



# SCHEMA

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SEVENTH ITERATION

# CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION	3	CONDITIONS	29
You Will Need	4	More on Conditions	30
CHARACTER	5	Condition Clusters	31
The Character Sheet	6	Scandal Cluster	32
		Even More Scandal	33
BACKGROUNDS	7	EXAMPLES	34
Boons	8	Dodging Fire	34
Kiths	9	Rat Things	35
Feats	10	Family Dinner	36
Knacks	11	Windcalling	37
Background Tweaks	12	Hive Priests	38
		The Scrap Inventor	39
SKILLS & FIELDS	13	A COURT OF THORNS	40
More on Skills	14	What This Is	41
Basic Skill List	15	Courtly Play	41
Filling In (Skills)	16	Thorny Principles	42
LUCK	17	Adjusting Boons	43
		Barbed Socialization	44
CUES	18	STAKES REFERENCES	46
GEAR CONDITIONS	19	What This Is	47
EXAMPLE CHARACTER	20	Chase Scenes	48
EXPERIENCE POINTS	21	Crafting	50
		Fighting	52
SIGNATURES	22	Sweeps	54
ROLLING DICE	23	DELVERS	56
Stakes Sheet, Tokens	24	What This Is	57
Making A Roll	25	The Human Kith	57
Types of Stakes	26	Ability, Proficiency	58
Stakes Advice	27	Delver Gear	59
Controlling Caution	27	A Health Pool	59
Restraining The Bold	28	Experience Tweaks	59
		THE OPEN FOLIO	60
		UNLICENCE	61

# INTRODUCTION

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Schema is a fairly light engine for roleplaying games, albeit one that can become more complex as play goes on – and one where the stakes on a roll are substantially more dense than “did I succeed?”. The devices of the engine make setting up and resolving complex rolls very easy.

Schema is played with a character sheet per player, and also a stakes sheet usually kept in the middle of the table, as the central point for these rolls.

Schema is described as an *engine* rather than as a *game* because it is intended for tinkering and fitting to your group and your setting. It's not 'generic' or all-purpose, but it is adaptable.



## CREDITS

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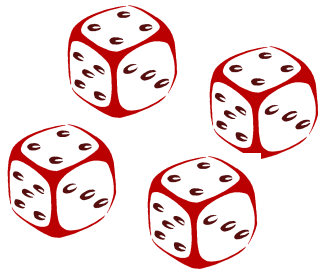
Writing, art, layout by Levi Kornelsen. Playtesting and consultation by Kim Lam, Tarrant Kwok, Owen Sleep, Holly Tetz, Kim Algara, Jason Tocci, David Gene Adams, Jared Sinclair, and a host of others across the various systems whose components were fed into the machinery of this game.

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# YOU'LL NEED DICE

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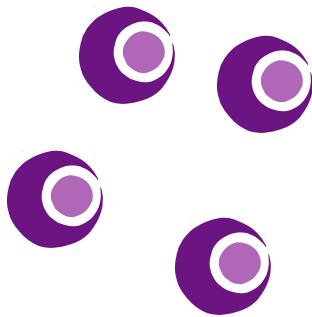
You will need at least four dice. These will preferably be fudge dice (which have the faces ■, □, ⊕), but can be regular six-sided dice if desired. If using regular six-sided dice, you'll treat each result of 1-2 as ■, each result of 3-4 as □, and each result of 5-6 as ⊕; these equivalencies are shown on the stakes sheet where they apply so that no outside reference is needed.



# TOKENS

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It's possible to get by without them, but the rules assume you'll be using two distinct kinds of tokens. First, ones to put on the stakes sheet to mark the dangers and augments of a roll (which are just called tokens). Second, tokens to use as 'luck points', which are referred to by the rules as coins. Glass beads as stakes tokens and poker chips as coins are ideal for 'feel', but both kinds of tokens can be represented by a single bowl of pebbles with no actual loss to the system.



# GUIDE PREP

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Guide preparation for using Schema primarily means prepping the game for their chosen setting – making skill list adjustments as needed, deciding on available backgrounds, and having rough notes (often just a couple of lines) on the kind of situations the characters will be dropped into.



# CHARACTER

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Schema relies on group discussion and agreement to create characters. Generally, the group has a character creation session, which the Guide opens using their pre-game preparation, describing the setting and premise to the players to whatever extent is needed. The Guide also may wish to do a walkthrough of the basic mechanics of the system, showing how a roll is made.

Once this framework is laid out, the players and Guide discuss what kinds of characters they would like to play within it, what the group will be doing, and so on.

The actual mechanics of creating a character for Schema, subject to that discussion and to modification by the Guide, are:

- Choose two backgrounds

- Choose six skills and note the field for each.

- Assign your skills the ratings: 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1 (Higher is better).

- Name your character.

- Decide on and note your cues.

- Note a few starting 'gear conditions'.

- Grab five luck tokens (or note that you currently have 5 luck)



# CHARACTER SHEETS

The character sheet, available as a separate download from the same sources as this book, is pretty straightforward.

At the very top of the sheet is a tent-fold section to show off your cues to others and remind yourself what they are.

In the main body of the sheet, character name is given first, followed by backgrounds; luck is recorded on the right, if tokens aren't being used. Skills are given a few lines each, to allow the main skill and several specializations to be noted on those lines, with their ratings recorded in the box beside.

Conditions at start are generally purely gear, which usually means ratings at one and no notes beyond names.

CUES:

MY NAME IS:

CUES TO REWARD:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

/5

BACKGROUNDS: \_\_\_\_\_

LUCK

SKILLS

<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> FIELD: _____

CONDITIONS

RATING / NAME / NOTE (Tweak, Effect, Duration, Etc)

<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> NOTE: _____
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# BACKGROUNDS

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Characters are typically created with two background traits, chosen from those given over the next few pages or from setting material created by or for the Guide. There are four categories of background given here – Boons, Kiths, Feats, and Knacks, which may be altered or expanded by the Guide and group before play gets going.

Typically, a character can't be given more than one Kith and/or one Knack, but can have as many boons as desired. In some settings, though, multiple Kith or Knack traits might make sense.

In nonmagical or humans-only settings, Knacks or Kiths or both may be absent – if both are removed, and no additional backgrounds added, the number of backgrounds per character should likely be reduced to one each.

## INVOKING BACKGROUNDS

Many backgrounds must be invoked to gain their effect (or, in some cases, one of their effects). To invoke a background, you'll say that you're using it, and spend one of your points of luck.



# BOONS

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Boons are generally backgrounds that are partly external to the character, such as money or social position, but the category is also used as something of a catch-all for background traits that don't fit anywhere else.

Here are nine boons:

**BENEFACTOR:** You have a powerful backer of some sort, created with the Guide. Those aware of this backer may know of this, and treat you accordingly. Invoke this boon to obtain a minor favour from that benefactor while contacting them.

**CONTACTS:** You correspond with many contacts. In any settlement that correspondence reaches, invoke this to declare that you have a contact there; the Guide states who, and what they have written about the area. In a city-based game, contacts might be in different barrios, or neighbourhoods, or one each in various walks of life (medicine, military, government, crime, and so on).

**EXPERTISE:** You have a broad base of understanding in one or more of the fields where you are skilled. After choosing skills and specialties, choose two additional specialties for one of those skills – or one additional specialty for two of them.

**LINEAGE:** You are descended from a deeply noble or magical legacy. Magical beings will treat you as an equal, and you can invoke this boon to catch the attention of any crowd, be recognized by any noble, or play style on any applicable roll.

**LUCK:** You're just plain lucky. Your maximum Luck is increased by one – six instead of five.

**PRIVILEGES:** You hold a post such as priest, bard, or diplomat, which enjoys special rights, usually free travel, freer speech, and immunity from some forms of prosecution. Discuss this role and rights with the Guide before taking this boon.

**REPUTATION:** There are stories about you that portray you in a specific positive way; state what this is when you take this boon. False negative rumours about you die away quickly; even true misdeeds will only poison your good name slowly.

**UNDERLING:** You have a sidekick, squire, butler, or other assistant. Their pay or other arrangements are entirely taken care of, and they are fully loyal to you. They are competent, but not exceptionally so.

**WEALTH:** You possess both ready money and an ongoing income. In any open market, you can acquire minor items easily. Invoke this boon in to acquire a scarce item, make payment on a larger buy, or pay a notable wage or sum.

# KITHS

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Depending on setting, Kiths may be distinct types of human, separate but humanoid species, or something very different indeed. It's assumed by these rules that a 'baseline human' has no Kith trait, but in some settings, baseline humans might instead need to take a specific boon (such as Lucky) to represent *their* distinctions.

Here are eight kiths:



**DUENDE:** You are around three feet tall, with large eyes and ears. Your senses are keen; you can hear and see twice as far as usual, and can invoke this trait to play clarity on any roll where sharp senses might assist you.



**DUERGAR:** About four feet tall, you are solid and stalwart. You can carry twice the weight one might expect. You can invoke this trait to ignore or reduce (as applicable) the danger of injury from physical force (but not fire, acid, or the like).



**FAUN:** You have furry legs, hooflike feet, and inborn running ability. When travelling or running, or taking part in a social event centred on dancing, you can invoke this trait to resist exhaustion or to play speed (if applicable) on one roll.



**GHUL:** Your thin, hairless skin hints at the muscles beneath. You can digest anything organic, and bite heavily. Invoke this to chew up bone or wood, or afflict a target you are fighting up close with a broken bone or crushed flesh (by biting).



**JOTUNN:** About seven feet tall and strong, you are white-haired and blue-skinned. You ignore inconvenience, damage, and exhaustion caused by cold, and can invoke this trait to play efficacy on a roll where being strong makes you effective.



**RUSALKA:** You have smooth blue-green skin, and heavily kinked hair. You need no roll to swim indefinitely and leisurely in good conditions, and do not grow tired by swimming. If rolling to swim, invoke this trait to play speed.



**STRIGA:** Pale of skin, hair, and eyes, you have fangs and claws. You are not penalized for fighting unarmed, and can digest blood. If you drink enough blood to cause injury, invoke this to reduce an injury or fatigue condition by one.



**TUATHA:** You look like a youthful, point-eared human. At maturity, you stop aging, and can fully heal any injury that does not kill you, including missing limbs. Invoke this to heal as if from a week worth of rest over the course of one night.

