

ART Engine

Action Results Table
Tabletop Role Playing System

2012 Edition

By Joe Williams



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Chapter 1

Introduction

What is ART?

ART is the role-playing system first used in *Legendary Lives* and later in *Lost Souls*. The system takes its name from the Action Results Table, the universal chart at the heart of all task resolution.

The ART Engine contains rules common to all settings, but is not a complete game in itself. While an industrious group may find enough in these rules to create their own setting, most people will want to use a published setting designed for use with the ART Engine. The setting will provide details for creating characters appropriate to the setting and background information for constructing adventures and foes.

An ART adventure should be fast, freewheeling and wild. All die rolls are made by the players; the narrator describes what happens based on ten possible outcomes. The rules emphasize creativity, player participation and spontaneity. It's a game where the players can try anything and any roll can send the adventure in a new and unexpected direction.

Things rarely go the way the players plan—often with hilarious results. Because a light, comedic touch graces even the most serious of scenarios, the ART Engine isn't suitable for angst-heavy tales, since you never know when the next roll might elicit a tension-shattering laugh.

Requirements

To play a game using the ART Engine you will need:

- pencils and paper
- percentile dice
- a narrator to run the game

- one or more players to take on the roles of the adventurers
- a character sheet for each adventurer
- a pair of six-sided dice used for character creation (optional)
- tokens to represent characters (tokens may be painted miniatures, cardboard markers, or colored buttons)
- a phase/range track copied from these rules

Before Play Begins

As with most roleplaying games, an ART adventure requires preparation from both the players and the narrator.

The players must each create an adventurer to control during the game. Not only do they fill in numbers on a character sheet, they must also give thought to their goals and reasons for participating in adventures.

Together the players decide how their characters know each other and how they are related. How much tension and conflict is there between them? How did this motley crew band together, and what ties bind them?

The players present this information to the narrator. It's the responsibility of the narrator to come up with an outline for the adventure that integrates the characters and their relationships. How much preparation is needed depends on the narrator's style. The system was intended to be run with minimum preparation, allowing the narrator to freely improvise. The adventure outline may be as simple as a list of possible situations, a description of the foes the characters are likely to meet, and the settings they'll explore. Or it could be a step-by-step guide through the entire quest, with every possible alternative worked out in advance.

Summary of Play

The players each control a single character in the game, reacting to people and events according to the personality of their role. Their decisions directly affect what happens. They decide where to go and who to question, when to fight and how to solve problems. They control what their characters say, how it's said, and what they attempt.

The narrator serves as the player's senses, describing settings, situations, the passage of time, and all events outside the players' control. Vivid imagery and sometimes simple maps or sketches aid the narrator in explaining what the characters experience.

The narrator portrays every character the adventurers meet, assuming new roles as needed even if it means posing as several characters at one time.

The players must set goals for their characters and actively pursue those goals. They are responsible for *wanting* something. There are many goals for the players. They can seek to increase their skills, or gain fame or fortune. They can try to forge relationships with the other adventurers or narrator controlled characters. They can try to perform deeds, both good and evil. But they must always be trying to accomplish something meaningful. Their actions should be an expression of their motivations.

In return, the narrator must present the players with situations that are related to their goals, whether it's to advance those objectives or foil them. A story develops naturally out of the actions of the players and their rolls on the ART.

The dice help the narrator decide exactly what happens out of a range of possibilities. They provide uncertainty, suspense and challenge. **The narrator never rolls the dice, but interprets the die rolls made by the players.**

The narrator decides what happens impartially. Even if the narrator thinks a particular outcome would be more dramatic, exciting, or interesting, the narrator must abide by the tyranny of the dice and construct a narrative within the limits they impose. Paradoxically, the randomness of the dice can foster unexpected and unique developments that could never be scripted. Rather than restricting the players to a pre-conceived plot, the narrator can let the story go wherever the players and the dice take it. Running the game is an exercise in improvisation, where the narrator synthesizes events from the

character's objectives, the die rolls, and all that has gone before.

Using the Dice

ART uses percentile dice almost exclusively. Percentile dice, also called d100, consist of two ten-sided dice. It's usually best to have a pair for each player.

Together, these two dice are used to generate numbers from 1 to 100. To do this, designate one die as high. Then roll both dice simultaneously, and read the high die first. If both dice show zero, the result is 100 (also called 00, or double zero).

***Example:** You roll 6 on the "high" die and 1 on the other die. The result is 61.*

Kicker Die

When you roll percentile dice, the "low" die representing the ones digit is called the kicker. What you roll on the kicker can trigger special effects based on your perks, equipment and the abilities of your foes.

For example, if you have a perk that triggers on a kicker of 3, any roll ending in 3 will trigger the perk.

A kicker roll can trigger no more than one beneficial and one harmful effect. If the kicker die can trigger more than one advantageous special effect, the player must decide which to use. The narrator decides which harmful effect fires if there is a choice.

Terminology

People

Narrator: The person who runs the game; the referee or gamemaster. In these rules, the narrator is not considered a player.

Player: Someone who is playing an adventurer in the game. Unless otherwise specified, the rules always address the player.

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Character: A single unit in the game, whether a human, dinosaur, or unknown creature.

Adventurer: An individual character controlled by a player.

Foe: A character controlled by the narrator. While most narrator-controlled characters are adversaries, some can be neutral or even friendly.

Henchman: A friendly narrator controlled character operating under the direction of an adventurer.

Abilities

Attributes: Attributes broadly describe a character and define what your character is good at doing. All characters have the same set of attributes. The attributes of adventurers are assigned a numerical rating from 2 to 12. Foe attributes are rated from Catastrophic to Extreme.

Skills: Unique proficiencies that develop during play, skills give you a bonus to perform a narrowly defined action. Once acquired, they can range from +1 to +8. General skills can be used in many situations, while specialties give a bonus to a particular action. For example, the Climb skill applies whenever your character climbs anything, whether it is a cliff, fence, tree or wall. The Climb Rope specialty applies only when your character is climbing a rope. You'll normally acquire the general skill first and then specialize.

Typical foes do not have skills, but rely completely on their attributes. In the rare cases when a foe has a skill, it will be rated from Catastrophic to Extreme and will be used in place of an attribute.

Trait: A trait is the sum of an attribute and up to two skills, adjusted for any equipment modifiers. Traits are calculated on the fly as you make trait rolls.

Foes don't add their attributes and skills. Instead, they use skills in place of attributes.

The following table shows the relationship between foe attributes and adventurer traits.

Comparison of Foe Attributes to Traits

| Foe Attribute | Adventurer Trait |
|---------------|------------------|
| Catastrophic | 0 |
| Pathetic | 1 |
| Feeble | 2-5 |
| Inferior | 6-8 |
| Poor | 9-12 |
| Passable | 13-16 |
| Good | 17-20 |
| Great | 21-24 |
| Super | 25-27 |
| Awesome | 28-29 |
| Extreme | 30 |

Perks: A perk is a special ability that allows your character to do something other characters cannot.

Glory: Characters who successfully complete a quest gain a set amount of Glory that they must split between themselves. Once Glory equals ten times a character's current Fame, the Glory is erased and Fame goes up by one point. Characters can lose Glory by refusing or failing quests.

Gameplay

Adventure: An outline that assists the narrator in creating situations and responding to the actions of the players.

Quest: An objective that the adventurers take upon themselves. Narrator controlled characters can present the players quests, or the players can come up with their own quests by stating their objectives to the narrator in advance.

Session: A single gaming session. Each character gains an experience point at the end of every gaming session.

Between Adventures: An adventure may take one or more sessions to complete. The adventure ends when the characters complete their primary mission and return to base, where they rest and train for their next adventure. Characters heal between adventures, and players may buy new perks between adventures. The end of an adventure is always the end of a session. Preparation before a character's first adventure is also considered between adventures.

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Combat Round: A round represents approximately six to ten seconds. Rounds are highly structured. You don't have to be in combat to use combat rounds. Rounds are used in any situation where there is intense conflict between characters, such as in combat or in other circumstances where seconds count.

Exploration Phase: Exploration phases are everything that happens outside of combat rounds. An exploration phase can represent anything from a few minute to days. Phases are free-flowing, chatty, and loosely structured.

Abbreviations

Success and failures use a combination of a number and a letter.

| | |
|----|---------------|
| 1s | One success |
| 1f | One failure |
| 2s | Two successes |
| 2f | Two failures |

Attributes use three letter abbreviations.

| | |
|-----|--------------|
| AGI | Agility |
| ALE | Alertness |
| CHA | Charm |
| CRA | Craft |
| CUN | Cunning |
| DEF | Defense |
| DEX | Dexterity |
| FAT | Fate |
| INT | Intelligence |
| STA | Stamina |
| STR | Strength |

Action Results, foe traits and difficulty ratings use two letter abbreviations, listed here from worst to best (action results), least to most (foe traits) or easiest to hardest (difficulty ratings).

| | |
|----|--------------|
| CT | Catastrophic |
| PT | Pathetic |
| FB | Feeble |
| IN | Inferior |
| PR | Poor |
| PS | Passable |
| GD | Good |
| GT | Great |
| SP | Super |
| AW | Awesome |
| EX | Extreme |

Chapter 2

Creating an Adventurer

Your Character Sheet

In a role-playing game, you assume the role of an adventurer with distinct characteristics. These qualities define what your adventurer is good at and things you might want to avoid trying. Your adventurer's abilities are recorded on a character sheet.

Characters have different strengths and weaknesses, just like real people. Strong characters might decide to fight their way past an enemy. Charming characters might try to talk their way out of trouble. Cunning characters may try to bluff their way past, while agile characters might try to sneak around an enemy. In the same way, different characters with different traits will try different methods to accomplish the same objective.

In game terms, a character is described by **attributes**. All characters have the same set of attributes listed on their character sheet. Attribute scores range from 2 to 12 with an average score of 7 for adventurers (a typical human would have a score of 4). The higher your score, the more likely you will succeed at actions that depend on that attribute.

Attributes

Agility encompasses your character's balance, coordination, grace, speed, reflexes, and physical flexibility. It's important for movement and defense.

Alertness is your character's perception, and the acuity of their senses. It is the ability to notice and interpret things.

Charm is the impression your character makes on others. It combines presence, charisma, credibility, and style. It's useful for convincing others to follow your lead.

Craft is your character's affinity for crafting, repairing and operating machines and other devices.

It's used to repair armor, make things and operate vehicles.

Cunning measures how devious, sly and creative your character is. It's used when cheating, scheming, and performing acts of trickery.

Dexterity rates hand-eye coordination, finesse, and your character's ability to do precise work with their hands, such as picking a lock or disarming a bomb.

Fate measures luck and destiny. It shows whether your character was born under a lucky star, or an ill-fated comet. It's used to resolve seemingly random outcomes.

Intelligence is your character's swiftness of thought, comprehension, and ability to learn new things.

Stamina comprises fitness, endurance, and ability to withstand adverse conditions. It determines how much damage your character can take.

Strength is your character's brawn and muscle power. It determines how large of a weapon you can use and how much armor you can wear.

Determining Attributes

During character creation, attributes are assigned a rating from 2 to 12. Increasing your attributes after character creation is a long, slow process. Your narrator will tell you which of the following two methods you should use to create your character.

Random Method

Roll two six-sided dice and add them together. Assign the score to one of your attributes. Continue rolling and assigning your scores until all your attributes are filled in.

Balanced Method

Calculate your attributes in any order you want by adding any two numbers from the list below to determine an attribute's score. Each number can be used only once.

1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6

Example: You strike a 4 and a 3 off the list and apply them to your Agility, for a score of $4 + 3 = 7$.

Health

Adventurers and most foes can take only four wounds before being defeated. Wounds are recorded on your character's Health track. The first box represents a minor flesh wound (a scratch or bruise). The second box is a moderate wound (a gash or contusion). The third box represents heavy damage, such as a deep cut or cracked bones. The fourth box represents a grievous wound.

Your Stamina determines your Health. Each value goes into a separate box in the Health Track of your character sheet, starting from left to right. Here's what the Health Track would look like for someone with 7 Stamina.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> IN | <input type="checkbox"/> PR | <input type="checkbox"/> PR | <input type="checkbox"/> PS |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|

After character creation, Health and Stamina are no longer connected and can change independently. See Taking Damage in the How to Play chapter for instructions on recording damage.

Health

| Stamina | Health |
|---------|-------------|
| 2 | IN IN IN IN |
| 3 | IN IN IN PR |
| 4 | IN IN PR PR |
| 5 | IN PR PR PR |
| 6 | IN IN PR PS |
| 7 | IN PR PR PS |
| 8 | IN PR PS PS |
| 9 | IN PR PS GD |
| 10 | PR PR PS GD |
| 11 | PR PS PS GD |
| 12 | PR PS GD GD |

Fame

All newly created characters begin with Fame of one. You can increase Fame by finding rare treasures.

You expend Fame to improve trait rolls, take a multi-action (see Combat), revive fallen companions, or use certain perks. Keep track of expended Fame as tally marks next to your Fame score. When the tally marks equal your Fame you can no longer use Fame.

Whenever you roll an Awesome result on the ART, your Fame recovers; simply erase the tally marks.

Glory

You gain Glory by successfully completing quests. The narrator will tell you how much Glory the group receives. Your group must decide how to split the Glory between the characters who participated in the adventure.

When your Glory equals ten times your current Fame, erase your Glory and increase your Fame by one point.

Characters can lose Glory by refusing or failing quests, at the narrator's discretion.

Fortune

Fortune represents your character's wealth and resources. A character with high Fortune will have access to better equipment.

Your Fate determines your starting Fortune. After character creation, Fortune and Fate are no longer connected and can change independently. You can increase Fortune by finding valuable treasures during adventures.

Fortune

| Fate | Starting Fortune |
|------|------------------|
| 2 | Destitute |
| 3 | Impoverished |
| 4 | Poor |
| 5 | Struggling |
| 6 | Getting By |
| 7 | Middle Class |
| 8 | Comfortable |
| 9 | Well-off |
| 10 | Prosperous |
| 11 | Affluent |
| 12 | Wealthy |
| — | Rich |
| — | Filthy Rich |

Fortune isn't "spent" or "expended" to purchase equipment. Instead, you can equip any gear that has a cost up to your character's Fortune. For example, if you had Fortune of comfortable, you could equip as many items having a cost of comfortable or less that you could carry.

Equipment acquired during an adventure is treated a little differently. If the item is *purchased*, it follows the same rules as for initially equipping your character: you cannot purchase an item with a cost greater than your Fortune. Equipment *found, stolen or received as a gift* during an adventure is not limited by your Fortune. You can equip gear found during an adventure even if its cost exceeds your Fortune. However, at the end of the adventure you cannot keep any item with a cost greater than your Fortune.

Equipping Others

A wealthy character may be tempted to equip the entire group. For each additional character that you equip, you must reduce your Fortune by 1 rank for the purpose of buying gear. So if you are middle class and you equip yourself and two other characters, you could only choose gear with a cost of struggling or less.

Treasures

Treasures are awarded by the narrator during play. The players must decide among themselves how to distribute treasures. Most treasures, such as common relics, gems and jewelry, have no innate benefits but can be exchanged at the end of the adventure for Fortune.

Treasures have a Fortune value. If, at the end of an adventure, you found one or more treasures with a Fortune value greater than your Fortune, you get to increase your Fortune by one rank. You can never increase your Fortune by more than one rank per adventure no matter how many treasures you find.

