same Disadvantage, but it is harder to eliminate since simply repaying the original Favor might not be enough. Unchecked, a Bad Reputation can spread. It's not limited to one character or group like a Favor is.

Which one you get depends on what you were trying to do. If you were trying to jump over a pit, you'll probably get a Condition like Winded or even Injured. If you were creating something or gathering information when you got a Cost, your creation or information will probably have a Flaw. If you were trying to convince somebody to help you, you might owe them a Favor.

Costs also have fictional effects: people may be less willing to deal with you if you are visibly diseased, and people will react to the sight of your wounds with pity, revulsion, pride or disdain depending on your relationship to them. If you owe someone a Favor, they might track you down to collect.

Costs without rolls

Sometimes you can find an item with a Flaw without rolling. You can agree to owe someone a Favor without rolling. If you run a marathon you will be Exhausted, and if you try to take a bullet for somebody, you'll get the Injured Condition even if you roll a Success. The GM decides, but it should never come as a surprise.

Conditions

As described above, Conditions are temporary ailments that prevent you from performing at your best. There are Minor and Major Conditions. GMs usually work their way up, giving Minor Conditions before they give Major ones, but they are always free to give whatever makes sense.

The following list is not comprehensive. There are other Conditions you might get, and the GM can make up their own.

Minor Conditions:

Lost Confidence – When you have lost confidence in your ability, all your rolls relating to that ability have Disadvantage. If that ability relates to a Trick (See page 11), you cannot use that Trick.

Angry – When you are Angry, you have Disadvantage on all Skill Rolls in social situations or on tasks requiring concentration. You're not just a little bit mad; you're absolutely furious. Similarly, a character may be called Distracted or Grieving or Jealous or Afraid or whatever. Pick whichever name suits the situation and the character.

Winded – When you are Winded, you have Disadvantage on all Skill Rolls involving physical activity, and on attack rolls in the first round of any combat. If you are given the Winded Condition while already Winded, make a note (write Winded x2). There is no additional Disadvantage and recovery is the same. However, if you are Winded a third time before you recover, you become Exhausted instead.

Exhausted – When you are Exhausted, you have Disadvantage on *all* Skill Rolls, on all rolls other than attack rolls in combat, and on attack rolls in the first round of any combat. Because it affects all Skill Rolls, Exhausted is a tough Condition to have. It is also harder to recover from than Winded.

Major Conditions:

Injured – When you are Injured, you subtract one from every die you roll. A roll of zero is treated as a roll of 1. This is cumulative with the other Major Conditions.

Sick – When you are Sick, you subtract one from every die you roll. A roll of zero is treated as a roll of 1. This is cumulative with the other Major Conditions.

Cursed – Any game should have a third Major Condition distinct from the others. Cursed is simply one example that applies in a fantasy setting. When you are Cursed, you subtract one from every die you roll, or only on certain rolls at the GM's discretion. A roll of zero is treated as a roll of 1. This is cumulative with the other Major Conditions.

Example: My cyberpunk setting has a Major Condition called “Infected” representing a computer virus getting into a character’s wearable electronics. This doesn’t affect every roll they make, although it affects most. I make exceptions for things that the characters do unaugmented by their high-tech gear.

Example: Games with psychic antagonists or with themes of insanity can benefit from having a Major Condition focused on that. I use Shattered for someone whose mind has been badly affected by a psychic assault in my sci-fi setting.

Enraged – The Major version of Angry: so mad that you cannot see straight. This is a Major version of the Minor Mental Conditions like Angry, Jealous, or Afraid. When you are Enraged (or Terrified or Stricken, for example), you subtract one from every die you roll. This is cumulative with the other Major Conditions.

‘Tis but a scratch!

If this is your first time playing, you might make the mistake of thinking that getting Injured is no big deal and you can go right on adventuring with minimal effects. That is not the case. While you can indeed keep adventuring while Injured, you will feel the impact on every roll you make. If you have more than one Major Condition, you should probably be focused on getting well again before you try to do any more adventuring.

So now that you’ve got these nasty Conditions, you want to get rid of them!



Recovery

To recover from Lost Confidence, you must succeed at a roll despite the Disadvantage the Condition gives.

To recover from Angry, your character has to find a way to calm down or let out their rage. You may not recover from Angry while you have any other Minor Condition. The type of action needed depends on the character and is chosen by the player when the character first gets the Condition. One character might need to meditate, while another might need to talk to a friend. Recovery need not be time-consuming—it takes as long as it takes, so long as it is significant to the character.

Other Minor Mental Conditions are recovered narratively. For example, recovering from Afraid may just require you to find a safe secluded spot to relax for a few minutes, while recovering from Grieving requires you to come to terms with your loss.

To recover from Winded, you need to rest for ten minutes and have something to drink.

To recover from Exhausted requires food and a long rest in a safe place. The exact amount of time is up to the GM to decide based on context, but it is at least an hour and no more than a night’s sleep.

To recover from Enraged (or any Major Mental Condition), you must defeat whatever caused it, or else capitulate or back down.

Example: If you are Enraged at the Prelate for embarrassing you, you will remain Enraged until you get your revenge on her or until you leave the gala without it. If you leave the gala, the Condition will go away and you can still try for revenge later.

Example: This works in more abstract cases, too. If you are Terrified after seeing your friend Jad fall into the bottomless chasm, you will remain Terrified until you successfully come out the other side of the mountain or retreat back the way you came.

To recover from Injured or Sick requires appropriate treatment by a doctor and at least one full day of rest (more at the GM’s discretion). If the treatment fails or is not received in time, you will still recover eventually, but the GM will assign some other Twist, such as a much longer recovery time.

Recovering from Cursed depends on the curse. Perhaps a priest can bless you, or perhaps you need to find the right components for a cleansing ritual, or perhaps there is some task you must perform to make amends for your trespass. You have to work out in play what is required. When you are using a custom Condition, the GM will decide how recovery works.

What about me?

If your fellows are recovering but you have no Conditions, now is a great time to do something useful. Depending on how long they need to recover, you could explore your surroundings, make something useful, research your opponents, or talk to the locals.

Skills

There is no list of Skills to look up. A Skill is just a word on your sheet. They are made up on the spot. They must be specific.

No Stretching!

Players, please don't "stretch" to make a Skill fit your task. GMs, do not let your players stretch. First, you already have tons of freedom to define your Skills and you shouldn't need to stretch. Second, rolling Unskilled is how you learn new Skills and improve your character.

Jaden: *I know about herbs from my cooking – I want to use my cooking Skill to find the right herbs for a poultice to help heal his wound.*

Dini: *If you wanted to find the right herbs for stew that would be fine. Finding medicinal herbs is different altogether. You'll be rolling an Unskilled roll. If you roll well enough, I guess your cooking Skills might transfer over. In case you roll a 6, what do you want to call your new Skill? Herbalism? Apothecary? Foraging?*

Jaden: *Foraging! That sounds more useful than Apothecary at least.*

Aspects of Skills

You can use Skills in a few distinct ways: first, you can roll a Skill to attempt a task where you use that Skill primarily. This is what you would naturally think of. Use the Blacksmith Skill to craft a fine sword, or the Lockpick Skill to open a door.

Second, your Skill grants you knowledge of and expertise in that area. Your Blacksmith Skill means that you know about smithing techniques and your Lockpick Skill means you know about different kinds of locks. You can use this knowledge in two ways: to know something or to declare something.

You may use a Skill to ask the GM what you know or notice about a situation above and beyond what everybody knows. The GM will tell you some extra information that is interesting or potentially useful. You may need to roll for this, but usually not.

Alternatively, you may use your knowledge to make a declaration of fact related to your Skill. This is your chance to invent something about the world and steer the story. Usually this involves a roll, but if the GM thinks your idea is cool or if they can't think of a good Twist, they will just say yes and your declaration becomes fact. It seems obvious, but I'd better write it down: you can't make a declaration that contradicts previously established facts. Don't demand nonsense!

Connections

When you create your character, some Skills are known as connections: Skills you roll when you're trying to find a particular person or a person with a particular skillset. These Skills usually result in finding people your character already knows (even if the GM makes them up on the spot). Connections Skills include Business Contacts, Hierarchy, or Genie Summoning. Like all other Skills, if you don't have a connections Skill, you can roll it Unskilled as long as your description for why you might know such a person makes sense and fits the tone of the game.

Fun Once...

Here's another neat little rule with big implications. **You cannot roll for the same task and intent more than once.** This works two ways. First, if you're trying to climb a rope to the fourth floor, the GM can't make you roll to climb to the second floor, then again to the third floor, then again to the fourth floor. One roll decides whether or not you accomplish your aim and if you roll badly then the GM has the right to decide when your luck runs out—you might falter at the start or fall from thirty feet up, whichever the GM thinks is the most interesting. On the other hand, you can't roll to climb the rope, fail, and then roll to try again. A roll assumes you are giving it your best effort the first time.

You might need to roll again if the situation changes dramatically. If you sneak past the guards successfully but then you get a Twist on your roll to climb the wall of the keep, the Twist might be that you are seen and an alarm is raised. It would then be fair for the GM to require a further Stealth Skill Roll if you wanted to continue sneaking, likely with Disadvantage for the alarm.

Note the limitations on this rule. You don't make one stealth roll for an entire session. If you have two different intents then you roll twice even if you're using the same Skill. You might sneak into the gatehouse to raise the portcullis for your friends, and then sneak to scout the disposition of the guards outside the Queen's chamber. You can roll the same Skill twice in a row. The only thing that is prohibited is rolling the same Skill multiple times when there is only one intent and the situation has not changed dramatically.

Opposed Rolls

You and your opponent are in an argument, a race, using catspaws to contest control over the docks, or any sort of contest where you find yourself in opposition with another character. You're now about to make an Opposed Roll. Here's how it works. You each declare what you want (your intent) and how you're going to get it (your task). Your opponent does the same. Stop for a second and re-examine. Make sure that your intents really are at odds here. There may not be any real conflict after all; you may look at each other and say, "Oh, is that all you want? Well we can both have our way." Assuming that you are indeed at odds, you each pick a Skill that matches your task and roll a die. The higher roll wins. If one character wins by 3 or more, they win completely. They get what they wanted and the loser pays the price of their actions.

If a character wins by one or two, the winner gets what they wanted, but the loser picks one:

- The winner's hold on it is insecure.
- It costs the winner more than they expected: they get a Cost, or sometimes a Twist.
- It costs the loser less than they expected: they avoid a negative consequence such as a Cost or Twist.
- The loser gets something extra too: they get a Bonus as though they rolled a 6 on a standard Skill Roll.

The loser of the roll chooses one of the options and they may suggest how they see it working, but it's the GM's responsibility to fill in the details of the outcome. In any given situation, some of these options won't really make sense. It's up to the loser of the roll to choose an option that makes sense in the context. Don't demand nonsense! It's up to the GM to explain the result in a way that makes sense in the story, preserving the sanctity of both the winner's Success and the loser's choice.

If the roll is a tie, you may earn an Action Point by breaking the tie in your opponent's favor using one of your Complications (described later) or Flaws. If the tie remains unbroken, **neither side gets their intent**. The GM says what happens, assigning Costs or Twists to each side as seems fitting.

Unskilled Opposition

In an Opposed Roll Unskilled vs. Unskilled, a character who gets a 6 or rolls two 6s or a 5 and a 6 with Advantage or Disadvantage) may learn the Skill.

If there is an Opposed Roll Skilled vs. Unskilled, the Unskilled character has Disadvantage. If the Unskilled character rolls two 6's or a 6 and a 5, they may learn the Skill.

Specialists vs. Generalists

In an Opposed Roll where each side is rolling essentially the same sort of Skill, but where one side's Skill is specific to the task while the other's is more general, treat the roll as though the side with the more general Skill is Unskilled. This does give the generalist a chance to learn the more specific Skill if the dice go their way.

Example: Naz has the Skill chess, while Lila has the Skill strategy games. In a chess match, Naz's specific knowledge gives him an advantage over Lila the same way Lila's Skill would give her an advantage over someone with no relevant Skill.

Linked Rolls

A Linked Roll is a roll you make in preparation for a later action. You may be buying or creating tools for you or one of your allies to use. You may be spreading rumors about the Parson's wife to give your friend an Advantage at his trial. The idea is that you are doing something that, depending on how well you succeed or fail, could either help or hinder a future roll. It often precedes the next roll in the chronology of the fiction, but it could also be simultaneous. Distracting the guards while your friend sneaks past is a great time to use a Linked Roll.

A Linked Roll is always a standard Skill Roll, never an Opposed Roll. You do all the usual things: declare your intent, your task, and decide what Skill to use. Roll as usual and determine Success and/or Twists. It is a normal roll in all respects with its own distinct outcomes. It also comes with the added gamble that if you succeed then you (or whoever you are setting up) get Advantage on your future roll, but if you roll a Cost then the GM may choose to give you or whoever you are setting up Disadvantage on the future roll instead of giving you a normal Cost. The GM might tell you what the Disadvantage is immediately or might wait until the future roll to tell you.

What if I want to help my friend but the task doesn't really have a separate outcome that can have its own Twist? Like what if I just want to lend my strength as we lift the portcullis? That is Helping.

Helping

If you want to help your teammate in a way that doesn't qualify as a Linked Roll—if it's not a separate action that has its own consequences—then you get to roll (one die if you are Skilled, with Disadvantage if you are Unskilled) and if your result is higher than that of the person you are helping, you add 1 to their roll. This is not a normal roll and there are no Costs, Twists, or Bonuses, although you can learn the Skill if you roll two 6s or a 5 and a 6.

Example: If Bob is helping Cindy using his Law Skill and Cindy rolls a 1 and Bob rolls a 5, Cindy's result is counted as a 2.

So help is worth less than Advantage, but can act cumulatively with it—the example would work just the same if Cindy had Advantage but her highest die was less than 5. It also helps to mitigate Disadvantage. And, as might be expected, the help of a Skilled character is much more reliable than the help of an Unskilled character. It never hurts to help, but the help must be appropriate.

Example: Judith is trying to use diplomacy to convince the council that we should go to war for the good of the Federation and Bret says, "Hey, I'm Skilled at intimidation – I want to threaten them into going to war." The GM replies, "No, Bret. That's not helping. That's orthogonal to the diplomacy, not helpful." Bret says, "What if I'm just subtly and politely intimidating?" GM says, "No. You're stretching."

Helpers at Risk

If you help and the roll results in a Cost, you get one too. If the player rolling owes a Favor, you are also obligated by that Favor. If they get a Condition, you may get an equal or lesser Condition. If you used a knowledge Skill to aid a physical roll, your failure may reveal a Flaw in your information. You might be Angry at the character who messed up.

Multiple Helpers

If multiple players are helping, they each must roll and then proceed from lowest roll to highest. If their roll exceeds the current total, then they add one to it. The GM may limit the number of helpers on a roll.

Example: Asher rolls a 2. Bob is helping and rolls a 5, and Cindy helps too and rolls a 3. Cindy's roll is lowest, so she goes first. 3 beats 2, so they add 1, bringing the total to 3. Bob goes next and 5 is bigger than 3, so the total goes up to 4. Notice that if Bob went before Cindy, the final result would be a 3, not a 4. That's why the order matters.

Action Points

Action Points are a resource that you can earn and spend in certain situations. Action Points allow your character to perform at a higher-than-usual level both in and out of combat. You may spend an Action Point in two ways outside of combat: to use a Trick, or to get Advantage from a Related Skill. There are in-combat uses for Action Points, and they are described on page 94.

Related Skills

Sometimes when you are making a Skill Roll, you have another Skill on your sheet that is not being rolled, but that you think ought to be helpful. In that scenario, you may spend an Action Point to gain Advantage on your roll.

Example: Khat is participating in a Joust. She does not have the Jousting Skill, so she is rolling on the Unskilled table. However, she is Skilled at Horseback Riding, and she thinks that should be useful here. So she spends an Action Point to get Advantage on her Jousting roll.

Tricks

After Character Creation (see page 16), each character will start with two Tricks and can gain more as they level up, or from items, trainings, boons, or other sources. A Trick is a narrow application of one of your Skills. You may spend an Action Point to automatically succeed at something with a Bonus if you have an appropriate Trick.

Example: Khat has the Trick “**I want the truth!**: You can always sense lies, evasions, or partial truths.” Her character is in a conversation and she asks Manuel, the GM, “Can I tell if he’s telling the truth about his husband?” Manuel could just say yes and tell Khat “He’s clearly hiding something,” but he decides that she needs to roll in this case. Khat spends an Action Point and uses her Trick to garner an automatic Success, avoiding the roll. She also gets a Bonus, which she uses to intuit precisely what this man is hiding.

Complications

Complications are the ways your character tends to get in trouble. Using them to get Twists earns you Action Points. After Character Creation, each character starts with two Complications, and can gain more later.

When an Opposed Roll is tied, you may break the tie in your opponent’s favor by pointing to one of your relevant Complications and describing how it tipped the balance against you. This earns you an Action Point.

On any standard Skill Roll outside of combat, you can earn an Action Point by using a Complication to suggest a Twist caused by that Complication instead of rolling. The GM is free to accept your idea, modify it, or give you a different Twist altogether as long as it still uses your Complication. If you both agree, the Twist happens and you get the Action Point. If you don’t like the GM’s Twist, you are free to change your mind and roll instead.

Example: I’m trying to steal a relic from the Papal Treasury, but I’m running low on Action Points, so I use my Complication “Enemy of Charles the Bad” and suggest to the GM that as I enter the treasury I find his agents there also trying to steal the relic. The GM says “That’s pretty good but I’ve got something better—you find the relic and realize that it’s a fake! Charles the Bad’s agents have already stolen it!” Is her idea better than mine? That’s a matter of opinion, but it’s her choice. Now I’ve got an Action Point and a new lead to chase after. To Navarre!

One last way to use a Complication to gain an Action Point is similar to the first, but with the difference being that no roll is being made. If you and the GM agree, you can use a Complication to generate a Twist even when no roll was called for. A common example is when you are facing a decision. In general, you don’t have to roll the dice in order to have your character decide a certain thing, but you might use your Complication to have your character make a bad choice within their nature. Any player including the GM can suggest this sort of use of a Complication, but the player in question and the GM both must agree. The guideline you and the GM should look at when judging this sort of use is the following: **it needs to get you into deeper trouble, and it has to hurt.** If the Twist in question doesn’t hurt, you can still play your character that way. Your character’s Complications affect the decisions which are meaningless as well as those which matter, but only the latter kind of decision can get you an Action Point. The former is something most people do without encouragement.

Example: If your character is *cowardly*, you don’t have to roll dice to see whether or not he goes into battle, unless perhaps the enemy is supernaturally frightening. You might want to use your *cowardly* Complication to get your character into deep trouble by skipping out on the battle. The GM might disagree and say that skipping the battle is not more dangerous than joining it, so you don’t get the point (you can still skip the battle!). Or the GM might agree, give you the point and then set up a scene where you are being arrested for desertion.

Note that **the GM cannot give you Disadvantage for your Complications.** Your Complications only come up when you choose to play them. They are descriptive and they are resources, but they are neither prescriptive nor restrictive. Complications do exist in the fiction, though. If you have the Complication “Morbidly Obese” then other characters will react to your size, you may have trouble in tight spaces, and anyone—friend or foe—trying to lift you up or throw you around will have Disadvantage.

A Note on the Design of Complications

A Complication is something that can cause trouble for your character but it is never negative for you as a player. Your character’s Complications can only help you! First, they get you Action Points which can give you Advantage, guaranteed Success with a Trick, or special abilities in combat. Second, they are only used when you elect to use them—nobody can force you to use a Complication against yourself. Third, you can use your Complications to get Twists on rolls you don’t care about and spend the rewards on rolls you do care about. If you take advantage of this cycle and use your Complications and Tricks frequently, you will fail on your own terms and succeed when it really matters to you.

Last, but not least, when you use a Complication, you put your character in the spotlight. Adversity is guaranteed in *Strike!*, and Complications allow you to guide where you want your character to face adversity. When you and your friends are all doing this together, you wind up with a story that is all about your characters.

Conditions as Complications

A player may use a Condition in the same way they would use a Complication. If a player is Injured, they may choose to simply get a Twist instead of rolling, and receive an Action Point for it.

Session to Session

You can carry over up to three Action Points from the previous session. At the start of each session, you gain one if you didn't have any. Additionally, once per session you may award another player one Action Point for doing something you think is awesome. To be clear, you don't give them one of your own—it costs you nothing. When to give this award is completely at your discretion and the only rule is what I already said—give it away for something awesome, not just because Brenda is running low on Action Points or because it's the end of the session and you need to dump it off on somebody. If you haven't awarded it by the end of the session, you can award it then for something that happened earlier.

Your Character's Stuff

The effects of most items in this game are narrative. That is not to say that they have no mechanical impact. They have the strong mechanical impact of allowing you to do things in the story that you could not otherwise do because they wouldn't make sense. A Letter of Marque doesn't need a mechanical write-up, but without it you'll have a very hard time pleading your case when accused of piracy. Without a forge you won't be making any swords at all. A gun lets you shoot things. A blessed weapon may or may not have special mechanical benefits, but if the phantasms appearing in the church cannot be touched by mundane or profane objects then the blessing takes on a new significance. Some items may have mechanical effects. The GM section has a lot more information about items and their effects, but the one effect that is vital for you to know about is the Flaw. Recall that a Flaw is just like a Complication, with the difference that the GM can give you Disadvantage for it. It goes like this: items are flawed, but people are complicated. It is generally to your advantage to have items with Flaws. Make those Flaws work for you and get Action Points!

Be aware that items in your character's possession do not belong to you in the same way that your character's Skills or Complications do. You can lose or break items, temporarily or permanently, as a Concession in Combat or Team Conflict, or as part of a Twist at the GM's discretion.

Items and character change

When a player gets an item that makes them better at the thing they already do all the time, their character will not change and their habits will be reinforced. An item that gives them a good mechanical reason to try something different will push towards change. An item that makes them better at their strength but at a cost to some other aspect of play is subversive and will lead towards interesting consequences without necessarily changing the character's playstyle. GMs ought to think about this before they give out an item. Reinforcing a one-note character is boring—subvert or provide alternatives instead, but never punish. Punishment has no place.

Tools

Some Skills require tools to use properly. If you don't have any tools, you can't attempt the task. If you have makeshift tools only, you may attempt it with Disadvantage. This may depend on the complexity of the task.

Your character starts play with appropriate tools for their starting Skills. These may be lost as a result of Twists. When you learn a new Skill you do not automatically get tools—you must acquire them in play.

Example: You can't make a forgery if you have no ink. If you have a penknife and a pen, you can forge a simple document without Disadvantage. If you want to forge a complex document with stamps or seals you'll have Disadvantage unless you have proper tools.

Wealth

There is a Skill which isn't quite the same as other Skills: Wealth. Wealth is special because it has multiple levels and is the one place in the game where difficulty matters. Why does difficulty matter here? Simply because it works better this way. *Strike!* is not a game about tracking individual coins, so your character's ability to obtain items for sale is abstracted into this Skill. It represents not only how much money you have, but also how available that money is to you and how good you are at using it.

Wealth is ranked from zero to three. Zero is Penniless, one is Poor, two is Rich, and three is Super-rich. Similarly, items you might want to buy are ranked from zero to four. I'll use today's prices to give you an idea of what I mean. Unranked are items that are practically free: zero to five dollars. You never need to roll for these. Each level thereafter goes up by a factor of twenty. So level zero is items that are cheap: five to one hundred dollars. Even a poor person can afford these. Level one is items that are expensive: one hundred to two thousand dollars. A rich person can afford these while a poor person might balk. Level two are major purchases: two thousand to forty thousand dollars. A super-rich person can afford these often, while a rich person would take such a purchase very seriously. Level three are once-in-a-lifetime purchases: forty thousand to eight hundred thousand dollars. Even a super-rich person has to take these seriously. Lastly, level four purchases are utterly opulent: costing more than eight hundred thousand dollars. Only a super-rich person could even consider trying to buy one of these without needing a decades-long mortgage.

If you try to buy something two levels or more below yours, you can. You do not need to roll. You cannot use your Wealth to buy something two or more levels above yours. If you want to make that sort of purchase, you need to get a loan, find a wealthy patron, or take further measures to be able to do so. To purchase anything else, use the following table to determine the results. Items below your Wealth are labeled "cheap" and items above your Wealth are labeled "expensive."

Roll	Cheap	Same Level	Expensive
6	Success + Bonus	Success + Bonus	Success
5	Success + Bonus	Success	Success + Cost
4	Success	Success + Cost	Success + 2 Costs
3	Success	Success + 2 Costs	Twist
2	Success + Cost	Twist	Twist + Flaw
1	Success + 2 Costs	Twist + Flaw	Twist + Flaw

There is a Condition that typically goes with Wealth: Short. When you're Short, you act as though you were one Wealth tier lower. When you get two Costs, one of them is always a Flaw, while the other is either that you are Short or that you owe someone a Favor. The GM will decide which.

Often when you roll a Twist, the GM will ask you if you would rather do without the item in question, or "break the bank" to pay for it. A worse Condition happens when you "break the bank": being Broke. It's the same as being Short, but is much harder to recover from. Being Broke does not mean you have no money at all, just much less than you were used to having.

If you get the Short Condition twice, nothing changes. Simply note it down. The third time, however, automatically "breaks the bank" and Short upgrades to Broke. Later on, if you manage to get Short and Broke at the same time, they combine to cause you to treat your Wealth as two levels below normal. Multiple instances of Broke compound too. Effectively, being Broke is the same as a permanent reduction in your Wealth, but with the opportunity to work your way out of it. This is rough, but unlike other Conditions, the GM cannot simply give it to you. You choose it or else earn it by getting three Shorts.

You recover from being Short by working your job and being frugal for a week, or any equivalent way of making money. You can also recover by spending a cash parcel (see below) equal to the Wealth tier you are recovering to. To recover from Broke you need to work your job and live frugally for a year or equivalent, or spend a cash parcel one level above the one you are recovering to.



Cash

In the course of your adventuring, you might come into possession of cold hard cash or other easily spent loot. Cash parcels have ranks just like items and act as Tricks to make purchases of the same rank, except that instead of spending an Action Point to use the Trick, you simply spend the cash and you don't get a Bonus.

Example: Fil's character Gilly has a level two cash parcel. It's on her sheet as Ransom Money [2]. She wants to buy a used but fast getaway car, which is a major purchase [2]. Gilly is Poor [1], so she could roll for it but the results would likely be bad. Instead, Gilly could spend the ransom money and get the car without rolling. How will Gilly pay the kidnappers? Well, maybe she won't.

You can sell your stuff for cash parcels at the GM's discretion. The GM will tell you what you need to do. You can use cash parcels to recover from Conditions, as stated above.

You can also increase your Wealth tier permanently by investing your cash parcels. When you invest your cash to go up a Wealth tier, spend a cash parcel one level above the tier you are trying to reach. Investment takes time, and your money doesn't start working for you right away. It's up to the GM exactly how long it takes before your new Wealth is effective.

Examples: Gilly is a bit Short, so her Wealth is treated as level 0. She can get back to her usual Poor [1] Wealth by selling her iPad. Poor Gilly, she just bought it!

Later, Gilly has really spent all her money. She had to "break the bank" and has gone down a level to Broke [0]. To recover back to Poor[1] she needs to invest a level 2 cash parcel. Maybe she could sell that getaway car.

Gilly made a Huge Score [3]. She could hold onto that to spend on something really cool or she could invest it during downtime to increase her Wealth to Rich [2].

Teamwork

Five characters of Wealth X (two of whom can be replaced by cash parcels of level X) can roll as one character of Wealth X + 1. You all suffer any Costs or Twists that occur.

Example: Gilly and her two pals are all Rich [2] and they each have a Cash Reward [2] for returning their benefactor's kidnapped son. If the three of them combine their Wealth and chip in two of their cash parcels, they can roll as though they were one Super-rich [3] person. This could allow them to attempt to buy a level 4 item, like an old castle to use as their headquarters! They'll probably go broke doing it, but it'd be so worth it.

Helping someone in a different Wealth tier uses the usual helping rules with some additions. When helping a character one Wealth tier above, roll your helping die with Disadvantage. Helping a character two tiers above you is impossible—the super-rich don't need money from the poor! When helping a character on a lower Wealth tier, roll your helping die with Advantage. If the character is two Wealth tiers below you, you would be wiser to buy the item for them. If the player you are helping ends up rolling a Twist and choosing to "break the bank," then you get the Condition "Short."

Example of Play

The players here are Patty and Rick. They are playing the characters Arles and Carlos. The GM is Doug. This example covers Success, Conditions, Twists, Complications, Wealth, Linked Rolls and Helping. Arles and Carlos need to steal an enormous tome that is supposedly kept in the treasury in the Papal palace in Avignon. Carlos is a former priest and Arles is a knight.

Patty: So Carlos, how are we going to get in?

Rick: Well with my vestments and experience I'm sure that I'll be able to talk my way in. Disguising you is a different matter. My clothes aren't going to fit you.

Patty: How about I play a monk sworn to silence? What are those called?

Rick: I dunno, but my character would.

Doug: I don't think it's specific to them, but Cistercians would fit.

Rick: Indeed, Arles, we need to acquire robes to make you look like a Cistercian. I think we must make a trip to a tailor.

Patty: Do we need to roll? I can afford it for sure.

Doug: Yeah, we'll make it a Linked Roll to your attempt to talk your way past the guards. Getting the robes just right on short notice will be expensive, so it's a level 1 item.

Patty: Okay, well I'll roll my Wealth. I'm just going to flaunt my gold and find the best tailor in town.

Patty has Wealth 2 and rolls a 4. She succeeds and Arles gets his robes, exact in every detail. And they get Advantage on talking their way in.

Rick: While she's doing that, I want to case the joint. Find people who know about the layout and where I need to go.

Doug: Okay great. I'll just say yes to that for now. You do exactly that. In the course of the heist, when you want to bring in a fact you learned this way we'll roll and see what happens. Lets move on to the palace. You approach the doors. There are guards everywhere. The one in charge asks you your purpose.

Rick: Brother Felipe and I are here as envoys from the Bishop of Tortosa, conveying a message of some importance to His Holiness.

Doug: Do you have a letter authorizing your visit?

Rick: One of the guys I talked to would have told me about this, surely.

Doug: Yep. They did and you came prepared. Roll your Forgery Skill, with the Advantage from Arles' Linked Roll.

Rick rolls a 6. A Success with a Bonus.

Rick: Of course. You'll see that everything is in order. I hand him the letter and he allows me in. As my Bonus for rolling a 6, he doesn't even assign us an escort—he lets us find our own way.

Doug: Whoa. Alright, so then you use your knowledge of the layout of the place to make your way to the treasury. There are two guards here and you're not going to be able to talk your way past these guys.

Patty: We'll approach as though we want to ask them a question and I'll take one out while you take the other. Our intent is to incapacitate them without making lots of noise.

Rick: Carlos nods and takes his garrote out of his sleeve.

Doug: Okay, roll your combat Skills. Patty takes the lead and Rick will help because it's Patty's idea and she's the big brawler anyway.

Patty rolls a 3 on her Brawling Skill. Rick also rolls a 3. Rick's roll is not higher than Patty's, so he's not helpful. A 3 gets Patty Success with a Cost.

Doug: Well you take them out, but they put up more of a struggle than you expect. You're both Winded. You've now arrived in the Papal treasury. It's a very large room with not a lot of light filtering in from the windows high up on the wall. You see strongboxes and loot, but nothing that looks like what was described. It seems like there is a lot less gold here than you'd expect, too.

Rick: Damn, it's hidden. So I cased the joint earlier, right? Does one of the guys I talked to know where it would be?

Doug: Let's roll and find out. We'll make it a Linked Roll. You still have to search, but your information might make that easier or harder. I guess you're rolling your Catholic Hierarchy Skill for contacting the others who worked in the palace?

Rick: Yep.

Doug: And it'll have to be Search to find where it's hidden.

Rick: Cool, here goes!

Rick rolls a 1 on his Priest Skill. A Twist and a Cost!

Doug: So the Twist is that your questions made someone suspicious and the authorities were alerted before you arrived. You hear voices up above—you don't have much time to find it and get out. The Cost is that you get Disadvantage in your search because you are short on time.

Rick: Ah, Disadvantage sucks. I'm probably going to fail this anyway, so I'd like to use my Complication "Enemy of Charles the Bad" here. How about as I enter the treasury I find his agents there also trying to steal the relic?

Doug: Hmm. That's pretty good but I've got something better. After a frantic search you find the secret entrance to the sub-treasury. The ceilings here are very low and it's packed with jewels and gold. A few paces in you find the relic and realize that it's a fake! Charles the Bad's agents have already stolen the real one!

Rick: Aw darn. Alright, I guess we're chasing them back to Navarre. So we're going to have to get supplies for our trip?

Doug: Not so fast! You're still in the Papal treasury, and you hear footsteps coming down.

Rick: Isn't that a Twist? Can you do that when I didn't fail a roll?

Doug: Sure I can. It's not a Twist, it's just a thing that's happening. Things keep happening even when we're not rolling dice. Besides, this was set in motion when you failed your Linked Roll.

Patty: Carlos, I'll hide behind the door and knock them out when they come in and then we'll run.

Rick: I nod to Arles. I'll catch their attention so they don't notice him sneaking up behind.

Doug: Sounds good. Arles is using Stealth, Carlos is helping with Acting, right?

Rick: I'd prefer to call it Distraction. I'm Unskilled either way.

Patty: It's okay, I got this. Arles is very quiet for a big man.

Patty rolls a 1. Rick, helping, rolls with Disadvantage for being Unskilled. He gets a 5 and a 6. Taking the lower, his result is a 5. It's higher than Patty's, so she gets to add one to her result and gets a 2. That's a Twist. Moreover, rolling a 5 and a 6 allows Carlos to learn the Distraction Skill.

Rick: Ding! New Skill!

Doug: Nice, Rick! Too bad it doesn't help you this time. Four well-armed men come in dressed as guards. Before Carlos can even start his song and dance number, one guard says "There's the little guy. Where's the big one?" They turn around and see Arles. It's combat for you, and remember that you're both Winded.

Tactical Combat is described starting on page 87.

Rick: Wait! I want to spend an Action Point to bring in my relationship with Father Tomacelli and the Templars.

Doug: Ah, that's interesting. A secret Templar in Avignon. Okay, let me think for a minute about who might be here and what they might want.

For more on relationships, see page 30.

What Now?

This marks the end of the basic rules. You've got everything you need now to go and play the game if you just want a fast and simple roleplaying experience. If you are planning to be the GM, you can read up on what is involved in that role and find a wealth of advice and tools starting on page 56. If you want to create a character and start playing now, simply continue reading. If you want to learn about the more in-depth systems like Team Conflict and Tactical Combat, skip to page 87.





Creating Your Character

Once you have your character concept, follow these steps:

- **Background.** Your Background determines what Skills your character is best at, where your character gets material goods, and any special Tricks or abilities you may have outside of combat. You may pick one from the list starting on page 18 or make up your own using the questions on page 24.
- **Origin.** When you write down your Origin, whether it's a species or a hometown or a socioeconomic class, it lets you pick two Skills and one Complication. You may add one to your Wealth score in lieu of one Skill if you come from a wealthy Origin. See page 25 for some example Origins.
- **Personalize.** Choose one additional Skill (Resource Skills allowed), one additional Trick, and one additional Complication. These represent things that are personal to your character.

Note: If your game has a core activity, like fighting monsters or investigation, strongly consider picking up a relevant Skill now if you didn't get one from your Background. If you don't, you'll be rolling Unskilled a lot until you can learn one.

- **Gear.** You start with tools for any of your starting Skills that require them. Pick two more items to start with, subject to group approval. Your character may own more stuff beyond that, but you'll need to roll your Skills in play to find out.
- **Kits. (Optional)** If your group is using Kits, pick a Kit, following the directions on page 32. Your Kit gives you some cool powers and helps direct you towards a certain playstyle.
- **Relationships. (Optional)** Choose relationships. Using the relationship rules on page 30, collaborate with your group in writing down initial relationships. Try to tie them into the game's starting situation or quest. Default is one friend, one enemy, and one relationship somewhere in between.
- **Motivation.** Why is your character driven to do interesting things alongside the other characters? This step doesn't have any mechanical weight, but it is not optional! You must have some reason for your character to be involved and interested and not just along for the ride. In *Strike!*, you must be prepared to take the initiative. Until you can answer that question, you are not done making your character!

Now you're ready for anything except Tactical Combat. The rules for creating that side of your character are found on page 98 after the Tactical Combat chapter. If you just want to get started playing the game with the basic rules, you can do that now!



Advancement

Fallbacks

When you first gain a level, pick a Fallback. Now that you've gotten to know your character a bit in play, you might recognize a trend. Your Fallback is that thing you always fall back on when you are in trouble. Once per session, you can use your Fallback to turn a Twist into a Success (a Twist with a Cost turns into a Success with a Cost). After the GM has given the Twist, you narrate how you use your Fallback to turn the situation around and achieve whatever the intent of the roll was. Your Fallback should be broad, like bravery or meticulous planning. Fallbacks are very powerful, and each player can only ever have one.

Gaining Tricks and Complications

There are two advancement schemes you can use to improve your character over time and gain new Tricks and Complications: natural and level-based. Natural advancement lets you gain Tricks and Complications naturally through play just like Skills. Level-based advancement has you gain new Tricks and Complications as you gain levels instead.

Natural Advancement

To gain new Tricks, you need to track how you spend your Action Points. When you spend an Action Point on a Trick, put a check next to it on your sheet. When you reach ten checks, that Trick becomes second nature—you no longer need to spend Action Points to use it. You may now pick a new Trick of your choice related to any of your Skills.

When you spend an Action Point to get Advantage for having a Related Skill, put a check next to that Skill on your sheet. When you get six checks next to a Skill, you can gain a new Trick deriving from that Skill. You can also give up your Bonus when you roll a 6 on a Skill to put a check next to it without spending an Action Point.

When you spend an Action Point in combat (on Rally or on your Action Trigger), mark a check next to your Complications. When you get ten such checks, pick a new Complication of your choice.

New Complications are also received when you fail to recover from a Condition. The rules below apply to Injured, Sick, and Major Mental Conditions, but you can come up with your own versions for any custom Major Conditions you use.

If you do not receive medical treatment for a Major Physical Condition like Injured or Sick, or if that treatment fails, you must make a Skill Roll to recover properly. This roll cannot result in a Cost or a Bonus. If you get a Twist on the roll, you have a permanent debility, whether it's a chronic illness, a lost body part, or lasting emotional trauma. Mechanically, this will take the form of a new Complication.

When you back down to recover from a Major Mental Condition (as opposed to defeating what caused it), unless you receive treatment, you must make a Skill Roll to recover fully. This roll cannot result in a Cost or a Bonus—it is simply Success or Twist. If you get a Twist on the roll, you get a new Complication, as above. This can take the form of a damaging emotional or personality quirk, a grudge, or a powerful phobia.

As it says above, you must make a Skill Roll to try recover after failed treatment. What Skill should it be? Well, if you have a Skill that makes sense, roll it. Otherwise, the Skills to use for those are Health for physical recovery and Steel for mental recovery.

Example: Zenobia fled from the oracle with the Terrified Major Mental Condition and her mind filled with visions of assassins. She backed down, so she can recover. She could now go and seek treatment from a priest, a lover, or anyone else qualified to help her with emotional trauma. Instead, she chooses to keep it to herself. The GM calls for her to roll her Steel. She is Unskilled, and she rolls a 3—a Twist. That means that she has a new Complication. She decides that she will have the Complication "Paranoia." She sees assassins at every turn.

Making significant enemies can also be represented by new Complications. If you continue to provoke or ignore a person with whom you have a Bad Reputation, they may become your enemy and this can be a Complication.

Example: Zenobia once agreed to owe Arcadius a Favor in exchange for his help making peace with the military, but it turns out that his idea of a Favor is Zenobia's hand in marriage. Fat chance. Since she has no intention of giving him what he wants, Zenobia's unpaid Favor eventually becomes a Bad Reputation as he spreads rumours around his friends at court (like Zenobia cares what those guys think). After she calls him out on his corruption in front of everyone she gets the Complication "Enemy of Arcadius."

Level-based Advancement

With Level-based advancement, you want to give out bonuses at every level or every other level. This is easily customizable based on what options you are using in your game.

Gain a new Trick at Levels 2, 6, and 10. Gain a new Complication at Levels 4 and 8. Players gain new Advances from their Kits (see page 32) at odd levels, and new Reputations (see page 55) at even levels if you are using those options.

Mixed Method

You could have Tricks and Complications follow Natural Advancement, and have the players gain Reputations and Kit Advances by level-up. This is my favorite, but it requires players who are willing to put in the effort needed to use the Natural Advancement rules.

Changing Changing Complications

When it is narratively appropriate, you may swap out a Complication for any other. You get to decide when it is appropriate, not the GM, nor the other players, though they may voice their opinions.

Changing Tricks

You can change your Tricks if it is narratively appropriate too, but you need the group's unanimous approval. Tricks are too easy to abuse if you can simply change them whenever you like.

Replacing Lost Tricks and Complications

Perhaps you had a Trick based on buying things and now your character just lost all her money. You and the group agree that your Trick no longer makes sense. When a Trick is taken away like that, you can pick a new one to replace it immediately. The same goes for when you lose a Complication. This does not apply to Flaws and Tricks granted as part of equipment or other rewards, just to the Complications and Tricks you get for gaining levels or through Natural Advancement. Reward Flaws and Tricks granted to you by the GM are under the GM's control—if you lose one as part of a Twist, the GM is not obligated to replace it. Your character has inbuilt effectiveness in the rules that the GM cannot take away, and the extra stuff your character gets is just that—extra.

Advancement Chart

Level	Class and Role	Kit and Reputation	Other Advances
2	Role Encounter Power	<i>Reputation</i>	Trick
3	Class Encounter Power	<i>Advance</i>	Feat
4	Upgrade Role Boosts	<i>Reputation</i>	Complication
5	Upgrade Class Features	<i>Advance</i>	Feat
6	Role Encounter Power	<i>Reputation</i>	Trick
7	Class Encounter Power	<i>Advance</i>	Feat
8	Upgrade Role Boosts	<i>Reputation</i>	Complication
9	Upgrade Class Features	<i>Advance</i>	Feat
10	Role Encounter Power	<i>Reputation</i>	Trick
*	Gain a Fallback the first time you level up.		



Backgrounds

A Background expresses your character's primary area of expertise. It gives you a set of Skills and some Tricks that only you can do. When you are creating a character, you may pick one of the Backgrounds given here or make your own.

Each Background has a list of Skills. They include a range—practical, social, and so on. When you choose the Background, you get these Skills. You also start with any items it's logical for you to own based on your Skills. For instance, having the Sword Skill means you start with a Sword. The Background also has your base Wealth—zero, one, or two. It will be six minus the number of Skills you got. Last, it has one Trick: a special thing that you can reliably do by spending an Action Point, avoiding a roll. Your Trick is a specific use of one of your Skills. A Necromancer can always communicate with a recently deceased person. A Scholar can always call up a useful fact he once read. As long as they spend an Action Point, that is... otherwise they have to roll and see what happens.

If you are making up your own Background. It will be helpful to use the Background Walkthrough on page 24. When making your own, do not pick four premium Skills. By premium Skills, I mean Skills that will see use nearly every session. Each Background has at least one of those, but they all have Skills that are of more niche benefit, too. Those are more likely to come up as Linked Rolls or Helping for other Skills, or as Related Skills. These Skills can help define your character over a longer narrative arc.

You'll note that some Backgrounds have one Skill that is more general than is usually allowed. For instance, a Knight gets "Master at Arms" because to be a Knight one must be Skilled in a variety of weapons. The Knight Background would be incomplete if it only offered "Sword". A Background may have no more than one such Skill, and you never learn such general Skills in play. Also remember that in an Opposed Roll between a generalist and a specialist, the generalist might as well be Unskilled (page 10).

Without further ado, here are some Backgrounds:

Magnate

A Magnate believes in the power of money and making deals.

Skills: Bargaining, Business, Politics, Networking (Connections)

Rich [2]

Tricks: Greasing Hands: A Magnate can pay any bribe.

Journalist

A Journalist knows who to talk to when they need information off the record.

Skills: Writing, Research, Interrogation, Fast Talk, Sources (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Perfect Recall: A Journalist can always remember whatever they heard, word-for-word.

Police Officer

A Police Officer or town guard's position comes with many perks—everybody is eager to stay on good terms with the force.

Skills: Observation, Streetwise, Interrogation, Investigation, Perquisites (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Blank Stare: Whether through practice or sheer empty-headedness, a Police Officer can outwait or outstare anyone.

Diviner

A Diviner can often see a path to what they want that others might think mere luck or happenstance.

Skills: Augury, Astrology, Cold Reading, Rituals, The Stars Align

Poor [1]

Tricks: Through a Mirror Darkly: A Diviner can always make a prediction couched in metaphor such that, no matter the outcome, the recipient believes the Diviner to have been correct.

Actor

They're not necessarily your friends, but you can get an audience with people in the highest places, and you're good at finding odd jobs or quests for hire.

Skills: Acting, Singing, Oratory, Memorization, Wealthy Patrons (Connections), Odd Jobs (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Life of the Party: An Actor can always put on a performance worth watching and use it to get attention.

Shapeshifter

A Shapeshifter can usually find the right form to take on to attempt access to any location, be it the sacred heart of the temple or the bank vault.

Skills: Shapeshifting, Impersonation, Stealth, Alien and Animal Consciousness, Always a Way In

Poor [1]

Tricks: Master of Disguise: Looking the part is easy for a Shapeshifter. A Shapeshifter can always have a perfect disguise. Acting the part is another matter, but often the appearance is all that matters.

(Former) Prisoner

Prisoners learn to make the most of the little they are given.

Skills: Ditch Digging, Inconspicuous, Confinement and Escape, Saying What They Want to Hear, Something from Nothing, Underworld (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Bindings: A Prisoner is very familiar with methods of restraint and can always improvise secure bindings given the right materials. Given time, they can always escape from imperfect bindings.

Veteran

A Veteran's wartime friends are as close as family and contribute what they have when the Veteran is in need.

Skills: Soldiering, Foraging, Appropriate Weapons, Command, Old War Friends (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Fight Dirty: A Veteran can always win a clean fight by turning it into a dirty one.

Fashion Worker

Either you make clothes and accessories or you have a large collection and know where to get more.

Skills: Trends, Clothing Design, Decor, Backhanded or Ambiguous Compliments, Clotheshorse

Poor [1]

Tricks: Best Dressed: You can always show up looking perfect. You show up your rivals without out-shining the people you want to befriend.

Jongleur

They're not necessarily your friends, but you can get an audience with people in the highest places, and you know all the innkeepers from here to Timbuktu.

Skills: Singing, Storytelling, Seduction, Acrobat, Wealthy Patrons (Connections), Well-Traveled (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Witty Repartee: A Jongleur can always craft a bon mot to lighten the mood, cut the tension, or make light of an argument.

Programmer

Knowing about security isn't enough to start hacking, but it's a first step.

Skills: Coding, Hardware, Online Communications, Encryption and Security, Techie Friends (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: I Know This Code: A Programmer can always figure out how to work an unfamiliar computer program from the front end or the back.

Necromancer

A Necromancer must bind evil spirits to put into bodies.

Skills: Rituals, Anatomy, Binding, Speaking with the Dead, Raising the Dead

Poor [1]

Trick: Death Speaker: A Necromancer can always communicate with the recently deceased.



World Traveler

A World Traveler knows many tales from faraway lands.

Skills: Languages, Navigation, Storytelling, Foreign Etiquette, A Friend in Every Port (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: What's New: A World Traveler can always find out quickly what has changed since their last visit to a location.

Arcanist

The Arcanist has over the course of their studies come into possession of many strange magical or occult items kept safe in a lab.

Skills: Languages, Research, Esoteric Trivia, Spellcraft, Accumulated Debris

Poor [1]

Tricks: Identify Magic Item: An Arcanist always knows what power that weird relic must hold.

Druid

If it can be found in the wild, the Druid can find it.

Skills: Rituals, Speaking with Animals, Runes, Sensing Harmony and Discord, Spirits of the Land (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Signs and Portents: A Druid can always read the signs of nature, predicting the weather, or mystic and natural events.

Banker

Bureaucracy doesn't seem like much of a Skill until you're stuck without it in a lineup that never ends.

Skills: Finance, Bureaucracy, Negotiation, Accounting

Rich [2]

Tricks: Restructuring the Deal: When circumstances change, a Banker can always get favorable considerations in any bargain.

Ranger

If it can be found in the wild, the Ranger can find it.

Skills: Trapping, Tracking, Pathfinding, Weather Prediction, Foraging, Herbal Medicine

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Dead Reckoning: A Ranger can always find their way back to civilization when they are lost in the wilderness.

Thief

When trying to come up with an item, a Thief's first inclination is to find someone who has one and relieve them of it.

Skills: Lockpicking, Climbing, Stealth, Bluffing, Stealing, Underworld Contacts (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Case a Joint: A Thief can always find a way in and find out who is watching.

Assassin

An Assassin can kill in many ways.

Skills: Poisons, Sharpshooting, Social Engineering, Stealth, Underworld Contacts (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: The Getaway: An Assassin always plans ahead for unexpected occurrences. When something goes wrong in your plan, you saw it coming and have a way to sneak out.

Pirate

A Pirate takes what they want, or buys it with stolen coin.

Skills: Sailing, Uncharted Places, Intimidation, Ropes, Stolen Booty

Poor [1]

Tricks: Brutality: A Pirate always knows the right threat to inspire terror in a helpless captive.

Politician

You can tell them what they want to hear.

Skills: Fundraising, Policy, Oratory, Positivity and Platitudes, Friends in High Places (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Stump Speech: A Politician can always get a receptive crowd fired up and ready for action.

Lawyer

A Lawyer knows judges, police, and politicians.

Skills: Law, Research, Oratory, Judicial Contacts (Connections)

Rich [2]

Tricks: Make Your Case: A Lawyer can always convince a disinterested observer that they are right.

Blacksmith

A Blacksmith can make many things, but not without a good fire.

Skills: Weapons and Armor, Firebuilding, Mending, Brute Strength, Blacksmithing

Poor [1]

Tricks: Heavy Lifting: A Blacksmith can always lift an object or obstacle if anyone can.

Dealer

A Dealer in illicit goods and services has discreetly helped out many people. They now owe a debt.

Skills: Intimidation, Haggling, Bribery, Seduction, Debtors (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: The Dirt: A Dealer always knows the private vices of anyone who matters.

Noble Knight

A Knight must learn the use of many weapons.

Skills: Riding, Etiquette, Master at Arms, Tactics, Inherited Titles (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Of Course I'm On the List: A Noble Knight can always finagle an invitation in high society.

Noble (Non-Martial)

A Noble knows how to throw a party.

Skills: Household Management, Etiquette, Hosting, Flattery, Inherited Titles (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Of Course I'm On the List: A Noble can always finagle an invitation in high society.

Bard

They buy you drinks and invite you in if you entertain them.

Skills: Music, Bardic Knowledge (The Truth Behind the Legends), Witty Repartee, Sleight of Hand, Music Lovers (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Are You Not Entertained: A Bard can always play a crowd and keep them enthralled until the final round of applause.



Bartender

A Bartender has heard enough stories to know where to start digging when you want dirt.

Skills: Mixing Drinks, Conflict Resolution, Storytelling, Listening, Customers' Secrets, Everyone's Buddy (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: That's Enough: No matter how obstinate the jerk, a Bartender can always keep cool and lay down the law.

Clown

Why do you have one of those? Oh, it's for a trick I do with this rubber hose.

Skills: Juggling, Facepainting, Comedy, Unicycling, Sack of Odds and Ends, Comedians and Charlatans (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Lighten Up: A Clown can always make a stiff or stuck up person look bad. They might be furious, but they'll just embarrass themselves.

Related Backgrounds

Sometimes you might want the players to all start out with a similar Background. But starting everyone off with the same Background would work poorly: they would all have the same Skills! So make similar Backgrounds that have some overlap. Here is an example of related Backgrounds for a party consisting of sailors, with Skills that give each their own niche to occupy aboard ship. These are focused on the Age of Sail, but could be easily modified for any military hierarchy, whether historical, fantastical, or modern.

Sailor

Carousing can keep your troubles at bay.

Skills: Sailor, Ropes, Carousing, Hard Labor, A Friend in Every Port (Connections), Friends At Sea (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Tall Tales: A Sailor can always spin a yarn worth hearing and use it to get attention.

Marine

A marine can fight with pistols, sabers, or belaying pins.

Skills: Climbing, Personal Weapons, Close Combat, First Aid, Hard Friends (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Boarding: A Marine can always get on a ship, whether by scaling the anchor chain or swinging from a grapnel in the rigging.

Helm

Making good maps gives you an advantage on future journeys.

Skills: Pilot, Navigation, Weather, Geography, Cartography

Poor[1]

Tricks: Safe Havens: The Helmsperson always knows the best places on the sea to find friendly towns and isolated coves.

Gunner

Whether you're plotting a parabola or drawing up an attack, a good diagram can give advantage to your plan.

Skills: Vehicle Weapons, Physics, Chemistry, Tactics, Explosives, Helpful Diagrams

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Dead Reckoning: A Gunner can always tell how far away something is with a high degree of accuracy.

Ship's Doctor

A Diagnosis is required for appropriate medical care.

Skills: First Aid, Surgery, Diagnosis, Sailor, Medicines

Poor [1]

Tricks: Dull the Pain: A Ship's Doctor can always dose a patient with enough narcotics and alcohol to let them to ignore the pain.

Ship's Carpenter

Making do with minimal tools and taking things apart for re-use is always necessary on a ship.

Skills: Mending, Cooper, Ship Maintenance, Timber and Lumber, Carpentry, Scavenging

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Every Nook and Cranny: A Ship's Carpenter can always find hidden things or a good hiding place aboard their own ship.

Ship's Cook

Fire on a boat is very dangerous. They don't let just anybody cook.

Skills: Cooking, Sailor, Fishing, Fire and Firefighting Aboard, Produce Procurement, Friends at Market (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Tricks: Rinse It Off: A Ship's Cook can always cover up any foul taste and make even the inedible taste tolerable.

Captain

Command your crew well and you won't need to intimidate them.

Skills: Command, Navigation, Intimidation, Tactics, Chain of Command (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Peacemaker: The Captain can always settle disputes between sailors.

Officer

Not as glamorous as being a Captain, but the administration needs to get done.

Skills: Persuasion, Administration, Command, Accounting, Chain of Command (Connections)

Poor [1]

Tricks: Recruiter: The Officer can always talk someone into joining up with the crew for at least one adventure.

The Owner

You own the vessel. The Captain commands the crew, but you're the real boss. They risk their lives, but you risk your fortune.

Skills: Finance, International Trade, Appraisal, Old Boys/Old Girls Network (Connections)

Rich [2]

Tricks: Find Cargo: The Owner of the ship can always find something to put in the hold that'll turn a profit somewhere.



Background Walkthrough

To make your own background, simply follow this quick walkthrough. Pick a background concept to describe what your character did mainly before they got into the adventure. Your concept could be something like Goldsmith, Lawyer, or Alien World-scout. Keep it brief: a few words, not a few sentences.

Once you have your concept written down, answer the following questions in order and write a Skill for each.

- How does your character acquire physical goods? If your answer to this is “with money,” increase your Wealth by one. Otherwise write down a Skill.

Examples: The Goldsmith buys what he wants with money: Wealth +1.

The Lawyer buys what she wants with money. Wealth +1.

The Alien World-scout uses its Heuristic Scanning Device to locate what it needs. Heuristic Scanning.

- Who can your character call on when times are tough? If your answer is “they buy their way out of trouble” or “they fall back on the hired help,” increase your wealth by one. Otherwise write down a Connections Skill.

Examples: The Goldsmith falls back on his fellow guild members. Guild Member.

The Lawyer falls back on her friends in the judicial system. Judicial System Contacts.

The Alien World-scout falls back on its commanders and fellow agents. Scouting Network.

- What primary Skill do you need most to perform the tasks necessary to your background?

Examples: The Goldsmith needs Goldsmithing.

The Lawyer needs Public Speaking.

The Alien World-scout needs to evaluate worlds using Biochemistry.

- What Skill supports your primary Skill? This Skill is often, but not always a knowledge Skill.

Examples: The Goldsmith supports his trade with Appraisal.

The Lawyer supports her speaking with Legal Knowledge.

The Alien World-scout supports its scouting with Geology.

- What social or business Skill do you need to get ahead?

Examples: The Goldsmith needs Hagglng.

The Lawyer needs Persuasion.

The Alien World-scout needs to blend in using Disguise.



- What other Skill do you have from your Background that hasn't been mentioned yet?

Examples: The Goldsmith has Iconography.

The Lawyer has Research.

The Alien World-scout has Cartography.

There is no one right way to answer these questions. A Goldsmith might have picked Goldsmithing as his Skill for how he acquired things, bumped Appraisal up to primary and picked a different supporting Skill. The Alien World-scout could have put a greater emphasis on abducting local fauna instead of focusing on the science. The Lawyer could have used Logic instead of one of her other Skills.

- Considering all the Skills you just picked, name one circumstance involving one of those Skills, where you can always succeed. That's your Trick.

Examples: The Goldsmith can always identify an icon or symbol from his own religion, no matter how obscure.

The Lawyer can always persuade anyone to give someone a lighter punishment.

The Alien World-Scout can always diagnose any illness with its knowledge of biochemistry.

Wait, the Lawyer is poor? That doesn't seem right!

Slow down. We still have Origins to take into account. You still have one more chance to increase your Wealth. So that lawyer might end up rich, or she might not. If the result still seems wrong, you can go back and change your answers around.





Origins: Species and Cultures

Your Background tells us what your character has been up to lately. Your Origin tells us where your character comes from. Your Origin might be a type of creature like “Troll” or “Protocol Droid,” or a demographic like “Dwarven Peasantry” or “Middle-Class Suburbanite.” Work with your group to pick something appropriate to the tone of the game.

Once you have named your Origin, you pick two Skills and one Complication related to that Origin. If your Origin is wealthy, you may add one to your Wealth score in lieu of one of the Skills.

Sample Origins

Here are some sample Origins. The first couple are what you would traditionally think of as “fantasy races,” while the others are more general.

Lizard Nomad

The Eastern Lizardfolk Nation spans the Great Steppes and its warriors are known for their superb riding skills. Eastern Lizard cuisine is world famous.

Skills: Cooking, Horses

Complications: Cold Blooded

Germinant

A Germinant is a mobile, awakened plant. Some of them have the ability to turn other plants into Germinants. Awakened grass is not very bright, but larger Germinants have human-level intelligence.

Skills: Germinate*, Unnatural Growth

Complications: Solar Powered

*The Skill by which you awaken other plants.

Daughter of the Governor

This character grew up with every luxury and with access to celebrities.

Skills: Famous Friends (Connections), +1 Wealth

Complications: Spoiled

Born At Sea

This character grew up on a merchant vessel.

Skills: Sailing, Languages

Complications: Alcoholic

Making a Setting

You might want to pre-generate some Origins to fit a particular setting. Groups can make lists of appropriate Skills and Complications to create Origins appropriate to how they imagine those people to be in their game. These help flavor your world. If you are playing in an established world, whether it be published or homemade, the task is to agree on lists that describe the Origins as you collectively imagine them to be. The lists can have more or fewer than two Skills and one Complication. Players will just pick from the lists or not, depending on their vision of their character. This is also a good place to include some Restricted Skills that are only available to certain Origins in your setting.

Origin exceptions

Player characters are allowed and encouraged to be unique. If that means swapping around parts of Origins, that is to be allowed. If you want to be a robot vampire, you could perhaps take the Robot Origin and swap its Complication for the Vampire Origin's. The point of this is to be able to execute a character concept, so just talk to the group about it. If you're in it for the right reasons, they won't say no.

Sample Setting Origins

Here are some Origins that go with the sample scenario on page 172. You'll notice that despite their differences, only one Origin is fundamentally non-human. Each of these has at least two Skills and at least one Complication, and where it has more, you can just pick your favorites or make up your own if you don't like the ones listed.

Shade

Shades are the living remnants of dead humans. They lack the vitality and drive of the living, but have great knowledge. In general, as shades age they gain more knowledge and lose their drive to action. The oldest shades are content to live in their memories and occasionally stir to help a researcher answer some question of little import.

Skills: Stealth, Ancient History

Complications: Incorporeal, Unfocused

Chem

Chems are a dying breed. They have no way to procreate and cannot repair their injuries, leaving many of them to live with disabilities for lack of parts or knowledge.

Skills: Deep Analysis*, Endure Extreme Conditions

Complications: Inhuman, Irreparable

* Deep Analysis is essentially a level of mathematics and computing power that is unavailable to non-Chems. The Skill is *Restricted* to Chems only. It can be rolled Skilled or Unskilled by Chems.

Human

Humans. They're more or less like us. Some of them practice magic. Some are keepers of ancient technologies. Some are clever or wise, and some are stupid, craven, and dishonest. Some humans have minor psychic abilities, a legacy of a past Aeon's genetic science.

Skills: Cantrips*, Any

Complications: Any

* Cantrips are minor psychic effects—small sensory illusions, lights, temperature effects, and moving small objects are all fair game. No telepathy. Cantrips are *Restricted*. Only Humans may take the Skill at character creation and it may not be rolled Unskilled.

Bodyswapper

Bodyswappers are humans who have learned a secret method to transfer their consciousness into the body of another and the other's consciousness into their own. They can use this power to prolong their life indefinitely, infiltrate organizations, steal secrets, and gain power.

Skills: Bodyswap*, Seduction, Deception, Impersonation

Complications: Reviled, Double Life

* This Skill is *Restricted* to Bodyswappers only. It may be rolled Skilled or Unskilled by any Bodyswapper. Rolling it Unskilled simply indicates a lack of proficiency with the method.

Pel Jin

The Pel Jin originated as a movement of genetically modified people to the oceans to escape the overcrowding of the 26th century. Some Pel Jin today are totally aquatic, known as Deepers, but most are capable of moving on land. They look mostly human except for their gill covers, hairless heads and their webbed fingers and toes. The Pel Jin are the keepers of a great deal of ancient technology that has been lost to the land.

Skills: Ancient Tech, Healing Factor*

Complications: Fish out of Water

* Pel Jin have medical nanobots in their bloodstream to help speed recovery from injury and disease. This Skill is *Restricted*. It cannot be rolled Unskilled.

Fantasy Standby Origins

Here are some Origins you might use if you were playing a kitchen sink fantasy setting. They are written to be a bit silly because silly is the way I play this sort of setting.

Undead

You were just a simple werewolf when you were bitten by a vampire. That was only the beginning of your troubles, and someone came along and silver-staked you. Luckily you managed to work out a deal with some goddess and you're back as a Revenant to kick butt and take revenge. Or maybe you're just a wise-cracking floating skull.

Skills: Bloodsucking, Faking death, Turning*, Limited Shape-shifting, Being Totally Spooky

Complications: Stench of the Grave, Insatiable Bloodlust, The World is Full of Prejudice, Flesh Deficiency, Fatal Garlic Allergy

* Turning is when you bite someone to turn them into the same type of undead as you. When it works properly, the victim is mostly loyal to you. You can take this Skill if you are a Vampire, Werewolf, or Zombie. (It sort of works for skeletons, but it can take an awful lot of bites to get rid of all that flesh).

Dwarf

Play a Dwarf if you want to be the best. Dwarves are unrivaled at pretty well everything. Everybody knows that Dwarves are the strongest and toughest fighters, that they make the best items and the best beer, sing the best songs, have the most bling, and have by far the best beards.

Skills: Drunking*, Metalworking, Singing, Tunneling

Complications: Dwarven Supremacy (It's not that you think you're better than everyone else. It's that you *are* better and they can't seem to handle the truth. Especially those snooty Elves.)

*Drunking is the Dwarvish art of drinking a lot and pretending to be drunk. In addition to being just plain fun, it's useful for hustling, scamming, and generally getting away with things that you'd never get away with sober.

Elf

Play an Elf if you want to be the best. Elves are unrivaled at pretty well everything. Everybody knows that elves are the smartest and most skilled fighters, that they make the best items and the best wine, sing the best songs, and don't need any bling to look better than everyone else.

Skills: Archery, Singing, History of the Ages, Animal Handling

Complications: Elvish Supremacy (It's not that you think you're better than everyone else. It's that you *are* better and they can't seem to handle the truth. Especially those boorish Dwarves.)

Monster-person

You're like a dragon, but also a dude! Or you're a woman with the head and arms of a giant praying mantis! You're basically a monster, but you're also a person who can talk and walk and do people things. Best of both worlds.

Skills: Revulsion, Intimidation, Special Anatomy Skill*

Complications: The World is Full of Prejudice, Anatomical Difficulties*

* Your monstrous side makes some tasks easier and others harder. For instance, if you have giant praying mantis arms, you are probably great at snatching flying monkeys out of the air, but pretty poor at making balloon animals or sharing an arm-rest at the theater.

Magical Robot

You're a magical robot. How cool is that?! You could act like Bender. Bender is hilarious and nobody ever gets tired of him.

Skills: Lifting, Bending, Math, Enduring Elements

Complications: Too Heavy, Too Noisy

Kobold

Everyone always underestimates the plucky Kobold! Play a Kobold if you want to be the underdog and know everything there is to know about traps and dungeons—you helped create the darn things after all! Kobolds are by nature extremely cautious, but those who refuse to conform to that stereotype tend to take it to the opposite extreme.

Skills: Traps, Caves, Kidnapping, Wisecracking

Complications: Craven, Foolhardy

Dark Elf

Have you ever wanted to play the dark mysterious loner? Who hates his oppressive mother? Did you want to play it in every game? Then you want to play a Dark Elf.

Skills: Brooding, Oppressing, Fighting Oppression

Complications: Mommy Issues, Unconventional Beauty

Barbarian

You're from one of those peoples that eat weird food, frighten the city-dwellers, and pride themselves on their independence and self-sufficiency. You might be a funny color, like green, which is natural camouflage on top of its obvious aesthetic benefits.

Skills: Taboo-breaking, Hunting, Straight Talk

Complications: Uncouth Customs, Foul Odor, Repressed Dark Side

Divine Spark

In your veins flows the blood of the gods—or of demons. Or perhaps your birth was blessed or cursed by the great powers of the world. You may or may not bear the marks of divinity.

Skills: Divine Connections, Blessing*

Complications: Marked, Cursed*, Divine Enemy*, Scapegoat

*You might be blessed with a supernatural ability such as inhuman endurance or an aura of inspiration. Equally, you might be cursed. You might be hunted by the agents of a God or by demonic hordes. When you pick any of these, specify the details so you can use them in play.





The Characters' Stuff

Equipment, Loot, Magical Items, and More

This section tells you all the many options you can use when creating powerful items and advises you on best practices for this game. Players wishing to acquire items or claiming that their character would be carrying certain items already must look to their Skills. Assuming that their Skills are appropriate to the object in question, the GM must either say yes or ask the player to roll dice. Most of these items won't have any special mechanics attached. They may be very powerful nonetheless.

Example: The Holy Entrencher. This most sacred of blessed shovels allows the wielder to dig all day long without ever tiring. The undead may not cross any ditch dug with this item.

Items in the hands of the players are in an interesting position because while the characters are in control of their use, the GM has control over their downsides and also their existence. The difference between Complications and Flaws is instructive—the GM cannot use the players' Complications to give them Disadvantage, but Flaws are fair game. The GM cannot generally change a character's personality when a player rolls a Twist, but the GM can certainly damage, corrupt, or even remove items as a Twist. Play-

ers need to be able to count on the inherent effectiveness of their characters, which is sacrosanct. Their gear is not.

Some items go beyond the narrative effects and demand additional mechanics. Use your imagination and pick something that makes sense for your specific situation. In general, if you want to acquire one of these items, you'll have to either roll for it or pay some price—it doesn't do to give away these powerful benefits for free. Giving such items as treasure to reward players for clearing a dungeon or defeating a difficult enemy or exploring a secret passage is of course acceptable—in fact it's practically required. Loot has long been a core part of roleplaying games.

Possible benefits

Grant Advantage with a specific Skill or Skills

A skinsuit or an Elvish cloak that gives an Advantage to stealth rolls.

Ignore certain Disadvantages

Night vision goggles allow you to ignore Disadvantages to using the Observation Skill in darkness.

A reactive nav-system that lets you ignore Disadvantages to maneuvering in the debris field.

Grant a Skill

A loop of blessed rope that grants the bearer the Spirit Binding Skill.

A knotted rat's tail that allows one to communicate with rodents.

Help clear Conditions

A potion of health that can heal any Injury instantly.

Stimulants to temporarily ignore being Winded.

Grant a Trick

A scroll containing the Knock spell.

An app you can install in your wearable computer to analyse someone's emotional state and know if they are being deceptive.

Items like this are great: they are easily balanced because a player needs to spend an Action Point to gain the full benefit of the Trick.

Any of the above conditionally

The loop of rope only allows you to use Spirit Binding in the daytime and does nothing from dusk 'til dawn.

The skinsuit cannot fool robots or computerized surveillance.

Any of the above with a price

You must invest a spark of your vital energy into the rod of power before you can use it. Spend an Action Point.

When you take the drugs to ignore Winded, you will be Exhausted when their effects end.

The typical prices are spending Action Points and gaining Conditions, as those things are well balanced, but feel free to change it up if you have a cool idea.

Grant Action Points under certain conditions

A bloodthirsty sword that grants the bearer an Action Point each time it tastes the blood of the innocent.

A Holy Relic that grants an Action Point each time the bearer destroys a vampire.

Be careful with this one. These items are powerful and players really shouldn't be getting more than one free Action Point per session unless it comes with an associated price on the magnitude of a Twist. Using Complications, Action Points and their Tricks, players can trade Twists for guaranteed Successes. If you give away Action Points too freely they have no reason to use their Complications and the economy falters.

Grant a combat benefit

A Mech-Assist Combat Suit that can stop a fatal blow but cannot be repaired once broken.

A tower shield that allows your allies to take cover behind you.

Be careful with this one as well. Encounter Powers are good, but you don't want your players to have so many that they don't use their Class and Role powers. Training or items may allow you to gain another Class At-Will Power, giving you more versatility while staying balanced. Constant benefits are hard to balance. Conditional benefits are easier. If you don't know what this means yet, no worries—come back after you've read the Tactical Combat rules.

Note: Armor should generally not grant damage resistance: it's too powerful and stacks inappropriately with other abilities. What armor does best is let you survive a blow that should take you out. A suit of armor might allow you to spend an Action Point to stand up with 1 HP after being Taken Out once per combat.

For combat, I like limited-use items and items that have a chance of breakage because it limits the risk the GM takes when they design those items. If they screw up and the item is unbalanced, everyone knows that it'll only be unbalanced for a few combats and then you can be rid of it. If it turns out to be balanced and fun, it's easy to come up with ways to give the player such powers permanently. To resolve items with a chance of breakage, just roll a die each time it's used. On a 1, the item is broken. Even if an item is not limited-use, the GM is within their rights to break it or take it away as a Concession at the end of combat.

Downsides

Lots of items have downsides. Your plate armor is noisy and heavy, your rope is frayed and weak, your axe marks you as a foreigner, your staff has a mind of its own. The easiest way to give items downsides is by attaching Flaws. Recall that a Flaw is just like a Complication, with the difference that the GM can give Disadvantage for it. Flawed items are great because they let players get their characters in trouble without making them feel like they are being punished as players. It also means that better is not always better—chainmail might come with the Flaw “heavy,” which could earn an Action Point when swimming or climbing or whatever, while a Dwarf's mithril shirt has no such Flaw and no such option. He

gets his benefit if he wants to use his armor to impress or if he wants to sell or trade it. That is to say that one set of armor gives a narrative bonus while the other gives a mechanical one in the form of a Flaw.

Nevertheless, sometimes you want to give an item another mechanical downside to balance its upsides:

Disallow certain Skills entirely

Casting magic in metal armor.

Swimming while wearing a Mech-Assist Combat Suit.

Grant a Condition when you use it

A powerful artifact that brings a Curse on those who use it.

A book that drives the reader mad, giving the Shattered Condition.

Pay money or resources when you use it

A rocket launcher: rockets aren't free!

A super-laser powered by diamonds.

Owe a Favor when you use it

A sentient spear with its own agenda.

A passkey given to you by a shady dealer who wants you in her debt.

Any of the above conditionally

The artifact only curses those who use it for their own gain.

You won't owe the dealer any Favors as long as you only use the passkey against her rival.

These lists are not comprehensive. Be creative with items and give them personality.

Improving and Upgrading

It's appropriate for some items to have better benefits than others. Characters might replace items with better ones over time, or modify existing items to improve them. Their first suit of armor might give the benefit “Once per combat, when an enemy hits you, you may force them to reroll that attack and use the worse result.” Finding a much better suit, they might instead get the benefit “Once per combat, when an enemy hits you, they instead miss.” Bringing this suit to the greatest craftsman in the land for improvements, they might get the same benefit as before with an additional benefit of “Whenever an enemy hits you with a roll of 6, treat it as though they rolled a 5 instead.”

Mysterious Items

The special uses and abilities of items, not to mention their downsides, are not always clear to players at first. This can be true about simple things like potions found in an alchemist's lab, or it can be true about artifacts of great importance. Sometimes a little mystery is a lot of fun. Just make sure everyone is on the same page about this and don't go overboard with it. Dragging a pile of junk back to town and paying someone to cast “identify item” on it all is the opposite of a fun mystery.

Items and the World

Powerful and important items should be tied into the world. Where did they come from? Who used them before? How did they end up where they are now? What do the legends or rumors say? What are the item's secrets? The answers to these questions not only make the item more interesting but also give the players more insight into the world.

Example: The Stooping Falcon was once owned by Garrad the Slave Lord. The torture devices were turned into attractive but transgressive furniture by its next owner, the dashing Erryn Floll. Rumor has it that Erryn had a secret compartment full of the best recreational pharmaceuticals money can buy. It is also known that this is one of the few ships ever built that is capable of mounting a full-size Baranese Phase-Slider. Too bad nobody has built one of those in decades. What did Garrad do with his?

Legendary Artifacts

Powerful items change those who wield them, but are themselves changed by their wielders. An item of this sort may become more powerful or may become better-suited to its owner's needs, but only if the owner changes their behavior to suit the item. This process of attunement, of changing the character to suit the item, is completely under the player's control; the GM won't force any changes on the character. But the changes are not necessarily conscious on the part of the character.

Example: A shiny sword with a beautiful golden hilt owned by a Titan-hunter. If the owner attunes herself to the sword by improving her rather slovenly habits, wearing fancy clothes, and making an effort to speak in a more civilized way, the weapon might gain a bonus against Titans as it attunes to its owner.

Example: The Stooping Falcon has traits of both of its past owners, the slaver and the dandy. Now that it's in Smuggler Sal's hands, he can attune with it by treating his crew harshly or by entertaining wealthy guests, or ideally both. In return, the ship's AI might become better at forging and misrepresenting cargo manifests, it might reveal its secret compartments, or it might get better at spinning up quickly for getaways.

Although the character does not necessarily approve of or even know of the influence the artifact is having, the player is always on board. This is a fun option to offer a player who is interested in having their character adapt in this way, not a burden to foist on a player who isn't interested.



Relationships: Friends and Foes

Relationships can be simply people the characters know, but certain relationships can also have mechanical weight. Here's how I like to handle it. Each character has a list of relationships including anyone who is a recurring character. **They may spend an Action Point to have one of their relationships come in and change the situation.** The relationship may be saving the characters from immediate danger, providing them with a new lead when the trail has gone cold or anything else as long as the arrival changes in a big way what's going on in the scene or between scenes.

Example: Big Chuck is about to be sacrificed on the stone altar when a helicopter appears and his sometime nemesis Nala jumps out, shooting the Celebrant in the head. She throws Chuck over her shoulder and the helicopter whisks them both away. Chuck is out of the frying pan, but everyone knows Nala is not saving him out of the goodness of her heart.

Here's the catch: it's not always an ally who comes to save you and you don't always get to choose who it is. The player rolls a die. On a 4-6, they choose which relationship arrives. On a 1-3, the GM chooses. When the GM chooses, they may choose to add a new relationship to the list if they want to use this opportunity to introduce a new character that has been waiting in the wings. It's the GM's job to play NPCs, so regardless of who appears it's always up to the GM to decide the relationship's motivation for coming into the scene. If you're lost, use the following guideline: if the player got to choose who showed up, they should be mostly helpful. If



the GM got to choose, they should be helpful but with darker intentions (or at least intentions not so much in line with what the character wanted). This is just a guideline, not a rule. If you have a really good idea, don't let the guideline get in your way. Use the motivation that makes the most sense for the character.

If you're using these rules, you should be sure to include a good mix of antagonists, allies, and everything in between as relationships. This section was inspired by *The Dresden Files*, in which Harry Dresden is constantly being saved by his dog and his friends, but also by his enemies and others who want to keep him alive for their own purposes.

Sometimes when a relationship arrives there's a price. Nala may save you, but she may also steal your notebook while she's at it.

I like this system for two reasons. First, it means you can make the characters' lives complicated, dangerous, and brutal. You can capture people and threaten them with certain death, secure in the knowledge that even if they fail to escape they can spend an Action Point to survive. Second, it helps make the plots more intricate and introduces new layers to the story in an improvisational way. What might be initially a straightforward scheme to foil can turn out to be more complicated when a relationship shows up and you need to figure out what interest they have in the scheme.

Depending on the tone of your game, there are two variant ways of handling this that might apply. If you want fewer twists and turns, and you want the mechanic to be more of a "pay a point to save your butt" rule, the player may always choose which relationship arrives. If you want more surprises and want there to be greater consequences for players getting themselves into a bad spot, the GM may always choose.

There is a temptation to have a long list of relationships right away, but in practice it can become hard to use if the lists are too long. I'd advise starting with a short list: each character may start with one ally, one enemy, and one relationship somewhere in between. Further relationships are generated naturally through play. Players make new friends, acquaintances, and enemies. Not every one goes on the list—the rabid wolf may be an enemy, but it's not exactly good relationship material. Characters should go on the list when they spark enough interest that the group wants them to be recurring. Some characters go on every player's list (the Duke is an antagonist to the whole group) or only on certain players' lists (Jody and Jon's stepmother is a relationship for them, not for their bodyguard SONY 5-L).

Factions as Relationships

You might have a relationship with somebody who is unlikely to make personal appearances—that's okay, because you don't need them to physically show up. They might phone you or contact you remotely or maybe you look around and realize that they were here earlier and left you a hidden message. They might have an organization behind them that they can use. So when you use your relationship with Nick Fury, S.H.I.E.L.D. agents might show up instead of him. That's cool too. With this sort of relationship, pacing can be important—having S.H.I.E.L.D. agents show up a few times first can make it all the cooler when Nick Fury shows up in person, but one must be careful to give the player the full benefit of their relationship.

Going beyond this, it's possible to have a faction as a relationship. Maybe you have a relationship with S.H.I.E.L.D. instead of with Nick Fury, or a hateful relationship with Romulans. Be creative and feel free to play around with what a relationship means, but **try to make it more personal whenever you can.** A relationship with Nick Fury is cooler, more interesting and more versatile than a relationship with S.H.I.E.L.D. Nick doesn't always have to show up himself. You use a faction relationship in situations where a single person just doesn't work.

Quick Session Generation

You can use relationships to generate session ideas that are relevant to your characters in the following very simple way. Each character contributes two NPCs or factions with whom they have a relationship and the GM contributes two NPCs or factions of her choice that are not relationships. Insert one blank. Randomly pick three from this pool. You could do this by drawing names from a hat or rolling dice. Once you have your three selected, pick two that are in conflict and figure out what that conflict is and how the players might be involved. The third also has an interest in the conflict or has a tangential interest that involves them in the vicinity. If the blank token is picked, that indicates the birth of a new faction or major NPC. The first two NPCs or factions are in conflict, the players are involved, but partway through the session this new force comes in and twists the scenario. Keep the unused names for later in case you want a prompt for a Twist. If the conflict is playing out predictably, bringing in somebody unexpected may be just what is required.





Kits

These are Kits. Kits are an optional way to expand player choices. They do not override the core Skills system, but rather are intended as bonuses to it. The powers contained herein do not imply that you can't use basic Skills to achieve something that the Kit makes easier. They are, after all, optional, and the game works just fine without them. With that said, I think that you will be excited by what you see here and I hope that they will help inspire cool characters and roleplaying in your game.

At level 1, pick a Kit. You get what it says under the heading and you also pick an Advance. Get another Advance at every odd level. When you get an Advance, it can be from your Kit or it can be a general Advance, or it can be the base of another Kit if you want to join a second. The one restriction is on "poaching." Poaching is where you take an Advance from another Kit without having the base. You may only ever poach one Advance total.

What if you look at these Kits and decide that none of them fit? Well, you can get by just taking general Advances at first, or write your own. If you don't start with a Kit, just start with any two Advances from the General Advances or Mini-Kits.

Clarification: Recall that when you have both Advantage and Disadvantage, they effectively cancel out, but that you are still considered to have both, not neither. Thus, when an Advance gives you Action Points for succeeding at something despite a Disadvan-

tage, you still receive the Action Points for succeeding when you have both Advantage and Disadvantage. If you play your cards right with Advantage and Helping, you can often make those rolls.

Clarification: When a custom roll from any of these Advances gets you a Bonus (e.g. when you roll a 6) and the custom roll does not specify what a Bonus gets you, you may pick the Bonus as usual.

General Advances

Expert

(you may pick this more than once)

Pick a specific task and Skill. When doing that task with that Skill, you gain a Bonus on a roll of 4 or 5 (as though you had rolled a 6).

Master

(requires Expert; you may pick this more than once)

When doing your chosen task with your chosen Skill, you gain a Bonus on any roll, so long as your choice of Bonus does not contradict or invalidate the Twist.

Special Communication

You can communicate with something most people cannot (e.g. animals, spirits, trees, doors). You have access to an appropriate Restricted Skill. When you use this Skill to help another character, you have Advantage on your helping roll.

Note: Having access to a Restricted Skill means that you are allowed to roll it where others are not. You remain Unskilled, but if you use it often, you'll learn it soon enough by rolling a 6.

Special Helpers

(requires Special Communication)

When you use your special communication Skill as a Linked Roll and Succeed, in addition to getting Advantage on the next roll, you also get a Helping roll.

Emotional Power

Work with the GM and your group to create an Emotional Power as described on page 73.

Favored Enemy

Pick one specific type of foe, such as dragons, robots, or Yakuza. You have Advantage on rolls to recall details about these foes and their weaknesses. You may use Assess as a Free Action once per combat when fighting them.