# FEATS

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A feat is a spectacular physical capability, marking out the holder as heroic in some fashion. Most feats have an ongoing effect, as well as one or more invoked effects (which typically cost one luck).

Here are eight feats:

**BATTLE FURY:** Invoke this boon to enter a furious state. In this state, you gain a major bonus on all rolls, but must move towards and attack others at all times, and must roll boldly, until you take some action to “snap out of” this state.

**BRANCH WALKER:** You have a perfect sense of balance, and can walk on the limb of a tree, dance on a banister, sprint on a tightrope. When making rolls for physical action where this balance is critical, invoke this boon for a minor bonus.

**FARSTRIKER:** You possess a ranged weapon and ammunition with which you are skilled. You can invoke this to boon in order to make a shot at two targets at once, from hiding while staying hidden, or ignoring fog, light cover, etc.

**FLEET-FOOT:** You run a fair bit more swiftly than anyone without this feat; you must be otherwise disadvantaged to make for an even contest. Invoke this boon to accelerate to a speed where you can outrun deer, so long as you run with no pause.

**SALMON KICK:** You can jump about four feet straight up at any time, trading in a foot of height for three feet of breadth if desired; this can be in or from water. Invoke this boon to double this distance on any leap.

**SENSE OF SPACE:** You can feel and hear motion around you out as far as you can reach with precision; you could fight close-up blindfolded with no problems. Invoke this boon to increase the reach of this ability to twenty feet for a scene.

**TIRELESS:** You have impressive reserves of stamina; invoke this feat to refresh any other feat you have. If feats are powered by a pool of points rather than being exhausted, you have an extra such point.

**WHIRLWIND WARRIOR:** You when fighting, you are a blur of motion. You can invoke this boon to hit all enemies in reach instead of one, if possible – this may effectively mean playing the scope stake without needing to pay a die for it.

In many cases, feats will have some supporting skill. If the Guide wants to have a strong skill-feat connection, it may be appropriate to require a rating of 2 or more in some supporting skill when a feat is selected.

# KNACKS

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A knack is a magical ability. Using a knack means invoking it (spending a point of luck as usual), and *possibly* making a roll. Where the use is fairly clear and trivial, the point of luck will often do. More substantial uses of knacks require a point of luck and a roll to use, often with no automatic level of success and plenty of (sometimes very weird) dangers.

Here are eight knacks:

**BEAST SPEAKER (Specify):** Invoke this knack to sense the moods of animals of the named type, and roll Animal (Handling) to converse with or command animals of that type (including in groups).

**DOWSER:** Invoke this knack to 'smell' the direction to the nearest body of water, and the depth of the local water table. You can roll Awareness (Search) to stretch your senses across hundreds of feet of water, feeling its currents, depth, and shapes of everything submerged in it.

**GLAMOUR:** Invoke this knack to change your eye, hair, or skin colour. With a Subterfuge (Disguise) roll, you can extend this to gender presentation and gendered characteristics, height, and weight, even bending your looks towards those of another.

**GREENTHUMB:** Invoke this knack to sense the health and needs of plants you touch. With a Naturalist (Herbary) roll, you can push plants around you to grow or put forth flowers, fruit, etc, at unnatural speeds.

**HEXER:** Invoke this knack to sense if a touched person, place, or thing has significant luck or destiny (and what that is). With a Lore (Arcana) roll, you can curse someone you see with ill luck in some activity (a condition that effectively adds dangers to their rolls).

**KNOCKER:** Invoke this knack to feel the size and shape of a rock you tap and abutting rocks up to a twenty foot radius. With an Awareness (Search) roll, you can extend your 'feel' hundreds of feet through stone and soil.

**MEDIUM:** Invoke this knack to sense the presence of ghosts as silent, thin misty shapes in the air for about an hour. With an Awareness (Empathy) roll, you can focus on one, see it clearly, and hear anything it is saying as if in a whisper.

**WINDCALLER:** Invoke this knack to 'smell' the weather that will be arriving over the next twenty-four hours. With an added Naturalist (Weather Sense) roll, you can strengthen or weaken that weather a little, turning clear skies into some clouds, calm to breeze, and so on.

Knacks can be created ad-hoc; the Guide will balance them over the course of play; more power can always be balanced with more danger.

# BACKGROUND TWEAKS

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In some settings, it's desirable to have a clear division between physically heroic characters and magically adept types. When this is the case, an easy rule to institute is that once you've taken a Feat or a Knack, the other category is off-limits; you're either a Feat-user or a Knack-user. In other settings, magic is absolutely inborn, and Knacks cannot be gained through play.

In some settings, there's also a strong connection between various Kiths and magical powers – things like “Fairy ancestry gives those who have it unusual abilities; the abilities depending on the kind of fairy”. Connections like this can mean that only characters that have a specific Kith or are descended from it as a note can take Knacks, but they also mean that Kith characters who are otherwise locked into being Feat-users (as above) can take one Knack associated with their Kith. It can also run the other way – you have to take the Knack to get at the associated Kith, or the Kith is something the magic *turns you into*.

When these kinds of connections are desirable, here are recommended Knack-and-Kith links:

- ◆ Duende: Greenthumb
- ◆ Duergar: Knocker
- ◆ Faun: Beast Speaker
- ◆ Ghul: Medium
- ◆ Jotunn: Windcaller
- ◆ Rusalka: Dowser
- ◆ Striga: Hexer
- ◆ Tuatha: Glamour



# SKILLS AND FIELDS

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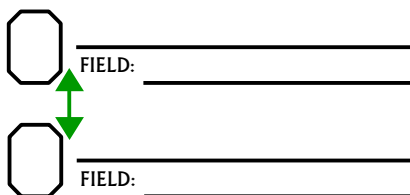
When creating a new character, you'll choose six skills and assign them the values 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1; higher is better. Each skill exists within a field, so Diagnosis is a skill in the field of Medicine. The listings lay out fields, then skills within them. Where a skill is listed in parenthesis in the lists, like (Weapon), you name a specific thing of that type. In the Performance field, (Musical Instrument) might become the Violin skill.

**SKILLS AND DICE:** You'll get dice equal to the rating of your skill when it applies to a roll.

**FIELD FAMILIARITY:** When you don't have the right skill, but do have a skill in the right field, you can take one die less than your rating if you are familiar with the alternate use - so, a character with Diagnosis (Medicine) 2 will almost certainly be familiar with first aid, and therefore get one die for emergency procedures. A character with Violin (Performance) 3 may need a *great deal of time* to develop familiarity before they can get two dice on a Fire-Eating (also Performance) roll, but will not technically need to gain that skill to do so.

**MULTIPLE SKILLS IN ONE FIELD:** If you'd like to play a character with multiple starting skills in one field, select the first one as usual, and then use up one of the "1" rankings in the starting array (the 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1). The second skill can then be recorded as being at the same rank as the first, and any future rank improvement to either will affect both. Like the familiarity rule, this is a bit of a gross simplification (why does improving my Fire-Eating from 2 to 3 also raise my Violin?) which groups can correct with more a detailed approach if they wish to, but overall most solutions simply aren't worth the added complexity required.

To easily track same-field skills for advancement, record them beside or one above the other on your character sheet and then draw in a line, arrow, or other indicator to clearly to link them (such as the green double-arrow shown below).



# FURTHER SKILL NOTES

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**ADDING MORE SKILLS:** If your character concept involves some kind of proficiency that's neither a skill nor a field here, chat with the Guide about adding it as one of those; the skill list is a starting point (albeit a pretty hefty one) rather than an end one.

**SKILL SPLITTING FOR SETTING:** The skill list can be, and often should be, modified to suit the specific setting and intended playstyle of the group. If the group will be consistently engaging with a single skill or two, it may be worth separating that group of specialties into distinct skills. If the game is set in a hospital, for example, turning Medicine into several entire fields of skill, and creating more specific skills within each, is very likely a good idea.

**REGROUPING SKILLS:** In some settings, it may also be good to reorganize fields – a setting where Herbarry is part of medicine rather than naturalism is fairly easy to imagine.

**COMBAT STYLES:** If the setting has specific combat styles, such as martial arts, then those should be noted as possible skills where appropriate. If those combat styles include fantastical elements, or a lot of packaged cross-training, then breaking each school out into a separate field may again be a good idea.

**VEHICULARITY:** Drive/Pilot/Helm/Crew is the extreme example of a field that often needs to be organized by setting, and may easily be collapsed into one field or split all four ways (or more, for a setting with a truly huge array of vehicles that characters might interact with).

**LANGUAGES:** Each character gets some number (often one, but in some settings two or more) languages free. For more, this field is used, with each skill as another known language – and a rank of 2+ allowing you to “muddle along” in all others.



# BASIC SKILL LISTING

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The following are listed as FIELD: Skill, Skill, Skill.

**ANIMAL:** Coursing, Falconry, Grooming, Handling, Riding, Teamster, Training

**ATHLETICS:** Acrobatics, Climbing, Endurance, Might, Running, Skating, Swimming

**AWARENESS:** Alertness, Empathy, Investigation, Lip Reading, Search, Stakeout

**CALCULATION:** Cryptography, Evaluate, Gambling, Mathematics, Navigation, Physics

**CRAFTS:** Alchemy, Calligraphy, Cooking, Counterfeiting, Leatherworking, Makeup, Masonry, Painting, Potter, Sewing, Smithing, Woodworking

**DRIVE/PILOT/HELM/CREW:**  
(Vehicle), (Powered or Environmental Suit)

**LANGUAGES:** (Language)

**LORE:** Arcana, Archaeology, Astronomy, Biology, Bureaucracy, Cartography, Geology, History, Iconography, Law, Literature, Metallurgy, Theology, Linguistics

**MARKSMANSHIP:** Artillerist, Gunner, Throwing, (Weapon)

**MECHANICS:** Engineering, Lockpicking, Machinist, Repair, Tinkering, Traps

**MEDICINE:** Diagnosis, First Aid, Pharmacy, Physician, Poisons, Surgery, Veterinary

**MELEE:** Unarmed, (Unarmed Style), (Weapon), (Weapon Style), Shield

**NATURALIST:** Fishing, Foraging, Gardening, Herbarry, Hunting, Prospecting, Survival, Tracking, Weather Sense

**PERFORMANCE:** Acting, Dancing, Fire Eating, Mimicry, (Musical Instrument), Singing

**RAPPORT:** Barter, Entice, Fortune Telling, Interrogate, Intimidate, Provoke

**SCHEME:** Management, Programming, Research, Schedule, Strategy, Tactics

**SOCIALIZE:** Carousing, Etiquette, Inspire, Leadership, Lecturing, Network, Oratory

**SUBTERFUGE:** Camouflage, Disguise, Deceive, Pickpocket, Sleight of Hand, Sneak

# FILLING IN (SKILLS)

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Levi is looking at the fill-in-blanks skills, and decides he should put together at least a bit of a list of what's available for those in his setting. Languages he's just going to name after his cultures and then throw in a trade pidgin for general use, so those aren't especially exciting.

