EXPANDED SKILL USE FOR BLUE PLANET

BY MARK STOUT

blue planet v2

UNDERCURRENTS

A RULES EXPANSION FOR THE BLUE PLANET SCIENCE FICTION ROLEPLAYING GAME

EXPANDED SKILL USE FOR BLUE PLANET

A Rules Expansion for the BLUE PLANET™ Roleplaying Game, by Mark Stout

CREDITS

Line Developer: James Sutton

Writing and Maps: Mark Stout

Editing and Layout: James Sutton

Graphic Elements: Brian Schomburg, Dawn Sutton

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SKILL TASK ROLLS

The Synergy game system has a quick and simple task resolution that is well suited to the action and intrigue of BLUE PLANET. However, there are times when game moderators may want more than a simple success or failure result. The action value subsystem that is already part of Synergy measures degrees of success and failure.

This rules expansion will show you how to use action values to give skill task rolls more variety in your BLUE PLANET games.

USING ACTION VALUES

All skill task rolls result in an action value, AV for short. Zero AV or higher is a success, and –1 AV or less is a failure.

Positive AVs indicate levels of success from good (+1) to stunning (+5 or higher). These are complete successes, in every sense of the word, with no unexpected problems.

Positive AVs of +1 to +4 can be used by the moderator to adjust some aspect of the skill result. For instance, the task could be completed sooner by an increment of time chosen by the moderator, such as one hour quicker per AV point. The skill descriptions in the next section contain suggestions on how the moderator can adjudicate AV points.

An AV of +5 or higher is such a success that, at the moderator's discretion, the character receives a benefit. A **benefit** is an unexpected bonus or perk relating to the skill task that was just performed. Some examples of benefits are:

• While successfully hacking into a computer system, the character discovers a back door that allows her to access the computer system in the future without having to make any rolls.

• After repairing a boat engine, the character discovers he has slightly increased the fuel efficiency of the engine.

An AV of zero indicates a marginal success. The character has succeeded at the task attempted—though just barely—and this creates a complication. A **complication** is an unexpected hindrance related to, but not part of, the task that was attempted. It isn't a failure, and should not be treated as such; rather, it is something that makes the situation more problematic. Some examples of complications are:

• While hacking into a computer system, the character is successful, but counter-intrusion software pinpoints her current location to security forces.

• After repairing one problem with a boat engine, the character discovers another problem that needs fixing.

Negative AVs indicate levels of failure from simple failure (–1) to critical failure (–5 or lower). The attempted skill task did not succeed.

Negative AVs of –1 to –4 can be used by the moderator to adjust some aspect of the skill result. For example, the task could take more time to complete by an increment of time chosen by the moderator, such as one hour longer per AV point.

An AV of –5 or lower, at the moderator's discretion, becomes a catastrophe. A **catastrophe** represents a task that not only failed, but did so in the worst possible way. Some examples of catastrophes are:

• While hacking into a computer system, the character is detected. Her location is pin-pointed, a security team is dispatched, and a return virus trashes the system she was using to perform the hack.

• While repairing a boat engine the character accidentally breaks a different part, rendering the engine irreparable, short of buying a new part.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

The skills here are arranged by aptitude, as in the BLUE PLANET *Player's Guide*. Each description includes suggestions for possible benefits, complications, and catastrophes, as well as using action values to moderate task results, and alternate uses for the skill. The use of action values with combat skills is covered in the *Player's Guide*, and so is not repeated here.

ADMINISTRATION

Bureaucracy

A character will most likely use Bureaucracy to obtain a license or permit for driving, piloting, boating, weapon ownership, or staking a Long John claim, or to get access to information while conducting an investigation. Positive action values can lessen the amount of time needed, while negative action values increase the time.

BENEFITS: Making a friend in an institution who can help you later, discovering helpful information, or having to spend less money on the service.

COMPLICATIONS: Having to fill out extensive paperwork, being submitted to a lengthy background check, spending more money than anticipated, or being flagged as a person of interest due to an error.

CATASTROPHES: Being arrested for a warrant you didn't know about, being blacklisted from obtaining that permit or service in the future, or making an enemy who uses resources to harass you.

Economics

A character can use Economics to engage in business transactions, such as stock speculation or running a business. Positive action values affect how well these transactions pay out, by increasing gains by 2% per AV point. Negative action values reflect a loss of money at the same rate.