Reskinning Kits

If you want to take a Kit and use its mechanics but modify some of its descriptions, that is generally allowed. When you get to the Tactical Combat section you will read more about reskinning (page 98). While you will be encouraged to reskin your combat Class and Role extensively, you have less freedom when it comes to Kits. If you want to be a Knife-slinger instead of a Gunslinger, go right ahead. But you can't be a cocky hacker Computer-slinger because most of the Gunslinger's Advances make no sense in the context of computer hacking. If you want to go beyond what you can accomplish with reskinning, you'll need to look into making your own Custom Advances (page 55).



The Gunslinger



You are a gunslinger. That means that you are flashy, skillful, and proud. When someone challenges you to a duel, you gain an Action Point if you accept. When you challenge someone else to a duel, announcing their crimes to all, they must accept or else suffer Disadvantage on all social interactions until you pardon them or they defeat you in some way.

Reskinning: Of course, this kit works just fine for an archer with a bit of reskinning. But it also works well for a swordslinger—a samurai, for instance, or a musketeer, as long as you ignore the “Long Shot” Advance.

High Noon

If you're using the gunslinger kit, you might want some simple Dueling rules, so here they are: Make an Opposed Roll. That's it! The rules for Opposed Rolls were made with just this sort of thing in mind. Losing and choosing “it costs you less than you expected” might mean that the shot went right through the muscle, leaving you ready for action. Choosing “it costs them more than they expected” might mean that you shot them, too, even if they won.

Advances

1 Always Draw

Always draw when someone else draws. Even if you can't see them or don't know they're there. If they are armed, so are you.

2 Always carry a spare

When you are disarmed, you have a backup. You always have extra ammo, too.

3 Trick Shot

When you succeed at a trick shot despite having Disadvantage based on that difficulty (e.g. shooting a chandelier at just the right moment, or planning a ricochet), gain two Action Points.

4 Long Shot

When you succeed at a long shot despite having Disadvantage because of the incredible distance, gain two Action Points.

5 Trash Talk

When you trash talk an opponent you just embarrassed, the GM must pick one of the following:

- They storm off and lose face.
- They talk back, revealing a secret.
- They get aggressive, making a blunder.

6 On the Other Foot

When an opponent has a gun to your head, and you manage to turn the tables, gain two Action Points.

7 Blurred Vision, Steady Hands

You never have Disadvantage to your shooting for being Wind- ed, Exhausted, drunk, poisoned, or otherwise intoxicated. Major Conditions do not affect your shooting.

8 I Dare You

In a duel, you can choose to let your opponent shoot first (mechanically, give them Advantage). If you win the duel anyway, gain two Action Points.

9 Hold It Right There

When you confront a villain in the process of doing wrong to others, they must choose:

- Focus on you, allowing the bystanders to get away.
- Continue with their plan, granting you Advantage.

10 Use the Scenery

When you use the environment as part of a Linked Roll to set up your next move and succeed, roll three dice instead of two on the target roll.

Suggested Feat

Steady Hands – This Feat simply extends the benefit of the Advance to combat: you never suffer Disadvantage for being Wind- ed or Exhausted. Your attack rolls are not penalized for Major Con- ditions, although all other rolls still are (e.g. Saving Throws, Ini- tiative).





The Psychic



You can sense the surface emotions of the people around you. You can tell if somebody is being deceptive, although you won't necessarily be able to distinguish when someone is lying and when they are merely holding back. You can sense when a mind reader is probing you and roll to resist their incursion.

Advances

1 Reliable Telepath

You can communicate with others mentally, sending thoughts and reading those thoughts they permit. You can do so whenever you can see the target, regardless of who they are. If you have communicated mentally with them before, you can do so when you know their approximate location. If you have a close bond with them and have been in their head many times, you do not need to know their location at all. If you do not meet these conditions, you must roll your Skill normally to establish a connection.

2 Mind Scan

When you read someone's mind, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, ask any three questions you like. They must answer truthfully.

On a Success, pick one of the following:

- You read all their surface thoughts. You know what they are thinking of now.
- You probe for one particular thing. Ask one question.

On a Twist, you find yourself vulnerable. Pick one:

- Probe aggressively. Same as a Success, but you reveal a secret to your target. The GM will ask you a question and you must answer truthfully.
- Probe defensively. You get a random impression. The GM will tell you what.

With a Cost, pick one:

- Probe subtly. They know you were reading them.
- Probe tentatively. There is a Flaw in what you get. The GM will say what.

3 False Mind

When a mind reader probes you, instead of rolling to resist, you may make an Opposed Roll to deceive them using an appropriate Skill. If you win by three or more, get all four of the following. If you win by one or two, pick three. If you tie, pick two. If you lose by one or two, pick one. If you lose by three or more, they read everything and you are Exhausted.

- They believe their incursion went undetected, or that they overcame your resistance.
- You choose what thoughts or false thoughts they read.
- You read their thoughts while they are inside your mind.
- You are not Exhausted.

4 Hallucination

When you create a hallucination in the minds of your target(s), roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, pick two. With a Bonus, pick three:

- You tune it to their vulnerabilities. You can impel them to action (e.g. to run or to fight).
- You fix it in their mind. They will not forget a single detail.
- You make the unreal seem possible. The hallucination can differ greatly from reality.
- You can maintain it for more than a minute, or through attempts to disprove it.

On a Twist, pick one. Also, parts of the hallucination seep out and affect everyone else around you.

With a Cost, your hold on reality is weakened. You have Disadvantage to all rolls as long as you maintain the illusion in the mind of your target.

5 Mind Rend

When you create physical pain in the mind of your target, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you may cause as much pain as you like for as long as you like, and if you so choose, when they recover they might have lost some of their sanity.

On a Success, the pain leaves them badly distracted and incapable of sophisticated tasks.

On a Twist, they experience a painful headache that they can work through but have Disadvantage on Opposed Rolls.

With a Cost, you suffer from a splitting headache yourself. This counts as a Minor Condition that applies to any rolls where you use your psychic powers.

6 Emotional Manipulation

You may use your telepathy to attempt to change the emotional state of those you are reading. When you do, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you pick their new emotion.

On a Success, you may pick their new emotion, but it must be “adjacent” to their original state. (E.g. you could turn jealousy into rage, or go the other direction to grudging admiration).

On a Twist, the target has an unexpected reaction to the emotion you just gave them. The GM decides the reaction. (E.g. you expected the rage to incite them to violence, but instead it drove them to run from the room in tears)

With a Cost, you also pick one:

- You work hard: You are Exhausted.
- You slack off: The target gets the feeling they are being messed with.

7 Suggestion

When you use your telepathy to implant a suggestion in an unsuspecting target, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, your suggestion takes root and they will defend their actions stubbornly, using rationalizations to explain why it made sense at the time.

On a Success, your suggestion takes hold, but pick one. On a Success with a Cost, get both:

- Go easy: They will think better of it in a minute.
- Be blatant: They become suspicious of you and will resist future attempts.

On a Twist (with or without a Cost), the GM will pick one:

- Your suggestion is there, but they are fighting it. They are conflicted and confused for a minute before their sense prevails.
- They carry out your suggestion in entirely the wrong way.

8 Astral Projection

Using your telepathy, you can go into a trance and send your mind to another plane of existence. What you find there depends on the setting. You are encouraged to work with your GM to come up with a Custom Roll that works for your setting.

9 Speak With Animals

Using your telepathy, you can always understand and communicate with animals at least as intelligent as a parrot or raven. This does not require a roll.

10 Speak With Ghosts

Using your telepathy, you can read the psychic residues and communicate in a limited way with what impressions were left behind. When you do, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, the residue is coherent. Ask away.

On a Success, pick one:

- The residue is fragile. You get one question. Make it count.
- The residue is partial. You may only ask questions relating to their final moments
- The residue is incoherent. Ask away, but the answers will be cryptic.

On a Success with a Cost, the dead will ask a Favor of you in return. If you fail to return the Favor, instead of getting a Bad Reputation, you will be Haunted. (Haunted is a Minor Condition. Which tasks it affects and how you can be rid of it are up to the GM to determine.)

On a Twist with no Cost, the dead will answer only once you do them a service. The GM will tell you what.

On a Twist with a Cost, they react badly and psychically assault you. You have the Haunted Condition until you leave the area. They will drop a hint during the assault—the GM tells you what.

11 Detect Minds

You always know how many minds are in the room, even if you can't see everybody. If the number in the room is ever different than what you can see, the GM must tell you.

12 Memory Wipe

When you erase your target's memories, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you wipe the memories permanently and choose what replaces them.

On a Success, you do a decent job, but cannot erase all evidence. You may choose what replaces the memory in question, but the old memories will resurface eventually. Or, you may erect a permanent block—the target will know that they are missing something, but will not be able to access it.

On a Twist, you wipe their memory but make a mess. The target will be able to put the pieces together soon.

With a Cost, you have to give up one of your own memories to make a connection. It has to be meaningful for you or else it wouldn't hold. What memory will you give up?

13 Mind Control

(requires Mind Reader and Suggestion)

You may enslave people to your will. That's really creepy! Roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, they become your slave completely for as long as you can maintain attention on it.

On a Success, you enslave them for a few minutes, but pick one. With a Cost, pick two:

- You control them only until they leave your sight.
- It takes all your attention to control them. You have Disadvantage at everything else until you free them.
- They are fighting back hard. They have Disadvantage at whatever you force them to do.
- It works, but they are privy to your thoughts while you control them.

On a Twist with no Cost, the GM will pick one of the following:

- You enslave them, but fall unconscious from the effort. You may control them, but your own fate is uncertain.
- They are deceiving you. They will play along, and then sabotage your plan.
- You enslave them, but they forge a secret connection with you. Henceforth they will be privy to your thoughts and might affect you in subtle ways. If you kill them, that piece of them will live on inside your mind and continue to be a nuisance.

On a Twist with a Cost, you are evenly matched. They resist you and you are Exhausted, but so are they.

Note: Hey, you don't need me to tell you that Mind Control is terrifying and socially unacceptable. Even when you succeed with this move, expect serious consequences if your actions are ever found out. And since you can't control your victims while you sleep, it seems inevitable that you will be found out.



The Wayfarer



When you enter a civilized place, whether you've visited before or not, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, pick three from the list below. On a Success, pick two. You know...

- A good place to get room and board free or cheap.
- A good place to hide.
- A friend who owes you a favor.
- Where to arrange for resupply and travel.
- Where to find a specialist service. (E.g. a Navbot repair shop or an underground pixie-fighting ring)
- Where to go to hear rumors.

On a Twist, you still pick one, but you're in trouble here. Describe who is here and how you pissed them off on one of your journeys.

With a Cost, you run into an old acquaintance to whom you owe a Favor.

When you enter a dangerous place, whether you've visited before or not, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, pick three from the list below. On a Success, pick two. You know...

- A secret entrance or path.
- A good place to hide, recover or lay in ambush.
- A place your enemies like to lurk.
- A resource inside that you could use.
- A person inside who isn't your enemy.
- An escape route.

On a Twist, you still pick one, but you've also heard that this place has a hidden danger. What is it?

With a Cost, your information has a Flaw. What is it?

Advances

1 Return Visit

When you enter a place you've visited before, the GM will tell you how things have changed since you were last here. Afterward, you may tell the group one other thing that has changed.

2 Souvenirs

When something you bought or picked up to remind you of one place comes in handy in another place, gain an Action Point. You may only gain this once per item, so you need to keep collecting.

3 Go Local

When you pretend to be from a place you're not from and fool a local despite the Disadvantage, gain two Action Points.

4 Trader

When you look for goods to sell elsewhere, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you find items at a Wealth rank of your choosing that will sell in the city or market of your choosing at a rank one higher than you paid.

On a Success, you pick either the type of items you found or the city where they are in demand. The GM will pick the other one.

On a Twist, the GM picks both.

With a Cost, you also owe a Favor to the person who gave you the tip.

5 Logistics

You get Advantage on rolls to find or arrange travel or supplies for a journey.

6 Polyglot

You know every normal language you need to know. Secret languages or codes are not included.

7 Backtrack

The return journey always seems to fly past with ease. You know how to get past all the hazards. When you go back the way you came, as long as you didn't collapse the tunnels behind you or something, just skip ahead to your destination. If anything major changed on the route, the GM can stop you at that point and tell you what you see.

8 Hardy

You do not have to pay any Costs on rolls to endure long journeys. If a pacing roll (see page 70) gives the group a Condition due to the fatigue of travel, you personally are exempt.

9 Pit Stop

Once per session, while you are traveling, you know of a special stopping place where you and the party can recuperate at relative ease and in safety. If pacing rolls are being used, this place is exempt.

10 Perfect Sense of Direction

When finding your way, you never take Disadvantage for not having a map or compass.

11 Cartographer

When you make a real-life map to share with the group, your character makes such a map and you gain an Action Point.

12 More Stuff To Do

When you enter a town, roll a die to see what you need to do here.

6	Make an important delivery.
5	Solve a mystery.
4	Rescue someone.
3	Get revenge.
2	Protect someone.
1	Steal or recover an object or animal.

Is someone hiring you? Did you stumble into a situation? Did you come here specifically for this? You get to fill in the details about what you need to do and for whom. Of course, there will be a reward if you complete the mission. That part is up to the GM. Your opposition is also up to the GM.

13 Scout

When you go off on your own scouting to find what lies ahead, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, you find out what is there and return to your group, but pick one. On a Success with a Bonus, pick two:

- Scout quietly. You don't get noticed.
- Scout thoroughly. You find the best approach. Ask the GM what it is. You and your group have Advantage if you use that approach.
- Scout carefully. You avoid any traps or dangers along the way.

On a Twist, you find what is ahead, but run into trouble. Pick one:

- You missed your chance. Your path back is blocked. The GM will say why.
- You hurried back and missed something crucial. The GM will decide what to leave out.

With a Cost, pick one:

- You stayed out too long. You are Winded.
- You didn't stay long enough. There was a Flaw in your info. The GM will say what.

14 Local Color

Whenever you travel to a new place, you can tell the party one local legend, and it will have some element of truth to it (GM decides which part is true). When you entertain the group like this, gain an Action Point.

15 Itinerant Artist

When you make a real-life cool drawing (or song or poem) about a place you visit, a person you encounter, or a scene from the game, your character does the same and you gain an Action Point.





The Boss



A handful of people follow you and help you. They have some useful Skills. Pick 2 appropriate Skills for them. They also are Flawed. Pick 1 Flaw for them. It has to be a real solid Flaw, though. The other players will tell you if it's lame. At the start of each adventure, roll a die. On a 6, Profit and a Bonus. On a 5, Profit. On a 4, Profit and Dissent. On a 2-3, Twist. On a 1, Dissent and Twist.

Profit means your gang has been doing great and accomplishing their goals, whether that's bringing in money or religious conversions or whatever. Dissent means that your gang is at odds with itself, whether that takes the form of fighting, excess, angering the local authorities, or whatever. Your gang has Disadvantage at whatever it attempts until you Profit. Twist means the usual thing: the GM makes something up related to your gang and their activities. Define your gang's Profit when you create it, although they may change over time. When your gang Profits when they were not in Dissent, you get Advantage on your next roll to ask them to do something risky.

When your orders are safe and sensible, you don't have to convince them. They attempt what you ask.

When you ask your gang to do something that sounds risky, stupid, or unnecessary, roll an appropriate leadership Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, they attempt it with Advantage.

On a Success, they attempt it.

On a Success with a Cost, you also owe them a Favor collectively.

On a Twist, they balk. Pick one:

- You ease up. They back down or run away.
- You crack down. They do it, but afterwards there is Dissent.

On a Twist with a Cost, they split. Some of them try to do it, but with Disadvantage. The rest turn on you. Once you reassert control, there will be Dissent.

Advances

1 A Growing Concern

(you may take this Advance up to three times)

Your gang is getting larger and better. Pick a Trick for them related to one of their current Skills, and pick another two Skills. Once per session you may use the Trick without paying an Action Point.

2 Lieutenant

You have a top-notch second-in-command. Pick 2 Skills and a Flaw for them.

3 Captain

(You may take this Advance twice if you want both a ship and a fleet to accompany it.)

You are the captain of a ship or fleet. Perhaps a sailing ship, airship, land ship, or space ship. For a fleet, perhaps a biker gang, fighter squadron, or kayak raiders. You get to make rolls for your ship or fleet. Mostly those rolls will be Unskilled, but see below.

Your ship or fleet is... (Pick 2)

- Huge.
- Well-armed.
- Fast.
- Tough.
- Cheap and fast to repair.
- Stealthy.

Roll on the Skilled chart when one of the traits you picked applies. It also has a Flaw—you pick what.

4 Upgraded Ship (Requires Captain)

You've put a lot of time and effort into your ship or fleet. Pick two more from the list of features under Captain, and upgrade one you had as follows:

- Gigantic.
- Bristling with weapons.
- Fast as lightning.
- Nearly invulnerable.
- Self-repairing.
- Nigh undetectable.

This acts as a Trick when appropriate. Once per session you may use this Trick to Succeed with a Bonus without paying an Action Point.

5 Perfect Loyalty

Your gang members are perfectly loyal to you. They will never crack and will die for you and your cause. They expect you to be just as loyal to them, however. Gain an Action Point when you put yourself at risk for a member of your crew. This Advance does not mean that they will follow your every order instantly, just that they won't betray you. When you roll a 1 and your gang splits, nobody tries to turn on you—some of them just refuse to do it and maybe they leave.

6 Territory

You are the protector of a people. A town, a shelter, a space station. You are their leader. You have responsibilities.

At the start of each adventure, roll a die before you roll for your gang.

On a 6, things are great. You can even skim a little off the top. Get a level 1 cash parcel.

On a 5, there is political strife. Someone doesn't like the way you've been doing things, has support, and is ready to make a change.

On a 4, the place is in need. The GM will say how. What you need will take a level 2 Wealth roll or an appropriate Skill Roll.

On a 3, a bad sort comes to town. Maybe a swindler, or a dealer of illicit substances, or maybe a child with a strange illness.

On a 2, there is trouble between your gang and the civilians. Instead of rolling a die for your gang, it automatically gets Dissent. The civilians are pissed off, too.

On a 1, the place is under attack!

Your place is... (Pick two)

- Easily defensible. (Advantage when defending the place from attack.)
- Favoring your gang. (When there is trouble between your gang and the civilians, instead of automatically getting Dissent, you make the usual roll but with Disadvantage.)
- Honest and open. (When a bad sort comes to town, you find out before the rot takes root.)
- Self-sufficient. (When the place is in need, it only takes a level 1 Wealth Roll).
- Ideologically united. (When there is political trouble, it doesn't turn to violence.)
- Producing or extracting valuable goods. (The cash parcels you can skim are level 2.)

7 Home Improvements

(requires Territory)

Pick two more from the list in the Territory Advance.

8 Home Field Advantage

(requires Territory)

You have Advantage on any social rolls with outsiders when you are on your own turf.

9 You Can't Hide

When you find that somebody or something is hiding in your gang (or in your Territory if you took that Advance), and you ask for it to be brought out, it will be.

10 Informants

When a member of your crew you sent into danger to gather information returns, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, they got the information you wanted.

With a Bonus, they got more info. You say what they found and the GM will elaborate.

On a Twist, something went wrong. The GM will pick one:

- Their information is misleading or out of date.
- Their information is correct, but if you send them back they will be captured.
- Their information is correct, but they are playing both sides and giving away your secrets.

With a Cost, they had some trouble along the way. Describe the source of trouble and pick one:

- You owe them a Favor. If you fail to pay back the Favor, the gang will have Dissent.
- You need to reimburse them. You are Short.
- They can't or won't go out spying anymore.
- They can't tell you all of it. The information has a Flaw.

11 Specialized Help

Pick a Skill you know. When your gang helps you with that Skill, they have Advantage on the helping roll.

12 Sugar Mama/Daddy

When you spend your own wealth helping your people, gain an Action Point.

Suggested Feat

Gang – In combat, you fight with your gang. Increase your size by 2 (e.g. from 1x1 to 3x3). You can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without granting Opportunities. Your ranged attacks do not grant Opportunities to enemies occupying your space. Once per round when you make an attack, each enemy whose space you occupy takes 1 damage. Your gang relies on you for leadership, so most Statuses are unchanged. For example, your gang cannot move while you are Immobilized, nor will they leave you when you are Grabbed, nor fight when you are Stunned.





The Scholar



When you discover something strange or inexplicable, gain an Insight Token and write down the strangeness. You may spend three Insight Tokens to have a eureka moment about one of the things on your list. This is a sudden stroke of insight, equivalent to rolling a 6 on a knowledge roll. And yes, this can be used to learn knowledge Skills.

Advances

1 Polymath

When you make an Unskilled knowledge roll, you may roll using the Skilled table. If you do, and you roll a Bonus, you must choose to learn the Skill.

2 Broad Expertise

Pick a fairly broad area of knowledge, such as History, Finance, or Biology. You are an expert in that field. When researching or recalling information in that field, you gain a Bonus on a roll of 4 or 5 (as though you had rolled a 6).

Note: You may take “Master” General Advances (page 32) using this to meet the prerequisite, but they must be as specific as usual. For example, you might pick European History Master based on History Expertise or Botany Master based on Biology Expertise.

3 Hands On Knowledge

When you succeed at a roll to identify an object or its origin by touch, smell, or taste, gain an Action Point.

4 Library

You have a large collection of knowledge available to you. When you access it looking for information, ask the GM three related questions and then roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, The GM will answer two of them.

On a Twist, the GM will answer just one of the questions.

With a Bonus, you may ask one follow-up question based on those answers. Your follow-up cannot be a question the GM did not answer.

With a Cost, one of the answers will have a Flaw. The GM will tell you what it is.

5 Bestiary

You have Advantage on rolls to recall details about monsters and their weaknesses. You may use Assess as a Free Action once per combat when fighting monsters. This is essentially a broader version of Favored Enemy.

6 Specialist

Pick a specific topic. Eureka moments about that topic only cost 2 Insight Tokens.

7 Invention

When you attempt to implement your theory in reality, spend two Insight Tokens for Advantage, or four for an automatic Success.

8 Experiment

When you make a scientific prediction as a Linked Roll and succeed, you roll three dice and take the best instead of two. If you were wrong, gain an Insight Token.

9 Teaching Is Learning

When you help someone with an Unskilled Roll and they get a 6 on the roll (whether or not your help mattered), gain an Action Point and an Insight Token.

10 Academic Colleagues

When you fail to find knowledge and consult your mentor or colleagues, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, they can tell you what you were missing.

On a Twist, they don't know, but you do learn something else interesting or useful, and you also learn where you could find the information you seek.

With a Bonus, you get an Insight Token along with whatever Bonus you choose.

With a Cost, they are a bit reluctant. Pick one:

- You owe them a Favor.
- They won't tell everything. The information has a Flaw. The GM picks what.





The Protagonist



You're just a regular person in a crazy crew of wizards and warriors, astronauts and aliens, or spies and superheroes. Start with either Hero's Journey or Bumbling from the list below. (Since you get a base move and an Advance at level 1, you could start with both. I recommend doing that.)

Advances

1 Hero's Journey

You represent the archetypical hero. When you take each step on the classic hero's journey, gain an Action Point. You may skip steps or change the order. When you get an Action Point for a step, cross it off the list.

- Refusing the call to adventure, and then accepting.
- Meeting the mentor.
- Leaving your state of comfort, being unable to return.
- First trial.
- Second trial.
- Third trial.
- Finding your love.
- Temptation.
- Confronting or reconciling with the one whose respect you crave.
- Self-sacrifice.
- Capturing the reward.
- Escaping with the reward.
- Being rescued by friends you made along the way.
- Returning home or refusing to return home.

Once you have completed "returning home or refusing to return home," if you wish to keep adventuring, you must swap this for another Advance.

2 Bumbling

When you make an Unskilled Roll and get a Twist, take an Oaf Token. You may spend three Oaf Tokens to automatically succeed at any Unskilled Roll, with the caveat that you must narrate how you screwed up in just the right way to inadvertently solve the problem.

3 My Hero

(requires Bumbling)

When an ally saves you from danger despite the Disadvantage of your bumbling around, they get an Action Point.

4 Adventurous

You don't start off with the same kinds of amazing powers others have, but you're willing to throw in and try anyway. When you succeed on an Unskilled Roll despite a Disadvantage, gain two Action Points.

5 Why Me?

Once per session, when you roll a Cost, you can pick an ally to bear that Cost for you.

6 Destined for Greatness

You can try any Restricted Skill once. If you roll a Twist, you cannot try again—it is Restricted for you. If you succeed, it is not Restricted.

7 Fish out of Water

When you ask an NPC to explain how the part of the world works, allowing the GM a chance to exposit, take a Learning Token. You may spend three such tokens to automatically succeed at a knowledge Skill Roll.

8 Do the Right Thing

When you take a Disadvantage for moral reasons and succeed anyway, gain two Action Points.

9 Talisman

A wise figure gives you an item of ambiguous significance. You may use this item to get an automatic Success on any appropriate roll once per adventure. The Talisman is important to the adventure and you can use it in any way that makes sense. Next adventure, you acquire a new Talisman. The old one is not gone, but you won't be able to get automatic Success from it anymore.

10 Death Wish

When throwing yourself into certain death to achieve a goal, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, you succeed at your aim.

On a Twist, you fail at your aim. The GM will say how.

With a Cost, you die. Without a Cost, you miraculously survive. With a Bonus, you are somehow unscathed, too!

When you die, your new character will start with one extra Advance or Trick on top of what they would normally have.

11 Heart of the Team

When one of your party members wants to turn back or give up and you remind them of what you are fighting for and convince them to press on, they get an Action Point. When the other party members are bickering and you solve the problem, whoever agreed to compromise or give in gets an Action Point. Limit one Action Point from this Advance per session per player.

12 Underestimated

When you and your allies have fallen into the clutches of the enemy, you personally will be held with insufficient security.

13 Bluster

When you manage to convince an NPC of your notable qualities, despite lacking such qualities, gain an Action Point.



The Tinker



When you break down an item for scrap, talk shop with another expert, spend time preparing supplies, or gather a new tool or ingredient, gain a Supply Token. When you succeed at creating an item, you can spend three Supply Tokens to pick from the following list of special properties.

- It is superior quality and using it gives Advantage.
- It has protection. The first time the GM tries to take it away or break it on a Twist, you negate that Twist and tell them what modifications you made to prevent such an occurrence. (e.g. "Actually, it is biometrically locked, so it electrocutes that girl when she tries to pick it up.")
- It is idiot-proof. It counts as a Trick for whoever is using it. (This means that anyone using it can roll on the Skilled chart without needing any other Skill, or can spend an Action Point to automatically succeed.)
- Add some cool detail or effect to it like you would with a Bonus.

Tinkers' Toys

GMs, the Tinker has spent resources on being able to create cool stuff. Respect that expenditure by letting their stuff work! However, they also have the ability to replace or repair stuff they lose, so don't hesitate to break or steal their stuff on a Twist or give it Flaws on a Cost even when they are rolling unrelated Skills. (e.g. "Oops, you fell out of the treehouse! Luckily you're not hurt. Your coconut radio broke your fall.") Breaking and stealing their stuff just gives them more reason to use their cool powers. Of course, moderation is important – if that was the only Twist you ever used, that would be both dull and frustrating for the player.

Advances

1 Workshop

When you spend time working in a place and getting set up, you can make it your workshop. Save one Supply Token per item when you make it in your workshop. Only one place at a time can be designated your workshop and give you this benefit: it's where you keep all your best tools and supplies. Your enemies might find and compromise your workshop, but you can always fix it up or set up a new one just by spending the time. Pick one of the following for your workshop.

- Well-stocked: save one Supply Token per property added instead of per item (e.g. adding two special properties costs 2+2 instead of 2+3).
- Secret: it is hidden and immune from tampering.
- Portable: you can carry it with you.



2 Assistants

(requires Workshop)

You don't have to be around for the actual fabrication process of items you design. You just give the instructions and your assistants carry it out, saving you the time. You still make the roll, however.

3 Mr. or Ms. Fix-it

When you need to repair an item you made or a mundane item, simply spend two Supply Tokens and an appropriate amount of time and it'll be good as new. If you don't want to spend from your supply, you are naturally free to roll your Skills as usual. This can't be used to eliminate Flaws in construction, but can eliminate Flaws the item picked up after being produced.

4 Specialist

(can select this multiple times)

Pick a fabrication Skill and a particular type of item. When you use that Skill to create that type of item, you have Advantage.

Note: The type of item must be more specific than the Skill. If you choose to be a Specialist in swordsmithing, you cannot pick swords as the type of item. Sabers would be an appropriate choice.

5 Sufficiently Advanced

(requires Specialist)

Your Skills are so good that they are incomprehensible to anyone else. You may stretch your specialist Skill to add powers to your items that your Skill could not normally achieve.

6 Reverse Engineer

You may spend two Supply Tokens to research an item you found that you previously did not understand.

7 Monstrous Fabrication

When you use parts of a monster to create equipment, name the properties of the monster you want the gear to have. Roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, it gets those properties.

On a Twist, pick one:

- You can't do it with your current supplies. You make a perfectly nice mundane item, but the monstrous properties are lost.
- You push too hard. You get what you want, but the item is "cursed." This doesn't necessarily mean a literal curse—it means there is something wrong with it that you don't know about it yet. The GM will pick, but they don't have to tell you what they picked.
- There was some contamination. You gain some properties of the monster. The GM will say which.

With a Cost, the object also gets an unwanted property of the monster. The GM will say what.

8 Coconut Radio

When you succeed at making something despite lacking appropriate materials, gain two Action Points.

9 Miniaturization

You love to create tiny things. Whenever you successfully make an item smaller than seems possible, conceal an item inside a larger item, or fit multiple modalities on the same item despite a Disadvantage for that difficulty, gain two Action Points.

10 Macro-construction

Your creations are huge! Whenever you successfully make an item bigger, taller, heavier, or more breathtaking than seems possible despite a Disadvantage for that difficulty, gain two Action Points.

11 Recycling

When you take apart an item you spent Supply Tokens on, even if it's broken, gain three Supply Tokens instead of the usual one for scrapping an item.





The Seer



Once per session, you may foresee the results of an action before you or another player rolls. Announce that you are using this ability, make the roll in question and let the GM describe the results, including any resulting Twist. Then you may decide whether to go through with the roll and the outcome you foresaw, or to try something different.

This kit will refer to your “Sight Skill”—this could be fortunetelling, augury, astrology, Sympathetic Predictive Emotional Modeling, or whatever you like. You may be Skilled or Unskilled, although you are likely to become Skilled in a short time by using it.

Advances

1 True Dreaming

Whenever you sleep, the GM reveals a dark future: some evil outcome or villainous plot that you might change.

2 Intuition

Once per session you may ask the GM for advice about the immediate situation. You have Advantage when you follow this advice.

3 Find the Pivot

You can see where the winds of change are blowing and find the weakest point in the house of cards that is the status quo. Perhaps you wish to buttress it, or perhaps to hasten its fall. Once per session, you may ask the GM where that weak point is and they must answer honestly. (E.g. “Hey, tensions have been running pretty high. What would need to happen to turn these protests into a full-on riot?”)

4 Omens

When you ascribe symbolism to something the GM described, explain your interpretation and roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, you correctly interpret the omen. Explain what it means - you can get Advantage (or give it to an ally) on one related future roll.

On a Twist, you have misinterpreted the omen. The GM will secretly re-interpret it and reveal what it meant later.

With a Cost, you have seen a Bad Omen: It’s a minor Condition that applies to all rolls you make relating to your interpretation of the omen, and to all Sight Skill Rolls. You will stop being fearful when you roll a Twist on one of your rolls relating to your interpretation—the bad omen has come to pass, the GM will describe how, and you no longer need to fear it.

5 Danger Sense

Always get a funny feeling when danger is imminent. The GM will tell you. In Combat: you may use an extra Move Action or Role Action at the start of each combat before Initiative is rolled.

6 Who Can Help

When you need help with a specific task, you may cast your wishes into the world. You receive back a vision. The GM describes a person who can help you, although the nature of their help will not necessarily be apparent. This person may or may not be known to you. If they are unknown, then later that session (or possibly the next, if time is short) you will meet a person matching the description.

7 Sacrifice

You may spend the time to make a sacrifice to get advantage on any Sight Skill Roll. The sacrifice could be literal or figurative. You often need to spend time or money acquiring an appropriate sacrifice, unless you already have something appropriate.

8 Major Sacrifice

(requires Sacrifice)

When you spend the time to sacrifice something you hold very dear, you automatically succeed at a Sight Skill Roll with a Bonus.

9 Bad News

When you make a prediction about trouble the GM has planned that is not obvious, and the GM tells you that you’re right, gain an Action Point. This works both in and out of character.

10 Saw That One Coming

Once per session, you may negate a Disadvantage. Describe how you prepared for it.

11 Hindsight

When you peer into a location’s past, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you find exactly what you were looking for with perfect clarity.

On a Success, you see the time you were looking for, but hazily. Pick one:

- The sound is garbled, but the picture is clear.
- The picture is blurry but the sounds and voices are clear.

On a Success with a Cost, you see the time you are looking for, but only fragments come through clearly. This is essentially a Flaw in the information you receive.

On a Twist (with or without a Cost), you see something useful from a different time. The GM decides what.





The Spy



You are a Spy. Your job is to gather information without being noticed. When you ask around for information on your enemies, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, pick two:

- Learn a vulnerability of your enemy.
- Learn something your enemy needs to continue their plan.
- Learn somebody who is working for your enemy.
- Learn where your enemy is headquartered.

On a Twist, pick two, but the GM will lie to you about one of them.

With a Bonus, you meet someone who shares your enmity and will provide material support.

With a Cost, pick one:

- You were too loose. Your enemy gets word about your asking questions. You'll be at a Disadvantage on one later roll of the GM's choosing.
- You agreed to too much. You owe somebody a Favor.
- You were too tight. You didn't get the whole story. One of the pieces of info has a Flaw.

Advances

1 Always On

You always have a concealed recording device on you. Even if the mafia just threw your wire in the river, you've got a backup somewhere.

2 Charming

You have Advantage when trying to use your seductive looks to get information.

3 Charmed

When you totally fall for a person's ploy because of their looks, gain an Action Point.

4 Fearless

You know how to keep your cool. When you go into a violent situation despite Disadvantage, and you succeed, gain an Action Point.

5 Expensive Tastes

When you end up Short or Broke because you tried to buy something you really didn't need, gain an Action Point.

6 Tailing

When you tail somebody on your turf, you have Advantage. When you're on their turf, you do not take Disadvantage for that disparity. Additionally, once per Chase conflict when you are the Chaser, the GM has to tell you the opponent's choice of action before you make your prediction.

7 Tailed

When you try to shake a tail, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you lose them completely and efficiently.

On a Success, you get away and pick two:

- Your vehicle is undamaged. If on foot, your clothes are unruffled.
- The chase doesn't cause collateral damage.
- You pick where you end up.

On a Success with a Cost, you are also Winded or Angry.

On a Twist with no Cost, you get away, but pick none from the list.

On a Twist with a Cost, your vehicle is wrecked, your outfit is ruined, you are Winded, and you are cornered.

8 Escape Artist

When you want to get out, describe your route and roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, you're out and maybe you changed something, picked up something extra or left behind a little surprise. You pick.

On a Success with no Cost, you get out no problem.

On a Success with a Cost, you get out, but pick one:

- You had help. You owe somebody a Favor. The GM picks who.
- You had to hustle. You get a Minor Condition. GM picks which.
- You had to leave something behind. The GM picks what.

On a Twist with no Cost, the GM will name the price. You can pay the price and get out, or stay.

On a Twist with a Cost, pick one:

- You're cornered and Winded.
- You surrender and are Angry.
- You are lost and Afraid.

9 Turn

When you confront your enemy's henchperson or lieutenant about their involvement with this evil plan, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, they betray their employer utterly at an opportune moment.

On a Success, choose one:

- Appeal to their morals. They show mercy to you, your friends, or innocent bystanders.
- Appeal to their pride. They demand more from their employer. More money, more influence, more information.
- Appeal to their suspicion. They secretly make plans to have something to hold over their employer if things go crooked.
- Appeal to their greed. They will leave their employer for the price of a level 3 Wealth roll.

On a Success with a Cost, the GM will also pick one:

- They make a show of treating you badly. You are Winded.
- They're doing this for you. You owe them a Favor.

On a Twist, they spit in your face and disdain your hypocritical worldview, but you have sown the seeds of doubt. Once they have seen evidence that what you said was true, you can try again with Advantage. With a Cost, they get violent with you and leave you with a Condition of the GM's choice.

10 The Bureau

You have the power of an organization behind you. Once per session, whenever you choose, you have backup waiting: a vehicle, a weapon, a tool, or an ally.

11 Gadgets

(requires The Bureau)

At the start of each adventure, or when you have time to get back to your handlers, they will present you a new gadget. You pick what it does and the GM will fill in the mechanical details.

12 License to Kill

(requires The Bureau)

When you're not in enemy territory, you are not subject to legal consequences for any crimes committed in the course of your duties. This generally covers your accomplices, too.



The Flame



The Burning Flame is mysterious, dangerous, and screwed up. Pick a weakness from the list below or make up your own.

- Men, women, or both.
- Drugs and alcohol.
- Obsessive behavior.
- Divided loyalty.

When you take Disadvantage or suffer a negative consequence because of your weakness, get a Broken Token. When a teammate helps you out with your problem or helps you overcome it, you may spend three Broken Tokens to give them an Action Point and gain an Action Point yourself.

Be a Team Player

Generally speaking, letting your team down outside of combat is interesting and speaks to your character's bad situation. Intentionally performing badly in Tactical Combat or even in a Team Conflict is potentially much more frustrating for your teammates. The fun of those subsystems is in working together against a common foe, so be considerate and do your part to make sure everybody has fun. Similarly, if you let your team down every single time they call on you, it doesn't make sense that they would keep you around at all. Save it for when it really means something. If the group feels you are being disruptive, listen to them and adjust your play.

Advances

1 Moths to the Flame

When you draw another into your weakness and thereby cause them hardship, gain an Action Point.

Note: You can't claim points repeatedly for the same person. Only once they have recovered can you draw them in again.

2 Dysfunctional

Once per session, when you let the whole team down because you are indulging in your weakness, gain an Action Point.

3 Double Dysfunction

Pick a second weakness in addition to your first.

4 On the Wagon

Whenever you take Disadvantage because of abstaining from your weakness, gain a Strength Token. Spend three to change one Advance from this Kit to an Advance from a different Kit and gain an Action Point. If you ever indulge in your weakness, gain an Action Point but lose all your progress: your Advances go back to what they were. When you have no more Advances to change except this one, spend three Strength Tokens to change change Kits completely: you're a new person.



5 Superpower

(you may pick this more than once)

Indulging your weakness gives you a special power. Pick a specific Skill or type of roll. You may spend two Broken Tokens to get Advantage on a roll of that sort, or four to automatically succeed. (e.g. a vampire can spend tokens to move super-fast.) Note: you cannot apply this to attack rolls in Combat.

6 Withdrawal

When you are forced to go too long without your weakness, you have Advantage on things that get you closer to your fix, but Disadvantage on things that take you farther from it.

7 Kindred Spirit

When you talk with someone and make a connection, you can see their obsessions and weaknesses. Roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success ask two of the following questions. With a Bonus, ask one more. On a Twist, ask one:

- What do they hate most about themselves?
- What do they want badly enough to betray their friends?
- What is their greatest fear?
- What do they hate most about another?
- What do they have hidden that you would want?

With a Cost, they get to ask two of you and you must answer honestly.

8 I Must Have It

When you see something that appeals to your weakness that you need but can't have, you may roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, you keep your cool. Ask the GM what the best way is to get it. The GM will tell you what you need to pay, who you need to trick, what you need to do, or who you need to fight. You have Advantage while you follow that advice.

On a Twist, you just gotta go for it. Everyone can see your naked desire.

With a Cost, you are Obsessed. You have Disadvantage to do anything other than try to get it while you are in its presence. The only way to recover from this Condition is to possess the object of your desire.

With a Bonus, the GM will also tell you one of the following. You pick:

- Who would like to help you, for free.
- How to keep it safe and hidden once you have it.
- Who else also wants to take it, and how to make it look like they did.

9 Sixth Sense for Trouble

You have the uncanny ability to always know where to find your weakness. Whenever it's around, even if it's hidden, the GM must tell you.

10 Strange Attractees

You are very attractive to the outcasts of the world. Your weakness is part of your allure, as is your power. They want to be like you or be with you. When you ask for help from someone on the fringes of society, you have Advantage.

11 Bad Relations

When you manage to turn an ally into an enemy, gain an Action Point.

12 Payback

Name the people you hold responsible for you turning out this way. You have Advantage when trying to exact revenge on them.

13 Race to the Bottom

Whenever you do something from this list in pursuit of your weakness, check off a box. If it is as far down the list as you have ever been, get a Broken Token. If it is farther down, gain an additional Broken Token for each spot below your previous best. When you hit bottom, you must swap this for a different Advance. You may only check the same box at most three times—further offenses don't rate.

- Deceit or omission
- Outright lying or oathbreaking
- Theft
- Allowing another to come to harm
- Selling out yourself and your principles
- Ruining another's livelihood
- Violence
- Allowing another to die
- Killing in cold blood

When you take this Advance you may re-arrange the order of items on the list, or even swap out for something else to reflect your character's priorities. But once they are set, they are set in stone, even as your morals disintegrate.





The Fountain



You are driven to selflessly help others. Pick a group you are driven to protect from this list or invent your own.

- The poor.
- Outsiders.
- The violent and desperate.
- Children.
- The physically or mentally ill.

When you take a Disadvantage or suffer a negative result because of your drive, gain a Charity Token and write down the names of those you helped. You may spend three Charity Tokens when you are in trouble to get somebody you helped in the past to return the favor and help you now (if no one on your list is present, an appropriate one will show up).

Advances

1 One Unique Item

You have in your control a thing of skill and beauty that is unrivaled in all the world. An article of clothing, a piece of art or craftsmanship, a song, or a recipe. When you share it with others, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, they are in your debt. Gain a Charity Token and write down their name.

On a Twist, they crave what you have. They will try to take it from you, either now or later.

With a Bonus, pick one:

- They tell you a secret.
- They will keep your unique thing a secret.
- They will evangelize and tell the world about your unique thing.

With a Cost, they grow jealous of you. You have Disadvantage when you ask them for help or when you try to help them until they get over it.

2 Universal Currency

When you return a Favor, gain a Charity Token.

3 Doubly Driven

Pick another drive, another group to help.

4 Soothing

When you talk someone down from a rash course, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, they reconsider and find a better way to express themselves.

On a Twist, pick one:

- They turn on you instead.
- They hesitate, then reconsider, but decide to take the same course, albeit with more caution.

With a Cost, they are only altering their course as a Favor to you.

5 Popular Charity

Your kindness is attractive to the wealthy and aspiring. They want to possess and control you, to feel that they are good like you, and to benefit from association with you. When you ask for help from one in the upper class, you have Advantage, but they will believe that you owe them a Favor.

6 See the Best in Everyone

When you talk with someone and make a connection, you can see their obsessions and weaknesses. Roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success ask two of the following questions. With a Bonus, ask one more. On a Twist, ask one:

- What do they love most about themselves?
- What do they want badly enough to change for the better?
- What is their greatest hope?
- What do they love most about another?
- What do they have hidden that they would rather share?

With a Cost, they get to ask two of you and you must answer honestly.

7 Pity the Enemy

When you help someone for no personal gain despite their enmity, disdain, or disgust for you, gain an Action Point.

8 What Goes Around

When you give a gift unbidden and it is accepted, gain a Charity Token and write down the name of the recipient.

9 Righteous Power

(can pick this multiple times)

Helping the needy gives you a special power. Pick a specific Skill or type of roll. You may spend two Charity Tokens to get Advantage on a roll of that sort, or four to automatically succeed. (e.g. a priest who can spend tokens to get aid from the heavens.) Note: you cannot apply this to attack rolls in Combat.

10 Easy Mark

When you know you are being deceived, but allow the deception to succeed out of charity, pity, or naiveté, gain an Action Point.

11 Good Relations

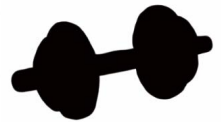
When you manage to turn an enemy into an ally, gain an Action Point.

12 High Road

When you convince a teammate to take a non-violent path instead of the violent one they were set on, they get an Action Point. Limit one per teammate per session.



The Brute



You are a paragon of physical accomplishment. When you roll a Twist on a task of athleticism, speed, strength, or appetite, you may gain the Winded Condition to re-roll.

Advances

1 The Alexandrian Solution

When you use brute force to solve a puzzle that seemed to call for intellect or delicacy, gain an Action Point.

2 Brush It Off

You may spend an Action Point to ignore one Condition for the duration of one conflict (that is, one Combat, Team Conflict, or Chase, or one scene of regular rolls).

3 Unstoppable

(requires Brush It Off)

You may spend an Action Point to ignore all Conditions for the duration of one conflict (that is, one Combat, Team Conflict, or Chase, or one scene of regular rolls).

4 Iron Stomach

You can eat anything without getting sick or suffering any unwanted effects, much to the amazement of onlookers or would-be poisoners.

5 Endure Elements

You do not have to pay any Costs on rolls to endure cold, hot, wet, or wind. If a pacing roll (see page 70) gives the group a Condition due to the weather, you personally are exempt.

6 Break Stuff

When you smash something, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success with a Bonus, pick two. On a Success, pick one:

- You can fix it later.
- Nobody can fix it ever.
- You break it in eerie silence.
- You smash it in a fearsome rage, terrifying onlookers.

On a Twist, you just break it. It's not quiet, but not too frightening. Somebody might fix it later, but you don't have what you need for that right now.

With a Cost, pick one:

- You are Winded.
- You break something else in your haste. The GM will give a Flaw to a nearby object.

7 My Body, My Weapon, My Tool

When you have Disadvantage for being unarmed or insufficiently armed compared to your opponents, or for trying to force something that ought to require a tool, and you succeed on the roll anyway, gain two Action Points.

8 And Look Good Doing It

Your body is strong and impressive, and you are admired by men and women alike. When you roll to impress, seduce, or intimidate someone while they can see your physique, flip a coin. Heads, they like what they see and you have Advantage. Tails, they don't really care about your body—no effect.

9 No Hunger

You can go as long as you like without food or water, and hold your breath for as long as you like.

10 Feats of Strength

When you show yourself to be the best, the champion, peerless, or the first ever to perform some feat of athleticism, speed, strength or appetite, gain an Action Point.

11 The Other Part of Valor

When you stand up to or try to withstand something obviously dangerous and get a Condition from it, gain an Action Point.

12 No Prison Can Hold Me

When you try to break your bonds, roll an appropriate Skill.

On a Success, pick one:

- You do it silently.
- You do it with terrifying swiftness.

On a Twist, you break them loudly and your foes have time to steel themselves.

With a Cost, pick one:

- You are Winded.
- You are still partially entangled and have Disadvantage until you fight free.
- You break something. Pick a Flaw for one piece of your equipment.

13 Rub Some Salt On It

When you succeed at something despite a relevant Condition, gain a Toughness Token. You may spend two such tokens to remove a Minor Condition or three to remove a Major Condition.

14 David and Goliath

You are not only incredibly strong and fast, but you know how to use your gifts well. If you have Disadvantage for being too small, weak, or slow, and you succeed anyway, gain two Action Points.



The Sorcerer



(by Yuri Kavalerschik)

Pick three of your trained Skills that represent using magic (or divinity, the internet, or some other esoteric force) to some specific end, such as attack, travel, or information gathering. These are your Sorcerous Skills, and can be enhanced by Power Tokens. Spend one Power Token to give yourself Advantage on a Sorcerous Skill Check, or to fuel an appropriate Trick. If you choose, the results can't be undone by mundane means.

When you replenish or prepare your sorcery by whatever means you establish when you take the Kit, reset your Power Tokens to 2. If you draw on an appropriate place of power to do so, reset your Power Tokens to 3.

Advances

1 Widened Expertise

You learn two new Skills representing the use of magic, and can now designate a total of five of your magical Skills as Sorcerous. When you reset Power Tokens, you can change which of your magical skills are Sorcerous.

2 Sorcerous Sanctum

You can set up a personal workspace in tune with your magic: when you replenish your sorcery at your sanctum, you get one additional Power Token. You can use your magical Tricks for free while in your sanctum.

3 Puissance

You can spend a Power Token to magnify the volume or number of targets a Sorcerous Skill Roll would normally affect, or the sheer force it would exert; a roomful of people rather than one person, an entire floor rather than a single room, a freight truck rather than a passenger car, etc. Multiple Tokens buy more scope.

4 Celerity

You can spend a Power Token to use magic much faster than normal. Do in seconds what should take minutes, minutes what should take hours, or hours what should take days. As well, such effects last longer than they normally would.

5 Reach

You can spend a Power Token to use your sorcerous Skills at incredible range - at least an order of magnitude greater than what's normally possible with what you have on hand. If an object or information (e.g. a blood sample or IP address) is required for long-range targeting, you can ignore one Flaw in whatever you're using.

6 Sorcerous Backing

Pick some cause, patron, or institution. Once between resets, when you advance or defend the interests of your backer, gain a Power Token. When you are out of Power Tokens, you may borrow one, but the GM will tell you what you need to do to repay.



7 Surge

When you roll a 6 on a Sorcerous Skill Check, gain a Power Token.

8 Augmentation

Pick a mundane Skill; it's Sorcerous for the purpose of this Kit. The first time you succeed in using it after a Power Token reset, you get an additional Power Token.

9 Exertion

Twice between Power Token resets, you can become Winded to gain the benefit of spending a Power Token without actually spending one. You do not need to have any Power Tokens to use this ability.

10 Blood Sorcery

When you get the Injured Condition, gain two Power Tokens. The Injured Condition gives +1 to your Sorcerous Skills instead of -1. When you reset in a location where a person has died in violence in the past few hours (e.g. a battlefield, a human sacrifice), it counts as being in a place of power.

11 Sorcerous Patron

You can spend Power Tokens you don't have. The first one after each reset is free, the next means you owe 1 Token, the next means you owe 2 more Tokens for a total of 3, and so on. If you can't pay off your Debt on your next reset (or just after an appropriate amount of time, if you avoid a reset), you're Cursed.

12 Kit Expansion

You gain the base advance of some other Kit, and can learn more in the future without "poaching." That Kit represents an elaboration on your sorcerous powers rather than a completely separate skill set: the Brute helps you use magic to destroy things or fortify your body, the Gunslinger to win arcane duels, and so on. You can use your Power Tokens in place of any Tokens that Kit uses. When an Advance from that Kit gives you Action Points, you may take Power Tokens instead.



Mini-Kits

With these Mini-kits, there is no "base" Advance, just a list of Advances. You can take any Advance from these without it being considered "poaching."



Spellbreaker

This Mini-kit is for a character who is resistant to a supernatural power or specialized in combating its users. The Kit is worded to counter magic, but could be easily re-skinned to counter telepathy or any other specialized use of power. The Mule, the White Rose, and Ty Lee are examples of this archetype.

Note: All the benefits in this Mini-kit are valid only outside of Tactical Combat. See the suggested Feats below if you want to carry these benefits into Tactical Combat.

Advances

Spellbreak

You know a technique to block the flow of magical energy. When you manage to get up close to the magic user and use this technique (typically by succeeding at an appropriate Skill Roll), they cannot cast spells for a few moments. Repeated applications may render them helpless for longer.

Resist Spells

Spells have a reduced effect on you and you can break spells with a touch.

Immune

(requires Resist Spells)

Spells have no effect on you.

Area Null

(requires Immune)

Spells have no effect in a small area around you and reduced effect nearby.

Suggested Feats

Spellbreak – When you hit a magic user with an attack, they must pass a saving throw in order to cast a spell on their next turn.

Combat Resist (requires group and GM approval) – Resist 1 damage from magic spells and when a spell hits you with an Effect, you may make a saving throw to avoid it.

Note: If you are taking Combat Resist, you need to check with the GM and group about the intentions for the game. This Feat is inappropriate for a campaign where all or most of the enemies wield magic against you, and the group or GM will let you know. The same goes double for the two Feats below.

Area Resist (Requires Combat Resist) – Extend the effects of your Resist Spells Feat to any creatures within 3 squares of you.

Combat Immune (Requires Combat Resist) – You are immune to all spells in combat.





Impostor

This Mini-kit is for a character that is impersonating another. That other will typically be referred to as “the target.” The Skinthief Advance allows for you to steal not just their identity but their body.

Advances

Identity Thief

Whenever you talk to someone close to the target about the target’s past, roll an appropriate social Skill.

On a Success, they tell you useful information about the target. Gain an Identity Token.

On a Twist, they give you information (gain an Identity Token), but they also get suspicious about you.

With a Cost, they are not eager to go into details. Pick one:

- You press them for details. You owe them a Favor.
- You let them miss the details. The information has a Flaw. Lose an Identity Token.

When you are confronted by a suspicious person about your identity, you may spend one Identity Token to allay their suspicions temporarily, two to prevent their suspicion from spreading to any onlookers, or three to set aside their suspicions forever.

Perfect Impression

When you succeed at fooling someone with your impersonation despite having the Disadvantage that they knew the target very well, gain two Action Points.

Skinthief

When you have successfully maneuvered a person into a position where you can steal their body, roll your Skinthief Skill.

On a Success, you take it over completely.

On a Twist, you take it over, but there is still a piece of them in there fighting you.

With a Bonus, you also get their memories.

With a Cost, the GM will pick one:

- You are Exhausted.
- They had a habit or addiction that you need to feed to keep in control.
- There is something missing. An ability or Skill that you sought to gain did not make it.



Who?

This Mini-kit is for a character who is easy to forget, overlook, or underestimate.

Advances

Underestimated

When you make an Opposed Roll with Disadvantage and win anyway, win as though you won by 3 or more, even if you didn’t.

Overlooked

Even when you are in plain sight, you may attempt to do something sneaky. If you succeed at this subterfuge despite the Disadvantage of being in plain sight, gain an Action Point.

Forgotten

Whenever the party collectively suffers at the hands of enemies from a Twist, Concession, or loss, you get to slip away unnoticed and avoid sharing their fate.

Example: If you lose a fight and the GM says that you are all thrown in the brig, you can say that you clung to the side of the ship and were written off as having fallen overboard while your friends were hauled away.



Doctor

This Mini-kit is for a character who can treat wounds, physical and mental.

Advances

First Aid

After each combat, you may reduce one ally’s Strikes by one for the purposes of calculating Conditions (not Concessions).

Healer

(requires First Aid)

Once per session you may reduce an ally’s Major Condition to a Minor Condition.

Panacea

(requires Healer)

Once per session you may eliminate an ally’s Major or Minor Condition.





Collector

This Mini-kit is for a character who has a vast collection of a certain sort of object. Choose what sort of thing you collect when you take

an Advance. Your collection is a boon, but also at times a burden.

Advances

I Have One Somewhere

When you search in your collection, roll your collecting Skill.

On a Success, you have just the thing.

On a Twist, pick one (the GM will fill in the details):

- You don't have it, but you know exactly who does.
- You don't have it, but you have something that might substitute for it reasonably.
- You have it, but it's unusable until you complete another task.

With a Cost, using your items instead of hoarding them means that you owe your collection a Favor. You'll suffer Disadvantage on future rolls of this sort until you add something cool to the collection, as you become loath to risk what you've got. The GM will tell you what item you desire so strongly for your collection.

I Must Have It

(requires *I Have One Somewhere*)

See the Advance of the same name in *The Flame* (page 47), but replace "weakness" with "collection."

Sixth Sense

When there is an item suitable for your collection nearby, you can feel it. The GM must tell you when there is something appropriate nearby, although they need not tell you what or where exactly it is.



Driver

This Mini-kit is for a character who is great at driving. They could drive cars, speedboats, starfighters, or chariots.

Advances

King of the Chase

Your opponents never get Advantage in a Chase for having a superior vehicle. Your skill is such that even if you're riding a horse and they are in a helicopter, the playing field is even.

Shoot and Drive

When using the Chase rules, you may shoot and drive at the same time without Disadvantage for either.

I'm Just Borrowing It!

There is always a vehicle nearby when you need one. It may not be easy, safe, or legal for you to take it, but it'll be there.



Investigator

This Mini-kit is for a character who is expert at investigation.

Advances

A Clue!

Wherever you go, in every scene, you can find one small clue that everyone else missed. Ask the GM what it is. Don't expect a big giveaway that breaks the case wide open: you have to use your Skills for that! These will be things that can help you build your case like "a curly blond hair on her cuff" or "a skidmark indicating that a motorcycle peeled out in a rush." Red herrings are part of the genre, so the GM is allowed to throw in an occasional misleading clue here, although most of them will not be.

Elementary, My Dear

When you use a deduction or investigation Skill to solve a puzzle despite Disadvantage for not having all the information yet, gain two Action Points.

Investigations

An investigation is composed of scenes. Each scene is a little puzzle in its own right, and the solution to each puzzle contributes to the solution of the larger puzzle. An investigator cannot use a Skill like investigation or deduction to solve the whole case, but they can use those Skills to solve a singular puzzle or scene.

Sleep On It

(requires *A Clue!*)

When you go to sleep thinking about the case and have at least three clues, roll a die. When you wake up:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 6 | You have a flash of insight. You know the crux of the issue. The GM will tell you. |
| 5 | You made a connection. The GM will tell you something that links two clues. |
| 4 | You have a visitor. They are there to confess or threaten. |
| 3 | Someone left you a message. A note, email or whatever. |
| 2 | Something bad happened and it made the news. |
| 1 | You are under attack! |





Face

This Mini-kit is for a character with a silver tongue.

Advances

Smooth Patter

When you talk someone into something despite having Disadvantage for their poor disposition toward you, gain two Action Points.

Famous

Gain an extra community Reputation (see page 55).

Outrageous Liar

When you succeed in a lie despite Disadvantage for the lie being very hard to believe, gain two Action Points.

Cold Reading

When you talk to someone and use Cold Reading to gain information about a target with the intention of later using your Skills to convince them of something, roll Cold Reading or another appropriate Skill. (This functions essentially like a Linked Roll.)

On a Success, you get the information you want and get Advantage when you try to convince them.

With a Bonus, your information lets you get into their trust so completely that you can move the person to the right by one column on the "Disposition to Players" chart permanently. (See Social Situations on page 68).

On a Success with a Cost, the GM will give you the information with a Flaw: using it reminds the target of something that you don't want them reminded of. Use it or not at your discretion.

On a Twist, pick one:

- You get good information and can use it once, but the target will later realize what you did and will permanently move one column to the left on the "Disposition to Players" chart.
- You get some information, but not enough to gain their trust.

On a Twist with a Cost, the target catches on and moves one column to the left on the "Disposition to Players" chart.



Moneybags

This Mini-kit is for a character whose love of money and financial acumen is unrivaled.

Advances

Big Spender

When you succeed at buying something valued above your Wealth score without Advantage, gain an Action Point.

Money Sense

You always know who the richest person in the room is, and what the most valuable object in the room is. When you ask, the GM must tell you honestly.

Cash is Confidence

When you are carrying with you a cash parcel of size equal to or greater than your Wealth score, you can ignore Minor Mental Conditions such as Angry or Afraid. If you are ever without any cash whatsoever, you automatically suffer a Minor Mental Condition until you rectify the situation.

Greed

This is an Emotional Power based on your greed (see page 73 for more on Emotional Powers). This is for a character whose lust for wealth goes beyond the natural. Your Greed rating starts at 1.

When you use your Wealth and roll less than or equal to your Greed rating, you may reroll the dice and take the better result.

When given a choice involving your Greed, to resist the emotion's urging you must roll a die and get a result higher than your Greed rating. For example, if you see a chance to get rich and your Greed is 3, you must roll a 4 or higher to do anything but take the chance.

Whenever your Greed grants you a reroll on Wealth and that reroll is better than your first result, put a check next to your Greed on your sheet. When you resist your Greed and lose, mark a check. When you have checks equal to your current Greed rating, increase it by one.

When you reach a rating of 6 you are losing either your fortune or your character: you must find an appropriate moment within this session or the next to let go. Your character automatically succeeds at whatever they intend and then you must choose: either they are lost to Greed forever, going mad with lust for money, or they overcome the emotion forever by reducing their Wealth to zero and giving up all their cash. For instance, you might sacrifice your entire fortune to save the town and forever give up your Greed. When you give up your Greed like this, pick a different Advance.



Custom Advances

You can make up your own Advances with approval from the group. As always with customization, you will do a better job at it if you get some play experience under your belt first. Most Advances fall into one of the following categories.

Custom Roll

These must be better than a regular Skill Roll in some way. Most of them succeed with downsides even on a Twist.

Info source

This comes in a few varieties. You can ask the GM for information you normally don't have access to. You can declare information. You can ask the GM for advice and get Advantage when you follow it. Note that the GM's advice does not need to be something the players will be happy to follow, but the GM should not make a habit of giving impossible or unwelcome advice.

Always True

This is something that is always true when your character is around. You always have something available—knives, a vehicle, whatever. Just watch out with these that you're not writing a Trick. The difference is that these Advances are typically things that aren't about how skilled you are at something and thus aren't used in place of rolling a Skill Roll.

Gaining or Spending Action Points

New ways to gain and new ways to spend. Just watch out that you don't make it too easy to gain a lot. Succeeding despite Disadvantage is a good one.

Gaining or Spending Tokens

This is what you should use if you want to make a move that gives spendable bonuses but where an Action Point would be too much. Making the move give tokens instead and giving a way to spend three (or any other number) of them for some effect is great. Being able to limit how they are spent ties them more firmly to the Kit.

Conditional Advantage

This is pretty self-explanatory. Advantage under certain thematic conditions.

Rule Breaker

This is a broad category including things that manipulate the results on the dice or remove Conditions. Places where the mechanics work differently for your character.



Reputations

When you reach level 2, you gain a Reputation around the things you do. You are known in a particular community. The community might be a location, a group you are a part of, or a group you have fought against. Your Reputation affects how people see you. When you use these rules, you should also be using the following chart, which is described in more detail on page 68.

Disposition to Players					
	Hateful	Opposed	Neutral	Aligned	Adoring
Anti	Imposs.	Imposs.	Disad.	—	Adv.
Indif.	Imposs.	Disad.	—	Adv.	Auto.
Pro	Disad.	—	Adv.	Auto.	Auto.

You must pick one of the following for your Reputation:

- Famous – People affected by your Reputation who would otherwise be neutral to you instead treat you as though they were aligned.
- Admired – People affected by your Reputation who would otherwise be aligned with you instead treat you as though they were adoring.
- Feared – People affected by your Reputation who would otherwise be opposed to you instead treat you as though they were neutral.

Examples: Boss Johnny wants to be known as the king of the town. He takes a Reputation “Famous in New Boston.” Scholar Sheila wants her work recovering the Lost Diadem of Nicomedia to be known to other scholars of antiquity and takes a Reputation “Admired amongst antiquarians.” Gunslinger Parnell wants to be feared by his enemies, so he takes a Reputation “Feared by the Red Palm Gang.”

How big is local?

It depends on your game. If your game will always be taking place in and around New York City, then a Local Reputation might be just in Harlem. If your game is a world-spanning globetrotting adventure, then your Reputation might be all of the New York metropolitan area.

Leveling Up Reputations

At each even level, you may either take a new community Reputation, or you may expand the scope of one of your existing Reputations. A local Reputation might become regional or even national, depending on the scope of the game. An organizational Reputation might expand to an entire field.

Examples: Boss Johnny increases his sphere of influence to cover all of New England. Scholar Sheila expands her Reputation to include any journalists, businesspeople, or politicians who have interests in the Near East. Gunslinger Parnell chooses to be known and feared by all occult criminals.



The Role of the GM

Read this section if you plan to be the GM or if you want to have more insight into the workings behind the rules. The section is written for the GM but is not off-limits to players.

Once the initial situation is decided, it's up to you as the GM to play all the characters that aren't the players'. You are required to come up with Twists and Costs when the players roll them. When you use the Tactical Combat rules, you also need to choose or create the enemies the players face in combat and the terrain on which they face them. Last, you must come up with rulings to decide what happens in situations where the rules don't fit neatly. So you have four responsibilities, examined in detail below. It's a harder job than the players have, but requires less work than in many other games. Much design work has gone into making the GM's job easier.

Playing the World

Your first responsibility is your roleplaying. You play all the characters in the world that aren't the player characters. You have four agendas in this respect: reinforce the game's tone, make the world seem as real as the tone of your game requires, give players hard and important choices, and make rolling meaningful.

Use the characters and events you portray to reinforce the game's tone. Often this means playing them as if they were real human beings, but it could mean playing them as if they were cackling supervillains or inscrutable aliens. The characters in the world should have goals and interests, relationships with one another and with the player characters.

If you want to make the world seem real to the players, you must listen carefully and try to see things from their perspective. If the players object to something in your roleplaying on the grounds that it's nonsense, hear them out and strongly consider revising your play to make the world seem real. Failing that, you should make sure that they understand why the characters are acting the way they are. The players shouldn't come out of the discussion still thinking that it's nonsense. *Don't Demand Nonsense* applies to you too. Don't be afraid to stick to your guns when you're right and to change your mind when you're wrong.

Making the world seem real also means making sure that the outcomes match the expectations you set with your descriptions. If you describe a terrifying sheer drop into a murky abyss, but then have a player fall in and simply assign them the Winded Condition, you've just undermined your own description. This applies in combat, too. You want to make the mechanical effects of the

monsters, traps, and terrain line up with your description of them. If the darts are tipped with “deadly poison,” a little bit of damage is not going to cut it. Give a Condition that requires immediate treatment—back up your scary description with scary mechanics.

Do not forget to show the players what is happening when they are not around. Each time they return to an area they previously visited, they notice what has changed. Things change over time and that is why time matters! Every day the players delay is a day when their opponents have been up to something: reinforcements have arrived, traps have been set, vulnerable targets have been secured, or worse. Show the players that time is not on their side by showing them increasingly worrying clues and portents as time goes on.

Hanging threads

I like to always have more plots on the go than the players can get to. It's tempting to always make things worse when the players don't handle something, but that can make it feel as though you are punishing them. Instead, you can pick from this list (or roll to decide randomly) what happens to a plot thread the players ignored or didn't have time to get to.

- *Someone else solved it and reaped the rewards.*
- *It escalated. Now it's more dangerous and harder to solve.*
- *It got personal for one of the players.*
- *It got more lucrative to solve.*
- *It got mixed up with another problem.*
- *It created a new enemy for the players.*

To make the players' choices feel important, you must focus on the things that the players care about. Focus on the things in the world that are relevant to the player characters. A character you made might have a detailed backstory, but you shouldn't give the players the character's entire life's story. Keep it relevant. The rest can come up naturally over time. There are rules you have to follow in playing the game, but some things are left to your discretion. That means that if something is really important to the players, it shouldn't be free. By the same token, if *nobody* cares about the outcome of a task, don't bother rolling the dice.

To make rolling meaningful, it's vital that you show the players the consequences of their actions, so that usually—but not always—they can foresee the likely consequences before they commit to their action. Players should know that any time they pick up the dice, Success will look different than a Twist. When players roll a Cost, don't just forget about it—bring it back around later.

You establish the consequences in the context of a player making a roll, but this does not preclude “saying yes” to their action and giving them the consequence without a roll. “You know that your cup is poisoned but you want to drink anyway? Okay, you spend the next week critically ill while Marcel takes over the business. After that week you'll still have the *Sick* Condition until you can recover.”

Make your decisions as fairly as possible and stick to your agendas.

Before the Roll

It is the GM's job to determine when a player's intent and task line up, and when a roll is appropriate. You can certainly tell a player that they are not in a position to perform a certain task, but you *must* tell them before they roll or else you make their Success feel like a failure. For example, you might tell them before they roll, “This is an extremely sophisticated vault and you're an amateur. If you like, you could spend the time trying to figure out what tools and information you need to crack it later.”

The flip side of this is the rule “**If you do the right thing, it works.**” That is to say that if a player has a great idea that incorporates the facts you have collectively established, it should probably just work with no roll required.

Example: June remembers that last time she met with the accountant, Akayla, she was eating a strong cheese and seemed very vain. June decides to go to the cheese shop to buy Akayla an expensive gift and flatter her. For her good memory and quick thinking, June is rewarded: she has the accountant eating out of the palm of her hand.

I'm going to state a rule here and then immediately contradict it. But it's still a rule. The rule is **Say Yes or Roll Dice**. When a player wants to do something, either you just “say yes” and they do it, or they have to roll and see what happens. The immediate response that springs to mind is “Well what if they want to invent nuclear fission or jump to the moon or convince the king to marry his daughter to the town drunk?” Okay, settle down. Here's the trick—it's always the GM's call whether a task and intent pair are appropriate. Getting to the moon is a valid intent, and jumping is a valid task for some intents, but together they are inappropriate. You can't get to the moon by jumping. There is no roll. You can jump as high as you like, but you'll never jump to the moon. It is **inappropriate**. Trying to get the king to give his daughter to the town drunk is a reasonable intent, but you could never achieve it by simply arguing with him no matter how much of a smooth-talker you are. It is **inappropriate**. *Don't demand nonsense!*

So what if the player comes back next session and wants to invent and build a rocket to get to the moon? That's actually a reasonable task and intent, but it's too big for one roll. You'd have to start by learning chemistry, then spend months or years on experiments to make explosives, then find blacksmiths who can make you what you need to test simple explosive projectiles, etc. The player doesn't get to just make one roll for it because it is **too complex**. That's an extreme example, but similar requests occur all the time. As GM, the phrase you want to have ready for this is “Okay, but first you would need to...”

What if the player wants to shoot an archery butt two hundred yards away? That's not inappropriate: it's *possible*, and it's not too complex—just extremely unlikely. It's **difficult**. And so you have to say yes or let them roll. You can give them Disadvantage because of the extreme difficulty if that's what the tone of your setting demands, but then they get to roll. When they try something so difficult, look at what's at stake and give them a nice big Twist if they fail—risk vs. reward again. If nothing is at stake, and they

just want to shoot the archery butt for no reason, just for its own sake, then there's not much you can do in the way of giving them a Twist. So there's no roll. They shoot it, but who cares? They are awesome. Player characters are allowed to be awesome. Always remember that difficulty is dependent on the tone of the game. A high-fantasy heroic game might have archers who can easily hit a target at that range and the only question is how many they can hit in ten seconds.

In summary, if the task is **inappropriate** to the intent, or if the task is **too complex** for one roll, there is no roll until those problems are corrected. If the task is very **difficult**, you have to **Say Yes or Roll Dice**.

My player wants to roll and show off a cool new Skill but there are no interesting stakes. I have to "say yes," but it feels like I'm saying no. What should I do?

Set up a situation where that player gets to use that cool new Skill with real tension. Do not roll when nothing is at stake. Just "say yes" and let the player describe their success for now. Be sure to give them their chance later in the session.

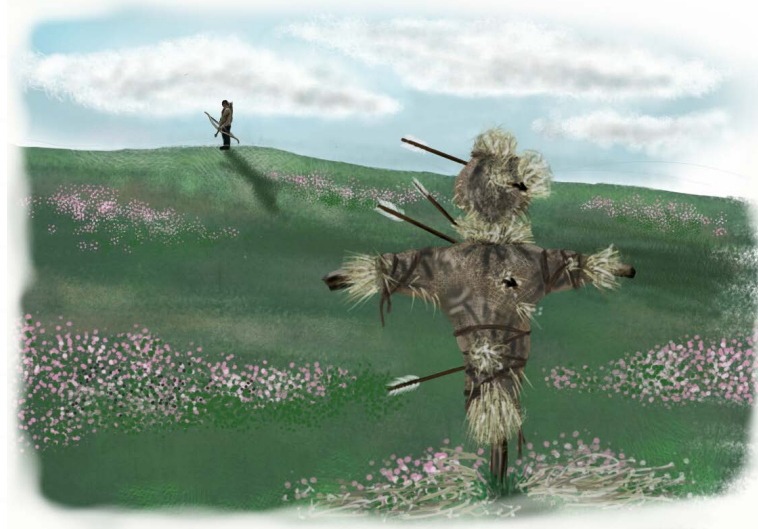
I wasn't ready!

If fairness is impossible because a player got overeager and rolled the dice before you decided what the roll actually meant, they have to roll again once you've worked it out. Once you've decided the outcomes, you're as bound by the dice as anybody else.

Describe everything!

Make sure players describe what they are doing before they roll. A good description from a player will help you come up with good Twists, help you adjudicate any Advantages or Disadvantages, and make the world come alive for the whole table. If a player says "I want to use my Thaumoscopy Skill to detect magic," you should respond by asking "Cool! What, specifically, are you doing?"

As GM, you are in a position to lead the way when it comes to descriptions. When you describe the situation with more cool little details, it gives players things to hang their own descriptions on.



The Roll Itself

The first thing to decide is whether to use an Opposed Roll or a standard Skill Roll. If the opposition is another player character, you have to use an Opposed Roll. If the opposition is an NPC who has his own motivations and intents beyond simply opposing the player, then it should be an Opposed Roll. If it's just some mook guard that the player wants to sneak past, make it a standard Skill Roll.

Players can ask for Linked Rolls when they want to prepare for a future action, but you can also demand Linked Rolls if you feel that an action requires preparation. "Sure you can build a bridge over the chasm out of scraps using carpentry, but the quality depends on your materials, so somebody needs to roll scavenging first."

Multiple Helpers

If multiple players are helping, they each must roll and then proceed from lowest roll to highest. If their roll exceeds the current total, then they add one to it.

Too many cooks spoil the broth

You must limit the number of helpers on any roll as seems appropriate. For instance, if the characters want to break down a small door, simple geometry means that they aren't all going to be able to add their strength unless they improvise some kind of battering ram. A player suggests: "Well what if we just take turns? He tries then I try?" Then he's going first, so he rolls. If he succeeds, they are through. If he fails, the Twist isn't going to be as bland as "He doesn't do it. Your turn." A Twist has to change the situation and precludes rolling again immediately.

Advantages

In an Opposed Roll, if both sides have the same Advantage or Disadvantage from the same source, ignore it. If both sides want to catch a football in the rain or if two characters are fighting with hands tied behind their backs, it is silly to give them both Disadvantage. Neither side has Advantage or Disadvantage.

Don't feel obligated to give characters an Advantage just because the players ask for it. Players have their own ways of generating Advantage without your input (see Helping, Linked Rolls, and Action Points). So you are free to give out Advantage and Disadvantage as the situation demands.

Group Rolls

Sometimes the players are in a situation where everybody has to perform the same task, succeeding and failing as a group. Common examples are sneaking, avoiding offending the host, spotting an ambush, or passing off disguises. The way rolling works in this game means that mixed results can be confusing. If Jo gets Success with a Cost and Bob gets a Twist, the whole group has to deal with the Twist, but Jo also has a Condition on top of that? That hardly seems fair, and Jo's Success is pretty meaningless.

The solution is the group roll. Simply, you decide who gets to roll for the group. Sometimes there is one character who is clearly the primary actor—then that character rolls. Sometimes the character with the greatest chance of Success may roll—spotting an ambush, for example. Only one character needs to spot the ambush to forewarn the rest. Sometimes the character with the worst chance of Success must roll—passing off a disguise, for example. One character’s mistake spoils the act. If there’s a tie, pick the character who has the most personally at stake or for whom you can think of a very personal Twist. Personal Twists are usually more interesting than abstract ones.

Although there is only one roll for the group, the other characters’ involvement is still narrated and can be represented using the rules for Helping or Linked Rolls if appropriate. When looking for the ambush along a wide road, everybody can help. In a cramped hallway, only the character at the front of the group might have any chance and nobody can help. When using Acting to pass off a disguise at a guard post, the weakest Actor must roll but another character can help out by doing most of the talking. At a grand soirée, the characters spending their time babysitting the weakest actor would be a giveaway and so they may not help. They may do Linked Rolls—using bluffs to convince the partygoers that the poor actor has sworn a vow of silence, perhaps—but in the end that character has to stand on their own acting abilities.

Orthogonal Actions

Okay, but what if Arvind wants to activate his doomsday device while Jamal is trying to pull the plug, while at the same time Shayan is trying to shoot Jamal to stop him from pulling the plug and Gudrun is tackling Shayan to throw off her aim? How the heck do you resolve that? Well, there’s not necessarily one right answer for all situations, but generally you can resolve the actions focused on interfering with other actions first. You can break this one down as follows: Gudrun against Shayan is clearly an Opposed Roll. If Gudrun wins, Shayan misses the shot. In that case, Jamal against Arvind is a simple Opposed Roll. If Shayan wins by three or more, she shoots Jamal badly and he can’t continue; Arvind presses the button unopposed. If Shayan only wins by one or two, then Gudrun might choose “It costs you less than you expected,” and as a result Jamal is only grazed and can still go for the plug, albeit with Disadvantage. He and Arvind make an Opposed Roll. You might sort it out differently and that’s okay. It’s the GM’s job to make these calls.

The Results

Success is easy. Just give the players their intent. You are allowed to add on to the Success by saying “yes, but...” only if the “but” does not take away from their intent. If their intent is problematic, you should catch that before the roll.

Costs

When the player rolls a Cost, it’s your job to figure out what that ought to be. Costs can be Conditions, Flaws, or Favors, but the key thing to remember is that they are all temporary Disadvantages. If you have an idea that doesn’t fall neatly into one of those categories but is still a temporary Disadvantage, go ahead and use it. If anyone asks, it’s a new Condition you made up.

If the character’s action involves an NPC, you should consider asking them to owe that NPC a Favor. A Favor is not something that has to be delivered immediately. A Twist looks like: “I might help you, but only after you help me with my problem.” A Favor looks like: “I’ll help you, but only if you’ll help me with my problem when you’re free,” or perhaps “I’ll help you, but you owe me one.” Always keep track of who the players owe Favors and in particular Favors that have been owed for some time. Having one of their creditors track them down in the middle of something important is a great Twist. If they turn him down now, they’ll get a Bad Reputation.

Note that players do not always have to explicitly agree to owe a Favor. It is enough that the character in question believes that they are owed. Even so, it is often a good idea to offer them that choice with some alternative bad result implicit if they refuse to agree.

Divine Favor

In a setting where Gods are real, a Favor is an appropriate Cost for just about any roll. The hand of the divine reached out to change their fate. They loose the arrow and see it tailing to the left, missing the mark. Then miraculously it slides back to the right and enters the bullseye! The fingerprints of the divine are all over, but what Favor do they owe and to which God or Goddess?

Just because a divine Favor would fit any roll doesn’t mean you should use it all the time. Think about how often you want divine intervention to occur before you go using it every session. Presumably players with strongly religious characters would be more interested in this sort of Cost.

Flaws are great Costs, but you always have to be careful of the line between Cost and Twist. When gathering information a Flaw is not: “Oh he tells you what you want to hear all right. And you eat it up hook, line and sinker.” A Flaw is more like: “He’s telling you the truth, mostly. But he’s leaving something out when he talks about the security system. You’ve got good intel and you won’t get anything else out of him without burning bridges, but your information is Flawed when it comes to the lab’s passwords and biometrics.” The same applies to physical objects, too. A Flaw is not something that prevents the object from being used normally, nor is it a nasty surprise to spring later—those are both Twists. A Flaw is a known problem that restricts or hinders its use in certain cases.

If a player makes a roll to find or create an item, or to gather or recall information and they succeed without a Cost, then you cannot give the item or information a Flaw. That would be taking away their success. If they simply find an object or come across information that you have put in their path without them trying to roll for it, though... those items can of course have Flaws, nasty surprises, or worse.

Conditions

Feel free to come up with custom Conditions, Major or Minor, to fit your situation. If you get a result of Success with a Cost but wrack your brains and simply cannot think of a reasonable Favor, Flaw, or Condition for the character, you can tell the player “You succeed, but you are Angry. What made you Angry just now?” Even experienced GMs get stumped—it’s okay to ask for help.

If a situation arises where a player expects to get a Condition without involving a roll, you may just give them one. If their character jumps down a mineshaft to escape, knowing that doing so will mean injury, they get the Injured Condition. You must warn them of the outcome first.

The Conditions that occur when a player rolls Twist with a Cost can be worse than when they roll Success with a Cost, but they need not be.

Example: Iowa James is climbing a sheer cliff to escape the KGB. If he succeeds, he's up. If he succeeds with a Cost, he's up but he's Winded. If he rolls a 2 and gets a Twist, it could be that the KGB are already waiting for him at the top of the cliff. On a 1, you might say that not only are the KGB waiting, but he's Winded too. On the other hand, you might say that he slips and falls, ends up Injured and unconscious in the river, left to wash up who knows where.

Managing Rests and Durations

When the players have Conditions, don't be afraid to press them. Sometimes enemies won't allow players ten minutes to rest, and sometimes players can't allow their enemies ten minutes to act. Fighting while Winded is not bad, and they can afford to be Winded a couple of times before they need to rest. Exhaustion is another story, as it punishes every Skill Roll. A good night's sleep in a safe spot is difficult to get while in a dungeon. It would require some Skill Rolls to secure an area and stand watch to allow for this to occur. Again, don't be afraid to press them—the whole point of these Conditions is to wear the characters down and force the players into hard choices. You don't need to baby the players. Losing a fight is not the end of the world in this game.

Heroes Overcome

Player characters sometimes make heroic decisions, and sometimes not. Part of your job is to make them heroic by giving them adversity to overcome. Even the most cowardly and unheroic character will have incredible tales to tell if it took all they could muster just to escape with their life. So don't be afraid to give them Conditions. Yes, it's tough, but that's the fun of the game.

If a character gets Winded, they will likely want to rest. Either they are doing something pressing and really don't have the time or they are not. If what they are doing is not pressing, then spending ten minutes to rest is perfectly reasonable. When they are Exhausted, on the other hand, it isn't very reasonable for them to go to bed at noon. Make sure players know that events are progressing without them and that things will keep getting worse if they sleep through the day. See "A Brief Word on Pacing" below. Conditions like Winded usually last only until the end of the scene or for a little longer if there is pressure. Conditions like Exhausted are expected to last several scenes, since it is harder to find time to recover. Injured can last across sessions at worst.

Wandering threats

In some old-school games players were deterred from resting by wandering monsters: if they didn't take steps to secure the area, every ten minutes there was a chance of an interesting event. If you want to use that technique, see pacing rolls on page 70.

Twists

One of your most important tasks is to come up with appropriate Twists. Twists can do a number of things with regards to the players' goals. For Twists, think narrative, not mechanical. Costs are more mechanical than Twists.