The transportation pile gets his attention first. The setting is very low-tech, but pretty fantastical, so Levi decides that the whole mess of drive/pilot/helm/crew will be broken into the fields of *riding* and *piloting*, with riding skills individually being a list of beasties (horse, enormous snail, giant tiger, mega-raptor, some kind of surface-swimming dinosaur creature), and piloting being a list of largely watercraft (coracle, many-oared boat, sailing ship, and a "sand ship" on skis).

Next, the combat pile; there are a bunch of old cultures with a good bit of violence around them in the setting, so Levi decides those are ripe for having unique fighting styles. He decides there should be a few of unarmed styles; something in the vein of judo, wrestling, pankration, kung fu, savate, and so on, and a few melee weapon styles (like kendo and fencing), which he'll name after their respective cultures.

Musical instruments are next, and for these Levi decides he'd like the setting to have a universal "shared heritage" of basic music (which all cultures build on), so he searches up some of the oldest known musical instruments.

Finally, because hospitality, meals, and cooking are a big deal in-setting, Levi adds a cooking field with skills for each of the cultures.

Here's how the modifications look:

## RIDING

Horse, Giant Snail, Harushan Tiger, Stalker Beast, Paddler Beast

## PILOTING

Coracle, Oarboat, Sailing Ship, Sand Ship

## UNARMED STYLES

Velnic Wrestling, Ganthan Dance, Weund Kickboxing

## MELEE WEAPON STYLES

Apalu Knifework, Kiamia Haft-arms, Tocion Axe-fighting

## MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Drum, Horn, Flute, Lithophone/Xylophone, Rattle, Harp

## COOKING

Velnic, Ganthan, Weund, Apalu, Kiama, Tocion

# LUCK

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Each player character has a pool of five luck, spent to enhance rolls and to power abilities. When carrying it into the fiction, the degree to which luck is treated as luck, as willpower, or as magical energy depends very much on how the player approaches its use – it abstracts all of those things together as well as being a meta-resource.

Luck is regained at the start of a session, unless the session picks up in the middle of heavy action that was paused. It can also be regained during the session by playing to cues.

When someone else plays off one of your cues, you can reward them with a luck point. These rewards are drawn from the middle of the table, not your own pool of tokens (or just given, if tokens aren't being used for this). You can award at most one luck point to each other player in any given scene.

The Guide doesn't spend luck, but might award it, even having a set of their own cues.



## RENAMING LUCK

For groups that will be using abstracted cues and don't feel the need to associate it with anything in-setting, Luck might be renamed "Plot points" or similar. In settings where characters deal in magic all the time, it might be worth renaming it as "Essence" to reflect that it's going to see a lot of use fuelling magic in that setting. Overall, if there's an especially strong thing it's going to be spent on because of the setting, consider giving it a new name to match.

# CUES

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Cues are statements addressed to the other players, informing them of things to interact with and other actions at the table which you will award luck for. There are a number of ways cues can be written – the group should discuss which ones work for them and which don't. In many cases, players will end up each writing a single cue from a selection of the following categories:

**CUES AS RAW DESCRIPTION:** Cues can be vivid description of your character in a way that hopefully prompts interaction. A character with the cue "Burning eyes in black armour, fearsome in all ways" is prompting others to approach with trepidation or defiance, and likely to treat their character as inhuman.

**CUES AS AURAS / ARCHETYPES:** In a similar line to description, a cue can be an archetypal statement for others to react to. If your cue is "Jock" or "Prom Queen" in a 80s high school game, everyone's going to be able to interact with that in ways you can reward.

**CUES FOR RELATIONSHIPS:** Putting out the cue "Establish a relationship with me, then escalate our relationship with drama!" is a pretty straightforward way to ask for, get, and reward interpersonal drama with your character.

**CUES AS FANMAIL:** Putting up the cue "Be Awesome" is a bit too vague to prompt and reward any kind of specific action, but "Describe cool stunts and involved magic" lets you throw awards at things that boost your enjoyment of the action. That said, if it's really desired, the whole group can agree together to put "Be Awesome" on their sheets, and just fling Luck at it without boundaries – but be aware that this often ends up being equivalent to "Be loud and flashy".

**CUES AS TROPE STEWARDSHIP:** If the group is playing towards some particular genre, they can look online for tropes and stylistic bits tied to that genre – and then players can pick from those and plant some of them in their cues as desired.

## THINGS TO AVOID

When setting up cues, throw them around the group and check if any of these issues are being run into. First, a cue should not run contrary to the other rules pieces associated with a character, but instead complement them. Second, cues aren't force; they aren't a place to try and *dictate* actions, but a place to put things that make others go "Ohh, I can work with that" - with a mechanism to remind them to do that. And third, cues should never render an intrinsic motive extrinsic; that is, if you schedule rewards for something players were going to be leaning into anyway, you cheapen it. Cues should shore up the desired support material, not the already-exciting heart of play.

# GEAR CONDITIONS

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Equipment, where it is bothered with, is recorded in the condition sections of the sheet, as simple conditions. A good deal of basic stuff can be handwaved off if it's desirable to do so; the system doesn't tend to deal in especially fine detail (though if your group glories in shopping and detail, have at it).

To summarize and get to the action quickly, most gear can be recorded in the form of outfits and kits, so a wandering princeling, for example, might have Fine Outfits 1 and Camping Kit 1. Dangerous items such as weapons, however, should always be listed individually or paired up as used – that same princeling might have Rapier and Dagger 1 as well as Blackmail Material (Lord Amar) 1.

High and low quality, where applicable, should be noted with the condition. Having shoddy equipment break is an added danger than can be thrown in, while a piece of fine equipment might be able to lose that quality to resist damage – or be used as social equipment with those who appreciate it.

Ratings here are based primarily on *scale*, not quality. A crossbow is gear condition that should be rated at one. A spear-throwing ballista you can set up with a few moments of work should be rated at two; one mounted on a castle wall would be rated at three. For items where scale isn't size (like blackmail material), discuss it with the Guide.



## ADVANCED OPTION: WELL-EQUIPPED

This option won't make sense until you're familiar with the system as a whole, but it's possible to consider equipment as something that always gives one die (and has notes but no rating) and consider things large enough to give multiple dice conditions *on the environment* instead of gear. If the division is treated this way, then allowing players to call in "I have the right equipment" for one die, and then another condition for more, can open up a bit more environment-using and calling-in-enemy-conditions action.



## EXAMPLE CHARACTER: TOSCAERWYN

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Kim is creating a character for a game set in a mash-up Celtic Arthurian kind of thing. The game is set in a village that's traditionally advised by witches but led by elders and battle champions. Kim immediately decides to be a witch, looks at the Knacks, and calls Medium as her clear choice.

The group throws around ideas for a while, and it's noted that well before play, the characters spent a lot of time in a petty kingdom over the hill. Kim improves "Oh, yeah, my girlfriend lives there", and the Guide goes "Okay, how about the princess – she could be a Benefactor for you". Kim loves it, so that's settled.

Backgrounds in hand, Kim pictures the character as kind of an ascetic, spooky and grumpy but perceptive. She settles on the following skills:

*Endurance (Athletics) 2*

*Empathy (Awareness) 3*

*Arcana (Lore) 2*

*First Aid (Medicine) 1*

*Unarmed (Melee) 1*

*Intimidate (Rapport) 1*

For gear, Kim just wants "travelling gear" and "pouches of hair and cloth" - the latter being samples of the clothes and hair of the recently dead of the village, to help her call them up as needed.

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# EXPERIENCE POINTS

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Most genres emulated by roleplaying games have both naturalistic character development, where the characters become more complex people with stronger connections and values, and direct advancement, where the characters grow more powerful as the storyline proceeds episodically. Experience points are a means for handling this second component, building up the power of the characters.

At the end of each session of play, each player receives a number of experience points to spend on their character, as follows:

- 1 POINT / SESSION: Extended campaign / Slow growth.
- 2 POINTS / SESSION: Mid-length campaign / Moderate growth.
- 3 POINTS / SESSION: Short campaign / Fast growth.

These points can then be spent as follows:

**GAIN NEW SKILL:** 1 pt. If you have another skill in that field, the new skill is immediately given the same rating as it. Otherwise the new skill is gained with a rating of 1.

**INCREASE SKILL:** This costs points equal to the new rating, must be done one level at a time, and can't raise a skill above 3. Increasing any skill in a given field improves all skills in that field.

**BUY BACKGROUNDS:** This costs points equal to the new total number of backgrounds the character will have, and should be discussed with the group in terms of "how the character gained this". If the group is using additional material that adds a great many further backgrounds, the point cost for new backgrounds may be reduced to a flat 3 apiece.





## BACKGROUND: SIGNATURE CONDITION

---

Signature conditions are an additional background type; they require a stronger understanding of the rules than is expected for basic character creation, and should generally be prepped by the Guide according to the setting.

A signature condition notes a single, specific condition which the character is exceptionally good at working in or with. When calling in that condition, the character receives one die more than the rating of the condition (up to three at most).

A signature condition could be a piece of equipment, most often a tool or weapon. If it is a tool or weapon tied to a specific skill, then it's best to gate the background so the skill itself must be rated at 3 before this tool can be taken as a signature condition.

Additionally, a signature condition could be a condition as placed on *someone else*. If your character is a satirist, they might be able to use conditions based on social scandal carried by someone else to devastating effect.

In many settings, the various forms of this background are best restricted to expert or esoteric training, or to long experience in environments focused on those conditions; the Guide will likely want to consider how to include such abilities.

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# ROLLING DICE

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The main function of this section is to walk you through how dice rolls are set up, made, resolved, and recorded. Each roll packs in a fair bit of action; they aren't strictly succeed-and-fail, but rather "How much, and of which things, did you get during this action?". Rolls as described here are made exclusively by the players; the Guide does not need to roll dice at all (though randomizing various things is something they may *wish* to do).