You can maintain your current Fortune if you find a treasure at your current rank, two treasures one rank below your Fortune, or four treasures no more than two ranks below your Fortune.

If you fail to find enough treasures, you must reduce your Fortune by one rank.

Example: *Tim and Tony finish an adventure with five treasures.*

Tim, who is well-off, takes an affluent jade jaguar. At the end of the adventure Tim gets to increase his Fortune by one rank, to prosperous.

Tony, who is struggling, gets the remaining treasures. There's a poor necklace, an impoverished book, an impoverished gem and collection of impoverished trinkets. That's a total of four treasures with a value no more than two ranks below Tony's Fortune. He gets to maintain his Fortune at struggling.

Trophies

Trophies are unique treasures that have unusual properties, often granting their owner a special perk.

Trophy weapons and armor are similar to their mundane counterparts, but have reduced Fortune

Chapter 2: Creating an Adventurer

cost. They may also grant a bonus against certain foes or an ability that triggers on a certain kicker roll, such as a shield that negates damage on a kicker of 8 or 9. The description of the item specifies what it does.

Like other equipment, trophies have a Fortune cost. Adventurers may use trophy weapons, armor and items for the rest of the adventure without paying the Fortune cost.

At the end of the adventure, a player cannot keep a trophy if its Fortune cost exceeds the adventure's Fortune. You may increase the character's Fortune for any treasures found during the adventure before making this comparison.

Gear

At the start of each adventure, you may equip your character with gear appropriate for the setting. Your starting equipment must not have a cost greater than your Fortune.

List your equipment in the Gear section of your character sheet. If it isn't on your sheet, your character doesn't have it. The only exception is armor and clothing. Armor is noted in the armor section of your character sheet, while clothing is simply assumed.

You can have no more than 2 items ready, 4 items at hand, and 9 items stowed about your body.

Ready items are instantly available, those at hand take one action to get out, and stowed items require a sustained Dexterity roll with a goal of 5 successes.

Multiple small items can be carried in one slot. Characters can make a kit of associated items, and then put the kit in one slot. A kit of medical supplies would fill one slot, as would a pouch of ten iron spikes hung from your belt. Objects carried together must be small and easily stored together.

Armor & Defense

Your Defense equals your Agility, adjusted by the cost of your armor. For example, if you are wearing well-off armor, your Defense equals your Agility + 1.

Your Defense can never be less than 1.

Wearing no armor is equivalent to wearing destitute armor. Your Defense in no armor is Agility - 6.

You cannot wear armor that has a STR Required greater than your Strength.

Armor

| Cost | Defense | STR Required |
|--------------|---------|--------------|
| Destitute | AGI-6 | - |
| Impoverished | AGI-5 | - |
| Poor | AGI-4 | - |
| Struggling | AGI-3 | - |
| Getting By | AGI-2 | 2 |
| Middle Class | AGI-1 | 3 |
| Comfortable | AGI+0 | 4 |
| Well-off | AGI+1 | 5 |
| Prosperous | AGI+2 | 6 |
| Affluent | AGI+3 | 7 |
| Wealthy | AGI+4 | 8 |
| Rich | AGI+5 | 9 |
| Filthy Rich | AGI+6 | 10 |

Example: Your character has 10 Agility and is just getting by. Your Defense in getting by armor is $10 - 2 = 8$.

Shields

A shield increases your Defense, but can be used a limited number of times per round. Add the shield's Speed to your Dexterity and Strength to determine how many times per round you may use it.

You must decide before making your Defense roll whether to use your shield on that attack. A shield must be at hand for you to use it. You cannot use a shield while wielding a weapon two-handed or if you are attacked by surprise or from behind.

Example: You have 9 Defense, 5 Dexterity and 8 Strength and you are carrying a well-off shield. Your Defense when using the shield is $9 + 2 = 11$. The speed of the shield is $15 + 5 + 8 = 28$. Consulting the Shield Uses table, you find you can use the shield 3 times per round.

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Shields

| Cost | Defense | Speed |
|--------------|---------|-------|
| Destitute | +1 | 0 |
| Impoverished | +1 | 5 |
| Poor | +1 | 10 |
| Struggling | +1 | 15 |
| Getting By | +2 | 0 |
| Middle Class | +2 | 5 |
| Comfortable | +2 | 10 |
| Well-off | +2 | 15 |
| Prosperous | +3 | 0 |
| Affluent | +3 | 5 |
| Wealthy | +3 | 10 |
| Rich | +4 | 0 |
| Filthy Rich | +4 | 5 |

Shield Uses

| DEX + STR + Speed | Max Uses per Round |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 0 to 15 | 0 |
| 16 to 20 | 1 |
| 21 to 25 | 2 |
| 26 to 30 | 3 |
| 31 to 35 | 4 |

Weapons & Attack

Weapons are described by their class and cost, for example a prosperous sword or poor rifle.

Class is the weapon's general category, useful for grouping similar weapons. If you have a skill that gives you +2 when attacking with blades, you would receive the bonus whether you were attacking with a sword or a dagger, but not with a bow or axe.

The class of your weapon determines whether the weapon requires one or two hands to wield. It also determines whether it is a melees weapon, used for close hand-to-hand combat, or a ranged weapon for picking off targets at a distance.

Two-handed weapons occupy both your "ready" slots, preventing you from using a shield. They are almost impossible to conceal and they cannot be used one handed.

You can describe a weapon by simply giving its Fortune cost, hands required to use, and class. For example, you can have an impoverished 2-handed axe, a rich 1-handed sword, a middle-class rifle, and so on.

Example: Your affluent character has 6 Alertness.

You equip an affluent pistol (a handgun) having ALE+3 attack and 4 range. Your attack with the bow is $6 + 3 = 9$.

Weapon Class

| Class | Type | Exmples |
|----------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Blade | 1h Melee | Sword, knife |
| Greatsword | 2h Melee | Claymore |
| Axe | 1h Melee | Hatchet, fire axe |
| Great Axe | 2h Melee | Battle axe |
| Club | 1h Melee | Nightstick, mace |
| Staff | 2h Melee | Quarterstaff, bat |
| Javelin | 1h Melee | |
| Spear | 2h Melee | |
| Hammer | 1h Melee | |
| Great Hammer | 2h Melee | |
| Whip | 1h Melee | Bullwhip, chain |
| Flail | 1h Melee | Morning star, flail |
| Pick | 2h Melee | Military pick |
| Sling | 1h Ranged | |
| Bow | 2h Ranged | |
| Crossbow | 2h Ranged | |
| Handgun | 1h Ranged | Pistol, revolver |
| Rifle | 2h Ranged | Carbine, sniper rifle |
| Shotgun | 2h Ranged | |
| Machine Pistol | 1h Ranged | Submachine gun |
| Machine gun | 2h Ranged | Assault rifle |

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Weapon Attack

| Cost | 1h Melee Attack | 2h Melee Attack | 1h Ranged Attack | 1h Range | 2h Ranged Attack | 2h Ranged STR Req. | 2h Range | Shotgun Range | AOE Damage |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------|------------|
| Destitute | DEX-6 | STR-4 | ALE-6 | 1 | ALE-5 | - | 3 | 1 | IN x3 |
| Impoverished | DEX-5 | STR-3 | ALE-5 | 1 | ALE-4 | - | 3 | 1 | IN x4 |
| Poor | DEX-4 | STR-2 | ALE-4 | 1 | ALE-3 | - | 4 | 1 | IN x5 |
| Struggling | DEX-3 | STR-1 | ALE-3 | 2 | ALE-2 | - | 4 | 1 | PR x3 |
| Getting By | DEX-2 | STR+0 | ALE-2 | 2 | ALE-1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | PR x4 |
| Middle Class | DEX-1 | STR+1 | ALE-1 | 2 | ALE+0 | 3 | 5 | 2 | PR x5 |
| Comfortable | DEX+0 | STR+2 | ALE+0 | 3 | ALE+1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | PS x3 |
| Well-off | DEX+1 | STR+3 | ALE+1 | 3 | ALE+2 | 5 | 6 | 2 | PS x5 |
| Prosperous | DEX+2 | STR+4 | ALE+2 | 3 | ALE+3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | GD x3 |
| Affluent | DEX+3 | STR+5 | ALE+3 | 4 | ALE+4 | 7 | 7 | 2 | GD x5 |
| Wealthy | DEX+4 | STR+6 | ALE+4 | 4 | ALE+5 | 8 | 8 | 3 | GT x3 |
| Rich | DEX+5 | STR+7 | ALE+5 | 4 | ALE+6 | 9 | 9 | 3 | GT x5 |
| Filthy Rich | DEX+6 | STR+8 | ALE+6 | 4 | ALE+7 | 10 | 10 | 3 | SP x5 |

Cost: This is the Fortune required to equip the weapon at the start of an adventure.

1h Melee Attack: This is your Attack with a one-handed melee weapon. Attack can never be less than 1.

2h Melee Attack: This is your Attack with a two-handed melee weapon. Attack can never be less than 1.

1h Ranged Attack: This is your Attack with a one-handed ranged weapon. Attack can never be less than 1.

1h Range: This is the range of a one-handed weapon. Ranges are in bands, as explained in the Combat chapter. You cannot attack a target beyond your range.

2h Ranged Attack: This is your Attack with a two-handed ranged weapon. Attack can never be less than 1.

2h Ranged STR Req: This is the Strength Required to use a two-handed ranged weapon. You cannot use a weapon if you do not have the required Strength.

2h Range: This is the range of a two-handed weapon, in bands.

Shotgun Range: This is the range of a shotgun. Shotguns receive +2 on their attack.

AOE Damage: The amount of damage an Area of Effect (AOE) weapon does, and the number of characters affected by the attack.

Melee Weapon Features

You can give your melee weapon any *one* of the features listed below.

Thrown: Adding the thrown feature allows you to hurl your weapon at a target. Once you throw a weapon it is gone until you can retrieve it. How far you can throw a weapon depends on your Strength, as shown below. Two-handed weapons cannot be thrown. Adding this feature increases the cost by 1 rank. Small blades and hafted weapons can have this feature automatically.

Thrown Range

| Strength | Thrown Range | Grenade Range |
|----------|--------------|---------------|
| 2 to 3 | 0 | 1 |
| 4 to 8 | 1 | 2 |
| 9 to 11 | 2 | 3 |
| 12 | 3 | 4 |

Thrown Only: Some weapons, such as throwing stars, are designed to be thrown but not used in hand-to-hand combat. Once you throw a weapon it's gone, unless you can retrieve it at the end of combat. Reduce the cost of thrown-only weapons by one rank. Thrown-only weapons cannot be two-handed.

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Entangle: Some flexible weapons, such as whips and bolas, can entangle. The weapon does its normal damage unless a kicker of 5, 6 or 7 is rolled, in which case the attacker may choose to entangle instead of doing damage. Entanglement doesn't do any damage. Instead, the target is entangled for 1 round for each success rolled on the attack.

On a kicker of 5, the attacker can entangle the target's arms. The target drops whatever is in their hands and cannot attack while entangled.

On a kicker of 6, the attacker can choose to entangle the target's legs. The target falls and cannot move while entangled.

On a kicker of 7, the attacker can choose to entangle the target's neck. The target takes sustained damage each round while entangled.

Entangle can be combined with the thrown only feature. Weapons with this feature are notoriously difficult to use and impose a -3 Attack penalty on their user. Adding this feature increases the cost by one rank.

Reach: Long weapons such as spears, pole arms, staves and two-handed axes and swords can perform an attack on characters in an adjacent band. Weapons with reach must be two-handed. Adding this feature increases the cost by one rank.

Ranged Weapon Features

Ranged weapons allow you to attack targets at a distance. It's assumed characters carry plenty of ammunition and reload as necessary during a fire-fight. A character can fire several times in a combat round. Therefore a single "attack" may expend multiple bullets or arrows. You may wish to consider an occasional missed attack as a turn spent reloading—you missed because your weapon was empty and you reloaded.

Ranged weapons can have any number of the features listed below.

Scope: Increase the weapon's range by 1 band. This feature increases the cost by one rank.

Silent: Bows and crossbows are naturally silent. You can add a silencer to a pistol or other firearm, but it reduces muzzle velocity. A silenced firearm suffers -3 on attack.

Shotgun: Shotguns have limited range, but receive +4 Attack.

Tripod: You can add a tripod to a two-handed firearm, giving it an additional +3 Attack. However, you must be prone to use the tripod, and it takes an action to set up.

Autofire: Autofire weapons normally attack in bursts. You can, however, fire an area of effect spray.

A spray uses the Area of Effect rules from the Combat chapter. Use your normal attack with the weapon to target a specific band. Consult the AOE Damage column of the Weapon table to determine the amount of damage you inflict and how many characters are affected.

An adventurer can spray a single large target (something the size of an elephant or larger). This allows you to make two attack rolls on the target as a single action.

Whenever you roll Catastrophic while attacking with a spray, you run out of ammunition. You cannot use the weapon again until you buy more ammunition or otherwise acquire it during the adventure.

Grenades

Grenades are thrown area of effect (AOE) weapons and can include Molotov cocktails, improvised explosive devices, and modern grenades. Grenades are destroyed when used. You can carry 4 grenades per slot.

Grenades have a maximum range based on your character's Strength (see Thrown Range table, above). Hurling a grenade requires a Dexterity roll. They do damage based on the AOE damage column of the Weapons table.

See the Area of Effect rules in the How to Play chapter for information on AOE attacks.

Goals & Motivation

Before you start playing, you must know your character's goals and motivation. What does your character want? Share this information with the narrator so they can create situations around your goals.

Some of your goals may become quests that can earn you Glory.

Starting Experience

You start the game with a number of experience points equal to your Intelligence. You may use your starting experience to buy perks or increase health as you would between adventures (see the Advancement chapter). Or you can save your experience points and use them later, combining them with experience gained on adventures.

Starting Skills

Before your first adventure, you can use your starting experience to buy skills. The Advancement

chapter includes a list of skills common to many settings.

The experience point cost to buy a starting skill depends on the skill level, as shown on the table below.

Starting Skills

| Skill | Experience Point Cost |
|-------|-----------------------|
| +1 | 1 xp |
| +2 | 3 xp |
| +3 | 6 xp |
| +4 | 10 xp |

Chapter 3

How to Play

Actions

What a character does during a turn is called an action. Actions can be anything: from traveling through the jungle, to fixing a jeep, to fighting a dangerous enemy. The choices are limitless. The rules provide instructions for many common actions, but players are certain to try things not listed. This is to be expected in a game where the players can try anything.

Many actions will succeed effortlessly, others will fail automatically and some will require a die roll to resolve. Whether a roll is necessary is at the narrator's discretion, using these guidelines.

Automatic Success

Characters succeed automatically when performing a routine action under normal conditions (walking, tying a shoelace, etc.).

The narrator should also allow automatic success if failure would have no substantial effect on the story. An action without consequences isn't worth spending time on. If there's nothing to gain or lose, then success should be automatic.

The narrator decides how long it takes to complete an automatic action, based upon real-world equivalents. The assumption is that the character can keep working at the task until it is complete, no matter how long it takes. If the length of time it takes or the degree of success is important then a roll must be made.

In a pinch, the narrator may allow automatic success when the character's success benefits the flow of the adventure.

Opposed actions are never automatic. If there is someone or something trying to prevent you from doing what you want, a trait roll is mandatory.

Automatic Failure

The narrator should use automatic failure if success would be so absurd as to break the suspension of disbelief, or if success would ruin the requirements of the adventure. A player who tries to sprout wings and fly between mountaintops is asking for automatic failure.