BENEFITS: Gaining inside stock information for an upcoming event, finding a lower cost supplier for your business, or discovering a tax loophole that saves you money.

COMPLICATIONS: Unexpected taxes or other fees, losing a supplier or materials, or facing new competition.

CATASTROPHES: Losing all money invested, or facing a lawsuit or legal charges.

Law

A character can use Law to represent a plaintiff, defendant, or themselves in a legal case, or can use the law to leverage a person or organization. Positive action values reduce the amount of time legal matters take, usually by weeks or months, while negative action values increase the time they take.

BENEFITS: Gaining a friend with legal authority, or having a case settled out of court.

COMPLICATIONS: Facing additional charges, or unexpected evidence being presented that hurts your case.

CATASTROPHES: Being charged with contempt, your client facing the most severe penalty possible, or your license to practice law coming under review.

Management

A character uses Management to direct the use of people, materials, and money in a business. Positive action values increase product output, worker morale, or sales over a month by 2% per AV point. Negative action values reduce them by the same amount.

BENEFITS: Promotion for your accomplishments, discovering a talent in your staff, or gaining a new account or customer base.

COMPLICATIONS: Someone else getting credit for your work, complaints from suppliers or customers, or your superiors giving you unrealistic goals.

CATASTROPHES: Losing an account or customer base, costing the business a significant money loss, or being demoted or terminated by superiors.

AGRICULTURE

All Skills

All Agriculture skills center on the raising of livestock animals or plant crops, from as small as a few animals and a garden, to thousands of animals and hectares of crops. Positive action values represent more sellable product—2% per AV point. Negative action values impart a corresponding reduction of product due to loss.

BENEFITS: Discovering a new crossbreed that has improved productivity, solving a problem with disease or genetics, or discovering a way to increase survival rate.

COMPLICATIONS: Having some contaminated product lead to bad publicity, predators or diseases striking your herds or crops, or new competition coming into your area.

CATASTROPHES: Losing some of your herd or crops to disease or toxins (4% per AV point), losing customers due to bad product, or facing legal action for poor agricultural practices.

ATHLETICS

Aquatics, Freefall, Parachuting, Sports

These skills focus on practiced bodily movements and knowledge of the activity and the environment in which they are used. Positive action values can represent reduced time to perform the task, an increase in speed (such as riding a current for Aquatics), or a higher scoring maneuver—if possible—in a sport. Negative action values represent increased time to perform the task.

BENEFITS: Discovering a stable current you can use to get somewhere faster, a ruling that gives your sports team an advantage, or a maneuver that is safer to use in freefall or parachuting.

COMPLICATIONS: Running into a predator while swimming, facing an unexpected hazard when in freefall or parachuting, or drawing a penalty in sports.

CATASTROPHES: Suffering a collision with a person or obstacle leading to possible injury, having your parachute fail to open, or being thrown out of a game.

Archery

A character can use Archery to shoot bows, crossbows, and spear guns, and build or modify them, as well as construct ammunition. Positive action values in non-combat situations indicate less time to modify or build the bow or ammunition; negative action values represent more time taken before failure is evident.

BENEFITS: Making a higher quality item that confers a one-point bonus to accuracy, damage, or durability, or making ammunition in a much shorter time.

COMPLICATIONS: Making a subpar item that reduces accuracy, damage, or durability by one point, or making the item takes additional time.

CATASTROPHES: Making an item that appears fully functional, but breaks on first usage—possibly with injury to the user—or making ammunition that is flawed and useless, but appears normal until fired.

COMMAND

Leadership

A character can use Leadership to inspire or motivate people into performing tasks. Positive action values can reduce the time of the task by some increment per AV point, or improve the results of the task by 2% per AV point or a similar equivalent. Negative action values result in lowered morale of the people you tried to direct.

BENEFITS: Making a friend who will help you without coercion, discovering a talent among the people you lead, or having the task turn out more productive than anticipated.

COMPLICATIONS: Alienating one or more people, making subsequent leadership checks more difficult, or realizing one or more people in the group is actively working against you.

CATASTROPHES: Having the group refuse your orders or mutiny against you, or the failure leads to injury or death, hurting the group's morale.