## A QUICK ORACLE: SHOW ME THREE

In cases where the group *really* just needs a fast yes-or-no check on something rather than a full roll, the Guide can just ask the player to "Show me three?" or whichever number – in which case the player need only show that they could get that many dice if a roll *were* to occur, and can spend luck to increase their count one-for-one until they hit it.

# THE STAKES SHEET

The stakes sheet (bundled with the character sheet) should be printed out and put in the middle of the playing area:

			
DANGERS		AUGMENTS	
<b>AFFLICTION</b> Weary, targeted, sickened, on fire, impeded. You have a die penalty or are denied some actions.	<b>ALTERATION</b> Something about you is significantly altered, whether at a condition or as a permanent change.	<b>ADVANTAGE</b> You set things up to aid yourself or another in future, creating a condition or augument opportunity.	<b>DURATION</b> The effect you create lasts longer, is more stable, can withstand more damage, or similar results.
<b>DELAY</b> The action takes more time than expected, or some need must be filled to complete the action.	<b>DISPLACEMENT</b> Something, whether you, your target, or your effect, ends up somewhere other than intended.	<b>EFFICACY</b> Your action hits harder, produces more progress towards a goal, or is otherwise strengthened.	<b>INCITEMENT</b> You provoke a response along specified lines from one or more other characters.
<b>EXPENSE</b> An item or a resource that you possess or value is broken, lost, or used up in the action.	<b>FATIGUE</b> You are more tired, taking or increasing a condition to reflect this — which may include “collapse”.	<b>OBSERVATION</b> You are especially observant in action, learning anything of note that can be learned as you act.	<b>SCOPE</b> You hit more targets, affect a larger area, or otherwise create a bigger effect.
<b>INDISCRETION</b> You betray information you didn't mean to, which can include your position and presence.	<b>INJURY</b> You take damage to your body. Gain or increase an injury condition, or the condition “dead”.	<b>SPEED</b> Your actions take place in a much shorter span of time than others would expect.	<b>STYLE</b> You give others the impression of poise and grace, regardless of your success or lack of same.
<b>MAYHEM</b> Collateral damage, chaos, or general sonic result from the action taking place.	<b>MENACE</b> The action motivates or creates a new threat or antagonist that's positioned to act against you.	<b>SUBTLETY</b> Your actions appear to be other than they are, whether by being hidden or disguised in some way.	<b>VEAXATION</b> You inflict an appropriately described danger on another or on the scene as a whole.

## PLACING TOKENS

Whatever tokens are being used to mark stakes (as well as those used for luck, which may or may not be the same tokens) should be laid out along with the stakes sheet. Ideally, this should be somewhere everyone can reach and clearly see.

With tokens available in this way, the Guide can place them on the danger section of the sheet, and players can remove them back to the bowl as well as adding tokens from the bowl to mark the augments that they're buying.

# MAKING A ROLL

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Dice rolling comes out of the usual back-and-forth of narration, emerging and proceeding as follows:

## 1. THE GUIDE SETS THE SCENE

During the normal course of play, the Guide is consistently setting scenes; some of these will lead to rolls, some won't.

## 2. A PLAYER DESCRIBES AN ACTION

Again, as is often happening, players describe actions for their characters. In some cases, the action will be something the Guide thinks could use some dice on it, and...

## 3. THE GUIDE DECLARES A ROLL

Hearing what has been proposed, the Guide states that a rules governed action is now going on, and a roll will be needed.

## 4. STYLE IS STATED

The action is then deemed to be *Bold* or *Cautious*. If it could be either, the Guide asks the player which style it is – which is the character being?

## 5. STAKES ARE LAID OUT

Based on the action, the scene, and the the style, the Guide will lay out stakes for the roll (as in "What's at stake?"). There are three kinds of stakes: dangers, augments, and automatic results; more on those shortly.

## 6. STYLE MAY BE REVERSED

If desired, after seeing the stakes, the player may spend a luck to switch from bold to cautious. This represents the *character* making a similar, last-second change of attitude as well.

## 7. DICE ARE ACQUIRED

The player takes dice equal to:  
+Their rank in the applicable skill (-1 if outside specialty).  
+The value of any condition they call in (see conditions).

## 8. DICE ARE ROLLED AND REROLLED

The player rolls the dice. If acting cautiously, all **■** and **▣** results are rerolled once. If acting boldly, all **■** and **▣** results receive a reroll instead. Upon seeing the result of either roll, the player may spend a point of luck to skip a reroll or gain another one.

## 9. DICE ARE ASSIGNED

The player spends **▣** results to cancel dangers and **▣** results to gain augments, one for one, as they like.

## 10. RESULTS ARE STATED

Finally, the Guide describes what the final outcome looks like, including changes to conditions, setting the scene for further action.

# TYPES OF STAKES

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
## AUTOMATIC STAKES



An automatic stake is something that *will* happen as a result of the action; it can't be removed. When stating any automatic stakes for an action, the Guide will generally state them aloud without marking them in any specific way.


## DANGERS



A danger is something bad that will happen on a roll unless the player spends a  die to cancel it. There are ten general forms for dangers given on the stakes sheet. When stating a danger, the Guide will often put a token on the stakes sheet, on top of that danger – which the player can remove by spending the die.

## AUGMENTS



An augment is something that won't happen as the result of the action unless the player spends a  die to make it (but which can). There are ten general forms of augment on the stakes sheet. When giving a possible augment the player might buy, the Guide will often just point to which general form this fits into; some players prefer to put tokens on these upon buying them.

## HOW MANY DANGERS?

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Guides using Schema for the first time are often a little hesitant throwing stakes around, especially in trying to sort out the right number and severity of dangers for a roll. Staking out rolls is something a Guide can *start* to learn by reading examples and structured setups (and should! They matter!), but will mainly improve at by practising it.

When setting stakes, remember that a player won't be rolling more than six dice, and that getting all dice up on a given face will almost always require heavy luck use. The closer a list of dangers gets to six, the more caution is being demanded – and going over six means there's no possible way to avoid all the trouble.

---

# STAKES ADVICE

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The role of the Guide in Schema is largely that of a traditional GM; the place where it differs notably is in setting stakes. Examples and concepts can only take you so far; when the game starts to roll, you'll find yourself adjudicating action with a much lighter safety net of rules than most game provide. You'll also have the *capacity* to improvise whole subsystems and minigames without changing a single rule, inside the context of stakes and conditions.

To get started, though, the primary tricks for good stakes setting up good tension between bold and cautious action, so that the choice is often one actually worth considering, and having strong standard conditions in clusters that create evocative detail and a span of material to track. The next few pages discuss these in some detail.

## CONTROLLING CAUTION

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If you're not managing stakes in a way that 'controls for caution', players can get the idea that it's always good to be cautious in Schema, because there's often automatic movement forward and you can just make another roll. To avoid justifying that viewpoint or creating it:

**LIMIT SUCCESS:** The victory obtained by only avoiding dangers should be extremely limited when possible, the bare margin of "you've avoided failure", rather than a grand success. Augments should be required to make a full success out of it. This should be your go-to method for making boldness attractive, but sometimes other methods are called for...

**SUMMARIZE:** Any time it makes sense to do so, summarize as much as possible into just one roll, and make it clear getting another try will be tricky or entirely impossible. If they don't get what they want on this go, then *they don't get it*.

**WEAK OR FEW DANGERS:** Having only two dangers, even if they're noteworthy, means that ■ dice beyond those two are lost entirely, which limits how attractive it is to be cautious. This can feel like a bit of a cheat, though – having an array of very weak dangers is often much more flavourful and balanced-feeling.

**DANGLE THE BAIT:** Make it *clear* how the goal can be expanded on by buying augments – how that bare margin can be pushed up into something much better, quite easily.

**SOMETIMES – DON'T:** Sometimes, you shouldn't control for caution and instead effectively demand it by piling on the dangers to the point of excess, effectively forcing caution and making any roll a question of *which* terrible crap the character suffers and *how much*.



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## RESTRAINING THE BOLD

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On the flip side of controlling caution, sometimes you'll have a player that always wants to go bold; the one who consistently uses all their mojo as fast as possible and then wants to call it a day. This can be a functional tactic, and will often (intentionally or not) end up as a spotlight grab.

To discourage this, reversing the tricks for encouraging boldness is an option, but not always the best. Often, it's better to just ensure that seriously reckless characters take conditions that linger – a bone-weary character might need a week of rest, rather than a night. A sickening affliction can last weeks. If the characters can't just call it a day, and being bold every time all the time *wears you down*, then such a character will need to change tactics at some point as their usefulness wanes, or end up in whatever form of collapse into helplessness awaits - either of which lets others shine a bit.

# CONDITIONS

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Conditions are temporary traits which can be applied to characters or to the environment, and can represent the current state of either, as well as representing resources at that location. “Hungry” is a condition a character might have - and so is “Blessed by the Frog God”. “Windy and stormy” is a condition the environment might have, as is “Crystal research materials”. Quite a few different stakes can be handled by inflicting or manipulating conditions. For the most part, how this occurs will be handled by the Guide and incorporated into the stakes they describe and lay out, but players should feel free to suggest, negotiate, and work with the Guide on this when it’s interesting to.

Conditions can have ratings, ranging from one to three. A condition at one is something fairly noteworthy, a condition at two is *very* noteworthy, and a condition at three is the kind of thing that becomes focal to situations and causes trouble all its own.



# MORE ON CONDITIONS

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**CHANGING CONDITION RATINGS:** The rating of a condition can often be altered - creating it at a rating of one and increasing it, or reducing it down and removing it at zero. This may require special circumstances, take place on a long time scale, or need specialized equipment (medical care is an example of this, aimed at reducing conditions). Or it may be possible to alter a condition very quickly with improvised tools (violence is an example of this, aimed at creating and raising conditions).

**CALLING CONDITIONS:** When making a roll, a player can potentially 'call in' one (and only one) condition. Describe how it is helpful to your action - and gain dice equal to the rating of the condition.

**OPPOSED 'CALLS':** If a condition ought to be a major obstacle for you in a given roll (or an opposing force would deliberately try to make it one), the Guide will take note of this and may well add a further danger to rolls where it applies. If the condition has a rating, the Guide might add dangers up to that rating.

**CONDITION NOTES:** Some conditions do things that aren't well expressed by a rating, or have durations or other asides in addition to a rating. "Cocooned in animated darkness", for example, might very well have a rating that must be reduced to break free - but that magical animation might also have a duration that will expire. Asides like this are put into condition notes.