A Twist means that the player did not get their intent or that they got their intent but something went seriously wrong or even that something really good happened that changed the whole scene. The character may or may not succeed in their task—either one is okay. A Twist can be beneficial, but it must look different than Success. The key thing to note here is that **a Twist MUST change the situation**. If you present your Twist and the end result is that the characters are in the same place, they're going to wonder why they can't just try again or try a different angle. They'll want to make the same rolls over again to get what they want. Boring! Remember, *Fun Once....*

Speaking of which, can a player roll with a different task but the same intent? Can a different player roll with the same task and intent after one has failed? Technically yes, but a good Twist would usually preclude that, at least in the short run. If they fail to convince the king by means of diplomacy, the Twist isn't going to leave them there still in the throne room ready to try a different angle. **Change the situation!** If things are bogging down, a Twist is a great opportunity for you to make a new, more interesting scene.

You'll want to use some Twists that are really harsh and some Twists that are pretty tame and even some Twists that are fortunate. It's important to get a variety and it's important to hit both ends of the spectrum. Every roll being a life-or-death situation is exhausting and frustrating for the players because they are going to fail a good proportion of the time. On the other hand, giving your players nothing but mild and beneficial Twists sucks the tension out of rolling. As a guideline, players that aim for bigger goals make themselves vulnerable to worse setbacks, including harsher Twists. Try to keep some balance between risk and reward, but at the same time make sure you're not picking on a player—constantly giving nasty Twists makes players reluctant to try cool things.

A brief word on pacing

GMs, it doesn't do to spring nastiness on your player characters without warning. For that reason, you should build the tension and pull your punches until one of two things happens: the players choose to ignore the obvious danger, or a player rolls and gets a Twist. Then it's game on.

On the broader scale, for every threat the players are facing, you should have a timeline: an idea of what happens if the players do nothing. You should have events to show the players that these timelines are progressing. When they wake up in the morning, there is ominous graffiti. The next morning, someone is missing. The next, a body is found. And so on.



Types of Twists

A Twist can **divert players from their goal, put obstacles in the way of their goal, make the player characters pay, or raise the stakes**. A Twist can also be your chance to follow through on the brutal consequences you set up when you raised the stakes earlier. If you always divert players from their goal, they'll get nothing done and get frustrated, but if you never divert them then they'll always achieve their goal in the end and raising the stakes loses its purpose. Putting obstacles in the players' path is about pacing: too many and the game slows down; too few and things are won and lost too easily. Making the players pay is when you take something from their characters while allowing them to progress to their goal. Raising the stakes allows them to get closer to their goal while revealing a worse possible future if the players fail in their task. You can only make the players pay so often before you've taken everything they care about, and the stakes can only get so high before raising them higher becomes meaningless. So the conclusion here is that you need to do each of those four things without leaning too much on any one. If you need a default, lean towards putting obstacles in their path.

Twists don't have to be all in your hands—it's often best if your Twists give players hard choices. You can make them choose whether to pay some kind of price to avoid an obstacle, or whether they'd rather give up now or else face much higher stakes later. You can give them ethical choices or practical ones. The choices should always be given through their character's eyes.

More positive Twists can **introduce new characters, give information, provide help from a surprising direction, or reveal a shortcut to the goal**. You can mix negatives and positives, too. Denying players their intent but rewarding them with information they need to continue their investigation is a great play. Raising the stakes while giving players an escape route or shortcut gives them a tough choice about how much they want to risk.

Your agenda here can be summed up by the following: Don't give the players everything they want, but do give them everything they deserve. Make life for the characters interesting and use your Twists to reinforce the tone of the game. Keep the story moving, keep the tension building, and follow through on your threats.

The Twist list

Here is a list of Twists. It's not comprehensive and you don't have to use it, but if you're not sure what to do you can look here for ideas. I always keep this handy when I am the GM.

- Put them into combat.
- Damage or take away their stuff.
- They get what they want, but with a nasty hidden surprise.
- They fail, but find a clue.
- Hurt or take their friends.
- Damage or twist their relationships or reputations.
- Change the environment.
- Threaten them with something really nasty...
- ...then follow through if they fail again.
- Someone shows up with bad intentions or gets in the way.
- An enemy benefits from their actions.
- Now there's more work (or a new quest) to do.
- They get split up (or captured).
- They take much longer than they expected or hoped.
- They can do it, but not right now.
- Injure or maim them.
- Give them a hard choice and don't let them off easy.
- Time-delay any of the above—let them know that the consequences of their failure (or of their apparent success) will be revealed later. They'll be antsy all session long waiting for their just desserts.

How can you injure them? That's surely a Condition, not a Twist.

Three ways. First, you can make the injury something with immediate effects but no lasting penalty. Thus, no Condition. For example, you may say that they are knocked out, and then skip ahead and tell them what they see when they come to.

Second, you may use the injury to force immediate action. You could say that they are bleeding out and need to get treatment right away, or that they are poisoned and will die in six hours if they don't get the antidote.

Third, you can give them a hard choice with a Condition as one of the choices. For instance "You're cornered. You can surrender to your pursuers or you can jump off the balcony and get Injured."

Tied Opposed Rolls

When an Opposed Roll results in a draw, neither side gets their intent. Try to think of something that makes both sides win. We've been taught from a young age about the importance of compromise, so our first instinct is to try to come up with a way that everyone can go away happy. That's great for real life, but in a game compromise tends to reduce the tension whereas both characters remaining unsatisfied tends to ratchet up the tension. Of course, there are times when it does not make sense for neither side to get their way, and then you can fall back on compromise, but that should be your last recourse.

End of Session Results

It's that time of the night. The session is winding down. Everyone is feeling tired and ready to go home. Your friend rolls a Twist, and you want something that will wrap things up nicely. In my experience, finding the right Twist is especially difficult at the end of a session. A Twist that prolongs the scene is inappropriate. You want to have some measure of resolution, even if you're going to leave it on a cliffhanger. With that in mind, if you're stuck for ideas, here are some tried and true session endings.

- *Victory! You save the kid and defeat the kidnapper. (Success)*
- *Tune In Next Week! You save the day, but then see the dragon coming over the horizon. (Success or Twist, depending on context)*
- *Misdirect. The prince was in another castle. (Twist)*
- *Captured! Now your plucky sidekick needs to save you. (Twist)*
- *The Big Reveal. The butler was the vampire all along! (Success or Twist depending on context)*
- *Saved! Your prospects look grim until the masked miracle swoops in to save you! (Success or Twist depending on context. With a Cost: you owe a Favor)*
- *Sacrifice. You save the day, but at what price? (Twist, or Success with a Cost)*

Making, Finding, and Connecting

Certain uses of Skills can stump you trying to think of good Twists and Costs if you're not ready for them. So here I provide you with some defaults. That is, you are free to ignore these results if you have something better, more dramatic or more appropriate in mind. You should keep these in mind whenever players use any Skills to make something, find something, or contact somebody.

- If a player rolls a Skill to make or find an item and gets a Cost, then by default the item gets a Flaw. The Flaw may or may not be temporary.
- If a player rolls a Skill to make an item and gets a Twist, then by default the Twist is that they are missing a key ingredient or tool. If they are under time pressure then you can give them a choice: spend time that they do not have to make it right, or put it together with duct tape and prayers. If they opt to do a shoddy job, then the result is very likely to fall apart after a single use. That is to say, it will fall apart after a single use unless you have a better, nastier idea. If they are not under time pressure, then the missing link should be something very difficult to find—a brief side-quest, really. Note that if the character is not under time pressure, has the Skill, has all the appropriate tools and is making something routine like a blacksmith making a sword, then you should simply “say yes.”
- If a player rolls a Skill to find an item or information and gets a Twist, then by default the Twist is either that their enemies have found them first, or that their enemies have found the item they are looking for first. What the enemies do is up to the GM. They may confront the party or surveil them. They may take the item, destroy the item, compromise the item, or ransom the item back to the party.

- If a player rolls a connections Skill and rolls a Cost, then by default the person they connect with is already owed a Favor. This can make dealing with them difficult.
- If a player rolls a connections Skill and gets a Twist, the default Twist is enmity. Either the person they connect with is their enemy or is in contact with their enemies, or their enemies are also present. The result of this could be that the contact won't help you, that they'll help you only at great expense, or that they confront you. It is up to the GM if the Twist is a minor inconvenience or if the Twist ends with Lando saying “I had no choice. They arrived right before you did. I'm sorry.”

I have one of those, right?

If a player thinks their character would already have an item, you can say yes or they can roll an appropriate Skill to see whether they have it. For example, a blacksmith might think they would have a suit of armor lying around. This type of roll cannot be made Unskilled. By default, a Cost means that the item has a Flaw, while a Twist means not only that they don't have it, but that they don't have it for a reason—a reason that prevents them from just rolling the same Skill again to make the dang armor! Maybe the reason is a simple lack of time. Either way, rolling the same thing twice in a row with the same intent breaks the “Fun Once” rule.

Tricks and Complications

You should be familiar with each characters' Complications and Tricks, and put a bit of thought at the start of each session into coming up with a few places where those aspects of their character might come into play. If you do not make an effort to push on those elements and remind the players, it is likely that they will not see much use. You don't need to see every element of every character in every session, but if you notice something that is on their character sheet and is not getting used, you should make an effort to put the player in a situation to use it. If you can't think of how to do that, you should have a quick talk with the player and ask them how they see that element coming up in play.

Example: Ahn has a Trick relating to escaping from piles of rubble or collapsed structures. This is the sort of thing that will not come up in play until the GM collapses a building onto the party. So it's up to the GM to do that every once in a while; for instance, when someone rolls a Twist with explosives.

If a player has a relevant Trick but elects not to use it and gets a Twist, either let them succeed with a downside or ask them to describe why their character didn't manage it this time.

Skills

Keep in mind that players don't spend resources on improving Skills and there is very little complexity added by having more Skills on their sheet. They also learn Skills very quickly by using them. Having specific Skills can also help when they are roleplaying. If they decide they are using “Religion” to convince the priest of something, that's pretty vague. If they have “Catholic Doctrine” and “Preaching” as options on their sheet, it makes them think about how their character would approach the situation. For all these reasons, **I recommend that you keep Skills specific.**

There is no default list of Skills. If you make a list of Skills, you are dictating what actions can be rolled for in your game. Anything outside that list is also outside the purview of mechanics. If that's what you want in your game, then please do work with your group to make your own custom Skill list. Making a Skill list takes a bunch of effort for what is usually not much gain. Don't do it unless you have a good reason. If you decide to use a Skill list and intend long-term play, you may run into the problem of a character knowing *all* the Skills. To avoid this, you may also decide on a cap on the number of Skills characters can learn. Once they reach this cap, if they want to learn a new Skill they must drop an unused one.

Learning

Typically, characters gain Skills by trying them. Because a character always has a chance to learn any Skill they roll, players making Unskilled rolls should be sure to pick Skills they might reasonably learn. If the character can't possibly know metallurgy, and surely cannot learn it in one attempt, then that shouldn't be the Skill they roll. What exactly is the character doing? You're sure they don't know metallurgy so they must be doing something else. If they are trying to identify a metal, perhaps appraisal is more suitable to the character. Tell them to roll that Skill instead.

Skills may also be Restricted. Sometimes a Restricted Skill cannot be used untrained and cannot be learned through practice. An example might be Cantrips—you can't make an illusion with the power of your mind just by grunting and screwing up your face. The Skill may only be available to those who have unlocked their magical ability or received specialized training from a wizard. Restricted Skills need not be supernatural—they could simply be specialized knowledge, such as metallurgy in the example above. Restricted Skills may be limited to certain Origins (see Character

Creation). To learn a Restricted Skill, you have to make it a goal and use your other Skills to achieve that in play.

Example: Only People of the Wind may use Spellsinging. They may use it trained or untrained.

Example: Rahman Field Modulation controls shields from personal bubbles up to city protection domes. It is very advanced and requires training before the Skill can be learned.

Example: The Gift is Restricted. It can never be learned. You were born with it and bear its marks or you were not.

Wealth and Cash

As described in the Wealth section (see page 12), the default Twist for Wealth is that the player can either “break the bank” and get what they want, or they can do without the item. You may offer a third option: Barter. The seller wants something the players have or can do, but would be loath to part with. It has to be a tough choice.

Cash Parcels

When players get monetary rewards, find treasure, or otherwise come into money, the way to handle it is cash parcels. Most of the Cash rules are in the players' section (see page 13) but a couple of edge cases are listed here because they are available at your discretion.

Cash parcels can be combined and split. Five level X cash parcels are equal to one level X + 1 cash parcel. Buying in bulk works similarly. Buying four items is generally the same as buying one in terms of tiers, but buying five to twenty such items is one tier higher.



Players can sell items for Cash Parcels or even use their Wealth to generate them directly. Cash parcels can only be created one at a time, never in bulk. All generation of cash and all bulk purchases are at your discretion. When players invest their money, the amount of time before they can use their new Wealth is also at your discretion, primarily to prevent players from exploiting the system to make nonsense happen.

Caveat emptor

The intent of these rules is to speed play and to obviate the need to track every penny. The abstraction speeds play, but is not a perfect simulation, so do not let players abuse these rules. The obvious ploy is to spend a level two cash parcel to buy a set of four items each valued at level 2, then to sell just one of those items for a level 2 cash parcel. Hey, now they're up three items without spending anything! That's cheating. Only allow bulk buying when the players actually need to buy in bulk. Use your discretion when players generate, split or merge cash parcels. If players aren't trying to game the system, the rules hold up fine.

Loans can be made. Loaning someone cash just means rolling to create the cash parcel and then giving it away. If interest is expected, a cash parcel one tier lower must be paid back in addition to the original amount. This is roughly five percent interest.

Adventuring Absenteeism

Rather than trying to track and pay for every meal, a character's lifestyle can be paid for in aggregate after a matter of months. If a character is working all or most of the time and only having occasional short adventures, then they can live according to their Wealth. If they are away from work for months on end adventuring, or if they try to live above their means, they need to roll to keep up their lifestyle. Living like a person of Wealth tier X requires a roll to pay for a level X + 1 item every six months.

Example: For a Poor [1] person to live like a Rich [2] person while off adventuring for six months, their upkeep roll would be level 3. Unless their adventuring proves lucrative, this is obviously impossible. There's a reason we can't just quit our jobs and fly around Europe staying at fancy hotels for a year.

Creating Settings

Creating a setting in which to play is a fun thing to do, and I believe that it's even better with friends. So the first piece of advice here is to get your fellow players to contribute ideas to the setting. Once you are ready to create, decide things in the following order: Genre and Tone, Conflicts and Themes, Factions and Locations, NPCs and Events. Often something you create on a lower level will cause you to go back and add to a higher level—an NPC might inspire a faction which could drive a conflict, for instance—so don't think of this as a one-way procedure.

Genre and Tone

You probably know well enough what your friends are interested in, but if you don't, or if you're playing with people you don't know so well, it's time to get on the same page. What sort of setting can you all agree on? Sci-fi, fantasy, historical, or modern? Adapting an existing franchise or setting, or coming up with something new? Do you want a tone that is goofy or serious? Focusing on

drama or challenging the players? How much do the players expect to contribute to the world-building or the story? You can play in any combination, so long as everyone is on board. Buy-in is the most important thing.

Conflicts and Themes

Conflicts and themes are very important for reinforcing the tone. If you want a serious, dramatic game, you need to pick serious, dramatic themes like loyalty and sacrifice. For a goofy game, themes are less important, but it can still help to have them. Mistaken identity is a common comedic theme, as is jealousy.

Choosing conflicts at this point, when there are no factions yet, essentially means drawing the big-picture strokes. Is this a game where the player characters are exploring a new frontier, coming in conflict with nature and the unknown? Is the game taking place during a war or a rebellion? Is the game about criminals facing off against agents of justice? Is it about survival in an unforgiving land? Whichever you choose, having that central conflict helps you build up factions around that conflict. The factions have their own minor conflicts with one another reflecting the main conflict. You can talk about those now, or flesh them out later.

Factions and Locations

Once the themes, conflicts, and tone are established, get out some paper and sketch a rough map. Note down the places that have already been mentioned. Everyone can add a location and say something about it. Note down any factions or NPCs that are mentioned and add factions as desired. Not all factions are equally important. Ten factions is a good number for a very long game, while just a few are needed for a game that will only run a session or three. Make sure each faction has a location, adding locations as necessary. Usually you want a location where factions border one another as well, whether it be a meeting place or a battlefield.

NPCs and Events

Now flesh out the NPCs, giving them all names. Each faction needs at least one, often the leader. Fill in any obvious blanks: if there is an Inquisition, surely there is a High Inquisitor. Make sure you have a few NPCs that operate at the level of the player characters. If the players are playing local investigators, you want to know something about the local Sheriff, not just the national Minister of Justice. Finally, events are major things that happened in the past that are relevant to the current conflicts. Most events should be associated with a location.

Secrets

As the GM, you are responsible for secrets. Create lots of them. Most locations, factions and NPCs have secrets, as do some conflicts and events. Just write a bunch down and make use of the best ones; if the others turn out useful later, you can use them then. If you like, you could tell each player that their character knows just one of these secrets. Another way to handle secrets is through rumors. Rumors require you to create false secrets, half-truths and conflicting information as well. Then when it comes time to tell the players what their characters know about a person or place, you can give them the facts and an assortment of rumors, some true and some false.

Fill the world with questions

Ask questions throughout this process, and do not answer all of them. Every faction, location, NPC, or event can benefit from having some unanswered questions for the players to discover and answer. Some of your secrets can be unanswered questions, too. Perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister is secretly disloyal to her country: to whom does she owe her true allegiance?

When creating a setting by yourself you follow the same order but have to do everything yourself. Personally, I find that going it alone is harder because I get paralyzed by choice when there's nobody to push back on any of my ideas, and without people questioning me I have fewer explanations for my creations. If you are creating a setting by yourself then it is absolutely vital that your players buy into the genre and tone of the game.

Custom Rolls

Custom Rolls are a great way to flesh out a setting. Sometimes you want to have randomness inherent in the world that does not come as a result of player character's Skills. In this case, you can design a Custom Roll. Each number represents a different outcome. Use Skill Rolls as guidelines. The idea is that these represent situations that recur over and over. They ought to be something the players can expect and plan around, engaging with them confidently, but their randomness introduces an element of risk and keeps things fresh.

In a game about cosmic horrors, you might make a Custom Roll for coming into contact with such horror. To flesh out your world you might make a Custom Roll about using certain kinds of technology or interacting with certain beings.

Example: When you gaze into the Orb of Kerm, you roll a die. On a 1, you black out. When you come around, you are haunted by inchoate images of unspeakable horror. On a 2, you relive the most traumatic event of your life (describe this scene, preferably without gory details). On a 3, you see a vision of some distant event of great personal import but come away *Exhausted*. On a 4, you enter the dreams of someone (GM's choice) acquainted with you and may have a brief discussion. You remember the details of the discussion, but the dreamer forgets. On a 5, you may see through the eyes of another for a few minutes. On a 6, you may see through the eyes of another for a few minutes, and may regain this connection at will for the next several days.

Example: When you camp in the Twisted Wood, roll a die. On a 1 Disaster! By magic or flood or marauding Snarks your camp is destroyed. On a 2 you are interrupted by a wandering creature, patrol, or event. On a 3 you are inconvenienced or short on supplies. On a 4-5, the camp is safe for the night. On a 6, you catch a break: a friendly face stumbles in or you find one of the wood's secret springs or groves.

Example: If your players stumble into an unplanned fight, their opponents might have something of value. Since the fight was unplanned, obviously you didn't work out in advance what they would have. So roll a die. On a 1-2 they just have junk. On a 3 they have equipment or minor valuables. On a 4 they have information to pull the players in: a clue, secret, mystery, or story hook. On a 5 they have the sort of item or information that allows players to bypass dangers: passcodes, keys, or a map. On a 6 they have riches or magic or new and powerful tech.

A classic sort of Custom Roll is the random monster table. When players go through a certain area, they may encounter different monsters with different probabilities. You may prefer not to roll on such tables, instead simply picking an interesting result without any randomness. I use both methods depending on whether I want to be surprised along with the players or whether I have a great idea in mind already or even whether I just want to try out a new monster. Only use encounters during travel if the travel is the focus of the game—if the characters are on a quest, say. If the focus is on what happens at the other side, simply skip over the travel portion and get to the good stuff.

Example: If you get a Twist when crossing the Great Erg and the GM tells you that you are attacked, roll a die. On a 1 the great Roc comes down and tries to steal your horses. On a 2-3 you come across the Necromancer's patrols. On a 4 you are attacked by Antfolk bandits. On a 5 you blunder into the territory of a Wind-Whale. On a 6 you are ambushed by a Desert Angler.

Adventuring regions

Locations are great. Locations are places where cool things happened and where everything connects. They do not exist in a vacuum, however. The trips between locations can be dangerous, too. The following is how I like to organize things for adventures in dangerous worlds, but different tones or genres require modifications.

I like to break things into three sections: Wilds, Points of Light, and Dungeons. Points of Light are small or large areas of relative safety and security in the midst of the dangerous Wilds. Dungeons are locations within the Wilds that have their own unique guardians and dangers but also contain secrets or treasure. Wilds are everything else around.

The Wilds are the container for all the potential adventures you can imagine. They are any region that is full of dangers but with spaces of safety within. They contain Points of Light, Dungeons, and realms of weird neutrals amidst their inherent dangers. Weird neutrals are groups that are foreign and do not trust the player characters but will not immediately reject them. Depending on the actions of the players, they may become friends or foes. If they turn into foes, the areas they control will no longer be Points of Light.

Examples of Wilds include deserts, jungles, mountains, forests, the ocean (if you're on a ship), the sky (if you're on an airship), outer space (if you're on a spaceship), a moon, occupied territories, a great network of tunnels beneath the earth, a realm of portals and keys, or a city of evil.

When creating Wilds, consider the following questions and sketch a rough map as you do so. You don't have to answer every question. What are the environmental dangers? What are the factions that control or have an interest in the Wilds? Where are the conflicts and boundaries? Where are the Points of Light? Where are the Dungeons? What are the landmarks that will help the players navigate? If the players get lost, what enemies might they run into? What might they run into that would surprise them? What are the secrets and where are they held?

Points of Light are sources of aid, rest, information, and rumors. They are the setting for festivals and events. Examples include villages, cities, monasteries, temples, oases, forts, castles, towers, and outposts. They could also be mobile: nomadic camps or patrols by the authorities. They will be friendly or weird neutrals.

When creating Points of Light, you should think about the following questions. What defenses do they have against the dangers of the Wilds? How do they get the necessities of life? What is their purpose? (E.g. A trading hub, a source of resources, a diaspora, a desperate band.) Who is the leader and is there internal conflict? How do they relate to nearby groups? (E.g. rivals, friends, lords.) What are the landmarks, unique traits, and secrets?

Dungeons are almost the reverse of Points of Light. They are places of concentrated danger for the players. They are sources of secrets, treasures, information, and unobtainable resources. They are enemies' lairs and places of strength. They are places that the players would never want to go, but must because of what lies within.

Examples of Dungeons include caves, towers, castles, woods, industrial complexes, banks, casinos, military bases, cruise ships, slums, tent cities, occupied towns, space stations, giant living creatures, magical living landscapes, or—of course—literal dungeons.

When creating Dungeons, draw out a map. Unlike the rough and wide open Wilds map, a Dungeon map usually has only limited paths to connect from one location to the next. In drawing your map, consider the following questions: is there one group of enemies here or more than one? Are there conflicts between them? Are there any weird neutrals? Are there traps or environmental dangers? Are there places of safety—miniature Points of Light—within the Dungeon? Where is the players' goal? What other treasure or secrets might they find aside from their goal?

Dungeons always contain groups of themed recurring enemies. Wilds often do too, but Wilds can also be more diverse. When designing your dungeon, create a group (or more than one group) of diverse enemies linked by a common theme and common mechanics.



Six dungeon examples

- A dungeon containing swarms of fiery insects guarding a fiery queen. Or expand this to multiple smaller dungeons with different sorts of fiery arthropods and queens leading to a larger dungeon containing the fiery empress of them all. Mechanically, the swarms use the Mob trait and all have fire-based powers.
- A forest of twisting paths containing plant monsters. Mechanically, each plant monster can take root instead of moving in order to regain health. The plants also have aura effects as a result of their intoxicating scents.
- A starbase controlled by militaristic androids. Mechanically, they all resist damage, move quickly, and use explosive attacks.
- Within the fetid swamp lies a fungal den of twisted people. The mind-altering fungus has given them time-altering powers at the price of their sanity and humanity. Mechanically, these poor creatures have triggered abilities giving them “do-overs.” For example, once per combat when a player hits one, the player must reroll the attack with Disadvantage. Once per combat, when they miss an attack they may instead reroll the attack against a different target.
- A realm of towers without bridges populated by flying creatures. Doors simply open into the empty sky and crossings must be made with ropes and grapnels. Being attacked during such a crossing would surely be disastrous.
- An abandoned shopping mall full of shambling undead controlled by a mad scientist. Mechanically, the monsters may revive after being Taken Out unless players take a turn to sever the head after it's been downed.

Creating NPCs

In order to play the world, you need to roleplay all the myriad characters in the world that your players come across. I won't burden you with unnecessary mechanics for how to do this, but I will outline the things you should consider to enrich your NPCs.

First: What notable Skills, if any, do they have? You don't have to list them all—just focus on the ones likely to come up in play. If the NPC ends up in an Opposed Roll against a player character, you'll need to decide whether they are Skilled or not.

Second: Where are they strong and where are they weak? If they have a particular strength, this can have a quasi-mechanical impact. If you try to arm-wrestle the Troll, you will lose (unless you cheat). If you try to upstage the showman, he will embarrass you (unless you've outsmarted him). This isn't the same thing as saying “no” to your players. You say “Yes, you armwrestle the troll, but once the match has started it becomes immediately obvious that you can't beat her fairly. She's just too strong. What do you do?”

Similarly, weaknesses can give players a way to get what they want without needing to roll. If the players come up with a good idea to take advantage of the Bosun's *reckless ambition* to spark a mutiny, they don't need to roll to convince him. He's already convinced that he should be captain. Other times the NPC might have Disadvantage on a roll due to, say, *fear of heights*.

Next: What interesting connections does the character have? Obviously the Lieutenant is close to the Colonel and has the respect of his underlings. No surprises there. But perhaps he was also childhood friends with a rebel general. Perhaps he is an addict and in the pocket of the Triads. Perhaps he has a burning envious hatred of the Marshal.

Finally and perhaps most importantly: What do they want? Everybody wants something and some people want more than one thing. These wants should be informed by the character's connections.

Each of these categories help you roleplay your character in a convincing way. Wants, connections and weaknesses guide their overall course, while Skills and strengths determine how they go about achieving their goals.

Now you know what your character will do and say, there's one last little trick to help your players remember who they are. Give each character a cue: a single descriptor that you use every time the character appears. Usually visual, like wavy blonde hair or a jagged scar, a cue could also use other senses, like a high coarse voice, a sour scent, or an indescribable sense of danger.

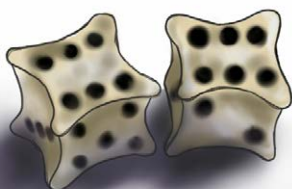
For more on creating villains specifically, see page 185.

Planning the Session

A major advantage of *Strike!* is that it requires little preparation. You don't need to plan all the things that will happen in the session. When you use the Twist List, cool and unexpected things happen in the normal course of play. That doesn't mean that you have to abandon all notion of planning, though. You might come to the table each session with a Twist that would suit each character, then wait for them to roll a Twist at an appropriate moment. You might simply have the idea that you want to bring in an enemy faction at some point. You won't always get to use all your ideas, and in fact if play goes in an unexpected direction you may not get to use any of them. Don't worry, just write them down and you might be able to use one another day.

Most of your prep time is picking and modifying monsters for the players to fight. So see the Team Monster chapter on page 140 for all the details on this part of your role as GM. Your agenda here is to make the fights exciting and not to go easy on your players.

If you are spoiled for choice, you can use random generators to help narrow things down and combine elements of your setting to come up with a quest for a session. One such method is described under the heading "Quick Session Generation" on page 31.



Pick three

For planning a given session, it can help to think of three really cool things you want to include. You could pick fights, Team Conflicts, chases, or just plain cool scenes. Tonight, I want to see a fight with an assassin on top of the bridge connecting the Petronas Towers, a motorcycle chase through Kuala Lumpur traffic, and an ambush in the alley by Nur and her goons. I sketch out a quick map for each fight, pull out or modify the monster stats I need for Nur and the gunmen she travels with, as well as for the assassin, Sukarno. Last, I think about one way these pieces might connect together, and I think about what cool stuff could happen if these scenes don't end up going the players' way. If the assassin escapes, he might leap off the bridge revealing a wingsuit. If the players can't catch the bike messenger in traffic during the chase, they might end up right where I want them for the ambush. Even if they catch the messenger, I just have to wait for them to roll a Twist out on the streets and then it's ambush time. If they lose the fight in the ambush, Nur gets to haul them up in front of her mother, Nurul. The odds of the session actually going exactly the way I just imagined it are slim, but I can probably work in some variation on each of these scenes with a bit of re-skinning to reflect the players' choices and the Twists that happened. With those three scenes ready to go, I'm confident we're going to have a great night.

Useful Practices

In this section, I'll provide some additional tools to help with setting scenes, exploration and travel, social situations, and magic. Experience has taught me that some of these can be contentious issues, so the most important thing is just to **do what works for you**. If your group already has a way of handling these situations that works well for you, don't change it. If you are running into problems or arguments, these tips might help.

Setting the Scene

A part of your role is setting scenes. The basic technique of scene-framing is starting with the scene already in motion: skip the boring parts and get to the good parts. Once you're comfortable with this, try to bring players' Complications into the scene framing. For example, you could tell the player that the scene begins with her character getting in trouble for her "Loudmouth" Complication and giving away their plan to the villain. If she's okay with this, she'll get an Action Point for her trouble. If she's not okay, she'll tell you and you need to reframe things. How far you can take this very much depends on your players; I've had players who would not be into this *at all* and others who would happily take the Action Point and elaborate on how their character screwed up. Sometimes players set their own scenes. That's great, but feel free to twist the situation if you think you can make it more interesting or challenging without invalidating the player's idea.

When you set scenes, the first minute or two should be about establishing the conflict. There should be some clear conflict, whether between characters in the scene or from the environment, otherwise it is easy to have a scene that never really gets going. If that happens, don't worry. You can never predict what the other players are going to do and sometimes that means that they won't respond to a scene the way you envisaged. No problem. If there is no conflict, just wrap it up and move on to the next interesting bit.

On the other hand, if you found some conflict then you're faced with a choice. Your first option is to let the players try to resolve it and see what the dice say. They might resolve it quickly and painlessly, or else they might get a Twist and get in a worse spot. The dice come up Twist often enough that you'll have plenty of scenes going differently than you or the players envisaged. These are usually the most memorable scenes. If you know in advance that you want to make a scene important and memorable, then you have a second option: set up a nasty surprise for the players. You put them in a conflict, then you make their situation worse, and only then do you let them try to work their way out of it.

Example: The group enters the boardroom to talk to Yutaka about the cyberware shipment. They say what they want, he says what he wants in return, and the players agree to a deal. That's that. No conflict, no roll, no problem.

Example: Yutaka says what he wants, the players say "no way" and try to convince him to accept better terms. They roll and succeed.

Example: Same as before, but they roll and get a Twist. Now Yutaka makes a gesture and Scotty O. comes in with his arm around Little Mike's neck and a gun to his head. Things just got real.

Example: You want to make sure you make an impression. Yutaka says what he wants, the players say "no way" and start to argue for better terms. He cuts them off and makes a gesture. In comes Scotty O. with Little Mike. They don't get to roll until the situation has already gotten worse.

Exploration

First, if there is a trap or a secret with a particular trigger and a player takes an action that would certainly find it, then they succeed. Remember, **"If you do the right thing, it works."**

Second, players can also generally search an area and rely on their character's Skills to find secrets. If they do this, it takes time and they must roll an appropriate Skill. They don't have to tell you all the various things they try—you can assume their character is trying all sorts of things depending on how the roll turns out.

Third, if there is nothing of interest to be found in an area, players do not roll the dice. If they search, they spend the time but no roll is required. This means that when they do roll the dice and fail, they'll know that there was something there and will want to try again and again. So your Twists need to be better than "You don't find anything." Remember, a Twist needs to change the situation. If they get to a point where they can try again later, that's cool but the stakes should be higher or you should "say yes."

Fourth, if the thing the players were looking for was plot-critical, usually it makes sense that they should find it even if they roll a Twist. The Twist should just give them some other obstacle or setback to deal with.

How do players know to do the right thing? **There must be some hint in your description** that players can latch on to and investigate. When players first discover an altar with a mystical tome, they won't know at first whether reading it will summon a nameless horror or give them important insight to the milieu, but there must be some way they can tell the difference with proper investigation. The other side of this coin is that when your description is very sparse and plain, the players know that there is nothing to investigate and won't obsessively check each flagstone with a ten foot pole. It is the GM's job to inform players of important details, but the players' job to react to those details. Attentive and cautious players can get by with a smaller number of rolls than hasty or inattentive players, but overcautious players slow things down for everyone. The classic disincentive to slow play is to have "wandering monsters" or unfortunate events happen at regular intervals, but don't be afraid to simply speak up and make it clear to the players that they are barking up the wrong tree.

With regards to traps, the procedure above generally works well. A typical Twist on a roll to find traps is setting off said trap. Another option is to occasionally have the trap partially triggered. You end up clinging to the edge of the pit rather than falling in, or you find yourself with your foot on a pressure plate, knowing that the trap will fire once you lift your foot.



Social Situations

Some players want to use their own social skills to avoid having to roll the dice. Other players want to immediately pick a Skill and roll the dice without getting into a conversation. Both of these are to be avoided.

First, require details. “I want to bluff him into thinking that the President wants him dead” is a good intent, but as a GM you need to press the player for more details on what exactly his character is saying. Those details are crucial for knowing how an NPC might respond positively or negatively. Without those details, you’re relegated to saying essentially “he believes you” or “he doubts you.” With the details, you can explain how or why he does one of those things.

Second, as soon as you have all the details you need, either say yes (remember, “If you do the right thing, it works”) or tell the player to roll the appropriate Skill. The appropriate Skill is based on those details, not just on the player’s intent. He may want to use his Bluff Skill, but if his bluff primarily relied on establishing credibility based on his knowledge of the CIA, there might be a more appropriate choice. If a player wants to roll a particular Skill, their words and actions must align with that Skill.

That is enough for most groups, but if you want more mechanical weight, you can use the following chart. Use this chart when a player wants to convince a character to take a particular action. The odds of success depend on the NPC’s disposition towards the characters and to what degree the action is in the NPC’s interest. Cross-reference these to find out whether or not to roll and whether the players have Advantage or Disadvantage or neither.

Most NPCs fall in the middle three disposition categories. Notice that a hateful character is so set against the players that they are unlikely even to help themselves if it would help the players, while an adoring character is likely to go out of their way to risk their own interests to help the players. These are extreme positions. Players can take actions to improve an NPC’s disposition towards them, but only by one step. To build trust by more than that requires more than words or gifts: it takes time and deeds. On the other hand, it can be easy to move in the opposite direction, even by accident. Trust is hard to gain and easy to lose.

Disposition to Players					
	Hateful	Opposed	Neutral	Aligned	Adoring
Anti	Imposs.	Imposs.	Disad.	—	Adv.
Indif.	Imposs.	Disad.	—	Adv.	Auto.
Pro	Disad.	—	Adv.	Auto.	Auto.

Preparedness and Difficult Regions

If you tried to cross the Sahara wearing what you are wearing right now, carrying only what you have in front of you, you would be at a Disadvantage in every single thing you tried to do. It is the same in the game—there are some regions that are so inhospitable that characters going there unready have Disadvantage on every roll and will not get far. You can use regions like this for places you don’t think the player characters should be able to go (yet).

Example: You can see the shimmering spires of Ardena from the smelly little village of Scut, but between lies the Forest of the Five Perils.

Even doing this, your players may ignore your cues and spend all their resources preparing for such a journey. Let them prepare and let them negate the penalties if their preparations are sufficient. But also make sure they see the consequences of focusing on that instead of on whatever else is happening.

Example: The players spend a week gathering supplies and hiring a guide to cross the Great Erg. A Twist means that high winds delay their departure another week. Now well-provisioned, they are able to attempt the crossing without having Disadvantage. But in the meantime, the Slavers’ coastal raids have gone unchecked, carrying off scores of people including some friends of the player characters.

You can also effectively gate off regions without needing to give players Disadvantage on many tests—just put one insurmountable obstacle in their path instead. However, don’t be surprised if the players out-think you and find a clever way to surmount it.

Example: Your nemesis operates out of Voy Torashi spaceport, but the space around Torash is enveloped by a blockade. You’ll never get through aboard the Stooping Kestrel.

What if you want an area to seem dangerous and be dangerous without discouraging players from attempting it? The primary tool you have here is consequences: the area is dangerous because the consequences for failure are greater.

Example: The spiders of Nur’Zal were one thing. Their venom might leave you heaving and retching for a week. But the arachnanthropes of Ardash il Falza are another story entirely. One bite and you’ll be on an inescapable path to eight-legs.

So as long as the players are succeeding, the area is no different from any other, but the moment they fail you must hit them hard. Your second tool is much more situational: in areas the characters are unfamiliar with, you may deny them the use of certain Skills.

Example: The survivalist’s Skills have until now been used only in a forest context. Foraging in a desert environment is not the same as in a forest and the survivalist may have to roll Desert Foraging Unskilled instead of being able to use their Foraging Skill.



Pacing Rolls

There is another technique I like to use sometimes and that is called the “Pacing Roll.” Each region is rated from 1 – 3 in terms of population and 0 – 2 in terms of how taxing or dangerous the environment is. A population of 1 represents sparse occupation, 2 represents a populous region and 3 represents a crowded region. An environment rating of 0 represents normal terrain, 1 represents a very difficult region, such as a snowy mountainside, 2 represents the harshest places in the world: the Himalayas in a storm or Death Valley under the summer sun.

The population rating indicates how likely you are to have a run-in with monsters or people, while the environment rating indicates how quickly you gain Conditions. A pacing roll is a simple roll of a die. If the roll comes up equal to or lower than the population rating, the party has an unexpected run-in with people or monsters. The encounter need not be dangerous, but it interrupts the party’s plans. If the roll is higher than that, but equal to or lower than the sum of the population rating and the environment rating, the party gains a Condition or Flaw related to their surroundings instead.

Roll	Result
P or less	Encounter with inhabitant.
P + T or less, but above P	Condition based on environment.
Above P + T	No problems.

For instance, if the population rating is 2 and the environment rating is 1, then when you roll a pacing roll, the party has an unexpected run-in on a 1 or 2, and the party gains a Condition on a 3. You ought not have the two ratings add up to more than 3 except in some strange circumstances. Is Death Valley populous? Are mountain peaks crowded? No.

Hungry, Winded, and Exhausted are useful Conditions that can affect a whole group while traveling. In a location harsh enough to give such Conditions, finding food or safe places to rest probably requires a roll. Alternatively, give the traveling gear a Flaw. For instance, the carriage has a poorly repaired axle or the grain got wet.

Okay, so when do you make a pacing roll? Well, some GMs like to keep close track of time. If that describes you, then make it

time-based. Roll once per hour or once per day while traveling. In an enclosed place where more is happening, roll once every ten minutes. If you don’t keep close track of time, use Skill Rolls to pace it instead: make a pacing roll once every four Skill Rolls the players make. If you find that too fast or too slow, adjust. In either case, you should make a pacing roll whenever the group tries to rest or make camp, but ignore the environment rating. Resting is not taxing, but you may still be interrupted by people or monsters.

Example: The Aluk Expanse is a sparsely populated part of the galaxy, home primarily to pirates and fugitives, but also the occasional hermit or commune that can’t abide the Autarchy’s way of life. It is used as a hiding place because the Farhan debris obscures the Extremely Massive Objects, making FTL travel a risky proposition. The population and environment ratings are each 1. On a pacing roll of 1, the players run afoul of pirates or come across a hermit in distress. On a roll of 2, they get Gravity Sickness (a Minor Condition) or their vessel gets a Flaw, perhaps Gravimetric Compressor Malfunction, giving them Disadvantage on rolls involving their ship’s maneuverability or speed. On a roll of 3 to 6, their travels are blissfully uneventful.

Randomness and Emergence

I like things like pacing rolls, wandering monsters, and random tables because I like the way unexpected connections arise out of them. When something unexpected yet totally appropriate to the situation comes up on the dice, that is very satisfying. When something out of place comes up, that is interesting because there must be some explanation—the players might come up with one on their own. The unexpected changes up the story.

The point of random tables is that the GM can be surprised by the world and have the feeling of playing in a living world that isn’t fully predictable. That’s the feeling that the GM instills in the players, so it’s no wonder that some GMs also want to have that feeling. Others don’t care. It’s just a matter of taste.

On the other hand, random fights in Tactical Combat are inherently less interesting than set-piece fights where you create interesting terrain beforehand. Some groups eschew random encounters for this reason. Others resolve random encounters with Skill Rolls instead of Tactical Combat. Many encounters can be solved without fighting and the basic rules can be used for fights too.

Magic and Supernatural Abilities

If a player wants to play a wizard or psychic or any character with supernatural powers, they are interested in using those powers to mess with the game's world. Depending on the tone of the game, starting magical characters may only be able to access relatively minor magical effects. If they want to access more powerful effects, they can do this by taking appropriate actions in-game to acquire knowledge. Players mostly break down into two types: those who want a defined list of effects they can generate reliably, and those who want to make it up on the fly. Regardless of which type of player they are, when they use magic they have to roll an applicable Skill (Evocation? Summoning?) and see what happens.

The first type of player may want to have a list of spells that they can pick from. I won't write out such a list in this book because it's beyond our scope, but you can make up your own such list based on your chosen setting or you can borrow from whatever game you fancy. Some players won't want a list but simply know what spells they want their character to have. The only limitations required are those demanded by the tone and setting of the game.

The second type is more likely to want to have the ability to say "Ah well, it's fortunate that I prepared a spell for just such an occasion..." and proceed to describe how they attempt to magic their way out of whatever problem. Working this way, there should be a firm agreement on the scale and precision of the actions the magical character can accomplish. Can they move small objects? Heavy boulders? Mountains? Rewire a circuit?

Magic is another good place for Custom Rolls. With non-magical tasks, everyone knows more or less what the expected outcomes are. Magic is something we have no experience with, so for players to engage with it confidently they need to know its rules. Laying out unique Twists and Costs that arise from spellcasting can help it feel unique, too. A special rule I like for Wizards is that if they roll a 2, the Twist is a mundane one but if they roll a 1 then they miscast and the spell doesn't do what's intended. Maybe they just summoned a demon into downtown Manhattan, or maybe they accidentally turned their hair bright green. Feel free to be really mean with these miscasts—magic is high risk and high reward.

Are wizards special that they get these things and others don't?

In one way, yes: Wizards are able to affect the world in ways that other characters cannot. That's the whole point of magic. In another way, no: the Wizard's player gets a mechanical benefit from their magic via their Skills and Tricks, while the other characters get benefits pertaining to their own special talents, whether they are supernatural or not. A Librarian might not have a magic spell prepared, but could instead announce "Aha! I was just reading about these the other day!" and use her Trick to save the day.

In Tactical Combat, players use Reskinning (see page 98) to translate their Class and Role powers into the magical abilities their character uses. They can use non-combat magic in clever ways during combat too using the rules for Skill Rolls in combat.

Optional Rules and Variants

Here are a few rules variants that you might consider using. They ended up here either because I prefer what I put in the main text over these, or because they add a layer of complexity that should be optional. Many of these give alternatives that better suit certain types of player or certain types of game. Some of them I use regularly, but would not recommend to beginners.

Lower and Higher Skill Tiers

The basic system of Skilled vs Unskilled gives even Unskilled characters a decent chance of getting what they want. To allow for more variation, you can include another tier below these. This bottom tier is called No Skill. To avoid confusion, you might rename the existing tiers Novice and Expert, using the Unskilled and Skilled charts respectively.

If you want to open things up on the other end, you can create a Skill tier above them all. This tier is always called Heroic, and allows for hyper-competence in a Skill. Moving from Skilled to Heroic needs more than just rolling a 6. Heroic Skills indicate a supernatural level of Skill and so something supernatural needs to be happening to go up to that level. Hence, you advance when the plot demands it. The new tiers look like this:

Heroic	
6	Success with two Bonuses
5	Success with a Bonus
4	Success
3	Success with a Cost
2	Twist with a Silver Lining
1	Twist
No Skill	
6	Success and learn the Skill OR a Bonus
5	Success with a Cost
4	Twist with a Silver Lining
3	Twist
2	Twist with a Cost
1	Something Awful

They should be pretty self-explanatory. A Silver Lining is just a Bonus but happens alongside a Twist—the player gets to pick the Silver Lining after the GM picks the Twist. What about Something Awful? When you get a Twist, something awful might happen or it might just be an inconvenience or a mixed result, and that is up to the GM. When you roll a 1 with No Skill, something truly awful is guaranteed. If you roll a 6 with a Heroic Skill, you get two Bonuses, but you may combine them into one especially good Bonus.

You have to figure out what starting Skills look like if you use these tiers. I'd suggest for a low-powered game that one Skill from your Background and the Skill you pick with your free choice start at Expert, with the rest starting at Novice. For a high-powered game, do the same but up one tier, so you start with two Heroic Skills.



Openings

When you roll a 5 on a Skilled Roll, you get an Opening. An Opening is a choice. You may take your basic success, or you can improve on it by picking a Bonus, but at the price of a Cost. Costs can be pretty bad for you, so you won't want to do this every time, and in general it is not a great deal, but sometimes you just have a great idea for a Bonus that is too good to resist.

You can apply this to combat, too: when you roll a 5 on an attack, you can treat it as a 6 if you take a Strike. Again, Strikes are rough and this isn't the kind of deal you'll want to take unless you have a good reason.

I really like this rule, but it's best used with experienced players who have a good idea of the value of Costs, damage, and Bonuses.

Hindering

Barclay is attempting to hack the SayuraTech accounts database while Jevins is trying to distract her, but he is unwilling to oppose her directly. Rather than use an Opposed Roll, you might simply reverse the helping rules. Barclay makes her roll and Jevins rolls too. If Jevins rolls higher than Barclay, she must subtract one from her result.

Grittier Injuries

Characters can have multiple injuries. The penalty doesn't stack, but each injury must be recovered from separately. You can write it as Injured (Chest), Injured (Right Leg), etc. If a character gets a Twist on a roll to recover, they may end up with long-term penalties from their wound. For example, -1 to speed, -1 to HP, or model their frailty by having them begin each fight with one Strike already, making them more likely to get re-Injured. A penalty like that could last through a whole adventure or longer, and should always come with an attached Complication so that the player can play up their injury outside of combat. So they might have "Complication: Sprained Knee (-1 speed)."

Lethality

Say you want character death to be on the table, but leaving it up to your judgment exclusively is unpalatable. Then use any or all of these rules: once a character has the Injured Condition, they are at risk. On any roll they make while Injured where it makes sense that they might possibly die in their chosen course of action, you may say that their life is on the line, announcing that fact clearly. If they roll a 1, then their character has died.

If a character has the Sick Condition and they undertake something that could severely worsen that sickness, give them the same warning. If they roll a 1, then they are overcome by their illness and incapacitated. They will die unless they can get prompt medical attention, and even then there is a risk that the doctor may not be able to save them.

In Tactical Combat, anyone with the Injured Condition who is Taken Out with 5 or more Strikes is dead. Anyone who is Taken Out with 7 or more Strikes is dead regardless of their Conditions. Additionally, monsters may expend an Attack Action to kill an adjacent Taken Out character. They may also do so with a ranged or melee reach attack as well, but in that case they must still roll

to hit (they hit on a 3 or higher). However, the only reason they would undertake such an action is if killing that character was the monsters' objective in the combat, or if the monster is designed around gaining combat advantages by killing characters. Such circumstances are rare. In desperation, a monster may also verbally threaten to finish off a downed combatant, preparing an action to kill the Taken Out character. In this case, the rest of the characters must decide whether to negotiate, to try to kill the monster before it can carry out its threat (or push it so that it is no longer adjacent), or to simply fight on.

2d6 Skill Rolls

This variant replaces the usual one die Skill Roll with a version using two dice. The purpose of the following rules is to take the general format of an *Apocalypse World* move and translate it into a very general implementation of *Strike!* Skills. You can see in this move some evidence of the influence that *Apocalypse World* had on *Strike!*

Roll 2 dice and add them together (add 2 to the result if Skilled)

- On a 12+, Success and a Bonus.
- On a 10-11, Success (and you may learn the Skill if Unskilled).
- On a 7-9, Twist or Success with a Cost. (GM's choice, but the GM should give this choice back to the player as an in-character decision if possible).
- On a 6-, Twist.

Advantage means you roll 3d6 and drop the lowest. Disadvantage means you roll 3d6 and drop the highest. A -1, as from a Major Condition, is simply a -1 still. Helping works the same way as before: the helper rolls, and if their roll is higher than the primary roll, you add 1 to it. Opposed Rolls are still 1d6 vs 1d6, following the usual rules.

Linked Rolls go as follows:

- On a 12+, Success and the target roll has Advantage, plus a Bonus.
- On a 10-11, Success and the target roll has Advantage.
- On a 7-9, Twist or Success with a Cost. (GM's choice, but the GM should give this choice back to the player as an in-character decision if possible. Success with a Cost means that the target roll has Advantage, but the player pays some other Cost. Twist does not affect the target roll.)
- On a 6-, Twist and the target roll has Disadvantage.

Simpler Learning

Instead of learning by trying Unskilled rolls, characters learn one new Skill per level, or per session. The Skill must be one they used during that session.

Action Point Options

The rules suggest each player starts with at least one Action Point at the start of each session and one that they must give away to another player. This is deliberately neutral, not encouraging any particular kind of behavior. You could take away those “freebies” and instead add in another way to get Action Points. Borrow from *Burning Wheel*’s Beliefs to encourage driven characters in a story centered on those drives. Borrow from *Dungeon World*’s alignments or *The Shadow of Yesterday*’s keys to give different player types their own ways to gain points, encouraging them in pursuit of their own style of play. Make up a rule suited to your setting to encourage whatever behavior you want to see in play. The expectation with whatever system you come up with is that it should be easy to get two points per session if you are at all trying, but very difficult or impossible to get more than five.

Teamwork Tokens

When a player character helps yours or does something special for your character, you give them a Teamwork Token. These Tokens can be spent in two ways. First, when you roll to help that player or they roll to help you, they may spend the Teamwork Token to make the help more potent: if the helping die exceeds the result, add 2 to the result instead of just 1. (Spend before the roll.) Second, they may spend the Teamwork Token in combat during your turn in order to go immediately after you. This does not change their position in the Initiative order and they miss their next turn: they just get to go earlier in the round, not get an extra turn.

You may only ever have one Teamwork Token from any given player. You may only spend one Teamwork Token per round in combat.

Emotional Power

Players may choose to give their character a special emotional power. These powers are rated from 1–6. These powers allow characters to exceed their normal boundaries, but can also take control away from the player. As they grow in emotional power, the benefits are larger but the loss of control is greater too. Let’s take as an example Faith. (For another example, see the Greed advance in the Moneybags Mini-kit on page 54).

First, certain Skills gain additional significance. Faith might transform the Prayer Skill into something capable of performing miracles. The higher the Faith rating the more powerful the miracle.

Second, certain Skills become more reliable. When you use such a Skill and roll less than or equal to your rating, you may reroll the dice and take the better result. For example, Faith might make the Preaching Skill more reliable. If you have a Faith 4 and you roll a 3 on your Preaching, you can reroll. If you roll a 2 on your reroll, you’re stuck with the 3.

Third, your character might lose control to their emotions. When given a choice involving that emotion, to resist the emotion’s urging you must roll a die and get a result higher than the rating. For example, if your Faith 2 demands that you pray at dawn, but you are supposed to go on a raid at dawn you must roll a die: you need to get a 3 or higher to go on the raid without stopping to pray.

Fourth, when you reach a rating of 6 you are losing your character: you must find an appropriate moment within this session or the next to let go. Your character automatically succeeds at whatever they intend and then are lost to the emotion forever. For instance, you use your Faith 6 to freeze the river of magma, cleanse the air of poison, and save the vale, at which point your character is called bodily to heaven and becomes a saint and a legend. At your option, and if it makes sense in the fiction, you may choose to lose the emotional power forever instead of your character. For example, you perform your last miracle and feel your power leave you as you realize that you have served your purpose as God’s vessel. Think hard, because you might well prefer to let the character move on out of your control rather than continuing to play the character in their lessened state.

Occasionally you may lose access to your emotional power as the result of a Twist. If your God fails to give you the miracle you need when you are most desperate, you may lose your Faith until you take whatever measures are necessary to regain it. If your Berserker Rage causes harm to your loved ones, you may be unable to attain that state until you have worked through your grief.

Advancement: Whenever your emotional power grants you a reroll and that reroll is better than your first result, put a check next to it on your sheet. When you resist your emotion and lose, mark a check. When you have checks equal to its current rating, the rating increases by one.

Examples: Humanity in a transhumanist setting, Corruption in a setting where magic leads to such, Pride, Fealty, Honor, Berserker Rage.

Whatever you pick, make sure both you and your GM know **exactly** what your emotion demands of you and agree on it, because your GM will enforce that on you by giving your character hard choices and you might not always get to decide what your character chooses. This rule requires trust that the GM and player are both going to be fair. Powergamers and control-freak GMs should take a pass here.

A Positive Condition

If the characters are particularly well-rested, they may get the *Fresh Condition*: they start each combat with an extra 2 HP. In Team Conflict, if you are *Fresh* you get Advantage on your Preparatory action if you take one. If you did not have time to take a Preparatory action, then your *Fresh Condition* allows you to make a roll as though you had time (without Advantage). The *Fresh Condition* is lost as soon as you gain any other Condition.

Redshirts

Players have a character that they play most of the time, but also have the ability to call in expendable forces to go into the most dangerous situations. Play officers on a starship and send the grunts into battle. Play spies and investigators and call in the tactical squad when things get hot. These characters are always expendable and death is, for them, a common Twist. They should have one or two Skills and if you’re using them for Tactical Combat, use the rules for “Simplified Classes.”

Playing without a GM

Making this work with the Tactical Combat rules would require a lot of hacking, so just stick to the basic rules. (Or you could make one player take on the responsibilities of the GM for combat purposes and play a character that is not capable in combat.) Players agree on a situation before play and create involved NPCs. Each important NPC needs a set of descriptors. Play your characters as usual. When there is an NPC that needs to be played, any player whose character is not involved in the scene can step in and play them. If all the player characters are in the scene, one must volunteer to play the NPC and have their character take a bit of a back seat. If the NPC is new, each player comes up with a descriptor except for the player who will be playing that character. They must play according to the descriptors the others give them.

When anyone rolls a Twist, the player to their left rolls two dice, consults the following chart, and comes up with Twists that fit the descriptions. If it's possible to give the player an in-character choice between the two outcomes, do so. If not, just pick one of the two results.

- 1: Harm. Damage the character directly. If physical damage is inappropriate, damage a relationship or their reputation instead.
- 2: Steal. Damage or take away something or someone the character values.
- 3: Obstacle. Some unforeseen challenge lies between the character and their goal.
- 4: Escalate. Increase the stakes. Threaten something really truly nasty. Next time the character rolls a Twist, if the threat is still relevant, it comes to pass.
- 5: Misdirect. The character receives or received bad information or misinterpreted something or ends up in the wrong place.
- 6: Yes, but. The character succeeds at their task, but... they get split up, they take too long doing it, they end up helping or informing an adversary, they get caught. This category is basically a catch-all.

Example: Diego is climbing the snowy mountain to save the baby bird! He rolls his Climbing Skill but gets a Twist. The player to his left rolls a 2 and a 3. She decides that Diego slips and his backpack falls in a crevasse. Now he must choose between going on without it (Steal) or having to go into the crevasse after it (Obstacle).

Example: Agent York has infiltrated MUCK headquarters and is trying to put a virus into their network. He rolls a Twist. The player on his left rolls a 5 and a 6. Misdirects are often hard to work into in-character choices, but sometimes you can do it. In this case, the player on his left tells him that while on the MUCK network, he found files that seem to imply that Agent Neville is working for them! She's a double agent! York can dig deeper to try to confirm or disprove this suspicion, but he hears footsteps and taking too long will get him captured (Yes, but), or he can leave now and go confront his fellow agent (Misdirect, since he's not sure if it's true).

Aptitudes

Use this rule if you want to slow down Skill advancement or if you want to model a character being a quicker study in some areas. Each character has different aptitudes: they may need just one 6 to learn a social Skill, but two to learn a mental Skill and three to learn a physical Skill. This adds bookkeeping, as you need to keep track of not only Skills you have learned, but also which aptitudes you have points saved in.

Example: Zenobia has a physical aptitude of 2. She rolls a 6 for her Sprinting roll and chooses instead of a Bonus to put a point towards learning a physical Skill. The next session when she rolls a 6 for Climbing Unskilled, she can spend that point to learn Climbing and write it on her sheet. If her physical aptitude had been 3, she would have needed one more point before she could learn a new physical Skill.





Detailed Subsystems

Strike! has three additional subsystems on top of the basic rules: Team Conflict, Chase, and Tactical Combat. Team Conflict presents a system for bringing a bit more detail and tactical choice to conflicts of all kinds. After that comes Chase—Chase is not nearly as in-depth as Team Conflict or Tactical Combat, and it resolves very quickly. Finally, we come to Tactical Combat, fulfilling the promise on the book's cover. Why go through the trouble to learn these more complicated sub-games? Because they are a lot of fun.

Intentions

The goal of these rules is to add depth and granularity to things that would otherwise be quickly dealt with. If you find that they instead feel like they reduce good roleplaying situations into a mechanical exercise, don't use them. You can do everything you need with the basic rules.

How Long Will It Take?

A Team Conflict usually takes about ten minutes or so, but it could also be over much faster if that's how the dice fall. A Tactical Combat usually takes between twenty and thirty minutes. Chase is very fast: a Chase will usually be over in under five minutes.

All of these times assume that the players have some experience with the systems. If it's your first time, be prepared for things to take about twice as long for rules explanations and questions.

Team Conflict

These rules can be used whenever you want to go into greater detail than using a few basic rolls to resolve a situation. They are particularly good for situations where each player character is contributing something to a group effort. Play is broken into rounds. Each round, each player contributes something to the team effort. The conflict can be essentially anything—a journey, a battle, a small fight, a debate, hacking a computer system, or planning and executing a heist, just to name a few of the myriad possibilities. As the name implies, this system is designed for use with multiple players on a team. The rules work with just one, but it really hits its sweet spot around three to five players.

Team Conflict Overview

In Team Conflict, two sides face off over a series of rounds. Each side has an Advance score and a Defense score for the round, which can depend on what the characters did that round, and on how the dice fell. Each team's Advance score is then compared to the opponent's Defense score. If the same team wins both comparisons, they win the Team Conflict. If each team wins one, the Team Conflict continues. Depending on how things go, the conflict could be over in a single round or it could take several.

Each round proceeds in two phases: choosing actions, then resolution.

Intent

At the start of the conflict, each side chooses an Intent, the same way they would if you were using an Opposed Roll. You don't need to specify your task, though—one of the primary reasons to use this system is that, unlike a simple Opposed Roll, you have multiple tasks coming together in the conflict.

Inanimate opposition

For the GM, the opposition need not be other people; these rules work very well for describing a journey or some other struggle against uncaring opposition. When you decide that the intent for the Dark Marshes is for the players to become lost in their depths, it doesn't mean that the marsh has such a desire, but rather that you, the GM, want to see that come to pass if the players fail.

Phase 1: Select Actions

Actions are what determine the players' Advance and Defense scores. The opposition's scores are fixed numbers. Each round, players choose actions (from the list below) and describe what they are doing and what Skill they are using. If they have the Skill in question, they have the entire range of actions available. If they do not have the appropriate Skill for their task, they must use one of the four basic actions. At most 2 players on a team may choose the same action in the same round, except basic actions. Each action gives a bonus to Advance (A), Defense (D), or both, and most have an additional effect. The effect of the action you pick must match what you describe your character doing and the Skill you intend to use, but *they need not match the name of the action*. The names are there to inspire, not to limit you. How the actions you choose are interpreted may vary greatly depending on the sort of conflict. Generally Advancing actions take you closer to your goal while Defensive actions keep the opposition from gaining theirs.

Basic Actions	
Progress	+2A.
Reckless Effort	+3A and take a Hit.
Block	+2D.
Take One for the Team	+3D and owe a personal Concession (usable once per player per conflict).

Advancing Actions	
All-Out Effort	+3A –1D.
Calculated Risk	+3A but take an extra Hit if you Draw.
Win At All Costs	+4A and take an additional Strike that cannot be recovered.
Targeted Effort	+2A and the enemy takes a Hit if you Draw.

Defensive Actions	
Total Defense	+3D –1A.
Prepare	+2D –1A now and +1A next round.
Observe	+1D +1A and scout one opposing roll next round.
Recover	+1D and remove one Strike or regain a Trait.

If you scout an opposing roll, when the next round starts you get to pick one of Advance or Defense and the GM must make that roll before you pick actions. Knowing a roll in advance like this makes planning your actions much easier.

The Opposition

The opposition to the players typically has far fewer choices to make in a conflict than the players do. Instead of choosing several actions, the opposition is simply represented by an Advance and a Defense score, to which they add their die rolls. Typically, the opposition has Advance and Defense scores equal to one less than the number of players. The GM will choose one action per round for the opposition; this action is chosen at the start of the round, but kept secret until the players have all chosen.. On top of this, it has traits that amount to special abilities or restrictions. See "Customizing the Opposition" below for more on this.

Instead of the Observe action, the opposition has the Obscure action: +1A +1D and if the enemy uses Observe, you cancel their scouting and add +1A or +1D next round (your choice, or both if the enemy used Observe twice). If both teams have PCs, they both have access to Observe and Obscure.

When the opposition uses Win At All Costs, instead of giving them a Strike, it removes an opponent's Strike. It is only usable when the opponents have a Strike to remove.

Phase 2: Resolution

Once everyone has chosen an action, add up your team's Advance modifiers and add a die. Do the same with the opponent's Defense. If your Advance is higher than their Defense, your Advance is successful. If it is lower, it fails. Then repeat with the opponent's Advance against your Defense and see the possible results below.

- One Advance succeeds, the other fails: Conflict ends. See "Winning and Losing."

Note: If you lose, you may spend an Action Point not to lose. If you do, your team takes one Hit, the Opponent removes one Strike or recovers one trait, and the conflict continues.

- Both Advances fail: a *Draw*. The conflict continues.
- Both Advances are successful: a *Push*. Both sides take a Hit. The conflict continues.
- One Advance ties, the other succeeds: a *Push*. As above.
- One Advance ties, the other fails: a *Draw*. As above.
- Both Advances tie: the conflict ends because of outside forces. Neither side wins. See "Double Tie."

Example: After adding things up, the players had an Advance score of 5 and a Defense score of 7. The opposition had an Advance score of 7 and a Defense score of 6. The players' Advance was less than the opposition's Defense, so it fails. The opposition's Advance tied the players' Defense. Since one Advance failed and the other was tied, the result is a Draw. The conflict continues and they play another round.

After a round, one or both teams might take a Hit. When you take a Hit, the opposing team gets a choice: they can deactivate one of your traits for the duration of the fight, or they may assign you a Strike. Strikes serve to mitigate your success if you win the conflict. The process is essentially identical when you deal your opponent a Hit—you can decide to deactivate one of their traits or to give them a Strike. Except in cases of alternative win conditions (explained below), players have little incentive to put more than one Strike on their opponents. For the GM, the more Strikes they can put on the players the better.

After a round, if the conflict continues, play another round.

A Special Case

If either your Advance or Defense values are less than or equal to zero *after* you've added the roll and all applicable bonuses, you lose the conflict. It is exactly as though your Opponent's Advance succeeded and yours failed (regardless of the actual outcomes). You may spend an Action Point to continue as described above. This inelegant rule is necessary to curb a degenerate tactic by ensuring that there is some level of risk involved when you sacrifice Advance all the way into the negatives in favor of Defense or vice versa. As long as your Advance and Defense are above zero after you roll, you have nothing to fear from this rule.

Order of Operations

Roll scouted rolls, play actions, play bonuses, roll Advance and Defense, play bonuses after the roll, compare and resolve, resolve action effects.

Opponents always play their bonuses before players do.

Winning and Losing

The conflict could end after *any* round. When it ends, the players may have achieved their goals. If they did, they might owe a Concession—something negative for them that does not negate their success.

Whether the players win or lose, if they have 2 or 3 Strikes, they each take a Minor Condition. If they have 4 or more Strikes they each take a Major Condition.

If the players win, they get what they want but also owe Concessions based on how many Strikes they have as a group. If they have 1 or 2 Strikes, they owe a Minor Concession. If they have 3 or 4 Strikes, they owe a Major Concession. If they have 5 or more Strikes, they owe both a Major and a Minor Concession.

Concessions are narrative effects that are discussed by the group. A Minor Concession indicates that while you've achieved your goal, not everything went your way. Perhaps you were seen and word reaches the ears of your enemies. A Major Concession might mean that you got your goal but something happened that bodes very ill for the future, or it might mean that you achieved most of your goal but its completion is still one step away. Everyone can throw out ideas, but the final decision is in the hands of the GM. The GM's priorities are to make the result appropriate to the level of Concession, and to pick something that makes sense to both them and the other players.

If the players lose and the Opponent has at least one Strike, then the Opponent gets what they wanted, but the players choose one:

- The Opponent's hold on it is insecure.
- It costs the Opponent more than they expected.
- It costs the players less than they expected.
- The players get something extra too. Maybe part of their stakes, maybe something else.

Whatever the players pick, the GM interprets.

If there are player characters on both sides, use the "If the players lose" list instead of Concessions. Both sides gain Conditions based on number of Strikes as above. For more details on player vs. player conflicts, see page 81.

Game over?

Losing a Conflict is something that is going to happen once in a while. It's not the end of the world. In fact, it's no worse than losing an Opposed Roll: you can even pick from the same list. The philosophy of Twists applies here, too: if you don't get what you want, you still get to see something interesting happen. Does it put your character in a tough spot? Now you get to show everyone how you get out of it!

Conceding

At the start of any round (but after you see any of your opponents' rolls you scouted), you may concede. Conceding must be a unanimous team decision. When a team concedes, they lose immediately but reduce their Strikes by two, reducing the Conditions they take on a loss. If the players' team concedes and can use a Complication to explain their loss, the player with the Complication gains an Action Point. By using a Complication you also get the more subtle advantage of determining the way in which you fail. Conceding does not mean that *your characters* necessarily concede or surrender—simply that they lose; how they lose is still up for interpretation depending on what has been decided so far.

Withdrawing

Any player can at any time choose to withdraw their character from the conflict and choose no more actions. They are still bound by the results of the contest and suffer any Concessions or losses the team earns. They take Conditions as determined by the number of team Strikes at the time they withdrew. Thus withdrawing has very little mechanical benefit and doing so is likely to be simply for character reasons. When you withdraw, you have to say how your character is withdrawing. Sometimes that's as simple as saying that your character won't be doing anything, but other times it is harder to extricate your character. In some conflicts the GM might determine that withdrawal is impossible, or that withdrawal means certain death. If the team is escaping from a burning building and you choose to withdraw from the effort, the logical outcome is that you burn to death. Withdrawal is permanent. If all you want to do is refrain from choosing actions for a round or two, you can do that without withdrawing.

Double Tie

When both comparisons are tied at the end of a round, the conflict is over. Roll a die and consult the following table to see how it ended:

Double-Tie Outcomes	
6	Love
5	An Astounding Discovery
4	A Third Power Enters the Fray (or Is Born)
3	A Natural Disaster
2	A Horrifying Act of Evil
1	Death

Double-tie alternatives

Depending on the tone of your game, you might swap out any of the above with any of the following (or come up with your own): A Foolish Mistake, A Miracle or Supernatural Event, A Selfless Act of Sacrifice, Betrayal.

Do your best to use the result you get, interpreting it literally if possible, metaphorically if not. If you are truly at an impasse and have spent at least a couple of minutes thinking and discussing with no luck, roll again.

Death in Team Conflict

What happens when Death comes up? Often a player character death won't make sense, but sometimes a player character's death is the only death that makes much sense. Discuss when you start your first Conflict whether Death can mean a player character's death or not. You can use whatever system you like, but I've found the following three to be very stable ones: "Death is never at stake in a conflict," "Death is always a possibility in a conflict," or "Death is only at stake when it's announced at the beginning of the conflict."

Secondary Goals

Sometimes in the course of a conflict, a character will want to take time to achieve something outside the scope of the conflict. Perhaps they want to slip into the necromancer's dungeon on the way past during the journey through the forest, assassinate the Chancellor during a pitched battle, or swap out a fake artifact for the real one during a fight. When they do this, they spend their action to make a Skill Roll, following the basic rules to resolve the action. So that their absence isn't a huge penalty to their team, they still provide +1A or +1D (Player's choice).

Preparatory Actions

Before a conflict starts, at the GM's discretion, players might have a chance to take preparatory actions. These can be governed by the basic Skill rules or they can fall into one of the following categories and be resolved as follows. Describe what your character is doing. You and the GM will work together to pick which of the following options fits your description. If you are Unskilled, roll with Disadvantage.

Stock Up	
5-6	+1 to be spent in any round after the rolls.
3-4	+1 to be spent in any round before the rolls.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Scout	
5-6	Scout both the enemy's rolls at the start of round 1.
3-4	Scout one enemy roll of your choice at the start of round 1.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Fortify	
5-6	+1D each round until you Lose or Push.
3-4	+1D in round 1.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Seize the Advantage	
5-6	Deal one Hit.
3-4	+1A in round 1.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Inspire	
5-6	You and each ally may each ignore one Condition for the duration of the Conflict.
3-4	You or one ally may ignore one Condition for the duration of the Conflict.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Play the Long Game	
5-6	+1A in round 2, +2A in rounds 3 and 4.
3-4	+1A in rounds 3 and 4.
1-2	-1A in round 1.

Note: If two or more players choose the same preparatory action, each rolls and the one with the best result stands.

Conditions in Team Conflict

Your team has Disadvantage for a number of rolls equal to the number of relevant Minor Conditions on all participants. The penalized team gets to choose which of their Advance or Defense has Disadvantage, as long as it makes sense for that Condition.

Example: One player has one Minor Condition, so one of the team's rolls has Disadvantage in the first round.

Example: Two players have one Minor Condition each and one player has two Minor Conditions. So the team's rolls have Disadvantage for the first two rounds (four Conditions, four rolls).

Relevant Flaws in gear or information count as Minor Conditions.

If you have one Major Condition, you give your team a -1 to Advance whenever you choose an Advancing Action, or -1 to Defense whenever you choose a Defensive Action. If you have two Major Conditions, you give the team a -1 to both Advance and Defense each round. If you have three Major Conditions, you give your team the penalties for both two and one Major Conditions. If you somehow manage to get four or more Major Conditions, simply continue in this vein: every two Major Conditions gives a -1 to both Advance and Defense, and any odd number of Major Conditions gives a penalty based on what action you choose.

So if you have one Major Condition you'll still be very beneficial to your team. Ignoring items or traits, you'll be operating at about 60% of normal. If you have two Major Conditions, you'll be of marginal benefit (about 20% of normal), but your team is still better off with you than without you. If you have three or more Major Conditions, unless you have some beneficial items or traits, you are actively hurting your team. When you have that many Conditions, you're better off spending your time recovering if you can. If the Team Conflict is escaping from a burning building, you don't have the option of sitting out and your teammates must shoulder the burden of helping you get out alive.

Customizing the Opposition

If N is the number of player characters in the conflict, a fair fight has an Advance score of N, a Defense score of N and has about half of N traits. To be perfectly clear, when I say a fair fight I mean one in which, if the players use optimal tactics, they are more likely to win than to lose but with losing being a strong possibility, and in which the players still have a reasonable chance of victory even if they botch their tactics a bit.

If an opponent ought to be better at Advance than Defense or vice versa, simply move points from one to the other—this does not greatly affect the difficulty. If an opponent ought to be more or less difficult than “a fair fight,” you may simply add or subtract points or traits. Be judicious in your addition and subtraction—it doesn't take many points in either direction to tip the balances pretty severely.

The opposition's traits modify the rules and its scores. You will find a list of traits immediately below. Changing your selection of traits has an influence on the difficulty as well—it is clear as you read the list that these traits are not all equally strong. For an easy conflict, give the opposition penalties to counterbalance their positive traits. You could give them no traits at all, but that would be boring. For a hard conflict, where the opposition is favored, give the opposition N traits. If it makes sense for the opposition to have more than N traits, simply give them what they need, but consider counterbalancing them with some negative traits or by giving the players positive ones.

If, in the course of play, you find that these guidelines result in challenges that are either too difficult or too easy for your players, change them to suit your needs. Maybe one of your players is a tactical genius and you need to increase the difficulty. Maybe your players are not good at coordinating their actions—tone it down a bit.

The Trait List

You can always make up your own traits to suit your situation, but here are some to get you started. Traits with “Superior” in the name count for two traits.

Aggressive: +1A.

Defensive: +1D.

Attrition: Opponent takes an extra Hit when you Draw.

Dangerous: Opponent takes an extra Hit when you Push.

Crafty: On a Draw, give your opponent -2D in the next round.

Superior Crafty: On a Draw, your opponent's Defense is reduced next round by the amount by which your Defense beat the opponent's Advance.

Penetrating: On a Push, give your opponent -2D in the next round.

Superior Penetrating: On a Push, your opponent's Defense is reduced next round by the amount by which your Advance beat the opponent's Defense.

Ablating: When you score a Hit, instead of giving your opponent a Strike or removing a trait, you may choose to give them -3D in the next round.

Draining: When you score a Hit, you may instead recover one trait or remove one Strike. This trait cannot be removed unless you have at least one Strike.

Superior Draining: When you score a Hit, you may additionally recover one trait or remove one Strike. This trait cannot be removed unless you have at least one Strike.

Recovery: On a Draw, you may recover one trait or remove one Strike. This trait cannot be removed unless you have at least one Strike.

Superior Recovery: Recover from one Hit at the end of each round, not including any Hits taken that same round. This trait cannot be removed unless you have at least one Strike.

Final: Your opponent's Strikes are irremovable while this trait is active.

Consequential: If the players win, they owe a Minor Concession on top of whatever they already owe.

Versatility: Assign an extra +1 to either Advance or Defense before the rolls.

Superior Versatility: Assign an extra +1 to either Advance or Defense after the rolls.

Fortified: Once per Conflict, ignore one Hit.

Costly: Opponent takes one Strike when they win.

Invulnerability: Cannot lose while this is active. Instead of losing, take a Hit.

Superior Invulnerability: As above, but this cannot be deactivated while other traits are active.

Increasing Power: Advance score increases by 1 at the end of each round.

Increasing Defense: Defense score increases by 1 at the end of each round.

Fated: All tied rolls go in your favor.

Note: Making a trait irremovable costs one additional trait. Conditionally irremovable traits may or may not cost extra—your call based on how hard it is to remove. An example of a Conditionally irremovable trait is one that cannot be removed until its owner's team has taken at least 2 Strikes, or until an opponent achieves a specific secondary objective.

Environmental traits

Sometimes the situation has traits that apply to one or both sides without belonging to either side. It's up to the GM to decide on these traits and to decide whether they may be removed or altered by Skill Rolls using the *Improvise* action and whether a team may assign a Hit to removing the environmental trait instead of one of their opponents' traits.

Example: Maintaining the Balance of Power—when either side would lose, add 2 to their Defense score.

Example: Dark Tunnels—The darkness makes it harder for the searchers to find their prey, but also for their prey to escape. Both sides have -2A while in the tunnels.

Alternate or supplemental win conditions

The GM may decide on alternative or supplemental win conditions. The simplest examples are ones based on Skill Rolls or on accruing enough Strikes.

Example: You win immediately if you succeed at a Hacking roll to bypass the security, but you only get one shot, and if you fail then the opponents get +2D until the end of the conflict as they are on high alert.

Examples: You cannot win until your opponent has taken at least 3 Strikes. This is a *supplemental condition*.

You win immediately once your opponent has taken 3 Strikes. This is an *alternative condition*.

You cannot win normally. Instead, you win once your opponent has taken at least 3 Strikes. This is a *replacement condition*.

Alternative win conditions can be secret—back doors that clever players might find. They need not be, however, and most times it makes sense for the players to know about them. You'll find that secret alternatives tend not to get taken. Supplemental or replacement win conditions can also be secret, but the players need to

have a way to figure them out. Once the players "win" and you tell them it's not over, they need to know, if not the condition itself, then at the very least what Skill to roll to discover the new win condition.

Changing the win conditions does not count against the trait count for the opposition, except at the GM's discretion if the conditions are particularly difficult to achieve.

Ending the Conflict early Round Limit

It is strongly recommended that you have a cap on the number of rounds to prevent the conflict from dragging on. If there is no victor after the set number of rounds (5 is a reasonable limit), the winner is the team with fewer Strikes. If both teams have equal Strikes, neither side wins: roll on the Double-Tie Outcomes table.

So... I guess we're done?

It might happen that in the course of a conflict you reach a point where it doesn't make sense narratively to continue, but it also doesn't make sense for either side to simply concede. If this happens to you, it means you (as a group) missed something. Maybe you screwed up the pacing or maybe you have found that the two sides' intents weren't truly opposed after all or maybe there wasn't enough depth for this system and you should have stuck with an Opposed Roll. Whatever the reason, simply stop; don't just go through the motions! Stop the conflict and move on. Just continue play using the basic rules, whatever situation you find yourselves in. Later, in a break or at the end of the session perhaps, try figure out as a group what happened and how to avoid that problem in the future.

Action Points in Team Conflict

You may spend an Action Point when you have a Related Skill (not the Skill you are using for your chosen action) to add 2 to either Advance or Defense before your team rolls. Only one Action Point can be spent in this way per team per round.

As stated above, you may spend an Action Point not to lose. If you do, your team takes one Hit, the Opponent removes one Strike or recovers one trait, and the conflict continues. You also get to narrate how you just saved everyone's butts.

Also as mentioned above, you gain an Action Point if you use a Complication to concede.

Learning New Skills in Conflicts

Keep track of any Basic Actions you take when you do not have the Skill on your sheet. Make a list. At the end of the conflict, roll one die for each such Skill. For each 6 you roll, pick one Skill from the list and write it on your sheet. **Only roll one die per Skill regardless of how many times you used it.**

Putting Traits at Risk

When you (player or GM) use a trait in a conflict, you put it at risk. If the conflict ends with that trait disabled, it becomes fair game for the opponent to demand its permanent removal as a Concession if you owe one. This *always* must make sense in the story! It doesn't make sense for the Lizard King to lose his *mag-*

nificent vermilion frill at the end of an argument about the ethical treatment of voles. Don't Demand Nonsense. Similarly, if you lose the conflict in such a way that the fiction demands the removal of your trait, then you lose your trait for whatever duration is appropriate. When it comes to this, the story is king and the GM typically has the last word. If you don't want to put a trait at risk, don't use it. This whole paragraph applies equally to both players and GM.

Player vs Player conflicts

My advice is that generally an Opposed Roll between two players is good enough and you don't need to bother with a full-on Conflict. But if you want to use these conflict rules, for instance when more is at stake, go ahead. Both sides choose actions in secret. If the size of the teams is uneven, it is not a fair fight. (Obviously. But you need to make sure that everyone knows that). If one team has help from NPCs or some other advantage, you can recognize that with an environmental trait as described on page 80. Usually a simple boost to Advance or Defense is all that's needed.

One special rule is needed in any player vs player Team Conflict: each side may only choose the Scout action once per round. The key thing is to make sure that a player team isn't rolling both their dice at the beginning of the round—you should always have at least one unknown factor to consider.

Custom Traits for Players

Giving Traits to player characters as items or intangible rewards is a good idea if you use these Team Conflict rules often. But there are a couple of potential pitfalls to look out for. Beware of granting actions that are better than those listed here and of improving just one of the actions listed here without cost: if you do that, you take away the player's effective choices as they will always (or nearly always) simply choose the action they are best at. Giving such extra actions or benefits but requiring the expenditure of an Action Point is a much better plan as the player still has an incentive to pick other things. You could refund the Action Points if certain conditions are met.

Examples: Power Shield – +1D whenever you choose a Defense action in a combat Conflict.

Armor of the Master Smith – +1D in each round in small-group combats. It takes 2 Hits to take out this Trait, but once it is taken out of play in a Conflict it cannot be used again until repaired.

High-quality map – When you choose the Observe action in a journey Conflict in the region, you may spend an Action Point to get an extra +1D and know one of the opponent's rolls in the round after next. That is, you scout two rounds ahead in addition to the usual one.

Traits can be held by an individual player, by the group as a whole, or granted as part of the scenario (see also the section on Environmental Traits above).

Examples: Artillery – The enemy army has Disadvantage on its Defense rolls in large-scale combats when *any* player chooses an Attack action.

The Local Guide – A local guide gives +2A in every round of a journey Team Conflict. This is very strong. Hope you don't lose him!

Translator – A translator is vital when you engage in a social Team Conflict in Orezk. Without one, your team would suffer -1A each round. A top-notch one gets you +1D each round instead.

Note: Traits don't need to be positive. Use negative traits sparingly. If you give your players a whole bunch of penalties, they will simply lose very quickly, and that's no fun.

Examples: The Subversive Local Guide – This local guide gives +2A in the first round of a journey Team Conflict. Then he gives -2A in the next two rounds as he leads you astray and betrays you.

Poor Leadership – During a large-scale combat Team Conflict, your general's bad orders cost you -1A and -1D each round. What a loser.

Unarmed – You can only pick Basic and Defense actions until you get your weapon back.

Roleplaying and Choices

Sometimes playing your character demands that you choose combinations that are tactically inferior, and it's totally okay (in fact it's recommended) that you make those inferior choices when they are called for. It's part of the game and if anyone gives you crap about it, tell them to reread this page. With that said, if you are constantly going against the grain and screwing over your friends, you can reasonably expect there to be some hostility in character or even out of character. Make dramatic choices and make interesting choices, but don't make it your policy to consistently make stupid choices.

On a related note, if the difficulty of challenges is high, it can put pressure on players to choose the tactically optimal choices. If you find that this is hurting your group's roleplaying, a good course of action is to lower the difficulty of the challenges across the board and encourage roleplaying within these mechanics. Once good habits are established, you can fiddle with the difficulty to your heart's content.

Don't demand nonsense!

If you find your fellow players having their characters performing nonsense just so they can use the Skills on their sheet, don't let them get away with it. No stretching! No, Bronan can't do push-ups to impress the King. The King is not impressed. Okay, fine, he's impressed but it's got nothing to do with your trial and you don't get a bonus!