Logistics

A character uses Logistics to manage the resources needed for armed forces in the field. It is used to confer advantage to troops involved in large scale engagements by ensuring they are adequately supplied and equipped. In game terms, the character in command of a large force makes a Logistics task roll. The AV of the result, if a success, becomes the number of times the commander can call in extra help in the form of air strikes, reinforcements, or orbital bombardment. The points pool can be no greater than the character's Logistics skill and lasts until used or the end of the battle, whichever comes first. Only make one Logistics roll per engagement. Used in a non-combat scenario, positive action values represent increased morale due to being properly equipped, while negative action values lower morale due to lack of equipment.

BENEFITS: Being able to acquire equipment not normally available, finding a new supply source, or maintaining equipment and resources despite lack of replenishment.

COMPLICATIONS: Getting equipment that is faulty in some way, finding out the resources were obtained illegally, making you culpable, or simply not receiving everything that was requested.

CATASTROPHES: Demotion for failing your duties, or possible court martial.

Strategy

A character uses Strategy to plan long term, large scale engagements. The character in command makes a Strategy task roll. The AV of the result, if a success, becomes a point pool that may be used by the commander when making task rolls for units. The commander can allocate points as a target number bonus to a unit's task rolls. The points pool can be no greater than the character's Strategy skill and lasts until used or the end of the battle, whichever comes first. Only make one Strategy roll per engagement. Strategy is used only for large scale battles.

FIRST JUMP

Noemi stood at the edge of the garage's roof, looking down at the dizzying two-hundred-plus meter drop to the floor of Barker's Gorge. Street-bridges crisscrossed the gorge at various heights, linking the sections of Second Try together. The day was clear and sunny, with a wind just strong enough to ruffle Noemi's curly, brown hair, which she had pulled back to stay out of her face. She was sweating, although she wasn't sure if it was due to the full-body jumpsuit she wore, or her nervousness over her first gorge jump. The parawing pack formed a comforting lump in the center of her back, with the harness strapped tightly across her shoulders and chest. That feeling reminded her of her father's tight hugs, given without fail every time she left her house, and made her feel just as safe.

Looking down and around, she raised one hand above her head, palm down and flat with fingers closed, to visualize her jump. Her whispers were followed by her hand's movements, mimicking the jump plan.

"Jump clear of the building." Her hand moved out, then quickly down. "One count, deploy wing." The fingers of her hand spread apart, and descent slowed. "Come around north towards the Shelf." She banked her hand left and moved it a third of a meter. "Come around south, pass under Electric Avenue." Her hand turned a lazy one hundred-and-eighty degrees right and descended under the bridge in her head. "Turn northeast towards the lake, and cruise in to land on the beach." Her hand banked left and dropped to stop at her waist. She stared for a moment at her dark-skinned hand and then sighed heavily.

"Piece of cake."

"Second thoughts Noe?" The question came from the lanky young man behind her. His name was Duch, and he was her friend, and her instructor. Thin and tall, his nearly two-meter height seemed to tower over Noemi's meter-and-a-half compact frame. He was garbed nearly identical to her and sported a bright yellow parawing pack.

Noemi flashed him a smile, brilliant white against her dusky skin. "I don't think so!"

Duch grinned back at her. "Glad to hear. I didn't think you'd get all the way up here just to back out." He peered down at the network of street-bridges below. "I think I'll fly over Electric to scare the tourists, then head out to the lake. I'll be down before you finish circling," he said matter-of-factly.

"Oh really? You sure enough about that to bet lunch on it?" Noemi countered.

"Lunch, eh? I'll take that bet and give you a five second lead." Duch's smile dropped, and his demeanor became serious. "No taking chances though, not on your first canyon jump, OK?"

Noemi nodded at him. "No worries, I'll be careful. You taught me everything I need to know."

He scoffed. "I wish I could have taught you everything. Some things you have to get on your own. All right Noe, whenever you're ready."

She nodded at him and turned back to the drop below. She whispered to herself, "Just like I planned."

She leapt off of the roof out into open air, and plummeted faster than she thought she would. On the count of one, she pulled the ripcord and the parawing exploded out of its pack and expanded to full size in a couple seconds. The harness jerked impossibly hard, yanking her out of freefall and into a slower glide. The impact left her breathless with the surprise of it, and she had to force herself to focus on her planned maneuvers, while gulping deep breaths of air.