Just because something sounds unlikely doesn't make it impossible. Pulp fiction is filled with miraculous escapes and implausible feats. Many things that seem impossible in real life are commonplace in pulp adventures. The same spirit applies to ART games.

It's often possible that some unforeseen circumstance could be invoked to explain success in even a seemingly impossible situation. If something seems impossible to the narrator, perhaps the player can explain how success could be achieved.

In most cases, the narrator should allow a trait roll and let the dice decide. The narrator can assign extremely high difficulties for actions that seem unreasonable. Automatic failure is reserved only for those cases where failure is truly inevitable.

Trait Rolls

Trait rolls are used to resolve situations where there is a range of possible outcomes *and* you have something to gain or lose.

If the narrator can think of only one possible result then that outcome is automatic and no roll is needed.

If you have nothing to gain or lose, then the narrator should simply move the story along by granting automatic success without resorting to a needless die roll. There must be the possibility of a penalty or reward (or both!) to make a trait roll worthwhile.

In general, whenever there is uncertainty, conflict or disagreement over what will happen in the game, the question is answered with a trait roll. You never get to decide when to make a trait roll. The narrator will tell you when to roll, what attribute to use, and the difficulty. You get to decide what skills to apply to the roll, if any.

Summary of a Trait Roll

The narrator must announce:

- The difficulty of the action.
- The attribute used to perform the action.
- Any trait modifiers the narrator wishes to apply.

The player must:

- Decide whether to abort the action.
- Generate a trait total by adding up to two skills to the attribute and adding any modifiers required by the rules or the narrator.
- Find the trait total on the ART.
- Decide whether to use Fame to improve the trait total.
- Decide whether to “take 25”.
- Roll the dice.
- Decide whether to use Fame to improve the result.
- Tell the narrator the column result.
- Trigger any effects based on the kicker die.
- Regain Fame (on Awesome).
- Improve your skills (on doubles).

The narrator then:

- Describes the outcome based on the number of successes or failures.
- Determines the time required to perform the action (for actions performed during exploration phases).

your character will try something not covered in the rules. Ultimately, the narrator must decide which attribute you will use to do things in the game, choosing the most appropriate one from the character sheet.

The narrator should strive to be consistent and fair. Asking one player to make a Dexterity roll and another to make an Agility roll when both are trying to accomplish similar things could be construed as showing favoritism.

Specialized Actions

Some actions are so specialized or complex that they are outside the competence of an average adventurer. Such actions require a perk to perform. A prime example is piloting an airplane. Characters with the Piloting perk can roll Craft to pilot an airplane. Characters without the Piloting perk have very little chance of success.

If you absolutely must attempt an action that requires a perk and you do not have the perk, you must roll on the 2 row of the ART. You do not gain any benefit from your attributes or skills.

Setting the Difficulty

The difficulty of a trait roll ranges from Pathetic (very easy) to Awesome (very hard).

Using common sense and instinct, the narrator must summarize everything about the situation that’s external to the characters into the difficulty rating. When characters are starting out, they should face difficulties of Pathetic, Feeble or Inferior. As their skills improve, their challenges should increase. Only experienced adventurers should attempt difficulties beyond Passable.

Although actions with Catastrophic difficulty are automatically successful, players may need to make Catastrophic rolls to determine the degree of success. Likewise, Extreme difficulty results in automatic failure, but players may need to roll to determine the degree of failure.

Some rolls, such as Initiative, do not have a difficulty. All results are successful; it’s just a matter of degree.

Choosing the Attribute

The rules dictate what attribute is used to perform common actions. But in a game where the players can try anything, there will be times when

Difficulty

| Difficulty | Challenge for Avg Adventurer |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Catastrophic | Boring (Automatic Success) |
| Pathetic | Routine |
| Feeble | Simple |
| Inferior | Tricky |
| Poor | Troublesome |
| Passable | Hard |
| Good | Daring |
| Great | Reckless |
| Super | Foolhardy |
| Awesome | Desperate |
| Extreme | Impossible (Automatic Failure) |

Unopposed Rolls Player vs. Environment

An unopposed action is one where you are trying something that is not opposed by another character.

The narrator sets the difficulty from the perspective of someone who is not especially familiar with the activity, a hypothetical “average” adventurer. The individual skills of the character attempting the action are not a factor. Any character attempting an identical action should face the exact same difficulty.

For example, a locksmith might find opening a lock routine (Pathetic). But an “average” unskilled adventurer would find it hard (Passable). The narrator must go with the Passable difficulty.

The narrator must also consider any unique circumstances that would make the action easier or harder. Running across broken ground is clearly harder than running across a paved street, even if the distances are the same.

The narrator should adjust the difficulty for equipment the character is using that might make the job easier. Climbing a cliff with a rope is easier than scaling it unaided.

Lastly, the narrator needs to factor in any special precautions you take. By using your wits you should be able to augment your chances of success, while thoughtlessness will increase your chances of failure.

Opposed Rolls Player vs. Foe

When you are acting against a foe, the difficulty is simply the relevant trait of your opponent. The narrator never rolls for foes. Instead, the player rolls, using the foe’s attribute as the difficulty. Failures for the player are treated as successes for the foe and vice versa.

The narrator must adjust the difficulty for the situation. Hiding in a dark alley is easier than hiding in an open street, even when the same character is searching for you. The character’s Alertness might provide the base difficulty, but it must be tempered by where you try to hide.

***Example:** You try to sneak past a goblin chieftain having Inferior Alertness. The narrator asks you to make an Inferior Agility roll. You get a Feeble roll and get caught.*

Your friend now has to sneak past the chieftain to rescue you. Your friend sets up a diversion by setting fire to some rags on the other side of the cavern. Even though the chieftain’s Alertness is Inferior, the narrator decides to make things easier by asking for a Pathetic Agility roll to sneak past while the chieftain is distracted.

Player vs. Player

Adventurers will sometimes turn on each other. It might be in the spirit of good sportsmanship, or it could be with lethal intent.

In some cases the narrator can simply have the players each make a trait roll with the higher roll winning. This is useful in contests such as arm wrestling and racing.

Attacks are resolved with an opposed roll. The player who initiated the action (usually the player whose turn it is) rolls first. The result of their roll is the difficulty for the defender. The narrator can further modify the difficulty for any special circumstances, just as they would with a foe. The number of failures rolled by the defender is treated as successes for the other player.

Neither the attacking player nor the narrator can directly control another player’s character. The narrator can stress what the character thinks and feels, but the defending player still gets to decide what the character does. However, a player who

does not consider their character's feelings could be penalized by losing Fame or experience points.

Example: *You have an attack of 8 and you shoot your pistol at another adventurer who has Defense of 4 and +3 versus handguns.*

The other player rolls their Defense of 7 and gets a Poor result.

You must then make a Poor Attack roll to hit your target.

Foe Tests

Since the narrator never rolls for foes, they cannot perform trait rolls. If the players are not directly involved with a foe's action, the narrator should simply determine the outcome using common sense.

In cases where the narrator absolutely needs to know the result of a foe's action as if it were an adventurer, the narrator simply uses the foe's attribute rating as the result.

Example: *A foe with Feeble Attack attacks a foe with Good Defense. The result is a miss because the attacker's trait is less than the defender's.*

Henchman

Players use Charm (or sometimes Cunning) to enlist a henchman and to see how well the henchman follows orders. Players make rolls for their henchmen by converting the foe's attributes to adventurer traits.

Henchman Traits

| Foe Attribute | Adventurer Trait |
|---------------|------------------|
| Catastrophic | 0 |
| Pathetic | 1 |
| Feeble | 2-5 |
| Inferior | 6-8 |
| Poor | 9-12 |
| Passable | 13-16 |
| Good | 17-20 |
| Great | 21-24 |
| Super | 25-27 |
| Awesome | 28-29 |
| Extreme | 30 |

Adding Difficulties

When a player is opposed by a group of foes, it's often easier to have the player roll once against the combined difficulty of all the foes. Difficulties can be added together by following these steps:

- Start with the lowest difficulty.
- Replace pairs of difficulties that are no more than one rank apart with a single difficulty that is one higher than either.
- Repeat until no more difficulties can be combined.
- Use the highest difficulty remaining.

The narrator can use this as a guideline, but should not feel obligated to use it when it would slow down the pace of the game.

Example: *Three foes with Alertness of Poor, Passable and Great are searching for you. This can be resolved with one roll. Poor and Passable can be combined into Good. Good and Great can then be combined into a Super difficulty.*

Example: *Three foes with Alertness scores of Feeble, Inferior and Great are searching for you. Feeble and Inferior combine into Poor. Poor is more than one rank below Great, so it cannot be combined. The highest remaining difficulty is Great.*

Example: *Four foes with Alertness scores of Passable are searching for you. The first two Passable scores combine into Good. The remaining two Passable scores also combine into Good. The two Good difficulties then combine into a final combined difficulty of Great.*

Adjusting Difficulty

Often the rules will specify the difficulty. For example, the difficulty of attacking a foe is the foe's Defense. The narrator should feel free to adjust the difficulty. For example, rolling an attack at +1 difficulty means to increase the foe's Defense by one column.

Difficulty can be adjusted by up to 3 columns. Difficulty cannot be reduced below Catastrophic or above Extreme.

Applying a difficulty to a foe's action requires the narrator to adjust the foe's attribute but in the opposite direction. For example, a foe making an attack at +1 difficulty would *reduce* their Attack rating by one column.

Example: *You attack a foe having Good Defense. The situation gives you a combat advantage, so the narrator decides that you get -1 difficulty. The narrator asks you to make a Passable attack roll against the foe.*

Trait Modifiers

Trait modifiers are added or subtracted from your character's attribute before making a roll. Trait modifiers are temporary, so do not change the attribute on your character sheet. Trait modifiers cannot increase an ability above 25 or below 1.

Although many trait modifiers are specified in the rules, your narrator may assign other adjustments depending on the situation.

Trait modifiers allow the narrator to tweak the difficulty without changing the range of possible results. This makes the most sense when the results are compared to a table, such as the Movement table or Fumble table, where the outcome depends upon the column rolled.

The bonuses and penalties given by trait modifiers are much more subtle than difficulty adjustments, allowing the narrator to more finely control the player's chances of success.

In these rules, trait modifiers are always listed in front of the attribute they are adjusting. Rolling +1 Agility means to roll your Agility score plus one. This can be combined with difficulty adjustments, which follow the attribute.

Trait modifiers apply only to adventurers. To apply a modifier to a foe, the narrator must reverse the modifier and then apply it the player's attribute. So if a foe has +1 to attack, any player attacked by that foe would have -1 on their Defense roll.

Player Steps

Changing Your Mind

Once the narrator announces the difficulty and attribute, you can abort the action before making the die roll. Aborting an action counts as an action.

Example: *For your action you say you will attempt to jump from one rooftop to another, thinking the buildings must be close together. The narrator, envisioning a wide alley between the buildings, tells you to roll Great Agility. This is much more difficult than you expected. Rather than take the chance of falling to your death, you abort the action. Next turn you will try something safer.*

Using Skills

Before rolling the dice, you may add two skills to the attribute the narrator asked you to roll against. It's up to you to decide which skills to apply, following these rules:

- You can add up to two skills to a trait roll.
- The skills must be relevant to the action you are attempting.
- Using a skill unrelated to the action is cheating.

Using the ART

Add your skills and any modifiers to your attribute. Locate the total on the leftmost column of the ART (Action Results Table).

After finding the correct row, roll percentile dice and read across the chart to find the die range in which the roll falls. The column rolled indicates the degree of success or failure the character has achieved. A roll can range from Catastrophic (a low roll) to Awesome (a high roll).

Example: *Your character is climbing a cliff. The narrator asks you to make a Poor Strength roll. Your character has Strength 9 and two relevant skills: Climbing +4 and Rock climbing +1.*

Your total trait is $9 + 4 + 1 = 14$. You roll on row 14 of the ART. You roll the dice and get 73.

Read across the Poor row of the ART until you find the range labeled "59-73." Since your roll of 73 falls within this range, you look at the top of the column to discover you have made a "Good" roll.

Using Fame Before Rolling

For every point of Fame that you expend *before* making a die roll you gain +2 on your trait.

Taking 25

Instead of rolling the dice, you may simply choose to "take 25." Determine the result as if you had rolled 25. You must announce you are "taking 25" before you roll the dice.

Using Fame After Rolling

If you roll less than the difficulty, you may spend Fame to improve your result. It costs 2 Fame to increase your result by 1 column. You may increase the result up to the difficulty, but not beyond.

Triggering Perks

Some perks are triggered by certain results. Others fire when you roll a certain number on the kicker die (the kicker is the low or "one's" die). If the kicker can trigger more than one advantageous special effect, you must decide which effect it fires.

Regaining Fame

If you rolled Awesome, you recover all expended Fame. You cannot regain Fame if you spent Fame to improve your roll.

- If you rolled under the difficulty, simply count the number of columns between the difficulty and the column you rolled to get your total failures.
- If you rolled the difficulty or more, count the number of columns between the difficulty and the column you rolled, and add 1 to the total. The result is the number of successes you rolled.

Example: *The difficulty is Great and you rolled Poor. The result is 3 failures.*

Example: *The difficulty is Poor and you rolled Great. The result is 4 successes.*

Example: *The difficulty is Poor and you rolled Poor. The result is 1 success.*

Interpreting Successes & Failures

You achieve the best possible outcome on an Awesome roll, while the worst possible result befalls you on a Catastrophic roll. In general, the higher the difficulty the less astounding an Awesome roll becomes. If the difficulty is Awesome, then an Awesome roll is both the best possible outcome and the most meager success—the mere fact that you succeeded is amazing enough. Conversely, a low difficulty makes a Catastrophic roll less devastating. A difficulty of Feeble carries with it less risk than a difficulty of Great.

Between these extremes are a range of possible results. There is no general rule for translating successes and failures to game results. Instead, the narrator must interpret each outcome as appropriate for the situation. The table below gives broad guidelines.

Successes & Failures

Successes and failures define the possible results of a roll. For example, an adventure might say that a character searching for clues will find one clue for each success on a Poor Alertness roll; or one red herring for each failure.

To determine the number of success or failures:

Interpreting Success & Failures

| |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5f: Complete disaster. The worst thing possible happens. Your screw up causes significant problems, possibly even physical harm. Things are much worse than when you started. |
| 4f: Blunder. You failed completely and looked foolish in the process, creating some new complication that will have to be solved. Things are worse than when you started. |
| 3f: Setback. You made a terrible mistake. You may have forgotten a crucial step, or you what you did is so wrong that it will have to be corrected. |
| 2f: Inconvenience. Something is preventing you from realizing your intentions. |
| 1f: Stymied. The action is harder than you expected. Your best efforts accomplished nothing. |
| 1s: Marginal success. With considerable difficulty, you finish most of what you wanted, but there is something left that you simply cannot do. Your workmanship is shoddy and will not last long. |
| 2s: Moderate success. Your work is adequate, but you cannot do everything you intended or you cannot do it as well as expected. |
| 3s: Solid success. With an effort, you accomplish everything you intended. Nothing fancy, just solid success. You meet expectations. |
| 4s: Complete success. You succeed completely, efficiently and look good doing it. You exceed expectations. |
| 5s: Bonus. The results exceed all reasonable expectations. Not only did you accomplish everything you wanted, you gained an unexpected advantage in the process. You may have acted so quickly that you are allowed a second action in the same turn, or a bonus on your next action. Since this is the best possible outcome, the narrator may let you describe the results. The narrator may add additional details. |

Describing the Results

The number of successes or failures is an essential guideline in deciding what happens in the game. The more successes rolled, the more completely, quickly, easily, or spectacularly you succeed. The more failures, the more devastating the outcome.