**SPENDABILITY:** Levels of some conditions can potentially be spent as if they were points, in much the same way as luck is (and possibly to replace or augment one or more of the uses for luck).

**TROUBLE:** Condition notes also include trouble; that is, "What goes wrong when the condition reaches 3?". The animated darkness, for example, might begin not only to restrain but to constrict of its own agency. "Popular in Banthis Town 3" might pick up the Trouble note of "Townfolk give no privacy or time", which in turn could lead to rolls that include popularity becoming notoriety as a danger.

**THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL:** Theoretically, a character engaged in heavy fighting could have "Bruised 3" and "Battered 3" and "All cut up 3", all as individual conditions. However, giving a character more than a couple tightly-connected conditions is generally just dancing around the inevitable. The recommended guideline for this is that any given "final state" such as death, exile, etc, shouldn't have more than two intermediate conditions before it arrives - so you might get "Bruised 3", then "Wounded 3", but then it's death. Additionally, the second intermediate condition should always have an effect applied - being wounded might mean rolling one less die on all rolls, for example.

# CONDITION CLUSTERS

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In Schema, clusters of conditions perform many of the functions that experienced gamers will generally associate with various types of points – Health points, Sanity points, Radiation points, and so on. The basis of this is a pair of conditions – one light, one severe. A basic example:

*Combat damage is tracked at Jane's table as "Hurt 1, 2, 3" followed by "Injured 1, 2, 3"; a character who is Injured has a one-die penalty on all rolls. Further damage after Injury 3 is death.*

With the basic pair of conditions established, you can add small notes or complicating optional conditions that you'll offer or put in, such as:

*Jane will make the offer to take the condition Unconscious instead of injured when a character takes their last point of Hurt, but before taking Injured. Once a character has the Injured condition, this switches from Unconscious to Comatose, which requires healing to wake up from. A character who goes all the way to Injured 3 gives up their chance to go Comatose; they are "pushing through to the death".*

Building atmospheric clusters of conditions that match your setting and desired action elevates the game greatly; consider them carefully as you prep for play!



# A CONDITION CLUSTER: SCANDAL

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Mark is running a game set in an imperial court, with the characters as courtiers. Naturally, social position matters, and pushing at the confines of the system is scandalous, which can cause issues. Mark arranges a total of five conditions to represent this.

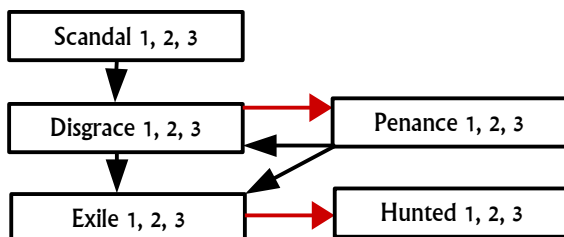
**SCANDAL:** The basic 'injury', having this condition has no major effect – some characters won't accept you as a visitor or invite you to events, but some will, making it possible to gain scandalous friends. Reduces by one point each week, doesn't recover while disgraced..

**DISGRACE:** The advanced form of scandal, only those who are themselves scandalous or disgraceful are likely to receive you (it might be a scandal). Reduces by one point each season, though not while in exile or hunted.

**PENANCE:** With some public act of contrition to the throne, you can transform disgrace into penance. Invitations and reception will resume, but expect to be morally lectured on your failing, with attendant delays and inconveniences. Any gain of scandal will revert penance to disgrace and add to it. Fades as disgrace does.

**EXILE:** A thoroughly-disgraced courtier that incurs further scandal will be exiled from court, send out into the provinces or beyond. This will be for a term of a year (1), decade (2), or permanent unless recalled (3). Exile is not instantaneous, but once the condition is taken, is inevitable.

**HUNTED:** A courtier who doesn't actually go into exile within a day and a night after the writ of exile is delivered to their home will have a bounty placed on their head; Exile become Hunted. They may expect all palace guards and soldiers to attack them and attempt their arrest, etc.



**CONDITIONS TREES**, like the diagram just above, are a fast way to visualize many clusters of conditions, and may be helpful in creating your own condition clusters or showing them off to players.

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# EVEN MORE SCANDAL: POLITICAL TRACKING

*For those who really want turn the dial on scandal WAY up, add...*

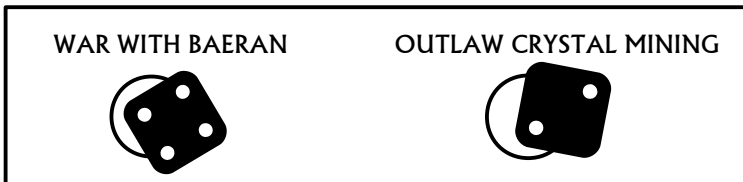
**SLANDER:** Scandal generates relatively naturally when someone does something, well, scandalous, or when such behaviour is uncovered. Creating scandal for someone else, thus, requires some such action. When someone can't wait for that or dig it up, there's always the option of inventing it. A slander condition should also note what the lie is, such as Slander (Sold secrets to the enemy) 2. Player characters may pick up Slander as a danger when social events occur where their enemies are present, or in rolls to handle downtime. They may also inflict it on others as a vexation in similar circumstances. Slander can be fought with proof of falsehood and action by allies; it's effectiveness fades over weeks (one week per point). It can be called on to gain dice and build Scandal.

**FAVOUR:** Favour means general approval or approval by the head of a noble court, gossipy neighborhood, or what-have-you, typically gained by buying Style while doing something approved-of. It may be required to buy backgrounds, can be called on many social rolls, lost as an expense, and *spent* to block scandal or slander.

**BARBED:** Barbed functions much as Favour, but indicates that the court doesn't wish to cross you; it is often gained with style while slandering or scandalizing someone (making it fairly easy to grab). It may well come with trouble, however.

## ISSUE TRACKING

In addition to tracking these conditions, it may be useful to track local issues – how likely is this piece of legislation or HOA motion to pass, how popular is this politician, and so on. A handy way to do this is to put down a piece of paper, and write the issues on it, and then set a numbered die or token pile under each. This can be condition-based, running from one to three, can create a spendable pool like luck, or can be given as a topic statement where a low number is “this is unpopular” and a high number is “this is very popular”.



# MORE EXAMPLES

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Getting the most out of Schema means getting a range of ideas on how it can be used, and ways to consider the system and its tools in motion. To that end, here are some added examples of the rules in use.

## A ROLL: DODGING FIRE




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Arsenau has stolen an egg from the nest of the firebird, a titanic creature capable of burning a city to the ground, and is now running away from it, over the open ground of its wastes, with... No further plan and no backup?

The Guide states that come morning, the firebird will certainly be able to see her, and will swoop past to turn the area she's in to black glass with terrible fire. Arsenau's player declares that obviously, yeah, she's being cautious, keeping an eye on the sky – and she's running *away*, right? That's danger-avoidance at its finest.

Sighing at this, the Guide drops seven tokens on injury to mark out “this danger, seven times” - which is a death sentence if it all hits, since it'll run right through both sets of conditions between being okay and death. Additionally, the Guide plays Displacement (Arsenau might exit the area in an odd direction), Expense (the egg might get broken), and Indiscretion (making Arsenau's presence visible to the Firebird for yet another pass).

That's nine dangers. The Guide doesn't bother naming any use for augments, but is open to them. Arsenau ends up with five dice – she's got Running (Athletics) 3, and she has practised movement in the desert and is wearing good running gear, but is mainly counting on calling in the firebird being good and tired... And the Guide agrees that it's a good bit tired, rating that at 2.

Arsenau's player rolls, rerolls, spends a luck to reroll again, and gets   . She cancels two of the Injuries, the Indiscretion, and the Expense (leaving five Injuries and Displacement), and buys Clarity for “I know where I am” to go with Displacements “Even though it's the wrong place”.

Arsenau staggers bleeding and crispy from the wrong side of the Firebird wastes and into the cover of a cave in some rocky crags before the sun rises. She has “Bruised 2” and “Burned 3”, and a Firebird egg.

# A ROLL: RAT-THINGS

---

Mara is taking point as she and her allies hunt through the sewers. They're looking for the nest of a swarm of rat-things, which are carrying a disease and have been infecting those in the city above.

Suddenly, the rat-things appear, as if from nowhere! Mara is the first to be engage, and is forced to roll; her player decides that she's being cautious when engaging.

The Guide puts two tokens on Injury and one on Affliction – Mara might get bitten up and might also catch something awful. For automatic stakes, Mara will get a couple shots in, but won't do serious damage without playing Efficacy. Additionally, the Guide notes that Clarity could get information on where the rat-things are coming from, and preparation could be used to build a "high ground" condition for the fight to call on.

Mara's player looks over these stakes, and decides that Mara, seeing the odds, will change tacks and wade in. She spends a Luck to switch to rolling Bold.

Mara's got Axe (Melee) at 3, and has an axe for one die, but that's the best condition she has available, so that's all - four dice. She rolls, rerolls, and end up with **3 3 3 1**.

Efficacy, Preparation, and Clarity are chosen. Mara slashes and kills a good half-dozen Rat-things with Efficacy. She also nabs that "high ground 1" for another die from preparation; this might go a few rolls. And she gets a good bead on where the rats are coming from with Clarity. Of course, she has Red Fever 1 and Gnawed Upon 2 to contend with, as well....



# A ROLL: FAMILY DINNER

---

Your character Doiro has brought their new bedmate, Goio, to feast day with the extended family, in the hopes that Ummamama Moochi and Gammagama Goochi, matriarchs of the family, will bless their union. The Guide has decided to track how much the matriarchs like the pair as an environmental condition, "Matriarchal Approval". You've already got it to rating one, so you might be able to ask for their blessing? But you think it's better to raise to three, even if that makes it trouble, to call it in on the attempt.

So it's time for the main feast. The Guide decides the conversation for the whole meal will be one roll, and asks how you're going about it? Boldly, you say. Boldly.

The Guide lays out some stakes:

**AUTOMATIC:** You'll absolutely get the condition "Stuffed with food" at one. That's just the price of entry on this one.

**DANGER:** Affliction - The Guide puts two tokens here, and notes that this is even more stuffed with food. If both tokens stay, you'll have that condition at three, and the Guide will likely assign it some kind of "Force you to take a nap because you're soooo full" trouble.