"Bank left.", her mind said and her left arm obeyed, pulling the control cord. The para-wing banked left, carrying her out over the Shelf, a large flat area high on the west wall of Barker's Gorge. The sensations of gliding, sunlight on her face, and the landscape rolling by under her threatened to draw her attention away. She pulled her attention back, and pulled on the right control cord to begin her wide circle around. She circled around completely while descending towards an opening between two of Second Try's street-bridges. She saw Duch's yellow parawing open and descend towards the bridge she would be passing under in a few seconds.

Watching his progress, she thought, "I may beat him down after all!" Then she looked back down and saw an ERT jumpcraft lifting off directly into her path.

Noemi froze. Her mind screamed at her to bank left hard to avoid the jumper, but her arms refused to move. Time seemed to slow as she glided toward the jumper, but then the decision was taken from her.

The jumper pilot must have seen her. The jumper's fans went from a whine to a roar as the jumper shot upwards, and out of her path. She passed under the jumper, missing it by mere meters, but not missing the wash from the fans. The powerful blast of air partially collapsed her parawing, forcing her down and away from the bridge into a spin. She spun, falling for a few heart-wrenching seconds before the para-wing reopened with a sharp crack and hard jerk on the harness.

The jerk returned her faculties to her. Heart hammering in her chest, she jerked hard on the left control cord, banking away from the bridges and out into the open sky over Lake Ibrium below. Sunlight reflected off the windblown ripples on the lake's surface as she glided over the water towards the northern beach. She came down fast, skimming the last few feet of water to land hard, falling to her knees on the warm sand.

She wasn't sure how long she knelt there before hearing Duch run up to her. She looked up into his face. It was etched with concern; he was asking her if she was all right.

Tears ran down her face, striking an odd contrast to the big smile on her face. As she spoke the first words that came to her, Duch's expression changed from concern to disbelief.

"Can we go again?"

Tactics

A character uses the Tactics skill in combat situations involving small groups of people to coordinate the actions of his allies. One character in the group is designated the leader. At the beginning of a combat action scene, the leader makes a Tactics task roll. Usually this roll is Average (+0) difficulty, but circumstances such as good intel or no intel can modify it, at the moderator's discretion. The action value of the roll, if a success, becomes a pool of points that the leader can allocate to allies to modify target numbers during the combat. The points pool can be no greater than the leader's Tactics skill and lasts until used up or the end of the combat scene, whichever comes first. Only make one Tactics roll per combat scene. Tactics is used only for combat scenes involving small groups.

COMMUNICATION

Language

Individual Language skills are used to communicate effectively with others speaking the same language. Positive action values indicate correctness and eloquence. Negative action values have no effect, as a failure represents an inability to communicate intent.

BENEFITS: Learning particulars of a dialect of a small group so that further task rolls with that group gain a one point TN bonus.

COMPLICATIONS: Mixing up words so you come across clumsily, or saying something that offends the listener.

CATASTROPHES: Saying something incredibly offensive, inspiring the listener to anger or even violence.

Negotiation

Negotiation is used to mediate business transactions and can be used for everything from haggling over the price of a hat with a street vendor, to sealing a deal worth millions of scrip. A character uses this skill for individual deals, as opposed to using Economics to run a business over the long term. Positive action values mean the character pays less or sells for more, usually 3% per AV point. Negative action values mean the deal could go through, but the character takes a 5% loss per AV point.

BENEFITS: Gaining a permanent minor discount (5%) with a particular dealer, gaining a reputation as a savvy business person, or gaining an important person as a contact.

COMPLICATIONS: The buyer doesn't have the money to pay right away, items you bought aren't up to expectations, or the person you're haggling with is offended, making future dealings difficult.

CATASTROPHES: Being blacklisted by a company, gaining a reputation as a dishonest business person, or being arrested because the goods you bought or sold were stolen.

Oration

A character uses Oration to speak to large groups of people in the hope of changing their opinions or behavior. Unlike Leadership, the character's intent is not to get the group to do something, merely to change their minds or persuade them that something is true, desirable, or just better. Positive action values mean more of the group believes what you say. A marginal success nets 50% of the group; each positive AV increases that by 7%. Negative action values have no effect, because a failure means no one is convinced.

BENEFITS: Gaining some of the group as loyal or fanatical supporters, getting the support of someone important in business or government, or getting funding for your cause.