Part of the craft of being a narrator is in adapting the quality of a character's roll to actions not covered in the rules. Simply saying an action is

"great" or "feeble" is not enough. Neither is saying the results are "successful" or a "failure." The narrator must describe what happens in terms of concrete events. The result of the roll must be woven into the narrative.

By interpreting the degree of success and failure, the narrator controls the tone of the game, making it as comical or serious as they like. Individual creativity is at work here, flavoring the game with the narrator's personal sense of what is appropriate and fun. Not all narrators will make the same judgment call in the same situation, and that is part of the beauty of the system.

Despite this apparent freedom, the narrator should strive to be consistent and fair. If you make a Poor roll, the narrator would be unjustified in having complete disaster befall you.

In many situations, a player will spontaneously suggest an interpretation for the narrator. If it's acceptable, the narrator should let it stand! This takes the burden off the narrator and gives the players a stronger sense of participation. Their contribution can only enrich the story, making it more enjoyable for everyone.

This is especially true of Awesome and Super rolls. Who better to describe what happens in these situations than the player who made the roll? Your narrator may allow you to describe your outstanding feat in your own words, adding additional details as appropriate.

Rewards & Penalties

Most situations involve the potential for a reward and a penalty. You either talk your way into the closed crime scene or you get detained by the police as a person of interest. You handcuff the suspect or he gets away. You pick the lock or you set off an alarm. You climb the mansion fence or you fall and hurt yourself.

At other times the only reward is the avoidance of something bad. Something of yours has been put at risk (usually your Health) but you have nothing to gain. You either resist the poison gas or it sickens you. You either dodge the falling piano or it hits you. Simply avoiding something bad can be a great relief and satisfying in itself.

Situations where you have something to gain but nothing to lose have less dramatic potential but make for creative puzzle solving. Because there isn't a penalty, the players are free to try different things.

A low roll in this case means a missed opportunity that can never be recaptured. You either pick the lock or you don't. If you don't, what do you try next to get in? Do you smash the window and wake up the neighborhood? Do you look for an open second-floor window and climb up?

The game mechanics provide for various types of penalties: wounds, fatigue, time wasted, or equipment lost. But there are less tangible penalties. Anything that complicates your adventurer's life can be seen as a penalty. On a personal level, you may be risking your pride, popularity, or a leadership role in the group. A low roll could limit your future choices or send the narrative in a direction that's disadvantageous to your character. You might miss an opportunity, or make an enemy.

Each gaming group has its own limits on acceptable penalties. Some groups might find graphic torture, mutilation, rape and amputation all fodder for fun times. Others will want to limit penalties to more lighthearted complications—as frivolous as a meddlesome relative at an inopportune moment. The most interesting penalties offer new situations. They can balance frustration with challenge, humiliation with amusement, disgrace with opportunity for redemption.

Rewards are a much less delicate subject than penalties. Anything that makes a player happy is a reward. Rewards include progress toward a goal, overcoming an adversary, or avoiding injury. Just being the center of attention and in control of the situation can be a reward.

Combined Efforts

When a group works together to accomplish a simple task, it may make sense to combine their efforts into one result. Not only does this increase their chances of success, it reduces the number of outcomes the narrator must invent.

The maximum number of characters that can combine their efforts is limited by common sense; too many and they start to get in each other's way.

In a combined effort, not all the characters need to be adventurers. Only the adventurers get to roll for a result. The narrator controlled characters simply use their trait ratings.

Non-Compounding Tasks

A non-compounding task is one where everyone is doing the same thing, but their efforts don't make the task easier for any one individual. Examples include sailing a ship or searching a room.

Each player in the group makes a trait roll. The highest result is the outcome for the group. But if any of the players rolls Catastrophic, something that character does causes the entire effort to end in disaster.

***Example:** Three adventurers and a narrator controlled character attempt to pole a raft across a lagoon. The narrator asks for Passable Strength rolls*

The players roll Inferior and Poor. The narrator controlled character has Strength of Inferior.

The best result of the group is Poor, which equates to 1 failure. With an effort, the adventurers make landfall amongst some reeds far from the beach they were aiming for.

Compounding Tasks

A compounding task is one where having another person help will make it easier, such as lifting a heavy object.

As with a simple task, each player in the group makes a trait roll and if anyone rolls Catastrophic the effort ends in disaster. The narrator then adds the results as they would add difficulties:

- Start with the lowest result.
- Replace pairs of results that are no more than one rank apart with a single result that is one higher than either.
- Repeat until no more results can be combined.
- Use the highest result remaining.

***Example:** Three adventurers attempt to carry an injured friend to safety. The narrator asks for a Great Strength roll.*

The players roll Good, Poor and Inferior. Inferior and Poor combine into Passable. Passable and Good combine into Great. The overall result is Great, and the three characters, after much struggling, slowly carry their friend.

Complex Actions

Actions that can be resolved with a single trait roll are called simple actions. Simple actions are great for moving the game along at a brisk pace. But sometimes the narrator may want to draw out a piece of action to give it more emphasis. Each piece of the action requires a different trait roll, often using different traits and difficulties.

Complex actions are always more difficult than simple actions. This adds dramatic tension, but also makes success harder to achieve.

The narrator must be prepared to narrate each step of the complex action and explain why each roll is needed.

- The narrator sets the attribute and difficulty for each step separately.
- You typically get to decide which step to try first. Some steps cannot be completed before others, and this will have to be kept in mind.
- The number of successes (or failures) you get is the bonus (or penalty) to your next trait roll.
- **If you get Catastrophic on any roll the action ends immediately in disaster.**
- On a failed roll, the narrator decides which step must be completed next. On successful roll, you get to decide which step to perform next.
- Continue until all steps are completed.
- The narrator interprets the final roll as the outcome of the complex action.

Example: You are participating in a debate. The narrator decides you will need to roll Charm, Cunning and Intelligence against the attributes of your foe and lets you decide which to use first.

You start with Cunning and get a Good result. Your foe has Passable Cunning, giving you 2 successes. The narrator describes how your sly innuendo puts your opponent on the defensive. You gain +2 on your next roll and you get to decide which attribute to use next.

You choose to roll Intelligence next. You have 3 Intelligence but your +2 bonus allows you to roll on the 5 row of the ART. You get a Feeble result versus your foe's Poor Intelligence, which equals 2 failures. The narrator concludes that your arguments hold little intellectual weight and your facts carry a whiff

of fallacy. The advantage you had at the beginning is lost, and you must make your final roll at -2.

You roll Charm at -2 and, with a very high roll, you get a Super result to conclude the debate. Your Super result versus your opponent's Poor Charm gives you 5 successes. The narrator describes the standing ovation you receive while your red-faced opponent is dwarfed by your dazzling presence.

Assist Rolls

The players can work together to complete a complex action. Not all the characters will be doing the same thing, but their efforts will combine into one objective. A classic example is a surgeon being assisted by other doctors and nurses.

Resolving an assist roll is identical to resolving a complex action, only the steps are completed by different characters. Anyone providing assistance or support to someone else must take their turn before the character they are helping.

If anyone rolls Catastrophic the action ends immediately in disaster.

Example: Jane, with 9 Craft, the Aircraft Piloting perk, +3 Piloting and +2 radio operation is helping you to land a plane via radio.

Jane is assisting so she rolls first. Because she can't see the airplane, the narrator decides she must make a Great Craft roll. She adds her Craft, Piloting and radio skills for a total of 14. She rolls on row 14 and gets a Super result, which equals 2 successes. Her instructions give you +2 on your trait roll.

Now it's your turn. The narrator happens to know that landing an airplane by following competent instructions isn't as hard as it sounds, and asks for a Passable Craft roll. The narrator doesn't require you to have the Aircraft Piloting perk because you aren't piloting solo.

You have Craft of 6 but no relevant skills. Your trait is 6 (your Craft) + 2 (for Jane's assistance) = 8. You roll the dice and get a Poor result, which equals 1 failure.

The narrator describes a very rough landing that damages the landing gear, but everyone gets down safely. No one will be flying that plane any time soon.

Assist Roll or Combined Effort?

The narrator must decide whether a task requires an assist roll or a combined effort.

A combined effort is always easier for a group, even if elements of the group have no aptitude in the effort. It's suitable to simple tasks that don't require much skill.

Assist rolls are appropriate in cases where each character in the group must contribute to the effort. Any weak link can reduce the chances of success for the entire group.

Impede Rolls

Players can also attempt to impede each other. This is treated in much the same way as an Assist roll, but the character being impeded suffers a penalty to their trait roll equal to the number of successes rolled by the character doing the impeding.

Sustained Actions

A sustained action requires more than one turn to resolve, with a trait roll made each turn to track the character's progress.

In addition to setting the trait and difficulty, the narrator also sets a *goal*.

The goal is the total number of successes or failures required to complete the action. Most sustained actions have a goal of 10, although it can range from 5 to 30. Normally the goal is the same for successes or failures, but they may have different goals if the narrator wishes.

The player makes a trait roll each round and keeps a running total of successes and failures. When either running total reaches the goal, the action ends. The last roll determines the degree of success or failure. So if the last roll was Feeble (2 failures), the overall action would be Feeble (2 failures).

Example: *The narrator requires a sustained Passable Strength roll with a goal of 10.*

Round 1: Get a Good roll = 2 successes.

Round 2: Get a Great roll = 3 successes for a running total of 5 successes.

Round 3: Get a Pathetic roll = 5 failures.

Round 4: get a Passable roll = 1 success, for a running total of 6 successes and 5 failures.

Round 5: Get a Feeble roll = 3 failures, for a running total of 6 successes and 8 failures.

Round 6: get a Passable roll = 1 success. Tally is at 7 successes and 8 failures.

Round 7: get a Great roll = 3 successes. Tally is at 10 successes and 8 failures. The number of successes has reached the goal and the attempt ends with a Great result (3 successes).

Sustained or Complex Action?

A complex action requires a pre-set number of rolls against different traits. A sustained action requires an open-ended number of rolls against the same trait.

A sustained action allows you to change your plans in the middle of the action, as opportunities present themselves or you become more desperate. An example of a sustained action is a chase, where it may take several rolls for you to escape your pursuer and you may attempt different actions along the way (see the chapter on Exploration Phases for more information on chases).

A sustained action is also suitable for when you need to complete an action in rounds that would normally be reserved for phases. This allows you to decide each round whether to continue with the sustained action or do something else. For example, if your jeep breaks down and your group is attacked while you are trying to repair it, the narrator may allow you to work on the jerry-rigging repairs while the battle rages. Your companions might have to fight a defensive battle, protecting you while you restart the jeep to make good your escape.

Hidden Rolls

Players always make their own rolls. Sometimes the mere fact that the narrator asks for a roll will suggest that something is happening. The narrator may use misdirection to maintain uncertainty.

Example: *You decide to search a room for a secret door. The narrator tells you to make a Poor Alertness roll. You roll Poor. The narrator tells you that you're*

certain the bookcase opens up as a secret door. You can even see a faint outline, but you just can't find the means to open it. Even though you know the result of the roll you do not know whether the door is really there or not. The narrator is simply saying the character thinks there is a secret door; the character may be entirely mistaken.

Example: *You walk into a room and the narrator tells you to make a Passable Alertness roll. You roll Feeble. You know something is up, but you don't know what. The nagging feeling that you missed something may cause you to search the room; or maybe you think you're entering an ambush and you draw your pistol. Both reactions are acceptable.*

Reaction Rolls

Reaction rolls are trait rolls that the narrator requires you to make. You are not initiating the action. Instead, you are reacting to something external.

For example, when entering a room, the narrator might ask for an Alertness roll to determine whether you spot the spy hidden behind the tapestry.

The narrator can ask you to make any number of reaction rolls in a phase or round. They do not count against what you can do on your turn and they can happen at any time, often during another character's turn. They help the narrator decide what happens to your character in situations that are beyond your control.

Defense rolls are normally made as reaction rolls.

Example: *A princess is trying to seduce your character. The princess has Great Charm. The narrator asks you to make a Great Cunning roll to resist her. You add your +2 resist seduction skill to your Cunning. You roll and get a Great result, barely enough to resist her wiles, despite your attraction.*

Alertness Rolls

The narrator calls for an Alertness roll when the detective has a chance to notice something of importance that is not immediately obvious. Alertness rolls often have high difficulty, but they are

free reaction rolls that don't count as part of your actions for the turn. A character who is deliberately searching for a specific thing should have a much lower difficulty.

Alertness can be used by the narrator as a means to provide the adventurers more information when they are stumped.

Success gives the adventurers helpful information about their environment, a tactical advantage in a threat situation, or a hint that may otherwise go unnoticed. The adventurers may spot an ambush before they enter it. They might notice faint scratches on the floor (only upon further investigation do they determine they're from a bookcase that has been moved). Or they may notice a discoloration on the hardwood floor (but they must conclude for themselves that it's from where a carpet once lay).

Typically the narrator will describe what the characters see, hear or otherwise sense and will leave it to the players to figure out its meaning. On a high Alertness roll the narrator may describe the meaning as well ("There's a discolored spot on the hardwood floor. It looks like there used to be a carpet that blocked the sunlight from the window, but the carpet must have been removed recently.")

On a failed roll the characters may miss a hint altogether or they may be misled by a red herring—the narrator simply draws their attention to some detail that does not help the characters but may prove interesting in its own right.

The narrator should be creative in coming up with reasons for why the characters failed to notice what they were rolling for. Perhaps something got in their way or they were distracted. If so, what was the distraction? Or maybe they were simply not paying enough attention.

Example: *Without knowing it, you pass a concealed door. The door is well hidden, so the narrator asks you to make a Super Alertness roll without telling you why. You roll Super roll. The narrator figures that this is good enough for you to notice something is not quite right about the wall on the left.*

Suspecting a secret door, you stop and search the wall. Since you are specifically searching for the door, the narrator drops the roll required three ranks and asks you to make a Good Alertness roll.

You roll Feeble. You make a terrible mistake that leaves you worse off than before.

Improvising, the narrator announces you found a small niche in the wall. As you probed the crack with your finger, you felt a sharp sting.

You snatch your hand back to see a scorpion clinging to your finger, its poisonous stinger embedded in your flesh.

Knowledge Rolls

Often the narrator will need to determine if your character knows a relevant fact about the current situation. Upon viewing an ancient temple, the narrator may ask you to roll Intelligence to find out if you recognize the architecture as Sumerian, or the glyphs as Aztec. Such Intelligence rolls are commonly called Knowledge rolls.

Often the narrator will require you to make an Intelligence roll to determine how much information to provide you when setting up the scene. In other cases, you may ask details that will cause the narrator to require an Intelligence roll.

Skills can give you a bonus to specific areas of knowledge, such as science, nature, history, occult lore, cultures, religion, and so on.

Fate Rolls

Sometimes the narrator simply needs a result to decide some issue not under the character's control. In these circumstances, the narrator can request a Fate roll. The difficulty is set based on the likelihood of the event happening.

Example: *The adventure write up says the adventurer's camp will be attacked at night. The narrator asks the players, who are taking turns standing guard, to make Fate rolls. The attack occurs on the shift of the player with the lowest result.*

Questions of Importance

You can do more on your turn than just perform an action. You can also introduce unexpected elements into the game environment or unexpected twists that not even the narrator expected.

