

Critical Skills

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The Encounter Critical skill rules allow for fast character creation and play. However, as the number of letters written to the Gazette by frustrated Journey Masters would seem to indicate, many Journey Masters are confused about under what conditions certain skills would apply and how certain skills might be used.

It is exactly this perceived ambiguity that this article attempts to address. Within are explanations of each of the various skills presented in Encounter Critical, when they apply, and how a player or Journey Master might use them to enhance their game.

There are doubtless other interpretations and situations not covered by this article. In these cases, the Journey Master is encouraged to use these suggestions as a guideline for creating their own skill use rules.

Alchemist

Mix, brew, ferment, or otherwise create a substance from its chemical ingredients. Examples include potions, beverages, poisons, chemicals, gases, and etc.

The type of concoction affects the attempt.

Mundane, non-magical substance (non-alcoholic beverage) +10

Interesting with a minor temporary affect (alcohol, mickey) +0

Minor magical or poison (Heal or do 1-6 damage)	-10%
Medium magical or poison (Heal or do 2-12 damage)	-20%
Major magical or poison (equivalent to a spell)	-30%

The Alchemist must know the spell prior to creating a major magical substance or poison. Creating a concoction takes 5-8 hours of work per dose.

Appease

Calm an angry character or NPC, but not a monster or machine. Use Machine Friend for machines and Monster Friend for monsters. Each success shifts the attitude of the target one level: Bloodlust to Enraged. Enraged to Angry. Angry to Annoyed. Annoyed to Indifferent. Indifferent to Friendly. A failed roll shifts the character or NPC in the opposite direction.

Argue

Not lose a verbal conflict by using emotion, tone of voice, and insinuation. Both sides in the argument roll until one side succeeds and the other fails. The side that succeeds is the winner. The loser gives up and cannot argue the point again for 1-4 hours.

The loser of an argument often (46%) has hurt feelings. The sore loser's attitude is then shifted one level away from Friendly: Friendly to Indifferent. Indifferent to Annoyed. Annoyed to Angry. Angry to Enraged. Enraged to Bloodlust. The winner must use Appease or Seduce to soothe the hurt feelings.

Blind

The Psi-Witch's special ability of fighting while blind. The Psi-Witch substitutes their Melee or Ranged Attack% with their Blind%.

Camping

Set a camp to ensure a comfortable night's sleep in the wilderness. A failed roll indicates an uncomfortable night's sleep, -10% to all skill rolls the following morning.

Clue

Spot something out of place, find a hidden item, or notice anything peculiar. Used to detect fakes and forgeries. Only works on non-moving items. Use Guard to detect living beings that might be hiding, sneaking, or otherwise attempting to avoid detection.

Command

Verbally compel a single individual to follow a single command it might ordinarily perform anyway. The character may only issue simple command sentences, such as "You there, attack the dragon" or "Tell the men to return to the Damnation Van" for friendly targets or "Surrender immediately!" or "Get the heck out of here!" for non-friendly targets. It is up to the target to interpret and implement the command. The target may resist with a successful Psi-Resist%.

A successful Seduce% roll prior to the Command% adds +10% to the Command.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches may attempt to command silently and

telepathically, requiring only line-of-sight to the target. The target is aware of the attempt but cannot identify the source. They may resist with a successful Psi-Resist%. Only Psi-Witch targets can identify the source of the attempt.

The attitude of the target affects the attempt.

Friendly	+30%
Indifferent	+20%
Annoyed	+10%
Angry	+0%
Enraged	-10%
Bloodlust	-20%

Command Energy

Psi-Witches can manipulate energetic forces such as electricity, light, warmth, radiation, or momentum. Command Energy may only control and direct, it cannot create or increase energy, or cause energy to simply vanish. The character can convert energy from one state to another, such as electricity into heat, or momentum into light, and etc.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches may also substitute Command Energy percentage for their Saving Throw against energy-based attacks.

Command Matter

Psi-Witches can manipulate matter. Command Matter may only control and shape matter; it cannot create matter where there was none or cause it to simply vanish. It also cannot cause matter to fly through the air or move on its own accord, nor can it cause matter to change state, such as from a gas to a liquid, or alter properties, such as turning lead

into gold. It can only re-shape matter, such as shaping a stone into a statue, or raw metal into a sword. Warlocks and Psi-Witches may also substitute Command Matter percentage for their Saving Throw against matter-based attacks.

Conjure

Knowledge of where a character may obtain an item or person. For example, knowing where to obtain Bee Girl honey or where to find an Alchemist after dark.