COMPLICATIONS: Hecklers in the crowd, nosy reporters, or opponents trying to shout you down.

CATASTROPHES: The crowd getting ugly—fights start, or people throw objects at you—news media paints you in a bad light, or you face legal action for causing a disturbance.

Persuasion

A character uses Persuasion to change another person's mind through reasoned argument or impassioned pleas. The difficulty varies based on what the character is attempting to persuade the person to do or believe. Positive action values reduce the time it takes to persuade the person. Negative action values increase the time spent before failing to sway the person.

BENEFITS: Gaining the person as a contact, friend, or loyal follower.

COMPLICATIONS: The person having second thoughts later, or being swayed back by a counter argument.

CATASTROPHES: The person ignoring you, reporting you to authorities, or becoming violent with you, as appropriate to the topic of the persuasion attempt.

Writing

A character uses Writing to communicate effectively in written form. The character can produce writing that is fiction or non-fiction based on a discipline, such as biology. Most writing is a long term activity, taking weeks to months to complete. The Writing task roll is used to judge the coherency and clarity of the final product. Positive and negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: A final product so good that it gains you some fame or respect in your field, or opens up other job opportunities.

COMPLICATIONS: Accusations of plagiarism, refutations by other experts, or bad reviews.

CATASTROPHES: Being painted as a hack writer, having your work publicly ridiculed, or suffering consequences at your job for the bad product.

CULTURE (ALL)

A character uses the Culture skill to understand the point of view, customs, and ethics of a cultural group. Positive action values indicate favorable reactions to your understanding of the culture. Negative action values mean longer increments of time spent before realizing the action was a failure.

BENEFITS: Making a friend of that group who will vouch for you, or slowly gaining reputation as a friend to that cultural group through repeated help.

COMPLICATIONS: Making a minor *faux pas* that demands an apology or task to overcome, or showing you simply don't understand the culture well, making further interactions more difficult.

CATASTROPHES: Being blacklisted or hated by a particular group that decides you represent everything they despise, or being the target of violence due to your massive social misstep.

FINE ARTS

Acting, Dance, Music

A character uses these skills to obtain and keep a job, or to put on spot performances, such as a street entertainer. Street performances call for one task roll per day, garnering a base of 25 scrip for a success, with each positive AV point adding 5 scrip to the total. Failures net only 20 scrip, with each negative AV point taking 3 scrip away. Maintaining a job in these arts pays anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 scrip per month, although people who become famous can earn 10 or 20 times that amount.

BENEFITS: Getting a job offer, or meeting someone who can help you.

COMPLICATIONS: Hecklers, a rival street performer who tries to outdo you, or a thief trying to steal your money.

CATASTROPHES: Having all your day's money stolen, or being arrested by the police for loitering.

Artisan, Painting, Photography, Sculpture

These skills involve creating *objets d'art* to sell to individuals or establishments. The character makes one task roll per week of work. On a success, the artist produces items worth 300 scrip, with each positive AV point adding 100 scrip. A failure produces items worth only 200 scrip, with each negative AV point taking 30 scrip away.

BENEFITS: Finding a patron who wants you to work for him, finding a buyer who will pay double for the next item produced, or gaining reputation in your field.

COMPLICATIONS: Dissatisfied customers or bad reviews.

CATASTROPHES: Creating items no one will pay for, or gaining negative reputation in your field.

HUMAN, LIFE, AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

A character with skills in the Sciences will generally use them as part of a job in research or teaching. In a typical BLUE PLANET game, task rolls are generally called for when the character is investigating something and has a skill in the related discipline. The task rolls can represent remembering facts, doing online research, performing lab tests, or debating topics, and vary based on which science skill is being used. Time is the biggest factor, so positive action values will reduce time by a small increment per AV point, while negative action values will similarly increase time spent before realizing failure.

BENEFITS: Making a side discovery related to the research, or coming to an exact conclusion.

COMPLICATIONS: Having your conclusion leave you with more questions, realizing you need another science to help your research, or coming to a conclusion that doesn't make sense.

CATASTROPHES: Having others ridicule your work as spurious, having your conclusion point you in the wrong direction, or some group taking an unhealthy interest in your research and attempting to stop it.

MEDICINE

First Aid

The use of First Aid in treating wounds is covered in the *Player's Guide*.