Materials

You can find cards you can print or copy and cut out to use in Team Conflicts online. See page 203 for more.



Team Conflict Example of Play

Sumit is playing as Ranbeer the Weather Knight. Karen is playing as Karen the Barbarian Mom. Akayla is playing as Purl, the Wizard of Fiber. The group is preparing for a journey to Hömfry, on the shore of Sayfin Sound. To get there, they must travel through the Forgetful Forest and over the Major Mounds. Quinn is the pun-loving GM, and wants to run this as a Team Conflict. He picks a few traits for the journey: The Forgetful Forest and Major Mounds must be overcome, so each provides Invulnerability—the players' team cannot win until they have deactivated those traits. Because supplies will be limited on this journey, the GM also chooses the trait Attrition—the players will take an extra Hit on a Draw. None of this is supposed to be a surprise, so Quinn tells the players which traits were chosen. He tells them that the Journey's goal is for the group to get lost or stranded. The opposition's Advance and Defense scores are each 3.

The players chat a bit and decide that an aggressive strategy is necessary to take out the Invulnerable traits quickly while avoiding being worn down by Attrition.

Sumit: We've got lots of time to prep, right? We can do some preparatory Actions?

Quinn: Yep!

Sumit: Great. Ranbeer is going to use his Stormsight Skill to predict what the weather will be like. That's Scout.

Quinn: Okay, but don't roll until we hear from the girls.

Karen: If Karen heard you call her a "girl" she'd beat you with one arm while using the other to cover Lola's eyes. Anyway, Karen will use her Wild Homemaking Skill to cook up a whole bunch of rations. That's Fortify.

Akayla: Purl will go find some Roving to spin for spells on the trip. Thinking about the mountains, she'll focus on warming and endurance. She'll use her Fiberfinder Skill.

Quinn: Stocking Up, right? Okay, everybody roll.

Sumit rolls a 3, Karen rolls a 1, and Akayla rolls a 6.

Quinn: Okay, Ranbeer, you know how rough the first part of the trip is likely to be. We'll find out when we start round one. You'll get to see one roll in advance.

Sumit: Cool.

Quinn: Karen, you make some great food! Little do you know that your compatriots will find your Murican cuisine to be both disgusting and nutritionally poor. You'll be minus one Advance in round one as everyone but you feels rather ill.

Karen: Snobs.

Quinn: Purl, you find great deals on both Firefox fur and Coarsehair Shagbeast wool. You get a plus-one to be spent any time you like, after the rolls.

Quinn hands Akayla a card so she doesn't forget her +1.

Akayla: Can I have a baby Coarsehair Shagbeast? Pleeeeease?

Sumit: Shagbeasts seem like great pets when they're little, but when they grow up you'll just have to give it to an overcrowded and underfunded Primate Sanctuary.

Quinn: Okay, round 1! Ranbeer, which roll do you want to scout?

Sumit: Well I'd kind of prefer to see their Defense, but the weather seems more like the journey's Advance.

Quinn: I could see the weather affecting how fast you can cross the terrain, too. Pick whichever you like.

Sumit: Okay, Defense.

Quinn rolls the opposition's Defense die and gets a 5. The opposition has a Defense score of 3, so their total is 8.

Karen: Okay, so we have to beat 8. If we put a +6 into Advance then we're likely to come out okay, especially with Purl's plus-one as insurance.

Sumit: Ranbeer doesn't have much in the way of traveling Skills other than Stormsight. He can keep scouting or he can do basic actions Unskilled.

Karen: Scouting seems really strong. Keep it up! Karen will shout at everyone to push on and keep marching late into the evening. She's using her Mom-voice Skill to boss everyone around. That's All Out Effort. "Come on! If I can do this while carrying the biggest pack and my three-year-old, you better not even think of complaining."

Akayla: Defense seems like a lost cause this round, and a Push will get us closer to our goal, so I guess Purl will use her Spell-knotting Skill and some of the Shagbeast fiber to knit together an endurance spell. That should allow us to press on and get past the forest, eh? Targeted Effort?

Quinn nods. Karen grabs up two dice and rolls one for Advance, a four, and one for Defense, a two. Adding up the scores, the team has an Advance of 9: 4(die) +3(Karen) +2(Akayla) +1(Ranbeer) -1(Karen's failed prep). They have a Defense of 2: 2(die) +1(Ranbeer) -1(Karen's action).

Quinn rolls a 4 for the opposition Advance, and adds 3. The opposition's Advance is thus 7 (4+3), which easily beats the team's Defense of 2. The team's Advance is a 9, which beats the opposition's Defense of 8. The result is a Push.

Quinn: A Push. I take a Hit and so do you. Your team takes a Strike. How do you assign your Hit? Disable a trait or give a Strike?

Sumit: Definitely disable a trait! Let's get past the forest.

Akayla: Well, we could disable the Attrition and then we'd be able to take a more defensive approach.

Karen: Nah, let's just go for it. One more round to get past the mountains and then the next round we can win!

Sumit: Okay. So I scouted, and I'd like to see the opposition's Defense again. Let's see what the weather is like on the mountains.

Quinn rolls the opposition's defense die. It comes up a 6.

Quinn: Ouch! Bad weather ahead. Not good for your progress.

Akayla: Let's go more defensive, and aim for a Draw this time. We can use Targeted Effort to generate a Hit to get past the mountains.

Ranbeer Scouts yet again, Karen bosses everyone to push on to the top of the mountains for Targeted Effort, and Purl knits them magical firefoxfur toques for Total Defense. They roll a pair of 2s. So they end up with an Advance of 4: 2(roll) +2(Karen) +1(Ranbeer) -1(Akayla). Their Defense is 6: 2(roll) +1(Ranbeer) +3(Akayla).

The opposition's Defense was 9, which easily stops the team's Advance. Unfortunately for them, Quinn rolls a 4 for an Advance of 7, one higher than their Defense! Luckily, Akayla still has her +1 card, and she uses it now to bring her team's Defense even with the opposition's Advance. Since the players' Advance failed, the result is a Draw.

Quinn: A Draw by the skin of your teeth! Well, the Attrition gets you and you take another Strike from the harsh weather and bad food. You also get to assign another Hit from Targeted Effort.

Karen: Obviously we make it over the mountain pass!

Quinn: Okay, well the Major Mounds are behind you and it's all downhill until you get to Khost.

Skipping ahead, the next round ends in a Push, giving the players another Strike, but putting an end to the Attrition as the team finds plentiful forage in the Morning Vale below the Mourning Veil Falls. In Round 4, despite the team's best efforts, Quinn rolls high again in round 4, leading to another Push. Now the players have 4 Strikes and the Opposition has just 1.

Sumit: Crap! Four Strikes would be a Major Condition for each of us. That's really harsh!

Akayla: We should consider conceding. We'll be lost in the Morning Vale, which doesn't sound too awful. We'll only have 2 Strikes, so we'll get away with just a Minor Condition each. And we'll get to pick something from the loser's list because we did give them a Strike. We'll get something extra for our troubles.

Sumit: That does sound better than dragging our butts into Hömfry and needing to spend a week in bed recovering from acute Murican food overdose. Karen?

Karen: Well I'm outvoted anyway, so I guess that's what we do.

Quinn: No, conceding has to be unanimous. If Barbarian Karen wants to press on, then you're not lost yet.

Karen: Nah, it's okay. We can get lost. It could even be my fault: I'll use my "The Kid's a Runner" Complication. Lola runs off after some pretty bird and we lose the trail while we chase her down.

Sumit: Woah, you get an Action Point, too. Conceding is sweet!

Quinn: Yeah it is! Karen, mark down an Action Point. I'll put a little Twist on your idea. Lola is found by the bird-folk. They are only about 3 feet tall, but they work well together and when you come stumbling into their glade you see Lola up high in the branches, carried there by the birds. You're all Winded from the run, and that takes care of your 2 Strikes. What did you want to pick from the list?

Akayla: Well either it costs us less than we expected, or we get something extra out of it.

Karen: Maybe if it costs us less than we expected, you'd get to keep a bunch of firefox and shagbeast fur and I could have extra rations.

Sumit: Maybe Ranbeer could stumble on an artifact as he runs. Something precious to the bird-folk. Something they had lost. That'd be "get something extra" or a bit like "it costs them more than they expected" if we consider the bird-folk part of the journey.

Karen: Sure. That's a cool idea. That'll come in handy now I'm sure.

Quinn: Okay, cool. But Ranbeer doesn't know it belongs to the birds. All he knows is that it's a bronze amulet with an image of the rising sun. Anyway, when you enter the clearing one of the bird-folk comes down from the branches. Another bird squawks loudly, but the one in front of you scoffs and says to Karen "Ignore him. He's just a bad egg. Always raven and crowin'. His grouching is too much to swallow. He was warning me about your axe. Well I'm not chicken, and I'm swift enough not to get gulled. I'll duck any blow. Well, Human? Your tern. Do you wish us fair or fowl? Are you here to hawk your wares or have you come here on a lark?"

Groans all around. Quinn grins broadly.

Sumit: Guys, we shouldn't have conceded. He's got a whole page of those puns printed out.

Karen: You're telling me he's not winging it? Toucan play that game.

Quinn: Hey! The puns are supposed to be my thing!

Karen: I egret nothing!





Chase

Here's a cool little system for chase scenes. It works best for car chases, but you could use it without much modification for chases on foot, in boats, on skis, in tanks, whatever.

Any chase has two teams: the Runners and the Chasers. In this system, the Runners try to use tricks to outwit and escape the Chasers. The Chasers try to seize the advantage by predicting what the Runners will do next. Chases are very short. Using these rules to resolve a chase only takes a couple of minutes.

At the start of the chase, the GM decides what distance the teams are from each other, Close, Medium, or Far. Usually teams start at Medium Range—starting at either of the other two distances can make for very short chases indeed. If the distance increases beyond Far, the Chasers have lost their targets. If the distance gets closer than Close, the Chasers have caught their targets or at least run them off the road.

A chase proceeds in rounds. In each round, follow the two steps below.

Step 1: Choosing Actions

In secret, the Runners pick an action and write it down. They may *Flee*, make a hard turn and *Double-back*, *Set Up* their next action, take a *Risk*, or give up the chase and attempt to *Hide*.

At the same time, the Chasers attempt to predict what the opponents will do. They write down their prediction in secret. This prediction comes with a downside—an action that they are unprepared for. If they think the Runners will keep *Fleeing*, they cannot be prepared for them to *Double Back* or *Hide* and vice versa. If they think the Runners are just going to *Set Up*, they won't be prepared for them to take a *Risk* and vice versa. If the Chasers guessed correctly, they have Advantage on the upcoming roll. If the Runners chose the action the Chasers are unprepared for, the Chasers have Disadvantage instead.

After prediction, Chasers have...						
Runners	Chasers	Flee	Hide	Double Back	Set Up	Risk
	Flee	Adv.	Disad.	Disad.	—	—
	Hide	Disad.	Adv.	—	—	—
	Double Back	Disad.	—	Adv.	—	—
	Set Up	—	—	—	Adv.	Disad.
	Risk	—	—	—	Disad.	Adv.

Step 2: Resolving Actions

The Runners' action and Chasers' prediction are revealed. The Runners narrate how they are trying to achieve their chosen action. Both teams pick appropriate Skills for their tasks and roll an Opposed Roll after deciding which character is rolling and who, if anyone, is helping them. The result depends on the action taken.

Range Modifier

If the teams are in Close Range, the Chasers have a -1 to their rolls, with a minimum of 1. If the teams are at Far Range, the Chasers have a +1 to their rolls, with a maximum of 6. The in-game reason for this is that the closer you are the less time you have to react to your quarry's actions. The out-of-game reason for this is to promote longer and more tense chases.

Flee

Fleeing is the most basic action. If the Runners win the roll, the Range increases by one step. If they lose, the Range decreases by one step. If they tie, the Range is unchanged.

Double Back

The Runners attempt to perform a quick turn and double back on the Chasers. If the Runners win, the Range is set to Far. If they lose, the Range decreases by 1. If they tie at Close Range, the Runners lose. If they tie at Medium Range, the Range is unchanged.

Note: At Close Range, this is a big gamble. At Medium Range, this action is functionally identical to Flee and simply gives the Runners more options both in the narrative and in outsmarting the Chasers. Double Back may not be used at Far Range—and why would you want to?

Set Up

The Runners take some time to lull the Chasers or to gain position to set up their next move. If the Runners win, their next move has Advantage. If they lose, the Range decreases by one but they still gain Advantage. If they tie, the Range stays unchanged and they do not gain Advantage.

Risk

The Runners jump the bridge, drive between the tankers, or slam through the barrier. The Runners must roll before the Chasers here. If the Runners roll a 3 or less, they crash and the Chasers catch them. If the Runners roll a 4 or higher, the Chasers now have the choice of whether or not to replicate that feat. If they decide not to attempt it, the Range increases by two steps (and thus the Runners escape if the Range was Medium or Far). If the Chasers decide to go for it, they crash on a 3 or less (not including the Range Modifier) and the Runners escape. If they roll a 4 or higher, then the rolls are compared just as though the Runners had chosen to Flee, including the Range Modifier.

Hide

The Runners decide to give up the chase and attempt to Hide instead. This action cannot be taken at Close Range—the Chasers are right on your tail! The Runners get a +1 to their roll if they are at Far Range instead of the Chasers: here the distance is working in their favor. Once the Runners make this choice, the Chase is effectively over. This is resolved exactly as an Opposed Roll as described in the basic rules. If the roll comes up a tie, the Chasers can't find the Runners but the Runners are pinned down and can't move without being found.

Extra Stuff

Now you've got all you need to run a cool chase. Here is some other stuff that might come in handy to add more depth and complexity if that's what you desire. All of these are optional, and you may mix-and-match as you like. Before you dig in to all this extra stuff, go play a Chase with the basic rules and get a feel for it.

Danger Level

The Danger Level of a chase starts at 0 unless the GM decides otherwise. It can never be higher than 2. It represents the likelihood of a crash based on the conditions—if either team (or both) rolls equal to or less than the Danger Level, they have crashed. This applies only to the result on the dice: **the Range Modifier does not apply**. For example, if the Range is close (Chasers get a -1) and the Danger Level is 2 and the Chasers roll a 3, they do not crash even though the -1 makes their roll a 2 when compared later.

Whichever side wins any roll in the chase may opt to move the Danger Level up or down by 1 for the next roll. The Runners may flee onto a back road or the Chasers might force them into busy traffic.

If you're running a foot chase, the notion of Danger Level often does not make sense and you ought not use this rule. On the other hand, if it is a rooftop chase, then Danger Level makes perfect sense. Use your judgment.

Obstacles

Whenever a chase roll ends in a tie, there is an unexpected obstacle. Obstacles are a chance for the GM to give the players a choice and/or show off something about their opposition. The choices can be moral or mechanical.

Examples of moral obstacles: “A wedding party has walked out into the street ahead. You know your pursuers won't hesitate to run them down, but if you slow down to avoid them you'll lose ground and the range decreases by one. What do you do?” Or turn it around: “You know the cops chasing you will have to slow down either way – you could gain some distance on them if you were to drive right through them. Is getting away worth risking innocent lives?” Or even “The women you were chasing just ran over an old man. There's nobody else around and he's obviously hurt very badly. Do you stop to help or do you keep chasing them?”

Examples of mechanical obstacles: “The road ahead is closed. You can drive through the construction site with a Danger Level of 2 for the next three rounds, or you can take the detour. The detour is full of traffic and the Runners won't be able to *Double Back* until you're out of it. Which way do you force them?”

“The ringing bells tell you that a train is coming. You might be able to beat it to the crossing and lose the pursuit, but if you fail you're likely to crash badly. If you want to try it, roll your driving Skill. Success means you made it, but the Twist will be that you get clipped by the train and send everyone to the hospital for weeks. What do you do?”

Shooting

Any player can try to shoot the opponents instead of helping their teammate. Shooting can reduce an opponent's roll or even take them out of the chase for good. The shooters roll their Shooting Skill immediately after the opponent rolls. If any shooter rolls higher than their opponent, the opponent must waste effort evading and subtracts one from the result (this is not cumulative in the case of multiple shooters). If a shooter rolls a 6, they have scored a hit and one character of the opposing team's choice is taken out of the chase. If the driver is hit, they must either stop or crash and are wounded either way—they get the Injured Condition, unless the fiction demands otherwise.

Even with multiple shooters, the opponent's roll cannot be reduced by more than one, although more shooters means more chances to roll a 6.

A driver may attempt to shoot and drive but will have Disadvantage on both. Similarly for shooting while running on foot or operating any sort of vehicle.

Multiple Chasers and Runners

If the Chasers have multiple vehicles, they can forgo helping one another in order to hedge their bets. One vehicle can bet on *Risk* while the other bets on *Set Up*, for instance. In this case the roll is made by whichever vehicle had the most advantageous prediction. So being outnumbered by the Chasers is very bad news.

Luckily, if there are multiple Runners they can choose to split up into two (or more) different chases. The Chasers then have to choose to split up as well to keep track of all of them or to let one group go.

Vehicle Mismatch

If one side has a clearly superior vehicle, such as a helicopter chasing a car, they get Advantage on all their driving rolls in the chase. Some vehicles might have special powers too. The Batmobile has several ways to get Advantage or damage vehicles trying to chase it. An Apache helicopter can just blow up more or less whatever it wants within the pilot's ethical and professional restrictions.

High Speed

In a high-speed chase you need to be thinking not just about what you're doing, but what you'll be doing next. When you start the Chase, the Runners must pick their first and second actions while the Chasers make their first and second predictions. After resolving the first action, they pick their third action and prediction. After the second, pick the fourth. And so on. If the Runners pick an action that becomes impossible to carry out (Hide at close Range or Double Back at Far Range), they instead Flee with Disadvantage.



Scenarios

The regular rules assume that the Runners just run away until they escape or the Chasers run them off the road. But sometimes, the Chasers have a different goal.

The Trap

Sometimes the Chasers are trying to force the Runners into a trap. The Chasers must have set this trap up beforehand or have allies who can set up the trap for them. The trap can be roadblocks, a natural feature like a canyon, a dead-end, or anything else that makes sense. The chase lasts for five rounds. After the fifth round, there is one final all-or-nothing roll for the Runners to escape the trap. The Range Modifier does not apply. It is simply an Opposed Roll as described in the basic rules. In the case of a tie, the Runners don't escape the trap but they aren't caught either—most likely they are pinned down or hidden and unable to get out for fear of being caught.

If the Chasers have put much planning into their trap, they've probably worked out a way to get Advantage and/or lots of help with it. So the Runners would really like to escape before the end of the fifth round. Without much planning, the trap is not much threat.

Home Free

If the Runners are making for a safe haven where the Chasers dare not catch them, they may lose the Chasers as usual, but also have an alternative win condition. If they Flee a total of four times, whether or not those actions are successful, then so long as the Chasers have not caught them, they are home free at the end of the fourth Flee round and arrive at their destination safely. If they win in this way, the Chasers know where they are.

Follow

Sometimes the Chasers want to follow the Runners but not catch them, and the Runners have no choice but to keep making for their goal. In this scenario, the Chasers are not willing to win by running their opponents off the road. If they would get closer than Close Range, they simply stay at Close Range instead. If the Runners haven't escaped by the end of the 7th round, the Chasers have successfully followed them.

If they are chasing the Runners back to a secure hideout and are at Close Range at the end of the 7th round, the Chasers may follow the Runners into the hideout before the gate is shut. At Medium or Far Ranges, the Chasers get their information but can't just drive in behind.

Backup

In some situations the Chasers (or the Runners) may have backup coming after a specified number of rounds. The cops might have a new car coming in every three rounds, and a helicopter on the seventh round, for instance. The chase is likely to be over by then, but if it isn't, then the police will have a big Advantage.





Tactical Combat

So you're in a fight! Time to break out the combat rules! Well, not necessarily. Use these rules if the fight is interesting, if you have time (making a Skill Roll or two takes a few minutes; these rules might take half an hour), and if the whole party is involved (rare is the time when you want to leave anybody out).

Overview

In combat, combatants take turns. On your turn, you typically do three things in any order you like: move, use a power to attack, and use power from your Role. When you attack, you usually have to roll to see if you hit and how well you hit. Your attack can deal damage, have another effect, or both, depending on how well you roll. Every attack roll uses the same chart to tell you how well you did. Role powers are even simpler, since you don't have to roll for them: they just happen. Once you have done your three things, your turn is done and the next character goes.

Every character has Hit Points. Enemies are out of the fight when they reach 0, while players are out when they reach -5. When one side has no one active, the fight is over and they have lost. That's the very high level view. Read on for the details.

Goals

Before you begin a fight, figure out what the players hope to get out of this. Usually this is clear. Don't get clever. **Stick to the obvious.** Even random encounters and fights with Stooges should have goals. They can be complex, but are most often simple—kill these goblins so we can get some rest; get through these monsters so we can find the boss. The only restriction is that they need to be something beyond “defeat these enemies.” Fighting is rarely an end unto itself—it is almost always a means to an end. Having one goal is usually the best idea, but you can have more than one goal if you need to—for instance if two players can't agree which goal

is more important. Once the goal has been decided, that's what is at stake: if the players defeat their enemies, they get their goal (almost always—see the section Winning and Losing on page 92). If they lose, the GM decides what happens and it probably won't be anything like what the players were hoping for.

Bad goals

Don't overreach—your goal should be **simple and obviously achievable** by defeating your enemies. Shaming them is good, robbing them is good, getting past them is good, impressing someone might be appropriate, but if you want your victory to have more than the obvious impact you'll need to use your Skills to get there either during or after the combat.

Inappropriate goals can be quashed by any player. “I want the news of our victory here to give the CEO of Badcorp a fatal heart attack” is not appropriate. Use your judgment.

Risk and Honesty

It's best to be honest about your goal. Your goal is at risk, but anything not in your goals is at the whim of the GM, whose job it is to provide you with challenges. When you make something your goal and you win, the GM is not allowed to mess with that.

The Grid

Combat takes place on a grid. Each square represents whatever distance you want and makes sense for your game. For swords and bows and stuff, one yard or meter per square makes the most sense. In a modern game with assault rifles, a square might be five meters. If you are modeling spaceships, squares might be kilometers across. For games with longer-range weaponry, expand the size as appropriate—a typical maximum range in the heat of battle is 10 squares, with some specialized characters getting double that.

Initiative

At the start of combat, we roll Initiative. Roll a die. That's your Initiative, and everyone takes turns from highest to lowest. In the case of a tie monsters go before players, and tied players go in whichever order they wish. Write it down so everyone can see—it is public knowledge. Hidden monsters the players are unaware of may be omitted.

On Your Turn

When you start your turn, the following happen in order.

- Resolve any effects that end or trigger at the start of this turn, including taking Ongoing Damage (see the Glossary on page 95). You may resolve these in any order you choose.
- Take action. This is the bulk of your turn. The next heading describes your actions in more detail.
- Roll Saving Throws. For each Status you have that is denoted "save ends," you roll a die. 1 – 3 is a failure, 4 – 6 is a success. On a success, you end the Status. On a failure, it continues.
- Resolve any effects that end or trigger at the end of this turn. You may resolve these in any order you choose.

Action Economy

On your turn you have an Attack Action, a Move Action, a Role Action, and as many Free Actions as you need within the bounds of common sense. You can trade your Attack Action for a second Move Action. **You cannot trade for a Role Action.**

Many actions (closing a door, for instance) are Free. Free Actions are only taken on your turn. Some things, like speaking, do not cost an action at all and can be taken at any time. Attack Actions are, unsurprisingly, mostly attacks—the way you damage and apply effects to Team Monster. Most of your Attack Actions will come from your Class, but some are common to all characters. When a rule tells you to "make an attack," it means that you can use an Attack Action the same way you would if it was your turn. Move Actions are how you move across the battlefield or do things like stand up or escape being Grabbed. Role Actions are mostly reserved for powers coming from your character's Role, and help you perform that Role—things like healing or putting down a wall of blocking terrain. (For more on Classes and Roles, see page 98.)

Some powers are listed as Interrupts or Reactions. These can occur at any time in response to a specific trigger. Interrupts are resolved before the triggering event while Reactions are resolved after.

No attack chains: If another character grants you an attack, you may not use a power that grants another character an attack. This rule mainly affects monsters and prevents infinite action chains.

Movement

You can spend a Move Action to gain squares of movement equal to your speed. You can use these squares of movement before, after or between (but not during) your other actions. So if your

speed is 6, you can move 3 squares, kill a monster (Attack Action), move 2 squares, heal your friend (Role Action), then move 1 more square. You can also spend a Move Action to shift 1 square—that is, you can move 1 square without granting an Opportunity to adjacent enemies (see below). You can also spend a Move Action to stand up from being Prone or to attempt to escape from a Grab. To escape a Grab, spend a Move Action to roll a Saving Throw (i.e. you roll a die: 1 – 3 is a failure, 4 – 6 is a success), and if you succeed you escape. The escape attempt consumes the Move Action whether successful or not. If you escape a grab or stand up in a square you are unable to legally occupy or which would cause you to fall or take damage, you may pick an adjacent legal square instead. Crawling while prone reduces your speed to 2.

Opportunity

Certain actions cause you to grant your opponents an Opportunity. When you provoke an Opportunity, your opponent takes the chance to strike at you, and you take damage. When you are granted an Opportunity, you may deal 2 damage to the enemy who granted it. This damage happens as an Interrupt, i.e. before the triggering action is resolved.

- When you make a ranged attack, you grant an Opportunity to every adjacent enemy. (Note that using a ranged Role Action does not grant an Opportunity.)
- When you leave your square without shifting (see Movement, above) you grant an Opportunity to every adjacent enemy.
- Some characters have special abilities which let them use Opportunities in a different way or gain Opportunities at different times. Such abilities are always explained in the specific rules for that creature or character.

You may only take advantage of at most one Opportunity granted to you by each creature per turn.

How to Read a Power

In this section you will find a few powers, with many more to come in the Class sections that follow. They are formatted to be fairly condensed while being fast to read and use in play. There are a few things you should know about how they work.

Action Types

First, the icon in the top-left corner tells you what type of action they use.

- ⚔ indicates that it uses an Attack Action. You get one of these per turn.
- ⚡ indicates that it is triggered and does not use an action.
- ○ indicates a Free Action that can be used any time on your turn.
- 👤 indicates a Role Action. You also get one of these per turn, but they are not attacks.
- ➡ indicates a Move Action.

Target

The possible targets of an attack are indicated in the top row.

-  means ranged, targeting one enemy in that range.
-  means melee, targeting one adjacent enemy.
-  means Burst, and targets everyone except yourself within a certain range. Area of effect powers like this make a separate attack roll for each target. The power as a whole is only considered a Miss if every attack roll was a Miss.

Roll or No Roll

-  in the top line and “**Effect:**” below means you make an Attack Roll. The  tells you the damage while the “**Effect:**” tells you the effect.
- No  means you do not need to roll. The power “just works.”

Basic Attacks

Every player character has two Basic Attacks. They look like this.

 Melee Basic Attack	At-Will		 2
Effect: None.			
 Ranged Basic Attack	At-Will	 5	 2
Effect: None.			

So what does that mean? Well, they each cost your Attack Action to use. Melee Basic Attack attacks an adjacent target, while Ranged Basic Attack attacks a target within 5 squares. Both have  2, so they can each do 2 damage and have no other effect, and require an Attack Roll.

GM’s Note: Monsters’ Ranged Basic Attacks have the same range as their other ranged attacks, if they have any, or range 5 if they have none.

The Attack Roll

Your Attack Action is often the core of your turn, and most Attack Powers require an Attack Roll on the following table to see the result.  means damage. For instance, you might have a power that has  2 and **Effect:** Target is knocked Prone. The result of your roll will tell you whether you dealt 2 damage, knocked the target Prone, both, or neither.

Attack Rolls	
6	Critical Hit: Effect and 2 times 
4-5	Solid Hit:  and Effect
3	Glancing Hit:  or Effect (player’s choice)
2	Miss: Gain a Miss Token (see below)
1	Miss: Gain a Miss Token and a Strike (see below)

Whenever you get a Strike, make a note. You’ll be counting how many you get, and at the end of the combat having a lot leads to consequences for you personally and your team as a whole.

When you Miss, the GM gets the chance to narrate a small Twist. Some enemies may have special abilities called Miss Triggers to take advantage of your blunder, or the GM could make something up.

On the other hand, when you Miss all targets with an attack, you take a Miss Token. You may spend any number of Miss Tokens after any future attack roll in the same combat to get +1 to the roll per token spent, so long as the roll was not a 1. If the roll was a 1 and you spend a Miss Token, you still take a Strike, but the first token spent bumps the roll up to a 3: a Glancing Hit. Unused Miss Tokens at the end of combat are gone. Powers that trigger extra benefits on a Hit do not activate if a Miss Token is used to turn a Miss into a Hit.

When you hit, you might get to do an Effect along with or instead of dealing damage. To see what I mean by Effects, look at the examples that follow or take a look at the section on Classes. There is a lot of variety! The Glossary near the end of this chapter explains any terms you don’t understand.

More Example Powers

 Phantasms	At-Will	 5	 2
Effect: The next ally to attack the target has Advantage.			
 Life Drain	Encounter		 2
Effect: 2 damage and regain 3 Hit Points.			
 The Perfect Chance	Encounter		
One ally in within 10 squares makes an attack with Advantage.			
 Raise Ally	Encounter	Free Action	
Targets one ally within 5 squares that has been Taken Out or is at or below 0 HP. The ally may re-enter the fight with 1 HP.			
 Don't Give Up	Encounter	Interrupt	
Trigger: One ally within 5 squares drops to 0 HP or below. The ally instead stays standing with 1 Hit Point.			

In these examples, the  indicates that each of the first three powers are Attack Actions, meaning you can use these on your turn by spending your Attack Action, or when an ally’s power tells you to “make an attack.” *Raise Ally* is a Free Action, as indicated by the  icon, and as noted in the top line. It can be used on your turn without spending an action. *Don’t Give Up* is a Triggered power—you don’t spend an action, but you may only use it when the listed “Trigger” occurs.

If an attack has damage in the top line, indicated by a  followed by a number, then it requires an Attack Roll and the next line represents the Effect, indicated by the presence of “**Effect:**” in the second line. In the examples, *Phantasms* and *Life Drain* require Attack Rolls. For *Phantasms*, whether you get to give an ally Advantage depends on your roll, as does whether or not you deal 2 damage. The final three powers do not require you to roll the dice. For instance, when you use *The Perfect Chance*, one ally will get to make an attack with Advantage.

Phantasms has ☞ 5, which indicates range 5. So it can attack anyone within 5 squares. A melee attack, such as *Life Drain*, is indicated by a ⚔. A ☼ followed by a number indicates a Burst attack, targeting every creature in that range.

Later in the monsters section, you'll see more variations. A ⚔ followed by a number is a simple reminder of a monster's reach. A ☼ and ☞ together indicate a Burst attack centered on any square in the indicated range. Generally, Burst attacks hit friends and foes alike, unless indicated otherwise, or unless it wouldn't make sense in the fiction for that to be true. You grant Opportunities to adjacent creatures when using an attack with a ☼ and a ☞ together just as if it had only a ☞.

Color

The color of the power indicates how often you can use it. Green powers are At-Will and can be used without limit unless otherwise noted, while Encounter Powers are purple and each one can only be used once per combat. Whether a power is Encounter or At-Will is also noted in the top line. Some Classes have yellow powers—these are neither Encounter nor At-Will, but follow their own rules that depend on the Class. Role Actions have the same At-Will/Encounter dichotomy, but their colors are blue and red.

A brief note on durations

I love having a variety of Statuses in the game, but I don't like having to keep track of what ends when. In this game, the vast majority of Statuses have one of three durations: until the end of the target's next turn, save ends, or until the end of the encounter. So it's simple—if you have an effect, either it ends when you're done your turn, you try to save against it when you end your turn, or it doesn't end. No problem!

Improvising

What if you want to improvise an attack in combat that isn't on your character sheet? You describe your action, and then the GM assigns an appropriate effect. You can go back and forth a bit but the GM has final say. The basic damage you get for trying something cool is 3. The strength of the effect depends on what you're trying to do—the cooler it is, and the more appropriate to the enemy, the stronger the effect. What if you want to improvise something that's not an attack? See the *Other Actions* heading below.

It was cool the first time...

Players shouldn't be using the rules for improvising to create powers that they can consistently use that are superior to those on their character sheet. The first time they do something cool, give them 3 damage and a good effect. The next time they try the same trick, it's 2 damage and a weaker effect. The whole point of these rules is to empower players to try new tricks and cool stuff.

Other Powers Everyone Has

Characters can Charge into melee with an opponent.

⚔ Charge

At-Will

Move up to your speed to a square adjacent a creature and make a Melee Basic Attack against it. Each square of movement must bring you closer to the target. You cannot Charge through Difficult Terrain.

Every player also has a Rally power, usable once per encounter to allow them to regain some health or will to fight, as represented by Hit Points (often abbreviated HP). It also allows them to regain some of their offensive potential at the same time. It does cost an Action Point to do so, though. It looks like this.

Rally

Encounter

No Action

Special: You may only use this on your turn, but you may use at any point in your turn, even while Incapacitated, Dominated, or under any other Status.

Spend an Action Point. Regain 4 Hit Points and regain the use of one Encounter Power from your Class (i.e. not a Role Action) you have expended.

Characters also have the ability to Assess situations or monsters. This involves asking the GM questions which they must answer as honestly and helpfully as possible.

👥 Assess

At-Will

Roll a die and ask the GM that many questions from the lists below.

About an enemy:

- How many Hit Points does it have?
- How would you summarize its powers?
- What are its special traits?
- Is it carrying anything strange or unique?

About the encounter:

- Who is really in charge?
- What can I use against the enemies?
- What can they use against me?
- Are there hidden doors or traps?
- Are there hidden enemies?

Notice that this power is blue. That means you use it as a Role Action (the 👥 icon also indicates this). You'll often use this when you have no compelling reason to use powers from your Role, or when you suspect that there are hidden enemies. You might also get a free use of it before combat if the GM deems it appropriate.

Other Actions

Sometimes players want to take other actions in combat—open a door, jump over a pit, hide in the shadows, that sort of thing. The GM decides the mechanics of unique situations, determining what sort of action it is and whether it requires a roll. When rolling a Skill is required in combat, use the basic rules, but with the difference that instead of a Cost, you get a Strike like you would if you rolled a 1 on an attack.

Twists in combat don't have to be as game-changing as Twists out of combat: a simple failure might be Twist enough ("You try to jump across the pit... but no. In you fall.") but two other good options are the partial success ("So close! You're hanging from the far side of the pit by your fingers, and here comes an orc with her hobnail boots on...") and the never-even-started ("You take the run up, but you know you'll never make it. You stumble to a halt before you plunge over the edge."). Sometimes wasting your action is Twist enough without adding injury to insult.

Always bear in mind the tone of the game when you're working out your intent: unless you're some sort of demigod, jumping a pit while wrestling the Hydra isn't going to work. Likewise for sweet-talking someone whose arm you've just chopped off, or hiding in a brightly lit room from someone who is standing three feet away and staring directly at you. *Don't demand nonsense!*

Fiction Takes Precedence

When any player, including the GM, uses a power or creates any sort of mechanical effect, it's incumbent on them to explain and describe what their character just did. Sometimes this description conflicts with what the mechanics prescribe. The rule here is that the **fiction takes precedence**.

Fiction takes precedence means that if a player's explanation does not make sense, or if it violates the tone of the game, then they can't do it even if the mechanics say they can. Remember, this applies to the GM as well! This sort of conflict comes up a lot with Flying creatures and areas of effect or terrain effects.

With that said, always err on the side of permissiveness. If the player comes up with a cool description for how their character achieves something awesome or unexpected, in keeping with the tone of the game, then there is no conflict. On top of that, always give players a chance to revise their description when necessary. If the player taking the action cannot think of a way for what the mechanics are describing to occur, another player should offer up an explanation.

Example: Alex describes her character doing a sweep kick and tripping all the enemies around her in a Close 1, but she has a bird-man adjacent that has already been described as being above the ground, though not high enough to have the Flying Status. Kwame points out that this doesn't make sense. Even though the mechanics of her power say that the bird-man takes damage, that cannot happen unless Alex elaborates on her description. Jamar suggest that following her sweep kick, Alex's Martial Artist could snatch a goat-man's axe and hurl it at the bird-man. That description fits perfectly with the mechanics and works with their game's gritty tone.

This rule isn't primarily about restrictions. When you get a cool idea that isn't necessarily supported by the mechanics, this rule is there to back you up. The GM can make sensible rulings about things that are outside the scope of the mechanics. Hey, doesn't it make sense that my flaming arrow would set off those powder kegs? Why yes, it does—so they explode and do... whatever they do in that situation. Hey, I'm holding a torch—can't I burn these webs off instead of struggling to escape? Sure! Use your Attack Action to do it and then you don't need to roll to escape.

Hit Points and Taken Out

You always start each combat with your maximum Hit Points (for players, that is 10 by default). These go down as you take damage, and can be restored by a variety of means depending on the genre. They represent a combination of your will and ability to fight on.

Your Bloodied value is equal to half your Hit Points (rounded down). When you have this many HP or fewer, you are considered Bloodied - which has special effects with certain powers.

When you are reduced to 0 HP or below, you are Incapacitated. If you regain Hit Points while below zero, you first set your Hit Points to zero and then regain the specified amount. While you have 0 HP or fewer and are Incapacitated, each time you start your turn you make a Comeback Roll: roll a die; on a 1 or 2 you lose two Hit Points (this cannot be resisted or reduced), but on a 5 or 6 you regain one Hit Point (first setting your Hit Points to zero, as described above).

When you are reduced to negative 5 HP, you are Taken Out. You're out of the combat for good, although you can come back to consciousness and regain your Hit Points after the combat just like anyone else.

You can intentionally take yourself out of combat if you want to escape: once you are 20 squares from any enemy, you are out of the combat if you want to be. You could also take yourself out by other means, such as surrender.

I'm Taken Out—What Now?

Well, being Taken Out isn't going to happen every combat. It should be fairly uncommon that it happens to you, and if it does keep happening to you, consider whether you might want to change your playstyle to something a bit more defensive or maybe take some Feats that help your survivability (see page 137). But in the short term, that doesn't help, right? You're out of combat and wondering what to do with yourself. If you want to stay involved, ask the GM if he can give you a monster or two to control and set yourself to taking out your erstwhile allies—misery loves company, right? If that's not your thing, then take a break, get a drink, kibitz with the other players. Don't distract them, though. If it's Billy's turn and he's not paying attention because you're talking to him about American Idol, that just slows things down for everyone.

Strikes

When you are first Bloodied in a combat, you take a Strike. When you are first reduced to 0HP or below, take two Strikes, and take one Strike each time thereafter. If you are Taken Out, take a Strike. When you roll a 1 on an attack, take a Strike.

After each combat, Strikes determine what Condition if any your character gets:

Post-Combat Strikes	
0-1	No Condition
2-3	Winded
4	Exhausted
5+	Injured

Depending on the circumstances of the combat, at the GM's discretion you may receive different Conditions. For instance, if you were fighting a mummy, the GM may tell you that instead of Injured, you are Cursed. The mechanical effects are equivalent, but recovery may require different Skills.

Winning and Losing

Is combat the solution to every problem? Is it Game Over if you lose a combat? Will the GM fudge the rules to save you? No. Not in this game. In this game you can win and not get all of what you want, and losing doesn't mean death. GMs don't need to be afraid of winning! If the GM wins a combat, they get to put the players in a tight spot and the players get to be awesome in getting out of it.

When you win a combat—meaning that at least one of the player characters is not Taken Out, and all enemies are Taken Out or otherwise taken care of—you total up all the Strikes your team has accrued. Let N be the number of players on your team and S be the total Strikes.

- If S is less than N , you have won a total victory.
- Else if S is less than 2 times N , you owe a Minor Concession.
- Else if S is less than 3 times N , you owe a Major Concession.
- Else if S is greater than that, you have won a Pyrrhic victory. Your enemies are defeated, but you do not get your intent.

Concessions

Concessions are narrative effects that are discussed by the group. A Minor Concession indicates that while you've achieved your goal, not everything went your way. Perhaps you were seen and word reaches the ears of your enemies. A Major Concession might mean that you got your goal but something happened that bodes very ill for the future, or it might mean that you achieved most of your goal but its completion is still one step away. A Pyrrhic victory indicates that you did not achieve your goal and it's no longer within your grasp. In a fight to stop and kill the evil Vizier, a Major Concession might mean either that you killed him but his plan is still in motion without him, or that you stopped his plan but he managed to survive somehow. Perhaps he activated his ring of escape and is simply gone, with his plan proceeding. The Concession must always depend on what the players intended to achieve.

So who decides? While everyone throws out ideas and discusses their merits, the final outcome is decided by the GM exclusively. GMs are instructed to listen to their players and give their ideas a fair hearing. Players are encouraged to make their suggestions appropriate to the level of Concession. If you owe a Major Concession and all your suggestions are minor inconveniences at most, the GM is obligated to ignore them and impose what they feel is appropriate. The GM must take into account the players' intentions in the fight and give them what they have won. If they came to kill the Vizier and they owe only a Minor Concession, then the Vizier is dead and the GM just has to deal with it. Luckily, GMs always have ways to make life interesting for the players.

Losing

So you lost. You were all Taken Out. Now the GM gets to put you in a bad spot. Likely you are captured. Maybe you wake up alone and in a pitch black hole with a strange and unnerving scent. Perhaps you are stripped of your possessions and left for dead. (That's one of my favorites: being dumped naked in the river generates

hatred like nothing else and players will go to great lengths to get back their belongings.) Note that it's not just intelligent enemies who may leave characters alive, as even a hungry carnivore may be content to shred their packs and eat all their rations once everyone is unconscious.

What about character death? Well, that depends on the tone and setting of your campaign and also on the actions of the players. You should agree before you play whether or not death is on the table and under what circumstances, but here are some guidelines. Most intelligent creatures can find something better to do with a group of heroes than simply kill them. Even if they want to kill them, they may screw it up. They may think that throwing Odysseus into storm wracked seas is sure to kill him, when in fact he wakes up washed ashore with a beautiful maiden peering at him. What about mindless hungry creatures? Maybe the party manages to escape but into a worse spot. Or maybe the mindless creature eats one of the player characters and leaves the rest.

Personally, I think that killing one character is something that should be on the table sometimes. It is a serious moment in the game, but it shouldn't be cause for anger in real life. The rest of the party need to deal with the loss and its ramifications while the player who lost their character gets to try something new. This is also where players' choices come into play. If the player characters have been killing and slaughtering the soldiers of the Duke instead of disarming, disabling, or capturing them, they will get a reputation. This reputation can help them when they wish to be feared, but it will not serve them well if they are defeated by the Duke's forces. One or more of the party may be killed and the rest very badly treated as reprisal, even if the soldiers are under orders to bring them in alive. Characters who have a reputation for honor are more likely to be treated with honor.

Depending on your group, character death can also give weight to your descriptions—if you describe something as incredibly deadly, the players will feel the import much more strongly if they know that death is truly on the table as a possible consequence.

What about the dreaded TPK (Total Party Kill)? Is that ever appropriate? I never say never, but to my mind there's only one reason that makes sense: the group wants to end the campaign. If this is your last session, then maybe it makes sense for the final fight to be Do or Die. Do you slay the robot queen or do you die trying?

Advantage and Disadvantage

If you and an ally are flanking a target, i.e. you are both adjacent to the target and on opposite sides or opposite diagonals of the target, you both have Advantage on melee attacks against it.

Any melee attacks against a Prone target have Advantage.

If you are Hidden from your target when you attack or Charge, you have Advantage on that attack.

Conditions

Winded and Exhausted give Disadvantage to attack rolls in the first round. Exhausted also gives Disadvantage to all rolls other than attack rolls. Major Conditions give -1 to all rolls.

Cover

When you have cover, attacks against you have Disadvantage. Terrain that grants cover should be called out by the GM when the map is brought out or when it is created. Cover always works however the GM says it should—a portcullis works differently than a tree or a wall.

Burst attacks judge cover from their center (unless the fiction demands otherwise). To get cover against a ranged attack, you need to use terrain via the following rules.

Take Cover

When you are right up against an object, you can press up against it to get more protection than you get from simply having the object nearby (see Intervening Cover below). For these purposes there are two kinds of cover, Low and Full. Low Cover represents things like boxes, piles of sandbags, and chest-high walls. Full Cover represents things you can stand behind and remain safe, like large trees, pillars, and walls. The type of cover only matters if you are right next to it—your character needs to get down and press up against it to take advantage. When you aren't adjacent, use the rules for Intervening Cover below. Low Cover counts as Difficult Terrain to move over.

The diagram on the right explains how Low Cover works geometrically. If I were to write it out it would seem complicated, but when you see it it's absolutely simple. Taking cover against Low Cover (this does not cost an action) grants you cover in a half-plane if you are non-diagonally adjacent. Taking cover diagonally only grants you a quarter-plane of cover.

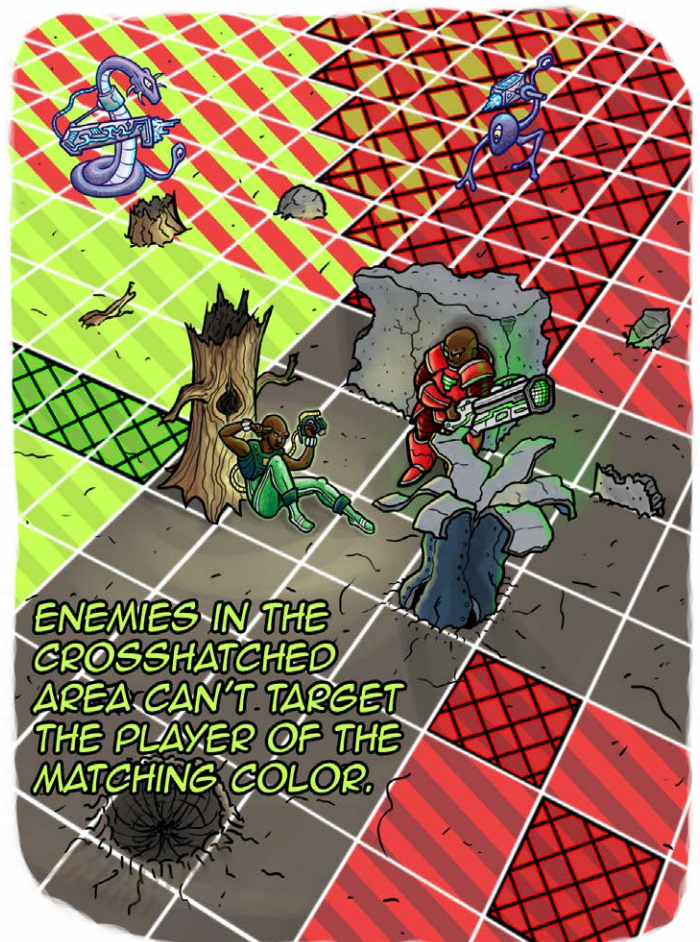
Full Cover grants you cover in the same region as Low Cover. On top of that, Full Cover blocks line of sight, granting you full immunity to attack from some squares. Taking cover against a pillar non-diagonally gives you one row or column of protection. Taking cover diagonally gives you protection along that diagonal. Standing behind a wall with two or more squares of Full Cover is more advantageous than standing behind a pillar: you get protection not just along the row and diagonal but everything in between too.

When you have taken cover, you may spend an Attack Action to *Hunker Down* until the start of your next turn or until you leave your square, whichever comes first. If you are hunkered down, ranged attacks from which you have cover must roll an extra die and take the worst result. I.e. they typically roll three dice since they already have Disadvantage due to your cover.

Allies generally provide Intervening Cover against enemy attacks, but typically you cannot take cover against other creatures. However, relative size is important and the situation can change things. If you take cover against the brachiosaur's leg, then by all means treat it as Full Cover.

Cover and Large Creatures

A creature large enough to occupy more than one square can only take cover by standing next to an object large enough to block one entire side of its body.



Intervening Cover

Intervening Cover is the set of rules you use to determine how an object or piece of terrain might impair your shot against an enemy if the enemy is not taking cover against it.

- If you can draw an unobstructed line from any point on your square to the center of theirs, you have a clear shot.
- If you can't do that, but you can draw a line from a point on your square to a point on theirs, they have cover against you.
- If you can't do either of the above, i.e. you cannot draw any lines from your square to theirs, then you have no shot.

Note: When drawing lines past cover, you may not “cut the corner,” nor may your line run along an edge of the cover. Cover is considered to block all its edges and corners.

Low Cover does not count for Intervening Cover unless the GM decides that the circumstances demand it.

Concealment, Sight and Targeting

When a target is *concealed*, all Ranged and Melee attacks against it have Disadvantage. When a target *cannot be seen*, you cannot target it with Ranged and Melee attacks or Opportunities. Targets that *cannot be seen* always briefly reveal their position when they attack, even if they remain Invisible. If you wish to attack such a creature, you must ready an action (see the next heading) to attack it when it reveals itself. Most times there are other ways to make Invisible creatures visible, as well. Terrain or conditions that provide concealment also exist at the GM's discretion, and should be used sparingly—spending an entire fight with Disadvantage just because it's nighttime is frustrating. Save concealment for when it's really dark. A very dense fog might give concealment beyond 5 squares and take away line of sight entirely after 10 or 15 squares.

When an area is *obscured*, all creatures in the area are *concealed*. If your only sight-lines to a creature pass through an *obscured* area, that creature is *concealed to you*. This rule counts the square you are in as part of your sight-lines. So in particular all creatures are considered *concealed* to a character in an *obscured* square. When an area is *completely obscured*, the above is all true except that you may replace *concealed* with *cannot be seen*.

Hidden simply means that your enemies do not know where you are. They can't target you and you have Advantage on your attacks against them. If you take any action that would reveal your position such as leaving cover, using an Opportunity, or making an attack, you are still considered *Hidden* until the action is fully resolved. So you can Charge out of cover at an enemy and still have Advantage on that attack, but if you move and then attack, your attack does not have Advantage. If you use a power that allows you to make multiple attacks, you only have Advantage on the first.

To become *Hidden* you must be out of sight for a full round. You must also be out of sight in a place where you could actually move around while remaining out of sight. You can't hide behind a tree and expect the enemy to just forget where you are. Once you are

Hidden you need not remain out of sight so long as you keep to cover or concealment. If you want to dart from one piece of cover to another without being seen, you must make a Skill Roll as you move, and the GM is within their rights to disallow such an action if your movement is directly where the enemy would be looking—right across a hallway, say.

Some enemies have special senses and player characters can use a Feat to get them as well. For instance, *Tremorsense X* means that you can “see” using the vibrations in the ground. You can see the area around you and all creatures in contact with the ground within X squares regardless of intervening terrain. This allows you to ignore the restrictions for *concealed* creatures or those that *cannot be seen* usually, as long as they cause vibrations on the ground. *Darkvision* means that you can see in the dark. You ignore the restrictions for *concealed* creatures or those that *cannot be seen*, when those Statuses are caused by darkness. Most creatures with *Darkvision* are sensitive to rapid changes in light. Sometimes your attack is blocked by terrain, even when you can see your target. So your *Tremorsense* does not mean you can make a ranged attack through the wall even if you can see through it. Throwing a javelin in a high arc over a big rock, though? Go for it, but you'll have Disadvantage. If you couldn't see your target, you would not be able to make that attack.

Prepared actions and Delaying

You can spend an Attack Action to prepare an Attack or Move Action. Say a specific trigger and say specifically what you are going to do when that trigger occurs. When the trigger happens, you take the action you described. If the trigger doesn't happen before your next turn, you've wasted your preparation.

You may delay at the start of your turn. You take no actions and make no Saving Throws. All beneficial Statuses that end on your turn end now. Harmful Statuses do not end. After any creature's turn ends, you may choose to take your turn. Your Initiative moves to this new point for future rounds.

Action Points

You may spend an Action Point at any time to activate your Rally. Additionally, your Role gives you a way to spend Action Points in combat called an Action Trigger. You may not spend Action Points to gain Advantage on attacks in combat, although you may still spend them to get Advantage on any Skill Rolls you make.

Order of Operations

If multiple actions seem to resolve at the same time, the general rule is that the user of the abilities may pick the order in which to resolve them. If more than one character is involved, it should be clear if there is an Interrupt or a Reaction at play.

Damaging Zones

Damaging zones only deal damage once per round per target.

This includes wording such as “When a creature enters an adjacent square it takes 1 damage”. It includes zones arising from terrain, powers, or anything. It is broad and any exceptions must be specifically called out, such as “Creatures take 1 damage for *each* adjacent square they enter”. It doesn't injure you more to be waved back and forth through a fire than it does to be held in the fire.

Glossary

This is a list of terms that are used elsewhere. Whenever you see a term that you don't understand, look here.

Ally – An ally generally refers to your teammates, but not yourself. If you are Dominated, whoever is dominating you gets to determine who you consider an ally for the duration.

Attack – An attack is any Attack Action or any power that would normally cost an Attack Action, even if you are using it without spending one.

When a power or ability tells you to “make an attack,” you may use an Attack Action just as though you had spent one on your turn.

Blinded – A Blinded creature cannot see clearly, but it has not necessarily been rendered fully blind. Thus all of its attacks have Disadvantage. All melee attacks against it are made with Advantage. A Blinded creature cannot take advantage of Opportunities granted to it, nor use Miss Triggers.

Bloodied – A Bloodied creature has fewer than half its Hit Points remaining.

Buffer Points – Buffer points are noted separately from Hit Points, but act in the same way. When you take damage, remove any Buffer Points before removing Hit Points. **Buffer points are not cumulative:** if you have Buffer Points from multiple sources, instead of adding them together, just take the highest value.

Champion – A Champion automatically succeeds on each Saving Throw. Champions have multiple turns per round and usually count for 4 other creatures when designing combats. See page 141.

Dazed – A Dazed creature does not get its full complement of actions on its turn. It may only take one action: Attack, Move, or Role. It may not take advantage of Opportunities granted to it, nor use Miss Triggers.

Deafened – A Deafened creature cannot hear. It automatically fails any rolls that require hearing and has Disadvantage on rolls that use hearing but not exclusively.

Difficult Terrain – Difficult Terrain takes 2 squares of movement to enter. This applies to any form of movement, so if you are only shifting 1 square, you may not shift into Difficult Terrain. Flying creatures usually ignore Difficult Terrain, but it depends on the nature of the terrain.

Distance – The number of squares separating two characters, counted by the shortest route, and ignoring terrain and obstacles. For example, adjacent creatures are a distance of 1 apart.

Distracted – A Distracted creature may not use Miss Triggers or Role Actions or take advantage of Opportunities.

Dominated – A Dominated creature may not take advantage of Opportunities granted to it, nor use Miss Triggers. When it starts its turn, the creature dominating it gives it a very brief command. It must attempt to follow those directions to the best of its abilities. When a player character is Dominated, it is up to the player how to go about achieving the GM's command. They must make the attempt in good faith. Be a good sport. Movement while Dominated does not grant Opportunities.

Alternate (less fuzzy) version: A Dominated creature is Dazed. Its one action is chosen and targeted by whoever is dominating it. Only At-Will actions may be chosen.

Elite – An Elite creature automatically succeeds on each Saving Throw when it is not Bloodied. They take two consecutive turns on their Initiative count when they are Bloodied. An Elite creature usually counts for 2 other creatures when designing combats. See page 141.

Escape – Some Statuses are listed as “escape ends.” These can be ended by attempting to escape, exactly as you would from being Grabbed. That is, you must spend a Move Action to roll a Saving Throw. If you succeed, the Status ends. You automatically escape from any Grab or similar Status if the creature Grabbing you is Incapacitated.

Flanking – When you and an ally are both adjacent to the same creature and on opposite sides or opposite diagonals of that creature, then you are flanking it. You both have Advantage on melee attacks against it.

Flying – A Flying creature may not be the target of Melee attacks except those used by other Flying creatures. A Flying creature may not make melee attacks against non-Flying targets, nor does it count for Flanking against them. Moving while Flying does not grant Opportunities except to other Flying creatures. However, gaining the Flying Status does grant Opportunities to any adjacent creatures as you take off. While Flying, you do not gain Opportunities for non-Flying creatures' movement. You can choose to stop Flying at any time. If a Flying character is knocked Prone, they lose the Flying Status.

Forced Movement – This includes throws, pushes, pulls, slides and involuntary teleports. It does not grant Opportunities. When using Forced Movement, you may elect move the target fewer spaces than specified. If any Forced Movement would bring the creature into damaging terrain or into a zone that deals damage or applies a negative effect, it may elect to roll a Saving Throw to roll to safety. If it succeeds, it falls Prone at the edge of the Zone. If it fails, the Forced Movement continues but it falls Prone anyway.

Frenzied – When Frenzied on your turn, roll a die. On a 1, it is as though you were Dominated; on a 2, you must run towards whatever Frenzied you as directly as possible, then make a Melee Basic Attack against it with Disadvantage if it is within range; on a 3 or 4 you must Charge towards whatever Frenzied you if you are in range, or move your speed towards it and make a Ranged Basic Attack if you are not; on a 5-6 you may take your turn normally, but only use Basic Attacks. After this roll and action have been resolved, you end your turn. The roll counts as a “panic roll” and this Status is an inversion of the more common Panicked Status. If you are both Panicked and Frenzied, roll both Panic Rolls and follow the lower result (tie goes to Panic). Do not grant Opportunities for actions that are not under your control.

Goon – Goons are more fragile than Standard Monsters. They have an HP threshold, and if the first damage they take does more than that value, they are Taken Out. Otherwise, they are considered Bloodied and are Taken Out the next time they take damage regardless of the amount. For the purposes of the Cleave Feat and other abilities, a wounded Goon is considered to have 1 HP.

Grabbed – A Grabbed creature is Immobilized and cannot take advantage of Opportunities nor Miss Triggers. To escape a Grab, you must spend a Move Action to roll a Saving Throw and if you succeed you escape. Most creatures cannot Grab more than two other creatures at a time. You automatically escape from any Grab if the creature Grabbing you is Incapacitated.

While Grabbing an enemy, you may try to move, dragging it with you. Spend a Move Action and make an Opposed Roll. If you have multiple enemies Grabbed, you only make one Opposed Roll and they use the Helping rules. If you win by 3 or more, move your speed freely. If you win by 1 or 2, you may move as though Slowed, or take 2 damage to move freely. If you tie, you move as though Slowed and you and the Grabbed creature each take 2 damage. If you lose by 1 or 2, you may move as though Slowed, or the enemy may choose to take 2 damage to escape. If you lose by 3 or more, the enemy escapes.

Forced Movement that moves the Grabber out of reach from their victim or that would move the Grabbed creature out of reach gives the Grabbed creature a free escape attempt. If it succeeds, complete the Forced Movement, otherwise the Grabbed creature remains Grabbed and, if necessary, is dragged along by the Grabber.

Guarded – When a creature is Guarded, attacks against the creature that roll a 6 are treated as 5's, and 4's are treated as 3's. Guarded overrides attack roll bonuses: an attacker can boost their roll up to a 6 (using a Miss Token, for instance), but Guarded will bump it right back down to a 5.

Harried – A Harried creature has Disadvantage on all its Saving Throws, rolls to escape, and panic rolls (see Panicked). You cannot end the Harried effect or attempt to save against it at the end of your turn until you have finished all your other Saving Throws.

Immobilized – An Immobilized creature cannot move except by teleporting.

Incapacitated – When you are Incapacitated, you fall Prone and are Stunned. Marks, Grabs, and other Statuses you are actively maintaining end.

Interrupt – An Interrupt is an action that is triggered. It is resolved before the triggering event.

Invisible – While Invisible, you *cannot be seen*. See page 94.

Marked by X – If you make an attack that does not include X as a target, you grant X an Opportunity (so long as you are within range of its longest-ranged attack). If you shift out of a square within X's reach (usually any adjacent square), you grant X an Opportunity unless your shift moved you closer to X. If the creature Marking you is incapacitated, the Mark ends.

Ongoing Damage – When you have Ongoing X Damage, you take X damage at the start of your turn. There is one exception: if taking the damage would bring you down to 0 HP or less, you may take one final action (of any sort) before taking the damage. If that action removes the Status, you are saved and may continue your turn. Multiple instances of Ongoing Damage are cumulative, unless they are from the same source (the same power or trait). If a creature gains ongoing damage during its turn, it immediately takes that damage.

Panicked – When Panicked on your turn, roll a die. On a 1, it is as though you were Dominated; on a 2, you must run away from whatever Panicked you as directly as possible, while making a Ranged Basic Attack against it with Disadvantage if it is within range; on a 3 or 4 you must take cover from the source of your fear, then make a Ranged Basic Attack against it if it is within range (if you are already behind cover, you must still move at least one square. If there is no cover within your speed, treat this as a 2); on a 5-6 you may take your turn normally, but only use Basic Attacks. After this roll and action have been resolved, you end your turn. Do not grant Opportunities for actions that are not under your control.

Phasing – Phasing creatures can move through obstacles and terrain, but may not end their turn in an object.

Pull – When you pull a creature, you move it the specified number of squares. Each square must bring it closer to you (i.e. reduce the distance between you). See Forced Movement.

Prone – All melee attacks against you while you are Prone have Advantage. You cannot take advantage of Opportunities nor Miss Triggers. You may not move nor shift normally. You must crawl or stand up as a Move Action. When you crawl, you move as though you were Slowed. Attacking while Prone grants Opportunities to all adjacent creatures. While Prone, treat Low Cover as Full Cover.

Push – When you push a creature, you move it the specified number of squares. Each square must move it farther from you (i.e. increase the distance between you). See Forced Movement.

Reach N – When a creature has Reach N, it may make melee attacks against any creature within N squares. Leaving any square within a creature's reach without shifting grants it an Opportunity, unless your movement brings you closer to it. You don't give the thug a chance when you approach, but you do when you run away.

Reaction – A Reaction is an action that is triggered. It is resolved after the triggering event.

Recharge – When a spent Encounter Power is recharged, it no longer counts as spent and can be used again.

Regenerate X – A creature with this Status Regenerates X Hit Points at the start of each of its turns. Regeneration generally does not combine with things that add to or subtract from the effectiveness of healing or regaining HP.

Resist X – A creature that resists X damage totals all the damage it receives at any one time and subtracts X before reducing its Hit Points. So an attack that does damage on its damage line, immediately as an effect, and because of a Class or Role feature only has X subtracted from the total once, not three times. By contrast, an attack that does damage on its damage line and more damage later as an effect is resisted on both occasions. Resistances from multiple sources are cumulative, but not those from the same source.

Restrained – A Restrained creature is Immobilized and has Disadvantage on all its attacks. It may not take advantage of Opportunities nor Miss Triggers.

Saving Throw – Roll a die. On a 4-6 you succeed, on a 1-3 you fail. Statuses that are denoted "save ends" mean that you get to roll a Saving Throw at the end of your turn, but some powers or abilities might grant you a Saving Throw earlier than that.

Slide – When you slide a creature, you move it the specified number of squares in any direction or combination of directions you like. See Forced Movement.

Slowed – A Slowed creature has its speed reduced to 2 and cannot spend a Move Action to shift.

Stooge – A Stooge has only 1 Hit Point, automatically fails all Saving Throws, and only deals 1 damage on Opportunities.

Stunned – A Stunned creature may not take actions except those labeled "No Action" nor take advantage of Opportunities, nor use Miss Triggers. It cannot flank.

Teleport – A Teleport counts as a Shift (if you do it) or a Slide (if you do it to another creature) except that it ignores all intervening terrain and creatures. Teleporting never grants Opportunities. Teleporting automatically escapes Grabs. Essentially, teleporting allows you to ignore terrain and all the usual consequences of leaving a square.

Throw – Throw is identical to Push except that it ignores most terrain and creatures between the start and end of the Push. Depending on the tone of your game, some monsters are likely immune to being thrown because of their size. Give them a trait to represent that or else your dragon will get suplexed.

Vulnerable X – A creature that has Vulnerable X damage totals all the damage it receives at any one time and adds X before reducing its Hit Points. So an attack that does damage on its damage line, immediately as an effect, and because of a Class or Role feature only has X added to the total once, not three times. By contrast, an attack that does damage on its damage line and more damage later as an effect does the extra damage on both occasions. Vulnerabilities from multiple sources are cumulative, but not those from the same source. Usually creatures are only vulnerable to certain types of attacks, such as a robot having Vulnerable 2 to electric attacks. When any attack gives the target Vulnerability as an Effect, the Vulnerability does not apply to damage from that attack, but only to future damage.

Weakened – When a Weakened creature attacks and does damage, it sums up all its damage resulting from its attack and halves it, rounding down, before reducing its target's Hit Points.

If you are Weakened and your victim is Vulnerable to or Resists your damage, the Vulnerability or Resistance are added on *after* halving the damage.

Zone – A Zone is simply a region of the battlefield with an ongoing effect. Zones apply their effect or damage to a given target no more than once per round (i.e. once it has experienced the effect, it cannot experience it again until the start of its next turn, assuming it only has one turn per round). So moving in and out and in again is no different than moving in once. If a creature is forced into a Zone that deals damage or applies a negative effect, it may elect to roll a Saving Throw to roll to safety. If it succeeds, it falls Prone at the edge of the Zone. If it fails, the Forced Movement continues but it falls Prone anyway.





Creating Your Character Part 2

There are three more steps to creating a character if you want to use the Tactical Combat rules. You can do these in more or less any order, but I'll list them in my favorite order.

- **Choose your Class.** Your Class defines the main way you interact in combat and most of your powers.
- **Choose your Role.** Your Role determines what your job is in combat: Do you protect your teammates? Heal and support them? Do you spread your damage around or do you focus on one target? Where your Class gives you your Attack Actions, your Role gives you your Role Action powers.
- **Pick a Feat.** Feats allow you to customize or personalize your character. Pick any one Feat from the list on page 137.

Note: Unless contradicted or modified by your other choices, every character starts with 10 HP and a speed of 6.

Reskinning

Reskinning is the idea that you can use the mechanics as written but change your narration of how those mechanics are enacted to suit your character. Your Class and Role are the skeleton of your character but you put on whatever skin you like. This is limited to the combat portion of the character. Origins and Backgrounds are simple enough to create and customize that you are expected to change them to fit your character concept. Instead of trying to create a Class that fits the way you want your character to fight exactly, just pick the best fit from the ones provided below and reskin them to match your character. It's not a difficult process at all—you just describe what it is your character is doing in combat. See also the rules for improvised attacks on page 90.

Example: Johann is playing a Shapechanger reskinned as a space commando in power armor. When he wants to take flight in combat, he can activate his jetpack using *Hawk's Transformation*:

✖ **Hawk's Transformation** Encounter ↗ ♠3

Effect: Fly up into the sky. You cannot be seen nor targeted. You gain the Flying Status. At the start of your next turn, you may fly down to any square on the map.

This comes along with the text "While in this form, you may gain the Flying Status as part of any Move Action." The name suggests that he ought to transform into a bird of prey, so Johann never uses that name explicitly. Instead, he describes how his commando smashes his foe with his fist and blasts off in a cloud of exhaust.

The Classes here define the mechanical way your character interacts in combat. They do not define who your character is or even how your character achieves those effects. The Martial Artist could be a martial artist using different styles, or it could be a medieval knight using different weapons to achieve different effects, or it could be a Shapechanger changing from one form to another, or it could be a gang of Smurfs whose attacks differ depending on which Smurf takes the lead. You as a player are free to determine what exactly your character is doing when you use the powers provided by your Class.

Reskinning and Tone

Tone is important here. The gang of Smurfs idea may sound fun, but it is a problem if the rest of your friends are hoping to play with a serious tone. Any tone of game is acceptable, from silly to pulp to serious to grindhouse gore as long as everyone involved knows the tone that the group is going for and works towards that tone. Don't play a character that conflicts with the group's desired tone.

If you want a gritty game with magic, make sure that the magical effects are as gritty and limited as the hacking and slashing, although they ought to be limited in different ways. If the Magician is effectively Green Lantern while the Martial Artist is effectively Bruce Lee, you've got a tone mismatch: some players are playing in a gritty and harsh world and some are playing superheroes. I'm not here to tell you how to balance your game. I only ask that you be transparent and ensure that everybody is on the same page about balance and tone.

Reskinning and Setting

Setting can also dictate across-the-board reskinning. You can play this game in a modern or futuristic setting where melee attacks represent medium-range guns, and range 20 represents sniper rifles at very long distances. You could use these rules to represent naval combat. You can do just about anything with reskinning, so setting concerns may require reskinnings before individual players get to make their own. Here's the caveat: the combat Classes in this book may be made to work as ships for your naval combat game, but they are not designed with that in mind. Reskinning requires more and more rationalization and post-hoc justification the further you stray from playing as individual fighters.

Reskinning and Balance

So Joe is playing a widowed crazy old lady discovering that her lifelong obsession with fortunetelling is actually rooted in psychic abilities, while Chuma is playing a being of fire slinging fire summoned from the elemental plane of fire. Okay, so there's a bit of a mismatch here in how effective you would expect them to be in combat. It's up to you if that sort of disparity is okay in your game. It may also indicate a mismatch in the tone of the game—maybe Chuma needs to tone down the whole fire thing. But they could both be cool characters and if they fit your intended tone, there's no problem at all. If you start them both at level 1, they are both equally effective in combat. Maybe Chuma's character ought to be a Striker while Joe's could be a Leader. Then the fire-thrower would out-damage the psychic grandma but the psychic would be better at helping the party keep up the will to fight.

So you've decided to go ahead with those two characters and a few sessions later they both get lassoed by their nemesis, The Midnight Cowboy. Chuma argues (rightly) that since his body is made of fire surely the rope would burn away within seconds, and the fiction comes first. This seems a bit unfair to Joe, but it's the right call. As the game progresses, Chuma keeps using his flaming body to insist on one thing after another, all completely reasonable and legal. You start to realize that since he's damaging people who grab him, burning up the environment and destroying terrain, immune to a number of effects, and gaining all sorts of advantages from his reskinning, that maybe it should cost him something. The stuff he does is awesome and cool, but some of the other players feel like he's cheating. A little foresight could have prevented this problem, but it's not too late to fix. The answer is that his flaming body provides him with a range of immunities and special abilities that are very useful in combat, and he should *pay a Feat* to access those immunities and abilities. Depending on what level the players are, there are a few ways to charge a player a Feat—you can simply swap away one of their existing Feats, you can make them spend their next Feat on it, or you can just give everyone else a bonus Feat (since the one player has already managed to unintentionally sneak in a bonus Feat). Whichever method you choose, there should be no further bitterness because Chuma gets to play his ridiculous fire-dude and do all that cool stuff, while everyone else gets to spend their Feat on something else to make their character cool in whatever way they like.

Leveling up

As characters level up, their progress is determined by their Class and Role. You can expect to get improvements to your Role at even levels and to your Class at odd levels.

At levels 3, 5, 7 and 9, gain an extra Feat.

When to level up

By default, all characters level up at the same time when it is narratively appropriate. This could be after finishing a great quest or simply to represent having a long period of downtime in which to improve their abilities. In particular, level 1 should be fast. As soon as everyone is comfortable with the rules, you can move up to level 2.

Frankly, you can use just about any leveling system you like here. If you want to give out old-fashioned experience points, that's fine. Leveling is not something that ties into the mechanical reward cycle of the game, and so you are free to use any leveling system that encourages the kind of behavior you want to see in your game. That means don't give out experience exclusively or mostly for killing monsters unless you want the game to be about killing monsters. One of my favorite experience systems is Keys from *The Shadow of Yesterday*—check it out and see what you think. You could also check out *Lady Blackbird*, which is free, to see Keys in action. The most important thing to remember is that experience systems are not necessary, which is why the game has none as a default. Introduce one only if you want to promote certain behaviors.

New Options and Retraining

You aren't stuck with the choices you make in character building. If you don't like a power or Feat you chose and want to choose another one, go ahead and do it. The GM might tell you to wait until this particular quest or session is over, or to wait until a convenient moment to tie the change in with the story if such a moment is coming up soon, but usually they will say to just go ahead and do it now.

Replacing Characters (or Adding New Ones)

There are many reasons why you might change your character. Your previous one might have died or retired or been disabled or settled down or went on vacation or disappeared into a screaming vortex to the overworld. Or maybe you just got tired of her. At any rate, simply create a new character and figure out with the group how to introduce your new character into the game. All the usual warnings apply: make a character that has an interest in the situation and a reason to work with the others at least some of the time; don't make a character that is too close in mechanical terms to another player's character—variety is important and everybody should have a niche or role in the group.

As far as your level goes, the default is to create your new character at the same level as the others (but see page 169 for another option). Having the same level brings you up to speed with the others in terms of everything but Skills and equipment. If you've been playing for a while and everybody has lots of Skills—more than ten each—then you may take two Backgrounds for Skills and resources. You may still only pick one of the two Tricks available (unless you get more by leveling up). You collaborate with the GM to work out what gear, if any, you may start with.

Of course, all this applies to introducing new players to an ongoing game too.

Leveling Options and Variants

Slower Advancement: Gain Class and Role-specific benefits at odd levels, and spread out the benefits that all characters get (e.g. Feats, Tricks, Kit advances) over the even levels. This extends the game from ten levels to twenty or more without any “dead levels.”



Combat Example of Play

The Necromancer uses her Move Action to gain her speed (6) in squares of movement. She then moves 3 squares to end next to the Goop.

Now that she is adjacent, she can attack. She spends her Attack Action and uses this power:

✖ Terrifying Visage At-Will   2

Effect: Target must use its Move Action on its turn to move its speed away from you or take 3 damage.



She rolls a 3, which means she could deal the enemy 2 damage or apply the Effect. She chooses the **Effect**: the Goop is terrified of her and must spend its move action to flee from her on its next turn.

Because she is a Controller, she has the following feature:

“When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, you may choose to either slow the target until the end of its next turn, or to slide the target 3 squares.”

She elects to slide the Goop 2 squares, putting him directly between her and her ally, Hippocampia. On Hippocampia's turn, she will have Advantage if she attacks the Goop because she and the Necromancer are flanking.

She uses her Role Action to use the following power on the Goop:

🧛 Sap Strength At-Will  10

Target is Weakened until the end of its next turn.



Now the Goop is Weakened and will do half damage on any attacks next turn. Using a ranged attack would grant an Opportunity to adjacent enemies like the Goop, but Sap Strength is a Role Power, and not an attack. Role powers do not grant Opportunities.

She still has 3 squares of movement. If she moved, she would grant the Goop an Opportunity and she would take 2 damage, but she's happy where she is. The Necromancer is done with her turn.

A few minutes later, after Hippocampia has taken her turn, it's the Goop's turn. The GM has been thinking about what to do during Hippocampia's turn. The Goop seems to have two reasonable choices:

The Goop could “trade down” its Attack Action for a Move Action and use it to shift so that it is only next to the Necromancer and not Hippocampia (shifts do not grant Opportunities), then spend its Move Action to run away, granting the Necromancer an Opportunity and taking 2 damage.



The Goop could spend its Attack Action trying to attack the Necromancer or Hippocampia (doing half damage if he hits because he is weakened), and then either stay put and take 3 damage from *Terrifying Visage* or spend his Move Action to run away, granting Opportunities to both players and taking a total of 4 damage.



This was the Necromancer's plan all along: instead of dealing 2 damage immediately, she put the enemy in a spot where it has to choose between taking 3 or 4 damage or taking 2 damage but giving up its Attack Action.





Classes

Your Class is your primary way of interacting with the combat system. It gives you all your Attack Actions outside the basic ones, and usually has a gimmick or two that makes it unique. No two Classes should play anything like one another.

Remember what you read about reskinning on page 98. The most obvious Class is not always the right Class for your concept. If you want to play a shapeshifter who changes forms throughout combat, you might naturally go to the Shapechanger Class. But the Martial Artist Class with its many stances might actually be closer to how you imagine your character fighting. If you want to play a wizard whose spells mostly help their teammates, you might find that the Warlord is a better fit than the Magician. You pick the Class you want based on how you want the character to play. How you describe your powers and your characters' actions is completely up to you.

Ready to go? Without further ado, here they are. Starting with The Necromancer.

If you get confused about how these powers work, see How to Read a Power on page 88 and the Glossary on page 95.

The Necromancer

What Goes Down Must Rise Up

Necromancers really get going when the bodies start to hit the floor. Necromancers command fallen enemies, revitalize fallen friends, and strike fear into their opponents. Reskinning is encouraged as always, and especially so for this Class. If you're playing a game where you're supposed to be the good guys and you don't want to kill everything in your path and defile their bodies with dark magic, you should reskin (see page 98). You might want to play this Class as someone who can get into the enemy's head through one means or another and bring them over to your side after they are Taken Out. Between that and the fear-based powers, this Class makes for a fantastic telepath.

Mark of Death: The first time you hit each non-Stooge enemy with an attack, give it the Mark of Death. When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, you gain the benefit of your Gift. At level 1, pick one of the following three Gifts:

Lesser Gift of Undeath: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, it stands up on its next Initiative count under your control as a Specter (see the statistics below). The Specter has 1 Hit Point and is Taken Out at the end of its first turn.

Lesser Gift of Terror: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, each enemy within 3 squares of it and each other creature with your Mark of Death takes 1 damage and must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Distracted until the end of their next turn.

Lesser Gift of Vampirism: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, get the Regenerate 1 Status. That is, you Regenerate 1 HP at the start of each of your turns until the end of the encounter. (Note: Multiple instances of Regeneration are cumulative.)

If this feature causes you to Regenerate more than enough HP to return you to your maximum, gain one Vitality Token (only one per round, no matter how many points of Regeneration were wasted). These can be spent to give you strength and speed.

- **Strength:** You may spend any number of Vitality Tokens when you hit with an attack. The attack deals extra damage equal to the number of tokens spent.
- **Speed:** You may spend any number of Vitality Tokens when you move or shift. The length of the move is increased by the number of tokens spent if it is a shift, or by twice that number otherwise.

At **Level 1**, gain the *Speak With Dead* At-Will Power and choose two more At-Will Powers. Gain the *Command Undead* Encounter Power, and choose one more Encounter Power.

✂ Speak With Dead	At-Will	↗ or ↘5	♠2
Effect: If the target is Taken Out before the start of your next turn, you gain Advantage on your first attack on your next turn and may ask one question from the Assess list.			
Special: If the group prefers it, you need not be restricted to the Assess list; ask any question and the target must answer honestly.			

✂ Deadly Poison	At-Will	↗ or ↘5	♠2
Effect: 1 Ongoing Damage and the target cannot regain Hit Points (save ends).			

✂ Phantasms	At-Will	↘5	♠2
Effect: The next ally to attack the target has Advantage.			

✂ Terrifying Visage	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: On the target's next turn, they must spend a Move Action to make their best effort to move as far away from you as is possible with one action, or else take 3 damage.			

✂ Command Undead	Encounter	↘10	
Special: May only target undead creatures. If you reskin, put some similar restriction on this. A telepath may only be able to Command another telepath's psychic thralls, for instance.			
The target makes a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Dominated until the end of the encounter.			

✂ Life Drain	Encounter	↗	♠2
Effect: 2 damage and regain 3 Hit Points.			

✂ Corpse Explosion	Encounter		
Targets one enemy within 10 squares that has been Taken Out. All creatures adjacent to the target or in its square take 4 damage.			

○ Raise Ally	Encounter	Free Action	
Targets one ally within 5 squares that has been Taken Out or is at or below 0 HP. The ally may re-enter the fight with 1 HP.			

✂ Seed of Fear	Encounter	↘5	♠3
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target ends its turn within 5 squares of you, it is Harried and Distracted until the end of its next turn.			

At **Level 3**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

✂ Greater Mark of Death	Encounter	↗ or ↘5	♠3
Effect: When the target is Taken Out, it stands up on its next Initiative count under your control. It has 4 Hit Points and is Dominated until the end of the encounter.			
Special: If you have the Gift of Undeath and the target had your Mark of Death, then when this Dominated version of it is Taken Out it stands up once more as undead, as per Gift of Undeath.			

⚡ Lich Pact	Encounter	Reaction	
Trigger: You are Taken Out or you make a Comeback Roll. You regain 4 Hit Points and stand up. You are Dazed until the end of the encounter.			

○ Health Swap	Encounter	Free Action	
Transfer one negative Status from you to an enemy within 5 squares. If you have no negative Statuses, the target counts as Bloodied instead until end of the encounter.			

At **Level 5**, replace your Gift with its upgraded version below. Also increase the damage on your At-Will's and Basic Attacks to 3.

Gift of Undeath: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, it stands up on its next Initiative count under your control as a Crude Zombie (see the statistics below). The Crude Zombie has 1 Hit Point and lasts until it is Taken Out.

Gift of Terror: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, each enemy within 3 squares of it and each other creature with your Mark of Death takes 2 damage and must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Dazed until the end of their next turn.

Gift of Vampirism: In addition to the benefits of the Lesser Gift of Vampirism, when a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, you may make a Saving Throw at the start of your next turn. If you have no save ends Statuses, make the Saving Throw anyway, and if you succeed, gain a Vitality Token. If this feature gives you multiple Saving Throws on the same turn, roll each of them. If you succeed on at least one, you gain a Vitality Token. But you cannot gain more than one token from Saving Throws each turn.

Note: So if you over-Regenerate and you succeed at a Saving Throw without a Status for it to end, you might gain 2 vitality tokens. That is the limit: you will never generate more than 2 in a turn.

At Level 7, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

☒ Crude Domination	Encounter	☞5 ♠4
Effect: Slide the target up to its speed then knock it Prone. Each enemy you slide it adjacent to must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is knocked Prone.		
☒ Army of Specters	Encounter	☞10
Targets only enemies that have been Taken Out. Each target stands up on its next Initiative count under your control as a Specter. Each Specter has 1 Hit Point and is Taken Out at the end of its turn.		
☒ Play Dice with Death	Encounter	
Pick any number of enemies within 5 squares. Each makes a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out. If it succeeds, you take 4 damage.		
☒ Terror	Encounter	☞ or ☞5 ♠4
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, each time the target starts its turn it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Panicked on that turn.		

At Level 9, replace your Gift with an upgraded version. Command Undead now targets two enemies within range.

Greater Gift of Undeath: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, it stands up on its next Initiative count under your control as an Advanced Zombie (see the statistics below). The Advanced Zombie has 4 Hit Points and lasts until it is Taken Out.

Greater Gift of Terror: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, each enemy within 3 squares of it and each other creature with your Mark of Death takes 3 damage and must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Panicked until the end of their next turn.

Greater Gift of Vampirism: When a creature with your Mark of Death is Taken Out, Regenerate 1 HP and make one Saving Throw at the start of each of your turns until the end of the encounter. Receiving this gift multiple times means that multiple Saving Throws may be made each turn. When you have no save ends Statuses, these may be used to generate Vitality Tokens, as per the level 5 feature.