A question of importance is one where the answer:

- is not trivial or inconsequential
- is not obvious and inescapable
- has not been predetermined by the narrator

A question of importance is resolved by a trait roll. For practical reasons, you are limited to one question of importance per turn, plus one action.

As a simple example, say you are in a room rifling through a CEO's desk and three security guards barge in through the only door. Your question of importance could be, "Can I get out a window?"

A narrator who hasn't already established whether the windows offer an egress could allow a Fate roll. If the roll is high enough, it might mean the windows open onto a fire escape, or it might mean you are close enough to a tree (or another rooftop) to jump out, or there might be a ledge outside that will let you climb down. But if the roll is low, the windows might be shatterproof or you could be so far up that jumping is out of the question.

Note that climbing or jumping will probably require another trait roll to resolve. So just because the answer is positive, it doesn't mean it's going to be easy!

Player Story Additions

Questions of importance can affect the course of the story in minor ways. The point is that the narrator, like the players, doesn't know everything and doesn't control everything. The narrator's job is to interpret the rolls of the players and build a story around them.

Using Perks to Control Story

Some perks allow the player to expend Fame to affect the story in deeper ways.

The Military Contact perk could allow a player to ask if the man guarding the hideout is an old war buddy. The narrator should let the dice decide, with the chance that the man turns out to be an old war enemy always a possibility.

Taking Damage

Every hazard in the game has an Attack rating. When you face a hazard, whether it's a troll, or a trap, you must make a Defense roll against the hazard's Attack rating. On a successful roll you completely avoid taking damage. You dodge the troll's club, elude the trap, or the damage glances harmlessly off your armor.

On a failed roll, your character takes damage based on the number of failures that you rolled, as shown on the Payer Damage table.

Some hazards have a damage rating of +1 to +3. Add the hazard's damage rating to the number of failures before consulting the Player Damage table.

Player Damage

| Failures Rolled on Defense | Damage |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | Inferior |
| 2 | Poor |
| 3 | Passable |
| 4 | Good |
| 5 | Great |
| 6 | Super |
| 7 | Awesome |

Example: You roll Feeble Defense against a foe with Poor Attack, resulting in 2 failures. You take Poor damage.

Example: You roll Good Defense against a foe with Passable Attack. You avoid taking any damage at all.

Example: You roll Feeble Defense against a foe with Poor Attack and +1 damage. You get 2 failures, but you must increase the number of failures by +1 for the foe's damage rating. Three failures results in Passable damage.

Inflicting Damage

When you attack a foe, what you roll is the damage you inflict. If you roll Great then you do Great damage to the foe. If you roll Poor you do Poor damage. If you roll less than the foe's lowest health

level then you either miss the foe or your attack does no damage.

Recording Damage

Your character's Health consists of a series of boxes, each with a wound level. Starting with the rightmost box and going to the left, check off boxes following these rules:

- Check off the box that corresponds to the damage.
- If the required box is already checked off, you must check off the highest available box that does not exceed the damage.
- If the damage exceeds the highest available box, check off the highest available box plus an additional box for each column the damage is over the highest available box.
- Never check off a box that's already been checked off.
- Never check off a box that's higher than the damage.

If all your available boxes are all higher than the damage, you simply shrug off the injury without harm. Your character cannot be "nickel and dined" to death. You can take an unlimited number of minor flesh wounds.

Example: You have Health of IN/PR/PS/GD.

You roll 2 failures on a Defense roll, resulting in Poor damage. You must mark off the PR box.

Next turn you roll another 2 failures on Defense, resulting Poor damage again. Poor is already marked off, so you must mark off the next lowest box. In this case, you mark off the IN box.

On a later turn you roll 1 failure, resulting in Inferior damage. The damage is less than the available boxes (a PS and GD) so the damage is ignored.

On an especially bad Defense roll, you get 5 failures which corresponds to Great damage. Great is one column over your highest available box. You must check off both your highest available box and one additional box. You check off GD and PS.

Now that all your Health boxes are checked off, your character is defeated.

Staggering

When you check off the rightmost Health level of an adventurer or foe, that character is staggered and loses their next turn.

Defeat

Once *all* the health levels on your Health track are marked off, your character is defeated. A defeated foe is killed outright.

A defeated adventurer falls unconscious and suffers a permanent reduction of -1 to Fame (down to a minimum of zero).

A defeated character remains unconscious until they recover at least one box of Health. This can be done through first aid, healing, or with med-kit as explained below.

Killing Unconscious Adventurers

Generally foes will not bother to kill an unconscious adventurer. Instead, the foes will focus their attacks on active threats. Should foes win a battle, they may loot the bodies and leave the adventurers for dead, allowing them to recover hours later through natural healing.

Certain Death

Some situations are so dangerous that the only possible outcome is death. There is no possibility of incapacitation or unconsciousness. In such situations, no Defense roll is made. The character is simply killed on the spot.

Certain death is always the result of a choice by the player. The player must be advised that the action they are taking will result in certain death. The player must then be given the opportunity to abort the action and try something else.

If the player insists on sacrificing their character, then a highly dramatic death scene should be played out.

A dead character can no longer be used in the game. You will have to create a new character and the narrator will have to introduce the character when convenient, usually during the next gaming session.

If the narrator expects a scenario to be especially deadly, the narrator may ask the players to create

more than one character during the preparation stage. Should one character die, you will have another ready to take its place.

First Aid

If you are conscious, you can apply first aid to yourself or another character. First aid takes several minutes to apply and cannot be done during combat.

It costs 1 Fame to heal Inferior damage. Increase the Fame cost by +1 for each level of damage over Inferior. For example, healing Poor damage costs 2 Fame and healing Great damage costs 5 Fame.

***Example:** Your companion with IN/PR/PS/PS Health has been knocked unconscious. At the end of combat, you expend one Fame to remove the check mark from the Inferior box, reviving your friend.*

Your friend then expends 3 Fame to remove the check mark from a Passable health box. Your friend now has available Health of IN/PS.

Natural Healing

After a full night of rest, you may make an Stamina roll to heal. You may erase one box that does not exceed the roll.

***Example:** Your character goes to bed with the Poor and Passable health boxes checked. In the morning you roll your Stamina to heal. You roll Inferior, less than your lowest wound. You do not heal that night. You must go another day with your injuries.*

The next night you roll again. This time you get a Good result. You erase the checkmark from the Passable health box.

Med-Kits

Medicinal plants, magical potions, and modern remedies can heal wounds much more quickly than bed rest. Such remedies are called “med-kits” for purposes of this discussion.

Med-kits have a limited number of uses. Each attempt to use a med-kit consumes one of its uses. Using a med-kit allows you to attempt to heal as if you had slept overnight, but the character being healed doesn’t roll Stamina; instead the character applying the med-kit rolls Intelligence.

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Med-kits are used during encounter phases and take minutes to apply. They cannot be used during combat.

Some med-kits grant a bonus to your trait roll to perform the healing. A +5 Med Kit would be quite a rare treasure.

Example: During a fight you check off the Inferior and Poor boxes on your Health Track. After the battle, you use a med-kit with 3 uses.

You roll Pathetic on your Intelligence. This is under your lowest Health box so you fail to heal.

You expend another use of your med-kit. This time you get lucky and get a Great roll. You heal the Poor box on your Health Track.

Special Types of Damage

Sustained Damage

Fire and acid can cause sustained damage. The damage begins at Inferior and increases by 1 level each round until the source of the damage is extinguished or you die.

Sustained damage will accrue a predetermined number of rounds and there's usually a way to stop the damage, for example dropping and rolling or diving into water to put out a fire.

Example: You get hit by a jet of flame that does sustained damage for 1 round for every failure you roll on Good Defense. You roll Poor Defense (2 failures). On the first round you take Inferior damage. On round two you take Poor damage before the flames go out.

Fatigue

Not every hazard causes wounds. Poison, exhaustion, and sickness cause fatigue damage. Each point of fatigue that you take causes you to suffer -1 on all rolls until the source of fatigue is removed. Fatigue from different sources is cumulative.

How long fatigue lasts depends upon its source, and is often determined with a trait roll.

Example: You are poisoned! The poison causes 1 fatigue and lasts for 1 round for each failure on a

Passable Stamina roll. You roll Inferior on our Stamina roll, so you suffer -1 for 2 rounds

Example: Your character is exposed to a terrible disease. Your character suffers 1 fatigue for every failure on a Great Stamina roll, and recovers 1 fatigue for each day of rest.

Falling Damage

The table below shows how much damage you take based on the height fallen. You do not get a Defense roll because hitting the ground isn't something that can be avoided. The surface you are landing on can affect the damage as shown below.

Falling Damage

| Damage | Height | Height |
|----------|--------|--------------------|
| Inferior | 10' | Short drop |
| Poor | 20' | Unfortunate tumble |
| Passable | 30' | Dangerous fall |
| Good | 40' | Great fall |
| Great | 50' | Dizzying plunge |
| Super | 60' | Terrifying plummet |
| Awesome | 70' | Perilous plummet |
| Extreme | 80' | Deadly dive |

Falling Adjustment

| Damage | Landing Surface |
|--------|------------------------|
| -3 | Deep snow, water |
| -2 | Dense vegetation, sand |
| -1 | Grass or mud |
| +0 | Dirt or wood floor |
| +1 | Stone floor, pavement |
| +2 | Rocks |
| +3 | Jagged rocks, spikes |

Example: You attempt to climb a sheer cliff. The narrator asks for a Passable Strength roll. You roll Feeble (3 failures) and plunge toward the rocks below. Because you rolled 3 failures, the narrator decides that you fall 10 feet per failure (30 feet) onto rocks. Your damage is Passable + 2 = Great damage.

Example: You are jumping over a ten-foot deep pit. The narrator asks for a Passable Agility roll. You get Catastrophic (5 failures). You fall head first into the pit. It's a short drop onto a stone floor, for a total of Inferior + 1 = Poor damage.

Example: You are edging along an icy mountain ledge. The narrator asks for a Good Agility roll to keep your balance. You roll Passable (1 failure). The narrator declares that you lose your footing and slip toward the edge.

You ask if you can catch yourself with your ice axe. The narrator requires a Passable Strength roll. You roll Feeble (3 failures). Losing your grip on your ice axe, you fall into the deep snow far below.

It's a dizzying plunge 50 feet into deep snow, which does Great – 3 = Poor damage as you plop into a snowdrift.

Insanity

When characters are confronted by extremely dangerous and unnatural situations, the narrator may require them to make Stamina rolls. The difficulty is based on the situation. Some examples are given below. A character should never roll when facing something they are accustomed to. An assassin would have to roll Sanity just because they found a mangled corpse.

Look up the number of successes or failures that the player rolls on the Sanity Check table.

Sanity Difficulty

| Difficulty | Description | Example |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inferior | Disgust | Find a mangled corpse. |
| Poor | Fright | Touch a mangled corpse unexpectedly. |
| Passable | Shock | Find the mangled corpse of a loved one. |
| Good | Panic | Attacked by a loathsome and obviously dangerous creature. |
| Great | Fear | Receive a visit by an IRS agent. |
| Super | Extreme terror | Witness a horrifying event: river runs with blood, body parts rain from the sky, etc. |
| Awesome | Mind numbing horror | Faced by own worst fear. |

Sanity Check

| Sanity | Result |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2s | You've coughed up scarier things than this. |
| 1s | You're disturbed but keep your cool. |
| 1f | You grit your teeth and swallow your rising panic. |
| 2f | You are paralyzed with fear for 1 round. |
| 3f | You flee in terror. Each round, make an Inferior Intelligence roll. Once you accumulate 7 successes you regain your self control. |
| 4f | You cry, whimper, scream, or huddle in a corner until slapped or shaken or until you recover by yourself after 5 minutes. |
| 5f | You faint. Each round, make an Inferior Intelligence roll. Once you accumulate 7 successes you awaken. If you roll any failures then you will awaken with no memory of the event that frightened you. |
| 6f | You faint for 1 minute per failure on an Extreme Intelligence roll. In addition, you are unable to speak for 12 hours. |
| 7f | You go catatonic for 1 hour per failure on an Extreme Intelligence roll. During this time, you cannot move or speak, but you can be led around by others. Once you recover, you gain a permanent phobia related to the event that frightened you. Decide on the phobia with your narrator. |
| 8f | Your character goes completely insane. Each day, you may try to make a Great Intelligence roll to recover. You still control your insane character, but you must behave in an irrational fashion. The narrator may require the insane character to do certain things or to behave in a certain way, including requiring the character to plot against former friends, or go into a violent frenzy. After your character recovers, your character may suffer a permanent mental illness. |

Chapter 4

Exploration Phases

Exploration Phases

Exploration phases are used when the characters are exploring, traveling, investigating, or interacting with friendly or neutral foes where there is no conflict. Much of the game is played in phases. The game shifts to rounds only when the situation becomes tense enough that formal turn order is needed, such as in a hostile encounter with foes.

Setting the Scene

The narrator begins the first phase of a scene by describing the environment, how the characters got there, and any other necessary details the players may need to make decisions about what to do next.

Declaration of Intention

At the beginning of a phase, all players declare what their characters are doing. The adventurers may act as a group, or they may each do something different.

The players can discuss their options with each other and the narrator. They can declare their intentions in any order, and players can change their minds in response to what other players decide. If this open-ended process bogs down, the narrator can ask the players to make Intelligence rolls and have players declare their intentions in *reverse* order (starting with the player who rolled the lowest result).

Each action has an appropriate scale of minutes, hours or days. All players must choose actions that have the same scale. A player who insists on declaring an action that requires a longer scale than the other players can do nothing until the scale switches to the longer time frame (or the player

chooses an action that requires the same scale as the other players).

Time Scale of Phases

| Scale | 1 phase represents |
|---------|--------------------|
| minutes | 5 minutes |
| hours | 1 hour |
| days | 1 day |
| weeks | 1 week |
| months | 1 month |
| years | 1 year |
| decades | 10 years |

Resolving Actions in Phases

Once all the players have declared their intentions, they can begin to resolve their actions.

The narrator resolves the actions in whatever order is convenient or most dramatic.

How Long Did It Take?

If all the characters are doing things that take approximately the same amount of time, the narrator can simply move the game forward without counting phases. But in more complicated situations, the narrator may wish to track how long it takes for the characters to finish what they are doing.

If the narrator chooses to track phases, then everyone must make a trait roll. If there is no chance of failure then the difficulty is Catastrophic, but you must still roll.

- On a successful roll the attempt takes 1 phase per column under Awesome. On an Awesome roll the attempt takes less than 1 phase—the player may attempt another action on the same phase.
- If you fail your roll, your attempt takes 1 phase per failure rolled.

Example: You are traveling to a neighboring town. The trip normally takes a few hours (in other words, the scale is in hours). The narrator asks for a Catastrophic Intelligence roll just to see how long the trip takes you. You roll Pathetic, 8 columns under Awesome. You get lost along the way and the trip takes you 8 hours to complete.

Example: You are trying to fix the engine of your car. The narrator asks for a Passable Craft roll and sets the scale in hours. You get an Inferior result (2 failures). You tinker with the car for 2 hours but fail to diagnose the problem.

Example: You go to the library to research an obscure region of South America to find a hint on the location of a legendary mine. The narrator asks for a Poor Intelligence roll. You get a Great result, 2 columns under Awesome. It takes you 2 phases to successfully complete your research.

Rolling Again

How many times can a character repeat an action, hoping for success? It depends on the stakes.