Forensic Medicine

A character uses Forensic Medicine to examine a corpse to determine the cause of death. The character can potentially spot additional details during the examination. Positive action values grant one extra detail per point. Negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: Realizing the cause of death was indirect—such as heart attack caused by a toxin or drug, or noticing something not in the official records, such as genetic work or unregistered biomods.

COMPLICATIONS: Identifying the cause of death but not knowing out how it happened, or missing a clue on the body.

CATASTROPHES: Include getting the cause of death wrong and facing some penalty when your mistake is discovered. Penalties could be disciplinary, or could mean a killer goes free due to faulty evidence.

General Medicine, Veterinary Medicine

A character uses General Medicine to provide long term care to patients recovering from injury, illness, or surgery. Veterinary Medicine is the same, just pertaining to animals.

As an optional rule, the successful use of the skill can drastically improve the recovery times of patients suffering from serious or critical conditions. Positive action values reduce

healing time by one week per AV point for serious wounds, to a minimum recovery time of three weeks; they reduce time by one month per AV point for critical wounds, to a minimum recovery time of three months.

BENEFITS: Noticing the patient has a condition that can be treated immediately before it becomes a problem, such as cancer or an aneurysm.

COMPLICATIONS: Patient getting an infection that must be treated, or an unforeseen condition threatening the patient's life.

CATASTROPHES: The patient having a severe medical emergency, such as a heart attack, stroke, or anaphylactic reaction to medicine, leading to disciplinary action, lawsuit, or charges.

Pharmacology

A character uses Pharmacology to understand the effects of drugs, their interactions with the body and other drugs, and proper dosing. Even with no other medical training, the character can effectively use medications. Positive and negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: Finding a combination of drugs that have an enhanced effect, requiring less of one drug when used together, or an effective combination no one has tried before.

COMPLICATIONS: Patient having a minor reaction due to not providing all information, or having a heretofore unknown allergy to a medication.

CATASTROPHES: Giving someone a drug they are severely allergic to, or mixing drugs that cause a bad reaction and endangering the patient's life, or facing disciplinary action or charges from the mistake.

Psychology

A character uses Psychology to diagnose and treat mental conditions. The character can also attempt to reason with people who are endangering themselves or others, such as a suicidal person threatening to jump off a building, to a person having a psychotic break holding people hostage. Positive action values reduce the time of long term treatment by a week or month per AV point. Negative action values add a similar time increment before being realized as a failure.

BENEFITS: Coming to a fast resolution for the patient, or discovering the underlying cause of the disorder.

COMPLICATIONS: Having a patient become angry or depressed during a session, become emotionally attached to you, or the patient becoming uncommunicative, making further task rolls more difficult.

CATASTROPHES: Losing a patient to suicide or violence, having a patient accuse you of misconduct, or a patient becoming violent to you.

Surgery

A character uses Surgery to treat serious or critical injuries. While First Aid can stabilize a seriously or critically wounded character, Surgery is necessary to begin the healing process. Positive and negative action values are not used since recovery time is dictated by general medicine.

BENEFITS: Taking care of all problems with one surgery, or doing so well that the general medicine task toll gains a one-point bonus.

COMPLICATIONS: Post-surgical infection, or discovering a problem that requires another surgical procedure.

CATASTROPHES: Patient dying during surgery, being served a lawsuit for malpractice, or facing demotion or termination from your job due to mishap.

STEALTH

Hiding

A character can use Hiding to hide himself, camouflage objects, or hide items on his person to evade detection. The latter use is mainly to avoid manual detection, like pat-downs, since no amount of Hiding skill can evade technological detection. Hiding is always an opposed task roll against Awareness, so the highest task roll AV is the winner.

Shadowing, Sneaking

These skills function similar to Hiding; they are always opposed task rolls against Awareness.

SUBTERFUGE

Bribery

With Bribery, the character knows how to offer money or favors to get someone to act in his best interest. Positive action values reduce the amount of money or difficulty of the favor by a small amount per AV point. Negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: The person being bribed takes a shine to you and is willing to do more than originally promised, or you find out helpful information related to the bribery attempt.

COMPLICATIONS: The person asks for more money each time a favor is asked, or another person in the same place finds out and demands payment in return for not turning the character in.

CATASTROPHES: Being thrown out of wherever you attempted the bribe, or being arrested for attempting bribery.