Undead Minions

The following are the stats for your minions if you picked the Gift of Undeath.

Specter	♥1 See <i>Life Shape</i> ☞6
Phasing: The specter can move through physical objects, including other creatures.	
Life Shape: The specter has the same size and shape in death that it did in life. It must move as it did in life.	
☒ Fright	At-Will ☞ ♠2
Effect: Target is pushed 2 squares.	
Note: If you reskin, you might replace the Specter's phasing with some other special trait. Give it a special form of movement such as burrowing, swimming, flying, or climbing, or make it a mob.	
Crude Zombie	♥1 See <i>Life Shape</i> ☞6
Life Shape: The zombie has the same size and shape in death that it did in life. It must move as it did in life.	
☒ Grab	At-Will ☞ ♠2
Effect: Target is Grabbed.	
☒ Devour	☞ At-Will
Targets one Grabbed creature. Target takes 3 damage. When the target is Taken Out, it becomes a Crude Zombie too.	
Advanced Zombie	♥4 See <i>Life Shape</i> ☞6
Life Shape: The zombie has the same size and shape in death that it did in life. It must move as it did in life.	
☒ Grab	At-Will ☞ ♠3
Effect: Target is Restrained (escape ends).	
☒ Devour	☞ At-Will
Targets one Restrained creature. Target takes 3 damage and the zombie gains 3 Buffer Points. When the target is Taken Out, it becomes an Advanced Zombie too.	





The Duelist

Mano a Mano

Meet the Duelist. The main idea behind playing a Duelist is that you get to pick a target and pick on it, harry it, and destroy it. Then you get to repeat. This is great if you want to focus fire with your allies on one target, but also if you want to isolate your quarry away from the rest of the fight and protect your allies as a Defender. This Class synergizes very well with the Controller, Striker, and Defender Roles, but there are powers that work well for Leaders and Blasters too.

Gain the *Duel* and *Change Target* powers.

○ **Duel** **Encounter Free Action**

Target one creature within 10 squares. Until the end of the encounter, when you attack the target, any 2s on your dice are treated as though they were 4s (6s at level 5).

Special: This power recharges when its target is Taken Out.

✂ **Change Target** **At-Will**

Make a Basic Attack against a creature. Then change the target of *Duel* to that creature.

Clarification: If you make this attack multiple times at once (for instance, as a Blaster), you may choose which target to change your *Duel* to after resolving the attacks. You may only ever have one target of *Duel*.

Whenever you start your turn, the target of your *Duel* takes one Focus. This represents that it needs to focus its attention on you and the need increases over time. When you start your turn, for each point of Focus the enemy has, pick one effect from the list below. It has all the Statuses you chose until the end of its next turn.

- Harried.
- Cannot benefit from positive effects from its allies' powers.
- Cannot take advantage of Opportunities.
- Cannot benefit from positive effects from its own powers.
- Cannot use Interrupts or Reactions.

The target may ignore your "Cannots" but it grants you an Opportunity if it does.

You can spend Focus in various ways depending on your chosen Class Feature. When you spend a point of Focus, remove one of the accumulated Statuses.

If you use *Change Target* to switch your *Duel* to another enemy, the original target loses all points of Focus and associated Statuses. It does not transfer to the new target. If you are Incapacitated (for instance, when you drop to 0 HP or below), you lose all your Focus.

At level 1, choose one of the following features.

Find an opening: When you attack the target of your *Duel*, you may spend any number of points of its Focus. If you hit, increase your damage by one per point spent.

Throw off their aim: When the target of your *Duel* hits your ally with an attack, you may spend any number of points of its Focus to reduce the damage by one per point spent.

Force their position: When the target of your *Duel* ends its turn, you may spend any number of points of its Focus to slide it one square per point spent.



At **Level 1**, choose three of the following At-Wills and one Encounter Power.

✂ **Get Over Here** At-Will ✂5 ♠2
Effect: Target is pulled to an adjacent square.

✂ **No Escape** At-Will ✂ ♠2
Effect: Target is Slowed (save ends).

✂ **Demand Attention** At-Will ✂ or ✂5 ♠2
Effect: Target takes 1 point of Focus if it's the target of your Duel.

✂ **Exploit Weakness** At-Will ✂ ♠2
Effect: Target is Vulnerable 1 to all damage with you as the source until the end of the encounter. Applying this effect more than once is not cumulative.

✂ **Guessing Game** At-Will ✂ ♠2
Effect: Set up a die where the GM can't see. If you set it to 1-3, the target is Marked until the end of its next turn. If you set it to 4-6, until the end of the target's next turn you are Guarded against its attacks and if it attacks you it grants you an Opportunity. Reveal the die when you need to prove what it was.
Note: You can use a coin or playing cards instead of a die here.

✂ **Ain't No One Else Around** Encounter ✂ ♠3
Effect: 3 damage if neither you nor the target have any other creatures adjacent.

✂ **Perfect Defense** Encounter ✂ ♠3
Effect: Target has Disadvantage to attack you. It makes a Saving Throw against this Status each time it hits you with an attack.

At **Level 3**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

✂ **Take the Opening** Encounter ✂ ♠3
Effect: Damage equal to the number of points of Focus the target has.

✂ **Stalker** Encounter ✂ ♠3
Effect: While the target is the target of your Duel, it takes one point of Focus whenever you end your turn adjacent to it.

At **Level 5**, increase your Basic Attack and At-Will Powers' damage to 3. If an enemy ignores your "Cannots" and you take the Opportunity, deal 1 extra damage. *Duel* improves.

At **Level 7**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

✂ **You Can't Ignore Me** Encounter ✂ ♠4
Effect: Target cannot make attacks that do not include you as a target (save ends).

✂ **Let's Take This Outside** Encounter ✂ ♠4
Effect: You and the target are teleported to an empty 10x10 room. Neither of you can affect or be affected by any creatures not in the room. You and the target remain there until either you are Taken Out or you are the only creature in the room that is not Taken Out. Then, all creatures in the room are teleported back to their previous locations.

Commentary: You probably shouldn't take this power if you are a Leader. I mean, that's common sense, right? Your job is to buff and help your friends and you want to disappear and leave them to their own devices? They need you. Similarly, if you're a Blaster you should be wary of taking this—what does a Blaster want with a 1-on-1? And if you drag along multiple enemies, are you sure you can take them all?

✂ **Where You Go, I Follow** Encounter ✂ ♠4
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, when the target leaves a square adjacent to you, after it finishes its move, you may shift up to your speed +4 to a square adjacent the target.

At **Level 9**, deal 1 extra damage each time you hit the target of your *Duel* with an attack. If an enemy ignores your "Cannots" and you take the Opportunity, deal 2 extra damage instead of 1. Double the effect of points of Focus spent. For example, you can spend 2 points to slide the enemy 4 squares, to reduce its damage by 4, or to deal 4 damage.





The Archer

Deadly at Any Distance

The Archer can be a basic ranged attacker and has great powers to fit that archetype. It also has the *Trick Arrow* power taking inspiration from superheroes if you want something less vanilla. You can of course reskin archery to any projectile you like, from javelins to psychic blasts. When you reskin the *Trick Arrow* power, you must reskin every part of it, but if you don't like the trick shots concept there are other powers you can take instead. In addition to their trick shots, Archers specialize in soft control—instead of preventing an enemy from doing something, an Archer simply shoots any enemy that doesn't behave as intended. At level 1, pick a Class Feature.

Sniper: Your range on all attacks is doubled. If you haven't moved on your turn before you attack, add 1 to the attack roll if it is a hit.

Blitzer: When the target of your ranged attack is within 3 squares, add 1 to the attack roll if it is a hit. You may spend your Attack Action to move your speed and make a Ranged Basic Attack at any point along your movement.

Sentinel: On your turn, as a Free Action, you may designate one character (or object, or patch of ground). Deal 2 damage to the first enemy that willingly enters a square adjacent to the designated character without shifting before your next turn. You cannot deal this damage if you are prevented from taking Opportunities.

At **Level 1**, you have a range of 10 on your Ranged Basic Attack. Start with the following four At-Wills. Four At-Will Powers seems like a lot, but Aim and Flare are only useful in niche situations. The other two are your go-to powers. Pick one Encounter Power.

✂ Aim	At-Will
Instead of attacking, you pick any target you can see and aim at it. Aiming grants adjacent enemies an Opportunity as though you were making a ranged attack. If your next ranged attack targets the same creature you aimed at, any range restriction is removed and you have Advantage for the attack.	

✂ Flare	At-Will	⚔10	♠2
Effect: The projectile attaches to the target and illuminates the area like a torch. The target can't hide. The projectile can be removed by the target as an Attack Action but otherwise lasts until the end of the encounter.			

✂ Pin Down	At-Will	⚔10	♠2
Effect: If the target moves more than 1 square on its next turn, it takes 3 damage. If the target had a prepared action, it loses it. If anyone was Marked by the target, the Mark ends.			

✂ Area Denial	At-Will	⚔10	♠2
Effect: Create a 5x5 zone centered on the target. Until the end of your next turn, any enemy that takes any action in the zone that doesn't result in them leaving it, or that ends their turn in the zone, takes 3 damage. They do not take this damage if they are adjacent to your allies for the entire action.			

✂ Trick Arrow	Encounter	⚔10	♠3
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Effect: Choose one effect from the following list:

Explosive Arrow: An explosive attaches itself to the target. At any time before the start of your next turn, as a Reaction, you may declare that it explodes, dealing 2 damage to the target and all adjacent creatures.

Alchemist's Fire: Ongoing 2 Damage and any creature that starts its turn adjacent or moves adjacent gains this same Status (save ends).

Smokescreen: Create a 3x3 zone centered on the target—the zone is totally obscured: creatures in the zone can't see out, creatures outside can't see in.

Entangling Bolt: Target is Immobilized until it spends an Attack Action to end this Status.

Tether Shot: Target is Immobilized, escape ends. While it is Immobilized, you can spend a Move Action to pull the target up to 5 squares.

Special: When you roll a 2 on your Trick Arrow power, you must treat it as though you rolled a 5, but you have run out of that kind of ammo. Cross the effect off the list. (If you are making this attack in an area, you do not run out of this ammunition until all targets are resolved.) Finding the materials and crafting these Trick Arrows is difficult, time-consuming and expensive. You'll have to find the downtime to make the Skill Rolls required if you want that particular ability back. Use all the usual rules in the Non-Combat section. This is a powerful ability, so the GM should not let you off easy.

✂ Bullseye	Encounter
Use the <i>Aim At-Will</i> and then make an attack against the same target.	

At **Level 3**, choose to have an additional use of *Trick Arrow* or choose one power from the list below:

✂ Leg Shot	Encounter	⚔10	♣3
Effect: The target is knocked Prone and takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			

✂ Surprising Shot	Encounter	⚔10	♣3
Effect: Target grants an Opportunity to all adjacent creatures.			

⚡ Split Their Arrow	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.		
Make a Ranged Basic Attack against the enemy. If you hit, then in addition to doing damage, the enemy's attack misses.		

At **Level 5**, increase your Ranged Basic Attack and At-Will Power damage to 3.

Gain the ability below corresponding to your Class Feature in addition to your existing Class Feature.

Steady Sniper: If you haven't moved on your turn before you attack, deal 1 extra damage on a hit.

Bloody Blitzer: When the target of your ranged attack is within 3 squares, deal 1 extra damage on a hit.

Sharp Sentinel: When you designate one character on your turn, deal 3 damage to *each* enemy that willingly enters a square adjacent to the designated character without shifting before your next turn. You cannot deal this damage if you are prevented from taking Opportunities.



At **Level 7**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

✂ You Can't Hide	Encounter
Use the <i>Aim At-Will</i> and then make an attack against the same target, ignoring cover.	

✂ Super Trick Arrow	Encounter	⚔10	♣4
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Effect: Choose one effect from the following list:

Flash Arrow: Target is Blinded (save ends).

Gas Arrow: All creatures within 2 squares of the target (including the target) take Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).

Glue Arrow: All creatures within 2 squares of the target (including the target) are Immobilized, escape ends.

Boxing Glove Arrow: Target is Stunned until the end of its next turn.

Slow Poison Arrow: At the end of your second turn from now, the target is Taken Out if it is a Stooge, Goon, or a Standard Monster. An Elite takes 3 rounds, a Champion or Titan takes 5.

Special: When you roll a 2 on your Super Trick Arrow power, you must treat it as though you rolled a 5, but you have run out of that kind of ammo. Cross the effect off the list. Finding the materials and crafting these Trick Arrows is difficult, time-consuming and expensive. You'll have to find the downtime to make the Skill Rolls required if you want that particular ability back. Use all the usual rules in the Non-Combat section. This is a powerful ability, so the GM should not let you off easy.

At **Level 9**, gain the ability below corresponding to your Class Feature in addition to your existing Class Features.

Sharpshooting Sniper: If you haven't moved on your turn before you attack, you may spend your Move Action as part of that attack, but not move. If you do, then any hit on that attack is treated as though you'd rolled a 6.

Lightning Blitzer: You may spend a Move Action to make a Ranged Basic Attack against a target within 3 squares. This attack does not get your Role Boost, nor does it benefit from your usual *Blitzer* or *Bloody Blitzer* bonuses.

Snapshot Sentinel: You may spend a Move Action to prepare a Ranged Basic Attack to use against the first enemy that moves within your range. This attack does not get your Role Boost.

Hint: To speed things up, pre-roll this attack as soon as you are done your turn and then you can inform the GM of the result when the enemy moves without making everyone wait for the roll.

Variant Trick Arrow (optional)

You don't need to spend time out of combat to refill your ammo when you run out. Instead, when you use your Rally you may choose to refill an ammo type instead of regaining an Encounter Power.





The Martial Artist

Master of the Arts of Warfare and Violence

When I say Martial Arts, you probably think Kung Fu, and while this Class makes an excellent Kung Fu fighter, it also applies equally well to the European knight, a master of many arms. In that sense, this here is the Fighter Class, or as close as we come to it. The Martial Artist uses stances to modify its powers and relies on Basic Attacks for its At-Wills. Why not simply give it powers with these effects? Two reasons. First, the idea of taking on a stance resonates well with the flavor of Kung Fu, and also with the variety of ways you might be done in by a knight, whether they skewer you with a lance or smash you with an axe or present the nigh-impenetrable defense of knightly armor and shield. Second, it opens up synergies with Leaders, with charging, and with any other situations that call for Basic Attacks. Martial Artists always have something nasty up their sleeves, and they work very well together with the next Class: the Warlord.

Each stance has two benefits: an effect for your melee attacks and a passive effect. The effect for melee attacks also applies to non-ranged Burst attacks if you are a Blaster. The passive effect ends if you become Incapacitated.

At **Level 1**, you may pick three stances. Only the basic styles are available at this stage, but you may use your Focused Attack power to access the Greater Styles briefly. Further improvements become accessible as you increase in levels. You may start any encounter in any stance you have access to. Once per turn, you may spend a Free Action to change stances. You may use only one stance at a time. You also gain the Focused Attack power, usable once per encounter.

Martial Artist Basic Stances

Stone Wall Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target has Disadvantage to attack you with melee attacks on its next turn.	
While you are in this stance, each turn you may pick a cardinal or intercardinal direction (e.g. North or Southwest). Until the start of your next turn you Resist 1 against ranged attacks in that half-plane. i.e. if you pick East, you resist damage against any ranged attacks coming from anywhere to the right of you. Even if the enemy is 1 square East and 10 squares North, it is still to your East and you Resist 1.	
Weeping Willow Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Slide target 2 squares.	
While you are in this stance, you have Reach 2.	
Tempest Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Deal 2 damage to an enemy adjacent to the target.	
While you are in this stance, enemies that end their turn adjacent to you take 1 damage.	
Python Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Grab the target.	
While you are in this stance, if an attack misses you while you have an enemy Grabbed, the Grabbed enemy takes 2 damage.	
Scorpion Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target takes Ongoing 1 Damage (save ends).	
While you are in this stance, add 1 damage to your Opportunities.	
Flickering Flame Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Shift 2 squares.	
While you are in this stance, you may Shift 2 squares as a Move Action.	
Mandala Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target is Distracted (save ends).	
While you are in this stance, enemies adjacent to you cannot take advantage of Opportunities granted by your allies.	

○ Focused Attack	Encounter	Free Action
On your next attack, treat your stances as though they were one tier higher for the effect and add one to the damage line of the attack. Until the start of your next turn, treat all your stances as though they were one tier higher for the passive effect. (e.g. treat Python Style as Greater Python Style)		
Commentary: If you have multiple uses of Focused Attack, you may use two of them simultaneously in order to further increase your damage and to treat X Style as Supreme X Style.		

Martial Artist Greater Stances

Greater Stone Wall Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target's melee attacks against you on its next turn automatically miss.	
While you are in this stance, each turn you may pick a cardinal or intercardinal direction (e.g. North or Southwest). Until the start of your next turn you Resist 2 against ranged attacks in that half-plane.	

Greater Weeping Willow Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Slide target 4 squares.	
While you are in this stance, you have Reach 3.	

Greater Tempest Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Deal 2 damage to each enemy adjacent to the target.	
While you are in this stance, enemies that begin their turn adjacent to you or move adjacent take 1 damage.	

Greater Python Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Grab the target. While Grabbed, it has Disadvantage to attack anyone other than you.	
While you are in this stance, if an attack misses you while you have an enemy Grabbed, the attack hits the Grabbed enemy as though the attacker had rolled a 4.	

Greater Scorpion Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).	
While you are in this stance, add Ongoing 1 Damage (save ends) to your Opportunities.	

Greater Flickering Flame Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Teleport 3 squares.	
While you are in this stance, you may Teleport 3 squares as a Move Action.	

Greater Mandala Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target is Distracted and Slowed (save ends).	
While you are in this stance, enemies within three squares of you cannot take advantage of Opportunities granted by your allies.	

Martial Artist Supreme Stances

Supreme Stone Wall Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target's melee attacks on its next turn automatically miss.	
While you are in this stance, you Resist 2 against ranged attacks.	

Supreme Weeping Willow Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Slide target 4 squares and knock it Prone.	
While you are in this stance, you have Reach 4.	

Supreme Tempest Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Deal 3 damage to each enemy adjacent to the target and to each enemy adjacent to you aside from the target.	
While you are in this stance, enemies that begin their turn adjacent to you or move adjacent take 2 damage.	

Supreme Python Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Grab the target and it is Restrained until it escapes.	
While you are in this stance, if an attack misses you while you have an enemy Grabbed, the attack hits the Grabbed enemy as though the attacker had rolled a 6.	

Supreme Scorpion Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target takes Ongoing 2 Damage until the end of the encounter.	
While you are in this stance, add Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends) to your Opportunities.	

Supreme Flickering Flame Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Teleport 5 squares and if you end in cover or concealment from all enemies, you are Hidden.	
While you are in this stance, you may Teleport your speed as a Move Action.	

Supreme Mandala Style	Stance
While you are in this stance, add the following effect to all your melee attacks: Target is Dazed (save ends).	
While you are in this stance, enemies who can see you cannot take advantage of Opportunities granted by your allies.	



At **Level 3**, choose between gaining an extra use of Focused Attack each encounter, or pick an Encounter Power from the list below:

⚔ Decapitation	Encounter	🔪 ♠3
Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out.		
Special: Only one target of this power may be subject to the effect. Additional targets gained via the Blaster Role or by any other means instead suffer an additional 3 damage as the effect instead.		

The False Death	Encounter	No Action
When you are Taken Out or at or below 0 HP, on your next Initiative count you may stand up and re-enter the fight with 1 HP.		

At **Level 5**, upgrade each of your stances to Greater Styles. Additionally, your Basic Attack damage is increased to 3.

At **Level 7**, choose between gaining an extra use of Focused Attack each encounter, or pick an Encounter Power from the list below (or pick any of the level 3 powers):

○ Martial Frenzy	Encounter	Free Action
You drop all stances and lose the ability to take on stances or to use Focused Attack, but in exchange you have two Attack Actions per round (save ends all).		
Special: The Saving Throw in this power cannot be manipulated or modified in any way.		

At **Level 9**, when you take a stance, you may also take a secondary stance you know at basic Style level. For instance, you may be in *Greater Python Style* and basic *Scorpion Style* simultaneously. When you spend your Free Action to change stance you may change both.





The Warlord

The Brains and the Brawn

If you want to make a warlord, you're already fairly well covered without the existence of this Class. Just put the Leader Role with a Martial Artist or a Duelist or an Archer and you're set. What you can't do is a pure support character. So here is the Class where I provide support for people who want to play the pure support role, taking inspiration from the lazy warlord and the pacifist cleric. To support this, the Class has to lean very strongly towards Leader-like powers, but that doesn't mean that you need to pick the Leader Role to go with it. A Warlord/Leader is a very strong support character, but any other Role combined with this Class can almost give the party a two-for-one, getting the benefits of the chosen Role along with some of the abilities of a Leader. The Class is not purely pacifist either—there are pacifist options at each level if you are interested in that, but you can also take regular attacks too.

Pure Support Powers: When you hit with a power that deals ♠S, you take a Support Token but deal no damage. When you roll a 6 on such a power, take an additional Support Token. When you miss with any power, take a Support Token. Support Tokens can be spent a number of ways depending on the Class Feature you choose. At the end of each combat, extra Support Tokens may be spent to reduce Strikes. You may spend up to one Support Token per ally to reduce their personal Strikes by one. This does not reduce the number of total Strikes for the team. So it helps avoid or reduce Conditions, but not Concessions.

Pick one of the following Class Features:

Rousing: Spend a Support Token when an ally starts their turn to give them 2 Buffer Points. You may not spend more than one in this way on the same turn. Gain a Support Token whenever a teammate within 5 squares of you takes a Strike or fails a Saving Throw.

Enabling: Spend a Support Token when an ally starts their turn to give them an extra three squares of movement. These squares are available regardless of how or if the ally uses their Move Action (e.g. they could move three squares and attack while Dazed, because the movement doesn't come from a Move Action). You may not spend more than one in this way on the same turn. Gain a Support Token whenever you give an ally Advantage on an attack by flanking the same target.

Incisive: Spend a Support Token when an ally starts their turn to give them extra damage on their next attack roll equal to the attack's damage line if they hit. You may not spend more than one in this way on the same turn. Gain a Support Token whenever you use the Assess power. You may spend a Move Action to use the Assess power.

At Level 1, choose three of the following At-Wills and one Encounter Power.

✂ Hit This Thing

At-Will

One willing ally within 10 squares makes a Melee or Ranged Basic Attack. (At level 5, they deal 1 extra damage if they hit. 2 extra damage at level 9.)

✂ Alley-Oop

At-Will

↗ ♠S

Effect: Slide the target 1 square and a willing ally makes a Melee Basic Attack against it. They do not get their Role Boosts on this attack. (At level 5, they deal 1 extra damage if they hit. 2 extra damage at level 9.)

✂ Morale-Boosting Punching Bag

At-Will

↗ or ↘ ♠S

Effect: The next ally to hit the target regains 2 Hit Points. (At level 5, they may choose to make a Saving Throw instead of regaining Hit Points. At level 9, they get both.)

✂ Enumerate its Weaknesses

At-Will

↗ or ↘ ♠2

Effect: The next ally to attack the target with Advantage rolls 3 dice and takes the best. (At level 9, until the start of your next turn, any ally that attacks the target with Advantage rolls 3 dice.)

✂ Knock It Off Balance

At-Will

↗ or ↘ ♠2

Effect: The next ally to attack the target has Advantage. (At level 9, they deal 1 extra damage if they hit.)

✂ Come Help Me Over Here

At-Will

↗

One ally within 5 squares may shift 1 square. Then you make a Melee Basic Attack against the target. (At level 5, you deal 1 extra damage if you hit. 2 extra damage at level 9.)

⌘ You Hit Like a Baby

Encounter ⤴ ♠3

Effect: Target is Weakened (save ends).

⌘ The Perfect Chance

Encounter

One ally within 10 squares makes an attack with Advantage.

⌘ Defensive Tactics

Encounter

One ally within 10 squares has Resist 2 damage until the end of your next turn.

⚡ Don't Give Up

Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: One ally within 5 squares drops to 0 HP or below.
The ally instead stays standing with 1 Hit Point.

At Level 3, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

⌘ Never Surrender

Encounter

Targets one ally within 5 squares that has been Taken Out or is at or below 0 HP. The ally may re-enter the fight with 5 Hit Points.

○ Chance to Recover

Encounter Free Action

You and each ally may make a Saving Throw.

⌘ Leave Them Exposed

Encounter ⤴ or ♠5 ♠3

Effect: If the next attack against the target hits, it deals an extra 5 damage.

At Level 5, add one damage to the damage line of *Enumerate Its Weakness*, *Knock It Off Balance*, and your Basic Attacks. Start each combat with one Support Token. Your other At-Wills improve. Gain the Battlecry below corresponding to your Class Feature.

Rousing Battlecry: Spend a Support Token when an ally gets a 1 on any roll to let them reroll it.

Enabling Battlecry: Spend two Support Tokens when an ally makes an attack to give them Advantage.

Incisive Battlecry: Spend a Support Token when an ally makes any roll other than an attack to give them Advantage. (E.g. Saving Throws, comeback rolls, Assess, Skill Rolls.)



At Level 7, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

⌘ Bigger Punching Bag

Encounter ⤴ or ♠5 ♠S

Effect: The next time each ally attacks the target, they have Advantage and regain 2 Hit Points.

⌘ Lead the Charge

Encounter

You and two allies make a Charge attack. Your allies do not get their Role Boosts on these attacks, though you still do.

⌘ Always in Position

Encounter ⤴ ♠4

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, whenever the target starts its turn each ally may shift 1 square.

⌘ Ultimatum

Encounter

Targets one creature within 5 squares. The target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out. If it succeeds, you may make an attack against it.

At Level 9, start each combat with three Support Tokens. At the end of combat, you may spend up to two Support Tokens to reduce Team Strikes by one per token spent. Your At-Wills improve.





The Magician

The Splendidly Attired Thaumaturge of Perilous Mien

(The Weirdo in the Dress)

So here's the Magician. I love Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth* and I love Wizards. I don't love Wizards who can do everything, though. This Wizard has a variety of effects at its disposal but it is not a Summoner, nor a Necromancer, nor a Diviner, nor an Illusionist. Wizards often have just the right trick up their sleeve, but never use the same trick twice in a row. To represent this, the Star Mage has access to powerful spells, but may only use any given one every third combat. Other varieties of mage have other limitations.

At level 1, pick your magical source: the regular motions of the stars, the unpredictable flows of chaos, or the fertile power of your own blood.

Star Adept: At level one, choose three At-Will Spells and three Encounter Spells. Each Encounter Spell, once used, may not be used again in the two following combats. Said another way, each is usable once every third combat. A *Star Magician* may use at most 2 Encounter Spells in any given combat.

Chaos Adept: At level one, choose three At-Will Spells and three Encounter Spells. At the start of each combat, number your En-

counter Spells from one to three and roll a die to find which one you have available for this encounter (1 or 2 means Power One, 3 or 4 means Power Two, 5 or 6 means Power Three). When you roll a 6 on an attack, you get a Chaos Surge: you may choose to apply an effect line from a randomly chosen Encounter Spell you *don't know* instead of doing extra damage. (To randomly choose a spell you don't know, select and number six such spells, then roll a die. To save time, you should have this list ready before combat.)

Blood Adept: At level one, choose three At-Will Spells and one Encounter Spell. You may not use any Encounter Spells until you have taken damage. After choosing an attack, but before the roll, you may self-inflict 2 damage to gain Potency. If you hit with your attack, one target that was hit takes 2 extra damage from Potency. If your attack power does not require a roll, deal just 1 extra damage instead.

Clarification: Self-inflicted damage cannot be resisted or reduced.

At **Level 1**, Increase the range of your Ranged Basic Attack to 10. Also pick one Encounter Spell to be your "Reserve Spell"—this is the power you gain whenever you use *Rally* and doesn't fall under the restrictions of each magical source.

Magician At-Will Spells

✂ **The Instant Repulsion** At-Will ⚡ 2

Effect: The target and each creature adjacent to you are pushed 3 squares.

✂ **Liscato's Bountiful Lubrication** At-Will ⚡ 10 2

Effect: If the target attempts to move on its next turn, it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it falls Prone.

✂ **Margul's Toxic Missile** At-Will ⚡ 10 2

Effect: Target takes 1 Ongoing Damage and loses one point of Resistance if it has any. (save ends). On a failed save, the target is Vulnerable 1 Damage until the end of the encounter.

✂ **The Excellent Prismatic Spray** At-Will ⚡ 10

Deal 2 damage (3 damage at level 5) to the target with no attack roll.

Special: For any Role, you may gain the benefit of your Boosts as though you had rolled a 5 on an attack. e.g. Blasters may damage extra targets and Leaders recharge Tactics.

Magician Encounter Spells

✂ **Word of Instant Friendship** Encounter ⚡ 10 3

Effect: Pick one creature. The target cannot attack you or the designated creature on its next turn.

✂ **Momentary Encystment** Encounter ⚡ 10 3

Effect: Target is removed from existence until the end of your next turn. For the duration it does not take a turn and it may not be targeted by any powers. It does not suffer nor benefit from any effects.

✂ Furz's Undeniable Command Encounter 10 3

Effect: Immediately spend an Attack Action for the target. Only At-Will Powers may be used.

✂ Soporific Decree Encounter 10 3

Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is asleep (Incapacitated) until it takes damage or until an ally spends an Attack Action to wake it while adjacent.

✂ Parvel's Total Constriction Encounter 10 3

Effect: Target is Restrained (escape ends).

✂ Radiant Motes of the Overworld Encounter 10 3

Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.

✂ Hura's Hasty Ripening Encounter 10 3

Effect: All of the target's attacks have their damage reduced by 2 (save ends).

✂ Hozrul's Efficacious Caltrop Encounter 7 3

Effect: Teleport two squares, making note of the square you used this power in. When any creature enters that square, it and all creatures adjacent to the square take 4 damage.

✂ The Cant of Inexplicable Lust Encounter 10 3

Effect: Pick a creature. If possible, the target must attempt to move adjacent to the creature on its next turn.

⚡ Practical Dome of Preservation Encounter Reaction

Use this power when a creature hits with an attack against you. The creature instead misses.

✂ Mudge's Localized Inferno Encounter

Create a 7x7 zone centered within 10 squares. Each creature in the zone takes 3 damage.

✂ Horwell's Offensive Amalgam Encounter 10

Effect 1: 3 damage.

Effect 2: Target is Immobilized (save ends).

Effect 3: Target takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).

Effect 4: Target is Panicked on its next turn.

Special: On a 3, the target is subject to one of the above four lines. On a 4, the target is subject to two of the lines. On a 5, the target is subject to three of the lines. On a 6, as a 5, plus 3 damage.

At Level 3, follow the directions for your magical source:

Star Warlock: Pick three more Encounter Spells. All the restrictions from level 1 still apply, but having more available lets you use two in each encounter instead of having to ration them.

Chaos Warlock: Pick three more Encounter Spells. At the start of each combat, number your Encounter Spells from 1 to 6 and roll two dice to decide which two you have for this combat. If you roll doubles, you get the power you rolled and a free choice.

Blood Warlock: Pick an additional Encounter Spell.

At Level 5, add one damage to the damage line of each At-Will attack and your Ranged Basic Attack. *The Excellent Prismatic Spray* improves.

Follow the directions for your magical source:

Star Mage: Pick one Major Spell. Major Spells count as Encounter Spells for all restrictions (but they cannot be used as your Reserve Power).

Chaos Mage: Pick one Major Spell. At the start of each combat, when you number your Encounter Spells from 1 to 6 to see which you may use, you may include your Major Spells in the list. When you get a Chaos Surge, you do extra damage *and* apply the effect line from one Encounter Spell you don't know.

Blood Mage: Your Potency damage is now 4 instead of 2 (2 instead of 1 if the attack doesn't require a roll). Pick one Major Spell to act as your Blood Curse. When you are Taken Out, you may use your Blood Curse: this does not require an action and ignores any negative Statuses you may have that would hinder the attack.

Magician Major Spells

✂ The Otherworldly Encasement Encounter 10 5

Effect: Each time it starts its turn until the end of the encounter, the target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails it is knocked Prone and Restrained (escape ends). If it fails such a Saving Throw while already Restrained by this effect, it takes 4 damage.

✂ Thanatin's Malediction Encounter 10 5

Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out. If it succeeds it is Dazed (save ends).

✂ Fay Zu's Lesser Subjugation Encounter 10 5

Effect: Target is Dominated (save ends).

✂ The Dome of Many Colors Encounter 10 5

Effect: A single sphere encloses you and all creatures adjacent to you. All creatures inside are protected from attacks originating outside the sphere. The shield may absorb 7 HP of damage before it fails. Creatures may exit the sphere but may not re-enter it.

✂ Incantation of Vulnerability Encounter 10 5

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, all attacks against the target have Advantage.

✂ Renalai's Slow Moment Encounter 10 5

Effect: Immediately take a new turn. All other creatures are considered Stunned during this turn.

Special: If you use this spell on multiple targets, applying the effect multiple times does not give extra turns.

At **Level 7**, follow the directions for your magical source:

Star Master-Mage: Pick one Major Spell and one Encounter Spell. You may now use up to three Encounter Spells per combat.

Chaos Master-Mage: Pick one more Major Spell. At the start of each combat, after numbering your spells, roll three dice. Any repeated numbers represent free choices.

Blood Master-Mage: Pick one Major Spell. You may not use a Major Spell until the sum of your self-inflicted damage and the round of combat total 5.

At **Level 9**, follow the directions for your magical source:

Star Archmage: Pick one more Major Spell. Pick another Major Spell to replace your Reserve Spell.

Chaos Archmage: Pick one more Major Spell. When you get a Chaos Surge, you do extra damage and apply the effect line from one Major Spell you don't know. (At this point there remain three you don't know. So 1 or 2 means Power One, 3 or 4 means Power Two, 5 or 6 means Power Three.)

Blood Archmage: Your Potency damage is 6 (3 if the attack doesn't require a roll).





The Bombardier

A Danger to Herself and Others

Bombardiers like to blow up the whole battlefield. They don't get effects that are as powerful as some other Classes, but they get to spread it around a lot more. Bombardiers excel in situations where they and their friends are outnumbered. Watch out, though—the Bombardier's attacks don't differentiate friend from foe. Bombs are risky business and a Bombardier's allies soon learn to keep their distance.

Shaped Blasts: You can have blasts of different shapes. When you create your character, pick two of the following:

- **Squares:** a 3x3 square.
- **Rings:** A ring including all tiles exactly 1 away from the center, or all tiles exactly 2 away from the center.
- **Crosses:** A cross or an X extending 2 squares in four directions from the central square.
- **Cones:** Essentially one fourth of a 5x5 square, divided along two diagonals (and including those dividing lines). In other words, a pyramid of 1, 3, then 5 squares.

From the Glossary:

Zone – A Zone is simply a region of the battlefield with an on-going effect. Zones apply their effect or damage to a given target no more than once per round (i.e. once it has experienced the effect, it cannot experience it again until the start of its next turn, assuming it only has one turn per round). So moving in and out and in again is no different than moving in once. If a creature is forced into a Zone that deals damage or applies a negative effect, it may elect to roll a Saving Throw to roll to safety. If it succeeds, it falls Prone at the edge of the Zone. If it fails, the Forced Movement continues but it falls Prone anyway.

Misfire! When you roll a 1 on any attack, do not take a Strike. Instead, take 2 damage and the zone your bomb creates is centered on you. Misfires are always square-shaped.

At level 1, pick one of the following three types of Bombardier:

Lasting Blasting: If you so choose, your zones last one extra round. You must make this choice when you fire.

Slow Burn: Gain the following At-Will Power:

✂ Delayed Fuse	At-Will	⚔10	♠2
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Special: Choose a type of Ammo before you roll this attack. If you choose an Encounter Ammo, increase the damage line to 3. If you choose a Friendly Ammo, do not roll an attack—simply apply its effect.

Effect: Select and mark two squares within 10. They are essentially mines that can be detonated at your discretion, but they take a moment to arm. After the start of your next turn, you may elect at any time to use up one of your marked squares to create a zone including it. This requires no action, happens as an Interrupt, and the zone lasts until the start of your following turn. Its effects depend on the type of Ammo you chose. Decide on the shape and precise placement of the zone when you detonate it.

Bombberman: Gain the following At-Will Power:

✂ Bombing Run	At-Will	⚔10	♠2
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Special: Choose a type of Ammo before you roll this attack. If you choose an encounter Ammo, increase the damage line to 3. If you choose a Friendly Ammo, do not roll an attack—simply apply its effect.

Effect: Move your speed and drop a bomb within your reach at any two points along your movement. At the end of your turn, create two zones, each including one of those squares. The zones last until the start of your following turn and have effects based on the type of Ammo you chose.

Clarification: How do Blasters' Multitarget Boosts interact with these powers? Well, turning the attack into an Burst attack allows you to damage more enemies and have a greater chance of getting the Effect line, not to use the Effect multiple times. Even if you leave it as a Ranged attack and roll a 5 or 6, you may not choose to apply the Effect line twice. Instead, Blasters always get larger zones from their Ammo: they may combine any two shapes. For instance, two cones could combine to make an hourglass, or a square and a ring could make a larger square.

At **Level 1**, you get the Grenade At-Will Power in addition to your Class Features above. Then, choose three At-Will ammunitions and one Encounter Ammo from the options that follow.

⚡ Grenade	At-Will	10	2
Special: Choose a type of Ammo before you roll this attack. If you choose an encounter Ammo, increase the damage line to 3. If you choose a Friendly Ammo, do not roll an attack—simply apply its effect.			
Effect: Create a zone including your target based on the Ammo you chose. The zone will last until the start of your following turn and have effects based on the type of Ammo you chose.			

Kaboom	At-Will	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it take 1 damage.		

Sonic Bomb	At-Will	Ammo
All creatures in the zone are pushed 2 squares (pushed from the bomb, not from you). Entering the zone costs 2 extra squares of movement.		

Toxic Bomb	At-Will	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they take Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).		

Slime Bomb	At-Will	Ammo
Leaving any square in the zone costs 3 squares of movement.		

Hot Bomb	At-Will	Ammo
Creatures must leave the zone as it burns. If they take any action in the zone that doesn't result in them leaving it, or if they end their turn in the zone, they take 3 damage.		

Energizing Bomb	Encounter	Friendly Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it gain an extra Move Action.		

Smoke Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
The zone is totally obscured: creatures outside the zone can't see in, creatures inside can't see anything.		

Sticky Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it are Slowed (save ends).		

At **Level 3**, choose one of the following Encounter Ammos, or the Getaway Bomb Encounter Power.

Healing Bomb	Encounter	Friendly Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it gain 2 Buffer Points.		

Icky Sticky Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Immobilized (save ends). If they succeed, they are Slowed (save ends).		

Weakening Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it are Vulnerable 1 (save ends).		

Concussive Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Dazed (save ends).		

⚡ Getaway Bomb	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy enters a square adjacent to you. Create a 5x5 zone centered on your original square. Shift to any square adjacent to that area, then deal 2 damage to all creatures in the area.		

At **Level 5**, increase the damage on your At-Wills and Ranged Basic Attack to 3. Increase the size of your zones as follows:

- Squares: a 5x5 square.
- Rings: A ring including all tiles exactly 3 away from the central square.
- Crosses: A cross or an X extending 5 squares in 4 directions from the central square.
- Cones: Essentially one fourth of a 9x9 square, divided along two diagonals (and including those dividing lines).

When you don't misfire, you may optionally shrink it to a smaller zone like you had at Level 1.



At **Level 7**, choose one of the following Encounter Ammos. When you use one of these, increase the damage line by 2 instead of 1.

Invigorating Bomb	Encounter	Friendly Ammo
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Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it may make a Basic Attack as a Free Action when they do so.

Flattening Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
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Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it are knocked Prone.

Flash Bomb	Encounter	Ammo
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Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it have Disadvantage on their attacks (save ends).

Big Kaboom	Encounter	Ammo
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Creatures starting their turn in the zone or entering it take 3 damage.

At **Level 9**, gain the ability below corresponding to your chosen Class Feature:

Longer Lasting Blasting: When you make an attack, you decide how many rounds the zone will last.

Spreading Slow Burn: When you use Delayed Fuse, you may throw 3 bombs instead of 2.

Super Bomberman: When you use Bombing Run, you may drop 3 bombs instead of 2.





The Shapechanger

Steer Today, Prawn Tomorrow

The Shapechanger crushes the small foes, flies to the distant foes and pins down the mobile foes. To be a shapeshifting combatant who constantly switches Forms throughout a single fight, you'll want to look at reskinning the Martial Artist. This Class is about taking on a Form that suits the fight and sticking with it. It's almost like having different Classes from one encounter to the next, so if you're the sort of player who likes variety this is a good fit for you.

At **Level 1**, gain the *Blurred Form* and *Primal Compulsion* At-Will Powers. These are usable in any Form, including your (untransformed) normal Form. All your other powers come from additional Forms. Each combat you may use one Transformation Power. Once you have used a Transformation Power and taken a Form, you may spend a Move Action to change back and forth to or from this Form only. Pick a kind of Shifter:

Multi-Form Shifter

Pick three Forms you know. When you use your Rally, you may choose to regain a spent Encounter Power, or you may choose a different Form you know and gain its Transformation Power instead.

Regardless of whether you take on multiple Forms in the same combat, you only get one level 3 Encounter Power and one level 7 in each combat. Once you have transformed into two or more Forms, you may spend a Move Action to change between any of the Forms you have taken on, for the rest of the combat.

You may also sacrifice a level 3 or level 7 Encounter Power to gain a use of another Transformation Power if you want to switch Forms without Rallying.

One-Form Shifter

Pick one Form only. When you *Rally*, you may choose to regain your spent Transformation Power. When you use it for the second time, instead of transforming again, you may add one of the following traits to your transformed Form for the rest of the combat:

- Plus one size (e.g. 1x1 becomes 2x2).
- Plus 1 reach.
- Plus 4 speed.
- All your attacks become “↗ or ↘ 5” instead of ↗

You may also sacrifice a level 3 or level 7 Encounter Power to gain another use of your Transformation Power if you want to enhance your Form without using *Rally*.

Level 1 At-Wills

✂ Blurred Form	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Shift 2 squares.			
✂ Primal Compulsion	At-Will	↘10	♠2
Effect: Slide the target 2 squares.			

For either variant, at **Level 5**, increase the damage line on all your At-Wills and your Melee Basic Attack to 3.

Form of the Tortoise

At **Level 1**, while in this Form, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Wills. While in this Form you Resist 1 damage.

✂ Tortoise's Transformation	Encounter	↗	♠3
Effect: Target cannot target you with an attack on its next turn.			
✂ Total Defense	At-Will		
You have cover from all attacks until the start of your next turn.			
✂ Shield	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Until the start of your next turn, you are Guarded.			

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Perfect Fortress	Encounter	↗	♠3
Effect: You Resist all damage until the start of your next turn.			

At **Level 5**, while in this Form, when an enemy deals damage to you with a melee attack, it takes damage equal to the amount you resist.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Shield For All	Encounter	↗	♠4
Effect: Gain Resist 2 damage until the start of your next turn. Allies also Resist 2 damage while adjacent to you until the start of your next turn.			

At **Level 9**, while in this Form, when an enemy hits or misses you with a melee attack, it takes damage equal to the amount you resist (or would have resisted, had they hit and dealt their damage), plus 1.

Form of the Bull

At **Level 1**, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Will. All of your attack powers may be used in place of a Melee Basic Attack when Charging (except for the ones below that include a Charge as part of the attack). While in this Form, gain Resist 1 to damage taken from Opportunities granted by movement as part of a Charge.

✂ Bull's Transformation Encounter ⚔ 3

Special: You must Charge at least 2 squares and make this attack instead of a Melee Basic Attack.

Effect: Target is knocked Prone and is Distracted until the end of its next turn.

✂ Bull Rush At-Will ⚔ 2

Effect: Push the target a number of squares equal to the distance you Charged to make this attack.

✂ Nimble Charge At-Will

Shift 1 square and Charge in either order. Do not replace the Melee Basic Attack with any other power.

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Shove and Follow Encounter ⚔

Push the target 3 squares and knock it Prone, then Charge it.

At **Level 5**, while in this Form, you may Charge through enemy squares. Any enemy you charge through falls Prone unless it forgoes its Opportunity against you.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Crash Test Encounter ⚔ 4

Special: Grab a creature within reach, then Charge another creature, dragging that creature with you, and then make this attack against the creature you charged instead of a Melee Basic Attack.

Effect: 4 damage to the creature you have Grabbed.

At **Level 9**, while in this Form, any enemy that does not forgo its Opportunity against you while you are Charging takes 3 damage, whether you charge through its square or not. Any enemy you charge through that forgoes its Opportunity against you takes 3 damage or falls Prone (its choice). This is in addition to the benefit you get at Level 5.

Form of the Hawk

At **Level 1**, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Will. While in this Form, you may gain the Flying Status as part of any Move Action.

✂ Hawk's Transformation Encounter ⚔ 3

Effect: Fly up into the sky. You cannot be seen nor targeted. You gain the Flying Status. At the start of your next turn, you may fly down to any square on the map.

✂ Fly At-Will ⚔ 2

Effect: Gain the Flying Status without granting an Opportunity to adjacent creatures.

✂ Diving Feint At-Will ⚔ 2

Special: You must have the Flying Status to use this power. When you use this power, you lose that Status.

Effect: The next attack against the target has Advantage.

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Dust Bath Encounter ⚔ 3

Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.

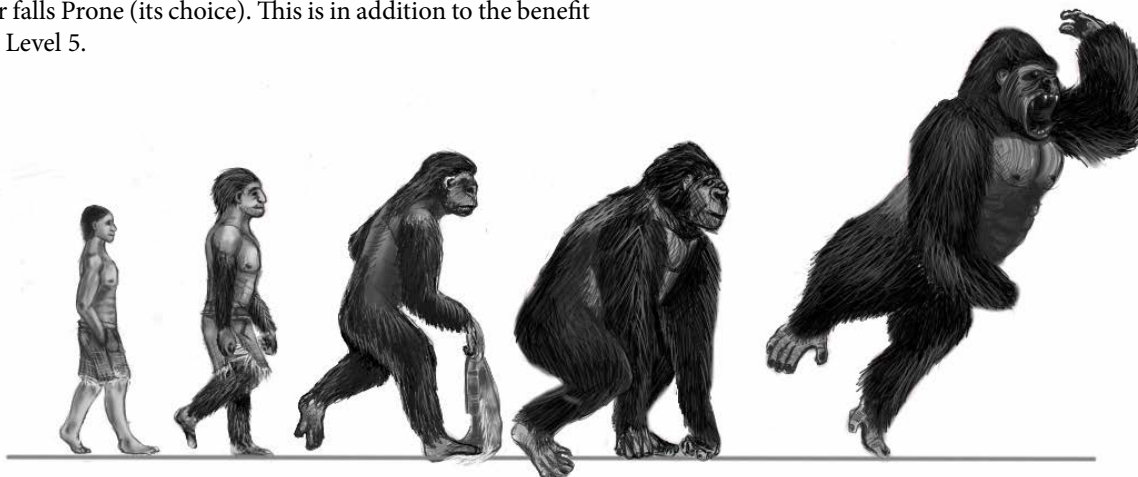
At **Level 5**, while in this Form, whenever you gain the Flying Status pick one creature. While you have the Flying Status, that creature has Disadvantage to hit you with ranged attacks unless it spends its Move Action to aim at you.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

✂ Live Bomb Encounter ⚔ 4

Effect: Grab the target and pick them up. Fly up to your speed, then drop them. Gain the Flying Status. Dropping the enemy deals 3 damage in typical circumstances (e.g. it falls onto neither a spike pit nor a trampoline), and 3 damage to whomever the enemy falls on.

At **Level 9**, while in this Form, whenever you gain the Flying Status pick one creature. While you have the Flying Status, that creature cannot hit you with ranged attacks unless it spends its Move Action to aim at you. All other creatures have Disadvantage to hit you with ranged attacks unless they spend their Move Action to aim at you.



Form of the Mammoth

At **Level 1**, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Wills. If an enemy within your reach attempts to stand from Prone, they grant you an Opportunity.

⚔ Mammoth's Transformation	Encounter	↗	♠3
Special: Push all adjacent creatures one square. Increase your size by one (e.g. from 1x1 to 2x2), then make this attack.			
Effect: Target is knocked Prone.			

⚔ Pushy	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Throw the target 2 squares (3 squares at level 5, 4 squares at level 9). If an obstacle cuts short this movement, the target falls Prone.			

⚔ Stompy	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: 2 additional damage if the target is Prone. (3 damage at level 5, 4 damage at level 9.)			

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Fastball Special	Encounter		
Throw one willing ally within reach 6 squares. One enemy adjacent to the destination takes 2 damage and is knocked Prone.			

At **Level 5**, when you are in this Form, increase your Reach by 1 (e.g. from 1 to 2). *Pushy* and *Stompy* improve.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Fastball Deluxe	Encounter	↗	♠4
Effect: Throw the target 6 squares and knock it Prone. Any enemies adjacent to its destination take 2 damage and fall Prone.			

At **Level 9**, when you take this Form, you push adjacent creatures 2 squares and grow by two sizes. *Pushy* and *Stompy* improve.

Form of the Viper

At **Level 1**, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Wills. While in this Form, when you deal Opportunity damage, the recipient also takes Ongoing 1 Damage (save ends). Each different source of Ongoing Damage you have is treated as distinct, act cumulatively, and must be saved against separately.

⚔ Viper's Transformation	Encounter	↗	♠3
Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends). At the end of each of the target's turns, if it fails its saving throw, the Ongoing Damage is doubled.			

⚔ Venom	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Ongoing 1 Damage (save ends), or Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends) if it was already taking Ongoing Damage.			

⚔ Enervation	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Target deals 1 less damage on its attacks (save ends).			

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Spit Poison	Encounter	↗5	♠3
Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.			

At **Level 5**, while in this Form, when you deal Opportunity damage, the recipient also takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends). This replaces the equivalent level 1 benefit.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Inescapable Venom	Encounter	↗	♠4
Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Incapacitated and takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends all). If it succeeds, it takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			

At **Level 9**, while in this Form, when an enemy willingly enters a square adjacent to you without shifting, it takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).

Form of the Kraken

At **Level 1**, gain the following Transformation Power and two At-Wills. While in this Form, you may have any number of targets Grabbed. When you have an enemy Grabbed, you are Guarded.

Note: Your Encounter Powers have Statuses that worsen if the target does not escape. If the target is suffering from a Status that denies it any chance of escape (e.g. Stunned, Incapacitated, or Dominated), it is given one Saving Throw on its turn to avoid the worsening Status, although it is still stuck with the original Status.

⚔ Kraken's Transformation	Encounter	↗	♠3
Effect: Target is Grabbed. If it does not escape on its next turn, it is also Restrained until it escapes the Grab.			

⚔ Grab	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Target is Grabbed.			

⚔ Crush	At-Will		
Deal 2 damage (4 damage at level 4, 6 damage at level 8) to each creature you have Grabbed.			

At **Level 3**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Choke Out	Encounter	↗	♠3
Effect: Target is Grabbed and Weakened while it remains Grabbed. If it does not escape on its next turn, it is also Incapacitated (save ends).			

At **Level 5**, creatures Grabbed by you take Ongoing 1 Damage.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power:

⚔ Death Grip	Encounter	↗	♠4
Effect: Target is Grabbed. If it does not escape on its next turn, it is immediately Taken Out.			

At **Level 9**, creatures take Ongoing 3 Damage while they are Grabbed by you. This replaces the level 5 benefit.





The Summoner

BMX Bandit's Partner in Crime

Here is one of the most interesting Classes in the game for reskinning. It's written up as a summoner of a variety of spirits, but the most basic reskin simply changes what is summoned. A Diabolist that summons only demons? Easy. But more than that, you could play this as a monster trapper with trained monsters. You could play it as a tech-guy with dangerous implements or automatons. You could play it as a leader with followers that come in to help in the fight. This last one especially works at any scale in any setting. Cool stuff. It's also a complex Class—lots of choices at character creation and more in play. Be warned, and don't play this Class if you get analysis paralysis. If you're like me though, you'll love having those choices. This Class is one of my favorites and I get excited about playing it. I hope you do too.

In each encounter you may summon one Elemental or Fey Creature, one Angel or Daemon, and one Greater Being, regardless of how many such powers you know. You may spend a Move Action to command all your summoned creatures to take a Move Action. When you summon a creature, you gain access to its associated At-Will Power. When you use an At-Will Power associated with a summoned creature, you treat that creature as the origin of the power. Summoned creatures have Basic Attacks, count as allies, and can take advantage of Opportunities. They are 1x1 unless otherwise noted. You gain your Role Boosts when making attacks

through the summoned creatures. If you are a Defender, your summoned creatures get the same Boosts as you on their Opportunities. When a summoned creature reaches 0 HP, it is Taken Out and you take one Strike.

Your At-Will Powers are conjurations—they must be conjured in an unoccupied square, but other creatures may pass through them. They have no Hit Points, no powers, and cannot be attacked.

When you spend your Rally, you do not regain a spent power. Instead, you may choose one of the following options: restore 5 Hit Points to one of your summoned creatures; change the Focus of your Angel or Demon; or spend an Attack Action to resummon your Elemental or Fey creature to a new location, using that Encounter Power again but without restoring the creature's Hit Points.

How do Feats interact? If you take a Feat like Long Reach or Huge, you may choose (at the time you select the Feat) for it to apply to one category of your summoned creatures instead of you. For instance, you may take the Huge Feat and decide that all your Fey Creatures will be one size larger than usual and have an extra 3 HP. The one exception is that Feats cannot apply to summoned creatures that come in groups (e.g. Feegles or The Mother's Brats). The Huge Feat is intended to add 3 HP and only 3 HP to the combat, not 30 extra HP spread over ten Feegles!

If a summoned creature suffers a Status, apply it as best you can. Statuses affecting their movement apply in the obvious way: e.g. an Immobilized summoned creature cannot move. Statuses affecting their attacks affect your attacks using them as origin: e.g. your attacks have Disadvantage when the origin is Restrained. A Dazed summoned creature cannot both move and be the origin of one of your attacks in the same turn. A Stunned summoned creature can do neither. A Frenzied or Panicked summoned creature can only be the origin of one of your attacks if it was Frenzied or Panicked by the target. A Dominated summoned creature may move and attack on your turn as though you commanded it, but at the Dominating character's direction, and won't obey your commands.

At **Level 1**, pick two Ancestral Spirits and either two Elementals or two Fey Creatures.

Ancestral Spirits

✖ Punisher	At-Will	✖10	♠2
Effect: Conjure a spirit in a square adjacent to the target. It lasts until the end of your next turn. You can take advantage of enemy Opportunities as though you were in that square.			
✖ Scout	At-Will	✖10	♠2
Effect: Conjure a spirit in a square adjacent to the target. It lasts until the end of your next turn. You can see as though you were in the spirit's square. Any ally that enters its square may teleport 4 squares.			
✖ Trooper	At-Will	✖10	♠2
Effect: Conjure a spirit in a square adjacent to the target. It lasts until the end of your next turn. Any enemy that enters a square adjacent to the spirit or the spirit's square takes 3 damage.			

✂ Shadow At-Will ✂10 ♠2

Effect: Conjure a spirit in a square adjacent to the target. It lasts until the end of your next turn. Enemies may not occupy the same square as the spirit. Allies that share the square are concealed.

Elemental Summons

✂ Summon Fire Elemental Encounter ✂ ♠3

Special: Summon a Fire Elemental within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Elemental as the source.

Effect: 2 damage to each creature adjacent to the Elemental.

✂ Flare At-Will ✂ ♠2

Effect: Ongoing 1 Damage (save ends).

Fire Elemental ♥5 1x1 ✂6

Any enemy that enters a square adjacent to the Elemental (up to 2 squares away at level 5, 3 squares at level 9) or that ends its turn there takes 1 damage.

Any creature within 5 squares of the Fire Elemental that deals damage to it takes 1 damage.

✂ Summon Water Elemental Encounter ✂ ♠3

Special: Summon a Water Elemental within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Elemental as the source.

Effect: Target makes a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

✂ Drowning At-Will ✂ ♠2

Effect: Target makes a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Dazed (save ends).

Water Elemental ♥5 1x1 ✂6

The Elemental's square and all adjacent squares (up to 2 squares away at level 5, 3 squares at level 9) are obscured. The Elemental's attacks ignore the obscuring.

If an attack misses the Elemental, it may shift one square.

✂ Summon Earth Elemental Encounter ✂ ♠3

Special: Summon an Earth Elemental within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Elemental as the source.

Effect: Knock the target Prone.

✂ Quake At-Will ✂ ♠2

Effect: Target is Slowed (save ends).

Earth Elemental ♥5 1x1 ✂6

If a creature attempts to leave a square adjacent the Elemental (up to 2 squares away at level 5, 3 squares at level 9), it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it falls Prone.

The Earth Elemental has Resist 1 damage.

✂ Summon Air Elemental Encounter ✂ ♠3

Special: Summon an Air Elemental within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Elemental as the source.

Effect: Slide the target 6 squares.

✂ Whirlwind At-Will ✂ ♠2

Effect: Pull each creature in Burst 2 to a square adjacent the Elemental.

Air Elemental ♥5 1x1 ✂6

All squares within 2 of the Air Elemental are Difficult Terrain, even for Flying creatures, but not for the Elemental itself (within 3 squares at level 5, 4 squares at level 9).

The Air Elemental is Invisible. Its location is only revealed when it attacks.

Fey Summons

✂ Summon Nymph Encounter ✂5 ♠3

Special: Summon a Nymph within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Nymph as the source.

Effect: On its next turn, the target may not make any movements that take it farther from the Nymph.

✂ Innocent Charm At-Will ✂10 ♠2

Effect: If the target attacks the Nymph on its next turn, it takes 3 damage.

Nymph ♥5 1x1 ✂6

At the end of your turn, pick one creature (two creatures at level 5, three at level 9) within 10 squares of the Nymph. That creature is Marked by the Nymph until the end of its next turn.

✂ Summon Feegles Encounter ✂ ♠3

Special: Summon ten Feegles within 10 squares. Make this attack using one Feegle as the source.

Effect: Push each enemy a number of squares equal to the number of adjacent Feegles. (For the purposes of direction, the source of the Push must be any adjacent Feegle, not the source of this attack.)

✂ Crivens! At-Will ✂ ♠2

Effect: 2 damage to each *different* enemy with at least four Feegles adjacent.

Feegle ♥1 1x1 ✂6

Feegles do not have Basic Attacks and cannot take advantage of Opportunities. You don't take a Strike when each Feegle is Taken Out, only if all of them are. You may use your Rally to revive 5 fallen Feegles instead of restoring 5 HP.

At the end of your turn, pick one creature (two creatures at level 5, three at level 9) adjacent to at least one Feegle. That creature cannot shift and loses speed equal to the number of adjacent Feegles, until the end of its next turn.

☒ Summon Wisp Encounter ☒5 ♠3

Special: Summon a Wisp within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Wisp as the source.

Effect: Pick one ally within 10 squares. The target cannot see that ally (save ends).

☒ Trick At-Will ☒5 ♠2

Effect: If the creature starts its next turn adjacent to the Wisp, it takes 2 damage.

Wisp ♥5 1x1 ☒6

When the Wisp is hit by an attack, it teleports 6 squares as a Reaction.

At the end of your turn, pick one creature (two creatures at level 5, three at level 9) within 5 squares of the Wisp. Pull that creature 3 squares.

☒ Summon Red Cap Encounter ⚔ or ☒5 ♠3

Special: Summon a Red Cap within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Red Cap as the source.

Effect: When the target is Taken Out, the Red Cap deals 3 damage to each adjacent creature.

☒ Marked for Death At-Will ⚔ or ☒5 ♠2

Effect: When the target is Taken Out, increase the damage the Red Cap does at the end of each of your turns by 1. These increases are cumulative.

Red Cap ♥5 1x1 ☒6

When any enemy is Taken Out, it gains 2 Buffer Points.

At the end of your turn, pick one creature (two creatures at level 5, three at level 9) within 10 squares of the Red Cap. That creature takes 1 damage.



At Level 3, pick one Angel or one Daemon. Angels and Daemons do not get Opportunities. Instead, they follow around their Focus, giving a bonus or penalty.

Angelic Summons

⚡ Summon Angel of Protection Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: You or an ally take damage.

Summon an Angel of Protection adjacent to the triggering damaged character. That ally (or you) is called the Angel's Focus. They take no damage.

☒ Protective Smite At-Will ⚔ or ☒5 ♠2

Effect: Target has Disadvantage to attack the Focus (save ends).

Angel of Protection ♥5 1x1 ☒6

The Angel of Protection follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Angel shifts to a square adjacent. While the Angel is adjacent, the Focus has Resist 2 damage, but each time this resistance is triggered, the Angel takes 1 damage.

⚡ Summon Angel of Vengeance Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: An enemy damages you or an ally.

Summon an Angel of Vengeance adjacent to the triggering damaged character. That ally (or you) is called the Angel's Focus. The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.

☒ Vengeful Smite At-Will ⚔ or ☒5 ♠2

Effect: Each time the target attacks the Focus, it takes 2 damage (save ends).

Angel of Vengeance ♥5 1x1 ☒6

The Angel of Vengeance follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Angel shifts to a square adjacent. While the Angel is adjacent, whenever the Focus takes damage, the creature that damaged them takes 2 damage.

⚡ Summon Angel of Healing Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: You or an ally take damage.

Summon an Angel of Healing adjacent to the triggering damaged character. That ally (or you) is called the Angel's Focus. The Focus gains 2 Buffer Points.

☒ Healing Smite At-Will ⚔ or ☒5 ♠2

Effect: The Focus regains 2 Hit Points.

Angel of Healing ♥5 1x1 ☒6

The Angel of Healing follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Angel shifts to a square adjacent. While the Angel is adjacent, whenever the Focus starts their turn they gain 2 Buffer Points.

Daemonic Summons

⚡ Summon Daemon of Wrath	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy takes damage. Summon a Daemon of Wrath adjacent to the triggering enemy. That enemy is called the Daemon's Focus. The Focus takes an additional 3 damage.		

⚡ Wrathful Claw	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: The next attack against the target has Advantage.			

Daemon of Wrath	♥5	1x1	⚡6
The Daemon of Wrath follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Daemon shifts to a square adjacent. While the Daemon is adjacent, the Focus has Vulnerable 1 damage. When the Focus is Taken Out, you may choose a new Focus for the Daemon.			

⚡ Summon Daemon of Sloth	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy moves. Summon a Daemon of Sloth adjacent to the triggering enemy. That enemy is called the Daemon's Focus. The Focus is Immobilized (save ends).		

⚡ Slothful Stupor	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: Target is Slowed (save ends).			

Daemon of Sloth	♥5	1x1	⚡6
The Daemon of Sloth follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Daemon shifts to a square adjacent. While the Daemon is adjacent, the target's Speed is halved (rounding down) and it may not shift. When the Focus is Taken Out, you may choose a new Focus for the Daemon.			

⚡ Summon Daemon of Pride	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy makes an attack. Summon a Daemon of Pride adjacent to the triggering enemy. That enemy is called the Daemon's Focus. The Focus has Disadvantage with the attack and grants an Opportunity to any adjacent creatures.		

⚡ Prideful Arrogance	At-Will	↗	♠2
Effect: The target is Distracted until the end of its next turn.			

Daemon of Pride	♥5	1x1	⚡6
The Daemon of Pride follows the Focus. When the Focus moves, the Daemon shifts to a square adjacent. While the Daemon is adjacent, the Focus' attacks grant Opportunities to all adjacent creatures. When the Focus is Taken Out, you may choose a new Focus for the Daemon.			

At **Level 5**, increase the damage on all your Ancestral Spirits Powers and the At-Will Powers associated with your summoned creatures to 3. Increase the damage on your summoned creatures' Basic Attacks to 3, but not yours. Your Elementals and Fey Creatures improve as noted in their descriptions. You may learn one more Elemental or Fey Summons and one more Angelic or Daemonic Summons. These must be the same types (Elemental/Fey, Angelic/Daemonic) as your Level 1 choices.

At **Level 7**, you may learn one Greater Summons.

Greater Summons

⚡ Summon The Mother	Encounter
Special: Summon The Mother within 10 squares. She spawns 5 Brats in adjacent squares. You do not control the Brats as summoned creatures and they do not count as allies, but you may determine how they use their ability at the end of each of your turns.	

⚡ Spawn	At-Will
Spawn 3 Brats adjacent to the Mother.	

The Mother	♥10	2x2	⚡0
At the end of your turn, The Mother spawns 2 Brats in an adjacent square. They may use their ability immediately.			

Brat	♥1	1x1	⚡8
At the end of your turn, the Brat moves up to its speed and attacks an adjacent enemy. It rolls a die. On a 3 to 6, it does 2 damage. On a 1-2 it takes 1 damage.			

⚡ Summon The Voice	Encounter	Special	♠4
Special: Summon The Voice. It does not occupy a space. Make this attack against any enemy you can see using the Voice as the source. Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it succeeds, it is Dazed (save ends). If it fails, it is Dominated (save ends).			

⚡ Confusion	At-Will	Any Creature	♠3
Effect: If the target has a Role Action, you may choose how it uses it on its next turn. You may choose how it uses its Miss Trigger. If the Miss Trigger affects you or your allies, it may be redirected onto enemies instead. It does not take Opportunities against its enemies, but it does take them against its allies (save ends all).			

The Voice	Special
The Voice has no physical body and cannot be attacked. It is Taken Out when you are. At the end of your turn, pick one enemy. That enemy must make a Basic Attack or a Charge against another enemy.	

☒ Summon The Strangler Encounter ↗ (Reach 2) ♠4

Special: Summon the Strangler within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Strangler as the source.

Effect: Target is Grabbed and Restrained until it escapes.

☒ Constrict At-Will ↗ (Reach 2) ♠3

Effect: If the target is Grabbed by the Strangler, it takes 3 additional damage and has Disadvantage on its next Saving Throw to escape. Otherwise, the target is Grabbed.

The Strangler ♥10 1x1 ☞4

The Strangler has Reach 2 and no limit on the number of Grabs it can maintain.

At the end of your turn, the Strangler may Grab one creature within its reach.

☒ Summon Contagion Encounter ↗ ♠4

Special: Summon Contagion within 10 squares. Make this attack using the Contagion as the source.

Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Infected until the end of the encounter. If it succeeds, it is Infected (save ends). (See below for how Infected works.)

☒ Worsening Plague At-Will ↗ ♠3

Effect: The Ongoing Damage associated with your infection increases by 1.

Contagion ♥10 1x1 ☞6

When any enemy starts its turn adjacent to an Infected creature or to the Contagion, it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Infected (save ends). Infected creatures take Ongoing 2 Damage and are Weakened. Creatures newly Infected by starting their turn adjacent to another Infected creature do not take the Ongoing Damage immediately.

At the end of your turn, the Contagion may Infect one adjacent creature.

At Level 9, your Elementals and Fey Creatures improve as noted in their descriptions. You may learn one more Elemental or Fey Summons and one more Angelic or Daemonic Summons. These must be the same types (Elemental/Fey, Angelic/Daemonic) as your Level 1 and Level 5 choices. You also learn one more Greater Summons.





The Buddies

Two Heads are Better Than One

There are many archetypes that put a pair of characters together as a unit—a Hunter and her faithful dog, a set of prankster twins, a knight and his squire, a wizard and her pet fighter, or even just two good friends. To model this, you can choose any Class for one character and simply use the rules for items or allies for the other. A Wizard and her familiar could simply be a Magician with a special item. This Class does the same thing a different way and maybe it's a better fit for your concept. By default, you and your Buddy's non-combat capabilities are held in common just like any other character (but see the variant rules at the end of this Class).

You control two characters on the map. One is called “you,” and the other is called your Buddy. You control both. You and your Buddy each get a Move Action. Your Buddy has 6 speed and starts with 5 HP. It is Taken Out as soon as it is reduced to 0 HP. You only start with a base of 8 HP instead of the usual 10.

Each time your Buddy is Taken Out, take one Strike.

Track Statuses separately for your Buddy. When your Buddy cannot take Attack Actions, you cannot use Encounter Powers or your Buddy's Active Effects. When you cannot take Attack Actions, you can make Attack Rolls with your Buddy as the source, doing 1 damage or one of your Buddy's Active Effects on a hit.

When you Rally, you may choose for your Buddy to gain the 4 HP instead of you. You may do this even if it was Taken Out when you used Rally.

Option (Super-Buddy): Your Buddy starts with 8 HP and you start with a base of 5 HP instead.

Defender Buddies: When you pick the Super-Buddy option and the Defender Role, you may decide that your Buddy will be the source of your Role Actions instead of you. Defense and Stickiness Boosts still apply to you, not your Buddy. This is a decision made at character creation, not something you can change from round to round or from combat to combat.

Customizing your Buddy

Your Buddy has Passive Effects, which are “always on,” and Active Effects which it applies to foes when you use certain powers. It applies Boosted Active Effects when you use your Encounter Power.

Passive Effects (Pick 2 at level 1)

- **Tough:** When you take at least 3 damage, Resist 1.
- **Fast:** Speed 10.
- **Long-Limbed:** Reach 2.*
- **Ranged:** Range 5.*
- **Aware:** +1 damage to Opportunities.
- **Brave:** When you get hit and your Buddy is within 2, it can shift adjacent and take the hit for you.
- **Slippery:** Ignore the first Opportunity for moving each turn.
- **Flying:** Can spend a Move Action to gain the Flying Status. Can stop flying as part of any Move Action.
- **Big:** Buddy is 2x2, and counts as Full Cover for allies.

**Reach/Range apply on all attacks that the Buddy makes and whenever the Buddy applies an effect. Using Range while adjacent to an enemy grants it an Opportunity.*

Active Effects (Pick 2 at level 1)

Effects last until the end of the target's next turn, unless noted.

- **Pushy:** Push 2.
- **Enervating:** Slowed.
- **Focused:** Marked.
- **Scary:** Harried.
- **Dizzying:** Distracted.
- **Handsy:** Grabbed, but automatically succeeds at escape roll.

At **Level 1**, start with *Team Attack*, *Recall Buddy*, *Boosted Buddy*, and pick two more At-Wills from below.

✂ Team Attack **At-Will** **↗ or ↘10** **♠2**
Effect: One enemy within reach of your Buddy suffers 1 damage or one of your chosen Active Effects. If this enemy is this power's target, you may do 1 damage AND one of your Active Effects.

✂ Recall Buddy **At-Will**
 Your Buddy rejoins you (shifts to an adjacent square) and regains 2 HP, even if it was Taken Out.

✂ Coordinated Attack **At-Will**
 Your Buddy shifts 1 before or after this. Make a Team Attack.

✂ We Are One **At-Will**
 Transfer 2 HP from you to your Buddy or vice versa, then make a Team Attack.

✂ Command Buddy **At-Will** **↗** **♠2**
Special: This attack's origin is your Buddy. Role Boosts apply.
Effect: one of your chosen Active Effects.

✂ Boosted Buddy **Encounter** **↗** **♠3**
Special: This attack's origin is your Buddy. Role Boosts apply.
Effect: the Boosted Active Effect (see below) corresponding to one of your chosen Active Effects.

Boosted Active Effects

- **Pushy:** Push 2 and Prone.
- **Enervating:** Weakened and Slowed.
- **Focused:** Marked and if it grants an Opportunity while within reach, it is knocked Prone.
- **Scary:** Next time you hit it, it is Panicked on its next turn.
- **Dizzying:** Dazed.
- **Handsy:** Grabbed and Ongoing 2 Damage while Grabbed.

At **Level 3**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers.

✂ Wrestling Combo **Encounter** **↗** **♠3**
Special: Target must be within reach of your Buddy.
Effect: Target is Restrained by you and Buddy. When it escapes one, it remains Grabbed by other.

✂ Trip and Stab **Encounter**
Special: Target must be within reach of your Buddy.
 Knock Target Prone, then make a Melee Basic Attack against it.

✂ Hold Still **Encounter**
Special: Target must be within reach of your Buddy.
 Target is Grabbed by your Buddy, then make an Ranged Basic Attack against it with Advantage.

✂ Fight Back to Back **Encounter** **↗** **♠3**
Special: You and your Buddy must be adjacent.
 Until you or your Buddy move or are no longer adjacent, all attacks against either of you have Disadvantage.

At **Level 5**, add 1 to At-Will and Basic Attack damage. Boost one Passive Effect per the following list, or pick another Passive Effect from the original list.

Boosted Passive Effects

- **Tough:** Resist 1.
- **Fast:** Speed 14.
- **Long-Limbed:** Reach 3.
- **Aware:** +2 damage to Opportunities.
- **Brave:** Take a hit for master when within 5.
- **Slippery:** Do not grant Opportunities for moving.
- **Flying:** Can spend a Move Action to gain the Flying Status and then fly up to its speed. Can stop Flying as part of any Move Action.
- **Ranged:** Range 20.
- **Big:** Buddy is 3x3, and counts as Full Cover for allies.

At **Level 7**, gain the following Encounter Power.

✂ Super Buddy **Encounter** **↗** **♠4**
Special: This attack's origin is your Buddy. Role Boosts apply.
Effect: the Super Active Effect (see below) corresponding to one of your chosen Active Effects.

Super Active Effects

- **Pushy:** Throw 4 and Prone, and any enemies adjacent to where the target was thrown are Prone, too.
- **Enervating:** Blinded.
- **Focused:** Marked and knocked Prone and standing up grants an Opportunity to your Buddy.
- **Scary:** Target is Panicked. Next turn, it is Harried.
- **Dizzying:** Stunned.
- **Handsy:** Restrained (escape ends).

At **Level 9**, boost one Passive Effect using the level 5 List and pick another from the original list.



Simplified Classes

I Like My Toast Plain

If all the above seems too complicated and you just want to smash things until they stop fighting, here is a simple level progression that uses only Basic Attacks and is well balanced. Playing using these rules is very fast and emphasizes the importance of terrain, as players have little opportunity to manipulate enemies. You still have character differentiation through Roles and Feats. This is a game with a more old-school feel in the speed and simplicity of combat. It's a lot of fun and even players comfortable with the more complicated powers of standard Classes might enjoy it as a change of pace.

Be warned! **I do not recommend mixing these simplified Classes with the other Classes in one party.** The balance should be roughly appropriate, but you can run into a situation where the players of the simplified Classes are bored while the players of the regular Classes do all the cool stuff. At the same time, the players of the regular Classes might be jealous that the players of the simplified Classes are getting equally strong results with less effort.

Optional Variant: Two Distinct Buddies

Maybe you want your Buddies to be two distinct characters outside of combat. They always act as a unit in combat (that's the point of the Class), but you can track their non-combat capabilities separately. The main thing this changes is character creation. You pick one Background for each character and each character picks 2 Skills from their Background. Pick one Connections Skill from each Background, or add one to Wealth instead if appropriate to the Background. Pick one Trick from each Background. You can pick a different Origin for each character and each character picks a single Complication and a single Skill from their Origin.

Character Creation Summary

If you choose to split your characters like this, each Buddy starts with:

- 2 Skills, 1 Connections Skill, and 1 Trick from their Background.
- 1 Complication and 1 Skill from their Origin.

When you earn new Tricks or Fallbacks by leveling up, you choose which character learns the Trick. The characters are tracked completely separately in their Skills, Complications, and Tricks. Tactical Combat abilities, Feats, Wealth, and Action Points are always shared in common, not associated with either Buddy. Kits and their Advances are also held in common, whether that is because just one Buddy has a Kit or because they share in the single Kit. Relationships can be held in common or split between Buddies or shared any way you like, as long as each **player** starts with the same number and kind of relationships. Future relationships develop naturally and may end up on either or both character's list.

At **Level 1**, add "1 damage" to the Effect line of both Basic Attacks. Your Ranged Basic Attack has range 10 instead of 5.

At **Level 3**, change the Effect of your Basic Attacks to "2 damage."

At **Level 5**, increase the Damage line of your Basic Attacks to 3.

At **Level 7**, change the Effect of your Basic Attacks to "3 damage."

At **Level 9**, increase the Damage line of your Basic Attacks to 4.

Melee Specialist Option

You may choose to ignore all of the above as it applies your Ranged Basic Attack. In exchange, when you make a Melee Basic Attack, any 2s on your dice are treated as though they were 5s.

Ranged Specialist Option

You may choose to ignore all of the above as it applies your Melee Basic Attack. In exchange, your Ranged Basic Attack has range 20.

That's it! Simple! Now go pick a Role and some Feats.

Old School Evolution

You can use simplified Classes to approximate old-school D&D Classes: a Fighter might be a Striker or Defender with the Melee Specialist Option, a Cleric would be a Leader, a Wizard would be a Controller or Blaster, a Ranger would be a Striker, and a Thief would be a Striker with Feats based around stealth and movement and maybe the Melee Specialist Option.

When appropriate, a character's in-game actions might lead to their gaining access to powers from other Classes. A Mage might get access to a Magician spell once per day, a Ranger might get the Duelist's Duel power when facing her favored enemy, a Fighter might get a Martial Artist stance, etc.





Roles

Your Role defines your place on the team and your goals in combat. Do you focus damage on one target, affect many enemies at once, protect your allies and take hits, enable your allies, or lock down the most dangerous foe? In this game, you pick your Role separately from your Class. Some Classes lean towards some Roles more than others, and certainly there are synergies to be found. It is my goal that all Classes should be viable with almost every Role. Perhaps the Duelist doesn't make a great Blaster. That's okay though because it's a great Striker, Controller, or Defender and works just dandy as a Leader. There really are no bad combinations.

The Blaster spreads around damage and effects across the battlefield. The Controller makes it hard for enemies to attack effectively. The Defender takes the heat for the rest of the group. The Leader helps keep everyone in fighting shape. The Striker focuses on bringing down a single target.

You do not need to feel any pressure to pick certain Roles based on what your friends are picking. More than one player can pick the same Role, and there is no such thing as a must-have Role. So pick whatever you like! Leaders heal, but anyone can spend an Action Point to Rally and get back in the fight, so you can easily play with no Leader. On the other hand, you could have a party of all Leaders if you like and the game still works fine—you would be a highly mobile team who shed Statuses like my cat sheds fur and who are very difficult to put down for good. Moreover, since each player has a different Class, characters feel very different even when they share the same Role.

One thing to keep in mind is that Blasters and Strikers speed up combat by taking down enemies more quickly, Leaders and Controllers slow things down by helping the team stay alive longer, and Defenders do a bit of both. So if your party is all or mostly Leaders and Controllers, your fights are going to take longer than if you were all playing Strikers and Blasters.

Blaster

The Blaster is about dealing damage to enemies across the map and restricting what the enemies can do on the battlefield. A Blaster can deal more total damage than any other Role and ruin the day for many monsters at once. The Blaster's joy comes from taking out the boss's Lieutenants while teammates kill the boss.

The Blaster is the most complex Role to play. You can make your attacks cover an area instead of just one target, but when you don't do that, you still get to do some extra damage to another target. Certain Classes have some tricky interactions with this Role. They are noted in the Class' write-up.

At **Level 1**, gain the Multitarget Boost ability and choose one of the Precision Boost or Terrain Boost abilities:

Multitarget Boost: If you attack with a power with range X, you may instead make it a Burst 1 centered within X targeting all creatures in the zone. This still grants Opportunities as though it was range X. If it is a melee attack, you may make it a Burst 1 targeting all creatures in the zone. You may move the center of the zone one square for each square of reach you have.

If you forgo the option to make your power a zone, you get the following benefit instead: When you roll a 3 or 4 on a ranged or melee attack, deal 2 damage to one additional target within range. When you roll a 5 or 6 on a ranged or melee attack, deal either the power's effect *or* 2 damage to one additional target within range.

Note: You never hit yourself with Burst attacks even though you are often in their zone.

Note: When a creature is included in the same effect multiple times from the same power, it only suffers once.

Special: Blasters using Melee attacks may use their existing squares of movement during the resolution of the attack to acquire new targets using their Multitarget Boost when they forgo the option to make their power a zone.

Example: A Blaster rolls a 3 on a melee attack, deals damage to the target, but has no other targets in range to deal bonus damage to. They may move next to another enemy and then deal the bonus damage to that foe, but this movement grants Opportunities as usual.

Note: When making a Burst attack, only the first attack roll may generate a Strike or lead to a Miss Trigger. Because of this, when attacking different kinds of enemies (e.g. two Elites and a Stooge) you must roll the attack against the most powerful first.

Precision Boost: Gain the *Precision* power:

👤 Precision	At-Will
Your next Burst attack may target one additional creature adjacent to the zone, if that creature is within range 5. (At level 4, you may instead exclude one creature in the zone. At level 8, you may do both.)	

Terrain Boost: Gain the *Terrain* power:

👤 Terrain	At-Will
Pick one of the following three options, centered within range 5:	
- Choose a 3x3 area (5x5 at level 4). The affected zone becomes Difficult Terrain until the end of the encounter. You may optionally remove any Low Cover in the area. (At level 8, your allies ignore this Difficult Terrain.) - Choose a 3x3 area (5x5 at level 4). It becomes obscured (see page 94) until the end of your next turn. (At level 8, your allies ignore this obscuring.) - Choose one square. It becomes Low Cover (Full Cover at level 4). (At level 8, pick two squares within range.)	

Action Trigger:

⚡ Consistent Attack	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: You miss an enemy with an attack.		
Spend an Action Point. Apply 2 damage and the attack's Effect to another enemy in range.		

At **Level 2**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

👤 That Wasn't There Before	Encounter
Create a wall of 8 squares of blocking terrain within 10 (the entire wall must be within 10 of you). The wall must be contiguous (the squares must be vertically or horizontally adjacent) and has height equal to the width of 2 squares. Anyone can break a square of this wall by dealing 3 damage to it. Attacking the wall always hits as though the attacker rolled a 5.	
👤 Like Moving Through Maple Syrup	Encounter ⚙️10
All enemies in the zone are Slowed until the end of their next turns.	
👤 The Friend Zone	Encounter
Create a 3x3 zone centered within 10 squares. Enemies are Vulnerable 1 while inside. The zone lasts until the end of the combat.	
👤 The Not-So-Friendly Zone	Encounter
Create a 5x5 zone centered within 10 squares. Any creature that starts its turn or enters the zone takes 1 damage (increase to 2 damage at level 6). This zone lasts until the end of the encounter.	

At **Level 4**, replace your Level 1 Boosts with the following:

Improved Multitarget Boost: If you attack with a power with range X, you may instead make it a Burst 1 centered within X targeting all creatures in the zone. This still grants Opportunities as though it was range X. If it is a melee attack, you may make it a Burst 1 targeting all creatures in the zone. You may move the center of the zone one square for each square of reach you have. For both the melee and ranged versions, you may extend the zone to make it cover a 4x4 square.