**DANGER:** Menace - You're seated next to Aunt Maunt, easily offended. If it goes through, you'll need to deal with her after.

**DANGER:** Mayhem - In your focus, it's possible you'll set off one of the old family arguments. This won't necessarily hurt your chances at that blessing, but it might make another condition in the environment.

**AUGMENTS:** the Guide also points out Efficacy as the augment you probably want; that's where more approval is, by way of sparkling conversation and obviously healthy bonding with your bedmate. Other augments can be discussed if you want.

You've got Etiquette at 2, and your relationship is also down as a condition titled "We Danced Until Dawn", which is a whole other story, and rated at 3 (this dinner is, in fact, the result of its trouble). Five dice. You throw them, and get 3, 3, 2, 2, 1. Since you're being bold, you have a reroll coming where you throw the blank and both minuses again, but this is a really good result - so you spend a point of luck, not to get a reroll, but to skip it.

Both pluses get the approval up to 3... And the Guide lets you know that the trouble this condition has will be an 'interfering interest' in your affairs. At least the blessing should come easily? With the two minuses, you knock a token off affliction - can't be sleepy when it comes time to get all formal. And you cancel the Mayhem. So you'll be pretty stuffed (at 2), and will have ruffled Aunt Maunt something fierce, but still.

# STAKES: WINDCALLING

---

Rup, a Windcaller (as per the Knack) has been smelling the wind and warning the village of an incoming storm for the last few days – and now, there it is on the horizon. The village has made some preparations, but isn't ready for this; it's the kind of storm that rips off roofs and splinters walls.

So Rup sits down facing the storm, calls a couple of villagers over to haul her away if she passes out or something, and sets in on the storm. The Guide declares this to be bold, thinks on this for a bit, and settles on these stakes:

**AUTOMATIC:** Rup will take the condition “Fatigued 3”. She's facing down a storm, and is going to be falling-down tired at the end at a *minimum*. No handouts for effect. For automatic effect, Rup can reduce the damage to one house down to manageability.

**DANGER:** Injury - The Guide puts four tokens here, which is enough to push into serious damage if not dealt with.

**DANGER:** Alteration – The Guide puts three tokens here, stating that Rup is pushing enough magic that it's going to make her different by the end. Permanent cosmetic and character sheet changes, to be negotiated after.

**AUGMENTS:** The Guide notes that each copy of Scope will increase then number of houses saved; Efficacy taken once will save target houses completely, with no damage, and Style will jazz up with awesome magical effects – which will also make it clear what's been protected.

Rup's player agrees that this is, indeed, bold, and goes for dice.



# CONDITION THINKING: HIVE PRIESTS

---

Tathkik, long-absent hive priest of the chittering shell, has returned home to its people, intending to pass through the portals of the shell and go beyond.

The Guide, however, lets Tathkik's player know that instead of returning to the condition "Hero of the Shell 2", which it earned previously, it will be coming home to the condition "Hero of the Shell Elders 2" - much time has passed in the hive!

Additionally, the Hive Priesthood is now led by a new molt, typified by Kerkunk, their Keeper of Gates, who considers use of the portals sacred. Kerkunk would... not approve of Tathkik taking its soft-shell allies through the holy gates to hunt Godspawn for their bile, no matter how pressing the need.

Tathkiks allies favour direct action - stealing into the hive and leaping through the portal - but Tathkik has other notions.

Tathkiks allies spread out through the foreigner-friendly areas of the hive, to drink, relax, and talk about how trade was so much better when the portals were open for business. They make a few rolls, get in a few fights for being disrespectful outsiders, but do create a hive-wide condition "Wide nostalgia for portal trade", and grind it up to 3.

With this in place, Tathkik goes out to visit old friends, and Tathkiks player explains how she'd like to put those friends to use. Rather than having their good will as a condition to call in, Tathkik wants to have some elders actively helping out rolling separate dice or otherwise helping in some other way.

The Guide doesn't see a problem with this, or a need to roll, and declares the allies will roll separate dice on their own actions. So Tathkik sorts out when Kerkunk will next make a public appearance, waits for it, collects some old allies, and calls out the Keeper of the Gates in public.

Elder allies at its sides, Tathkik accuses Kerkunk of being a zealot who is destroying the hive economy and livelihoods of many, and begins rallying the crowd to call for Kerkunk to resign.

Tathkik has Oratory 3, and can call on the nostalgia for portal trade - six dice, plus whatever benefits the elders bring. Its player feels pretty good about her position.

The Guide declares a break to try and sort out stakes and countermoves for the reputation-crushing shouting match that's about to go down.

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## CONDITION THINKING: THE SCRAP INVENTOR

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Marie is running a game in which Lisa would like to play a junkyard-based cobbler and inventor, but Lisa thinks the basic rules on equipment probably need a bit of building up to get them to a point where they can support this, and asks if that's something that can be done?

The basic methodology Marie comes up with is that each invention should mirror some existing item, with additional bonuses and positives as flat effects or as augments it allows to be played as well. Each will then also be given a list of added dangers and problems involved in using it, from breakage to using up ammunition, being loud, smoky, possibly exploding, and so on, and that whole conglomeration will then need to be “built” as a condition, with the positives as augments and the problems as dangers.

Marie also indicates that after trying this out a few times, she's likely to make some adjustments to this system to allow for developing from prototype to finished model through a number of iterations. This will probably be done by creating additional conditions “on the lab”, reflecting research and notes to work from, and slowly letting the stakes on the construction roll become targets to themselves be altered by research rolls. However, she says that she'd like to decide on how to do that *after* getting the basic “build a prototype” roll working smoothly, rather than jumping ahead.

Lisa nods along with this, feels like that's firm enough support to work from for her concept, and puts the character together.

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# SUPPLEMENTAL

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## A COURT OF THORNS

# WHAT THIS IS

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A court of thorns is a recurring network of social gatherings under some authority, and one in which societal cruelty is not merely common practice, but practically art.

Empires in decline and vicious faerie societies are often home to courts of thorns in fiction, and extremely petty politics in schools and backbiting neighborhoods also come to mind, but they can be placed in a variety of other locales as desired.

This supplemental section covers some notes for running play in a court of thorns. Naturally, the condition cluster for scandal and the extended material for it (page 30-31) should *all* be used.

## COURTLY PLAY

For courtly play, drive action in rotation to the events around and at:

**COURT SESSIONS:** The actual 'sittings' of the court, usually around some authority figure. The content of the sitting itself is likely to best be summarized quickly, but may involve the final settling of issues (see "political tracking", later), and include side scenes of various scales. A highly detailed discussion of the parent-teacher association meeting or kingly court session is likely to make the eyes glaze over, but hitting the hot buttons of the day and what goes on around them pushes everything else.

**MAJOR EVENTS:** Parties, grand balls and tournaments, annual celebrations and festivals, and the like. As Guide, setting up descriptions, actions, and prepared rolls for various 'stages' of these events can lend them unique weight. Additionally, any amount of noise can be made about who is and who isn't invited, and who conspicuously didn't attend despite an invitation.

**MINOR EVENTS:** Dinner parties and small gatherings (especially with those close to authority) can be the stage for rolls and action within the court.

**THE OFF SEASON:** Any 'off season' stretches of visiting and receiving visitors in minor ways can often be packed into short stretches with simple rolls – or can be an entirely separate mode of play. If the court has a heavy complement of landowners, magicians, adventurers, warriors, or others that have something else they need to do for a large chunk of the year, it's possible that courtly play is one season of action, with the other season or seasons being dedicated to whatever that profession dictates.

# THORNY PRINCIPLES

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**BEFORE PLAY:** Decide before play which specific skills are critical to courtiers, and make that clear to players. Etiquette and Network (Socialize) are strong possibilities for large events, as well as Provoke, Entice, and Intimidate (Rapport) for small encounters.

**DURING PLAY:** Roleplay short one-on-one or very small-group scenes, and use roleplaying to set up extended and large-group ones before changing to dice. The roleplay is the front end – the dice are the “several hours pass and”. If using skills as in the basic listing, try to keep rapport to small groups, socialize for large ones.

**HAVE A STRONG SIDE ORDER:** If play in and around a barbed court is focal to play, having at least one strong secondary activity (and often two or three) available is helpful to avoid the game feeling monotone. Hunting events, duels, and estate management are relatively common preoccupations for the classes of characters most likely to attend a barbed court, though this varies by setting.



# ADJUSTING BOONS

---

Some adjustments to Boons that may be worth considering for a courtly game are as follows:

Each character gains two added boons, or some specific boon that unlocks “position at court” is given to all characters (Head of House, below, may be ideal for this).

Lineage or Head of House may be *required* to obtain some boons.

Replace Underling with Staff, below.

Replace Wealth with Lands, below.

Remove benefactor, as nobody can be trusted.

Creation of packages of privileges in advance.

Reputation might gain this mechanic: It can be invoked to reduce any specific scandal or slander by one – but only once for any given incident of scandal or specific slanderous lie.

The replacement boons (and one new one):

**STAFF (Purpose):** You have a staff that performs some specified service, such as household management, petty espionage, personal defence (and possibly a bit of bullywork), and the like. This staff has some internal hierarchy and will be represented by a leader figure who may act as a general underling - sidekick, squire, butler, or other assistant. The pay and other arrangements of this staff are entirely taken care of by some instrument or holding, and they are fully loyal to you. They are competent, but not exceptionally so.

**LANDS (Specify):** You possess notably estates in your own name, which give you a home, ready money, and an ongoing income. The base of your operations can be detailed as you like, within reason. In any open market, you can acquire minor items easily. Invoke this boon in to acquire a scarce item, make payment on a larger buy, or pay a notable wage or sum.

**HEAD OF HOUSE:** You are the *nominative* leader of a house, clan, tribal group, or similar cluster of people, and likely their representative at court for this reason. Note that this is nominative, in name only; you can expand on this by stating any lands or staff you have are part of this package, but this isn't automatic – without doing so, the group is assumed to be relatively dispersed and not especially wealthy. What is automatic is the right to determine who is and isn't “part of the house”, can display whatever signets the house has, and so on. You can make threats to remove such rights, can grant them, lease them, and so on. Abuse of this authority may drive off some or all of the group membership, but will still leave you this nominative power.

# STAKES FOR BARBED SOCIALIZATION

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When you spend time socializing in a group, as in a fancy party or the like, it's likely at least some of these stakes will be laid out, often in addition to some form of efficacy tuned to whatever you're *aiming* to do at the event.