Warlocks can magically summon one generic creature, being, or item, causing it to appear nearby (6-15 feet away). This only summons a being or item of a certain type, such as "a Bee Girl", "a Radioactor", "a Warrior", or "a Sword". It cannot summon specific individuals or items.

Consume Alien Food

Eat food and derive nourishment from food that was not meant to be eaten. A failed roll means the food was not nourishing and the character will be hungry again in 1-3 hours. There is 34% chance that the character has food poisoning (no actions but bed rest for 1-4 days) or has contracted a disease (consult disease table).

Crowd Manipulate

Verbally compel a group of 2 to 5 people to follow a single command it might ordinarily perform anyway. The character may only issue simple command sentences, such as "Attack the dragon!" or "Retreat to the Castle!" for friendly targets or "Surrender immediately!" or "Get the heck out of here!" for non-friendly targets. It is up to the target

group to interpret and implement the command. The targets may resist with a successful Psi-Resist%, either individually or as a group.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches may attempt to manipulate the crowd silently and telepathically, requiring only line-of-sight to the target group. The targets are aware of the attempt but cannot identify the source. They may resist with a successful Psi-Resist%. Only Warlock and Psi-Witch targets can identify the source of the attempt.

The attitude of the target group affects the attempt.

Friendly	+30
Indifferent	+20
Annoyed	+10
Angry	+0
Enraged	-10
Bloodlust	-20

Enrich

Used to find money lying about, either accidentally dropped or stashed under a floorboard or in a cupboard. Failure indicates no money was found nearby. Whether the attempt succeeds or fails, the skill cannot be used again for another 1-4 days. For any amount of money found, there is a 16% chance that the original owner will return to look for it, will follow clues and tips that lead that owner to the character that took it, and will demand the money back.

The amount of money desired affects the attempt.

\$1-4	+0
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\$1-6	-10
\$1-8	-20
\$1-10	-30
\$1-12	-40
\$1-20	-50

Ensorcel

Warlocks may remotely manipulate items. Tasks include opening and closing doors, filling a tankard of mead, creating a cooked meal, write in a book, or any other task the character could ordinarily perform through mundane means but with only a flick of the wrist and fingers and the utterance of a magical word or phrase.

Explore

The Pioneer's knowledge of the environment and ability to perform the skills and behaviors necessary to minimize the effects of hostile climates and conditions; find food and water; build shelter; practice proper behaviors for different climates; know the effects of different hostile climates or conditions; follow tracks and spoor and identify the creature by same; and etc.

The character must spend 1-4 hours hunting and foraging. A successful roll means food and game was found, though a separate Ranged or Melee Attack% roll is required for hunting any game. The food and game will feed 2-8 people for a day. A failed roll means no food could be foraged or hunted that day. The character and anyone depending on the character for survival go hungry and take 1-4 damage that night.

A successful roll can also shorten the travel time across difficult or uncivilized terrain by half. A subsequent successful roll indicates that the route is repeatable and may be taught or sold to others.

Fake

The Criminal's ability to create and/or detect forgeries. To create a forgery, the criminal must make a successful Fake% roll. Record the actual result of the roll for each forgery made. A potential victim can detect a forgery with a Clue% roll that is not only successful but whose number is higher than the Criminal's Fake% roll. For example, a Criminal with a Fake of 32% creates a forged passport and rolls 27. The Guard with a Clue of 29% manning the gate to town inspects the passport. If the guard rolls 30, he has failed to detect the forgery. If the guard rolls 21, he has succeeded, but has still failed to detect the forgery. The guard needs to roll 28 to 29 to detect the forgery.

Another Criminal can substitute their Fake% for the Clue% when attempting to detect forgeries.

The attitude of the victim affects the attempt:

Friendly	+10
Indifferent	+0
Annoyed	-10
Angry	-20
Enraged	-30
Bloodlust	-40

A successful Appease% or Seduce% roll used before attempting to pass off a forgery may therefore make things easier for the criminal.

Favor

The Doxy's special ability to call upon special favors from rich and powerful people. Examples include having an enemy arrested, borrowing a Damnation Van for a week, protection by a bodyguard detail, and etc.

Great Feat

A feat of massive strength such as breaking a heavy chain, lifting a boulder, bending prison cell bars, and etc. The character can lift any weight up to their strength times 25 in pounds. After performing this feat, the character must rest for 2-12 turns.