If you forgo the option to make your power a zone, you get the following benefit: When you roll a 3 or 4 on a ranged or melee attack, deal 2 damage to two additional targets within range. When you roll a 5 or 6 on a ranged or melee attack, deal the power's effect to one additional target *or* deal 2 damage to two additional targets within range.

Improved Precision Boost: *Precision* improves.

Improved Terrain Boost: *Terrain* improves.

At **Level 6**, choose another of the Encounter Powers from the Level 2 list above. Your Action Trigger improves:

⚡ Dependable	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: You miss an enemy with an attack.		
Spend an Action Point. Apply 3 damage and the attack's Effect to another enemy within range or to the one you missed.		

At **Level 8**, replace your Level 4 Boosts with the following:

Super Multitarget Boost: If you attack with a power with range X, you may instead make it a Burst 2 or 1 centered within X targeting all creatures in the zone. This still grants Opportunities as though it was range X. If it is a melee attack, you may make it a Burst 2 or 1 targeting all creatures in the zone. You may move the center of the zone one square for each square of reach you have.

If you forgo the option to make your power a zone, you get the following benefit: When you roll a 3 or 4 on a ranged or melee attack, deal 2 damage to three additional targets within range. When you roll a 5 or 6 on a ranged or melee attack, deal the power's effect to one additional target *and* deal 2 damage to three additional targets within range.

Super Precision Boost: *Precision* improves.

Super Terrain Boost: *Terrain* improves.

At **Level 10**, replace one of your two Encounter Powers with an improved version:

👥 Where Did It Come From? Encounter

Create a wall of 8 squares within 10 (the entire wall must be within 10 of you). The wall is blocking terrain for enemies and enemies can't see through it. Allies can ignore both these features—they can see through it, move through it, and attack through it. The wall must be contiguous and has height equal to the width of 2 squares. Anyone can break a square of this wall by dealing 5 damage to it. Attacking the wall always hits as though the attacker rolled a 5.

👥 Like Moving Through Concrete Encounter ⚙️10

All enemies in the zone are Immobilized until the end of their next turns.

👥 The Friends With Benefits Zone Encounter

Create a 5x5 zone centered within 10 squares. Enemies are Vulnerable 1 while in this zone. Allies add 1 damage to the damage line of all their attacks while they are in the zone. This zone lasts until the end of the encounter.

👥 The Downright Unfriendly Zone Encounter

Create a 7x7 zone centered within 10 squares. Any creature that starts its turn or enters the zone takes 4 damage. This zone lasts until the end of the encounter.



Controller

The Controller is about locking down a single target with nasty effects. A Controller can stack debilitating effects on a single target better than any other Role. The Controller's joy comes from curtailing the boss' ability to fight back while their teammates do the damage.

At **Level 1**, gain the following abilities:

Control Boost: When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, you may choose to either Slow the target until the end of its next turn, or to slide the target 3 squares.

Damage Reduction Boost: Gain the *Sap Strength* power:

👤👤👤 Sap Strength	At-Will	⚔️5
Target is Weakened until the end of its next turn. (At level 4, save ends. At level 8, Weaken two targets in range.)		

Action Trigger:

⚡ Freeze!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: An enemy moves. Spend an Action Point. Replace the enemy where it started its movement. Its Move Action is still expended.		

At **Level 2**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

👤👤👤 Save or Suck	Encounter	⚔️10
The target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Stunned until the end of its next turn. If it succeeds, it is Distracted instead.		

👤👤👤 Stand Still	Encounter	⚔️10
The target is Immobilized and Vulnerable 1 until the end of its next turn.		

👤👤👤 Battlefield Repositioning	Encounter	⚙️5
Slide each enemy in the zone 5 squares to another square in the zone.		

👤👤👤 Flash	Encounter	⚔️10
The target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Blinded until the end of its next turn. If it succeeds, it is Distracted instead.		

At **Level 4**, replace your Level 1 Boosts with the following:

Improved Control Boost: When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, you may choose to either knock the target Prone, or to slide the target 6 squares.

Improved Damage Reduction Boost: *Sap Strength* improves.

At **Level 6**, choose another of the Encounter Powers from the Level 2 list above. Your Action Trigger improves:

⚡ Slide!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: An enemy moves. Spend an Action Point. Replace the enemy where it started its movement, then slide it its speed and knock it Prone. Its Move Action is still expended.		

At **Level 8**, replace your Level 4 Boosts with the following:

Super Control Boost: When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, you may choose to either knock the target Prone and it cannot stand up (save ends), or to slide the target 10 squares.

Super Damage Reduction Boost: *Sap Strength* improves.

At **Level 10**, replace one of your two Encounter Powers with an improved version:

👤👤👤 Save or Die	Encounter	⚔️10
The target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out. If it succeeds it is Dazed until the end of its next turn.		

👤👤👤 All Tied Up	Encounter	⚔️10
The target is Restrained and Vulnerable 2 (save ends).		

👤👤👤 Warzone Repositioning	Encounter	⚙️10
Slide each creature in the zone 10 squares to another square in the zone.		

👤👤👤 Solarbeam	Encounter	⚔️10
The target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.		

Clarification: If you use *Freeze!* or *Slide!* on an enemy who moved using an action other than a Move Action, that action should still be expended, though if it was part of an attack, the enemy may or may not still be able to make the attack from their new position. If their power gives them multiple instances of movement, all of it is canceled.



Defender

The Defender is about toughness and protecting his friends. A Defender can take more punishment than any other Role. A Defender should be able to give Team Monster the difficult choice between attacking the toughest character or being less effective in attacking others. The Defender's joy comes from pinning down the boss while allies destroy everything else. The Defender's key action is Marking. In this game, Marking simply gives the Defender more chances to hurt the monster in question. If they make an attack that does not include you as a target, or if they shift out of a square within your reach, then they grant you an Opportunity. You don't need to be up close to keep monsters Marked either. You can deal Opportunity damage at range, provided that your character has some in-fiction method of delivering that ranged damage even if they are primarily a melee character. (See Fiction Takes Precedence on page 91.) If you are Incapacitated, your Marks end.

At **Level 1**, gain the following abilities:

Defense Boost: When you take 3 or more damage, Resist 1. When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, regain 1 Hit Point.

Stickiness Boost: When an enemy grants you an Opportunity, it takes 1 additional damage. You gain the *Mark* power:

👤👤👤 Mark	At-Will	⚔️5
Target is Marked by you until the end of its next turn. (At level 4, Mark two targets in range. At level 8, three targets.)		

Action Trigger:

⚡ You Call That a Punch?	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack. Spend an Action Point. The attack misses instead.		

At **Level 2**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

⚡ I Don't Think So!	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy grants you an Opportunity. In addition to taking damage, the enemy loses the action that caused it to grant you the Opportunity. If it was attempting to move, it stops. If it was making an attack, the attack is not resolved.		

👤👤👤 Come and Get It!	Encounter	⚙️2
You pull every enemy in the zone to a square adjacent to you. Mark any or all of them until the end of your next turn.		

👤👤👤 You're Mine!	Encounter	⚔️5
The target has Disadvantage to any attack that doesn't include you as a target (save ends). This effect ends if you are Taken Out.		

👤👤👤 I'll Cover You!	Encounter	
One ally adjacent to you has cover from melee attacks while adjacent to you until they fail to end their turn adjacent to you. This effect ends if you are Incapacitated.		

At **Level 4**, replace your Level 1 Boosts with the following:

Improved Defense Boost: You Resist 1 all. When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, regain 1 Hit Point.

Improved Stickiness Boost: When an enemy enters a square adjacent to you, it loses the rest of its squares of movement for that action. When an enemy grants you an Opportunity, it takes 1 additional damage. *Mark* improves.

At **Level 6**, choose another of the Encounter Powers from the Level 2 list above. Your Action Trigger improves:

⚡ THIS Is a Punch!	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack. Spend an Action Point. The attack misses and grants you an Opportunity.		

At **Level 8**, replace your Level 4 Boosts with the following:

Super Defense Boost: You Resist 1 all. When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, regain 2 Hit Points.

Super Stickiness Boost: When an enemy enters a square adjacent to you, it loses the rest of its squares of movement for that action. When an enemy grants you an Opportunity, it takes 2 additional damage. *Mark* improves.

At **Level 10**, replace one of your two Encounter Powers with an improved version:

⚡ I REALLY Don't Think So!	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy grants you an Opportunity. In addition to taking damage, the enemy loses the action that caused it to grant you the Opportunity and must end its turn immediately. It grants Advantage to attacks against it until the end of its next turn.		

👤👤👤 Come and Get Seconds!	Encounter	⚙️3
Pull every enemy in the zone to a square adjacent to you. Then, every enemy adjacent to you is Immobilized (save ends). Mark any or all of them until the end of your next turn.		

👤👤👤 You're All Mine!	Encounter	
Every enemy has Disadvantage to any attack that doesn't include you as a target (save ends). You may exclude specific enemies. This effect ends if you are Taken Out.		

👤👤👤 I'll Cover You All!	Encounter	
All allies adjacent to you have cover from melee attacks while adjacent to you until they fail to end their turn adjacent to you. This effect ends if you are Incapacitated.		



Leader

The Leader is about boosting allies and healing. Leaders are the main source of in-combat healing in the game. A Leader enables allies while doing cool stuff too. The Leader's joy comes from giving everyone the boosts they need to take out the boss in no time.

At Level 1, gain the following abilities:

Teamwork Boost: Gain the Tactics Encounter Power. When you roll a 5 or 6 on an attack, you gain an additional use of this power:

👥 Tactics	Encounter
One ally of your choice may spend a Move Action immediately. (At level 8, two allies.)	

Healing Boost: Gain the Heal Encounter Power:

👥 Heal	Encounter	5
Target may regain Hit Points equal to half its maximum (round down). The target may pick one of the following options (at level 8, pick two options):		
If the target is Prone, they may stand up.		
If this brings the target to full health, they may have Advantage on their next attack.		
Enemies have Disadvantage to attack the target until the end of the target's next turn.		
The target may make a Saving Throw against one Status that allows one or attempt to escape a Grab.		
(At level 8, add to the list this option: the target may remove one Strike against them.)		

Action Trigger:

⚡ Try Again!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: An ally makes an attack and dislikes the result. Spend an Action Point. The ally may reroll the attack.		

At Level 2, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

👥 Hit 'Em!	Encounter
One ally may make an attack. They do not get the benefit of their Role's Boosts.	

👥 Walk It Off!	Encounter
You or an ally may make a Saving Throw against an effect, even one that does not normally end on a save.	

👥 Mass Heal	Encounter
Create a 3x3 zone centered within 10 squares. Each creature in the zone regains 2 Hit Points.	

⚡ Keep Walking!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: You or an ally fail a Saving Throw. Reroll it.		

👥 Reveal Weakness	Encounter
Target one creature. All attacks against it have Advantage until the end of its next turn.	

At Level 4, replace your Level 1 Boosts with the following:

Improved Teamwork Boost: When you roll a 3 to 6 on an attack, you regain the use of your Tactics power.

Improved Healing Boost: You may use Heal twice per combat.

At Level 6, choose another of the Encounter Powers from the Level 2 list above. Your Action Trigger improves:

⚡ Try Harder!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: An ally makes an attack and dislikes the result. Spend an Action Point. Attack hits as though the ally rolled a 6.		

At Level 8, replace your Level 4 Boosts with the following:

Super Teamwork Boost: *Tactics* improves.

Super Healing Boost: *Heal* improves.

At Level 10, replace one of your two Encounter Powers with an improved version:

👥 Hit 'Em Harder!	Encounter
Two allies may make attacks. They do not get the benefit of their Roles' Boosts.	

👥 Walk It Off Harder!	Encounter
You or an ally may end one effect.	

👥 Fresh Start	Encounter
Create a 5x5 zone centered within 10 squares. All creatures in the zone regain HP equal to half their maximum (round down).	

⚡ You're Fine!	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: You or an ally fail a Saving Throw. Saving Throw succeeds instead. You and any other ally suffering from the same Status immediately roll a Saving Throw to end it.		

👥 Reveal Weak Point	Encounter
Target one creature. All attacks against it have Advantage and roll an extra die, taking the best result (save ends).	



Striker

The Striker is about damage and mobility. A Striker can deal more damage to one target than any other Role. A Striker should be able to move around the battlefield to pick their targets. The Striker's joy comes from bloodying the boss in one round.

At **Level 1**, gain Damage Boost and pick either Mobility Boost or Accuracy Boost:

Damage Boost: When you roll a 2 to 5 on an attack, deal 1 extra damage to the target. When you roll a 6, deal 2 extra damage instead.

Mobility Boost: Gain the *Quick Shift* power:

👤👤👤 Quick Shift	At-Will
You may shift 1 square. (2 squares at level 8.)	

Accuracy Boost: Gain the *Draw a Bead* power:

👤👤👤 Draw a Bead	At-Will
Pick one enemy within 5 squares you can attack. If you attack that enemy this turn, you may ignore concealment or Low Cover (at level 4, any Cover) on that attack. (At level 8, if the enemy is Invisible, you are able to attack it.)	

Action Trigger:

⚡ Strike Back	Encounter	Reaction
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.		
Spend an Action Point. Make an attack against the triggering enemy.		

At **Level 2**, choose one of the following Encounter Powers:

👤👤👤 Lightning Strikes	Encounter
Gain an Attack Action and use it immediately, but do not get your Damage Boost on it.	

👤👤👤 Strike and Shift	Encounter
Deal 2 damage to each enemy adjacent to you and shift 1 square. (Increase to 3 damage at level 6, 4 damage at level 10)	

👤👤👤 Wind Up Strike	Encounter
Deal extra damage equal to half your level + 3 if you hit with your next attack (round down). If your next attack hits multiple targets, apply this damage only to one of them.	

👤👤👤 Momentary Weakness	Encounter
Pick two creatures. Your next attack against each of them has Advantage.	

At **Level 4**, replace your Level 1 Boosts with the following:

Improved Damage Boost: When you roll a 2 to 5 on an attack, deal 2 extra damage to the target. When you roll a 6, deal 4 extra

damage instead.

Improved Mobility Boost: Your speed is increased by 4. The *Quick Shift* power is unchanged.

Improved Accuracy Boost: *Draw a Bead* improves.

At **Level 6**, choose another of the Encounter Powers from the Level 2 list above. Your Action Trigger improves:

⚡ Dodge and Strike Back	Encounter	Interrupt
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.		
Spend an Action Point. The attack misses and you make an attack against the triggering enemy.		

At **Level 8**, replace your Level 4 Boosts with the following:

Super Damage Boost: When you roll a 2 to 5 on an attack, deal 3 extra damage to the target. When you roll a 6, deal 6 extra damage instead.

Super Mobility Boost: Your speed remains increased by 4. *Quick Shift* improves.

Super Accuracy Boost: *Draw a Bead* improves.

At **Level 10**, replace one of your two Encounter Powers with an improved version:

👤👤👤 Lightning Strikes Twice	Encounter
Gain two Attack Actions and use them immediately, but do not get your Damage Boost on them.	

👤👤👤 Strike and Run	Encounter
Deal 6 damage to each enemy adjacent to you and shift your speed.	

👤👤👤 Power Up Strike	Encounter
Deal 15 extra damage if you hit with your next attack.	

👤👤👤 Persistent Weakness	Encounter
Pick two creatures. Your attacks against them have Advantage and deal 2 extra damage until the end of the combat.	





Feats

Feats are a way of customizing your character's combat capabilities. They are powerful bonuses that can allow you to change your playstyle. If you like to get stuck in and take lots of hits, take Feats that make you more durable. If you like to go all out in the first round, take Feats like *Fast Reactions*.

Advantages

Lucky – Once per encounter you may force an enemy to reroll one attack against you. Once per encounter you may reroll one Saving Throw, escape attempt, or Panic Roll.

Reliable – Whenever you miss with an Encounter Power, you do not expend it. Attacks with multiple targets must miss all of them or be expended.

Note: This Feat does not work as-is for Summoners. See the Reliable Summoner Feat below.

Bread and Butter – Pick one At-Will attack power. Once per turn, when any power or ability allows you to make a Basic Attack, you may use this attack instead.

Like a Bull – You may use any melee power while charging instead of a Basic Attack.

Melee Shooter – Ranged attacks don't grant Opportunities to adjacent enemies. The rules for Flanking apply to your ranged attacks as well as your melee attacks.

Quickness

Slippery – Any time you shift, you may shift 1 extra square. Additionally, you may move through enemy squares, although you may not end your turn there. When you enter or leave an enemy's square, you do not grant that enemy an Opportunity.

Sprinter – Increase your speed by 4. If you have unspent points of movement after your turn, once per round you may spend them to move when it is not your turn. You may use this at any time, and if you use it in response to another event, it resolves as a Reaction.

Fast Reactions – Instead of rolling for Initiative, you always get a 7. You may use your Action Trigger twice per encounter.

Defenses

Resilient – You may use Rally twice per encounter. Whenever you Rally or are the target of a Leader's Heal power, regain an additional Hit Point. A 3 counts as a pass on your Saving Throws.

Toughness – +3 to max HP. You Resist 1 damage against anything other than attacks and Opportunities (e.g. against damaging Zones or Ongoing Damage).

Nothing Fazes You – Make Saving Throws to end Statuses at the start of your turn instead of the end. When subject to Forced Movement, reduce its distance by 1. When Slowed, your speed is 3 instead of 2. When an enemy knocks you Prone, roll a Saving Throw to try to stay upright.

Special Abilities

Flyer – You may gain the Flying Status as a Move Action. If you become Bloodied while Flying, you fall to the ground Prone.

Huge – +3 to max HP. Increase your size by one (e.g. from 1x1 to 2x2). Your allies may treat you as terrain granting Full Cover.

Clarification: See page 93 for how cover applies to creatures larger than 1x1. If you change size through any other means, you always stay one size bigger than you otherwise would be.

Wrestler – You have Advantage on escape rolls. Enemies have Disadvantage on rolls to escape your Grabs. When granted an Opportunity by an adjacent enemy, you may forgo dealing damage and it is Grabbed instead.

Long reach – +1 Reach. Once per encounter, when an enemy moves adjacent to you, you may knock them prone.

Cleave – Double your base damage when melee attacking enemies with the Mob trait. When you hit an enemy with a melee attack and deal more damage to it than it has HP remaining, you may apply the excess damage plus one to another enemy within reach.

Stealthy – Enemies searching for you while you are Hidden have Disadvantage. Also, gain the Hide power:

Hide	At-Will
You must be out of sight when you use this power. Move up to your speed, ending at least 2 squares away from your current location. You must remain out of sight during the movement and end in cover or concealment. You are Hidden.	

Superhuman – You get an extra sense and an extra movement ability. For your extra sense, pick one of Tremorsense or Darkvision (see page 94) or make up your own similar ability—echolocation, Wizard Sight, etc. These are all re-skinnings of “you can see in the dark.” They allow you to ignore the Blinded Status from some sources, depending on the description of the attack. For instance, the deafening and blinding sound and light from a flash-bang grenade would still affect someone with Darkvision or with echolocation, but would not hamper tremorsense. On the other hand, tremorsense is useless against flying foes.

For your movement ability, choose one:

- You can climb walls at your usual speed and fight while climbing without penalty.
- You can swim at your usual speed and fight while swimming without penalty.
- You can leap up to your speed, ignoring Difficult Terrain and only granting Opportunities for moving during the first square of your movement.
- You can spend a Move Action to teleport up to your speed to swap places with a willing creature you can see, or an Attack Action if they are unwilling.
- You may move through solid objects, walls, and creatures, but must end your movement in an open square. When you enter or leave an enemy’s square, you do not grant that enemy an Opportunity.
- Make up your own similar ability by reskinning or slightly modifying one of the above.

Minor Role Feats

These Feats enable you to take on some of the abilities of other Roles. You cannot take a Minor Role Feat for your own Role.

Minor Striker – Once per encounter, when you hit with an attack, deal 2 extra damage (increase this to 3 damage at level 4 and 4 damage at level 8) instead of using your Role’s Boosts. Additionally, you gain the Striker’s Quick Shift power as an Encounter Power. (Note that this power improves as you level).

Minor Leader – Once per encounter, you may slide an ally 3 squares as a Free Action. Additionally, once per encounter you may spend your Role Action to allow you or an ally to regain 2 HP (increase this to 3 HP at level 4 and 4 HP at level 8).

Minor Defender – You do an additional point of damage on Opportunities. Additionally, you gain the Defender’s Mark power as an Encounter Power. (Note that this power improves as you level).

Minor Blaster – Once per encounter you may turn a melee attack into a Burst 1 (you may move the center of the zone one square for each square of reach you have), or a Range X attack into a Burst 1 centered within X (this still grants Opportunities as though it was range X), targeting all creatures in the zone. You do not get your usual Role’s Boosts on this attack. Additionally, you gain the Blaster’s Terrain power as an Encounter Power. (Note that this power improves as you level).

Minor Controller – Once per encounter when you hit an enemy with an attack, you may slide it 3 squares and it is Slowed until the end of its next turn instead of your usual Role Boost. Additionally, you gain the Controller’s Sap Strength power as an Encounter Power. (Note that this power improves as you level).

Versatile Minor – You may use one At-Will Role power (or slide an ally 3 squares for the Leader Role) from each Role once per encounter. That is, you can Mark once, Sap Strength once, etc.



Class Specific Feats

These Feats are for certain Classes only. Some replace existing Feats that don't quite work properly because of the details of how the Class works. Others are extra abilities that would make great Class Features but for Classes that already had all their features.

Reliable Summoner – Whenever you miss with an Encounter Power, you still summon the creature as usual, but do not expend the power. (Attacks with multiple targets must miss all of them or be expended.) Later in the combat, you may use that power with the already-summoned creature as the source. Again, if you miss, you still do not expend it. This does not allow you to re-summon a creature. If the summoned creature in question is Taken Out, even if the power is not expended, you will not be able to use it.

Multi-Role Shapechanger – Each of your forms is associated with a different Role, chosen when you choose that form. When you start a combat, you have no Role. When you use a Transformation Power, you take on the Role associated with that form.

Clarification: If you take on multiple Roles over the course of the encounter, you must abide by the same limits to the number of Encounter Powers you use as everybody else. For instance, if you are level 2 then you may only use one of the level 2 Encounter Powers in each combat, regardless of how many forms you take. At level 6, you will be limited to two such Encounter Powers. And so on.

Bread and Butter for Shapechangers – Pick one At-Will attack power from each of your forms. You may use that power when any power or ability allows you to make a Basic Attack while in that form.

Fast Archer – Double your base damage when ranged attacking enemies with the Mob trait. When you use an Attack Action on your turn to attack an enemy with your Ranged Basic Attack and the enemy is Taken Out, your Attack Action is refunded. However, further attacks do not benefit from your Role Boosts.

Clarification: This benefit only works when you spend your Attack Action on your turn to make a Ranged Basic Attack alone. For instance, it does not combine with an ability that lets you move and make a Ranged Basic Attack.

Opportunistic Martial Artist – Apply the effects of your Style when you deal Opportunity damage. One exception: if you are in Python Style (at any tier), the enemy gets an immediate escape attempt for free to avoid your Grab.

Role Specific Feats

Beam Blaster – When making a Burst 1 attack, you may instead make a “beam” attack 5 squares long. A beam starts in an adjacent square and follows the same rules as a push: each square must be further away from you than the last. At level 4 when you can widen the zone to 4x4, you may widen your beam by 1 square. At level 8, when making a Burst 2 attack, you may widen your beam twice. Widening your beam means making it one square thicker in an intuitive way. For instance, you could make a normal 5-square beam attack due East and then add a square one to the North of each square in the beam to wind up with a 2x5 rectangle.

Option: As a Blaster, you may sacrifice your ability to make Burst attacks like usual, and only make Beams as described here. If you do that, this doesn't cost you a Feat.

Boosted Blaster – You have both Blaster At-Will Role powers: Terrain and Precision.

Distant Defender – The range on any of your Ranged or Burst Defender Role powers is increased by 3. When an enemy grants you an Opportunity, you may choose to Slow them until the end of their next turn instead of dealing damage. You may now take advantage of Opportunities within 8 squares of you, even if your longest-range power has a shorter range than that.

Savage Striker – When your attack reduces an enemy's Hit Points to one plus half your level or less (round up), they are Taken Out. This does not apply to Goons or Stooges.

Crafty Controller – Once per combat, when an enemy succeeds on a Saving Throw, you may make them reroll. If they succeed again, you may slide them 2 squares.

Limber Leader – When you use your Tactics power, you may also spend a free Move Action immediately.



Team Monster

The following section gives the GM what they need to adjudicate common situations in combat not covered by the rules so far.

Describing and Playing Team Monster

How you play the monsters is as much a part of how they “feel” as what abilities they have. If you are going to play them dumb, you can afford to have a couple more of them or have them be more powerful. The same thing applies if you intend for them to flee or surrender easily. Think about how your monsters will behave before the fight and be ready to follow through on that.

Ending early

You can have monsters surrender or flee at your discretion whenever it makes sense in the fiction. If the players have made the monsters' goal impossible, is it worth sticking around? If you want your monsters only to surrender when they have been Taken Out, that's fine. If not, are there conditions under which they might surrender early? If their leader is taken hostage? What might cause them to surrender late? If one alien just surrendered and the players killed it, the other aliens will not surrender so soon. Should this be represented by a couple of extra Hit Points? Use your judgment. It's your job to make the world seem real and to make the players' choices have consequences.

How you describe monsters' attacks is just as important as what their attacks are. If you describe an alien's psychic pressure bringing a character to her knees, it feels entirely different than if you describe an ogre's maul knocking her to the ground, even though their mechanical effect may be the same. Ongoing Damage could represent a bleeding wound, being on fire, poison, or any number of things. An Immobilized character could be stuck because of ice, fear, plants, stone, ropes, tasing, etc. You must describe the enemy attacks so that the players understand what is happening to their character. This makes things seem more real and inspires cool improvisations.

Fudging the Numbers

If you made a calculation error or if a monster is actually broken—as in, the powers literally do not work or make no sense—then you can change it in the middle of combat. If the monster is just a bit too powerful or too weak, don't try to fix it mid-combat. When you use the rules for Winning and Losing (page 92) the game progresses in interesting ways whether the characters win easily or lose badly, so it's not vital that you get the balance right every single time. Don't lie about a monster's HP or about the dice rolls to make things more dramatic—it takes away from the players' tactical choices if you try to force the combat to go a certain way. If the combat is going on too long and you need to wrap up, but the monsters have too much HP to finish up quickly, either come up with some reason for the monsters to give up or run away, or be honest and tell your players that you've had enough and you want to wrap up. You can find rules for mopping up in the Options and Variants section on page 169.

Allies: Relationships, Pets, and Retainers

There are several ways to handle the players' having allies in combat. The least intrusive is to have them act like an item—give a passive bonus or grant an Encounter Power suitable to their purpose. A healing ally might have an Encounter Power (usable by any of the players) that heals the player who uses it.

The next level of complexity is to have a token on the board that is controlled jointly by one or more of the players. It has Initiative and Hit Points and a single At-Will Power. If the players are finding that they desperately need a certain Role filled, this can help—the At-Will Power might be healing or damage or whatever is required.

The highest level of intrusiveness is to have a full-on character. Do not use this to have a GM-controlled player character; all that does is slow down combat and take away the focus from the other players. As a GM, you have enough on your hands during combat already. What this sort of character can be useful for is to fill out a party with small numbers. If there are only two players, combat is very unpredictable and luck-dependent, as a single bad round or lucky critical hit can mean the difference between success and failure. This is not necessarily a bad thing! It makes combat scary and dangerous and fast, and that might be just what you were looking for. However, if you desire more predictable outcomes, then each player could also control a “Retainer.” A Retainer has a Class and a Role and Feats, but lacks the out-of-combat Skills, Tricks, and Complications of a full player character. Using Retainers certainly helps make combat less “swingly,” but it comes at the expense of speed—doubling the number of combatants nearly doubles combat length.

Keywording Attacks

It can be useful to give attacks (both the players' and their enemies') keywords, like “Loud” or “Explosive” or “Fire” for the purposes of figuring out what sorts of effects they have outside of the listed mechanical effects. A “Loud” attack attracts attention, an “Explosive” one destroys or reduces enemy cover but may also destroy valuable items, an attack with the “Fire” keyword sets the dry forest alight where the same power with a different flavor would not, and an attack with the “Psychic” keyword cannot work at all against a mindless machine. These keywords depend entirely on the trappings the players and GM assign to their powers and not at all on the actual mechanics. It's important to give these trappings actual in-game effects so that players know that they can use these same abilities out of combat or in creative ways in combat, and keywords can help with that. See also the section on damage types on page 170.

Player chores

As GM, you have more than enough to keep track of in combat, so offload some of the work onto the more experienced players. One player can be in charge of tracking Initiative and warning people when their turn is coming up. Another player can be in charge of tracking everyone's Strikes—something new players often lose track of.



Combat and Monster Design

These are basic guidelines that you can follow to get fun combats and monsters. As you grow in experience you may find yourself going outside these guidelines more often to come up with encounters that feel very different. That is exactly as intended—this section just gives you the baseline from which you may deviate.

Combat Design

A typical, fairly easy combat has 1 Standard Monster per player up to 4 players (not including the GM). For 5 players, increase the damage of all Encounter Powers by 1 and the GM gets one Action Point to spend on any monster to give it one action of any kind on its turn. For 6 players, increase **all** monster powers' damage by 1 and the GM gets two Action Points.

The time a combat takes is very nearly proportional to the total amount of enemy HP the players need to eliminate. So to increase difficulty over the baseline without increasing the time spent in combat, give monsters more potent damage-boosting abilities, more multi-attacks, or add more Stooges (see below) instead of adding more monsters.

Miss Triggers

Before combat, think of a couple of cool scenario Miss Triggers to use and note them down. You can use these when the players miss an attack instead of using the target monster's Miss Trigger. These can be narrations to show future trouble, small or large changes to the terrain of the combat, or new problems to deal with.

Don't plan on using Miss Triggers to bring in reinforcements. You cannot predict when the players will miss. If you want reinforcements to be on the way, simply have them come in on a specific round. You could, however, use a Miss Trigger in round 1 to inform the players of the trouble arriving in round 3.

Example: "She deflects your blow, but in the process falls against the control panel. You begin to hear a distant alarm and a deep rumbling coming through the walls. What just happened?"

Example: "Your shot ricochets into the gas tank and the spray connects with the small fire, causing the whole thing to rupture. All of these squares over here are now aflame."

Example: "The mech tears down the billboard and uses it to block your attack before dropping it over here. This area is now Difficult Terrain from the wreckage."

Example: "You hear footsteps running down the hall behind you. Your prisoner must have gotten free of his ropes."

Example: "Your shot ricochets into the gas tank and the leak starts seeping towards the small fire. If they connect, the whole thing will blow and take the sealed files with it."

Terrain

Terrain is a key part of fights in this game. It's okay to have some fights in an open field or an empty room, but it's almost always the case that having more interesting terrain makes for a more interesting fight. Terrain can be used to change the tactical situation, to add danger to a fight, to add short-term objectives, and to increase the potential for improvisation.

The simplest kinds of terrain are things like walls and doors, pillars and cliffs—things that decide the shape of the battlefield and where players can go. These can create choke points or multiple routes, protect ranged units, block lines of sight, or give surprises and places to hide. These are your basic building blocks when you make your map. They may be humble, but don't overlook them—how you use these pieces can vastly alter the course of a combat.

Slightly more subtle than simple walls are those things classified as Difficult Terrain—broken ground, piles of bones, chest-deep water. Anything that slows down a character's movement falls into this category. Each square of Difficult Terrain takes two squares (or more) of movement to enter. If you can only shift one square, you can't shift into Difficult Terrain unless you spend two actions

to shift twice. A few squares of Difficult Terrain scattered around is pretty much useless, but a swath of it can force a player to take an extra round to cross the space or spend a round out of cover and vulnerable. Also consider enemies that are not limited by the same terrain as the players. An ambush by frog-kin in the swamp becomes much more dangerous when the players can't simply leap off the path into the bog at top speed and go frog-hunting.

Slopes are like Difficult Terrain, but only in one direction. Moving up the slope costs 2 squares (or more) of movement for each square you move up, while requiring no extra effort to descend. A particularly steep slope might require a Skill check to climb, might be descended very quickly by sliding down, and anyone caught on the slope has a hard time fighting (Disadvantage to attacks).

Firmly unsubtle is damaging terrain. Fires, pools of water electrified by downed power lines, lava flows, cliffs, caltrops, or even land mines are all examples of damaging terrain. Some are much more damaging than others. They all act in generally the same way, though. When you enter their square, you take some amount of damage. If you are forced into their square by Forced Movement, you get a chance to avoid it. Make a Saving Throw. If you succeed, you fall Prone in the last safe square before the damaging terrain and the Forced Movement ends—you managed to cling to something or kill your momentum with a slide. This simple rule can be less simple to adjudicate in practice. What if your character is Dominated and the player controlling your action decides that you throw yourself off a cliff? That really depends on the nature of the domination, but generally I would grant a Saving Throw for anything that would result in more than 3 points of damage. It requires a very strong form of domination to force somebody into a clearly suicidal act. Do zones created by players' powers count as damaging terrain? You're free to decide either way in your game, but I say yes it counts: I see no reason why the fire created by an incendiary grenade should be different from any other fire.

Last, there are dynamic pieces of terrain, things that players and/or monsters interact with. Locked doors, security cameras, magic portals, explosives, and much more. One of the big advantages of roleplaying games is that everything is interactive. If a player wants to interact with the terrain in a way that the GM didn't plan for, it's up to the GM to come up with a ruling on the spot about how that interaction should work. Remember your agenda as GM—make your decision based on fairness and fitting the tone, without regard to either beating or going easy on the players. With that in mind, it also makes sense while designing terrain to pre-plan how some of it works. If the players need to reach a certain point on the map but there's a locked door in the way, just give a few seconds thought to what it looks like. Can the players kick it down, or is it reinforced? How strong is the lock? Now that you've answered those basic questions, when it comes time to describe the door to the players you can do so in a way that informs them of everything you want them to know. If it's reinforced, that is likely immediately visible. The only limit on these types of objects is your imagination and you should come up with whatever suits you. High ground can give increased accuracy to shooters, some terrain can be destroyed by certain types of attacks, a narrow passage might give Advantage to attackers as there is nowhere to dodge. As you start thinking of more complicated examples, like

a magical vortex that randomly slides any character that gets too close, then you've strayed into the Traps section which deals with those sorts of terrain that have reactions.

Falling

How damaging a fall should be depends a lot on the tone and setting of the game. You can judge heights on an ad-hoc basis, but you should be consistent. You can use a simple system or a complex one. A simple system is like "when you fall, take 1 damage for each meter over 3," while a complex one might say "Divide the number of feet fallen by 10, round down then square the result. Roll a Saving Throw—if you fail, take double that number in damage. If you succeed, just take that number without doubling." Regardless of system, if you take damage from falling then you land Prone.

Environment

On a similar note, the environment can have a mechanical effect. Fighting in a septic area might give the Sick Condition to any character who gets Bloodied in combat. This differs from terrain in that it affects the entire battlefield. You can also use this to represent things like low light. If everybody is fighting under the trees in the dim starlight then everyone is affected equally. Giving all attacks Disadvantage would just slow the fight down. Instead, give some advantage to actions that would benefit from the situation. For example, you might decide that in order to Hide you simply need to make a Skill Roll and end your turn in Full Cover from all enemies because of the deep shadows.

Traps

When I talk about traps, I'm talking about anything dangerous on the battlefield that is less than a monster but more than simple damaging terrain. Traps are built and act a lot like monsters, with some key restrictions. They don't roll Initiative and they don't take a turn, nor do they make attacks. Typically, they have two types of effects: regular attacks and triggered actions. Regular attacks happen at the end of each round and can affect one creature, all creatures in a certain area, or even everyone. Triggered actions happen when certain conditions are met.

While traps never make attacks, that doesn't mean they always hit their target: when appropriate, the target might get a Saving Throw. This distinction ensures that the focus is on the player trying to dodge the trap, not on the inanimate object's "attempt" to hit. It allows the player dodging to have Advantage or Disadvantage. It also means that traps never get critical hits. If you want your trap to be able to score critical hits, just double the damage when the target rolls a 1 on their Saving Throw. For more examples, see the Sample Monsters and Traps chapter.

Example: A sentry gun shoots one intruder at the end of each round. This is a regular attack.

Example: A hidden pressure plate causes the room to start flooding when anyone steps on it. This is a triggered action.

Example: A magical orb causes two randomly selected creatures to switch places at the end of each round. This is a regular attack.

Traps come in all shapes and sizes, from minor annoyances to overwhelming threats. Outside of combat, traps don't need any special rules and there's no reason to use the Tactical Combat rules just to get around a trap. See exploration on page 68.

Lairs

You can design a small dungeon as one combat with multiple enemy groups that can be faced separately—just give the players a free use of Rally in between each group they encounter. The extra Rallies can keep them going in terms of Hit Points and Encounter Powers so they'll be able to face multiple groups without resting and without it becoming a slog with just their At-Wills. Obviously an area with this sort of design takes longer than a single simple combat would to play through, but it can be a good challenge and a lot of fun if you're into the Tactical Combat part of the game.

Long Days and Short Days

There are two ways to challenge your players. First, you can give them hard fights with ample time to recover in between. Second, you can give them moderately tough fights but put the pressure on so that they have trouble recovering from Conditions, wearing them down over time. When they don't have the time or opportunity to recover, then even easy fights can be tense because bad rolls or bad tactics can wind up making you Winded, making the next fight harder and starting a snowball effect. Giving players a series of hard fights with no recovery time will lead almost surely to their defeat, while giving them easy fights and easy access to recovery takes away any challenge.

Level Gaps

When you are new to the game, it is expected that you will put the players against monsters of equal level. As you get more experienced, you might want to change things up and have the players fight something really hard, and substantially higher level than they are. Increasing the level gap does shift the probabilities, but combats in *Strike!* are short enough that even with a big gap, a string of bad rolls can easily sink either side's chances. A combat 5 levels above the players is not necessarily going to be easy for the bad guys. About 5% of the time, the enemies are going to roll so badly in the first few rounds that the players are the ones who will have an easy time of it! Doing large amounts of damage when you hit doesn't help if you consistently miss.

Once you have some experience with combat, you are free to experiment, safe in the knowledge that even if you make a fight too hard and the players lose badly, it just means that the story twists.



Sample Monsters

What follows is a list of sample monsters. They are made to be used at any even-numbered level. The way to use them is as follows: they are designed for a base of level 2, and any extra traits or bonuses they get at higher levels are indicated. For example, the Leader's traits are "**Inspirational Leader**" and "**(L4 or 8) Helpful Leader**," so it has the Inspirational Leader trait when used at any level and has the Helpful Leader trait when used at levels 4 or 8. Some powers are only available at certain levels and some powers change at higher levels. The HP is listed as "X" — it is 6 plus 2 times the monster's level. All of these are made to be modified and the levels are included as a guideline to creating a level-appropriate challenge. Not every challenge needs to be level-appropriate, and using these examples you can come up with fights that are harder or easier than that baseline.

The monsters included here will let you make a challenge anywhere from level 2 to 12 by putting in the fight an equal number of monsters and play characters of roughly equal level. If you are looking for an odd numbered level, you can use monsters of one level above or below, or a mix of both: a one-level difference is not very significant. For easier challenges, just let the players outnumber the monsters. For tougher, increase the level of the monsters without increasing the number. Want the monsters to outnumber the players? Keep reading.

Converting Down

You can convert the monsters that follow here into Goons or Stooges if you want the monsters to outnumber the players without making the fights take forever or become impossible.

Goons are worth half of a Standard Monster each. Goons are intended to be run more simply than Standard Monsters and with less to keep track of. Instead of tracking HP, they are simply Taken Out after any two hits, or after one strong hit. They have an HP threshold, and if the first damage they take does more than that value, they are Taken Out. Otherwise, they are considered Bloodied and are Taken Out the next time they take damage regardless of the amount. To convert any of the following monsters into Goons, simply eliminate their Encounter Powers and replace their HP with a threshold of 4 for levels 1-4 or 5 at level 5 and up.

Stooges are even simpler and more numerous than Goons. In place of a Standard Monster, you can use four Stooges (increase to five at level 4, or six at level 7). Any instance of damage is enough to take them out. To convert any of the following monsters into Stooges:

- Reduce their HP to 1. They automatically fail all Saving Throws and only deal 1 damage on Opportunities.
- Eliminate their Encounter Powers.
- Eliminate their Miss Trigger.
- Reduce the damage by 1 on all their attacks. Also reduce any damage in the effect line of any attack by 1.

For example, instead of using three Standard Monsters, you could equivalently use one standard enemy, two Goons, and four Stooges. Or you could use six Goons or twelve Stooges. Would these combinations be precisely equally difficult? No. Some player characters are better at dealing with Goons and Stooges than others. Blasters thrive with large numbers of weaker enemies, for instance.

Converting Up

On the other hand, sometimes you want to increase the power of a monster to represent a big bad tough thing. You want an Elite, or maybe even a Champion.

Elites are worth two Standard Monsters. To convert any of the following monsters to an Elite:

- Give it all the traits and powers of a Standard Monster at double its level.
- Double its HP.
- Increase the damage on all of its attacks by one.
- Give it the following trait:

Elite: While you are not Bloodied, you automatically succeed on all Saving Throws. While Bloodied, you take two consecutive turns on your Initiative count.

Champions are worth four Standard Monsters and are the kind of super-fast super-tough opponent that can take on a whole group of players by themselves. To convert any of these monsters into a Champion:

- Give it all the traits and powers of a Standard Monster at double its level.
- Quadruple its HP (triple if you only have three players)
- Increase the damage on all of its attacks by one
- Give it the following trait:

Champion: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws.

Each of these Initiative counts is a full turn for you. So if a Status terminates at the end of your next turn, you only suffer on one of your Initiative counts.

This method will give you Elites or Champions up to level 6. For increasing their power beyond that level, see page 163 for more traits and abilities you can add.

Monster Strength is Public

Whether a monster is a Stooge, Goon, Standard Monster, Elite, or Champion is something you should tell the players when they see it. That information carries important information that they ought to know.

Generalists

The first sample monsters are the Generalists. You can use any number of these and with a little effort you can reskin them to match any number of monsters. All of these gain the following traits at level 6 and up:

Extra Damage: +1 damage to all attacks.

Recharge: When you roll a 5 or 6 on a single-target attack or a 6 on a multi-target attack, you recharge one Encounter Power.

At levels 10 and 12, they are the same as levels 6 and 8, but replace “Extra Damage” with the following:

Super Damage: +2 damage to all attacks.

Blaster	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Friendly Blaster: You may omit one ally from an area attack.			
Damage on a Miss: When you miss, the target takes 1 damage anyway.			
(L4 or 8) Deadly Blaster: You may add one enemy to an area attack if it is adjacent to the area.			
⚡ Blast	At-Will	⚙ 1 ☞ 10	💧 1
Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			
⚡ Make Space	At-Will	⚙ 2	💧 1
Effect: Push target 3 squares.			
⚡ Big Blast	Encounter	⚙ 3 ☞ 10	💧 2
Effect: Target is knocked Prone and takes Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, create a 3x3 zone including the enemy, lasting until the end of your next turn. Any creature except you that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 1 damage.			

Crowd Control	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Precision Blaster: You may omit all allies from an area attack.			
Effect on a Miss (L4+): When you miss, apply the Effect line anyway.			
(L8) Deadly Blaster: You may add one enemy to an area attack if it is adjacent to the area.			
⚡ Slowdown	At-Will	⚙ 2 ☞ 10	💧 1
Effect: Target is Immobilized until the end of its next turn. (L6+; save ends).			
⚡ Self-Preservation	At-Will	⚙ 2	💧 1
Effect: Target is Weakened until the end of its next turn. (L6+; save ends).			
⚡ Flash	Encounter	⚙ 3 ☞ 10	💧 2
Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, create a 3x3 zone including the enemy, lasting until the end of your next turn. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there is Slowed (save ends).			

Striker	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Slippery: Shift 2 extra squares whenever you shift.			
(L4 or 8) Dodge: Whenever you grant one or more Opportunities, roll a Saving Throw to avoid the damage and effects of one of them (you choose which).			
⚡ Striking Strike	At-Will	☞	💧 2
Effect: 2 extra damage.			
⚡ Mobile Strike	At-Will	☞	💧 2
Special: No effect line, but you may shift 1 square before or after the attack.			
⚡ Knockdown	Encounter	☞	💧 3
Effect: Target is knocked Prone and grants you an Opportunity if it stands up during or before its next turn.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, you may shift 1 square.			

Sniper	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Slippery: Shift 2 extra squares whenever you shift.			
⚡ Shoot	At-Will	☞ 10	💧 2
Effect: 2 extra damage.			
⚡ Pin Down	At-Will	☞ 10	💧 2
Effect: Target takes 3 damage if it moves before the end of its next turn.			
⚡ Crack Shot	Encounter		
Make an attack and ignore cover.			
⚡ Reflex Shot (L4 or 8)	Encounter	Reaction	
Trigger: An enemy leaves cover.			
Make a <i>Shoot</i> attack against it.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, you have advantage on your next attack against it before the end of your next turn.			

Defender	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Defender: Enemies are Marked whenever they are within reach.			
Opportunist: You may deal 1 extra damage (L4 or 8: 2 extra damage) when you deal damage on an Opportunity.			
(L4 or 8) Reach: You have Reach 2.			
⚡ Interposition	At-Will	☞	💧 2
Effect: One adjacent ally has cover from all attacks by the target until the start of your next turn or until the ally moves away from you.			
⚡ Watcher	At-Will	☞/☞ 5	💧 2
Effect: Target is Marked until the end of its next turn.			
⚡ Stop Sign	Encounter	Interrupt	
Trigger: An enemy attempts to leave a square adjacent to you.			
It does not move and it loses the action it spent.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, you have cover against all attacks until the start of your next turn.			

Brawler ♥ X 1x1 ⚔6

Opportunist: You may deal 1 extra damage when you deal damage on an Opportunity.

Sticky: When an enemy moves adjacent to you, it loses any remaining squares of movement.

(L4 or 8) Damaging aura: Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to you takes 1 damage.

⚔ **Multi-attack** At-Will ⚙ 1 💧 1

Effect: 1 damage and target is Slowed until the end of its next turn.

⚔ **Come Here** At-Will 🏹 5 💧 2

Effect: Pull target adjacent.

⚔ **Sweep-Kick** Encounter ⚙ 1 💧 2

Effect: Target is knocked Prone.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with a melee attack, deal it 2 damage.

Leader ♥ X 1x1 ⚔6

Inspirational Leader: Each ally regains 1 HP when they start their turns.

(L4 or 8) Helpful Leader: Allies have Advantage on their Saving Throws.

⚔ **Inspiring Attack** At-Will ⚡/🏹 5 💧 2

Effect: One ally regains 2 HP (or a damaged Goon recovers).

⚔ **Command** At-Will

One ally makes an attack.

○ **Revive** Encounter Free Action

One ally that was Taken Out rejoins the fight with 1 HP.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you, you or one ally may move your speed or make a Saving Throw.

Grappler ♥ X 1x1 ⚔6

Stable Footing: Whenever you would be knocked Prone, make a Saving Throw to avoid it. Reduce Forced Movement by 1.

Abductor: You may move normally while Grabbing enemies. Drag them along with you.

(L4 or 8) Wrestler: You have Advantage on escape rolls. Enemies have Disadvantage on rolls to escape you.

⚔ **Grab** At-Will ⚡ 💧 2

Effect: Target is Grabbed. (L6+: and Restrained.)

⚔ **Crush** At-Will

Deal 3 damage to each Grabbed enemy.

⚡ **Human Shield** Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: You are hit by an attack.

One creature you have Grabbed is hit instead.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you, you may Grab it if it is adjacent, or move your speed towards it if it is not.

Specialists

These monsters are a bit more complex than the generalists, and it usually doesn't make sense to have a combat full of one kind. More likely, you would have a combat with some generalists and one or two specialists. At levels 10 and 12, all of these are the same as their level 6 and 8 counterparts, but with the following traits:

Extra Damage: +1 damage to all attacks.

Recharge: When you roll a 5 or 6 on a single-target attack or a 6 on a multi-target attack, you recharge one Encounter Power.

Drainer ♥ X 1x1 ⚔6

Leech: When you hit with an attack, regain HP equal to the damage you deal.

(L4 or 8) Find Weakness: Once you have regained HP from an enemy with *Leech*, you have Advantage on attacks against that enemy.

(L6+) Life Bond: When you roll a 5 or 6 on an attack and hit, the target takes Ongoing 2 Damage until you are Taken Out. Each time it takes this damage, you regain 2 HP.

⚔ **Draw in** At-Will 🏹 10 💧 2

Effect: Target must immediately move its speed towards you or become Dazed until the end of its next turn.

⚔ **Enervate** At-Will ⚡ 💧 2

Effect: Target is Weakened until the end of its next turn.

⚔ **Co-opt** Encounter ⚡ 💧 3

Effect: Target makes a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Dominated until the end of its next turn. Succeed or fail, when it is Taken Out, it stands up with 4 HP and is Dominated until the end of the encounter.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you, it takes a Strike.

Controller ♥ X 1x1 ⚔6

(L4 or 8) No Exit: When you hit with an attack, the target is Harried until the end of its next turn.

⚔ **Entangle** At-Will 🏹 10 💧 2

Effect: Target is Immobilized (L6+: Restrained) (save ends).

⚔ **Reposition** At-Will 🏹 10 💧 2

Effect: Slide the target 3 squares. Target is Slowed (L6+: Immobilized) until the end of its next turn.

⚔ **Stupefy** Encounter 🏹 10 💧 3

Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Blinded until the end of its next turn. If it succeeds, it is Dazed instead.

⚡ **No Dice (L4 or 8)** Encounter Reaction

Trigger: an enemy succeeds at a Saving Throw.

They must reroll it.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you, it is Weakened until the end of its next turn.

Brute	♥ X	2x2	≡ 6
Strength: When you are Slowed, your speed is 4, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 2. When Grabbed, you can move freely, dragging the grabber with you unless it chooses to let go.			
Heavy: You cannot be thrown, and you reduce Forced Movement by 1.			
(L4+) Massive: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws.			
(L4 or 6) Protective Shell: Your attackers do not gain Advantage by flanking you.			
(L8) Damage Resist: Resist 1.			
✂ Bodyslam	At-Will	↗	♠ 2
Effect: Target is thrown 3 squares. (L6: and falls Prone).			
✂ Grab	At-Will	↗	♠ 2
Effect: Target is Grabbed.			
✂ Living Missile	Encounter	↗	♠ 3
Effect: Target is thrown up to 5 squares into an enemy. Both creatures take 2 damage.			
Special: If target is Grabbed or is willing, you may forgo the attack and simply apply the damage and this effect.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, regain 2 HP.			

Charger	♥ X	1x1	≡6
Always Charging: You can use any melee attack at the end of a Charge.			
Defensive Movement: Resist 1 damage from Opportunities.			
(L4 or 8) Unstoppable Charge: While Charging, you can move through enemy spaces. They must choose to shift out of your way or fall Prone.			
(L4 or 8) Swift Charge: Increase your speed by 4 while Charging.			
(L6+) En Passant: While Charging, deal 2 damage to any adjacent enemy to which you grant an Opportunity.			
✂ Rush	At-Will	↗	♠ 2
Effect: Deal damage equal to one third the number of squares you Charged to make this attack (round up).			
✂ Plow	At-Will	↗	♠ 2
Effect: Push the target the number of squares you Charged to make this attack, up to a maximum of 5. If you would exceed that maximum, knock the target Prone as well.			
✂ Bouncing Charge	Encounter		
Charge and make a <i>Plow</i> attack, then Charge and make a <i>Rush</i> attack against a different target.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy within your speed misses you with a ranged attack, Charge it.			

Sneak	♥ X	1x1	≡8
Stealthy: You need not be out of sight for a full round to become Hidden. It is enough that you take a Move Action in which you begin and end the move out of sight.			
(L6+) Feint Often: Your Feint power becomes At-Will.			
(L8) Knockout Blow: When your attack brings an enemy to 0 HP or below, it is Taken Out.			
✂ Sneak Attack	At-Will	↗/↘ 5	♠ 2
Effect: 3 damage if you were Hidden from the target at any time during this turn.			
✂ Slip Away	At-Will	↗	♠ 2
Effect: Move your speed without granting the target an Opportunity.			
⚡ Feint	Encounter	Reaction	
Trigger: You miss with an attack.			
You have Advantage on your next attack against that target before the end of your next turn.			
✂ Shadow Walk (L4+)	Encounter		
Turn Invisible. You remain Invisible until the end of your next turn or until you attack.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, you may move your speed without granting that enemy an Opportunity.			

Heckler	♥ X	1x1	≡ 6
Opportunist: You may deal 1 extra damage (L6+: 2 extra damage) when you deal damage on an Opportunity.			
Aura of Rage: Any enemy that leaves a square adjacent to you must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it loses all its actions for the rest of its turn.			
(L4 or 8) Lead Foe: You have Advantage on attacks against enemies that are Slowed or Marked by you, or that Frenzied on their last turn.			
(L6+) Can't Let It Go: When you hit with an attack, your target is Slowed until the end of its next turn.			
✂ Enrage	At-Will	↘ 5	♠ 2
Effect: Target must run its speed directly towards you immediately. (L6+: and loses its Move Action on its next turn.)			
✂ Shaky Legs	At-Will	↗/↘ 5	♠ 2
Effect: Target is Slowed (save ends).			
✂ Inspire Frenzy	Encounter	⚙ 5	♠ 2
Effect: Target is Frenzied on its next turn.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, whenever it attacks any creature other than you in the future, it must succeed on a Saving Throw or else lose its action. This effect ends once it succeeds at such a roll.			

Horror	♥ X	1x1	⚡6
Opportunist: You may deal 1 extra damage (L6+: 2 extra damage) when you deal damage on an Opportunity.			
Aura of Fear: Any enemy that enters a square adjacent to you must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it loses all its actions for the rest of its turn.			
(L4 or 8) Sense Fear: You have Advantage on attacks against enemies that are Distracted or Harried, or that Panicked on their last turn.			
(L6+) No Exit: When you hit with an attack, your target is Harried until the end of its next turn.			
⚡ Strike Fear	At-Will	⚡	♣ 2
Effect: Target must run its speed directly away from you immediately. (L6+: and loses its Move Action on its next turn.)			
⚡ Gnawing Doubt	At-Will	⚡ 5	♣ 2
Effect: Target is Distracted (save ends).			
⚡ Inspire Panic	Encounter	⚡ 5	♣ 2
Effect: Target is Panicked on its next turn.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, whenever it attacks you in the future, it must succeed on a Saving Throw or else lose its action. This effect ends once it succeeds at such a roll.			

Packmaster	♥ X	1x1	⚡6
(L4+) Pack Tactics: When you start your turn, two Stooges may move.			
Summoner: When you start your turn, summon 2 Level 1 Stooges. They act immediately after your next turn (L6+: this turn).			
(L8)Pack Lord: Your Stooges' attacks deal 1 extra damage.			
⚡ Inspiring Strike	At-Will	⚡/⚡ 5	♣ 2
Effect: Two Stooges that were Taken Out revive and stand up.			
⚡ Cannon Fodder	At-Will	⚡/⚡ 5	♣ 2
Effect: Take Out up to 3 Stooges within 5 squares of the target. Deal 2 extra damage per Stooqe sacrificed.			
⚡ Loyalty	Encounter	Interrupt	
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack. The attack hits one of your adjacent Stooges instead.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you, one of your Stooges may attack the triggering enemy or move its speed towards it.			



Easy Reskinning

Reskinning any of these monsters is mostly a matter of narration, and maybe giving it an extra unique power, but there are also some common traits that help make the reskinning work. You can represent a swarm of small enemies using the mob trait. A monster might be incorporeal or flying or have some other special form of movement that can be represented by a trait. For a full list of traits, see the Monsters From Scratch section on page 161.

Mob: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob. Mobs also ignore or resist many Statuses and Effects due to the rule Fiction Takes Precedence (see page 91).

Incorporeal: Ignore all terrain. You may move through objects.

Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action. When you are Bloodied, you may no longer have the Flying Status.

Climber: You can move up to your speed while climbing.

Leaper: As a part of your movement you may leap in a straight line over creatures and obstacles within reason. This allows you to avoid granting Opportunities in the middle of your movement but not when you leave the first square or land in the last.

Burrower: Acts much like leap, but you are underground during the movement and may also choose to stay underground to end your move.



Dr. Frankensteins' Monsters

These are monsters designed all or partially by Kickstarter backers. Some use typed damage as described on page 170.

Necrotic Wasps

by Bardakus Maximus

These thumb-sized parasitic wasps climb inside their still-living prey to lay eggs. As the eggs develop into wasp young, the poor beast playing host is driven mad. If the young are allowed to mature, then when the host body is killed or badly damaged, a swarm of new wasps will emerge. Intense heat can also cause the swarm to emerge early. This fight could begin with what seems to be a pack of rabid stray dogs, but the rabies turns out to be infestation.

Take any Standard Monster of level at most 5 and give it the following trait. Its new level is equal to its old level plus one, with a minimum of three.

Infested: When Bloodied, the creature is instead Taken Out and a Necrotic Wasp Swarm emerges. When the creature takes fire type damage, it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is immediately Taken Out and the wasps emerge.

Necrotic Wasp Swarm, Level 2 ♥ 10 3x3 ⚔ 6

Delayed Initiative: The Wasp Swarm acts on the same Initiative count as when it emerged. It does not act immediately when it emerges, but must wait one round.

Mob: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob.

Short Reach: You have Reach 0. That is, you must be in someone's space to attack.

Natural Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action.

⚔ **Sting** At-Will ⚙ 0 ♠ 1

Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends. No save while in the swarm).

⚔ **Distraction** At-Will ⚙ 0 ♠ 1

Effect: Target is Distracted until it gets out of the swarm.

⚔ **Swarm the face** Encounter ⚙ 0 ♠ 2

Effect: Target is Blinded until it gets out of the swarm.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with a melee attack, it takes a Strike and is Parasitized. This infestation has no ill effects at first, but requires medical treatment within a week or else it is fatal.



Plague Thrower

by Jim Jacobson

The Plague Thrower's plague requires players to move around in a different way than usual. An encounter with one Plague Thrower will likely see players fairly easily shrugging off the infection, so multiple plague throwers are recommended for synergy.

Plague Thrower, Level 2 ♥ 10 1x1 ⚔ 6

Immune: The Plague Thrower counts as Infected (see the *Plague Toss* power below), but does not suffer the penalty.

⚔ **Plague Toss** At-Will ⚙ 1 ⚔ 10 ♠ 1

Effect: Target is Infected.

While Infected, you are Weakened and have Ongoing 1 Damage. Each time you take the Ongoing Damage, its amount increases by 1. Any creature that starts its turn next to an Infected creature becomes Infected. Any Infected creature that starts its turn more than 5 squares away from the nearest Infected creature loses the Infected Status.

⚔ **Make Space** At-Will ⚙ 2 ♠ 1

Effect: Target is Infected. Slide target 2 squares.

⚔ **Plague Blast** Encounter ⚙ 5 ♠ 2

Special: Targets only Infected creatures.

Effect: 3 damage.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an Infected enemy misses you, it takes its Ongoing Damage immediately.

Zohar the Red, Burning Skeletal Mage

by PublicOpinion

Zohar is a Leader, and his most dangerous ability is greatly enhancing all the various other enemies in the fight. He is not just resistant to fire but actively benefits from being attacked with fire. When he dies, he spawns another squad of angry skeletons in mourning for their beloved boss.

Zohar the Red, Level 4 Elite	♥ 28	1x1	≡ 6
Elite: While you are not Bloodied, you automatically succeed on all Saving Throws. While Bloodied, you take two consecutive turns on your Initiative count.			
Mourning Skeletons: When you are Taken Out, a level 1 Goon Mob of Skeletons rises up in mourning.			
Aggressive Leader: Each ally adds 1 to the damage line of their attacks.			
Hot Blooded: You Resist 2 fire damage. When you take fire damage, even if you Resist it all, you gain an extra Attack Action on your next turn.			
✂ Flurry of Fiery Fists	At-Will	⚙ 1	♠ 2
Effect: 3 fire damage.			
✂ Command	At-Will		
Two allies make Basic Attacks.			
✂ Fiery Burst	Encounter	⚙ 1	♠ 3
Effect: Ongoing 3 Fire Damage (save ends) and shift 2 squares.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will		Reaction
When an enemy misses you with an attack, one of your allies may make a Basic Attack against it.			
Mob of Skeletons, Level 1 Goon	♥ 4 (Goon)	1x1	≡ 6
Mob: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob.			
Skeletal Strength: No non-area attack can Take Out the mob unless it was already Bloodied.			
✂ Multi-attack	At-Will	⚙ 1	♠ 1
Effect: 1 damage and target is Slowed until the end of its next turn.			
✂ Chattering Charge	At-Will	↘ 5	♠ 2
Effect: Shift adjacent to the target.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will		Reaction
When an enemy misses you with a melee attack, deal it 2 damage.			

Sand Razor

by Stubin Long

Sand Razors are large, aggressive creatures perfectly adapted as the apex predators of their desert homes. Classified as a form of wingless earth dragon, Sand Razors have claws well suited to burrowing through the sand and loose dirt of their hunting grounds, while remaining sharp enough to easily rend flesh and metal alike. The wounds caused by them have been known to bleed profusely, thereby further weakening their prey.

Sand Razors favor two primary tactics. The first is to use their mobility and ability to burrow to quickly strike at and retreat from isolated opponents and then let the blood loss weaken them before moving in for the kill. Their second tactic is to burst from the ground in the middle of a cluster of opponents, viciously striking out with tooth, tail, and claw at all within reach. Sand Razors have also been known to kick up sand and other debris in an attempt to blind their prey so that they might press their advantage or, more rarely, retreat. In the unlikely event a Sand Razor retreats, let it go—when wounded, the creatures go into a blood frenzy that greatly increases their attack speed.

Sand Razor, Level 8 Champion	♥ 88	1x1	≡ 10
Champion: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws. Each of these is a full turn for you.			
Strong Defense: You cannot be flanked, cannot be thrown, and reduce Forced Movement by 1.			
Burrowed Advantage: You may burrow under the ground when you move. When you start your turn burrowed, you have Advantage on your first attack this turn.			
Bloodied Rage: When you are Bloodied, gain an extra Attack Action on each of your turns.			
Long Reach: You have Reach 2.			
✂ Bleeding Strike	At-Will	↗ 2	♠ 3
Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			
✂ Bloody Dervish	At-Will	⚙ 2	♠ 2
Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			
✂ Sandstorm	Encounter	⚙ 2	♠ 3
Effect: Target is Blinded (save ends).			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will		Reaction
When an enemy misses you, if you are not underground you may burrow without granting Opportunities to the enemy who missed you.			

The Whisperer

by Nezbleu

The Whisperer is gifted with the original tongue of humankind, the primal language that penetrates deep into the primitive recesses of our mind.

The Whisperer is Invisible to all except the one it speaks to. As it speaks, it slowly disables the target.

The Whisperer, Level 5 ♥ 16 1x1 ⚔ 4

Invisibility: The Whisperer is Invisible to all except for creatures who are Reverting (see *Reversion* power below).

⚔ **Reversion** At-Will ⚔ 10 ♠ 2

Effect: Target is Reverting (see below) beginning at Stage 1, and unable to speak until the Whisperer is Taken Out.

As a creature reverts, it passes through stages. It makes a Saving Throw at the end of its turn. When it saves, it improves by one stage. When it is hit by this effect again, it worsens by one stage.

Stage 0: Nothing

Stage 1: Distracted

Stage 2: Dazed and cannot see anything except the Whisperer.

Stage 3: Panicked

Stage 4: Taken Out

⚔ **Command** At-Will ⚔ 10

Special: May only target Reverting enemies who are at Stage 1 or worse.

Target must immediately make an at-will attack of your choice against a target of your choice.

⚡ **Diversion** Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.

The attack hits one enemy within 2 squares instead.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy who is Reverting misses you, it worsens by one stage.

Hive Wheel

by Elkay

Hive Wheels are a pair of large wheels with an insect hive between them. These are more than simple insects, though: collectively, they have enough intelligence to build and operate the Hive Wheels to get around and perform the business of civilization, and to fight against their foes.

Hive Wheel, Level 2 Elite ♥ 20 1x1 ⚔ 8

Elite: While you are not Bloodied, you automatically succeed on all Saving Throws. While Bloodied, you take two consecutive turns on your Initiative count.

Roll Over: When you move, you may roll over any Prone creatures. When you do, they may make a Saving Throw to roll out of the way. If they fail, they take 3 damage.

Angry Swarm: While Bloodied, anyone who enters a square adjacent to you or starts its turn in one takes Ongoing 2 Damage.

⚔ **Swarm Attack** At-Will ⚔ 5 ♠ 3

Effect: Create a 3x3 zone centered on the target. Anyone who enters the zone or starts its turn there takes Ongoing 2 Damage.

⚔ **Push Over** At-Will ⚔ 3

Effect: Push the target 1 square and knock it Prone.

⚔ **Wheel Rampage** Encounter

Move your speed. During this movement, when you attempt to enter another creature's square, you first push it 1 square and knock it Prone.

⚡ **Lost Control** Encounter Interrupt

Trigger: You are Taken Out.

Make a Wheel Rampage attack, followed by a Swarm Attack before collapsing.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an adjacent enemy misses you with an attack, push it 1 square and knock it Prone.

Brain Parasite
by Chris Gallant

Facehuggers, headcrabs, and brainworms, oh my! Everyone loves a good parasite. This is a template that you can apply to other monsters to give them such a parasite. The parasite tries to jump to the players if it can. The creature you add this to has all of the following powers and traits in addition to its usual ones. Its Miss Trigger is added to the one below. It will be referred to as the host.

Outside of Combat, being Infected by a Brain Parasite might leave you comatose or might leave you under its command. The GM will say which, and you can use your Skills to figure out how to cure an Infected teammate. During Combat, Infected works as follows:

The first round you are Infected, nothing happens. The second round, you must make a Saving Throw when you start your turn and become Panicked that turn if you fail. The third round, you must make a Saving Throw when you start your turn and become Dominated (or Stunned if it leaves you comatose instead of under its command) for that turn if you fail. The fourth round and thereafter, you are Dominated (or Taken Out if you were Stunned).

Brain Parasite, +3 Levels		♥ +6
Transfer Attempt: Whenever the host hits with a melee attack, the target is Grabbed.		
Disregard for Life: While Bloodied, the host has Advantage on all attacks, but all attacks against it also have Advantage.		
⚡ Transfer Parasite	At-Will	🔪 ♀ 3
Special: Only targets creatures the host has Grabbed.		
Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Infected. (See above).		
⚡ Dead Host	Encounter	
Trigger: The host is Taken Out.		
The parasite runs free, acting on the same Initiative count as its former host. Its statblock is below. It may flee or try to find a new host.		
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction
When an enemy misses you with an attack, it becomes Harried (save ends).		

Hostless Parasite, Stooge	♥ 1	1x1	⚡8
🗡️ New Host	At-Will	🔪	💧 3
Effect: Target must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is Infected (see above).			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, you have Advantage on attacks against it.			

Spirit of Disco
by David Brandt

As with all monsters, there are many interesting and fun encounters to be had with the Spirit of Disco that do not take place within the confines of Tactical Combat. The Spirit can strike at any time and try to bring back The Scene, but it's most likely when the mood is right to evoke it. It is not a malicious spirit: it just wants people to dance! While it's around, a Disco playlist is recommended.

In Tactical Combat, the Spirit of Disco doesn't work like any other monster. It operates as a third party with its own goal separate from the goals of the two teams. Its goal is to get everyone on both teams dancing. This works best when played by an independent player: perhaps a guest or else a regular player whose usual character is not present. When everyone is dancing, The Scene comes back for a brief time and both sides lose themselves in the movement. Everyone wakes up later Winded and sweaty from all that dancing.

The Spirit of Disco rolls Initiative like anyone else, but does not have a physical form and cannot be attacked directly. It inflicts the Dancing Status. When you are Dancing, you cannot make attacks against others who also have the Dancing Status. It also means you are dancing while you fight! When you are Immobilized, Grabbed, or Restrained, the Dancing Status ends.

On its turn each round, the Spirit of Disco picks one creature. That creature is Dancing (save ends). Then the Spirit of Disco initiates one of the following dances:

The Electric Slide: The Spirit of Disco picks a direction. Everyone Dancing slides 3 squares in that direction. Anyone they bump into or end adjacent to is also Dancing (save ends) and also does the slide, possibly transferring the Status further.

The Bump Dance: The Spirit of Disco pushes each Dancing target 1 square. Any creatures now adjacent are Dancing (save ends), and get pushed 1 square from the initial target (the Spirit chooses the direction) and the dance keeps spreading in this way.

The Disco Point: On the count of three, each Dancing creature points to one creature who is not Dancing. Anyone pointed at in this way must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Dancing (save ends).

Disco Inferno: The Spirit designates a 7x7 area. All creatures in the vicinity are pulled until they are in that area. Nobody can leave the dance floor until the end of the Spirit's next turn.

YMCA: All creatures who were Taken Out stand up with 1 HP and are Dancing until the end of the encounter. The Spirit may only use this dance once per encounter.





Titans

Titans are built like Champions. They are Champions, but with an extra thing or two that makes them special. Their huge size can make it important for characters to target specific body parts, they can have multiple forms as their HP is reduced, and their sheer size allows them to drastically alter the nearby terrain. You can mix and match any of the following rules when you use Titans.

Targeting Body Parts

For most opponents, which part of their body you hit is simply up to your narration. Titans are so huge that your position determines which parts you can even target. Titans are thus broken down into sections. A dragon might have the sections: left claw, right claw, body and hind legs, wings, head, and tail.

Based on the level of the monster, you have an HP total along with an HP threshold for each body part. HP thresholds are typically equal to the HP of a Standard Monster, $6 + 2$ per level. As noted above, the HP total should be the same as a Champion, $24 + 8$ per level. When designing a fight with a Titan, the main questions you must answer for each body part are:

- Does the damage to this body part count towards the total? Is it a weak point?
- What happens when the damage to that part exceeds its threshold?

Based on your answer to the first question, damage to that body part will either contribute, not contribute, or count for double towards reducing the monster's HP total. You might make a monster where every area of the body is linked to its total HP, or you might make a monster that only takes damage when attacked at one specific weak point. Monsters with weak points have some way of protecting that weak point—a reaction they can use to block the weak point is a good way to go about this, limited to once per round or under certain conditions or linked to a body part that must be eliminated.

The answer to the second question could be one of:

- The body part is destroyed/disabled. The monster loses an ability or takes a penalty for the duration of the fight.
- The monster takes a temporary penalty.
- A weak point is exposed.
- The monster changes tactics.
- Any combination of the above.

If you do too much damage to a dragon's wings, it won't be able to fly. If you do enough damage to its head, it might be stunned for a turn. If you do that much damage to its body and legs, perhaps you exposed a weak point and the dragon must start fighting more defensively, blowing a ring of fire around itself to keep you away from the exposed flesh.

If you are building monsters the "precise way," traits that a Titan has that are lost when a body part is eliminated are discounted by half. However, for Titans even more than most monsters, don't feel limited by a points budget that stops you from giving it cool parts with exciting abilities.

Multiple Forms

When you make a Titan with multiple forms, each form should have the Hit Points of an Elite, $12 + 4$ per level, although it will be built like a Champion otherwise. When it changes form, the Titan might have a few new abilities, or it might be a wholly different fight. After the second change of form, give each player a free use of Rally. This keeps the combat from turning into a slog as all the players' best powers are used up and the monster still has lots of HP. The Titan is considered Bloodied only while it is in its final form. If combining this with Targeting Body Parts, the $12 + 4$ per level acts like its total HP, and different forms can have different weak points.

How many forms you use is up to you and up to how long you want the fight to go. Two or three forms should result in a fairly typical fight in terms of length. More forms means a longer fight, obviously. If you are considering having the fight continue for five forms or more, give the players a free use of Rally after every second form change.

Alternating Forms

Another way to handle multiple forms is to have the Titan alternate forms each round instead of changing when it is hurt badly enough. In odd numbered rounds, it fights normally, but in even numbered rounds it becomes impossible or difficult to attack and uses a huge power or combination of powers that force the players to use their turn in some other way.

Terrain Alteration

Once each round, a Titan may use a special terrain-altering power. Maybe it sprays out a slick of hot oil that can cause you to slip if you walk on it, maybe it re-arranges the floating platforms in its inner sanctum, or maybe it tears down a wall and hurls a giant chunk of masonry. If this power is basically an attack, then it can use the power on one of its turns. If the power is indirect or mostly for show, it may use the power in addition to its usual turns. Terrain Alteration and Alternating Forms go well together.

Moving Around

Representing huge Titans can be tricky. Is your monster a 4x4 giant, or a titanic robot that takes up half the map? You might have a mini that works for the former, but for the latter you need to get creative. Using other toys or models is a fun option, Lego is great if you've got it, or you could be minimalist and throw down a few tokens and use your imagination for what they represent.

Moving and turning something big or that has a non-square base isn't really covered by the rules, though, so what should you do? Just make it up. That seems very imprecise, but the key idea here is that these gigantic monsters are literally on a different level from the characters. That crate you're hiding behind? For you, it provides cover. For the Titan, it's as much of an obstacle as an origami box. So when the monster moves, you can spend its Move Action, describe how it moves, and then just move the token(s) or figure(s) in whatever way that makes the most sense based on what you just described. That movement may still grant Opportunities, and the Titan should have a Speed so you can't just dash all around the map with a single move (unless that's one of the Titan's traits). You are still following the intent of the rules, but it's best not to get bogged down in the details of how many squares of movement it should take to rotate a quarter-turn while crushing an outhouse. Titans are huge and cinematic and play by a different set of rules in the fiction, so it makes sense that they can ignore some of the game rules, too.

Judging Levels

It is harder to judge what level a Titan should be than it is for other monsters, especially when they have multiple forms. Don't worry too much about the levels. If you want to use a Titan at a different level, simply adjust the HP and damage accordingly.

Sample Titans

Sand Angler

The Sand Angler is an example of a Titan with alternating forms. On odd numbered rounds, the Sand Angler lurks beneath the sand and attempts to swallow enemies from below. On its first Initiative count of 7, it creates a 9x9 zone on the map. Describe this sand funnel and make sure it is clear to the players that they need to get out of this zone. The zone is Difficult Terrain. On Initiative counts of 5 and 3, the Sand Angler pulls enemies in the zone 2 squares towards the center. Any enemies that remain in the zone at the end of the round are swallowed and immediately Taken Out.

It begins each even numbered round by bursting forth from the ground in the center of the sand funnel and using *Sand Burst* on its Initiative count of 7. On its other Initiative counts it should be moving and lashing its flagella, and attempting to Grab and swallow as many characters as possible.

Sand Angler, Level 3 Titan ❤️ 48 3x3 ⚔️ 6

Titan: You always succeed on Saving Throws. You are immune to effects that hinder your movement. Take three turns per round on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. See description above.

Reach: The Sand Angler has Reach 3.

Growing: Each odd numbered round after the first, the damage on all the Sand Angler's attacks and Opportunities increases by 1.

Swallow: If a Grabbed enemy is reduced to less than 0 HP, the Sand Angler swallows it and it is immediately Taken Out.

Opportunist: When granted an Opportunity, the Sand Angler may choose to Grab the target instead of dealing damage.

⚔️ **Lashing Flagella** At-Will ⚙️ 3 💧 2

Effect: 2 damage.

⚔️ **Multiple Grab** At-Will ⚙️ 3 💧 2

Effect: Target is Grabbed and Restrained (escape ends). If the target has not escaped when the Sand Angler goes underground, it is Slowed until the end of its next turn.

⚔️ **Swallow** At-Will

Deal 2 damage to each enemy you have Grabbed.

⚔️ **Sand Burst** At-Will ⚙️ 5 💧 2

Special: Usable on Initiative count 7 only.

Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy within reach misses you with an attack, it is knocked Prone.



Combinotron

Combinotron is a giant robot made up of smaller (but still huge) robots, and protected by a swarm of even smaller (cat-sized) robots. Combinotron has a shield arm, a sword arm, a giant cannon on one knee and a flamethrower on the other knee. Combinotron starts totally surrounded by its swarm of flying robots. Once its swarm has been mostly cleared away, its true form is revealed. Once its true form has been damaged enough, it splits into parts and each robot fights on its own. Each piece is a Goon.

Combinotron, Level 5 Titan ♥ 24 7x7 ⚔ 10

Titan: You always succeed on Saving Throws. You are immune to effects that hinder your movement. Take three turns per round on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. See description above.

Mob: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob. Mobs also ignore or resist many Statuses and Effects due to the rule Fiction Takes Precedence (see page 91).

Reach: Combinotron's swarm has reach 3.

Tear Down: Once on each of your turns with Initiative count 5, you may destroy one piece of cover or other object within reach as a Free Action.

Enormous: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws. When you are Slowed, your speed is 5, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 3.

Recharge: When you roll a 5 or 6 on a single-target attack or a 6 on a multi-target attack, you recharge one Encounter Power.

⚔ **Sensor Bots** At-Will ⚔(3) ♠ 3

Effect: Sensor bots attach to the target. You have Advantage to attacks against the target until you hit it. This Advantage applies to all your forms and pieces.

⚔ **Deploy Swarmbots** At-Will ⚔(3) ♠ 3

Effect: 4 Stooges appear next to the target. They act immediately after your next turn.

⚔ **Blinding Swarm** Encounter ⚔(3) ♠ 4

Effect: Target is Blinded until the end of its next turn.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with an attack, 4 Swarmbots appear at the edge of the swarm and act immediately after Combinotron's next turn.

Swarmbot (Stooge) ♥ 1 1x1 ⚔ 6

⚔ **Entangle** At-Will ⚔ ♠ 2

Effect: You attach to the target. You are Taken Out. Once four Swarmbots are attached to the same enemy, it is Restrained until it spends an Attack Action knocking them off.

When phase 2 starts, remove Combinotron's Swarm form from the board and in its place put the following 5 Goons (you may spread them out) along with 6 Swarmbots. Roll Initiative for these new enemies.

Sword Arm ♥ 5(Goon) 3x3 ⚔ 6

Reach: Combinotron's sword has reach 2.

⚔ **Striking Strike** At-Will ⚔(2) ♠ 3

Effect: 2 damage.

⚔ **Knockdown** At-Will ⚔(2) ♠ 3

Effect: Target is knocked Prone

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with an attack, 1 Swarmbot appears next to you and acts immediately after your next turn.

Shield Arm ♥ 5(Goon) 3x3 ⚔ 6

Shield Arm: Once on each of your turns, you may designate one enemy as a Free Action. You Resist 3 damage against that enemy's attacks until you designate a new one.

⚔ **Interposition** At-Will ⚔ ♠ 3

Effect: One adjacent ally has cover from all attacks by the target until the start of your next turn or until the ally moves away from you.

⚔ **Watcher** At-Will ⚔ ♠ 3

Effect: Target is Marked until the end of its next turn.

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with an attack, 1 Swarmbot appears next to you and acts immediately after your next turn.

Cannon Leg ♥ 5(Goon) 3x3 ⚔ 6

Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action. When you are Bloodied, you may no longer have the Flying Status.

⚔ **Shoot** At-Will ⚔ 10 ♠ 3

Effect: 3 damage.

⚔ **Evade** At-Will ⚔ ♠ 3

Effect: Gain the Flying Status and move your speed

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with an attack, 1 Swarmbot appears next to you and acts immediately after your next turn.

Flamespiral Leg ♥ 5(Goon) 3x3 ⚔ 6

Self-Destruct: When Taken Out, every enemy within 5 squares takes 4 damage.

⚔ **Flamespiral** At-Will ⚔ 2 ♠ 2

Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).

⚔ **Flame Shot** At-Will ⚔ 5 ♠ 3

Effect: Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).

⚡ **Miss Trigger** At-Will Reaction

When an enemy misses you with an attack, 1 Swarmbot appears next to you and acts immediately after your next turn.

Command Module	♥ 5(Goon)	3x3	≡ 6
Command Swarbots: On each Initiative count of 3, summon 2 Swarbots adjacent to you. They act immediately after this turn.			
✂ Inspiring Attack	At-Will	↗/↖ 5	♠ 3
Effect: One damaged Goon recovers to full health, or one Goon that was Taken Out stands up and rejoins the fight Bloodied.			
✂ Command	At-Will		
One ally makes an attack.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, 1 Swarbot appears next to you and acts immediately after your next turn.			

When all the Goons of Phase 2 are Taken Out, they combine together and become phase 3.

Combinotron, Phase 3	♥ 24	5x5	≡ 10
Titan: You always succeed on Saving Throws. You are immune to effects that hinder your movement. Take three turns per round on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3.			
Shield Arm: Once on each of your turns with Initiative count 7, you may designate one enemy as a Free Action. You Resist 3 damage against that enemy's attacks until you designate a new one.			
Tear Down: Once on each of your turns with Initiative count 5, you may destroy one piece of cover or other object within reach as a Free Action.			
Command Swarbots: On each Initiative count of 3, summon 2 Swarbots adjacent to you. They act immediately after this turn.			
Reach: Combinotron's sword has reach 2.			
Enormous: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws. When you are Slowed, your speed is 5, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 3.			
✂ Sword Arm	At-Will	↗(2)	♠ 3
Special: Only usable on Initiative count 7.			
Effect: Target is knocked prone.			
✂ Cannon Leg	At-Will	↖ 10	♠ 3
Special: Only usable on Initiative count 5.			
Effect: 3 damage.			
✂ Flamespiral Leg	At-Will	⚙ 2	♠ 2
Special: Only usable on Initiative count 3.			
Ongoing 2 Damage (save ends).			
⚡ Rocket Punch	Encounter	Reaction	
Trigger: An enemy hits you with an attack.			
It takes 3 damage, is thrown 5 squares, and is knocked Prone			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, 2 Swarbots appear adjacent to you and act immediately after your next turn.			

Combinotron is level 5. It would be cool to build up to this fight by having the players fight Standard Monster versions of the individual huge robots on their own earlier in the campaign so they get a taste of what they are facing.

The Dragon

The Dragon is an enemy with multiple parts, and its Miss Trigger gives it terrain alteration. Damage to the head, body, and claws counts towards the dragon's total, while damage to the wings and tail do not. Each of the left and right claws, the tail, the head, the body, and the wings have HP thresholds of 24. Here is a breakdown of what the dragon loses when you take out its body parts:

- **Wings:** Flyer.
- **Tail:** Lashing Tail.
- **Both claws:** Dangerous Reach, Claw Swipe, and Miss Trigger.
- **Head:** Strong Will, Bite, Swallow, and Fiery Breath.
- **Body:** Dealing 24 damage to the body opens up a gap in its scales and the body no longer has Resist 2 damage.