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**EXPENSE:** A mingling event often has some costs, such as tickets, fancy dress, or other such. Attending events hosted or attended by certain groups will mark you as an enemy of their rivals.



---

**CLARITY:** You get answers to questions that you might have (one per die), based on the knowledge of those in attendance. This will not reveal actual secrets, but will reveal 'open' secrets.



---

**STYLE:** You impress others enough that you are likely to gain further invitations to social events (that you would not be invited to otherwise). This means that you are seen as a lively and entertaining guest – and may be used to gain favour at some events.



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**PREPARATION:** You pass some information around among the attendees. This information is given 'neutrally', unlike Vexation. It may be possible to cushion the impact of some scandals by putting it out into general knowledge, changing it into an 'open secret'.



---

**VEXATION:** You spread some scandal or rumour about a given group or person, which will (if it's spicy) go through the group fairly quickly. This may cause trouble for the target, which might be anything from a shortage of future invitations to a duel or fistfight out back.

---

## DANGERS

Here are a few dangers that might apply to rolls like this. These can be applied repeatedly in many cases:



**INDISCRETION:** You let slip some fact or opinion that gives away more than you want or which paints you in an odd light. If you already have enemies among the group, they will likely seize on it and attempt to make something significant out of it (either immediately or later on).



**MENACE:** You significantly offend someone, making them into a new ill-wisher. You may or may not *know* how you did this, or that you did.



**AFFLICTION:** You engage in conversation with someone that is troublesome, making a 'friend' you likely don't want.



**INJURY:** You are subjected to slander, scandal, or other calumny from your enemies, and are damaged by it (incurring a condition at one per copy of this).



**DISPLACEMENT:** You find yourself among people you don't want to be seen with, and are seen with them. Alternately, you see or hear something you weren't meant to see or hear, and your observation is noticed in turn.

---

## FEINTS AND PITFALLS

Some dangers to be applied to this roll can be treated as *unknowns*; that is, the Guide can mark a danger – and then even if it's not cancelled, reveal the threat to be empty. The Guide may want to note which dangers do matter in advance, and reveal this as appropriate, if doing this (or if this is done often, use tokens with a mark on the bottom to flip and reveal “this was a real danger/that wasn't”).

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# SUPPLEMENTAL

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## STAKES REFERENCES

# WHAT THIS IS

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This supplemental section is composed of two-page spreads giving various activities and some interesting stakes that could be applied to them. Guides can then reference these when applicable and as inspiration for making their own stakes references, if desired.

While the whole idea of premade stakes references is optional, they can be extremely beneficial some of the time:

**REPETITIVE ACTION:** If one kind of action comes up all the time, especially if it's central to play, it can start to feel dull if the stakes constantly remain the same. When this is the case, brainstorming for lots of different things that could happen in and around that actions and making a stakes references that is basically a list of interesting ways to change it up can be useful. As examples - in combative games, this could mean expanding on the *Fighting* sheet given in this section; in dungeon-delving exploration games, it might mean looking over and expanding on the *Sweep* sheet.

**HIGH FLAVOUR AND SET-PIECE STUFF:** If there's something you're fairly sure is eventually going to be a thing, or recurs occasionally, and it deserves rolls around it to have really good stakes, consider making a stakes references for it. If one of the characters has been gathering up components for forging an awesome weapon, pull out the *Crafting* sheet in advance and give it a going-over. If the group is hunting pirates in their own ship, putting together a *Boarding Action* stakes references might be worth considering.

Stakes references can also codify new things to be tracked on the tabletop while they're being used, even to the point of practically becoming mini-games unto themselves. See issue tracking for expanded Scandal (page 33) for one example of this, and the *Chase Scenes* reference given next page for another.

If making custom references is your deal, note it's possible to take it further than simple references if you want to – you could create full replacements for the middle-of-the-table stakes sheet, with custom spaces for stakes tokens, tracking spaces for keeping track of various things involved, and then put those down in order to play out the mini-game of that action directly on that reference.

# STAKES FOR CHASE SCENES

When engaging in a chase scene, whether by foot or vehicle, a number of rolls to chase may be made. The Guide sets up for this action by determining how big the gap is between the leader and pursuit (usually 2-4), and putting out some tracker (often a numbered die) for that. If there's a countdown destination (see below), a second tracker can be used for that as well.

In a mounted or vehicular chase, other actions (shooting, fighting, and so on) might be folded into this roll, or rolled for separately as they happen during the chase (and if rolled for separately, may be affected by things like the size of the lead).

The basic stakes for a chase typically are:



**SHIFTING LEAD:** If you are the pursuer, you drop one point further behind (increase the lead by one). If you are the pursued, your pursuers come one step closer (decrease the lead by one). This can be overcome with speed, below.



**COUNTDOWN:** If there's a destination for the pursued to achieve (a safe place or target), they get one point closer. If the gates of the city are open, and the side being chased just needs to get inside to end the chase, for example, that's what the countdown leads to



**SPEED:** Adjust the lead by one in whichever direction you like - speeding away from or catching up, as may be. If you are the pursuer, taking speed might also allow you to force the side being pursued off course, *increasing* the countdown (depending on the terrain and so on).

LEAD:



COUNTDOWN



## ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Here are a few further stakes that might apply to rolls like this. These can be applied repeatedly in many cases:



**AFFLICTION / INJURY:** You or your vehicle sustain damage as a condition – and one tat may be called against you, decreasing your dice total in further rolls. This might be the result of dangerous terrain, or of ongoing hostile action from the other side of the chase (if they're shooting at you, say).



**MAYHEM:** You incur collateral damage, knocking into things or people, sending things flying, and so on. You may need to answer for that... later.



**MENACE:** Added pursuers join in, chasing you; this may be the authorities trailing you after Menace is taken, henchmen trying to get you off the Boss's tail, or others. If you are the pursuer, this lead is tracked separately from the lead your target has on you - you now have two points of lead on these new pursuers, and adjust both types of lead simultaneously.



**DISPLACEMENT:** If you have multiple pursuers, this dangers means they get you in a position where they can split up and come at you separately – you must now adjust your lead on them individually.



**INCITEMENT:** You trick a pursuer into taking some damage or getting caught up in something that will slow them down. The automatic 'lead shift' stake does not apply to them for the next two rounds. If their transport is fragile, this may simply put them out of the chase altogether.



**VEXATION:** You position yourself to do damage to the lead or a pursuer (this usually requires the lead be one or zero). This is often a separate roll (possibly by a passenger if in vehicles), exchanging fire or boarding their vehicle.

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# STAKES FOR CRAFTING

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When a character crafts something of note, they'll need tools and materials as appropriate to the task, and then roll for the creation of the craft; this typically generates a condition at the appropriate rating for the size of the item, with notes generated from the crafting process.

The basic stakes typically are:



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**MATERIALS:** Each craft roll uses up materials that can't be retrieved if the result is not as desired.



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**AFFLICTION:** Each die here removes a potential flaw from your work.



---

**EFFICACY:** Each die here adds an improvement to your work.

---

The difficulty with this arrangement of stakes is that a pile of tokens on affliction to indicate possible flaws and an invitation to make a second pile on efficacy for improvements is a bit bland without a clear understanding of what possible flaws are being avoided and what possible improvements exist to be gained. Toward that end, a set of five flaws and corresponding improvements is given next page. The Guide can list off flaws that seem likely and improvements that seem possible from this set, and the player can use dice to remove flaws and make improvements, with the caveat that an improvement can't be taken unless the corresponding flaw is first removed if present.

## CRAFTS IN STAGES

In some cases, a crafting roll will be used to generate a condition that can then be called in on *another* crafting roll or on grunt labour used in creating something larger. If you draft plans to fortify a building, for example, the plans created might be used to gain bonus dice on the roll (or rolls) to actually build the fortifications, whether those are careful crafting or just digging the ditches around the site and getting them in the right places.

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## FLAWS

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**INEFFECTIVE:** The craft does less damage, moves more slowly, or otherwise is weak at its intended function.

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**INEFFICIENT:** The craft uses up fuel or ammunition rapidly, running out will be a common danger of using it.

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**OBVIOUS:** The craft creates a lot of noise, light, or smoke, making the use of it distinctive and highly notable.

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**HEAVY:** The craft is unusually bulky and heavy, making it harder to carry or manoeuvre in a pinch.

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**JURY-RIGGED:** The craft is easily broken, there's a danger of breaking it when used.

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## IMPROVEMENTS

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**EFFECTIVE:** The craft does more damage, moves more quickly, or otherwise is excellent at its intended function.

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**EFFICIENT:** The craft uses up less fuel or ammunition, and running out will be a danger much less often.

---

**SUBTLE:** The craft is quiet, non-reflective, and otherwise much less 'showy' than usual.

---

**LIGHT:** The craft is unusually light, making it easier to carry or manoeuvre.

---

**DURABLE:** The craft is especially solid, and dangers of it breaking should be very rare.

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# STAKES FOR FIGHTING

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When you fight in a melee, it's likely at least some of these stakes will be use. The basic stakes for melee combats are:



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**GRAZE:** You graze one foe. This may mean inflicting a 'damage' condition on them (or increasing such a condition by one). Alternatively, if the Guide is tracking enemy health as pools of points with notes, token, or placeholder dice, you might reduce such a pool of points.

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**INJURY:** You are struck by any attacks your chosen target makes, and possibly by further attacks from other enemies also fighting you. Each die spent here will cancel one attack, as you dodge, block, or parry them to protect yourself.

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**EFFICACY:** You get in a solid hit, increasing a damaging condition by one more, starting a new such condition, or reducing a health pool by one further, as appropriate. If your attack has some form of unusual effect, that might occur instead.

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**PREPARATION:** You perform some trick of skill, from the list to the right or invented with the Guide. You can perform only one such trick each roll, unless you have something that allows otherwise.

---

**ALMOST EVERYTHING ON THE STAKES SHEET** can be applied to combat in one way or another. Differing enemies can have unique attacks, tactics, or dangers they carry with them. Weapons and armour could bring new features to the table. Finally, the environment itself can provide new opportunities to augment your roll, and new dangers.

**IF PLAYER CHARACTERS FIGHT EACH OTHER**, they will take turns making this roll. This requires that the Guide invent "monster stats" for both sides, including the standard attacks for each. Guides should be aware that PvP isn't really something this system is built to handle, though; facilitating such action will always require some improvisation.