If there was a penalty for failure, the player can try the action however many times they want, suffering the consequences for each failure.

If there was no penalty for failure, then the player can still try again, but each failed attempt increases the scale by 1. The increase in scale remains until the end of the gaming session.

Example: A character falls in a 10 foot pit, taking damage from the fall. The player then tries to climb out. The narrator sets the scale at minutes.

The player rolls Inferior. The narrator decides that the character climbs for 3 phases (15 minutes) before falling back into the pit. Once the damage is resolved, the player may try climbing out again, risking another roll.

Example: You are trying to open a sealed safe in the comfort of your study with all the tools you need. The narrator asks for a Poor Dexterity roll with a scale of hours. You get Pathetic. You spend 3 hours on the lock.

Since there isn't a penalty for failure, the narrator increases the scale to days. You make another Poor

Dexterity roll and get a Good result. It will take you another 3 days of diligent effort to crack the safe.

Example: You try to pick a lock. The narrator sets the scale in minutes and asks for a Passable Dexterity roll.

You get a Feeble result (3 failures). You spend 3 phases (15 minutes) picking the lock when a guard comes by on his rounds!

After you deal with the guard you try picking the lock again. Again the narrator asks for a Passable Dexterity roll. This time you get an Inferior result (2 failures). Again the narrator thinks of an appropriate penalty: after 2 phases (another 10 minutes) your lock pick breaks in the lock.

Fortunately you have a spare lock pick, but you first have to remove the broken pick from the lock. Fortunately you have a pair of needle nose pliers. The narrator asks for an Inferior Strength roll. You get a Super result. This is a successful roll so instead of counting failures the narrator checks the Phases Required table. After another 1 phase (5 minutes) you free the broken lock pick.

You go at the lock again, again attempting a Passable Dexterity roll and this time getting a Poor result (1 failure). After 1 phase (5 minutes) you realize this is going to take much longer than you expected. The narrator cannot think of an appropriate penalty, so instead decides to increase the scale by 1 for any future attempts.

The scale is now hours. You make another Passable Dexterity roll, this time getting Feeble (3 failures). You spend 3 more hours working on the lock. With no hope in sight, the narrator increases the scale by 1, to days.

There is no way you can spend days working on the lock. You reluctantly give up.

Setting Time Limits

Before rolling the dice, you may announce the maximum number of phases you will devote to the task.

If the number of phases rolled is more than the time limit, the task is left incomplete. It is neither successful nor a failure, but simply aborted partway through. Aborted actions cannot be attempted again until the next gaming session.

Phase Track

Actions during phases can be tracked using a row of ten squares. Each square represents one phase. The track identifies when actions are completed and when players can act again.

The narrator places a token for each player in the first square of the track. Under the first square the narrator places a turn marker. This shows the current phase. Players with a token in the box above the turn marker can declare an action.

As actions are resolved, move the player's token to the right one space for each phase that the action requires. When a token reaches the rightmost box, it wraps back around to the first box.

Once all the actions on the current phase have been resolved, the narrator moves the turn marker to the next square on the right occupied by a player's token. The process then starts over from the beginning, with all players who have a token in that square declaring a new action. As with the other tokens, the turn marker wraps around to the first square.

Influencing Another Character's Action

Because success or failure is determined at the start of the action, it's possible for circumstances to change between when the roll is made and when the action is completed. This makes it possible for someone to intervene to help or hinder the character.

If you are trying to help another player who has failed a roll, you must be able to complete your action before they do.

Example: *Rick and Shari try to climb a cliff. The narrator requires a Passable Strength roll. Rick rolls Feeble. He will climb for 3 phases before falling.*

Shari rolls Great and climbs out in 2 phases.

From the top of the cliff she can see Rick struggling. She asks the narrator, is Rick close enough for her to reach? To keep things interesting, the narrator decides Rick is barely within arm's reach.

Shari reaches down and grabs Rick's outstretched hand. The narrator asks for a Passable Strength roll for her to pull him to safety.

Shari rolls Passable. She grabs hold of Rick and stops him from falling (if left alone he would have

fallen on the next phase). Checking the Phases Required table, the narrator determines that it takes her another 5 phases to pull him up. Alternately, the narrator could have switched the game to rounds and used the Sustained Action rules (as explained in the next chapter) to see if Shari could pull him up.

Movement During Phases

Characters can move vast distances during even a five minute phase. Only the general position of the characters is tracked: they might be at the library, driving to another town, or traveling cross country.

For the most part, characters can travel without making a roll. The narrator simply decides how long the travel takes based upon the distance, the mode of transportation, and the conditions.

If the narrator wants know exactly how many phases the trip requires, the narrator sets the scale of at hours, days or weeks, as appropriate, and requires a trait roll: Stamina for long hikes, Strength for long mounted rides, Craft for long drives. The trip takes 1 phase per column rolled under Awesome.

Shadowing

Following someone without being noticed is a complex action that requires two rolls. You must be moving at least as fast as your target. For example, you cannot shadow someone on foot if they are in a car.

First roll Alertness to keep your target in sight. The difficulty is your opponent's movement trait (Stamina if moving on foot, Craft if in a vehicle, or Strength if mounted). How well you do on your Alertness roll determines how much distance you can leave to your target. As with any complex action, successes count as a trait bonus to your next roll while failures count as a penalty.

The second roll is to avoid being detected. Roll Agility if on foot, Craft if in a vehicle, or Strength if mounted. The difficulty is your opponent's Alertness. Success allows you to safely follow your target for one phase per success. At the end of this duration, you must make another set of rolls. Phases can be minutes or hours at the narrator's discretion.

One failure means you lose your target (see tracking to pick up their trail). Two or more failures means that you target spots you and tries to elude you. See Chases, below, for more information.

Possible specialties include shadowing in a city, in a town, in a building, in daylight, at night, in a forest, in the countryside, in a jungle, in a car, in a boat, on foot, on horseback.

Tracking

Tracking is the art of finding and following tracks and other signs of passage. Typically you and your target must both be on foot or mounted.

You need to make an Alertness roll to track a target. The narrator sets the difficulty based on the terrain and age of the tracks, and whether your target is trying to cover their tracks.

On a failed roll you do not find the tracks and cannot track your target.

A successful Alertness roll allows you to track your target. The more success you roll, the faster you can move while tracking.

Roll Stamina if on foot or Strength if mounted to catch up with your target. The difficulty is Super -1 for each success you rolled on Alertness.

The narrator should increase the difficulty by +1 if the target is moving continuously without rest. The narrator should increase the difficulty by +2 if the target is moving by a faster method than the player. The narrator reduces the difficulty by -1 if the target is moving slowly.

The narrator sets the scale to minutes, hours or days depending on how far you are from your target.

On a failed roll you lose the scent. You cannot roll again because the trail has grown cold.

On a successful roll you catch up with your target. You can then use the Shadowing rules if you want to continue following them, or Chase rules if you want to overtake them.

To draw out a tracking scenario, a successful tracking roll may lead you to a location that your subject is no longer at, but which contains clues or other opportunities for adventure. The narrator may then require another set of tracking rolls to pick up the subject's trail.

Chapter 5

Combat Rounds

Combat Rounds

Hostile encounters between adventurers and foes are played in rounds. The narrator shifts the game to rounds when fighting begins or the situation becomes tense enough that who goes first matters.

A round represents six to ten seconds of game time (as opposed to the real time it takes to describe your character's actions, roll dice, and play out the round).

Initiative

Initiative is the order in which the players and their foes take their turns during a round. Initiative is established at the start of the encounter and does not change.

The players each roll Alertness to determine their character's initiative, while foes use the Alertness ratings.

Characters act in descending order of initiative, from Awesome to Catastrophic.

- Ties between adventurers are resolved by agreement between the players or by a die roll.
- Ties between foes and players go to the player.
- Foes with tied initiative act in whatever order the narrator wishes.
- Characters with Awesome or Super initiative receive a bonus round at the beginning of the encounter.
- Characters with Pathetic or Catastrophic initiative lose their first turn.

Example: Jen rolls Super initiative, Bill rolls Poor and Sam rolls Pathetic. The foes have Poor initiative, except for a Boss with Super initiative.

Bonus Round:

*Jen gets to act during the bonus round.
Then the boss acts after Jen.*

First Round:

*Jen goes first (on Super)
The boss foe goes second (on Super)
Bill goes next (on Poor)
The foes act (on Poor)
Sam, with a Pathetic roll, loses his first turn.*

Second Round:

*Jen goes first (on Super)
The boss goes next (on Super)
Bill goes next (on Poor)
The foes act (on Poor)
Sam goes last (on Pathetic)*

Simplified Initiative

If the keeping the turn order straight is too cumbersome, the narrator can simply start with the player who rolls highest on initiative and go around the table clockwise. The foes act when the turn order reaches the narrator, unless the players all roll lower than the foes in which case the foes go first.

Taking Your Turn

On your turn, you announce what your character is doing and then resolve your actions. Once your turn is done, play proceeds to the next character in order of initiative.

Even when it's not your turn you may need to roll in response to an action taken by another character. Often you'll need to make a Defense roll to defend against an attack. These rolls can happen at any time and are in addition to whatever actions you initiated on your turn.

Actions

In general, you may perform one action per round. Actions may or may not require a trait roll to resolve. The actions you can take during combat rounds must be something that could take place within a few seconds. Most actions take one round, but sustained actions may require several continuous rounds. Typical actions include:

- Attack
- Use a combat perk
- Dodge
- Move
- Jump
- Climb
- Sneak
- Run
- Aiming
- Draw a weapon (automatic success)
- Ready a slung shield (automatic success)
- Stand up (automatic success)
- Open a door (automatic success)
- Knock over a table
- Take cover
- Interact with the environment
- Pick up something

Free Actions

Free actions do not count against what a character can do during a turn and can be performed at any time during the player's turn. Reaction rolls can occur even when it is not the player's turn. A player can perform any number of free actions in a round, within reason. Free actions include:

- Talking
- Movement within a band
- Dropping an item at hand
- Taking the safety off a gun
- Reloading
- Questions of importance
- Reaction rolls
 - Defense rolls
 - Most Alertness rolls
 - Fate rolls
 - Resistance rolls
 - Other narrator required rolls

Automatically Successful Actions

You can try to convert an automatically successful action into a free action. Make a trait roll at Inferior difficulty. The trait depends on the action:

- Draw a weapon or ready a slung shield: Roll Dexterity.
- Stand up: Roll Agility.
- Open a door: Roll Strength.

If you succeed, you perform the action as a free action.

On a Feeble roll you accomplish what you intended, but your turn ends.

On a Pathetic or Catastrophic roll, not only do you fail to do what you wanted, but your turn ends.

Waiting

At the start of your turn, before you act, you may announce that you are waiting. As soon as you announce you are waiting, you must choose when in the round you will act based on the following rules. Play then proceeds to the next character in order of initiative.

- You must act *after* another character who has not already taken their turn.
- You must act *before* all other characters who are already waiting.
- When your turn comes around, you must act. You cannot wait again on the same round.

Example: *Abe has Great initiative, Ben has Passable initiative, and Cindy has Inferior Agility. Circumstances show that going last in this situation would be advantageous.*

On his turn, Abe decides to wait. He decides he will go after Cindy.

On his turn, Ben also decides he wants to wait to see what Cindy does. He cannot wait until after Abe because Abe is already waiting.

Cindy cannot wait because all the other characters are already waiting. She must take her turn.

Ben would also like to continue waiting, but he already waited once this round. Ben must act next.

Abe gets to go last.

On the next turn, Abe decides to wait and go after Ben, not Cindy.

On his turn, Ben cannot wait because the next character in line is already waiting, and Ben cannot wait past someone who is already waiting. Ben goes second.

Abe then takes his turn.

Cindy goes last.

Multi-Action

At the end of your turn, you may expend 1 Fame to immediately take another turn. At the end of that turn, you may spend 2 more Fame to immediately take a third turn.

Movement

The position of characters relative to one another and their environment is often crucial in a combat situation. These movement rules will help you to out-maneuver your opponents.

Range Track

Use a copy of the Phase/Range track to record distances between characters and important features of the environment. The narrator places a token representing each adventurer in one of the bands. Other tokens are used to mark groups of foes. Important features can be marked with tokens or drawn directly on the range track. Any exits from the area must be indicated on the track; the edges of the track do not necessarily represent exits.

By placing the adventurers in the middle of the grid, the narrator can surround them with foes and environmental features.

The number of bands between the adventurers and the other tokens show how far apart they are.

The rules allow you to determine whether a foe is in range, how many turns it will take you to get into range, and whether there is anything in your way. To keep things abstract and reduce the opportunity for argument, the rules do not provide real-world equivalents to distances and ranges.

Encounter Range

The narrator decides how far apart the adventurers and the foes are at the start of the

encounter. The starting range indoors will normally be 1 or 2 bands. In the jungle or dense woods it is 2 or 3 bands. In more open environments the range can be 4 or more bands.

The narrator may wish to set the encounter range equal to the highest initiative roll, counting 1 band per column rolled over Catastrophic. If the highest Initiative is Great, the encounter would start at 7 bands.

Movement Rates

Movement within a band is a free action. You can always interact with any character or object in your band.

Moving to another band isn't free and requires an Agility roll. Consult the movement roll table to see how far you can move based on what your roll.

Movement does not have to be used all at once. You may use the movement at any time during your turn. If you made an Awesome Agility roll (move 2 bands as a free action), you could move 1 band, attack, and then move another band.

Movement Roll

| Agility Roll | Outcome |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| CT | Stumble. Move 0 bands. |
| PT to IN | Move 1 band. |
| PR | Move 1 band as a free action. |
| PS | Move up to 2 bands or move 1 band as a free action. |
| GD | Move up to 3 bands or move 1 band as a free action. |
| GT | Move up to 4 bands or move 1 band as a free action. |
| SP | Move up to 4 bands or move up to 2 bands as a free action. |
| AW | Move up to 5 bands or move up to 2 bands as a free action. |

Example: *You are adjacent to an enemy. You want to move up to them and attack with your melee weapon. You roll Agility and get Poor. This is good enough to move 1 space as a free action. Moving into your enemy's band, you launch your attack as your standard action.*

Example: *You are adjacent to an enemy. You want to move up to them and attack with your melee weapon. You roll Inferior on Agility. You can move just*

1 band but take no other action. You decide to move away from your enemy.

Rough Terrain

Rubble, thick vegetation, and loose debris constitute rough terrain. Your movement ends when you enter a band containing rough terrain.

Sneaking

If a foe hasn't seen you or is distracted, you can try sneaking to an adjacent band. Roll Agility. The difficulty is the combined Alertness of the foes in the vicinity. On a failed roll, you're spotted. On a successful roll you can move to an adjacent band unnoticed. On an Awesome roll, the movement is a free action.

Foe Movement

Foes do not roll to move. Instead, look up the foe's Agility on the movement table to determine how many bands they can move in a round.

Stopping Foe Movement

An adventurer in the same band as a foe can try to prevent that foe from leaving the band. When the foe tries to leave the band, the player declares their intention to stop them. This is a free action that can be performed even if the adventurer has already taken their turn.

The player rolls Agility versus the foe's Agility. On a successful roll, the adventurer prevents the foe from leaving.

Multiple players in the space can try to stop the foe as a combined, compound action.

A player can attempt to stop only one foe per round.

Escaping Foes

When you leave an enemy occupied band, you must count the number of foes in the band. If there are more foes than friendly units (not including your character), leaving the band will cost two bands instead of one.