Dragon, Level 7 Titan	♥ 72	4x4	≡ 10
Titan: You always succeed on Saving Throws. You are immune to effects that hinder your movement. Take three turns per round on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. See description above.			
Scales: Resist 2 damage. Wings only resist 1, head resists 3.			
Wings: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action.			
Dangerous Reach: You have Reach 3 with your <i>Claw Swipe</i> and your Opportunities do 2 extra damage. You can use your reach to make melee attacks while remaining Flying.			
Strong Willed: Whenever you would be Dazed, Stunned, Panicked, Dominated, or Incapacitated, you first make a Saving Throw to try to avoid the effect. You do not automatically succeed at these rolls.			
Enormous: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws. When you are Slowed, your speed is 5, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 3.			
Lashing Tail: When an enemy within 3 of you grants you an Opportunity, you may knock it Prone in addition to dealing damage. When an enemy within 3 of you moves closer to you, it must make a Saving Throw. If it fails, it is knocked Prone.			
Recharge: When you roll a 5 or 6 on a single-target attack or a 6 on a multi-target attack, you recharge one Encounter Power.			
✂ Claw Swipe	At-Will	↗(3)	♠ 3
Effect: 2 damage.			
✂ Bite	At-Will	↗	♠ 3
Effect: Target is Grabbed.			
✂ Swallow	At-Will		
Deal 3 damage to any enemies you have Grabbed. If this brings them below 0 HP, you swallow them and they are Taken Out.			
✂ Fiery Breath	Encounter	⚙ (see below)	♠ 3
Special: Create a 3x7 zone adjacent to you. Make this attack against everyone in this zone.			
Effect: Ongoing 3 Damage.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, chuck scenery. Grab a nearby pillar or boulder and hurl it at the attacker, dealing 3 damage, knocking them Prone, and changing the terrain nearby.			

Unfair Enemies

Here are some centerpiece monsters designed with the idea that players have to find ways around their abilities. They are not complicated to play in a fight and they don't have multiple forms and tons of powers, but they do have some abilities that simply destroy unprepared characters. I have not given these monsters HP values, since they do not have a level—there is no way to accurately gauge the value of traits that are intended to be unfair. You can calculate the appropriate HP based on the players' levels. These monsters have At-Will Powers that would be terrifying if they were Encounter Powers.

Why would you use a monster that is intentionally unfair? To force the players to overcome the monster's combat strengths by non-combat means. If they can't face it head-on, they need to think outside the box. Naturally, it is of the utmost importance that the players are aware of this before they go charging headlong into an unwinnable fight.

Medusa	♥ X	1x1	⚔ 6
Champion: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws. Each of these is a full turn for you.			
Petrifying Visage: Any who gaze upon you are instantly turned to stone.			
Serpent Hair: Enemies that start their turn adjacent to you must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are bitten and lethally poisoned. They take Ongoing 4 Damage until the end of the encounter and gain the Major Condition Fatally Poisoned afterwards. They die if they cannot remove the Condition within 24 hours.			
Strong Willed: Whenever you would be Dazed, Stunned, Panicked, Dominated, or Incapacitated, you first make a Saving Throw to try to avoid the effect. You do not automatically succeed at these rolls.			
Supernatural Senses: You have Advantage on any roll with your senses. Your enemies have Disadvantage on any roll to hide from you.			
⚔ Sword	At-Will	⚔	💧 3
Effect: None.			
⚔ Bow	At-Will	🏹 20	💧 3
Effect: 3 damage.			
⚔ Wall of Blades	At-Will		
Make two <i>Sword</i> attacks and you have cover from all ranged and melee attacks until the end of your next turn.			
⚔ Blade Dance	At-Will		
Make four <i>Sword</i> attacks, shifting up to two squares between each attack.			
⚡ Miss Trigger	At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, shift 4 squares.			

The Gorgon

The Gorgon Medusa instantly turns to stone any who gaze upon her awful visage. She is also a deadly foe, so walking in blind without any further preparation is just going to get you killed. She lives in a cave, so simply attacking her with indirect fire is not a solution by itself. She has two older, immortal sisters who are even worse than she is. The Medusa presents a problem, the solution to which should take at least one session of play, and could be stretched into a multi-session arc if the resources the players need to defeat her are contained within some kind of dungeon.

Looking into a mirror is not, by itself, a solution. Using any mirror clear enough to see her face will end with you as a statue. Looking in a polished bronze shield allowing you to just make out her silhouette will work, but it would be impossible to hit her like that if she were on her guard. When Perseus used this trick, he first had to talk to the goddess of Wisdom, then find the Graeae and trick them into giving him the location of the Hesperides who helped equip him. He required not only the polished shield, but also a special sack to safely hold her head, an adamantite sword to cut it off with, and a hat of invisibility and winged sandals so that he could fly in completely invisible and silent to do the deed. The hat of invisibility also allowed him to escape from her two sisters. I'm listing all this not to say that your players should do all these exact things—by no means! They should come up with their own solution, but it absolutely cannot be as naïve or as simple as just walking in with a mirror.

Depending on how you imagine the Gorgon, you might want to reskin the *Sword* attack to something with her bare hands, and you may not want to give her the *Bow* attack.



The Vampire

Not a vampire, but The Vampire. He lives in a huge castle. He is a master of magic and can only be killed with a stake through the heart. He can be warded off by garlic, holy symbols, and holy water. He must flee from sunlight. His castle is full of minions and traps. He rests in his coffin by day, and can only exert minimal control over his castle while the sun is up. Because of his unearthly speed he is a deadly foe and to take him on at night in his own castle is suicide. The goal of any adventuring party by day is to find his resting place and kill him before nightfall. After nightfall, any would-be vampire hunters are on the defensive, trying to survive the night in a magically changing castle, hunted by The Vampire and his allies.

The Vampire acts in the outside world through intermediaries as a great lord, collecting taxes and all the rest. So The Vampire has allies and spies outside his castle, but also enemies. Equipment will be important for this venture, but information will be critical as finding the Vampire's resting place quickly is key.

Swarm of Bats		♥ 5(Goon)	3x3	☞ 6
Mob: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob.				
Distraction: When the swarm is occupying the space of any enemy, all attacks against that enemy have advantage.				
Disperse: When damaged but not Taken Out, the swarm disperses around the room. It cannot be attacked or even damaged while dispersed. When it starts its next turn, it coalesces in a square within 10 of where it dispersed.				
Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action. When you are Bloodied, you may no longer have the Flying Status.				
☞ Bite		At-Will	☞	♠ 2
Effect: 1 damage and if you were Bloodied, you recover to full health.				
⚡ Miss Trigger		At-Will	Reaction	
When an enemy misses you with an attack, disperse as though you had taken damage.				



The Vampire				♥ X	1x1	☞ 8
Champion: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws. Each of these is a full turn for you.						
Unnatural Reflexes: You have cover against all ranged and melee attacks.						
Unnatural Stealth: You have Advantage on any attempt to hide and can always move absolutely silently.						
Strong Willed: Whenever you would be Dazed, Stunned, Panicked, Dominated, or Incapacitated, you first make a Saving Throw to try to avoid the effect. You do not automatically succeed at these rolls.						
Unnatural Senses: You have Advantage on any roll with your senses. Your enemies have Disadvantage on any roll to hide from you.						
Natural Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action.						
Weaknesses: While exposed to sunlight, you are Weakened and take Ongoing 3 Damage. Any character may spend an Attack action to raise a holy symbol to keep you away. Until the end of the character's next turn you may not move adjacent nor make any melee attack against them.						
☞ Unnatural Strength		At-Will		☞	♠ 3	
Effect: Target is thrown 5 squares. If it hits a wall, it takes 1 damage for each unused square of forced movement.						
☞ Dazzling Spell		At-Will		☞ 10	♠ 3	
Effect: Target is Blinded (save ends).						
☞ Drink Blood		At-Will		☞	♠ 3	
Effect: 2 damage and you regain HP equal to twice the amount of damage dealt with this power. The target takes a Strike and if it finishes the combat with enough Strikes to gain the Injured Condition, it instead gains the Infected Condition and turns into a Vampire if not cured.						
☞☞☞ Charm Spell		At-Will		Role Action		
Choose one creature within 10 squares. You may choose the target's Move Action at the start of its turn (save ends).						
<i>First failed saving throw:</i> Target is Dominated (save ends)						
<i>Second failed saving throw:</i> Target is completely enthralled by you until the end of the encounter (and possibly beyond, depending on how things end up). It is playing for the bad guys until you are defeated.						
☞ Mist Form		At-Will		Move Action		
You turn into mist. You cannot attack or be attacked while in this form. Revert back to your normal form as a Move Action.						
⚡ Miss Trigger		At-Will		Reaction		
When an enemy misses you with an attack, a Swarm of Bats appears adjacent to you.						

The Dragon (UE)

♥ X

4x4

☞ 10

Champion: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws. Each of these is a full turn for you.

Scales: You Resist 3 all and have cover against all attacks.

Enormous: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws. When you are Slowed, your speed is 5, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 3. When Grabbed, you can move freely, dragging the grabber with you unless it chooses to let go.

Strong Willed: Whenever you would be Dazed, Stunned, Panicked, Dominated, or Incapacitated, you first make a Saving Throw to try to avoid the effect. You do not automatically succeed at these rolls.

Lashing Tail and Swiping Claws: You have Reach 3. Your Opportunities do 4 damage and knock the triggering enemy Prone.

Natural Flyer: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action.

Recharge: Regain the Fiery Breath power when you roll a 5 or 6 on an attack.

☞ Bite

At-Will

☞(3)

♠ 3

Effect: Target is Grabbed in your mouth and moves with your head. If the target does not escape on its turn, it is swallowed and Taken Out.

☞ Rampage

At-Will

☞ 2

♠ 2

Effect: 2 damage and slide the target 4 squares.

☞ Fiery Breath

Encounter

Create a 2x5 zone adjacent to you. Any creature in the zone without cover from you takes 16 damage. If the creature has cover, it takes damage depending on the quality of that cover. Behind Full Cover, the creature only takes 4. Behind Low Cover, the creature takes 8 damage.

☞ Fly Away

At-Will

Move Action

You get the Flying High Status. You are out of range of all attacks but your attacks are out of range too. You can remove this Status with another Move Action. While Flying High, you might drop anyone you have Grabbed. The fall from this height will leave them Taken Out. Similarly, anyone who escapes your jaws will then fall. To avoid this fate, any character that does escape may choose to still be Grabbed but safe from being swallowed.

Special: You cannot take this action while Immobilized or Restrained, and must spend both your Move and Attack Actions to do it while Slowed.

⚡ Terror

Encounter

Reaction

Trigger: You are Bloodied.

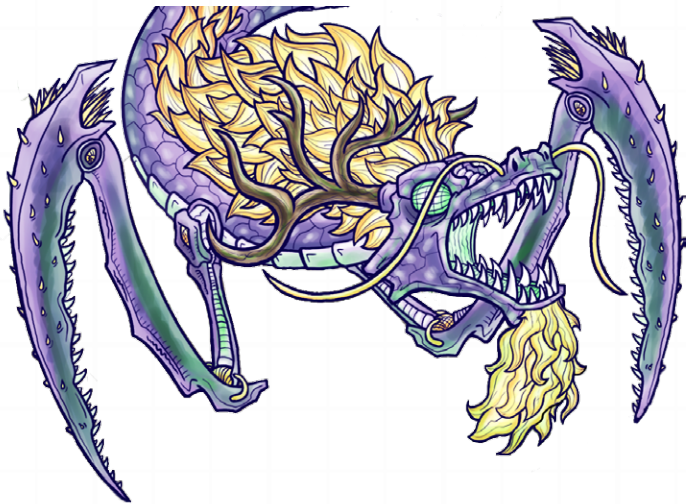
Each enemy that can see you must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Panicked (save ends).

⚡ Miss Trigger

At-Will

Reaction

When an enemy misses you with a ranged attack, it must move its speed toward you.



The Dragon (Unfair Edition)

The Dragon can fly out of reach of your weapons, can breathe fire hot enough to melt stone, is enormous, is wickedly intelligent, has a mesmerising ability with her words and her gaze, and has scales that are nigh-impenetrable by any mundane weapon. She has superhuman senses, especially smell. She lives in a lair inside a dangerous fortress. She may or may not have minions that worship her as a god. The people in the vicinity are terrified of her and oppressed. She has vast wealth and can use it to pay for spies and bribe the unwary.

Players need to find a way to penetrate her defenses, bypass her mesmerizing qualities, not get melted, and prevent her from flying away to wreak havoc. They might try to find a secret way into her lair to avoid the main entrance which she has well-guarded. Any plan they can think of must be disguised with false fronts and misdirection or else it will be easily found out by a combination of her spies and her wicked intelligence.





Monsters From Scratch

There are two ways to make monsters: the easy way, and the precise way. The precise way gives you a better idea of how strong the monsters will be, but it takes more effort. When you're just starting out with the game, start by simply using the sample monsters and reskinning them. Feel free to modify them to add or remove traits and change powers as necessary. As you GM more, building monsters from scratch is something you will want to learn.

The easy way has two steps:

1. Pick traits and powers.
2. Pick a monster type.

Caveat

The rules below focus only on the combat characteristics of a monster. Monsters should be interesting outside of combats, before combats, and after combats too! Monsters can have many awesome and cool traits that can have very strong impacts on the characters that may not be listed here, simply because they don't come up in combat. Can the monster wait unmoving for weeks on end? Great! Don't neglect those traits. Make your monsters cool and scary. And always remember that, like player characters, your monsters can communicate and use their Skills and abilities during combat.

Traits and Powers

First and foremost, a monster should have all the traits and powers it needs to fulfill your vision and not one more. You can get away with having one really complicated monster in a combat, but if you have five of them then you'll be seriously slowing things down with all the decisions you've given yourself. Champions and Elites are more complex than Standard Monsters. Adding to damage is a good way to make a monster stronger without adding complications.

Pick traits from the list later in this section, or make up your own. They have numbers next to them, but for the easy way, you can just ignore those.

For powers, come up with effects that it makes sense for the monster to have. Use the sample monsters and player characters' powers as guidelines. If you use effects that effectively take away a player's choices for a turn, like Dominated or Panicked, you should typically give the player a Saving Throw to avoid the Status. Again, don't give the monster more powers than it needs.

Monsters should have some way of achieving their role. Ideally, these are passive things like bonuses to damage, resistances, or alternative movement types, but sometimes they need Role Actions. Use Role Actions sparingly—one monster taking a Role Action each round is no problem, but when all the monsters have them, that starts to slow things down. I almost never give Monsters Role Actions.

Monsters have actions that occur when they are missed by an attack. These are called Miss Triggers. When things are going well for the players, these won't come up much and won't affect the balance. When the players roll badly, these are more common and potent Miss Triggers can make bad luck turn worse. When using the Take Cover rules, they also encourage players to use terrain to get high-quality chances and refrain from taking low-odds shots into cover.

Miss Triggers can often take the role of Role Actions in helping monsters achieve their combat role. To keep combat moving smoothly, don't include too many complicated Miss Triggers. Simple is better for most monsters, and special monsters can get more complicated ones.

Example: My dragon needs to breathe fire, bite and claw multiple foes, and sweep the field with its tail. So I focus on making those powers cool and effective, rather than cluttering it with a bunch of less-important powers. It needs to fly and have tough armored skin, so I pick traits to match those. It's also incredibly smart and it loves treasure and so on, but those are things that I will bring out with my roleplaying. I don't need to write those up as combat traits. I want to emphasize the destruction the dragon does, so for a Miss Trigger, the dragon will smash down a part of a building and hurl it towards the character that missed.

Monster Type

When you pick a monster type, you are picking how many of them make up a combat. Recall that the types are: Stooges, Goons, Standard Monsters, Elites, and Champions. For monsters that are even weaker than Stooges, that need to gang up on the players in a swarm to pose any threat, use a Standard Monster with the Mob trait.

The level of a monster is typically the level of the players, but you can change this if you like. Don't use monsters more than a few levels above the players, or else the combat can slow down as they have too much HP.

A Stooze always has 1 HP and its attacks and Opportunities do 1 damage. Use four Stooges (five at level 4, six at level 7) instead of one Standard Monster.

For Goons, instead of tracking HP, they have an HP threshold, and if the first hit they take does more than that value, they are Taken Out. Otherwise, they are considered Bloodied and are Taken Out on the next hit regardless of how much damage it does. The threshold is 4 (increasing to 5 at level 5). Their attacks do 2 damage. Goons should not have Encounter Powers, since their entire purpose is to be numerous and easy to track. A power that triggers or becomes available when they are Bloodied can substitute for an Encounter Power if you like, since you will be tracking that Status already.

Standard Monsters have HP equal to 6 plus twice their level. Their At-Will attacks do 2 damage. Unlike Stooges and Goons, they can also have one Encounter Power, which does 3 damage.

Elites have twice the HP of a Standard Monster at the same level. They do 3 damage on their At-Will attacks and 4 damage on their Encounter Powers. Elites automatically succeed on all Saving Throws while they are not Bloodied. While they are Bloodied, they get two consecutive turns on their Initiative count. An Elite with some Stooges or Goons for backup makes a great boss fight.

Champions are fast and strong. A single one is a match for four player characters. Champions have four times the HP of a Standard Monster at the same level. They deal damage on their attacks like Elites but take three turns per round. They act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. Champions automatically succeed on all Saving Throws. Champions should have very strong Miss Triggers.

Regardless of monster type, zone attacks or multi-target attacks should do 1 less damage than single-target attacks. That means that Stooges with area attacks should do a base of zero damage, only applying an effect (although that effect might include damage).

Making mistakes

Designing monsters is not nearly so high-stakes as designing a new character Class because you only have to use the monster once—if it doesn't work, you can either change it between combats or ditch it entirely if fixing it would be too hard. You can even fix a monster mid-combat if you made a calculation error or if it's actually broken. Recall the heading "Fudging the Numbers" on page 140.

The Precise Way

The precise way starts off like the easy way, but adds one extra step. Instead of giving the monster a level based on what level the players are, you use the traits and powers you gave the monster to calculate a level. Then you give it the appropriate HP for its level, and you will have a good idea of how powerful it is.

When you use these guidelines to create monsters of roughly the players' levels, and when you use one Standard Monster per player, or equivalent, the fight is very likely to go in the players' favor, but also very likely to end with them owing at least a Minor Concession.

Precisely imprecise

Although we call this the precise way of making a monster, and it is certainly more precise than the easy way, it is not true that two different monsters that have been calculated to have the same level pose an exactly equal threat. Some groups are strong against certain kinds of monsters and weak against other kinds. If you pick powers and traits that work well together, your monster will be stronger than if you pick powers and traits haphazardly. As you get familiar, you'll be able to get fancy and design monsters specifically to challenge your group to whatever difficulty you like. There is no substitute for experience.

Traits listed below cost points. If you made up your own trait, try to find something similar on the list to use to estimate a point cost. Most traits just cost one point, but some cost many, and some actually cost negative points. Add up all the points from traits.

Next, you need to adjust for how strong the monster's powers are. You will find below a list of Effect Tiers. Use the examples there to figure out a tier for each power.

For Stooges, who only have At-Wills, you only consider their strongest power. Add 2 points for every tier above Tier 1 on the effect of the power. Stooges should never have effects above Tier 4.

For all other monsters:

- Add 2 points for every tier above Tier 2 on the effect of their strongest At-Will Power.
- Add 2 points for each Encounter Power beyond the first.
- Add 1 point for every tier above Tier 4 on each Encounter Power or Triggered power.

Now your monster has a point total arising from their powers and traits. For a Stoooge, Goon, or Standard Monster, this is its level. For an Elite or Champion, divide this in half to get its level.

Building backwards

You can aim a monster at a particular power level by deciding first what level you want it to be. For a Stoooge, Goon, or Standard Monster, spend points equal to the desired level on traits and power effects, using the same rules as above. For an Elite or Champion, spend points equal to double the desired level.

Effect Tiers

Tier 1: Harried, Distracted, or Slowed; Ongoing 1 Damage.

Tier 2: Weakened, Immobilized, or Grabbed; grant a Saving Throw, Forced Movement 3 or fewer squares.

Tier 3: Prone or Dazed; Ongoing 2 Damage, Forced Movement over 3 squares.

Tier 4: Restrained or Panicked; revive a fallen ally at 1 HP.

Tier 5: Blinded or Stunned*; Ongoing 3 Damage; heal all allies 2 HP.

Tier 6: Incapacitated or Dominated; Ongoing 4 Damage; revive a fallen ally at half its HP.

*Do not use the Stun effect on player characters. It just means they don't get to play. It is included here only for reference.

Healing yourself or one ally X HP is tier X.

Changing an effect from one round to (save ends) increases its tier by one. Allowing a Saving Throw to avoid the effect lowers its tier by two. Allowing a Saving Throw to lessen, but not avoid the effect lowers its tier by one.

Ranged Attacks

Generally, just give monsters whatever range they need on their powers to fulfill their role. If they are primarily ranged attackers, they need range 10 to match most ranged player characters. If they mix melee and ranged attacks, then range 5 is appropriate. If you want to give a monster range 15 or even 20, go ahead, as long as you've thought through what that will mean in play.

Common Traits

Traits' and powers' point costs are marked in square brackets. If no cost is marked, the default is 1 point. [*] means variable cost, usually depending on how many players it affects—use your judgment. [X*] means variable, but at least X. [Tier] means that the cost is equal to the effect's tier, with a minimum of 1. These trait costs vary depending on your choices and on the player characters' abilities. Flying is very powerful if all the player characters are melee-focused, but less so if they are all ranged. Traits may be worth negative points—these should be used only sparingly, and only if they are relevant. Restricting a powerful trait can be worth a reduction in points. For example, a trait that only comes into play when the monster is Bloodied ought to be less expensive at the GM's discretion.

Warning: giving dangerous monsters defensive abilities like resistances can help emphasize their threat level and make players choose between slowly taking out the real danger or taking out the easier enemies first. However, if you give all the monsters in an encounter defenses, it simply slows things down.

Monster Types

Mob [2]: Any Burst or other area attack that can target multiple squares of the mob does double its base damage. A mob can occupy the same space as other creatures and can move into their squares without provoking Opportunities. The mob makes an attack against any enemy starting its turn in the mob. Mobs also ignore or resist many Statuses and Effects due to the rule Fiction Takes Precedence (see page 91).

Elite [N/A]: While you are not Bloodied, you automatically succeed on all Saving Throws. While Bloodied, you take two consecutive turns on your Initiative count.

Champion [N/A]: You act on Initiative counts of 7, 5, and 3. You automatically succeed at all Saving Throws. Each of these is a full turn for you. So if a Status terminates at the end of your next turn, you only suffer on one of your Initiative counts.

Attacking

Recharge: When you roll a 5 or 6 on a single-target attack or a 6 on a multi-target attack, you recharge one Encounter Power.

Extra Damage [3]: +1 damage to all attacks.

Super Damage [7]: +2 damage to all attacks.

Hyper Damage [12]: +3 damage to all attacks.

Weak Damage [-3]: -1 damage to all attacks.

Damage on a Miss: When you miss, the target takes 1 damage anyway.

Effect on a Hit [2xTier]: Whenever you hit with an attack the target is... thrown 3 squares, for example.

Effect on a 6 [Half of Tier, rounded up]: Whenever roll a 6 on an attack the target is... knocked Prone, for example.

Take Advantage: Deal 1 extra damage when you hit with an attack with Advantage.

Conditional Advantage [2*]: Attacks have Advantage when... Charging, for example.

Always Advantage [6]: All your melee (or ranged) attacks have Advantage.

Time Shift: Send an attack back into the past. Spend next turn's Attack Action now to attack any target(s) with one of your attack powers, even a target not in range of that power. If on your next turn, you cannot get in a position where you could have attacked that target with that power, take 5 points of damage from paradox.

Power Thief [3*]: You may use any power that you have seen any character use.

Movement

Speedy: +2 to speed.

Super Speedy [2]: +4 to speed.

Slippery: Shift 2 extra squares whenever you shift.

Unhindered: Ignore Difficult Terrain.

Incorporeal [3]: Ignore all terrain. You may move through objects.

Strength: When you are Slowed, your speed is 4, not 2. When you are Immobilized, ignore that effect but your speed is instead 2. When Grabbed, you can move freely, dragging the grabber with you unless they choose to let go.

Flyer [2]: You start the combat with the Flying Status and can gain the Flying Status when you take any Move Action. When you are Bloodied, you may no longer have the Flying Status. [Costs +2 points to ignore the last sentence.]

Climber: You can move up to your speed while climbing.

Leaper: As a part of your movement you may leap in a straight line over creatures and obstacles within reason. This allows you to avoid granting Opportunities in the middle of your movement but not when you leave the first square or land in the last.

Burrower: Acts much like leap, but you are underground during the movement and may also choose to stay underground to end your move.

Dodge [2]: Whenever you grant one or more Opportunities, roll a Saving Throw to avoid the damage and effects of one of them (you choose which).

Super Dodge [5]: You never grant Opportunities.

Defending

Damage Resist [5]: Resist 1.

Super Resist [12]: Resist 2.

Hyper Resist [21]: Resist 3.

Effect Resist [*]: When hit by a specific type of attack, gain some positive effect... gaining extra speed on your next turn, for instance.

Vulnerable [-X*]: Vulnerable X to a specific type of attack.

Effect Vulnerable [-Tier*]: When hit with a specific kind of attack, you take some negative effect.

Stable Footing: Whenever you would be knocked Prone, make a Saving Throw to avoid it. Reduce Forced Movement by 1.

Belly Crawl: You cannot be knocked Prone.

Balanced: When subject to Forced Movement, you decide where the movement takes you.

Protective Shell: Your attackers do not gain Advantage by flanking you.

Lightweight [-1]: All Forced Movement against you is increased by 1, and you have Disadvantage to escape Grabs.

Heavy: You cannot be thrown, and you reduce Forced Movement by 1.

Massive [2]: You are immune to Forced Movement including pushes, pulls, slides, and throws.

Strong Willed [*]: Whenever you would be Dazed, Stunned, Panicked, Dominated, or Incapacitated, you first make a Saving Throw to try to avoid the effect. You do not automatically succeed at these rolls if you are a Champion or Elite.

Berserker: When Panicked, instead of rolling a die to determine what action to take, treat the roll as a 6. When Stunned on your turn, you may make one Basic Attack or Charge.

Cold[*]: You are immune to Panic, fear-based effects, and psychic effects.

Painful Touch: Any character that Grabs you takes 2 damage or suffers some effect.

Regenerator[X]: Regenerate X+1. (See the Glossary, page 95.)

Super-Regenerator [Number of players]: Regenerate 2 HP per player character. Lose this trait when it fails to bring you to full health.

All-or-nothing: Your maximum HP is halved, but you Regenerate all your HP each time you start your turn. (Do not take this trait with an Elite, Champion, or Titan.)

Resilient: Save at the beginning of your turn instead of the end.

Second Chance: The first time you have been Taken Out, stand up at the start of your next turn and rejoin the fight with 1 HP.

Splinter: Start the fight with half your normal HP. When you would be Taken Out, instead split into four Stooges (five at level 4, six at level 7) with all your traits (except this one) and At-Will Powers.

Revenge [*]: Each time you fail a save, increase the damage on your attacks by 1.

Roles and Miscellaneous

Opportunist: You may deal 1 extra damage when you deal damage on an Opportunity.

Damaging Aura[3]: Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to you takes 2 damage.

Effect Aura [Tier+1]: Any creature that starts its turn adjacent to you takes an effect.

Stealthy: You need not be out of sight for a full round to become Hidden. It is enough that you take a Move Action in which you begin and end the move out of sight.

Invisible [6]: The monster cannot be seen. (See page 94)

Disease (or Curse): If a character takes enough *Strikes* to become Injured, he instead becomes Sick (or Cursed).

Inspirational Leader [2X]: Each ally regains X HP when they start their turn.

Helpful Leader [2]: Allies have advantage on their Saving Throws.

Aggressive Leader [4]: Each ally adds 1 to the damage line of their attacks.

Pack Lord [2]: Your Stooges' attacks deal 1 extra damage.

Summoner [X]: When you start your turn, you summon X level 1 Stooges. They act immediately after your next turn.

Duelist [3]: Name one target. +1 damage on attacks against it and resist 1 damage from it. May name a new target when the original target is taken out.

Sticky: When an enemy moves adjacent to you, they lose any remaining squares of movement.

Defender: Enemies are Marked whenever they are within reach.

Guard: All allies are Guarded while adjacent to you.

Reach: You have Reach 2.

Super Reach [3]: You have Reach 3.

Hyper Reach [5]: You have Reach 4.

Wrestler: Advantage on escape rolls. Enemies have Disadvantage on rolls to escape you.

Abductor: You may move normally while Grabbing enemies. Drag them along with you.

Friendly Blaster: You may omit one ally from an area attack.

Precision Blaster [2]: You may omit all allies from an area attack.

Deadly Blaster: You may add one enemy to an area attack if they are adjacent to the area.

Power Magnet: All attacks of a particular type (e.g. magical attacks) target this creature, regardless of who the attacker thought they were targeting or what they intended.

Charge Up [*]: Each time a trigger happens (e.g. you are hit, you hit an enemy, you take a certain type of damage), take a token. When you are Taken Out (or Bloodied, or when you choose), deal damage to all enemies within 5 equal to the number of tokens you have.

Hydra [5]: Gain an extra Attack Action each turn while you are Bloodied. (Do not take this trait with an Elite, Champion, or Titan.)

Stronger on a Miss [2]: Each time you miss, increase the damage of all your attacks by 1.

Zombie[2]: When Taken Out by anything other than a critical hit, make a Saving Throw. If you succeed, you stand up with 1 HP.

More Negative Traits

Slow Start [-1]: You always lose Initiative.

Mindless [-1]: You can only attack nearest target each turn.

Two Left Feet [-1]: You can't shift.

Slow [-1]: Your speed is 4.

Very slow [-2]: Your speed is 2.

Immobile [-4]: You are immobile.

Fragile [-1]: A critical hit automatically takes you out.

Ranged Only [-4]: You do not have a melee attack and if you are hit by a damaging melee attack, you are immediately Taken Out.

Traits Above and Beyond

Some traits are too powerful to be rated in points. An enemy who is invincible except to sunlight may prove to be an easy challenge or an impossible task depending on the situation. Traits like this are fantastic. If alone, a monster like this becomes a puzzle instead of a regular combat. With more typical allies, it adds a puzzle element and extra threat to a normal fight. Other examples include enemies that turn you to stone if you meet their gaze or that return to life unless killed by fire. Typically these traits amount to either conditional invincibility or super-powerful attacks.

Sample Miss Triggers

Some Miss Triggers only make sense when the missing attack is ranged or melee. These are indicated in parentheses. Miss Triggers are typically either bonuses to the target who was missed, or penalties to the attacker.

Bonuses to the Target

Recover: Regain 2 HP.

Slippery: Shift.

Shield: You have cover from all attacks until the end of your next turn.

Fade Out: Become Invisible.

Revive: One Stooze joins or rejoins the fight.

Command: One Stooze attacks the attacker or moves adjacent.

Tactics: Four allies may shift.

Healing: One ally regains 4 HP.

Mass Healing: Each ally regains 2 HP.

Ready Action (r): Prepare an action to... shoot the attacker if they move, for instance.

Take Aim (r): On your next turn you have Advantage if you make a ranged attack against the attacker.

Penalties to the Attacker

Riposte (m): Attacker takes 2 damage.

Area Attack: Create a 3x3 zone centered on the attacker. Creatures starting their turn in that zone take 1 damage.

Effects: Target is... Immobilized or Weakened, for instance.

Area Effect: Create a 3x3 zone centered on the attacker. Creatures starting their turn in the zone are... Slowed, for instance.

Note: For these last two, the effects should usually last until the end of the attacker's next turn. If you make it save ends, the attacker has a chance to save immediately—for a major effect like Dominated, this is a good thing.

Knockdown (m): Attacker is knocked Prone.

Forced Movement: Pull/Push/Slide attacker 2 squares.

Mark: Attacker is Marked until the end of its next turn.

Misfortune: The attacker takes an extra Strike.

Grab: Move adjacent to the attacker and Grab them.

Charge (r): Charge the attacker if it is within charging range.

Chuck Scenery: Smash a huge boulder or piece of masonry at the attacker—they take 2 damage, as does everyone adjacent. Any adjacent cover is reduced or damaged, as is the terrain from which the boulder came.

Terror: Whenever they attack you in the future, the attacker must succeed on a Saving Throw or else lose their action. This effect ends once they succeed at such a roll.

Intimidate: Attacker and any adjacent enemies must make a Saving Throw. If they fail, they are Panicked on their next turns.

Sample Role Actions

Remember to use Role Actions sparingly, and only in cases where a Miss Trigger would be inappropriate. Note that Role Actions should never have attack rolls, even if they are attacks.

At-Will Powers

Shifty: Shift one square.

Tactics [2]: One ally may immediately use a Move Action.

Bless [3]: One ally gains Advantage on their next attack.

Curse: One target within 10 is Vulnerable 1 (save ends).

Entangle: One target within 10 is Slowed until the end of its next turn.

Pull: Pull one target up to 5 squares to end adjacent to you.

Mark: One target within 10 squares is Marked until the end of its next turn.

Encounter Powers

Inspiration [X]: Each ally regains X HP.

Sound the Attack [2]: Each ally may immediately use an Attack Action.

Mass curse: All enemies within 10 are Vulnerable 1 (save ends).

Abilities in Play

Monster abilities are not required to use keywords and glossary terms. “Anyone who looks upon the face of the Gorgon is turned to stone” is a perfectly clear rule and can be applied in combat or out without reference to Saving Throws or any other glossary terms. Knowing this, you can make a Gorgon (or a Dragon or a Vampire) truly frightening as all the players’ powers and abilities come to nothing if they can’t figure out some way to fight something that doesn’t play by their rules. These sorts of monsters make a great centerpiece for an adventure and regardless of what plan the players come up with to tackle the foe, you can be assured of a good session or two of fun as the players try to see their plan through to fruition. There are a couple of monsters in this mold on page 158.

The other side of this coin is that you can have big centerpiece monsters with lots of cool mechanical interactions and multiple phases. You can take inspiration from raid bosses in MMORPGs and make a big, challenging, always-changing combat. The key to having big bosses like this are the powers. Great powers include: big telegraphed attacks that are avoidable but hugely damaging—the boss sets it up one turn and unleashes it the next; summoning or spawning allies, often Stooges; triggered actions upon being brought below a certain HP threshold; attacks that physically alter the environment and terrain; different phases—when the boss is reduced to 0 HP it doesn’t die, but just changes to the next form with all new abilities. See the Titans section on page 154 for more on this sort of monster.

So why use one method over the other? The first method emphasizes the play before the combat starts as the players use their non-combat abilities and clever ideas to find ways around the enemy’s overwhelming powers. Once they’ve found a way around it, the combat itself is often straightforward. The second method emphasizes the play during the combat and the combats are often longer and harder. However, all the players really need to do for this sort of boss monster is get to the right place and get fighting—no other prep needed. Of course, you could mix them together and come up with a big mechanics-heavy multi-phase boss monster that also has an insurmountable advantage that must be negated before the players even have a hope, forcing them to do all the pre-combat preparations. Which way you want to run things depends on what you and the other players enjoy best. Some players really hate long encounters that take up most of the session, while others find them exciting and challenging.

Beyond Your Abilities

Some monsters are just too big and powerful for adventurers to kill. If this is the case, you must state this up front before combat so players can adjust their intent accordingly. “You can’t destroy the giant armed as you are, but you might be able to drive it away.”

The optional rule is this: the players cannot kill or capture any monster more than 3 levels above them. If the players come specially prepared and armed, this does not apply.

Troubleshooting

My monster came out the wrong level!

If you want it to be higher level to pose a tougher challenge for your players, just spend extra points on damage or resistance. If you find that you’ve spent enough points to make it a higher level than you desired, either find something to cut or simply reduce its HP. If you want the monster to be around the strength of level 4, but you spent 7 points on all its traits, just give it the HP of a level 2 monster.

What do I do if my players keep losing?

Honestly, this is a great problem to have. The solution is almost always to simply use fewer monsters. Downgrade some monsters to Goons or cut them altogether. As a side-benefit, the combats go faster too.

What do I do if my players keep winning and need more challenge?

This one is tougher, because the obvious solution (use more monsters) can have the side-effect of slowing down combats. If the combats are going quickly, you can add monsters or bump them up to Elites. If the combats are taking long enough that you don’t want to make them take any longer, do not add monsters and do not add more HP to your monsters. If the combats are causing them to take Conditions, one solution is simply to allow them less time to recover and try to wear them down over time. If they aren’t even getting Conditions at all or if preventing recovery doesn’t make sense, then you’ll have to make the fights harder. Try designing combats with terrain that favors the monsters, giving the ranged ones good cover in hard-to-reach locations. Take advantage of the players’ weaknesses and deny them their strengths.

Take advantage of known weaknesses: if they have no Blaster, use Stooges and try to overwhelm them with numbers; if they have no Leader, buy extra damage traits for your monsters to put them at risk; if they have no Striker, buy defensive traits like Damage Resist; if they have no Defender, focus your attacks on one target; if they are melee-heavy, use lots of spread-out ranged units; if they are mostly ranged characters, use units with high mobility to close the distance.

Deny them their strengths: if they rely on mobility, put terrain in their way; if they rely on shooting, make them pass through danger to get good shots; if they are strong on control powers, buy traits and powers that reduce those effects, grant immunities, or grant Saving Throws; if they are strong on defense and healing, bypass their HP by applying Statuses.

If you've tried all of these things and you still can't make it close, maybe you should quit playing games with Julius Caesar and Napoleon.

What if the difficulty level is fine but combat takes too long?

If you or your players are new to this, then the stumbling block might be rules understanding. As you learn the rules better, the game will go faster. For now, if the speed is a big issue, you should not look up any rules during the combat. If you don't know the answer, just use your judgment, keep the play moving, make a note, and look up the rule later.

Make use of players who are comfortable with the rules and fast on their turns to help you with some of the simple tasks. Have one player in charge of tracking Initiative and reminding the others when their turn is coming up soon. Have another player in charge of tracking Strikes for everyone, since that is easy for people to forget. Have another in charge of tracking Statuses, to tell you and the others what you need to remember on your turns. Don't assign tasks like these to any player who is taking a while to take their turns, as it will just slow them down further.

Make sure players are ready to go on their turn. If a player's turn comes around and the player hasn't even started thinking about what to do, then that slows things down for everyone, making it harder for others to pay attention and causing a cycle of inattention as they take longer on their turns. First try to fix it by talking to the players. If that doesn't work, then you might have to let them know that if they aren't ready to move when their turn comes up, then their character will hesitate while the fight goes on until the player is ready to jump back in.

Too much table-talk and optimization can slow things down too. Every group has a different level of tolerance for how much out-of-character strategizing to allow, but if the fights are dragging on because the players are discussing their options for too long, then you need to get together and limit that as a group.

As the GM, it's important that you lead by example and take your turns quickly and without dwelling for long on any strategic decisions.

Do not be afraid to attack player characters when they are down but not Taken Out when the circumstances make sense. If you let them get back up over and over, you are making the combats take longer as you fail to capitalize on your success. Remember, being Taken Out is not the same thing as being killed.



Tactical Combat Variants

All of these variants change the way the game plays, and in doing so they upset the balance to some extent. It's up to you to judge whether the thing they bring to the table is more valuable than the distortions they cause. If you're unsure whether or not you should use one of these variants, stick with the standard rules. Once you have a solid baseline of experience playing *Strike!*, you'll be better able to judge what is right for your game.

Cover Fiddling

Changing the bonus you get for being in cover changes how you interact with cover. Low Cover might only give Resist 1 instead of giving the attacker Disadvantage, making it relatively less valuable than Full Cover. Depending on the kinds of maps you use, you might find that players often have to attack through cover and the Disadvantage is slowing things down.

Life Below Zero

Right now, when you are at or below 0 HP, you have a very good chance to get back up and get back in the fight after a turn or two. This emphasizes the fact that you're down but not out and encourages enemies to spend actions finishing off downed characters. If you change the odds on the roll so that you lose HP on a 1 to 3 and only regain it on a 6, you end up with a system where monsters can mostly ignore downed characters unless somebody spends the time to heal them. This significantly changes the "anything could happen" feeling of being below 0 HP. There are many other modifications you could make to this to change the feel.

Team Initiative

In Tactical Combat, instead of rolling Initiative for each monster individually, the GM just rolls once. The play alternates between Players' Turns and GM's Turns. At the start of the Player's Turn, everything that is supposed to happen at the start of each player's turn happens (in whatever order the players decide on). Then, all the players can go, interweaving their actions however they like. For example, Dane takes his Attack Action and his Role Action, then waits for Gia to take her actions before he spends his Move Action. At the end of the Player's Turn, all end-of-turn events happen (players decide the order). If any of the characters are Dominated or otherwise have their actions controlled by the GM, those actions occur after the player-controlled actions (unless otherwise specified). The GM's turn is basically just the mirror-image of the Players' Turn. All the monsters go at once and monsters who get multiple turns per round can spend all their actions in whatever order they like, and the GM decides the order of events.

In the first round, something special happens—the first Players' Turn only goes to the players who rolled higher than the GM on Initiative. Any player who rolled lower has to wait for the next Players' Turn.

Warning: Champions become very dangerous when using this rule as they get three consecutive turns to focus on anyone they want.

Level Zero

If you want the characters to start at a lower power level in Tactical Combat than a level 1 character, you can take away all their abilities and leave them with just their core powers (Basic Attacks, *Charge*, *Rally*, and *Assess*) and a *Feat*. Over time they can earn their *At-Wills*, *Class* and *Role* features, *Encounter Power(s)*, and their second *Feat*. If you are doing this to introduce new players who have a lower tolerance for complexity (e.g. children), you'll want to use easier monsters than usual.

The other reason for level zero is to have the players start off with characters that truly are not up to the challenges they set out to face and some of whom are likely to die before they get powerful enough to even the odds. If that is the scenario you are going for, then you obviously don't want to pull any punches with the monsters you pit the players against. You might even reduce level zero characters' HP to 6 to make them feel very fragile indeed.

Skilled Saves

When a player must roll a Saving Throw to avoid an effect, if the character has a Skill corresponding to the action that will avoid the effect, they succeed on a 3-6 instead of a 4-6. E.g. I've got the Skill "Navy SEAL Training" that helps me avoid panicking in a combat situation. So when I need to make a Saving Throw or Panic, my Skill makes it easier for me to keep my cool. As always when using Skills, **no stretching!** This rule isn't standard because in the strongly codified high-stakes combat mini-game it's hard to keep your mind on the tone and avoid trying to stretch your Skills to fit what you want to happen.

Escalation

If you are finding combat dragging on in later rounds, this rule adds an extra layer of complexity, but fixes that problem. Whether this trade-off is worthwhile is up to you. I personally just nag my fellow players to hurry up when the fight is winding down. From round two onwards, 2s count as 3s. From round three onwards, 3s count as 4s. From round four onwards, 4s count as 5s. From round five onwards, 5s count as 6s.

Panic

This rule introduces a Willpower Roll, which operates much like a Saving Throw. You roll a die: a 1-2 is a failure, while a 3-6 is a success. If you fail, you are *Panicked* (save ends). You get less likely to panic as you go up in levels. At Level 1, all Willpower Rolls have Disadvantage. At level 2, the Disadvantage goes away. At level 5+, all Willpower Rolls are made with Advantage. At level 9+, you have Advantage AND you roll yet another die on your Willpower Roll (i.e. roll 3 dice normally or 2 when you have Disadvantage, taking the best result). You must make a Willpower Roll when you are first Bloodied, when an ally gets Taken Out, when an ally gets Dominated, or when a power tells you to do so. This introduces a negative feedback loop to the combat—if you start off badly things can rapidly get worse.

Parties at Mixed Levels

Characters generally have equal accuracy and equal Hit Points across levels, so a character of any level is useful in combat. Now obviously a lower-level character has lower effectiveness. They do less damage, have weaker effects, and have fewer options. Gener-

ally we want all the players to contribute equally, so generally we want to have everybody at the same level.

There are a couple of situations where having differing levels is advantageous, though. Lower level characters have one big advantage over higher level characters: they are simpler and faster to play. So if you use Retainers (see page 140) you might want them to be lower level than the players' primary characters. Similarly, it can be useful for learning a new character to start at a lower level and then quickly advance (one or two levels per combat) until you have caught up to the rest of the group. You might consider doing this if you change characters because your previous one died or retired or went on vacation to Mars. This isn't mandatory, though. If you think you can handle starting off your new character at a higher level without slowing the game down, go for it.

Don't go sticking the newbie with a crappy low-level character. It's not a fun introduction to the game to be given a character that doesn't contribute! If you want to introduce a new player and they can't handle the complexity yet, give them a character the same level as yours but with fewer choices to make in play. *Duelist/Striker* is a powerful combination that is also easy to play, and *Simplified Classes* are highly effective and very easy for beginners to learn with.

Mopping Up

Mopping up is a player-driven system for quickly ending combats without having to play it out to the bitter end. Players can declare that they are mopping up and take 1 Strike per Stoooge or Bloodied Goon, 2 Strikes per Unbloodied Goon, 3 Strikes per Unbloodied Standard Monster, and 2 Strikes per Bloodied Standard Monster left in the fight. These Strikes must be divided as evenly as possible, starting with the player who has the most Strikes. Players who are Taken Out are not involved in this division. This is fairly punishing. That is intended.

Example: Jan has 3 Strikes, Erica has 2 Strikes, and Jo is already Taken Out and has 4 Strikes. There is one Bloodied Standard Monster and three Stoooges still standing. Jan and Erica decide to mop up, so they must divide 5 Strikes among themselves, starting with Jan. So Jan gets 3 and Erica gets 2. Jan ends the fight with 6 Strikes and is Injured, while Erica and Jo each have 4 and are both Exhausted. They collectively have 14, which gets them a Pyrrhic victory, but they were already on track for that anyway.

Players cannot mop up while there are Champions, Titans, or Elites on the board. On top of that, some circumstances might preclude mopping up—remember, the story comes first! If the players know that reinforcements are just about to arrive in two rounds and the question is whether they can fight their way out fast enough, it doesn't make sense to say that they just "mop up" and go. The GM can say whether or not the situation allows it.

Exposed

If your target doesn't have cover from a ranged or melee attack, they are exposed and you apply your damage line again! This is just like rolling a 6, and it is cumulative with rolling a 6. There are some exceptions. First, creatures with the Flying Status are not

considered exposed to ranged attacks, because they mostly cannot take cover. Second, using the Exposed rule leads to a lot of prepared actions to fire on the first foe who leaves cover: to prevent the fight from becoming a stalemate, creatures are not considered exposed during their own turn. So you can leave your cover without taking a huge risk. Prepared actions are still very powerful if your enemies are behind cover and need to move, but to get the extra damage bonus you need to catch them standing still.

Adding damage in this way does two things for the gameplay. First, it speeds up combat to make up for the fact that there is more cover around. Second, it changes your priorities entirely: you'll want to be dashing from cover to cover, and working to get flanking shots; open fields become terrifying; and melee enemies (who don't have to worry about cover once they've managed to close the gap) become a top priority. Because of the importance of cover in these rules, **when combat starts every character gets a free move into cover**. If one side is ambushed, they may be denied this free move as they are caught out in the open. Additionally, **when you are taking cover and an enemy attempts to separate you from your cover with Forced Movement, you get a Saving Throw to hang on and avoid the effect**.

You will note that melee attacks using this rule will almost always get the extra damage. This is true, but melee attackers are very vulnerable, too. You may spend a Move Action to *shield* yourself until the start of your next turn or until you leave your square, whichever comes first. While you are *shielded*, you are not considered *exposed* against any melee attacks.

Some creatures have the trait *brazen*. A brazen creature is not considered exposed to ranged attacks. This assumes you are using the Exposed optional rule. If you aren't, this means nothing.

Note: This variant had extensive playtesting, much more so than the other rules in this section. While it worked alright and generally achieved what it set out to do, it was also less balanced and had more player complaints than the standard rules. The rule itself is good for the right setting, but the Classes and enemies are not designed around it, so there were problems.

2d6 Attacks

The goal here is to reduce the proportion of Strikes and critical hits from 1/6 each to 1/12 each, while keeping the rest of the odds more-or-less the same. Rolling 2d6 in this way will have a more predictable feel. Just because you're using the variant Skills on page 72 doesn't mean you'll need to use these or vice-versa.

Roll 2d6

- 11-12 Effect + 2xDamage (Treat it as a 6)
- 7-10: Effect + Damage (Treat it as a 4, for 7-8, or a 5 for 9-10)
- 6: Effect or Damage (Treat it as a 3)
- 4-5: Miss (Treat it as a 2)
- 2-3: Miss and a Strike (Treat it as a 1)

The parentheses indicate what to do when the rules refer to "rolling a 6" or anything like that. In this variant, that is equivalent to rolling an 11-12.

Advantage means you roll 3d6 and drop the lowest. Disadvantage means you roll 3d6 and drop the highest. A -1, as from a Major Condition, is simply a -1 still.

Saving Throws and Initiative are still 1d6 rolls. There is no reason to make them 2d6.

A few powers and bonuses are affected by this change. They are as follows.

Archer: Sniper or Blitzer bonuses: +2 on a hit instead of +1.

Warlord: *Enumerate Its Weakness*: "rolls 3 dice..." becomes "rolls 4 dice and drops the 2 lowest."

Magician: "When you roll a 6 on an attack" becomes "When you roll a 10 to 12 on an attack."

Leader: *Reveal Weak Point*: "...roll an extra die" means that they roll 4 dice and drop the lowest 2.

Optional Rules Module: Damage Types

Here I present three ways of dealing with typed damage. The first and second are things many roleplayers will be familiar with. The third is based on a matrix of interactions. Many games have this in the form of a rock/paper/scissors style interaction, but it can be made more complex if desired.

Free-form Damage Types

Some attacks have a damage type and some enemies have resistances, vulnerabilities, or immunities to certain damage types. The basic resistance looks like *Resist 1 Fire*, meaning that any incoming fire damage is reduced by 1. A mechanical construct might have this trait. See *Resist X* in the Glossary for more details. The basic vulnerability looks like *Vulnerable 1 Fire*, meaning that any incoming fire damage is increased by 1. An animate scarecrow might have this trait. *Immune Fire* means that all fire damage is ignored. A spirit of elemental fire might have this trait. There are also different sorts of vulnerabilities and resistances that can be used, such as: *Resist Fire: when the creature takes fire damage, its next attack deals an additional 1 fire damage*, or *Vulnerable Fire: when the creature takes fire damage, its Regeneration ceases to function on its next turn*.

Of course, you need not be limited to elemental damage types or to the types traditionally used in D&D. Damage types by power source (e.g. Arcane/Divine/Psionic) or by weapon type have been used in the past, but be creative and don't just put in the same old damage types because that's how you've always played. We're trying to be progressive over here.

So how do you add these things to your game? On the GM side of things, just add in appropriate resistance and vulnerability traits to your monsters and if any of your players have resistances or vulnerabilities (see below for how players get such things), add

in appropriate damage types on the monsters’ attack powers. This can be done very quickly with little thought.

On the players’ side, a player can choose a damage type for each power if they so desire. Picking a damage type is a message to the GM that this player wants to have situational advantages in some fights and situational restrictions in others. The GM should be sure to use monsters that have vulnerabilities and resistances to the damage types players are using.

If a player wants one or more powers to have variable damage types, for instance “With this power sometimes I summon a flaming sword, but sometimes it’s a spear of ice or an axe of cold iron,” they want to get the advantages without the restrictions. This is perfectly okay, but it costs them a Feat to do so.

How do players get resistances (or vulnerabilities)? The simplest way is through magical items granting these properties. Players might also take a Feat granting them *Resist 1* to a certain damage type. If a player wants to create a character that resists a certain damage type but is vulnerable to an equally common damage type, it does not cost a Feat. Events may transpire in game giving these Statuses temporarily or permanently in the form of a curse or a boon. Use trade-offs: maybe they become immune to fire but vulnerable to psychic attack.

The availability of specific damage types, resistances or Feats may always be restricted by the group for either balance or setting concerns. If the players all know that the campaign is going to be fought nearly exclusively against fire elementals, allowing fire damage to be resisted even at the cost of a Feat might present a balance issue. If the setting says that the Green Ray Emitters are only in the hands of the Cadre’s elite forces and are biometrically locked to prevent others from using them, you won’t want to make that damage type freely available. Maybe you make it cost a Feat or maybe you restrict it entirely.

Weak and Strong Defenses

Instead of changing how hard attacks hit based on their damage type, one can instead change how easy it is to hit with certain types of attacks. While most attacks are avoided by a combination of dodging and protective equipment, other attacks may target a character’s willpower or might only be resisted by main strength and toughness. A player may choose at character creation to have one strong defense and one weak. Add 1 to all attack rolls against their weak defense and subtract 1 from attack rolls against their strong defense. Willpower and Toughness are just examples: based on the setting and tone, you may wish to have other types of defenses that can be weak and strong. The one limit to keep in mind is that attacks targeting these special defenses should be the exception, not the rule.

Matrix Damage Types

In this system every creature has a type and so does each attack. Some attacking types deal extra damage against certain types of creature and some do reduced damage. Some creature types may be immune to certain types of damage too. The most common implementation of this type of system is a rock/paper/scissors style where rock creatures do rock attacks which are extra effective

against scissors creatures who use scissors attacks and so on. But the type of attacks a creature has don’t need to be linked necessarily to the creature’s type. The most famous implementation of such a system that goes beyond simple rock/paper/scissors is Pokémon. That particular matrix is pretty complex, and I wouldn’t recommend using it except in the Pokémon setting. Here is a simpler matrix to demonstrate the idea:

Damage type vs. defense type				
Attack \ Defense	Physical	Spectral	Harmonic	Iron
Physical	—		-1 dam.	+1 dam.
Spectral		+1 dam.	—	-1 dam.
Harmonic	+1 dam.	-1 dam.		—
Iron	-1 dam.	—	+1 dam.	-1 dam.

Reading down the first column in this example, Physical attacks cannot damage Spectral targets, but they deal extra damage to enemies animated by Harmonic magic, and reduced damage to the Iron servants of the Geomancers.

The simplest way to make a matrix work for your game is to have all the types be more-or-less equally good at offense and at defense. Then everything is balanced and a player can choose any damage type for each of their attacks and any defensive type they like, just as in the free-form system.

However, there are interesting situations that arise when you have some types that are stronger than others. An enemy that is immune or resisting the most common types makes an interesting foe as players need to improvise ways to be effective. But how do you balance that in the players’ hands? The same way as in the free-form system above—require Feats for access to certain types, and/or completely restrict types. To reiterate, these restrictions should arise from either balance concerns or setting concerns. Both kinds of concerns are valid, regardless of what people on the internet might tell you.

Let’s look at our example above and let’s assume that most attacks and most creatures in our setting are “Physical.” Now Iron-type attacks are excellent because you’ll be doing extra damage to most targets, so access to that damage type may cost a Feat or might be usable only for Encounter Powers. On the defensive side, Iron resists Physical attacks. You might decide that having Iron type requires a Feat since it gives you resistance to most attacks, although it comes with a vulnerability, too. Going further, Spectral type may be restricted to NPCs only since it is immune to Physical attacks, which would be too powerful for a player to have.

Creatures can have more than one type. When an attack is used, both the resistances and vulnerabilities apply. Multiple resistances and multiple vulnerabilities are cumulative. Multi-typing could be available to players for free, for the cost of a Feat, or available to NPCs only as the setting and game balance demand.



The Toolbox

The Toolbox is a collection of useful tricks and practices, with advice on using well-known settings, creating villains, and adapting *Strike!* to adversarial play.

Sample Scenario

The following is a brief sample scenario for you to start improvising from. If you want pre-generated characters, monsters, and more details for this scenario and others like it, visit the website at www.strikerpg.com and look for the sample adventures.

The Archaeologist Finpus Blin has just unearthed a grand tomb in the hills outside the city of Saramay. It is suspected that this is actually the tomb of the Magus Menda. Legend has it that in a past age, Menda ruled half the world for a century before a rebellion overthrew her and entombed her.

There are forces today that are interested in breaking the seal despite the dangers. The now-dying race of Androids known as Chemical Men or Chems were still being produced in Menda's time. One Chem Preacher named "Arlis of the third eye" and a group of her followers wish to use Menda's ancient wisdom to create more of their own kind. "King" Gossage the loan shark and crime boss who owns half of Saramay's docklands is interested too. He is secretly the Bodyswapper Chalamathan, who wishes to inhabit Menda's body to steal her power and longevity. A small handful of Shades surviving from that Aeon still revere her memory and would like to see her rule reestablished.

The Chems are diligently translating ancient texts. If left to their own devices, they will find the key. Chalamathan has used his wealth to purchase an Unmaking, a rare and ancient artifact that can destroy any spell. Once used, it is gone, so Chalamathan must be careful and study the warding spells to avoid wasting it on some minor obstacle. If given the time, he will find a way in. The shades have no need for translation, but are slow and patient and will be opportunistic, stealing information and letting others do the work as is their way. Any or none of these factions might prevail. Only one thing is certain: the players cannot stand against Menda. If the seal is broken and they face her without first making preparations to ensure their safety, they will be forced to flee or be destroyed.

What exactly are Shades and Bodyswappers? Make it up. Fill in the gaps together and leave some gaps to be filled in during play.

Who are the players? Do they want to free Menda or to keep her imprisoned? Do they want to work with one of the factions outlined above or do they want to stop them all? They may or may not be a group, but they need to have a reason to work together. Once you've collectively decided on your group goal and picked characters, you're ready to go.



Other Worlds

Familiar worlds adapted

In this section you will find three very different setting adaptations. I would love for you to use them. I put a lot of enthusiasm and attention into them. But more importantly, you might use this section to get ideas for how to adapt other settings to *Strike!*, and adapt *Strike!* to other settings.

Masters of the Four Elements

The Setting

Welcome to a world of fairy-tale creatures, mythical spirits, and masters of the four elements. This section will give you sample villains and characters and a brief sample scenario to set the tone. It also contains a set of Origins and Kits for use in this setting.

Villains

Guo, a crystal master with a crystalline fortress guarded by spirits. Source for a crystal dealer named Ikkot who is selling useful little bound spirits on the black market.

Nara learned fire-leaping from an imprisoned ifrit. Taught disciples, who are committing thefts. Has advanced to lightning transport. As a big reveal, can steal a Metal Controller's body by traveling through their wires.

Characters

Rime, a snow master who can blind you with blowing snow or by icing your goggles, and turn a puddle of water into a flurry of snowflakes.

Zeke, an autistic air master whose unique outlook has given him a very different variety of Air Control using pressure differentials.

Cal, an enormous fire master who makes a living running a travelling show in which she will eat anything and withstand a variety of bodily assaults without flinching.

Voda, a crystal master who treats bound spirits with respect and is horrified and offended by the trinkets Ikkot deals in.

Scenario

A series of daring thefts has Capital City in an uproar. A group of criminals known as the White Heart have been using a new fire mastery technique to teleport through flames. Merchants are pointing fingers at Ikkot, a dealer in bound spirits for use in cooking and household maintenance. The merchants claim that all of Ikkot's competitors are being robbed by the White Heart while Ikkot gets richer by the day. But a cursory investigation into Ikkot will find no shady deals and no direct association with the White Heart. The true connection goes deeper than that. Ikkot's source for his helpful little spirits is a man named Guo, the first true master of the art of trapping spirits. While small spirits have been bribed and tricked into helping with household tasks for generations, the scale and methods of Guo's spirit-catching operations are offensive to those in tune with the spirits. Worse, Guo draws no distinction between the small animal-like spirits and the larger intelligent spirits, enslaving all alike. Guo sold one such intelligent spirit, an ancient spirit of fire, to Nara, an ambitious fire master who is now the leader of the White Heart. This spirit taught Nara the secrets of teleportation through flames and she passed on that teaching to her disciples.

I like this sort of scenario with two linked antagonists because it is flexible and allows room for player choices and priorities. The players can get to Nara by going through Guo, or vice versa. They might prioritize spiritual concerns and be driven by moral imperative to end Guo's enslavement of spirits, or they might have baser concerns and simply have been hired to put a stop to the White Heart. To solve the mystery of one villain, they must confront the other.

Character Creation

To create a character, follow the usual steps and pick one of the following Origins. Then, pick a Kit—if you want access to an elemental mastery beyond the very basics, you must pick one of the Kits presented here. These Kits are unlike the standard Kits in that these are meant to be restrictive. If you do not have the Rocket Flight Advance, then you cannot use your Fire Mastery Skill for rocket flight. If you do not want elemental mastery, you can simply pick a standard Kit.

Origins

Here are some Origins for initiates for each element. These are just suggestions, so if you want to change the Water Initiate's Swimming Skill to Sailing, that's fine. The Skill and Complication just have to make sense in the context of the origin. Keep the elemental control Skill, though—that's what makes you an initiate!

Water Initiate

Skills: Water Control, Swimming

Complication: Water Scarcity*

*Fire Initiates make their own fire, and air and earth are plentiful, but there isn't always a large source of water around when you need one.

Fire Initiate

Skills: Fire Control, Cooking

Complication: Quick to Anger

Air Initiate

Skills: Air Control, Meditation

Complication: Devoutly Non-Violent

Earth Initiate

Skills: Earth Control, Weightlifting

Complication: Bullheaded

No Elemental Talent

Choose or write any origin.

Kit/Backgrounds

Here are some special Kits/Backgrounds. These Kits don't work the same way other Kits work. These restrict what everyone can do with their Skills. For example, if you want to use water mastery to preserve someone in ice, you must have the appropriate Advance. That's something that was off limits for the Kits in the main body of the game, since it's important that Skills can do whatever makes sense. When the Psychic Kit gives you the Mind Scan Advance, it doesn't mean that you can't try to read someone's mind before you get the Advance. You can always try it with an appropriate Skill using the normal Skill rules even if you're not using Kits in your game at all, but the Advance makes you better or more reliable at it.

In the context of a particular setting, though, it can make sense to block off specific abilities behind Advances. If you decide to use these Kits, they restrict what the players can do. Without the Healing Waters Advance, a player cannot use their Water Control Skill to attempt the water peoples' traditional healing magic. Any Skill that can be unlocked through an Advance is otherwise Restricted. Each elemental control Skill allows you to control medium-sized amounts of the appropriate element: from a pebble to a person-sized boulder, for instance. Controlling the smallest or largest scales must be unlocked through Advances.

One last difference: these are Kits and Backgrounds in one. So when you pick a kit from this list, you don't need to choose a background. If you pick a regular Kit instead, you should pick a regular background, too. Regular Kits that are recommended for this setting include The Boss, The Tinker, The Brute, and The Protagonist.

Note: To poach an Advance from another Mastery, you must have any Skills that Advance refers to. For instance, you must have the Ice Control Skill to take the Snow Control Advance.

Note: If you take one of the Advances that requires a partner of another Mastery and also poach the equivalent Advance from that Mastery, you can perform the feat by yourself. E.g. a Water Master could spend two Advances to take their version of Weather Control and poach the Air Master version and thus control the weather without needing a partner.

Clarification: When an Advance tells you to unlock a Restricted Skill, do not automatically learn it. Your first tries are Unskilled.

Setting-specific General Advances

Meditation

When you stop to meditate and consult the spirits before taking on a task, roll your Meditation Skill. (This functions essentially as a Linked Roll). Some people see the spirits manifestly, but most simply get a feeling or a sign for guidance.

On a Success, the spirits guide you. Tell the group what they advised to help you complete your task and get Advantage on the task when you follow that path.

On a Success with a Cost, you also owe a Favor to a spirit.

On a Bonus, a friendly spirit takes a liking to you and will guide you in the future, giving you Advantage when you meditate about topics they are knowledgeable about. The GM picks those topics.

On a Twist, pick one:

- The spirits give advice you are unable or unwilling to follow. It might still be interesting or useful.
- The spirits give advice, but it doesn't provide you with Advantage. It might still be interesting or useful.

On a Twist with a Cost, the GM will pick one:

- You get trapped in your trance for a while. You get some insight eventually, but lose crucial time. It might be that you are too late or that the spirits showed you that you ought not attempt the task after all.
- You misinterpret the signs and choose a bad path. You have Disadvantage on your Task.
- You face a hostile reception from some spirits and have bad visions. You have Disadvantage on future Meditation rolls until you bring your spirit back into balance.

Pet

You have a loyal pet. It might be a regular creature, or it might be a machine or a spirit. This pet is useful. Pick one:

- It's big, so you and your friends can ride on it.
- It's small, so it can sneak in or out of danger.

Pick one:

- It flies.
- It can burrow.
- It can swim and dive underwater.
- It has extra senses.
- It can talk.
- It has clever thieving hands.

Allegiance

You owe your allegiance to an organization. When you call on the organization to help you out of a bind the GM will tell you how many Allegiance Tokens it costs you. One if it costs them little. Two if they must take a significant risk. Three if they must pay something they consider significant. If you don't have enough Allegiance Tokens to pay, they won't help and you're on your own.

Every so often, about once per session, they may ask you to do something. Sometimes this will be a simple task, but sometimes difficult. If you do the task, gain an Allegiance Token. If you attempt but fail, you gain and lose nothing. If you refuse, lose an Allegiance Token. If the task is particularly important to the organization and particularly difficult, the GM might tell you it is worth two Allegiance Tokens, but then refusing it would also cost two.

If your repeated refusals take you deep into the negatives, you ought to consider ending your allegiance and taking a different Advance, as you and the organization no longer see eye to eye.

When you go above and beyond the call of duty for your organization, the GM will award you an extra Allegiance Token.

Example: The Inventors' Guild wants you to kidnap Gagan before he reveals their trade secrets in front of the General Assembly. This is crucial for the guild, but you know that Gagan needs to be there to oppose Mei's takeover of the Security Council. You decide to turn them down and lose your last two Allegiance Tokens. The fate of the nation is more important. Now you're on the outs with the guild for a while, but maybe you can make it up to them by giving them commercial rights to your latest invention.

Multi-Element Master

All the basic elemental control Skills are Unrestricted to you (i.e. Water, Ice, Earth, Fire, and Air). You may take Advances from any Elemental Master Kit for which you have the appropriate Skill.



Water Master



Skills: Water Combat, Ice Control, Soothing, Sailing, Fishing and Coastal Foraging, Water Elders (Connections)

Trick: Dowsing. A Water Master can always find a nearby source of water, even if it's well-hidden.

Penniless [0]

Push and Pull

Flow in one direction and then use the natural reaction to reinforce your next move. When you reverse your plans as part of a planned feint or as an improvisation or reaction, you have Advantage.

Advances

Preserve in Ice

You may safely preserve in ice an injured or sick person or animal, or anything that would otherwise crumble or decay over time. You may thaw it safely later, and it is as if no time had passed for it.

Snow Control

You may use your Ice Control to control particles of ice as small as snow and to break up ice into snow.

Waves and Resonance

Push and pull, push and pull, building up larger and larger waves. Using Water Control, you may take extra time to create far more powerful effects than usual.

Fog Machine

You may use your Water Control to turn water into steam, fog, or mist.

Water Breathing

You can breathe underwater.

Ride the Current

In very large groups, people and their opinions flow and mix like currents in a stream. Unlock the Trend Reading Restricted Skill. Use this Skill to find out how people feel now and how that will change in the near future.

When you successfully identify a social trend using Trend Reading, you may ask the GM how to best take advantage of the trend. You have Advantage while following that advice.

Guide the Current

(requires Ride the Current)

You may use your Trend Reading Skill to try to shape and manipulate popular opinion through political activism or surreptitious rumors.

Pool of Dreams

You have a sacred pool of water that you peer into to receive visions. When you look into the pool, pick a time, place, person, or object you wish to see. The GM will show you a vision of that. The vision might not contain precisely the information you were looking for, but it will contain useful information. The pool cannot see the future. Looking repeatedly into the pool does not work. You must wait a while before you can get another vision.

Water Healing

Unlock the Water Healing Restricted Skill. Use it to heal wounds, remove toxins, and treat mental trauma. You need access to very pure water for difficult healings. Healers usually carry a flask of it.

Spirit Calming

(requires Water Healing)

Through your Water Control, you may use your Soothing Skill to calm angry spirits.

Spirit Domination

(requires Spirit Calming)

You may use your Soothing Skill to control spirits and bring them to your side. This is coercive and is generally forbidden by those with knowledge of spirits.

Sudden Erosion

You may use your Water Control Skill to use water like a drill to quickly erode earth and stone.

Plant Control

Unlock the Plant Control restricted Skill. Using the water inside plants, you can make them move at your command. This works better on supple plants like vines and less well on rigid ones like trees.

Animal/Human Control

(requires Plant Control)

Unlock the Animal Control Restricted Skill. You can use your control over the water in an animal's body to control their actions against their will. The use of this powerful ability against humans is forbidden in every society.

Weather Control

(w/ Air Master partner)

Team up with an Air Master with this same Advance to control the weather.

Sinkhole

(w/ Earth Master partner)

Team up with an Earth Master with this same Advance to turn the earth itself into a sinkhole over a large area and solidify it again.





Air Master



Skills: Air Combat, Glider Flying, Animal Handling, Evasion, Doing Without*, Spirit Guides (Connections)

*Air Masters are often ascetic and are trained to fast and to go without comforts.

Trick: Air Cushion. You can always escape a fall unharmed or save a falling friend.

Penniless [0]

Fly Like the Wind

When fleeing or escaping, you have Advantage.

Advances

Asceticism

(requires Meditation)

You spurn the luxuries of the physical world. In return, your self-control becomes stronger. When you use the Meditation Advance to prepare for a future roll, whatever the result of your Meditation you may make a helping roll for yourself on that future roll.

However, if you put your physical comfort ahead of your mental discipline, the GM will give you the Unbalanced Condition. This gives you Disadvantage to all uses of Meditation and denies you that helping roll. To recover, ask the GM what you must give up.

Spirit Projection

(requires Asceticism)

Using the Meditation Skill, you can go into a trance and send your mind to another plane of existence. This is the realm of spirits, dreams, and sometimes the dead. You can do more than just seek advice—you can take an active role in the realm of the spirits.

Become Spirit

(requires Spirit Projection)

The pinnacle of spirit projection is the ability not just to travel to the spirit world for a time, but to leave your body completely. Your body must be safe, but through your ascetic training you have ceased to have bodily needs and can live wholly as a spirit.

Vacuum Generation

Using your Air Control Skill, you can remove the air from a volume of space, creating a sucking, choking vacuum.

Crushing Pressure

(requires Vacuum Generation)

You may use air pressure differentials to crush even the strongest objects using your Air Control Skill.

Unstable Telekinesis

Using pressure differentials, you can use your Air Control Skill to cause objects to move and fly through the air. You cannot lift very heavy objects in this way, and lifting delicate objects is unwise.

Toxic Gasses

You keep with you at all times a vial containing a toxic gas. You can use your Air Control when you unstop this vial to disperse it or direct it to a target.

Broad Application

You may use your Air Control Skill to generate a wind over a large area. Not as intense as what you can accomplish in a small space, this is nevertheless strong enough to stymie a fleet of sailing ships.

Flight

You may fly without the use of a glider or any other aid. Unlock the Fly Restricted Skill.

Minor Illusions

You can use dust and disturbances in the air to alter the appearance of things. Unlock the Illusions Restricted Skill. Use this Skill to create minor visual illusions.

Cloak of Wind

(requires Minor Illusions)

You can camouflage yourself effectively with your Illusions.

Move Silently

You do not make any noise when you move. This often gives Advantage when you are being stealthy.

Silence

(requires Move Silently)

Using your Air Control, you can create a zone of silence in an area around you with a radius of about ten feet. You don't need to roll to do this unless you are also using Air Control for something else at the same time. This acts like Move Silently for a whole group.

Far Listening

Air Masters can hear sounds from farther away than others. You can use your Air Control Skill to eavesdrop or listen for danger.

Throw Sound

Sound is vibrations in the air. An Air Master with great precision can create sounds. Unlock the Throw Sound Restricted Skill. You can create auditory illusions.

Glass Breaks, Ears Bleed

(requires Throw Sound)

You can use your Throw Sound Skill to create a sound loud and piercing enough to cause pain and break glass.

Weather Control

(w/ Water Master partner)

Team up with a Water Master with this same Advance to control the weather.

Firestorm

(w/ Fire Master Partner)

Team up with a Fire Master with this same Advance to feed oxygen to the flames and create a deadly destructive firestorm all around you.





Earth Master



Skills: Earth Combat, Earth Cuffs*, Construction, Tracking, Farming and Foraging, Earth Mentors (Connections)

*Used to restrain others

Trick: Stand Your Ground. An Earth Master can always hold their ground against someone trying to force them to move.

Penniless [0]

Neutral Jing

When you let your opponent make the first move and then use their momentum against them (literally or metaphorically), you have Advantage.

Advances

Burrowing

You can use your Earth Control to create tunnels large enough for others to pass through.

Pass Through

You can move through and merge into walls without damaging them.

Metal Control

Unlock the Metal Control Restricted Skill.

Wire Fu

(requires Metal Control)

You always have strong wires spooled and ready on your person. You can use your Metal Control to launch them, swing on them like Spider-Man, or lasso your enemies.

Sand Control

You can use your Earth Control to control particles of earth as fine as sand, and to break up earth into sand.

Launchpad

You can use your Earth Control to launch yourself into the air and to soften falls.

Broad Application

You can use your Earth Control Skill to move the earth over a broad area, though not as radically as you can do with a small amount. Nevertheless, your broad control is strong enough to create an earthquake or to slowly open a large chasm.

Rolling Road

(requires Broad Application)

You can use your Earth Control Skill to move a large section of earth along, carrying everything on top of it. You can effectively turn the ground you are standing on into an earth barge.

Armor

You can use your Earth Control (or Metal Control if you have it) to quickly create a suit of armor from materials at hand.

Strength of Stone

(requires Armor)

When you make a suit of armor using the Armor Advance, it gives you Advantage on rolls requiring you to lift, push, or otherwise exert sheer strength.

Structure Sense

You have an intuitive grasp of structural support and what will cause a collapse. You can use this to destroy or to reinforce structures. Ask the GM how to initiate or prevent a collapse. When you follow that advice, you have Advantage.

Tremor Detection

Unlock the Tremor Detection Restricted Skill. You can use it to sense what is going on nearby through the vibrations you feel. You can even use it to see through walls. This sense loses fidelity over long distances unless what is being sensed is very heavy, such as a train or an army marching.

Emotional Tremors

You may use your Tremor Detection Skill to detect emotions in others, and to detect when they are lying. You won't necessarily know what they are upset about, or what they are lying about.

Crystalline Mesmerism

Unlock the Crystal Master Restricted Skill. You may use the power of crystals to hypnotize people. Using this power to trick people into doing things they would normally be unwilling to do is obviously considered socially unacceptable. It is socially acceptable to use it to treat psychological trauma.

Crystal Prison

(requires Crystalline Mesmerism)

You may lure and trap spirits in crystals. This is coercive and is generally forbidden by those with knowledge of spirits. Finding a particular kind of spirit requires a Spiritual Knowledge Skill Roll. Trapping does not generally require a roll unless the spirit is of great power or is actively fighting you. When you release the spirit to do your bidding, roll your Crystal Master Skill:

On a Success, the Spirit does your bidding and leaves. With a Bonus, the Spirit happily returns to the Crystal instead.

On a Success with a Cost, the Spirit does your bidding, but you owe it a Favor and it will call on you later.

On a plain Twist, the Spirit ignores your bidding and does some minor mischief before leaving.

On a Twist with a Cost, the Spirit turns on you and the crystal you were storing it in breaks.

If you ever re-trap a spirit against its will after it has done your bidding, the result when you next release it will always be a Twist with a Cost.

Spirit Portal

(requires Crystal Prison)

You can use the power of trapped spirits channeled through perfect crystals to open a physical portal into the spirit world. When you do so, roll your Crystal Master Skill. If your crystals are less than perfect, you have Disadvantage.

On a Success with a Bonus, the portal is perfect and remains open for as long as you keep the crystals in place.

On a plain Success, you open a portal, but pick one of the following:

- The spirits are weak: the portal can only remain open long enough for one short trip.
- The spirits are angry: you can expect a chilly response in the spirit world.

On a Success with a Cost, it is as above, but you also owe a Favor to the most powerful spirit you used in opening the portal.

On a Twist, you open a portal, but the GM will pick one of the following, but will not necessarily tell you which.

- It is unstable and might close at any time.
- It takes you to a part of the spirit world you did not expect.
- One of your trapped spirits will escape when you are not looking. Vengeance burns in its heart.

On a Twist with a Cost, all of your crystals break and your spirits escape, and you are left with a permanent rogue portal. A rogue portal takes you to the spirit world, but moves around so you will have difficulty finding your way out and will never know where you might end up.

Lava Control

(w/ Fire Master partner)

Team up with a Fire Master with this same Advance to turn the earth nearby into lava.

Sinkhole

(w/ Water Master partner)

Team up with a Water Master with this same Advance to turn the earth itself into a sinkhole over a large area and solidify it again.

Suggested Feat

Taking the Superhuman Feat giving you tremorsense and the ability to burrow in combat fits this Kit well.



Fire Master



Skills: Fire Combat, Dueling, Games of Skill, Intimidation, Fellow Fire Masters (Connections)

Trick: Body Heat. A Fire Master is always able to control the temperature of their body, never falling victim to hypothermia, frostbite, or heatstroke, among other possibilities.

Poor [1]

Flash Fire

When you make your move before the enemy is ready, you have Advantage.

Advances

Get Mad

You can choose to become Angry to gain an Advantage on any roll using your Fire Control.

Emotional Control

When you roll a 6 on any Fire Control roll, in addition to an Extra Bonus, you may eliminate one emotional Condition, such as Angry or Afraid.

Ignite Passion

You can use your passions to incite others. Gain Advantage when you have a Condition appropriate to the emotion you are trying to evoke. For instance, if you have the Angry Condition and are trying to make others angry.

Electricity Redirection

Unlock the Electricity Control Restricted Skill. Using this Skill, you can redirect electricity from any source in a direction of your choosing.

Electricity Generation

(requires Electricity Redirection)

You can generate bursts of lightning from your fingers using the Electricity Control Skill.

Magnetism

(requires Electricity Generation)

You can use your Electricity Control Skill to turn your body into an electromagnet to attract or repel magnetic materials.

Broad Application

You can generate heat over a broad area. Not as strong as your ability to channel fire up close, you can nevertheless use your Fire Control to slowly thaw an iceberg or warm a building.

Heat Sense

Some Fire Masters can make sense of the heat around them, allowing them to see in a new spectrum and spot any heat source, whether it's a hidden person or a campfire hidden behind the trees.



Explosion Generation

Unlock the Explosion Control Restricted Skill. You may use this to generate and direct relatively small explosions.

Rocket-Flight

Use your Fire Control Skill to blast through the air. What you lack in precision you make up for in thrust.

Precision Application

Using a tiny jet of flame, you can wield your Fire Control very precisely to cut or to weld.

Iron Constitution

You may channel your life force to burn away toxins and poisons inside. This can protect against assassination, but also against simple intoxication.

Untouchable

You are immune to the effects of fire and heat.

Phoenix Rebirth

(requires Iron Constitution and Untouchable)

When you are killed, you erupt in flame. You will be reborn from your ashes in one day.

Heat Sink

You can use your Fire Control to suck the heat out of an object. Larger objects take longer.

Scrying through Fire

When you spend the time to build a sacred fire, you can see visions of the future through the flames. Name a person, place or thing. The GM will give you a selection of visions of possible futures involving that person, place, or thing. It will not always be clear what events would cause which vision.

Fires of Creation

With the right kind of fire, you can re-forged the spirits themselves, changing elements of their immutable nature. Unlock the Spirit Forge Restricted Skill. With this Skill, you could turn a tempestuous river spirit into a serene one, reducing the risk to sailors trading on the river. Beware unforeseen consequences, however. When you use this Skill, a Twist will usually indicate that you made the change you wanted, but that it didn't have the effect you expected. Spirits are the way they are for a reason.

Purging Fires

(requires Fires of Creation)

You can use your Spirit Forge Skill as a weapon to destroy spirits permanently. This is generally forbidden by those with knowledge of spirits. A land or an object that lost its spirit will change in unpredictable ways.

Teleport through fires

You can teleport by stepping into a fire and then out of another fire. You must know the exact location of the fire and it must be lit, otherwise the teleportation will fail and you will be rendered unconscious or Injured. This is most reliably done by travelling only to fires you can see.

Lightning Transport

(requires Electricity Generation)

You may turn to lightning and travel along conductive materials such as wires. In this form you can jump gaps of less than ten feet.

Firestorm

(w/ Air Master Partner)

Team up with an Air Master with this same Advance to feed oxygen to the flames and create a deadly destructive firestorm all around you.

Lava Control

(w/ Earth Master partner)

Team up with an Earth Master with this same Advance to turn the earth nearby into lava.



Star Strike!

A vast empire amongst the stars. A desperate band of rebels. Frontier worlds on the edge of imperial space, where people make their livelihood in the grey area between illegal and immoral. Are the rebels terrorists? Is the empire an evil totalitarian regime? Perhaps both those things are true. This setting has plenty of room for playing the squeaky-clean good guys fighting the good fight, while also having room for playing greasy no-good crooks trying to make their way in a dirty galaxy. Moral choices take center stage here, but they share the stage with starfighters, robots, laser-swords, and huge hairy aliens!

Aliens

There are lots of aliens and despite speaking different languages, everyone generally understands one another. When you write robot on your sheet for your Origin, you want to be able to do things like survive being taken apart and put back together, directly interface with and communicate with computers, and know a lot of information. You might want to engage in the idea that you are treated as an object that can be bought and sold or scrapped for parts without any moral qualms. Maybe you want to be a huge and intimidating alien who communicates in roars, or an alien from a race of gangster snails. Or maybe you want to be any of the many humanoid aliens that come in a variety of shapes and colors—in that case, you can just use any Origin you might pick for a human.

Robot

Skills: Direct computer interface, inhuman endurance

Complications: Considered an Object

Big, Scary, Hairy

Skills: Intimidation, Hand-to-hand combat

Complications: Can't Speak Common

Gangster Snail

Skills: Organized Crime [Connections], +1 Wealth

Complications: Barely Mobile

Outer Worlder

Skills: Manual Labor, Machinery

Complication: Provincial

Core Worlder

Skills: Urban Navigation, +1 Wealth

Complication: Spoiled

Space Jobs

Here are some Backgrounds that fit in this setting. Feel free to adapt these or any other Backgrounds.