Guard

Used to spot anyone hiding, sneaking, or otherwise trying to avoid detection within 6" of the character. Warlocks and Psi-Witches may automatically detect the presence of anyone entering or leaving an area within 6" of the character whether they are hiding or not.

Happenstance

Used to find a useful item lying about, either accidentally dropped or stashed under a floorboard or in a cupboard. Failure indicates no equipment was found nearby. Whether the attempt succeeds or fails, the skill cannot be used again for another 1-4 days. For any item found, there is a 16% chance that the original owner will return to look for it, will follow clues and tips that lead that owner to the character that took it, and will demand the item's return. The Gold Credit value of the item found is equal to the result of the skill check. For example, 34. Any item found in this way can be sold for half the original value.

01-46	Misc. Equipment
47-62	Armor
63-74	Ranged Weapon
75-92	Melee Weapon
93-00	Magical Item

Illicit

The Criminal's special knowledge of underworld personages, secret gang signs and cants, and the locations and customs of various criminal enterprises and activities. Examples include knowing what gang runs a town by identifying the hidden clues in graffiti or in the signs for pubs and inns, knowing who will bring the best price for fencing stolen goods, where to go to buy or steal the best forgery equipment and lockpicks, and etc.

Invisibility

Avoid detection or notice while standing still. Under normal circumstances, it is assumed the character is attempting to remain hidden behind or within something such as a pillar, a door, some bushes, a shadow, or a crowd. Combining these elements, such as behind some bushes in the dark, infer +10% to the attempt for each element after the first. For example, hiding in a crowd offers no bonus; in a crowd in the dark infers +10%, in a crowd in the dark and behind a pillar infers +20%.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches do not require an element to hide behind. They may attempt to become invisible in the open, in broad daylight, and in

full view, though the elements still provide a bonus as normal.

Labor

Work hard at a menial task for one hour. A failed roll means the character becomes exhausted and must rest for 1-4 hours before continuing.

Lesser Feat

A feat of instant strength such as busting open a door or lifting a cannonball. The character can lift a weight up to their strength times 10 pounds. The character does not have to rest after performing this feat.

Logic

Not lose a debate using facts and logic, without appealing to the opponent's emotion. Each side in a debate rolls until one side fails and the other succeeds. The one who succeeds wins the debate.

A successful preliminary Scholarship% roll adds 10% to a subsequent Logic% attempt.

Machine Friend

Design, build, use, repair, or disable a machine, troubleshoot and diagnose a malfunction, program a computer or robot, and etc. Building and repairing machines requires tools of the appropriate type.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches do not require tools. They can achieve all of the same effects simply by touching the machine.

Magical Attack

Hit a target with a magic-based attack such as a spell, a scroll, a magic wand, and etc.

Meld

The Psi-Witch ability to telepathically bond with another subject it touches for 2-7 rounds. Upon completion of the Meld, the Psi-Witch learns the entire history of the target it touches, its strengths and weaknesses, and all personal details.

Melee Attack

Hit a target with a contact weapon such as a sword, a knife, a foot or fist, a hobbling, a tankard of ale, and etc.

Mistaken Identity

Use costumes and make-up to appear as either a generic or specific creature or being, at the character's option.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches do not require make-up or costumes. They can magically alter their appearance to be a generic creature or being. They cannot appear to be a specific individual.

Monster Friend

Calm an angry monster. Does not work on other characters or intelligent NPCs. Each success shifts the attitude of the target one level:

Bloodlust to Enraged. Enraged to Angry. Angry to Annoyed. Annoyed to Indifferent. Indifferent to Friendly. A failed roll shifts the monster

one level in the opposite direction.

A Warlock or Psi-Witch may magically “befriend” any monster, shifting a monster directly to “Friendly”, simply by speaking to it. The target is not controlled by the character, but it will cooperate as much as it can, to the point of defending the character from attacks by third parties, unless the third parties are also friends, in which case the target will remain neutral. The target will not obstruct, resist, or attempt to cause harm to the Character in any way unless, themselves, attacked.

Murder

The Criminal’s chance of outright killing an opponent with a single blow after a successful Sneak Attack.

Provide

The Pioneer’s special skill of using materials found in the wild to create useful items, vehicles, clothing, and structures. Examples include creating huts from reeds and bamboo; clothing and armor from hides and carapaces; a weapon from rocks, sticks, bones, and sinew; gunpowder from sulfur, charcoal, and saltpeter, a healing potion brewed from herbs; and etc. The Pioneer’s effective skill is reduced by 1% for every 100 gold credits of value an equivalent item would cost in the civilized world. Fashioning an item from natural components takes 1-4 hours per item.