Example: You are in a space with one friend and two foes and you want to flee. You roll *Inferior* on Agility, which lets you move 1 band. But because there are more enemies in the band than friends, leaving the band will require movement of 2. Your escape is blocked and you cannot move this round.

Chases

Chases take place in combat rounds and are played on the range track using the normal movement rules.

During a chase, the pursued character may attempt dangerous stunts. The narrator may present situations, or the player may ask *questions of importance* to create their own opportunities.

When the pursued character succeeds in a stunt, the pursuer must then make the same stunt at the same difficulty. Failure by either character means the chase ends in an accident. Characters can attempt one stunt each round.

Once you get a certain number of bands away from your pursuer, you elude them. Your narrator sets the number of bands required based on the environment. In an area with lots of cover, you may need only 3 bands to escape; in open plains you may need 10 bands.

Example: During a trip to New York, you run afoul of a street gang. You're alone, unarmed, and outnumbered. You make a break for it and the thugs give chase. The narrator starts the encounter at 1 band and requires you to get 5 bands away from the thugs to escape them.

Round 1: The narrator asks for an Initiative roll. Fortunately for you, you roll *Great* and get to go first.

You roll Agility to move, and get an *Inferior* result, allowing you to move 1 band.

The thugs, with *Inferior* Agility, move 1 band, staying close on your heels.

Round 2: At the start of your next turn you ask the narrator if there is a fire escape nearby. The narrator asks you to make a Fate roll. You get a *Good* result, and sure enough there's a fire escape you can get to by climbing up the nearby dumpster.

You scramble up the fire escape ladder. Normally climbing a ladder doesn't require a roll, but since you're fleeing the narrator requires an *Inferior* Strength roll. You get a *Good* result and zip up the ladder.

Your pursuers have Passable Strength and they scramble up after you.

Round 3: Now that you are on the roof of the building, you leap across an alley onto the roof of another building. The narrator asks for a Passable Strength roll to make the jump. You roll Passable (1 success. You make it, but just barely. Your midsection slams into the ledge of the other building, your legs dangling thirty feet above the pavement.

One of your pursuers jumps across after you. With Passable Strength, they can't do any better than you did. The narrator asks you to make a Fate roll. You roll Feeble, and the narrator announces the thug missed the ledge altogether and instead grabbed your legs. You must roll Good Strength to avoid losing your grip on the ledge and plummeting into the alley.

You roll Great on Strength and hold on.

The other thugs stop their pursuit.

Round 4: With one hand you loosen your belt and point your toes down. Your trousers slip off your legs and the thug goes along with them.

The other thugs climb down the fire escape to look after their buddy, while you pull yourself onto the other roof and, pantless, make good your escape.

Of course, your wallet was in your pocket. Whether the thugs find it or the police find it, you can expect a visitor at your home later.

Combat

Foe Attacking Player

When your character is attacked by a foe, you must make a Defense roll against the foe's Attack rating. The number of failures you roll is the amount of damage you take. See Taking Damage in the How to Play chapter for a full explanation of how to track damage.

Example: *You roll Inferior Defense against a foe with Passable Attack. Inferior versus Passable results in 2 failures, which equates to Poor damage on the Player Damage table.*

Player Attacking Foe

When you attack a foe, you roll your Attack for the weapon you are using. What you roll is the damage you inflict on your target.

Example: *You attack a foe having Health of PR/PS/GD/GT. You roll Great. The narrator marks the GT from the foe's health and the foe is staggered (see Taking Damage in the How to Play chapter).*

You attack the foe again on a later turn and get another Great roll. The damage is one column over the foe's highest available health level, so the narrator must mark off both the GD and PR. The foe's health now looks like this: PR/PS/GD/GT.

These two blows have softened up the foe. You must still deliver Passable damage to finish off the foe. Anything less will merely add another minor injury but never a mortal wound. The foe's reserves have been whittled down, but you still need that killing blow.

Example: *You attack a foe having Health of IN/IN/PR/PS. You roll Super, 3 columns over the foe's highest health level. The narrator must mark off the PS and three other health boxes. You kill the foe with a single blow.*

Player Attacking Player

You roll your attack. The player you are attacking rolls their Defense. The number of failures they roll is the damage your target takes.

Example: *You attack another adventurer. You roll Good on your attack and your target rolls Poor on their defense, which is 2 failures. Two failures translates to Poor damage on the Player Damage table.*

Multiple Foes Attacking a Player

When multiple foes gang up on a player, the narrator may require one Defense roll against the group instead of rolling separately for each foe. The difficulty is the combined Attack of the foes (see Adding Difficulties in the How to Play chapter).

A group of foes has a higher damage potential than an individual. Thus, even a group of minions can bring down a heavily armed foe.

Fumbles

If you roll Pathetic on an Attack roll and you are using a ranged weapon, all adventurers in the same band as your target must roll Fate. The lowest roller must then roll Poor Defense and take damage for any failures rolled.

If you roll Catastrophic on an Attack roll (melee or ranged) you must roll Agility on the Fumble table.

Foe Fumbles

Foes don't roll to attack. Instead, a foe fumbles if their target rolls Awesome Defense. The player who caused the fumble then rolls Cunning on the Fumble table and applies the results to the foe.

Fumble Table

| Agility | Result | Cunning |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| CT | Suffer +2 difficulty on all rolls until the end of your next turn. | AW |
| PT | Suffer +1 difficulty on all rolls until the end of your next turn. | SP |
| FB | Strike a fellow adventurer in your band (all possible targets roll Fate, low roller gets attacked). If there are no friends in your band then treat this as a PT roll. | GT |
| IN | Target gets a free attack on you, if within range. | GD |
| PR | Drop your weapon. | PS |
| PS | Falls down. If you are already prone, you drop your weapon instead. | PR |
| GD | You cannot attack on your next turn, but you can perform other actions. | IN |
| GT | You cannot move on your next turn, but you can perform other actions. | FB |
| SP | You cannot parry or dodge on your next turn, but you can perform other actions. | PT |
| AW | Recover fully from the fumble. | CT |

Dodging

Dodging is an action that you may take on your turn. Roll Inferior Agility. For each success that you roll, you gain +1 on all Defense rolls until the start of your next turn.

If you roll Catastrophic on your dodge roll, your character stumbles and falls down. Your turn ends and you suffer +1 difficulty on all Defense rolls until the start of your next turn.

Moving While Dodging

If you roll Great or better on your dodge roll, you may move into an adjacent band. This reflects dodging and weaving as you advance, or tumbling and rolling to escape combat.

Parrying

Parrying counts as your action for the round. You announce you are parrying after you roll Defense and the amount of damage has been determined. You cannot parry if you are attacked by surprise or from behind. You cannot parry if you have already taken your turn. You can parry with a weapon or shield that you have at hand, but you cannot parry with your bare hands unless you have a perk that allows it.

- A one-handed melee weapon can only parry another one-handed melee weapon, or a small natural weapon.
- A two-handed weapon can parry any melee weapon.
- A shield can parry any melee weapon or ranged weapon.
- You cannot parry with a ranged weapon.

Roll your Dexterity. The difficulty equals the damage done by the attack. If you roll the difficulty or higher you parry the attack and take no damage. Otherwise you take the full damage.

On a Pathetic roll your weapon/shield is knocked from your hand. On a Catastrophic roll your weapon/shield shatters.

Example: You roll Inferior against a Good attack, which does Passable damage. You haven't taken your turn yet, so you announce that you are parrying with your shield. The difficulty is Passable. You roll your Dexterity and get a Great result, easily deflecting the attack at the cost of your turn.

Area of Effect

To attack with an AOE (area of effect) weapon, you must first declare which band you are targeting.

Roll an attack to hit your target band. If you are throwing a grenade, you must roll Dexterity. If you are firing a machine gun, you must make your regular attack roll.

The difficulty of the attack roll is based on the range of your weapon and the distance to the target band. The difficulty at the maximum range of your weapon is Good. Reduce the difficulty by one for each band under the maximum range.

Your attack roll determines which band is hit, as shown on the AOE Attack table.

AOE Attack

| AOE Attack | Result | Fate |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| AW | +1 damage and +1 to number of characters affected | CT |
| SP | +1 damage | PT |
| 1f | 1 band over | 1s |
| 2f | 1 band under | 2s |
| 3f | 2 bands over | 3s |
| 4f | 2 bands under | 4s |
| 5f | 3 bands over | 5s |
| 6f | 3 bands under | 6s |
| CT | Out of ammo (autofire only) | AW |

Your weapon determines how many characters are hurt by your attack and the amount of damage they each take (see AOE Damage in the Weapons table). All the characters must be in the band hit by the AOE attack. Any character who has not already taken their turn can fall prone, thereby reducing damage by -1, but this will count as their action for the turn.

If there are more characters in the target band than you can hit, you will hit those characters with the lowest Fate. You get to decide who is hit when there are characters with tied Fate. It's possible you will hit friendly adventurers. The decision to fall prone must be made before rolling Fate.

If your attack lands short by more bands than the distance to the target, you attack your own band by accident. You cannot accidentally attack behind you.

***Example:** You throw a grenade that does PSx3 damage at a group of four soldiers who are one band away. Your Strength of 7 gives you a range of 2 with grenades. You are targeting a band 1 under your maximum range, so the difficulty is Passable. You roll Good and hit the band with the soldiers.*

All the soldiers have Poor Fate. You pick three and do Passable damage to each one.

***Example:** You have 7 Strength and hurl a PSx3 grenade at an enemy 2 bands away. You're attacking at your maximum range so the difficulty is Good. You roll Catastrophic. The grenade lands 3 bands short. You're only 2 bands away, so the grenade bounces off a tree branch and lands in your band (note that it cannot land in the band behind you).*

You and three friends are in your band. Your attack can hit only three characters.

Two of your friends haven't taken their turn yet and fall prone, while you and your third friend remain standing.

All four of you must roll Fate. You roll Good while your friends roll Good, Feeble and Poor. Because you and your friend tied with Good rolls, you, as the attacker, get to decide who is hit. You decide it will be your friend.

Your two friends who fell prone take Passable - 1 = Inferior damage each.

Your friend who remained standing takes Passable damage.

Your friends block you from the blast and you take no damage.

Foe AOE Attacks

The rules are similar for foes who attack with an AOE weapon. Since foes don't roll to attack, one of the players in the targeted band must make a Fate roll on the Fate column of the AOE Attack table.

Combat Options

Besides attacking, there are a number of other actions a character may attempt during a fight. This section covers some of the most common actions.

Standing Up

Standing up is an automatically successful action. However, when performed as a free action, it requires an Inferior Agility roll.

Drawing a Weapon

Drawing, picking up, or otherwise readying a weapon or shield is an automatically successful action when it's the only thing you are doing on a turn. When performed as a free action, it requires an Inferior Dexterity roll.

Force Back

When you are in the same band as a foe and you are using a melee weapon, you can try to force the foe into a nearby hazard by rolling your Strength against your foe's Strength or Agility, whichever is higher. For every success, you can push your foe back one foot. This maneuver can help you force a foe off a ledge or into a trap. It may require more than one successful force back roll to get your opponent into the position you want.

Your opponent can move you one foot for each failure that you rolled. If you're not careful, you may find yourself falling off the cliff.

Knock Down

You can knock a foe down by rolling your Strength against your foe's Strength or Agility, whichever is higher.

If the number of failures you roll equals or exceeds your Agility, you fall down instead.

Protecting

If you and a companion are in the same band, you can try to protect your companion by interposing yourself in front of a foe's attack. You must roll Agility. If you roll Passable or better, you jump in front of your friend and the foe must attack you instead of the intended target.

You announce that you are protecting the target immediately after the narrator announces the attack. You must forfeit your *next* action in order to protect. You cannot protect if you have already performed an action that round.

Playing Dead

When you are hit in combat, you can pretend your wounds are fatal and play dead. Make a Cunning roll. Foes with Intelligence or Alertness greater than your Cunning roll will see through your ruse. All other foes will assume you are dead and leave you alone, at least until all other threats are removed and it's time to feed or loot the fallen.

Aimed Attack

By taking careful aim, you gain +4 to attack on your next round. Aiming is a full action.

Disarm

You may use your weapon to disarm your opponent. Roll your Attack. The difficulty is your adversary's Dexterity or Strength, whichever is higher. Increase the difficulty by +2 if you are using a one-handed weapon and your opponent is using a two-handed weapon. Increase the difficulty by +5 if you are using a ranged weapon.

On a successful roll you knock your opponent's weapon five feet away.

If you are using a melee weapon to disarm your opponent and you roll Catastrophic, your own weapon is knocked five feet away.

Attacking Objects

Some objects, such as mirrors and pottery, can be easily smashed—there is no roll required. For more sturdy objects, such as a barricaded door or locked safe, the narrator uses the rules for a sustained action (assuming the action is occurring during combat rounds).

Combat Modifiers

Your tactics will affect how well you fight. Foolish maneuvers will result in a penalty, while imaginative attacks should give you a bonus. Here are some suggested modifiers:

Combat Modifiers

| Attack | Condition |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| +4 | Attack a prone opponent with a melee weapon |
| -2 | Shooting a prone opponent with a ranged weapon |
| -2 | Attacking from a prone position (except rifles) |
| +2 | Firing a rifle from a prone position |
| -10 | Attacking an opponent you cannot see |
| +4 | Taking a complete turn to aim |
| +2 | Firing a handgun two handed, but suffer -1 on Defense rolls until your next turn |
| -4 | Defending in a grapple |

Grappling

To initiate a grapple, you must be in the same band as your foe and you must have at least one hand free. Roll your Agility versus your foe's Strength or Agility, whichever is higher. If you attack from surprise, roll against your opponent's Strength, Agility or Alertness, whichever is lowest.

- Reduce the difficulty by one column if you use both hands to grapple.
- Increase the difficulty by one column if you attempt a silent grapple (covering your opponent's mouth to keep them from crying out).

If you fail your roll, your opponent gets a free attack against you. You suffer -1 on your Defense for each failure you rolled on your grapple attempt. You can try to grapple again on the next round.

If you succeed in your Agility roll, you have successfully grappled your opponent. **The number of successes you rolled is the bonus you get on all actions performed in the grapple (attack, pin, takedown, or take weapon).**

On the round that you successfully grapple you get a free follow-up action on your opponent.

Other characters may join the grapple without making an Agility roll. Joining a grapple is an action.

Takedown

You can throw your opponent to the ground by rolling your Strength against your foe's Strength or Agility, whichever is *lower*. You may either join your opponent on the ground to continue the grapple, or you can break the grapple and remain standing.

Other characters in the grapple must choose to fall or break the grapple.

Fighting in a Grapple

While you are grappling, you and your opponent can only use your bare hands or short melee weapons such as knives or hatchets.

Fighting in a grapple is dirty and deadly. Players suffer -4 on all Defense rolls, but gain +4 on all Attack rolls against foes.

Attacks on a grapple from outside the grapple will hit a random character. Players in the grapple roll Fate. The character (friend or foe) with the lowest Fate is hit. On a tie, the attacker decides who is hit.

If someone inside a grapple uses a handgun, the attack is made on a random character using the rules for attacking into a grapple. You can end up shooting yourself in true cinematic fashion.

Pinning a Foe

While engaged in a grapple, you can try to pin your opponent.

Roll your Strength against your opponent's Strength or Agility whichever is higher. Your opponent is pinned for 1 round for each success that you roll.

A pinned character can do nothing until released, nor can you do anything while holding your enemy (except perhaps drag them around using brute Strength).