Astromechanic

Skills: Navigation, Starship Repair, Engineering, Hacking, Electronic Parts Construction, Friendly with Computers (Connections)

Penniless [0]

Trick: Emergency Patch. You can always put a starship back into working order, at least for one flight.

Protocol

Skills: All Languages, Etiquette, Diplomacy, Flattery, Aide to the Powerful (Connections)

Poor [1]

Trick: Smooth Things Over. When someone has just insulted another, you can always calm the offended party.

Bounty Hunter

Skills: Starfighter Pilot, Laser Rifle, Nonlethal Weapons, Investigation, Friends in Low Places (Connections)

Poor [1]

Trick: Expert Tracker. You can always find out where your quarry went next.

Space Magician

Skills: Meditation, Moral Lore, Laser-sword, Magic, Magicians' Council (Connections)

Poor [1]

Trick: Mind Trick. You can always use your magic to convince someone not to bother with something they weren't committed to doing. For example, convincing someone to slack at their boring job.

Smuggler

Skills: Pistol, Starship Pilot, Smuggling, Bribery, Black Market (Connections)

Poor [1]

Trick: Evasion Ace. When being chased by the authorities, you can always make a getaway.

Spaceships

Spaceship fights are cool, and you will probably have a player who wants to fly around in space and get into battles. That's great, but it can be hard to make everyone feel involved. Try to have some on-board goal for characters to achieve if they are not actively involved in the piloting or shooting during the fight. Maybe they need to secure or hide some cargo, repair the FTL drive, decipher a code, fight off an assault drone trying to board the ship, or sneak aboard the enemy ship. One of the first planned mini-expansions for *Strike!* is vehicle rules, which will include a section on spaceships and dogfighting, so look for that in the near future.

Magic

There is magic out there amongst the stars, but this magic is powered by moral choices. If you have the talent for it, you can use your powers to reinforce and uphold your values. If you are weak, power tempts you and drags you towards a perversion of your values. There are two opposing views of magic in this universe, and a small number of practitioners who do not ascribe to either view.

What can magic do? Regardless of your ethical alignment, the basic powers it grants you are the same. You can move objects at a distance, fog a person's mind, sense magic, and move with superhuman dexterity. One Restricted Skill, Magic, gives you access to those four abilities. Other powers are possible, but you'll have to discover them in play—maybe your magic allows you to sense emotional pain, shoot lightning, control the weak of mind, or talk to plants. Learning such a power is done simply by learning an appropriate Skill. All magic use is driven by the usual Skill rules. The important thing isn't how you use your magic, but why.

I want to play in this world but without the magic. I don't like magic in my sci-fi.

Okay. So do that. Magic serves to highlight and accentuate the role of morality in the setting, but it's not the only way to do that.



White Magic

White magic is subtle and difficult. It's not the easy way. The easy way leads to darkness. When you pick this path, you have a Corruption rating that starts at 0. Be careful! If you give in to the Corruption, it can begin to take over, even to the point of overriding your control of the character.

When you use good magic within its purview, you are safe from Corruption. Its purview is protecting yourself and others. That's it. There are rules you are expected to follow. You can disobey these rules at any time, but you will gain Corruption that way and may come to regret your decisions. Make a Corruption Roll when you use your magic...

- ... for personal gain or selfishness, or to protect yourself at the expense of others.
- ... out of anger, revenge, or fear. This includes, but is not limited to, any roll when you have the Angry Condition or any other emotional Condition.
- ... to harm any life that does not pose an immediate threat, including a surrendering foe.
- ... to resort to violence when escape was an option.
- ... for convenience instead of honesty.

Wait, does that mean that I need to get up and walk across the room to get the remote instead of magically calling it to my hand?

There are two possible answers, and you and your group need to pick which one is right.

- Yes, using your powers for trivial convenience is the first step on the path to Corruption.
- No, using your powers for trivialities does not constitute a moral choice.

Corruption Rolls

When you make a Corruption Roll, roll a die. If the result is higher than your current Corruption rating, increase your rating by 1.

Temptation

When there is a chance for you to repeat your mistakes, the GM may tempt you. The temptation must be a similar decision to one that caused you to make a Corruption Roll in the past, or a follow-up to such a decision. If you try to resist the temptation, roll a die. If you roll higher than your current Corruption level, you resist the temptation. If the result is less than or equal to your current Corruption, you fall victim to it and must follow through with that temptation—the choice is out of your hands. Of course, you must then make a Corruption Roll.

Never! I won't!

If you fail a temptation roll but are absolutely adamant that you will not fall into that temptation, you may take the last-ditch effort of blocking your own magic. You lose all access to your magic and any associated abilities for the rest of the adventure. You must spend downtime afterwards to re-center yourself and come to terms with your choices. If you choose this, reduce your Corruption by one.

Tapping into Corruption

When you use your magic and your roll is less than or equal to your Corruption rating, you may tap into your Corruption and reroll. This represents using your anger, fear, and bad memories to drive you—a sure path to Corruption. You must abide by the better of the two results. When you do this, make a Corruption Roll.

Maximum Corruption

When you hit Corruption level 6, your slide into darkness is complete. Your character has become irredeemably evil, and their arc is at an end. At the end of this adventure you must give up your character to become an NPC and make a new one. Is there another option? How can you avoid this fate? Block your magic, as above. Take the downtime after the adventure to meditate on your decisions and reduce your Corruption. One other way: instead of reducing your Corruption during downtime, you might find a teacher to show you another path. Another way to deal with your emotions. A darker path...



Black Magic

Black magic isn't about being evil. It's about using your emotions to power your magic. You channel your anger, jealousy, and fear into your powers to make them stronger. You see magic differently than white magicians and are practiced at using your emotions productively in this way. Your magical Skill Rolls are never penalized for emotional Conditions such as Angry, Afraid, etc.

Tapping into Passion

When you are Angry, Afraid, or have any other similar emotional Condition and you dislike a result on a magic Skill Roll, you may tap into your passion and re-roll, taking the higher of the two results. You also can't just tap into that same source over and over again without inflaming your passion. If you wish to tap the same Condition a second time, you must go from Angry to Enraged (or from Afraid to Terrified, etc.). Since this is a Major Condition, it will give you a -1 to all your non-magical Skill Rolls.

Getting Angry

When you are not Angry and you dislike a result other than a 1 on a magic Skill Roll, you may choose to get Angry and re-roll. Take the higher of the two results. This counts as tapping into passion and uses your one "free" tap of the Condition, so any subsequent tapping escalates it to a Major Condition. You cannot use this on a 1 because a Twist with a Cost when using black magic usually means that you lost control of your emotions and went too far.

Nobody Likes a Black Magician

There is a downside to this power even if you use it responsibly, and that is that people do not trust you. Everyone assumes the worst about black magicians because of what some bad apples have done in the past and because of white magician propaganda. Sadly, this means that you must take pains to hide your power. Disguise yourself as a white magician, use your magic subtly, and suppress any rumors about you. If word gets out, the consequences will be dire indeed. You will find yourself a pariah and hunted by white magicians.

What is the difference between a black magician and a fallen white magician?

The white magician's arc is about resisting temptations. They do not know how to effectively channel their emotion like a successful black magician. Rather, a fallen white magician is a slave to emotion. Black magicians, being in tune with their passions, find it easy to manipulate fallen white magicians into doing their dirty work.

Gray Magic

Gray magic users don't put much stock in either the self-control and self-denial of the white magic users or the passion of the black magic users. You can use magic Skills, but you do not tap into your emotions for it, do not suffer temptations, and do not gain Corruption. Pick this path if you want to have cool powers but not worry about the morality or consequences. Is that missing the point? Yes, it absolutely is. But sometimes you want to miss the point because there's a more important point somewhere else.



The Company

These are special character creation rules for playing as a mercenary company in a world ruled by super-powerful wizards. To create a character, pick one of the Company Backgrounds below. Also pick 1 Trick and 1 Complication. Ignore the rest of non-combat character creation. You'll get other things instead.

Company Backgrounds

Company Veteran

Pick 1 Combat Skill, 4 Company Skills and 1 Free Skill .

Trick: Escape. You can always get yourself out when things get too hot. That's why you're still around and not in the ground.

New Recruit

Pick 1 Combat Skill, 2 Company Skills and 3 Skills from a regular background.

Trick: From the regular background you chose.

Company Cultist

Gain the Cult of the Company Skill. Pick 1 Combat Skill, 3 Company Skills and 1 Free Skill .

Trick: Incredible Athleticism. You can always succeed at a task that requires nothing more than climbing, running, or jumping.

Wizard

Gain Combat Magic, People-Sensing*, Showmanship, Magical Lore, Toughness**, and Trickery.

*Used for finding specific people and for sensing hidden people.

**Wizards in this world are inhumanly tough and hard to kill in proportion to their powers.

Trick: Magical Specialist: Pick a specialty, such as shapeshifting, weather magic, using animals as spies, or making flying carpets. You may make up your own but it needs to be specific, not broad. You can always succeed at that specialty.

Fallen Great Wizard

Pick 1 Combat Skill. Also gain Administration, Command, Strategy, Greater Sorcery (Lost), Empire History.

Trick: Fearsome Reputation. You can always intimidate someone who doesn't realize you've lost most of your powers.

Magical Null

Pick 1 Combat Skill and 1 Free Skill. Also gain Strategy, Tactics, Inspiration, Magical Null.

Trick: Strategic Genius. You can always come up with the right plan in a military situation.

Other Backgrounds

Other characters are possible but not included here. You may make up your own background if your character doesn't fit in these, but be careful—if you don't fall into one of these categories, then are you really part of the company? It is important for the tone of the game that everyone truly belongs.

Great Wizards rule the world, but their talents are beyond those of player character Wizards. Concerns over power level aside, to achieve the level of wizardry they have, they have sacrificed most of their identity, their past, and their humanity. They are villains and patrons for the company, not player characters. The company cannot stand against them directly, but they are not invincible—with teamwork and a good plan and the right tools, the company can take down anyone.

Combat Skills

The company are serious bad news. You may take as your combat Skill "Master of Arms" and be Skilled with any weapon you lay hands on. If you choose to take a specific weapons Skill (spear, bow, whatever) then you are one of the best in the world with that weapon—in exchange for restricting yourself, your skill with your chosen weapon is astounding. Mechanically, you use the Heroic Skill table from the optional rules section.

Company Skills

There are some Skills that the company trains and drills in. Everyone in the company has at least some of these Skills.

- *Artillery*
- *Cavalry*
- *Forage*
- *Intimidate*
- *Logistics*
- *Scout*
- *Siege*
- *Soldiering*
- *Tactics*
- *Tracking*

No Wealth

Individual resources do not play a big role in this sort of story. You are assumed to be paid well enough to drink and carouse to your heart's content—when you actually get some time off, that is. Bigger purchases than that will usually be made with company funds on behalf of the company. Your starting Wealth is 0. Securing funds for the company is the role of the Captain (although they may delegate the task). The company starts with a Wealth rating of 2 and many expenses. Without the support of a wealthy a patron to help replenish it, it is inevitable that the company's funds will go down.

Special Roles

Each player gets a special role in the company. Some of them come with out-of-game requirements such as keeping a chronicle or making maps. Here are five. If you need more, make them up. If these roles are not filled by players, fill them with NPCs.

Captain

This character is the captain. They are at the top of the chain of command. What they say goes. If not, it's mutiny or desertion—in essence a betrayal of your family. However, the captain always heeds advice from the men and women of the company and defers to them in their areas of expertise. Delegation is crucial, and micromanaging would not be tolerated. Restriction: cannot have the New Recruit Background.

Once per session, when you ask your fellow players for opinions about an important choice, and then make the final decision, gain an Action Point.

Annalist

The Annalist must record the deeds of the company in a chronicle. Gain a special Skill: Annals of the Company (Restricted to the Annalist only until they choose to pass them on or to take an apprentice). It can be used for keeping up the annals or researching in them, but its main use is as a knowledge Skill allowing the character to recall (and create) company history. On top of that, the annals are full of the cunning tricks the company has used over the centuries—you can use this Skill to ask the GM what the enemy will do and then declare what trick you have up your sleeve for that. Very powerful, but if you fail such a roll, the results are invariably disastrous.

Once per session, when you read a recap that you prepared about the previous session, gain an Action Point.

Surgeon

The only really good surgeon in this damned backwards part of the world. Gain the Skill: Surgery (Restricted—nobody else can have it at character creation and you cannot roll it Unskilled without training. Without training, you might roll First Aid or Medicine or Anatomy instead.)

Once per session, when you smooth over a potential problem or bickering, gain an Action Point.

Standard Bearer

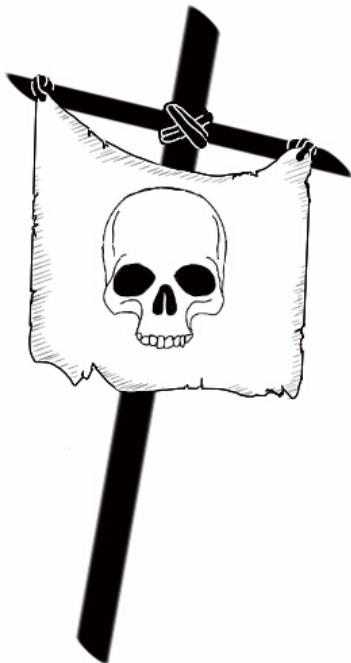
What it says on the label. Gain the Skills Conspicuous and Battlefield Inspiration (useful for rallying the troops, especially the fleeing ones).

Once per session, when you cut short discussion and lead the group into action, gain an Action Point.

Cartographer

The company often uses maps. The Cartographer must make real-life maps of the locations the company travels through, in cooperation with the GM. Gain the Skills Geography and Cartography (useful for creating maps to give bonuses to strategy, tactics, logistics, or journeying Skills). When the character makes a map, so should the player, and vice versa.

Once per session, when you make a map of a new location, gain an Action Point.





Villains

Having a villain that the players can encounter and interact with before the final showdown is great, but sometimes players will only see the short term and try to end things early. This is a natural instinct, surely, and it's one that is easy enough to work around with the right rules. This section will give you a selection of villains, each with a brief description, some roleplaying directions, and a couple of get-away techniques. Each get-away technique can work if you make it not feel cheap (if you can't use it without feeling cheap, don't use it!), but can only work once, and each one serves to emphasize to the players how this particular type of villain works.

How Evil?

Some of these villains rely on the fact that the players won't simply resort to outright murder and damn the consequences. If you want to make sure that players respect that boundary, a simple and open discussion about tone is the answer. What is the place of killing in this genre? Also note that if your villain is too evil, too inhuman, or their plan too world-destroying, the players will want to kill them simply out of prudence even if they generally do not kill their foes. The point of this section is to get you thinking about your players' likely reactions and how you can work within those bounds to play your villain better.

One thing not listed here that every villain needs is a motivation. Like any other character, you should always have the idea of what they want now at the forefront of your mind.

Leading the stampede

It's not really this villain's fault. They have been pushed into an impossible situation. The momentum is too great, and even if they wanted to stop they couldn't. This character is a good way to give a human face to a threat when the real villain is an intangible or inanimate foe, such as a super-virus or vast social forces. The question isn't how to stop them, but how to stop the forces behind them.

Origins

- They sparked the revolution but lost control.
- They created the threat, but it mutated or became self-aware.
- It was entirely an accident and they are too scared to try to stop.

Directions

- Show them bluffing.
- Show their control slip.
- Later, show them trying to stop what they started and being crushed or swept aside.

Get-Aways

- They don't get away. But like they've been saying, the threat will go on without them. It was never about them.
- They promise to help stop what they started. They change sides (falsely or in truth).

Unstoppable

This villain is all about sheer force. Physically, they are more than a match for their foes. Their danger is obvious and palpable. How do you stop someone who is literally unstoppable?

Origins

- A giant robot suit.
- A monster or shapeshifter.
- A perfect master of martial arts.

Directions

- They break stuff.
- They show off their physicality. They are gorgeous or grotesque.
- They show off their speed or agility.

Get-Aways

- They go where the players cannot follow. They leap onto a building or smash through walls.
- They are caught, but break free of their bonds or cell.

Messing with minds

This villain is dangerous because they make it so you cannot trust your senses. Their lair is disorienting in the extreme, and their servants are wholly under their sway. How can you defeat an opponent who can alter your very mind?

Origins

- Creator of mirrors, prisms, projections, or optical illusions.
- Master of hallucinogenic drugs.
- The power of suggestion.
- A superpower, like telepathy or illusion magic.

Directions

- They lie about everything. They lie about lying.
- They tell the truth only when the players are sure they are lying.
- They use their illusions to reveal the truth.

Get-Aways

- They only appeared to be caught. It was an illusion.
- The players see or hear the villain running and give chase to the illusion while the real one hides.
- Shut down the players' senses. Everything goes black and silent, or psychedelic and shrieking.

The Mystery

This villain has powers unknown. They are dangerous because nobody knows exactly what they can do. How can you stop somebody when you don't know what to stop?

Origins

- A monster, alien, spirit, cape, or visitor from the future.
- A cypher. A total unknown.
- An inventor, collector, or enchanter.

Directions

- They reveal that which was hidden.
- They reveal a new power.
- They claim a power they do not have.

Get-Aways

- They have a previously unseen power to effect an escape.
- They escape impossibly. What?! How??
- They escape, but must reveal the key to their powers to do it.

Too Useful

This villain has knowledge and tools that the players desperately need to fight worse villains. They are dangerous because the players need them. How can you thwart someone and expect them to turn around and help you?

Origins

- A broker of information and secrets.
- A collector of macguffins.
- An inventor and scientist.

Directions

- They give the players a free taste.
- They ask for something seemingly innocuous. Suspiciously so.
- They ask for something they don't really want, knowing that the players will bargain them down, or hoping that the process of getting that thing progresses their goals.

Get-Aways

- Make the players an offer they can't refuse.
- Make the players an offer they don't want to refuse.
- After their capture, they are freed by someone who owed them a favor.

You and What Army?

The boss is the leader of an army. They are dangerous because they command dangerous people. How can you stop somebody when you cannot even meet them without laying down your weapons?

Origins

- A leader of a crime syndicate or CEO of a megacorporation.
- A general or royal.
- A summoner of an army of monsters, a creator of autonomous machines, or a friend to the animals.

Directions

- They order another do their bidding.
- They hide behind guards and go-betweens.
- They request a meeting with the players, unarmed, on neutral ground.

Get-Aways

- Their henchpeople prevent their capture.
- An accomplice helps them escape.
- They buy their way out, bribing a guard.

The True Hero

This villain is beloved of the people and has a reputation for strength and goodness. They are dangerous because nobody believes they are dangerous. How do you stop them without being decried as villains yourselves?

Origins

- Actually was a true hero, but turned to darkness.
- Still is a true hero, but fights for different goals.
- Never was a true hero, but tricked people into thinking so.

Directions

- They go out openly amongst the adoring crowds.
- They announce their plans (or “plans”) to the world.
- They laugh at the insinuation that they are doing anything wrong.

Get-Aways

- They call on the people to intervene and prevent their capture.
- They are captured, but their loyalists free them.
- They are captured, but the players are taken to be villains until they release the true hero.

One step ahead

This villain always knows their opponents’ plans. Every action is accounted for and has a response. When their foes finally catch up with them in the sewers, they have already planted a bomb that will cause a moving train to crash, allowing them to escape in the chaos. How can you stop an opponent who knows your plans before you do?

Origins

- They are a product of the same training that created one of the player characters.
- They have a spy, mole, or bug amongst their foes.
- They have some kind of superpower or magic, like telepathy or a crystal ball or super-intelligence or time travel.

Directions

- They let slip something they should have no way of knowing.
- They brag that the players are playing right into their hands.
- They always act and drive the plot, and win while the players react...
- ...until the players take the initiative and go off-script. Reaction is not this villain’s strength.

Get-Aways

- They wanted to be caught. All part of the plan.
- They have a contingency. Something to provide an escape route or to create a distraction or urgent situation that the players need to deal with.
- They only appeared to be caught. It was actually someone else.

Kill Your Villains!

All of these villains have get-aways, but that doesn’t mean that they should always get away. Remember, you only use their get-away when it won’t feel cheap. Sometimes your players will put your villain away for good. Let them.

The flip side of this is that since players will be facing a villain of some sort one way or another, and since it is often more interesting to face recurring villains than a sequence of brand new ones, players should usually be on board when they foil the villain’s plan and save the day but the villain escapes, later to return.





Adversarial Play: Invasion!

In *Invasion!*, players square off against each other in an extended Team Conflict where every action they choose is determined by an individual scene. Players take on the roles of Generals, Prime Ministers, Empresses, Scientists, and Superspies during an invasion: figures whose actions decide the direction and outcome of the war.

Overview

The main idea is that the abstract level of the invasion is handled by a Team Conflict. The fate of the nation hangs on that conflict. But for each round, instead of simply picking an action and narrating what you do, you must have a whole scene around your attempting that action, with all the Skill Rolls and Complications and so on that a scene entails. How well you roll in the scene doesn't determine your action, though, only what you attempt. In this way, a session of play will encompass one or two rounds of the Team Conflict and the whole invasion is stretched out over several sessions worth of play.

Player Division

There are two options: standard or Player vs. Player (PvP). In standard, this is a piece of game structure that can be dropped into a typical game with a GM against the players. It essentially functions as a Team Conflict that overarches the scenes of the game. PvP puts all the players on an equal footing against one another in a GM-less game.

Player vs. Player

In PvP, the game works best if the teams are roughly equal in number. The game is competitive, but not cutthroat. The competition must be civil and sporting, with fairness valued above winning. A player who is just out to win without regard to fairness will ruin this game. Each player who sets a scene picks a player from the other team to be the GM of that scene. They should pick a player who does not have a character in the scene if possible. Every GM is required to follow the same rules—they can be tough, but they must be fair and their Twists and Strikes must be appropriate to the stakes of the rolls being made. Anyone can call out anyone else about a Twist that seems unfair or nonsensical. This is where the potential for ruining the game comes in: if one player decides that every Twist the other team rolls results in the direst possible con-

sequences, they minimize everyone else's chances of having fun. Be sporting and be prepared to admit mistakes when challenged. Being harsh with Twists does not affect the outcome of the overall conflict. That's the key here: you can play as hard as you like in the conflict mechanics and try your best to win, and being sporting doesn't take anything away from that.

Structure of the Conflict

Preparation is made to ensure that the conflict isn't over in just one round—this is intended for a short campaign of a few sessions. The structure can be adapted to other conflicts or to extensions of the conflict, too. After a successful invasion, maybe the next step is an insurgency and occupation. After a failed invasion, maybe a counter-attack is next. If you enjoy using this structure, you can continue until you've reached a satisfying conclusion.

Setting Up

Set up a standard Team Conflict, plus two extra traits per side granting invulnerability. Be sure to use the rule about "intelligent opponents" on page 76. For the invulnerability traits, generally, the defending nation should have territories that need to be conquered before they will admit defeat, while the invading force will have armies or reinforcements that need to be eliminated before they will pull back from the invasion.

In PvP, each side gets two traits granting invulnerability, and any team with fewer players getting an extra +1A/+1D and one extra trait for each player they are short.

Any other traits on either side that are important to represent should be included as usual. There is one important rule change from the regular Team Conflict rules to the *Invasion!* rules: Action Points can no longer prevent your team from losing.

It's important to lay out at the start which sort of actions constitute Advance and which constitute Defense. Advance for invaders means taking territory, holding taken territory, or ruining enemy infrastructure. Defense means protecting armies, recruiting, and maintaining supply lines. Something like propaganda could fall into either category depending on the intent. Advance for the defenders means eliminating invading armies and cutting off their supply lines and reinforcements. Defense means holding territory, retaking territory, promoting resistance, and maintaining morale and infrastructure.

You can alter those definitions to fit your situation, but whatever you decide, stick to the definitions! There should be some tension between what your characters want or have the capacity to accomplish in the fiction and what the optimal action will be.

Scene Structure

Before each roll of the Team Conflict, each player must set one scene in which their character plays a primary role. In their scene, they invite other characters in and decide on the general shape of the conflict. Their Team Conflict action they choose for the round must be based on the actions they took in their scene. The GM gets to set a number of scenes equal to the number of players on the other team. In PvP, a team with fewer players gets extra scenes to make up the difference.

You may make whatever rolls are appropriate in your scene, but once your goal has been won or lost, your scene is done. You may not play out the fallout and so on. That should be a Tangential Scene, which you can have later if you like, and which doesn't count towards the overall conflict, or you can simply narrate or gloss over the fallout. For now, it's time to give someone else a turn.

So if it doesn't change the outcome of the conflict whether I succeed or fail in my scenes, what difference does it make?

Everything that happens in a scene is still true! If your character gets captured, then unless your friends spend a scene rescuing her, your next scene is going to start with her in prison, which will severely limit your choices as to what you can accomplish. Making the outcomes of individual rolls within scenes affect the overall outcome of the conflict would have a distorting effect on play and compromise the sporting nature of the competition. Being fair to your opponents is just as strong mechanically as being unfair, so you should always be fair!

Tokens

There are two kinds of Tokens that are used to settle the order of the scene structure when there is disagreement over what should happen next. A Black Token can be spent before any Team Conflict roll to add one to either Advance or Defense. A Gold Token can be spent after any Team Conflict roll to add one to Advance or Defense. These Tokens are used to help answer the next two questions.

Who goes next?

Whoever wants to! Any player, including the GM, who wants to have a scene now may suggest one. After all suggestions have been heard, if multiple players from the same team want to go next, they should simply decide as a team what to do first. If they like, they may have a Tangential Scene devoted to the discussion about what to do next and let their characters hash it out and let the dice decide with an Opposed Roll. Tangential Scenes don't count as their scene for the round and don't directly influence the conflict.

If players from opposite sides each want to go next, they may simultaneously and secretly bid any number of Black Tokens from the bank. The team that bid the most gives the other team that many tokens (from the bank, not from their own pool, if they have any from previous bids). The invading team wins ties. The same process applies if both sides want to go second, although in this case ties go to the defending team.

I already had my scene, but now I want another.

You can take another scene any time (although a given character may never be the focus of two scenes in a row), but the cost to having an extra scene in a round is a Gold Token to the other team. The benefit to having another scene, on top of any narrative benefit you gain from it, and on top of Action Points you earn through your Complications, is that you may choose which scene to use when determining your action choice in the Team Conflict roll for the round.

I think we should have a Tangential Scene here. It would fit really well.

So suggest it. As long as the other players agree, then go for it. It doesn't count against you in any way, and it's good to have scenes to establish the facts of the game and how the characters interact. However, if another player wants to have a non-Tangential Scene first, they take precedence. This pushes the game towards action.

Do my scenes have to be huge in scope?

No, not at all. They should be relevant to the conflict, but they can be very personal. Your scene could be a tense confrontation between your character and another players' character arguing about policy. Your scene can be as big or as small as you like. The Team Conflict takes care of the big picture, so it's often best for you to make sure you take care of the details. Your scenes can be procedural, involving your character working to accomplish a discrete task, or they can be dramatic, involving other characters in open-ended conflict with yours. It's all up to you.

Do we all have to fight for the same things?

Not at all! Your characters can be mortal enemies, so long as they find themselves working on the same side. You can have a scene where you try to assassinate a teammate and still count as working towards your side of the invasion.

Can I have a Tactical Combat or a Chase for my scene?

Yes. A Chase, certainly. Chase is very fast, so there are no restrictions on Chase. For Tactical Combat, the one thing to keep in mind is that it will take half an hour instead of the five or ten minutes a regular scene takes. So you need to ensure that everyone is interested in investing in that, and that there is time to finish it, too. Too much or too little combat can be a drag, and everyone has their own preference. If the group likes to have a certain number of combats per session, aim for that. Also, any Tactical Combat must involve all the players somehow—sitting out for half an hour while the others play is no fun.

The GM side

GMs, you should choose major characters on your side of the invasion, but also have characters acting as antagonists within the other side, too. Having an antagonist within the other side could mean a traitor, but it could also mean a loyal fighter who opposes the player characters' methods. If the players present a united front, it is more important for you to put these antagonists in their midst. If the players like to have their characters squabble and fight one another, you can focus more on providing the external impetus to provoke that infighting. Most of your scenes should involve at least one player character in some way, but if you have a scene that you really want to show that doesn't involve them, you can simply invite them to play roles in opposition to the character you are highlighting. Even when you have a scene with a player character in it, you may invite the other players to play roles you assign—just tell them who the character is and what the character wants, and let them give it a shot.

Trying to Win

You should try to win the conflict. Follow all the usual advice with-in scenes, make things feel real and make them exciting. Within the mechanics of the Team Conflict, try to win. It makes the game more tense and exciting when the players know that they are up against a real challenge and stand a real chance of losing.

The Roll

At the start of the round, each side should declare a goal: what they hope to achieve should they score a Hit. Describe it in narrative terms and in the mechanics. If the players on a team can't agree, they should vote or compromise. If an enemy trait is being targeted, the fictional result is usually simple to describe. "We will take control of the Eastern Waters." If you are gunning for a Strike, that's your opportunity to declare something true—Strikes can seem weak compared to actually making progress towards victory, but when you can use them to make your wishes reality, their power can't be ignored. "We will form a naval blockade, stopping all foreign aid." If you score your Hit, the other side gets a Strike and your blockade is a fact. "We will assassinate General Arci." If you score your Hit, the other side gets a Strike and General Arci is dead! Your table needs to agree on whether or not it is appropriate to take out Player Characters in this way. If death is on the table, you should probably have a backup character in mind for this eventuality.

With this done, all the scenes are played out as described above. The scenes do not all need to relate to the overall goal for that roll, although often some of the scenes will relate to it. Fill in the details as necessary. It is possible that your entire team will roll nothing but Twists in their scenes and yet still win the resulting Team Conflict roll, or for the opposite to happen. This is because there are other forces at play, other actors in the conflict, and not everything is within your control.

Wrong Goal?

You should certainly be wary of having a scene where your team's goal is decided before the Team Conflict roll. If you personally assassinate General Arci in your scene, then what does the Team Conflict roll decide? Whether or not the General stays dead? Whether the General's replacement is equally strong? You must answer this question before having that scene. It may be that your team's goal needs to be changed.

Once the scenes are done, everyone chooses their actions and spends any Black Tokens. Rolls are made simultaneously for each side's Advance and Defense and then Gold Tokens are spent. The invaded team must always spend their Black Tokens first, while the invading team must spend their Gold Tokens first.

Once the result is clear, Hits are assigned and everyone discusses what the outcome means. If there is a winner on the roll, they narrate the outcome. If it was a draw or push, there must be a compromise. If the invaded team lost but still had an invulnerability, they probably lost one of their territories, or maybe a key trait was disabled instead. If it was a push, then the invaders likely gained ground but at the cost of having one of their armies smashed or supplies disrupted. The stakes are big here, and you should not be

afraid to advance the timeline by a significant amount. The next roll might take place months from now. When discussing this, you should speak out of character about what the outcome should mean, expressing your opinion, not your character's.

Assuming the Conflict continues, begin again, with each team announcing its goal for the next round.

If there is a final winner, with the losing side having no more invulnerabilities, move on to resolving the conflict in the usual way. The stakes are bigger, but the rules are the same. Concessions are serious business here! An entire nation was won or lost, so even a Minor Concession must have that sort of scope. Do what comes naturally now—if you feel like roleplaying out your characters' reactions to the results, go for it. If you'd rather talk about the results in an abstract way, that's cool, too. Take some time and give some thought to what you want to happen next. You could play another big conflict following on the heels of the last, or you could just go back to the base rules with your characters moving on to different goals. Or do you want to keep playing the same characters at all?

What happens on a double-tie? Well, the current conflict is over, for better or worse, and possibly prematurely. You all need to use the result to discuss what it means and whether it should mean the final end of the war or merely open up the beginnings of a new phase in the conflict.

Timing

Depending on how long your sessions are and whether or not you are playing out Tactical Combats, you might be able to finish one or two rounds per session. Finishing the Conflict as a whole will generally take between three and ten such rolls, typically around six. So if you are playing two rounds per session, you should plan on 2 to 5 sessions, with an expectation of 3 or 4. If you are playing shorter sessions and only play one round per session, double that.

Other Themes

You could try adapting these rules to any overarching conflict, not just an invasion. The stakes have to be high, though: higher than the player characters can handle on their own. It doesn't make sense to spend several sessions to answer a question that could have been answered in a scene or two of typical play.





Adversarial Play: Dangerous Delves

This section details a set of extra rules to facilitate adversarial play in a different way than *Invasion!* did. *Dangerous Delves* lays out restrictions that the GM must follow, but within those restrictions the GM can play as hard as they like and try to beat the adventurers. The set-up here is that there is a town and outside the town are various dungeons of varying difficulty, each housing treasure. The players can find out generally how difficult each one is and choose what level of difficulty they wish to attempt. Of course, this being setting-agnostic, the “town” and “dungeons” do not need to be literal. The “town” is simply a safe haven where characters can recover, and a “dungeon” is simply a relatively contained area populated by opponents and protecting something desirable.

Setting Up

The GM and the players work together to come up with the basic ideas and setting conceits. The players make characters and the GM works on outlining some dungeons. Each dungeon is rated on three scales: enemies, environment, and size.

The enemies ratings simply correspond to the level of the enemies in that dungeon. If there is a range of levels, the average level of the hardest two combats are used to calculate the rating.

The size rating tells you how many combats to expect. Short (2 or

3), long (4 or 5), very long (6 or 7), or marathon (8 or 9). The number of major noncombat obstacles should roughly parallel the number of combats, as should the number of minor obstacles. A major obstacle might take at most three successful rolls and some thought to overcome, or it might require every player to roll. A minor obstacle can typically be overcome by a single fairly obvious roll. A locked door is a minor obstacle, while a submerged hallway that everyone needs to swim through is a major obstacle. A Team Conflict also counts as a major obstacle.

The environment rating tells you what kind of Conditions you can expect from the threats other than monsters in the dungeon. Depending on the environment, some Conditions will be limited, which puts restrictions on how and when the GM may use them. Death is also limited or not depending on the environment. See “Limited Conditions” below for a full explanation of what limited means. Placid means that all Major Conditions are limited. Dangerous means that Injured is not limited. Deadly means that Sick is limited, but nothing else. Unhealthy means that Sick is not limited. A dungeon could be Dangerous and Unhealthy, putting both Major Conditions on the table, but not death.

How many dungeons do I have to make? Won't that take forever?

The GM does not have to make all the dungeons at once. They should have a brief description and some ratings, but they are not expected to have all the details. That's all the GM needs to know for now. The players will always pick their next destination at the end of a session, and the GM can fill in the details and prepare between sessions.

Example: “The Hive” is a derelict ship anchored about a mile out from the ruins of Miami Beach. It is infested with Formics left over from the first wave. It is a Short, Dangerous dungeon with Level 4 opponents, and lies less than a day's journey from the players' HQ in Epcot.

The GM should outline at least 6 dungeons within 3 levels of the players. As dungeons are completed, the players should find out about more so that they always have choices. Later on, they might return to a familiar dungeon for a new purpose. Once the dungeons are outlined and characters made, there is a bit of roleplaying as the players learn about each others' characters and the GM drops hints about the surrounding Dungeons.

Collaborative Treasure Creation

Players want cool treasure, and leaving it up to the GM in an adversarial environment doesn't really work. So the players will each come up with one item they want the most—this is called an Artifact, and can be essentially anything as long as it follows the item creation rules. Artifacts are not generally more powerful than other items, but they are special in that the GM has less freedom to mess with them. Each player also comes up with two items called Masterworks. Masterworks give a Trick or a conditional Advantage outside of combat, or an Encounter Power in Tactical Combat. Last, each player comes up with two items with powers that are not particularly useful, but might be amusing and could come in handy with some creativity—these are called Knick-knacks. Any item can have a Flaw for free. The GM may add up to one Masterwork per player and one Knick-knack per player to the list.

Every player should look over every item thus created and check for unbalancing aspects—a Trick that is too broad, or an Artifact that would be game-breaking. Any items deemed unfair should be revised. If there is a dispute over whether or not an item is fair, try to compromise. If compromise fails, vote. Everyone has an equal vote, and a tie indicates that the item must be revised.

Next, for each player, the GM should secretly come up with a “curse”: one of the items that player came up with will have a hidden downside that is not apparent at first glance. Artifacts cannot be cursed. They may also curse one of the items they created.

The GM then stocks the dungeons with all the items from the list. Each dungeon must have at least one Masterwork or Artifact. Short dungeons have a minimum of one item, and the minimum increases by one item for each length beyond that. The GM decides in secret where each item on the list goes, and tells each player where they can find their Artifact. Not every item must be stocked immediately, and some may be held in reserve for future dungeons, but all the Artifacts must be stocked.

Example: The Hive is Short, so it only needs one item, and the GM thinks it's a perfect place to put the nuclear flame-thrower Artifact that Allison has asked for. The GM also decides to include a portable fish-finder radar Knick-knack. The GM must tell the players about the Artifact, but doesn't need to say anything about the Knick-knack. “Allison, Colonel Vargas happens to mention to Burke that two weeks ago Captain Pinilla went into the Hive armed with a nuclear flamethrower and never came back out.”

Once treasure creation is done, the players can roleplay out coming to a decision about what they want to tackle first. This way the GM knows what they need to prepare for next time. Unless the GM feels confident in their ability to come up with a dungeon and combats in just a few minutes, it's okay to wait until next session. Any extra time can be filled with improvised non-adversarial role-playing using the usual rules. Surely there is something one of the players wants to do around town, or some little problem for them to solve together.

Once the GM has come up with the dungeon, the second session will start with gathering rumors and preparing (see Between Dungeons below), followed by traveling to the dungeon.

More Treasure

Eventually, you will need more items to stock newer dungeons. After the players have found a number of items equal to twice the number of players, they each create one more and the GM creates one per player. Artifacts replace Artifacts. For each non-Artifact item, the GM rolls a die. On a 1, that item is cursed. These rolls are secret.

Cash

A dungeon should have a cash parcel in it equal to half its level, rounded down. So a level 9 dungeon should have a level 4 cash parcel. If the players split it equally, just subtract one from its level. So a group of five players would end up with one level 3 cash parcel each. When asked to price an item, the GM must strive to be fair, but the decision remains with the GM.

Dungeon Building

When designing a dungeon, the GM is limited by the ratings they have announced to the group. The length determines how many combats to plan, the enemies levels are restricted by the enemies rating, and the GMs' use of Conditions is limited by the environment rating.

Combat Design

When designing Tactical Combats, GMs must follow the guidelines in the Combat Design chapter as though they were rules. In particular, a combat may only have the number of enemies described there (usually one standard monster per player) unless the players have agreed that they want a harder challenge. The monsters in a dungeon should all be within two levels of one another, and the dungeon's enemies rating is based on the hardest two combats.

When creating enemies, it is best if the GM simply modifies and re-skins the existing sample monsters. If they need to create a monster from scratch, they must use the points-based monster building referred to as “The Precise Way” on page 162. If using a trait or effect not listed in that section, find the closest analog to see what it is worth.

Favorable Terrain

If the terrain is slightly in favor of one side or another, don't worry about it. But if the terrain is stacked obviously in favor of Team Monster, reduce the number of monsters to compensate.

A specially designed defensive piece of terrain, like a turret with a small gap to shoot from, counts as one Goon for each monster it protects. Same for a well-hidden ambush point the monsters can hide in. Extend this to any other pieces of terrain that you include for the purpose of helping the monsters.

If there is no individual piece of purpose-built terrain helping the monsters, but simply an advantageous overall distribution of cover, that counts as one Goon. It counts as one standard monster instead if the players would need to spend more than one round to close the distance.

Traps and Hazards in Combat

A basic trap attacks at the end of each round, can be disabled with a single successful Skill Roll, and/or can be smashed with an HP threshold like a Goon. Such a trap counts as one Goon. A more dangerous trap might take five successful Skill Rolls to fully disarm, and/or has the HP of an Elite. It can attack everyone at the end of each round, and is worth one Elite. If a trap falls between those two baselines in power, it counts as one Standard Monster.

Some hidden hazards fall in between the ideas of favorable terrain and attacking traps. A simple hidden pit trap that deals 4 damage and knocks the victim prone, for instance, is worth one Stooge. Players who use the Assess action and ask the right question will find such traps easily, obviating most of their danger. If there are multiple such hidden traps and a player uses Assess and asks if there are traps, you must tell them yes, and you must reveal the location of one such trap. The rest can be found one at a time by

further Assessing, or players can spend a Move Action and ask about a 5x5 area to reveal that sort of trap if it is in the area they asked about.

More complex hazards might be worth more than a Stoooge. Imagine how you expect the combat to go and try to honestly evaluate how much effect the Hazard will have and how difficult it will be for the players to avoid it. There is some blurriness in the costs here. You must use your best judgment and evaluate these things as fairly as possible. Once you have done that, though, you are free to use them to the fullest extent of your abilities in Combat and try to beat those characters! You are expected to play as fairly as possible in the building phase and to play as hard as you like in Tactical Combat, so long as what you are doing makes sense.

Limits

Limited Skills

The GM should come up with a list of Skills (about 20 is a good number) that will be sufficient to attempt most rolls in the dungeons. The players will thus know what Skills to aim for during character creation and in play so they don't end up creating characters who are useless in the dungeon. Skills that are not on the list can, of course, be used as usual. The idea is simply to avoid a situation where the players think you are being unfair in calling for Skills they don't have. If you are primarily calling for Skills from the list you showed them at the start of the game, they have no grounds for complaint. If you are constantly going off-list, then they do have a valid complaint. A sample list is provided at the end of this document.

On this list can be "Exotic" Skills. These are Skills that will be useful in certain dungeons, but that new characters are not allowed to start with. They must be learned during downtime or in play. A dungeon that calls for many of those Skills should have an "Exotic" tag on it and is worth a little bit more experience (see below for advancement rules including experience). In dungeons that are not Exotic, you may have areas that call for Exotic Skills, but they must allow for Unskilled characters to still succeed in some way or to find another way around.

Limited Conditions

For adversarial play, custom Conditions are not on the menu. When handing out Minor Conditions as Costs, the GM is limited to Lost Confidence, Angry/Afraid, and Winded. Exhausted works slightly differently in this mode: you are Exhausted when you get three Minor Conditions other than Lost Confidence (Lost Confidence is different in that it does not recover with resting). For instance, you might be Winded twice and Afraid once—then you would become Exhausted. Furthermore, the Conditions the GM hands out must make sense. If your character simply gave advice to another, it does not make sense for that to leave you Winded. The GM is trying to beat you, but they still have to play fair.

Major Conditions can be limited or not, depending on the rating. If the Condition in question is unlimited, then it may be used at any time in the dungeon, so long as it makes sense. Since it is unlimited, the GM does not need to tell the players before they take an action that the action might have such a Condition as a possible Cost. However, if the danger was not announced beforehand,

then that Condition can only be used on a Twist with a Cost, not a Success with a Cost. On the other hand, if the danger was announced before the players acted, then it is fair to apply it on any Cost the players roll—they knew what they were getting into.

If a Condition is limited, that means three things. First, you can only threaten it in specific pre-planned threats. Second, those threats must be announced before the roll. Third, the players must have some way to avoid dealing with those threats and still complete the dungeon.

Example: The Hive is Dangerous, which means that there might be hidden traps that can give out the Injured Condition if a Cost is rolled. The GM may or may not tell the players that a particular obstacle carries that risk. But The Hive is not rated Unhealthy, so any danger that could cause the Sick Condition must be clearly announced to the players. "The corridor below is flooded, and the water exudes a foul odor. You might be able to swim through to the next hatch, but if you swallow any of the water, you will become very sick."

Moreover, since Sick is limited, there must be some way for them to work around this without risking that Condition. If the players work their way to the stern, one of the storage lockers there contains scuba gear, and using that will allow them to safely traverse the flooded sections of the ship. They don't know that yet, but they do know that there must be another way. Still, maybe the flooded corridor represents a shortcut—taking the risk now might be better than the alternative.

Death is handled the same way as any other Major Condition. Unless the dungeon is Deadly, any area where death is on the table must be clearly announced to the players and there must be some way for them to work around it without risking death. In a Deadly dungeon, death is always on the table, but characters that spot the danger might be able to intervene and save their teammates.

These restrictions on Conditions do not affect the rules for Conditions after Tactical Combat. You can be Injured in combat even in a Placid dungeon. Additionally, when you enter a Combat Injured and you are Taken Out with enough Strikes to earn another Injured Condition, you are instead dead.

The Third Major Condition

There is a third Major Condition in *Strike!* It's called "Cursed" by default, but it could be reskinned to "Psychically Shattered" or whatever. This Condition is usually limited. If it makes sense to draw the association between this Condition and Exotic Skills, then Exotic dungeons might be unlimited for Cursed. If you use this Condition, it must be possible to recover from it in town during downtime, just as with Sick or Injured. Perhaps you call in a Priest to break the curse or a counselor to heal your mind.

Example: The Jackson Hive is an Exotic dungeon. Built beneath the ruins of Mississippi's capital city, the Hive is home to many of the intelligent alien species, and their tech is everywhere. These aliens are the ones with psychic powers, and thus the "Shattered" Condition is unlimited here.

Limited Item Penalties

The GM can give Flaws to any item they like when a Cost is rolled, so long as it makes sense. Flaws are conditional Disadvantages, though, so they cannot apply to every use of the item. Twists can result in broken, lost, cursed, or destroyed items. However, Artifacts can never be permanently lost or destroyed: they are always findable and fixable.

If an item that seemed okay at first glance is turning out to be overpowered in play, and the group agrees, then take the first opportunity in the narrative to “fix” it so it works in a more balanced way. If the group does not agree, raise your concerns and take a vote. As before, everyone has an equal say, everyone must vote in good faith (that is, if you know your item is overpowered, you can’t lie and say that it’s fine), and a tie means that the item needs revising.

Limited Help

Instead of the GM determining how many helpers are allowed for any roll, the rule is simply one. One, and only one, helper is allowed for any given roll, so long as their help makes sense. No stretching! If the GM thinks that a roll should not have any help allowed, it is their responsibility to describe the situation fully and convince the players that help does not make sense with that task.

In the Dungeon

While in the dungeon, there are a few extra rules. When the GM has carte blanche to give out nasty Major Conditions, or even to kill characters, the players need a way to fairly combat that. That way is called an intervention roll.

Intervention Rolls

When the GM assigns a Major Condition (or death) to your teammate, and you yell “NOOOOO” and try to save them, roll an appropriate Skill for whatever task you are using.

On a Success with an Extra Bonus, you save them and nobody gets any Condition.

On a plain Success, you save them and either you or the character you saved gets a Minor Condition instead.

On a Success with a Cost, you save your companion, but you get the Major Condition (or die) instead.

On a Twist, you fail to save them.

On a Twist with a Cost, you both suffer the same fate and get the Major Condition (or die).

Only one character can intervene on any given occasion. If someone else wants to get involved, they may use the helping rules (and thus risk a Minor Condition).

Example: Jon, the GM, says “Minh, the floor is unsafe and your character is in the front. What Skill would your character use to try to avoid the floor collapsing? Roll it.”

“Uh oh,” says Minh. “Guys, I don’t like taking the lead in Deadly dungeons. Well, Tanya would use her Catlike Reflexes Skill to leap away from the danger.” She rolls a 1.

Jon says “Ha! Your reflexes won’t save you here. The floor gives way. And remember that intense heat I was just describing? Well that’s because the room sits atop a lava tunnel. When the floor goes, you fall to your death.”

“Nooooo! Tanya, I’ll save you!” shouts Phil. “Intervention! I’m rolling Brock’s Sprinting.” Phil rolls a 2.

“Wait, I’m helping!” calls Steph. “Case is not Skilled, but he’ll give it his best.” Steph rolls a 3 and a 6. “Hey, I did help!”

Jon says “Okay, a two plus one for the help is a three. Success with a Cost. Brock rushes forward and manages to grab Tanya and hurl her back towards safety, where Case grabs her hand and pulls her back onto solid ground. Unfortunately, Brock couldn’t stop his own momentum and perishes in flame. Because of the Cost, Case is Afraid.”

Steph says “Holy cow. That’s brutal. Case is absolutely pissing himself.”

Medical Intervention

Medical Skills to prevent infection or treat injury can be used to make an Intervention Roll immediately after the Injury or Sickness instead of happening as the Condition is being applied. Sometimes during this sort of roll it makes sense that you could get the Condition instead of the original target, but sometimes it doesn’t. While treating a gunshot wound during a firefight, you might yourself be shot. While removing poison or stopping an infection, it is possible that you could be poisoned or infected yourself. But if you’re in a safe environment treating someone who fell from a high platform, then there really is no risk of injury to yourself. In that case, a Cost makes you Exhausted.

Bonuses

Since this is adversarial, while we are restricting the GM’s control, we also need to restrict players’ Bonuses when they roll a 6. First, everything you describe has to make sense! This applies to players and GMs alike, always. When you roll a Bonus, you may suggest anything you like, but the GM may simply veto it if they think you have overreached. If your chosen Extra Bonus is simply Advantage on a particular future roll, then as long as it makes sense, the GM cannot veto it.

Binary Rolls

If every roll can risk a Condition, then players will be discouraged from making rolls unless they have to. But sometimes it’s good to be able to make a roll for the purpose of getting information or finding out more about the dungeon, giving the GM an opportunity to fill in some of the details. To encourage those kind of rolls, we have the following rule: If a player is attempting a roll that is voluntary (i.e. not required to progress), and that will not give a material advantage, then they do not risk a Cost, but they also do not get a chance at a Bonus. The roll becomes binary: Twist or Success, ignoring anything else.

Resting and Restocking

When the players take time out in the dungeon to try to recover from being Winded or Angry/Afraid, the GM makes a pacing roll, as described on page 70. A dungeon environment rating of Placid translates to a 0 on this roll. Deadly translates to 2, and anything else is a 1. Population rating is 1 if the players have completed more than half the fights, 3 if the players have completed no fights, and 2 otherwise. Any negative result on the pacing roll means an interrupted rest. Obviously, the players cannot even attempt to rest if there is an active danger nearby. The players might use their Skills to try to hide and make rest possible. If it is already possible, they might use Skills to make it more secure, essentially giving themselves Advantage on the pacing roll if they succeed.

If the players try to camp out in the dungeon to recover from being Exhausted, they must succeed at securing an area first. Then they must make a pacing roll without Advantage to see if the rest is disturbed. If the rest is peaceful, then while they rest, the denizens of the dungeon may reset or change the traps and hazards, or else they may get one combat's worth of reinforcements, but not both.

If the players leave the dungeon before completing it and head back to town to recover, likely from a Major Condition, the dungeon can be reinforced and restructured. The GM is free to reset or change any of the traps and hazards, and may restore two combats' worth of reinforcements.

What if I make a pacing roll and get an encounter, but the characters have already completed all the combats in the dungeon according to the length rating? Or if I do have one left to spend, but had a particular set-piece combat planned?

Then there is no combat. Either hurry things along by simply letting them rest, or have someone else disturb their rest, but not by initiating combat. Perhaps a lone enemy sneaks up and tosses a grenade into their midst.



Replacing Dead Characters

When your character dies in the dungeon, you may replace them any time the group goes to town. If the group wants to stay in the dungeon, you may come in during the next rest of any length after you finish creating your character. New characters start at level 1, but see the Advancement section below for how that works.

Moving Things Along

If a player rolls a Twist, since this is adversarial, you are naturally within your rights as GM to have the Twist be that they didn't overcome the obstacle. However, you must still change the situation. It is against the rules for them to sit there trying and re-trying the same thing over again, and it's up to you to give them a Twist to make sure of that.

If they are facing an opponent using Opposed Rolls, after they fail to stop the enemy a few times, the enemy should simply achieve his goal and move things along.

Example: Jack is searching the machine shop and rolls a Twist. Before he can find anything of use, an infiltrator in disguise as a police officer runs up the stairs and draws on Jack. Jack tries to shoot first and it's an Opposed Roll. Jack loses by two, so he'll be shot and Injured unless he chooses "It costs you less than you expected." He instead opts for "It costs them more than they expected" and shoots the gun out of the cop's hands. When Kate runs in and tries to shoot the infiltrator, he has Disadvantage because of Jack's choice, but manages to win anyway. Kate chooses "It costs you less than you expected" in order to avoid Injury and so she leaps aside and lands hard. She's Winded instead of Injured. This has gone on long enough, though. For the cop to just keep shooting and recapitulating the same rolls could be boring or frustrating. Instead, his next move is to dash for a binder on the desk and try to jump out the window with it. The players are free to take a third shot at him, but this time if they fail, he gets away and the scene doesn't drag on. What's next? Maybe a Chase!

Between Dungeons

When one dungeon is complete, characters will need to recuperate before they are ready to move on to the next. Uninjured characters will wish to repair their broken gear, practice new Skills, and prepare for the next dungeon. During downtime, you can do any two things from this list.

Why only two things? Why can't we spend as long as we like in town?

Because this is essentially a somewhat arbitrary pacing mechanic to keep things fair. In a normal game, if you spent too long in town noodling around, the GM would probably have the villains taking advantage of that time to do awful things. Gaming how much downtime to take is basically missing the point. The point is going into dungeons and getting out alive.

Recovery and Repair

You may recover from any Condition while in town. Minor Conditions recover automatically without costing any downtime, so long as you simply describe how you make yourself feel better.

If you have a Major Condition, though, you will need proper medical care and you will need to spend one unit of downtime. To find the care you need, you must make a Wealth or Connections roll, unless perhaps you can convince a contact to help you for free. Maybe one of your teammates has an appropriate medical Skill. If they want to try, then one unit of their downtime is spent helping you. You will recover your Major Condition one way or another, but any other Costs or Twists are up to the GM. They cannot be Major Conditions, though.

You may attempt to get a broken or Flawed item repaired. This works essentially the same as recovering from a Major Condition. Either spend time finding someone using Connections or Wealth, spend time to try to fix it yourself, or get a teammate to spend the time fixing it. You'll always fix what you wanted fixed, but there might be a Cost or Twist. The price was exorbitant, you owe a Favor, the process introduced a wholly different Flaw, or whatever.

Learning

If you want to practice a new Skill, spend one unit of your downtime practicing. Make a roll: on a 6, you learn the Skill. If your practice is dangerous, a roll of 1 will earn you a Condition.

If you have a Skill and you want to help your friend learn it, you may spend one unit of your downtime teaching them. Make a Skill Roll with Teaching, not the Skill that you are trying to teach. Success means that your friend has Advantage on their attempt to learn. A Cost means that you have Lost Confidence in the Skill you were trying to teach.

You can also spend an extra unit of downtime using your Connections or Wealth to find and hire an NPC to roll their Teaching Skill. If you already found a teacher before, it doesn't cost you any downtime to hire them again, although you still have to pay them if they weren't a friendly Connection.

Gathering Rumors

When you ask around about the next dungeon you intend to visit, spend one unit of downtime and roll a Connections Skill.

On a Success, you get a rumor and you know that it's true.

On a Twist, you still get a rumor, but you have no idea whether or not it's true, false, partially true, or misleading. Only the GM knows.

A Cost indicates that you owe someone a Favor.

A Bonus is up to you, as always.

Rumors might include a way to bypass a trap, a treasure you will find, the location of a hidden door, or where enemies like to lurk. A rumor must always be concretely useful advice.



Repaying Favors

You might spend a unit of your downtime repaying a Favor. If you want to keep finding rumors without Disadvantage, you'll need to spend some time repaying the people who helped you before. The GM will tell you what they need you to do.

Other Preparations

You might spend a unit of your downtime buying equipment or doing anything else you need to do to get ready for the next dungeon based on whatever rumors you've heard.

Advancement

When you enter a dungeon, you should have an objective: collect all the treasure or one particular treasure, defeat all the monsters, or achieve a particular goal that the GM tells you beforehand. The dungeon is complete when you achieve your objective and get back to town safely. If you just want the treasure, you don't need to defeat all the monsters. If you're not sure if you've achieved the objective, you can ask the GM and they will tell you yes or no.

When you complete a dungeon, to calculate the number of experience points you earn, start with the length rating: ½ for Short, 1 for Long, 1½ for Very Long, or 2 for Marathon. Add to that a danger rating: ½ for Unhealthy, ½ for Dangerous, 1 for both, or 2 for Deadly. Add ½ if the Dungeon is Exotic. Take this result and multiply by the level of the dungeon. Round up.

Example: The Hive is Short, so we start with ½. It is Dangerous, so we add ½. The total is 1. We multiply that by the level of the dungeon, 4, to get a result of 4 XP for completing the dungeon.

If the players give up before reaching their goal, the GM should apportion XP based on what proportion of the dungeon they uncovered or enemies they confronted. Since the dungeon will be re-stocking before they come back, this should not diminish the XP for any subsequent attempts.

You reach level N when you have N² total XP. At a conservative pace, this should take you two level-appropriate dungeons to gain a level. By accepting more danger, you can increase that speed.

Example: You currently have 11 XP. To get to level 4, you need to reach 16 XP. Doing the Hive for 4 XP isn't going to be enough unless there is some bonus XP to be had somewhere. You might consider taking on a longer or higher level dungeon if you want to get to level 4 quickly.

Catching up after your character dies is not too bad. If you are level 1 and your teammates are level 7, you can probably handle a level 6 dungeon easily. You won't be contributing as much on offense as they, but you are no more vulnerable than they in Tactical Combat because of the fact that Hit Points do not scale up. A Very Long, Dangerous, Unhealthy Level 6 dungeon with one bonus point of XP will jump you up to Level 4 in one go. Even though catching up can be fast, you might want an insurance policy, so you can spend your downtime working on that.

Training Replacements

You may spend one unit of downtime teaching the adventurous young folk of the town your Skills. Write one of your character's Skills on a list and add your level in XP to a pool. This is a private pool, not a shared pool for the group. This pool may never exceed your current level of XP. When you create a new character, they start with XP equal to the amount in your pool. Pick one additional Skill from the list you've been making for each level beyond first. If your character has an Exotic Skill, you can put it on the list, and then your new characters will be allowed to start with that Skill.

Town Assault (Optional)

To keep pressure on players to advance quickly, use town assaults. Every time the players return to town, regardless of whether they succeeded at completing a dungeon, roll a die and note the result, keeping a running total. When the total is 10 or more, an assault happens and enemies attack the town. Assaults take place in between the two units of downtime each player gets, so they will have time at least to recover from their Conditions. An assault is a series of three sequential fights, played as one long fight: you do not count up Strikes or assign Conditions or regain spent powers until the very end. Between each section of the fight, players get a free use of Rally—even if they were Taken Out. Leaders recover one use of Heal. Unless, of course, all the players were Taken Out in one section. In that case, team monster wins and the town gets pillaged.

The first assault should have fights of levels 1, 2, then 3. The next assault should have 3, then 4, then 5, and so on. This ramping up in difficulty forces the players to keep gaining levels in order to keep up with the events. The Titan rules work very well here to represent an attack on the town by a giant monster with multiple forms, or you could use more traditional combats to represent a raiding party.

Successfully completing an assault grants XP to each team member equal to the level of the hardest fight in the assault. If you are Taken Out at the end of the final section of an assault and finish with 7 or more Strikes, you are dead. If you are not Taken Out or if you are but have fewer than 7 Strikes, you recover fully. There is always time to rest and recuperate, not to mention celebrate, after a successful defense of the town. Having saved the town, you will doubtless receive the very best medical care free of charge. With that done, you may take your remaining downtime actions.

If the team loses an assault, however, they have Disadvantage to all rolls in this downtime and the next as the town is devastated. When the team loses an assault, the next assault will be the same

strength, not tougher.

Extra Downtime

Between dungeons you may take an extra two units of downtime per player, but the GM will make a roll towards the next Town Assault after the first extra unit. Assaults are generally less lucrative than dungeons in terms of treasure and experience, while being nearly as dangerous, so taking extra downtime is not typically a good bet unless you are ahead of the curve and can afford more assaults.

Winning

Before the game, or during the game, all the players should agree on a level they are aiming to finish at. Often this is level 10, but for a shorter game, you can opt for a lower level. There should be a dungeon at this target level that is Deadly and Marathon, containing a final boss fight at the end. When the players manage to beat that boss, they win. The GM's score is the number of player characters killed. If the GM kills more characters than the target level over the course of the campaign, they win.

Sample Skill List

Here is a sample Skill list for a Dangerous Delves game set in the aftermath of a partially successful alien attack on Earth. Cities are in ruins and there are hives of aliens all around.

Shooting, Heavy Weapons, Hand-to-Hand Combat, Hacking, Explosives, Swimming, Running, Reflexes, Spelunking, Climbing, Biology, Chemistry, First Aid, Stealth, Observation, Engineering, Logistics, Leadership, Tactics, Administration.

Exotic Skills

Alien Behavior, Exobiology, Alien Weapon Tech, Alien Flight Tech, Telepathy, Combat Empath, Alien Languages.



Essays

These are a set of short essays on an assortment of topics as requested by Kickstarter backers. They cover a variety of topics and I hope you find them useful.

Diversity in Strike!

I value diversity in gaming because I believe that bringing in new perspectives to any field leads to better outcomes. I have always been interested in diversity in my consumption—I like to eat a broad variety of foods and try out new flavors, and the same goes for books, music, and games. The best way to ensure that we see new games that challenge our perceptions and show us something new is to support a diverse group of content creators. That doesn't mean driving out the old ones at all, but rather welcoming new faces into the fold and being excited when those faces look different from our own.

I believe that it is not enough to accept diversity, but that we must actively encourage it. There is empirical evidence to back this up, too.* If we only accept those who are different without actively seeking them out, pre-existing segregation will naturally continue. This is a simple mathematical fact. So in the process of making *Strike!*, I sought input from gamers who were women, transgender, disabled, and from different backgrounds than my own. They helped make *Strike!* better, not just by helping me make *Strike!* inclusive, but also with their ideas about game balance, GM tips, fun mechanics, and all the other stuff gamers like to talk about.

*See “The Parable of the Polygons” here: <http://ncase.me/polygons/>

Art and Language

All of *Strike!*'s art and language is intended to be inclusive. Half of the characters in the art are women, and half men. As you flip through these pages, you can expect to see not just people with varied skin tones, but also varied ages, body shapes, and sizes. What about sexual orientation? Well, that doesn't show up in art, and sexuality of any sort is never mentioned directly, but if you look for indirect references, you will find mention of one same-sex couple and one opposite-sex couple. Why go to this effort? It requires no great effort to be inclusive: typing “they” instead of “he” is hardly onerous. But what is the point of all this? The point is that gaming is for everyone! The point is that anyone who picks up this book should find that this game is for them. I don't want a young woman to look at my book and think, “Oh, that's just for boys.”

Growing the Hobby

What else can inclusion do for us? Simply put, exclusion inhibits growth while inclusion promotes growth. I am interested in helping the hobby of roleplaying grow. Greater interest in our hobby means more for all of us. More games get made, some of which you won't care about but others will turn out to be something you never knew you always wanted. More respect and understanding comes our way as more people are exposed to the fun of this sort

of gaming. More opportunities for gaming come our way as the audience and platforms for gaming continue to grow. If the hobby looks like it's just for one particular sort of person, that image drives away not just the people who do not conform to that model, but also their friends. Gaming is social and spreads socially as we invite our friends in. The best way to combat segregation in gaming is to invite your friends to play games with you, especially the ones who might otherwise be hesitant about trying it. I have introduced people to gaming who never tried it before and re-introduced people who tried it in the past and thought that it wasn't for them. While there are certainly people out there who have no interest in gaming and never will, I believe that the pool of potential gamers is larger than the hobby as a whole and that there is immense room for growth.

Historical Portrayals

Positive portrayals in media help people feel appreciated and part of society instead of alienated from it. *Strike!* is a game where cool heroes do awesome things, limited only by your imagination. If imagination is our only limit, what excuse could we possibly have to exclude any type of person from being a hero? We are not beholden by harsh historical realities. Furthermore, we often are ignorant about those historical realities anyway. Travel was not as rare and difficult as we often assume it to be. Over two thousand years ago, Greeks conquered as far as India and ruled in Africa and the Middle East. In medieval times, Mongolians ruled an empire from the Balkans to Korea. Throughout this time, there were established trade routes that could take a person from Spain to China. A person from China showing up in ancient Rome is not only possible, but it's nearly certain to have happened. Rome had emperors who were Arab, African, and all kinds of European. It had gay emperors, bisexual emperors, and an emperor who might have identified as transgender were they born in modern society. Some emperors had disabilities of various types. And those are just the emperors! Why mention this? Only to reinforce that a fantasy where all the people live apart in culturally and ethnically homogenous groups runs counter to what we know about humans. Even in the most grounded and realistic historical game, you can pick a hero from any part of the world or from any walk of life. While prejudice and persecution was real, there were always exceptions, and history records many great people who rose to heights that seem impossible given where they began.

When I write on the first page of this book that you can be anyone, I mean it.

Your Voice

I want to hear from you! When you visit www.strikerpg.com, you'll be able to comment on the blog and look me up on Twitter or Facebook. I am always open to making connections with other gamers. This game would not be what it is today if not for the gamers of all stripes who reached out to me and contributed their own skills and ideas.



Horror in Strike!

Strike! was not built for horror, but with some work, you can adapt it to make a horror game. The main thing is working out Twists and Costs that feel right. Twists like “split the party,” “damage their stuff,” “block the exits,” and “threaten them with something nasty” work very well for horror, while “put them into combat” should be used sparingly. Horror has a different pace than action, and that pace does not include a lot of fights. You should be raising the stakes often.

Tactical Combat

A typical Tactical Combat is very poorly suited to horror, as any monster can simply be taken down if you hit it enough times. That’s not how horror monsters work. They are unstoppable until you know their weakness, and even then you might only slow them down. If you specially design monsters that follow the rules of horror, then you could play out the fight using the Tactical Combat rules, so long as the players are aware that it’s not really a typical combat. They should soon realize that dealing damage is not the way to win the fight, and they may have no way of defeating the monster aside from running for their lives.

Remember, in combat the goal can be as simple as “make it to the doorway alive.” Making it to that doorway—or pursuing any goal that does not require all the monsters to be killed—may still require that the players fight some monsters. A Tactical Combat can be a more fine-grained way of resolving whether or not the player characters manage to make it out alive than a simple Skill Roll.

Resting

Making rolls when you have Conditions naturally leads to more Conditions, and players will be aware of that spiral. This is the part of the system that players generally find most scary already, and you can use that to reinforce the tone of the game. Don’t let players rest and recover from their Conditions easily. When they think they are safe, show them that they are not. Make them roll, and make them pay to get some brief moments of safety. Making them roll is self-explanatory: to try and make things better, they must risk making them worse. Making them pay means giving them a hard choice: if they want to rest, they need to give up crucial time, important ground, valued items, or people they care about.

Countdowns

Countdowns are a common motif in horror. They come in two varieties: the countdown to rescue or the countdown to doom. Use one or the other or even both in your game. Either way, if you are using a countdown it is of vital importance that you keep track of time fairly and that your players know that you are doing so. If the players get to thinking that it’s one of those action movie countdowns that always stops at 1 second, they won’t be scared. This is not action, this is horror: make sure the players know that the countdown is real, and the threat is real.

In the countdown to rescue, the heroes have no hope to prevail, but know that if they simply hold out long enough against the odds, they will have a chance to escape. In this scenario, it’s all about husbanding resources and holding on to what they’ve got.

Every time they get a Condition or lose an item or lose physical ground, they know that they have less standing between them and death. If everything goes their way, they’ll get out alive. If things go wrong, only some of them will come out alive. If things spiral out of control, they will all die. These are the stakes.

In the countdown to doom, the players know that if they don’t get away or overcome their foes by a certain point in time, they will lose. In this scenario you should be less focused on taking away their stuff and more focused on taking away their time. If everything goes well, they will reach the final confrontation with time to spare and then attempt to prevail. If things go badly, they will reach the final confrontation at the last moment and only have one chance to prevent the doom. If things spiral out of control, they will never reach the final confrontation. These are the stakes.

Player Character Death

When should player characters die? In a countdown to rescue situation, it is quite likely that the players will start to lose their characters as the countdown nears the end. This is part of the social contract and players should be explicitly told at the start of the game that character death is a real possibility for this session. This leaves you with the quandary of what to do with players whose characters died. If there are only a few minutes left, they can just watch. If there is an hour left, then you don’t want to leave them out for that entire time. Either let them rejoin the game on the players’ side by taking over an NPC, or have them help you play the side of evil. With certain kinds of horror (zombies, vampires, etc.), it might even be appropriate for them to keep playing their character but a monstrous version of their character that stands in the way of their erstwhile teammates.



Strike!... in Space!

Moving and fighting in low gravity or zero gravity environments is very different from moving around on Earth. When you stop and think, you can probably come up with many differences. Some of those make for cool ideas to use as extra rules for combat in space. Other differences might lead to rules that would make the combat much less interesting—don't use those rules! Don't sacrifice the fun of the game for the sake of realism. If you must be realistic in a way that would compromise Tactical Combat, do so using the basic rules and keep it out of Tactical Combat. If a Skill Roll ends up lame, you only wasted a few seconds and can easily recover. If a combat turns into a slog and takes forever while being boring for the players, recovering the fun of the session is much harder.

The key message to take away from this section is to think about how fighting is different in this environment, then to think about whether those differences would make the fight more interesting or less, and then to use them or gloss over them depending on your conclusion. This lesson doesn't just apply to low gravity environments, but to any rules variants you consider using.

Fun Maps

Playing in space gives you an opportunity to use fun maps with weird shapes. The key rule to remember when playing with weird non-standard maps is the rule of cool: if a player has a cool idea, let them do it. It would certainly be possible to make playing with weird maps a slog where everyone tries to puzzle out the geometric details on every turn, but that totally defeats the purpose. The point of playing on a map like the ones following is to introduce some variety into the game, not to be a stickler about geometry.

The Donut

You can play in a circular tube with a map that is a torus (a donut shape). To do this is easy: each edge of the map connects to its opposite edge and generally you shoot at a target by looking along whichever direction is shortest. Judging cover can be a bit tricky in situations where you are nearly above your target (i.e. both ways of counting the distance are equally far), so my best advice is to try not to be too picky about it, let the GM have the final say, and for the GM to err on the side of generosity. This map shape works whether you are on the outside of the donut or the inside.

A variant is to have only one edge connect to its opposite, and the other two edges are walls. This is as though you are playing on a circular rotating space station where you can only walk on the floor, not on the walls and ceiling.

The Asteroids

Another cool map in space is a collection of objects close together that players can jump between, a la Mario Galaxy. Each object can have its own map, and players can jump between maps when they are in the right area. You might color-code the maps so that players know that they need to be in the red area to jump to the asteroid, or in the green area to jump to the mining drill. Giving players something to do on each object is essential to keep them moving from one to the other to get the most out of this set-up.

Bad Ideas

There are a couple of things that are bad ideas in space that you might not think about: jumping and shooting. There is no rule that says that you need to have them be bad ideas in your game: maybe the spaceships in your game are strong enough not to be punctured by shooting on board. But on the other hand, maybe having a fight where nobody can use guns is exactly what you want right now. Remember, you only change the rules if you think that rule change will make things more interesting. Otherwise you come up with some reason why the rules are the same as normal.

Jumping

Jumping in low or no gravity environments can take you a lot farther than it can on Earth, but that doesn't mean it's always a good idea. Anyone who has played dodgeball as an adult can tell you that if you jump, you make it very easy for your opponents to hit you because you remove your ability to dodge. While you are in the air, you are following a parabolic path which is completely predictable and which you have no power to change. Thus, anyone who wants to hit you right around your knees with a dodgeball will have little trouble doing so as you come down. The same is even more true in a gunfight in low gravity: if you jump, anyone who wants to shoot you on your way down will be able to do so easily if they are any good at shooting.

To model this in combat, you can allow people to jump to any part of the map in one turn as a Move Action, but anyone who wants to shoot them after such a jump can do so with Advantage that round.

Shooting

Using guns on a spaceship is a terrible idea for any number of reasons, primarily the risk of catastrophic depressurization. This gives you a way to emphasize hand-to-hand combat for a time, even if most of the game takes place on a planet with enemies wielding lasers. If your group is entirely made up of ranged characters who shoot things, this might be one of those ideas that make things less fun.



Lessons from Earthbound

When I was asked by a backer to write about *Earthbound*, my first reaction was “Cool! I remember liking that game!” Then I sat down to write and was stumped. What is there to say about it in relation to *Strike!*? You play as a bunch of kids fighting cops, hippies, bugs, plants, goo, and aliens. The plot is nonsense and it’s full of puns. What’s the takeaway? What do I want to impart here in these pages? I had no idea. So I went back and started going through it again, and I took notes on the cool things in the game that I wanted to learn from. What follows is a collection of lessons from *Earthbound*. There is no common theme, but that is fitting because *Earthbound* is a collection of things that shouldn’t really fit together but somehow do.

Imprisoned!

About a third of the way through the game, your characters get locked up and you cannot escape. Instead, you begin again playing as a new character on the way to save your original party. This stuck out immediately as a solution to an occasional issue in *Strike!* The issue goes something like this: the party loses a fight and are captured as a consequence. Then they get to be cool in escaping. But what if for some reason you don’t think they ought to be able to escape? For instance, they might have already escaped and letting them escape again would make the enemies look inappropriately incompetent. *Earthbound* has the solution: you can beat the players, lock up their characters, and not let them escape. Then they get to play new characters who rescue their old ones. At that point, each player can decide which character they want to stick with, and the unused ones can go off to do other things until they are needed once more.

The same sequence and others in *Earthbound* show how cool it can be to split the party up and have them do different things. Splitting the party is on the Twist List for a reason, so use it!

Something To Look Forward To

One little mechanic I always loved about *Earthbound* was the broken items. One of your characters likes fixing things. If you have a broken item in his inventory, then eventually he’ll fix it at some point when you rest. In practical terms, this is hardly different than just getting the item directly, except that it makes you waste inventory space on something useless in the meantime. However, it does not feel that way. It feels great! It gives you a feeling like when you know a package is on its way in the mail.

The lesson here is that giving players a hint that they’ll be getting something cool in the future can be even more exciting than getting something that they never expected. So give your players a broken and useless item, or give them a mysterious egg that might hatch one day or let them witness someone using a cool power that they can learn.

Game Logic

In *Earthbound*, things don’t make sense at first. You heal by eating hamburgers and the plot is driven by puns and bizarre happenings more than it is by the characters and their motivations. The game never lets the plot get in the way of the humor. The lesson here

is that you can have different agendas than the ones I suggest. In the GM section, I wrote that you must try to make the world feel real. However, if the tone you agree on is based on nonsense and jokes, then your agenda changes. You must make the world feel silly! *Earthbound* certainly isn’t the only adventure to do this. Alice’s adventures in Wonderland have this same property where the protagonist travels from one joke to the next.

Even if the world doesn’t have to make sense, it still needs to follow some logic. You know that you can use your pencil eraser to eliminate a large iron statue of a pencil because that’s the sort of logic the game teaches you to expect. It’s important to have some kind of consistent logic, even if it’s nonsense logic, to let the players engage confidently with the world and contribute their own jokes and direction.

Gimmick Fights

Earthbound has some fights that play out very differently from all the others. In one fight, the only way to win is to activate one character’s little-used special ability while the other characters do nothing but protect and keep alive that one character. Obviously you wouldn’t want to make every fight have that structure: that would be very dull! But as a special surprise to make you puzzle out the correct technique and break out of your usual tactics, it works perfectly.

So go ahead and make gimmick fights where the players’ usual tactics don’t work. Just remember that you need to have enough regular combats to build up the patterns before you subvert them.



Non-Combat Hacking

In this section, I'll give you some information on how to insert your own systems or modify existing ones.

The Price of Everything

In the process of making the game, I made some simple assumptions to keep things balanced about how much things were worth. If not attempting something is a baseline of 0, and a Success is a +1 while a Twist is a -1, then I can calculate that a Cost or a Disadvantage is worth -0.65 and a Bonus or an Advantage is worth +0.65. A +1 or -1 on a roll is worth +/- 0.55. Each Skilled helper is worth about +0.3.

Suggestions

Here are a couple of areas that are ripe for modification.

Advancement

It would be very easy to insert your own system for advancement. When do players gain a level? Well, you generally want to keep the players fairly close in level, but because of the way the combat math works, it's not vital that everyone stays right on par with everyone else. Anyone can contribute meaningfully to any part of the game at any level.

You could make a system like *Apocalypse World's* where each session for each player, the GM and one other player would highlight one Skill, Trick, or Complication, and base advancement off of using those aspects of your character that the others wanted to see. You could make a system where players get points for certain behaviors that you choose, or that they choose. You could make it based on their character's ethical alignment. You could base advancement off of loot alone, tying levels to getting bigger and better items and cash parcels. Advancement systems drive player behavior, so pick one that encourages the type of play you want to see.

Unfamiliar Skills

It can be useful to have a magic system, an idea of the limitations of telepathy, or a procedure for hacking into megacorp security systems. What do all these things have in common? They are Skills that we don't have experience with, and without experience, it's hard to know what is and is not allowed. We don't have that instinctual idea of what "makes sense" and it's very easy for such Skills to end up being overly broad in their usage. This is where having some ground rules in place can help. This can be as simple as a few Custom Rolls and a breakdown of the topic into specific Skills, or it can be as complex as you like. I've mostly stuck to simplicity where possible because it's broadly beneficial, but complexity has its rewards too, when used well.

Wealth-like Skills

Wealth began as a Skill that some players had and some did not. It gained complexity as a result of the unsatisfying way it worked in play. It can serve as a lesson for how you could expand out other Skills and add complexity. You can take any Skill and add on Skill-specific Conditions, tiers for the Skill, tiers for the obstacles, and so on.

Detailed Subsystems

You can hack on detailed resolution systems like Chase or Team Conflict to cover any aspect of play you feel deserves a more in-depth treatment. You need to pay attention to input and output, basically. You want players to come into your system with Skills and Conditions, and for those things to matter. You might also want to give them a way to spend Action Points, especially if your system is going to take more than a few minutes to resolve. For outputs, you want to understand how the outcomes flow back into play: can the players come out of it with Conditions? What happens when they win and when they lose? Can there be a tie?

Pitfalls

What do you need to watch out for? Well, there are going to be pitfalls that I never discovered, but here are a couple that I ran into during development.

The Condition Spiral

For a long time, Costs were just Conditions and there were no Flaws or Favors. This changed for two reasons. First, because it was often hard to come up with Conditions for certain types of rolls, particularly social and crafting rolls. Second, because occasionally the players roll a big string of 1s and 3s in close succession, and quickly descend into a point where they cannot go on. For certain tones, that's fine—your party needs to scramble to escape the dungeon, beaten and afraid. But for many games, that would frustrate both the players and the GM by acting as a roadblock. Giving the GM kinder options to use for Costs means that even with a bunch of 1s and 3s, the characters can keep going. This should serve as a lesson while hacking—watch out for any subsystem that gives the GM no choice but to give Conditions. Think to yourself "If the player rolled three or four Conditions in a row here, would that be okay?"

Broad Skills

In the early tests of *Strike!*, Wealth was simply left up to the general Skill system as something you had or didn't have. This was unsatisfying in part because, despite measuring one specific thing (how much you can buy), it was very broad in its applications, from bribery to shopping to making more money. Broad Skills are poison in this game for two reasons. First, it is very easy to end up in a situation where everyone has them, erasing any distinctions between the characters in that aspect of the Skill. Second, having a broad Skill discourages learning other Skills, discourages rolling Unskilled, and thus hampers character development. If your hack enables players to learn a broad Skill, you have to ask yourself how you will avoid those problems. How will you limit access to avoid everyone ending up equally good at it? How will you keep it constrained to let players continue to develop more cool specific abilities?

Action Points

This is a pretty simple one. Don't give out so many Action Points that players don't feel motivated to use their Complications. Don't give players ways of spending their Action Points that are so strong or broad that they don't want to use their Tricks.



The End

Here you will find some play aids and materials, the index, and a Ludography: a list of the games (and one game-related blogger) that directly contributed ideas to *Strike!*

Ludography

Thanks to the following games and media for their direct contributions to the ideas and rules of *Strike!*

Luke Crane's *Burning Wheel* and *Mouse Guard* for Twists, Fun Once, Too Many Cooks, and much more.

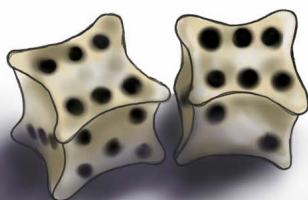
D&D 4e for the obvious influence, but also for the fact that if not for 4e I would not be playing RPGs.

Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World* for teaching me that we don't need target numbers or difficulty classes to make a fun game.

XCOM *Enemy Unknown* for showing me how to make a cover system that makes taking cover simple, important, and dynamic.

Rob Heinsoo and Jonathan Tweet's *13th Age* for One Unique Thing and Icons, which influenced my advice on Character Concepts and Factions, respectively.

Rob Donoghue's Blogs for the Aspects of Skills (originally from Feng Shui) and for inspiring the six categories of Twist in the "Playing without a GM" rules and probably a lot more ideas that were sloshing around in my head.



Resources

Where are the character sheets and play aids?

Character sheets, one-page player and GM references, cards for use in *Team Conflict*: all of these and more are available on the website at www.strikerpg.com for free download. You can also find free adventures, more examples of play, and news about the game and upcoming expansion content.

What about Physical Stuff?

I am not at all picky about what dice I use or what I use to represent the monsters. So long as I have something that the players can look at and recognize, I'm happy. Minis and tokens each have their advantages, and I like both. One product I do highly recommend is a dry-erase grid. It's absolutely great to be able to plan out and carefully draw a well-crafted battlemat, or to be able to quickly scribble some terrain onto the grid and be ready to go in no time, all with this one product. Paizo made the one I use, and I have been happily using it for years.

I want to play online. What do I need to do that?

Strike! works very well for online play, and much of the testing took place online. To play *Tactical Combats* online, you need some tools. I recommend the website *Roll20* (www.roll20.net). It's where I play when I play online, and *Strike!* and *Roll20* fit one another very well. Once you are familiar with *Roll20*, you'll be able to find a custom character sheet there, made just for *Strike!*.

Once you understand the basic functionality of the website, I also strongly recommend using macros for player and monster powers in *Tactical Combat*. First, they look nice when they show up in the chat window. Second, players can set it up so they can simply pick the power they want to use from a list so they don't have to type out what it does each time. Third, having the powers recorded that way in the chat window leaves a clear record that makes it easy to know what has been spent and easy to review when any player has a question about something that happened a few minutes ago. You can find a brief tutorial for creating macros on www.strikerpg.com along with all the other resources.

I want to make something based on or using *Strike!* Can I?

That would be great! If you need permission to use any part of *Strike!*, do not hesitate to ask: I am very open to it. You can get in touch via the website and also find resources for creators there, too.

Anything else?

Nope. Go grab a few friends and play!



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