---

## TRICKS IN COMBAT

Here are a few tricks you might use preparation to accomplish.



**DISARM:** You knock away an item that your target is holding. This makes it unready – they can't use it effectively for a round. If you spend two hits on this feat, you disarm them entirely. Enemies with natural weapons (claws, horns, and so on) can't be entirely disarmed, but can generally be made unready.



**PIN/GRAB/TRIP:** You block a single target from fleeing the melee for the next round. In some circumstance, whether you do this by positioning yourself, grabbing a target, or tripping them may matter. On a ledge or bridge, tripping might cause a fall, but not all enemies can reasonably be tripped. Enemies can also be dangerous to grab in some cases, and flying enemies or those with an open field of movement can't always be pinned by getting in their way.



**ESCAPE:** You get someone (willing) out of the melee, giving them time and space to withdraw; this person can be yourself.

## ENVIRONMENT AS EQUIPMENT

The environment around the characters can be called upon as (and in place of) equipment conditions, and when it is, the Guide will assign rating to it, as well as possible dangers and other effects involved in using it. In a cavern, kicking a stalagmite or column down to drop the pieces onto an opponent may very well let you call it in as a 3-point piece of equipment, and even increase the automatic damage dealt in the roll, but might also come with the danger of fatigue, injury to yourself, or mayhem.

The Guide is encouraged to not only allow this, but to be generous with 2 and 3 point ratings on such 'equipment' – but to balance this out with additional dangers that are only detailed once the character is committed to the attempt. This makes getting creative in battle generally effective, but often unpredictable and dangerous in way beyond the fighting itself. In addition, it's worth noting that wild uses of the environment in battle are often *by definition* bold, with no option to attempt them cautiously.

# STAKES FOR SWEEPS

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When you work to explore or 'clear' a potentially hazardous environment, alone or as group leader, these stakes might get used. The dangers here can be treated as unknowns; making a lot of noise may not *matter*, but can still be marked out as a danger. The Guide may want to note which dangers do matter in advance, and reveal this as appropriate. The basic stakes for this roll are:



---

**EXPENSE:** You or the group incur some minor expense each time this roll is made, which may be a measure of time, opportunity, fatigue, stress, or even torches.



---

**AFFLICTION:** You (or a group member) fall prey to a hazard on the scene, if there are any, and are snared, take a fall, set off a trap, or the like.



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**INDISCRETION:** You make a lot of noise, which might attract unwelcome searches.



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**MAYHEM:** You mess the place up, shoving things out of your way, opening locks destructively, or the like so on (not necessarily on purpose). If others are looking for you or pursuing you through the area, you leave a very clear trail.



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**DISPLACEMENT:** You are confused by any blind twists or turns or other layout tricks present; this may put you somewhere odd, or divide your group.



---

**DELAY:** The sweep takes much longer than expected, which may let other events move forward.

---

## AUGMENTS

While sweeps are almost always made cautiously given the large list of unknown dangers, there are a few augments that could be added in...



**EFFICACY:** You are aware of any enemies and their movements around you, and can get the jump on them or avoid them (if possible).



**PREPARATION:** You keep clear track of everywhere you've been, and have a mental (or physical) map of the area covered.



**VEXATION:** You take time to jury-rig deadfalls, alarms, or other improvised aggravations in your wake. Work out their nature with the Guide.



**INCITEMENT:** You create some minor diversion off your main path (if possible), which will attract attention shortly if there's any attention to attract.



**CLARITY:** You discover any hidden passages, valuables, supplies, or other useful goods that are hidden well enough to require special scrutiny.

---

## TEAM SWEEPS

ASSISTANCE and teamwork can be handled in a small group with a lead and up to four assistants by making use of the following setup:

- 1) The leader always rolls cautiously, and any **+** results they score are ignored.
- 2) Each assistant (who must be able to get a die) names one augment and then rolls one die boldly; if they score a **+**, they gain that augment for the group.

LARGE GROUPS of more than 5 should have those beyond the first five either be 'tag-alongs' behind those doing the sweep, or broken off into one or more additional groups, making their own rolls.

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**SUPPLEMENTAL**

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**DELVERS**

# WHAT THIS IS

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Delvers is a custom setup for *character creation* in Schema which brings characters much more in line with popular and old-school adventure gaming, in order to give players more familiar ground to stand on and to allow easier crossover of material built for such play into Schema.

The altered process for character creation is:

Choose three backgrounds, one of which must be a Kith.

Assign ability ratings: 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1 (Higher is better).

For each ability, choose and note proficiencies equal to its rating.

Name your character.

Decide on and note your cues.

Note down your starting gear.

Grab five luck tokens (or note that you currently have 5 luck)

## THE HUMAN KITH

---

The primary alteration to the standard backgrounds is the addition of a “Human” kith. The benefit to this Kith is one-point increase in starting and maximum Luck. This can be stacked with the Lucky background if desired; together bumping starting Luck up to 7.

The assumption in most settings that delvers exist in is that the various Kiths are cosmopolitan and can interbreed. As such, a character can take a second Kith and mix-and-match descriptive details while gaining all mechanical benefits of both. A character can also have only one Kith in rules terms, but be described with some cosmetic features from other Kiths – a particularly tall human with a bit of a bluish cast might have Jotunn ancestry (though not enough to be cold-immune or spectacularly strong).

Whether Kiths are linked to specific Knacks (and also if Knack-Feat differentiation will be used) depends entirely on the specific setting.

# ABILITY, PROFICIENCY

---

Instead of having rated skills that are grouped into fields, delvers possess ability score ratings in six ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma), and then have some number of proficiencies associated with those abilities. In effect, the field (ability) gets the rating, and the skills (proficiencies) are either “have it or not”.

For example, your character might have Strength 3, and be proficient in Axe, Sword, and Might (which are marked down under it). When they get into a fight, if they are using an Axe or Sword, they get the three dice for their Strength score. If they were using another melee (and thus Strength-based) weapon they were *not* proficient with, they would take a -1 and thus only get two dice from their Strength score.

Here are the proficiencies, grouped by their associated ability scores:

## STRENGTH

Might, Shield, Unarmed, (Melee Weapon)

## DEXTERITY

Acrobatics, Artillerist, Gunner, Pickpocket, Sleight of Hand, Sneak, Throwing, (Ranged Weapon)

## CONSTITUTION

Climbing, Endurance, Running, Skating, Swimming

## INTELLIGENCE

Alchemy, Arcana, Archaeology, Astronomy, Biology, Bureaucracy, Calligraphy, Camouflage, Cartography, Cooking, Counterfeiting, Crew, Cryptography, Disguise, Drive, Engineering, Evaluate, Gambling, Geology, Helm, History, Iconography, Law, Leatherworking, Literature, Lockpicking, Machinist, Makeup, Masonry, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Navigation, Painting, Physics, Pilot, Potter, Repair, Research, Schedule, Sewing, Smithing, Strategy, Tactics, Theology, Tinkering, Traps, Woodworking

## WISDOM

Alertness, Animal Handling, Animal Training, Coursing, Diagnosis, Empathy, Falconry, First Aid, Fishing, Foraging, Gardening, Grooming, Herbarry, Hunting, Investigation, Lip Reading, Pharmacy, Physician, Poisons, Prospecting, Riding, Search, Stakeout, Surgery, Survival, Teamster, Tracking, Veterinary, Weather Sense

## CHARISMA

Acting, Barter, Carousing, Dancing, Deceive, Entice, Etiquette, Fire Eating, Fortune Telling, Inspire, Interrogate, Intimidate, Leadership, Lecturing, Mimicry, (Musical Instrument), Network, Oratory, Provoke, Singing

# DELVER GEAR

---

Equipment for Delvers runs off the well-equipped option (page 19). Items carried are simply listed, and have no ratings (though they may have notes and be special in other ways). On a roll, you gain one die if you are “well equipped” for the task at hand in the judgment of the Guide, and can *also* call in a local or personal condition. Characters should be created with about a half-dozen items of mundane quality and possibly some amount of coinage (if the group cares to track money at such a level), though they are likely to obtain much nicer items as they go along.

# A HEALTH POOL

---

Health for Delvers is treated as a pool, like luck, rather than as a series of conditions. Personal conditions still exist, and are used entirely as usual, but anytime a danger would inflict or raise a damage-representing condition, it instead reduces health.

Your character has (6+Constitution) starting and maximum health; health is regained by resting. In a somewhat realistic game, you might heal a single point each full day or night of rest (with medical rolls to speed this); in a more cinematic one, you might heal your full score each night.

If your character loses all their health exactly, they fall briefly unconscious; if they lose all health *and take more damage*, they die.

# EXPERIENCE TWEAKS

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Delvers spend experience points as follows:

**GAIN NEW PROFICIENCY:** 1 pt. Add a new proficiency to your character, noting it under the associated ability score.

**INCREASE ABILITY SCORE:** This costs points equal to the new rating, must be done one level at a time, and can't raise a score above 3.

**BUY BACKGROUNDS:** This costs points equal to the new total number of backgrounds the character will have, and should be discussed with the group in terms of “how the character gained this”. If the group is using additional material that adds a great many further backgrounds, the point cost for new backgrounds may be reduced to a flat 3 apiece.

# THE OPEN FOLIO

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This document is part of a series, each part of which can be used independently with material from wherever you like or pulled together. All the parts of this series can be found on [levikornelsen.itch.io](http://levikornelsen.itch.io).

- ◆ **Basic Practices:** *Fundamentals of Tabletop Roleplaying* goes over the very basics of how to play and run tradition tabletop roleplaying.
- ◆ **Setting and premise:** *Awen: Fantasy Setting Design* is a group procedure for creating fantastic settings, from placing biomes to working out a history. Resulting setting tend to hover around something like a late bronze age or early medieval era at completion, but can push along further if desired.
- ◆ **Situation Builders:** *Situations for Tabletop Roleplaying* is a compilation of fill-in-the-blanks situations, allowing for quick prep of situational elements on a single page.
- ◆ **Rules Engine:** *Schema* is an adaptable rules set using fate/fudge dice, which lets the group fold down fairly complex activity into a very few dice rolls, with loads of unintended consequences, side effects and benefits all packed in.

Taken together (and with whatever further material you like added in), these can be used as a singular game – or any number of them can be substituted out, swapping for a premade or Guide-built setting, using other methods to create situations, or using a different rules engine to handle the dice-and-numbers parts of play.





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