Taking a Weapon

While engaged in a grapple, you can try to wrestle your opponent's weapon away from them by rolling your Strength against your foe's Strength.

Chapter 6

Advancement

Inspiration Points

When you roll doubles (11, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77, 88, 99, 00) on a trait roll you can immediately do one of the following.

- Create a new skill.
- Place an inspiration point next to the attribute you used (on a roll of 00 only).
- Place an inspiration point next to a skill.

Creating Skills

You can create a new skill if you used fewer than two skills on the roll. To create a skill, write down the specific action you were performing when you rolled doubles. Some examples are given below, or you can make up your own. Work out the details with your narrator. Remember, you can create a skill out of any action that requires a die roll.

Newly created skills start at +1.

You can never choose to duplicate a skill you already have. You may, however, create a skill that is a subset of one you already have.

Example: *You are climbing a cliff using your Strength of 5. You roll 22, a failure, which gives you a skill point. You choose to create a specialty: Climb, which starts at +1. This is a general skill that will help you whenever you climb anything: a rope, a fence, or a cliff.*

Later, you are climbing a rope. You get to use your Strength of 5 and your Climb skill of +1. You roll 11, another failure. You choose to create a new skill. You already have Climb, so your new skill must be more specific. You choose to create Climb Rope.

The next time you are climbing a rope, you can now roll Strength + Climb + Climb Rope for a total of 7. When you are climbing other surfaces you will roll

Strength + Climb for a total of 6. Other feats of Strength will use just your base attribute of 5.

Increasing Attributes

On a roll of 00 you may place the inspiration point next to the attribute you rolled against.

Between gaming session you can improve your attribute scores by spending the inspiration points next to them. It costs a number of inspiration points equal to the attribute's current score to increase it by one point. Inspiration points can only be used to increase the attribute they are next to. You must erase expended inspiration points from your character sheet.

Inspiration points gained on Defense rolls are placed on Agility.

When you roll 00 on an attack, add the inspiration point to your Dexterity (for melee attacks), Alertness (for ranged attacks) or Strength (for unarmed attacks).

Example: *Over the course of a gaming session, you roll 00 several times while making Defense rolls. Each time you place an inspiration point next to your Agility. At the end of the gaming session, you have five inspiration points next to your Agility of 3. You erase three inspiration points and increase your Agility from 3 to 4.*

Improving Skills

When you roll doubles, you may place an inspiration point next to one of the skills that you used on your roll, provided the number on the kicker die is more than the skill's current rating.

Once the number of inspiration points next to a skill equals *four*, the skill is capped. You cannot apply any more inspiration points to a capped skill.

At the end of the gaming session, increase your capped skills by 1 point and erase all inspiration points next to them. The skills are no longer capped.

Skills cannot exceed +8. You cannot apply inspiration points to a skill that is at +8.

Example: *You have Dexterity of 5 and +4 opening locks and +2 picking padlocks. You roll 44 while attempting to pick a padlock. Because 44 is a double number, you get an inspiration point.*

You cannot create a new skill because you used two skills on the roll.

You cannot put the inspiration point against opening locks because the kicker die, 4, isn't more than the skill's current rating of +4.

You put the inspiration point next to your +2 picking locks skill. This is allowed because the skill's current rating of 2 is less than the kicker die.

Sample Skills

This list covers some skills common to many settings, but is no means complete. Specialties are included in parenthesis. Skills are listed according to the attribute they most often modify, although it's possible for a skill to modify any attribute.

Defense

- Defending while wearing a specific kind of armor.
- Defending against certain types of enemies (orcs, goblins, thugs, police, zombies, guards, etc.).
- Defending against certain types of weapons (blades, flexible, hafted, etc.)

Agility

- Maintaining balance in dangerous situations: tightrope walking, balancing on ledges, balancing on moving vehicles, keeping your footing on a storm tossed ship.
- Squeezing through narrow gaps: fit in small space, crawl through tunnel, squeeze through bars, wriggle through air vents.
- Swinging: from rope, from trapeze, from chandelier, from pole.
- Escaping restraints: escape handcuffs; escape ropes; escape strait jacket; escape grapple.
- Moving during combat.
- Dodging.

- Sneaking around unnoticed: hiding in shadows, hiding in specific environments (jungle, desert, forest, etc.).
- Kicking an object.

Alertness

- Searching for things.
- Noticing things: by environment (the woods, the city, a dungeon, etc.)
- Making initiative rolls.
Hearing faint sounds: eavesdrop, hear noise, recognize voice, listen through door/wall, identify sound.
- Tracking: finding, following, and interpreting tracks.
- Finding your way: by environment (at sea, in the desert, in the forest, in the mountains, in a cave, in a dungeon), using certain tools (compass, GPS, satellite locator).
- Searching: search room, search desk, search for valuable, frisk suspect, find hidden compartments, find secret doors, find hidden items, find traps.
- Crime scene processing.
- Attacking with thrown weapons.
- Attacking with handguns.
- Attacking with rifles.
- Attacking with shotguns.
- Attacking with fully automatic weapons.
- Attacking certain types of foes (thugs, mercenaries, Nazis, dinosaurs, goblins, wizards, etc.).

Charm

- Persuading people with an emotional appeal.
- Making friends.
- Reading emotions.
- Appearing harmless.
- Seducing others.
- Leading others.
- Interrogating a prisoner (non-violent).
- Integrating with other cultures.
- Being believed when telling the truth.

Craft

- Piloting watercraft: by type (raft, rowboat, canoe, sailboat, motorboat, speedboat, yacht, fishing boat, ship, etc.), by activity (maneuvering, docking, pursuing, outrunning), maintaining specific type of watercraft, avoiding reefs.
- Driving automobiles: by type (sedan, sports car, pickup truck, SUV, minivan, truck, motorcycle), by activity (high speed pursuit, outrunning, performing jumps, eluding police, taking hairpin curves).
- Repairing and maintaining gear.
- Operating machinery.
- Repairing electronics.

Cunning

- Bargaining with others: negotiate, bribery, bartering, deal-making.
- Hiding things: concealing weapons, smuggling contraband, camouflaging people in certain environments—forest, desert, swamp, jungle, urban.
- Lying: telling tall tales, fast talking, conning people, selling used cars, manipulating people into doing something that is not necessarily in their best interests.
- Deceiving: hiding your true motives, hiding the extent of your personal knowledge, distorting the facts.
- Torturing a prisoner.
- Forging: forge signatures, create false documents, counterfeit money, copy works of art.

Dexterity

- Opening locks: open combination lock, crack safe, slim-jim a window, pick a deadbolt, pick a padlock, jimmy a window lock, jimmy a door, hotwire an electronic lock, defeat an magnetic lock, open a car door, open a house door, open desk drawers, open treasure chests, open ancient locks.
- Setting traps.
- Disabling traps.
- Creating disguises.
- Operating small electronic devices.

- Filching: picking pockets, stealing small objects, shoplifting.
- Attacking with blades.
- Attacking with flexible weapons.
- Attacking with hafted weapons.
- Attacking with pole arms.
- Attacking with staves.
- Attacking with bows and crossbows.
- Attacking certain types of foes: thugs, mercenaries, Nazis, dinosaurs, goblins, wizards, etc.

Fate

- Gambling.

Intelligence

- Remembering things seen or heard just once: remembering maps, remembering enemy plans, remembering messages, remembering orders.
- Performing first aid on wounded characters.
- Assessing the value of items: monetary value, cultural significance, historical importance.
- Detecting forgeries: detect counterfeit money, detect forged artwork, detect forged documents.
- Computer programming.
- Understanding hard science: physics, chemistry, biology.
- Understanding soft sciences: anthropology, psychology, sociology.
- Interpreting tracks.
- Knowing about religion.
- Knowing about the occult and supernatural.
- Knowledge of medicine: determining time of death, diagnosing disease, prescribing treatment, knowledge of poisons and antidotes.
- Knowledge of languages: by language.
- Knowledge of forensics.

Stamina

- Resisting insanity (see Sanity Rolls).
- Withstanding adverse conditions.
- Swimming
- Resisting torture.
- Enduring interrogation.
- Resisting temptation.
- Resisting seduction.

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- Playing sports: skiing, skydiving, surfing, water-skiing, etc.
- Running long distances.
- Hiking.
- Foraging and trapping.

Strength

- Jumping: high jumping, long jumping, pole vaulting, hurdling.
- Riding a mount: riding by type of animal (horse, camel, elephant, etc.).
- Intimidating foes: bullying certain types of people or foes.
- Climbing: mountain climbing, ice climbing, wall climbing, fence climbing, rope climbing, rock climbing, tree climbing.
- Lifting and heavy objects: lifting gates, carrying people, weightlifting.
- Breaking down barriers: kicking in doors, bending iron bars.
- Throwing an object.

Experience Points

At the end of each game session, each adventurer who participated in the session gains one experience point (xp). Add the experience point to the total on your character sheet.

You can spend experience points during an adventure to create a new skill.

Between adventures you can buy perks or increase health.

Increasing Health

You can increase your Health between adventures. Find your current health on the table below; next to it is the cost to increase your health by one rank.

Increasing Health

| Rank | Current Health | Experience Point Cost |
|------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 2 | IN IN IN IN | 1 xp |
| 3 | IN IN IN PR | 1 xp |
| 4 | IN IN PR PR | 1 xp |
| 5 | IN PR PR PR | 2 xp |
| 6 | IN IN PR PS | 2 xp |
| 7 | IN PR PR PS | 3 xp |
| 8 | IN PR PS PS | 3 xp |
| 9 | IN PR PS GD | 4 xp |
| 10 | PR PR PS GD | 5 xp |
| 11 | PR PS PS GD | 7 xp |
| 12 | PR PS GD GD | 9 xp |
| 13 | PR PS GD GT | 12 xp |
| 14 | PS PS GD GT | 15 xp |
| 15 | PS GD GD GT | 20 xp |
| 16 | PS GD GT GT | 25 xp |
| 17 | PS GD GT SP | 30 xp |
| 18 | GD GD GT SP | 35 xp |
| 19 | GD GT GT SP | 40 xp |
| 20 | GD GT SP SP | — |

Buying Perks

You can buy perks between adventures. The cost to purchase a perk is listed below. Some perks have an attribute requirement that must be met before the perk may be purchased or used.

Perks

Not all the perks listed here are appropriate for every setting. When in doubt, ask your narrator.

Piloting **1 xp**

Allows you to pilot an aircraft using Craft. Requires Intelligence of 5 or more.

Transportation **2 xp**

You own or have access to an exclusive method of transportation appropriate for the setting, such as a private train, an airplane, helicopter, ship, hot air balloon, carriage, etc. Requires Fate of 8 or more.

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Mimicry **1 xp**
You can imitate animal sounds with our voce, using Cunning to determine success. Requires Cunning of 5 or more.

Advanced Mimicry **1 xp**
You can imitate a person's voice using Cunning. Requires Mimicry and Cunning of 7 or more.

Flurry **2 xp**
When you successfully attack and the kicker die comes up 0, you get a free follow-up attack on the same target. Requires Dexterity of 5 or more.

Advanced Flurry **3 xp**
As above, but you get a free attack when the kicker die is 0 or 1. Requires Flurry and Dexterity of 7 or more.

Combat Tactics **3 xp**
When you attack and the kicker die comes up 0, you get +2 on all your attacks in the next round. Requires Intelligence of 5 or more.

Strategic Positioning **1 xp**
When you get a 0 kicker on a Defense roll, you gain +2 on your first attack roll on your next turn.

Defensive Maneuver **1 xp**
When you get a 5 kicker on a Defense roll, you gain +2 Defense until the start of your next turn.

Counterstrike **3 xp**
On an Awesome Defense roll, immediately counter attack your attacker as a free action (if your attacker is in range). Cannot be combined with Strategic Positioning or Defensive Maneuver.

Riposte **1 xp**
When you successfully Parry and you roll 0 on the kicker die, you can immediately counter with a free attack. Requires Dexterity of 5 or more.

Advanced Riposte **1 xp**
When you successfully Parry and you roll 0 or 9 on the kicker die, you can immediately counter with a free attack. Requires Dexterity of 7 or more.

All Out Attack **1 xp**
At the start of a round, before anyone has taken their turn, you can announce you are performing an all-out attack that round. You gain +3 on your attack rolls, but suffer -1 on all Defense rolls that round.

Feint **1 xp**
Feinting is an action where you attempt to mislead your opponent, causing them to open themselves to your next attack. When you feint, roll Cunning versus the Cunning of your opponent. For each success you roll you gain +2 on your next attack on that opponent. Works only in melee.

Second Wind **3 xp**
During combat rounds, pay 1 Fame at the end of your turn to immediately get another turn. Requires Agility of 8 or more.

Bounceback **1 xp**
You can stand up as a free action. Requires Agility of 7 or more.

Quickdraw **1 xp**
You can draw your weapon as a free action. Requires Dexterity of 8 or more.

Breakfall **1 xp per rank**
You know how to fall without taking damage. Reduce damage from falls by one column. Rank 1 requires Agility of 8+; rank 2 requires Agility 10+. Maximum of 2 ranks.

Surprise Attacks **1 xp**
You gain +5 on your attack when attacking during a bonus round (see initiative).

Backstab **1 xp**
You must be in the same band as your foe to attempt a backstab, and you must be making a melee attack. Getting behind a foe is an action that requires

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a Cunning roll versus your foe's Alertness. For every success that you roll, you gain +2 on attacks against that foe. The bonus lasts until your foe hits you with an attack.

Requires Agility of 7 or more.

Bulletproof Armor **3 xp**

You gain +5 Defense against firearms while wearing your bulletproof armor. Must be applied to a piece of armor that you equip at the start of the adventure. If the armor is lost during the adventure, you lose this perk until the end of the adventure.

Armor Piercing Rounds **1 xp**

Your firearm attacks cannot be stopped by bulletproof armor.

Intuition **1 xp**

By expending 1 Fame, you can ask the narrator to provide guidance on your current quest.

Tumbling **1 xp**

When you dodge during combat, you can move 1 band on a roll of Passable or better instead of Great or better. Requires Agility of 6 or more.

Coordinated Attacks **1 xp**

You gain +2 on your attack for each friendly character who has already attacked your target on this turn.

Dual Wielding **1 xp**

You can use a one handed weapon in each hand. Choose one of the weapons as the primary weapon. The other weapon is the secondary weapon. When dual wielding, use the attack of the primary weapon and add +2 as a bonus to your attack.

Critical Hits **1 xp**

Expend 1 Fame before making an attack. If you hit your target, increase the damage you inflict by +2.

Unarmed Combat **1 xp per rank**

For each rank of unarmed combat, you gain +1 on unarmed attacks, up to a maximum of +6.

Haymaker **2 xp**

Expend 1 Fame to attempt a knockout punch. Roll your Strength against your foe's Stamina. You knock out your foe for one round per success rolled.

Lip Reading **1 xp per rank**

Allows you to make an Alertness roll to tell what someone is saying by watching their lips. The difficulty is Passable. Reduce the difficulty by 1 for each additional rank in Lip Reading, down to a minimum of Inferior. Requires 5 Cunning.

Called Shot **2 xp**

You can decide what body part your attacks hit (head, torso, arms, legs). Normally this is advantageous only against foes having certain body parts that are more heavily armored than others.

Shield Use **1 xp per rank**

Add +2 per rank to your shield speed for purpose of calculating free shield parries. Maximum rank is 5.

Healer **2 xp per rank**

A number of times per day equal to your rank, you can perform healing as if you were using a med-kit.