Disguise

With this skill, the character can use clothes, prosthetics, and make-up to assume the appearance of another person, either generic or specific. Disguise rolls are opposed task rolls against Awareness and follow the typical rules.

BENEFITS: Doing a disguise so well that it becomes easier in the future, giving you a one-point bonus on future task rolls involving that disguise.

COMPLICATIONS: Having part of the disguise come loose or smear, forcing you to attempt a quick fix or improvise.

CATASTROPHES: Everyone seeing you're dressed up as someone you're not, and leading to people playing along just to bust you for it later.

Fast-Talk

The character can use Fast-Talk to improvise and lie quickly, talking his way out of a situation. Fast-Talk rolls are opposed task rolls against Presence and follow the standard rules.

BENEFITS: Not only are you believed, but the person you fast-talked is willing to help you out in some way because they completely believe you, or the person believes you and slips you some important bit of information.

COMPLICATIONS: The person becoming suspicious and following you for a while, or the person running some kind of security or background check on you.

CATASTROPHES: Being detained on the spot, or the person playing along just to bust you later for it.

Forgery

Using Forgery, a character can reproduce ID cards and documents that look official and may even pass muster. Forgery rolls are opposed task rolls against Awareness and follow the standard rules.

BENEFITS: Your forgery is so authentic that if it doesn't match computer records, someone will update the records to match your fake.

COMPLICATIONS: Your forgery passes inspection, but someone checks on it again in a short amount of time, anywhere from 15 minutes to a couple of hours.

CATASTROPHES: Your forgery is so bad that it is immediately spotted and authorities are summoned, or the person plays along until authorities arrive.

Lockpicking

A character can unlock or lock mechanical and electronic locks with Lockpicking, given the proper tools. It's worth noting that the Electronics skill can also be used to bypass electronic locks with the proper tools. Positive action values reduce the time it takes to bypass the lock by five seconds—one combat round—per AV point. Negative action values increase the time to realize the lock can't be opened.

BENEFITS: Understanding the lock so completely that you can unlock or lock it without a task roll. It only applies to that particular lock.

COMPLICATIONS: Tripping a security monitor and someone is sent to check the lock, or getting a pick stuck in a mechanical lock and being unable to get it out without breaking it.

CATASTROPHES: Setting off an alarm that alerts security, or breaking or shorting out the lock so you can't open it until it's fixed.

Sleight of Hand

With Sleight of Hand, a character can pick pockets, slip something into a drink, or draw from the bottom of a deck of cards, all while not being noticed. Sleight of Hand rolls are opposed task rolls against Awareness and follow the standard rules.

BENEFITS: Picking a pocket and getting something very valuable, drawing a winning card from the deck, or performing a magic trick so flawlessly you astound everyone nearby.

COMPLICATIONS: Having your moves caught on a security camera and noticed later, or having someone get suspicious even though they didn't see you do anything.

CATASTROPHES: Being caught red-handed and getting involved in a fight, apprehended by security forces, or arrested by the police.

SURVIVAL

Fishing, Foraging

A character uses these skills to obtain food in the wilderness from natural sources. A marginal success indicates obtaining enough food for one meal, while positive action values increase the amount by one meal's worth per AV point, Negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: Finding a stable food supply that will last for days or longer, such as a pool of fish, or a large patch of edible plants, or finding a clean fresh water supply.

COMPLICATIONS: Food that must be cooked or water that must be boiled to ensure safe consumption.

CATASTROPHES: Mistaking poisonous plants for edible ones, encountering a dangerous animal, or mistaking a contaminated water source for fresh.

Mountaineering

A character with Mountaineering knows how to use climbing gear to ascend steep or sheer surfaces. Positive action values decrease the amount of time by one hour per AV point, while negative action values increase the time.

BENEFITS: Finding an easier route which gives a one-point bonus on future rolls, or finding a ledge large enough to rest or sleep on.

COMPLICATIONS: Crosswinds making your climb more difficult, having a piton or rope slip, or having bad weather come in suddenly.

CATASTROPHES: Having a rope or piton break, or losing your grip and falling a distance.

Navigation, Orienteering

A character can use these skills to find his way, whether in vehicle or on foot. Positive action values decrease the amount of time by one or more hours per AV point, while negative action values increase time in addition to steering the character in the wrong direction.

BENEFITS: Finding an easier way to travel that completely avoids some danger—terrain, flora, or fauna—or finding a path that drastically cuts travel time.