Psi Resist

Resist or counter any attempt to alter a character’s thoughts, mood, or

intentions. This includes Appease, Command, Crowd Manipulate, Monster Friend, Psychic Implant, Read Mind, or Seduce.

Psychic Implant

Psi-Witches may insert a thought implant into the target. Once inserted, they will always know where the target is as well as their general physical and mental state, such as “alive and well” and “angry” or “injured” and “sad”. Targets are aware of the attempt and may attempt to resist using Psi-Resist, though only Psi-Witches can identify the source of the attempt.

Ranged Attack

Hit a target using a ranged weapon such as a sling, bow, pistol, rifle, laser, and etc.

Read Minds

Have a basic understanding of the thoughts and intentions of another character, NPC, or monster it can see on a general level.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches may know the specific thoughts and intentions of any target it sees.

Restore Courage

Remove fear from up to five terrified individuals. Can be used to remove the effect of a Scare.

Saving Throw

Reduce or Avoid any one non-psychic effect. For example, avoid a trap,

parry a melee attack, dodge a ranged or magical attack, resist the effects of a poison or a gas, and etc. Simply making a successful Saving Throw% reduces damage taken by half. Rolling less than half the character's Saving Throw% allows the character to avoid the damage entirely.

Scholarship

Knowledge of facts and data and an understanding of intellectual concepts including science, philosophy, mathematics, language, and etc. Also used to conduct research. Researching includes combing libraries or performing experiments for 1-4 hours in order to answer a specific question. A failed roll indicates that no answer was determined in that time period.

A successful Scholarship% roll will add +10% to a subsequent Logic% attempt.

Seduce

Gain trust or compliance by implying an offer of companionship or favors. Can only be used on someone who is already Friendly. If the target is Indifferent, a preliminary Appease% or Seduce% roll will shift them to Friendly. A failed attempt shifts the target away one level: from Friendly to Indifferent and Indifferent to Annoyed.

See the Future

Predict the outcome of a current series of events. This is not an accurate vision of an actual outcome, but a prediction based on current information and circumstances, or a "hunch" or "gut feeling". A change

in information will change the prediction and a change in circumstances will affect the outcome. A Scholarship% or other pertinent skill roll for research may be required prior to the prediction to provide all the necessary pertinent facts and details to make an informed prognostication.

Warlocks and Psi-Witches do not need to research the situation to provide an informed prediction.

Sneak

Avoid detection or notice while moving at no greater than half the normal movement rate. Under normal circumstances, it is assumed the character is attempting to remain hidden while sneaking behind or within something such as a pillar, a door, some bushes, a shadow, or a crowd. Combining these elements, such as behind some bushes in the dark, infer +10% to the attempt for each element after the first. For example, sneaking in a crowd offers no bonus; in a crowd in the dark infers +10%, in a crowd in the dark and behind a pillar infers +20%.

Criminals, Warlocks, and Psi-Witches do not require an element to sneak behind. They may attempt to sneak in the open, in broad daylight, and in full view, though the elements still provide a bonus as normal.

Sneak Attack

Replace Magical, Melee, or Ranged Attack with Sneak Attack for any attack preceded by a successful Sneak% roll on the previous round.

Steal

Palm items, cut purses, pick pockets, and shoplift without being detected. A successful Steal% roll removes the item without being noticed. A failed Steal% vs. an observer's failed Clue% or Guard% means the attempt failed but no one noticed. A failed Steal % vs. an observer's successful Clue% or Guard% means not only did the attempt fail, but someone noticed the attempt.

Survival

A character's ability to survive a mortal wound.

Tame

A Pioneer's special ability to temporarily befriend an animal or monster. A Pioneer can attempt to tame any creature after a successful Monster Friend% or Machine Friend% roll. A successful Tame% roll will shift a monster's attitude directly to "Friendly" simply by speaking to it. The target is not controlled by the character, but it will cooperate as much as it can, to the point of defending the character from attacks by third parties, unless the third parties are also friends, in which case the target will remain neutral. The target will not obstruct, resist, or attempt to cause harm to the character in any way unless, themselves, attacked.

Unpleasant Order

Perform an action that the character finds repugnant, repellant, or would otherwise resist doing. Examples include cleaning a sewer or outhouse, executing a good friend, destroying a favorite piece of equipment, seducing a cretin, jumping off a cliff, and etc.