COMPLICATIONS: Bad weather, unexpected obstacles like ravines or rivers, or dangerous flora or fauna that will take extra time to avoid.

CATASTROPHES: Stumbling into an encounter with dangerous flora or fauna, or becoming lost.

Tracking

A character uses Tracking to follow people or animals over land. Positive action values will give one detail per AV point, such as number of creatures, weight, movement speed, and how long ago the tracks were made.

BENEFITS: Finding out all the details, including esoteric ones, such as knowing tracks were made by a Silva wearing designer boots and limping on his left leg.

COMPLICATIONS: Mistaking the number of tracks or one of the details.

CATASTROPHES: Following the wrong set of tracks for hours before realizing they're not the right tracks.

TECH

Computers

A character uses Computers to maintain, repair, use, and program computers. Positive action values reduce the amount of time needed to perform the task, by a small increment per AV point. Negative action values increase the amount of time before realizing failure.

BENEFITS: Discovering a back door while hacking into a computer system, improving the speed or storage of a computer you repaired, or discovering information hidden on a computer.

COMPLICATIONS: Having your location tracked as you hack a system, fixing a computer only to find another problem that needs fixed, or your computer runs slower or has less memory for a reason you can't determine.

CATASTROPHES: Having your location pinpointed and your computer disabled by a virus while trying to hack into a system, or having the computer you try to fix become irreparably damaged.

Damage Control

A character can use Damage Control to minimize or stop damage to a vehicle or facility from a disaster. It includes knowledge of vacuum, deep water, and firefighting techniques. Positive action values reduce the time needed to perform the task, by minutes or hours depending on the task. Negative action values increase the amount of time before realizing failure.

BENEFITS: Stopping the damage before any real harm is done, and discovering the cause at the same time.

COMPLICATIONS: Realizing the main disaster has started a secondary one that you must also deal with, or there are people trapped you must rescue.

CATASTROPHES: The disaster growing so large you can't control it yourself, or people in danger are being injured or killed before you can help them.

Demolitions

A character uses Demolitions to create, modify, or disarm explosive devices. Positive action values reduce the time needed to perform the task, by minutes or hours depending on the task. Negative action values increase the amount of time before realizing failure.

BENEFITS: Discovering a more efficient way to construct or modify a device, or finding a quicker way to disarm an explosive device.

COMPLICATIONS: The explosive you're working with starts to become unstable, requiring you to dispose of it or stop the reaction, or the device you're trying to disarm has a secondary detonation method that must also be disarmed.

CATASTROPHES: The device explodes while you're creating, modifying, or trying to disarm it.

Electronics, Mechanics

A character uses these skills to build, modify, or use electronic and mechanical devices of various kinds. Positive action values reduce the time needed to perform the task, by minutes or hours depending on the task. Negative action values increase the amount of time before realizing failure.

BENEFITS: Finding a way to make a device smaller or more efficient, repairing a device so well it functions better, or coming up with an idea for a new device.

COMPLICATIONS: Making a device that works but not quite as well as you planned, repairing a device but discovering another problem that needs fixing before the device works, or having a device you're using display strange quirks of behavior.

CATASTROPHES: Designing a device that just won't work, breaking a part you're trying to repair so you have to buy a replacement to complete repairs, or breaking a device the first time you try to use it.

Remote Operation

Using Remote Operation, a character can pilot remotes of all kinds—air, ground, and water. Remotes are treated as vehicles in combat, and use those rules. In non-combat situations, positive and negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: Learning how to operate one remote especially well, giving you a one-point bonus when operating that remote only.

COMPLICATIONS: Running low on fuel or battery power, or experiencing a malfunction.

CATASTROPHES: Crashing your remote into an obstacle, a predator tries to eat your remote thinking it is food, or you lose the signal connection to your remote and can't control it until you relink.

VEHICLES (ALL)

A character uses these skills to operate vehicles safely. In combat situations, use the vehicle combat rules in the *Player's Guide*. In non-combat situations, positive and negative action values are not used.

BENEFITS: Learning how to operate one vehicle well, giving you a one-point bonus when operating that vehicle only.

COMPLICATIONS: Running low on fuel or battery power, or experiencing a malfunction.

CATASTROPHES: Crashing your vehicle into an obstacle or another vehicle.