



# PSI-PUNK







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## About Fudge



Fudge is a roleplaying game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design and other online forums. The core rules of Fudge are available free on the Internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and other sites. Fudge was designed to be customized, and may be used with any gaming genre. Fudge gamemasters and game designers are encouraged to modify Fudge to suit their needs, and to share their modifications and additions with the Fudge community. The Fudge game system is copyrighted ©2000, 2005 by Grey Ghost Press, Inc., and is available for use under the Open Game License. See the [fudgerpg.com](http://www.fudgerpg.com) website for more information.

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## Introduction

**Psi-punk** is a role-playing game set on Earth in the year 2096. Unlike many futuristic fantasy settings, **Psi-punk** isn't a space opera or even a traditional cyberpunk game – though we did take inspiration from both genres. Instead, **Psi-punk** strives to be something unique but still identifiable with other settings you may have experienced in the past, whether in books, movies, video games, or other role-playing games.

Here, you will enter a world where huge corporations control large aspects of the public's everyday lives and have even usurped

the role of governments in many instances. However, despite the control these corporations have over the lives of the average citizen, many people still resist their reign and attempt to fight them – either openly or covertly.

Meanwhile, powerful humans with psychic abilities, commonly referred to as “mentals,” “psychics,” “psi-freaks,” and “psi-punks” have become a formidable minority that leaves mundane citizens feeling powerless – a fact which the controlling corporations seek to exploit to their own ends.

In this harsh world of political intrigue, corporate espionage, and tough street life, you will take on any number of roles as a character who's just trying to make it in the world. Perhaps you're a psychic and a rebel, seeking to diminish the reign of a giant megacorporation or perhaps you're a corporate drone whose only goal in life is to make it through the day so he can work again tomorrow (admittedly, the latter doesn't sound as exciting.)

Whatever the case may be, you're about to enter a realm rife with possibilities and excitement, drama, action, intrigue and adventure. You're entering the world of **Psi-punk**, so buckle up – it's going to be a crazy ride.

## Inside This Book

Inside of this book you will find a ready-to-use role-playing game complete with a setting, rules for character creation and playing the game, and Game Master-specific pieces of advice for running a game of **Psi-punk**. Though this game uses Fudge™ mechanics, this stand-alone product is presented with everything you will need (short of dice and players) to get started with your adventures – no additional reference materials are required.

In **Chapter 1: The World of Psi-punk**, you will be given a brief overview of the setting, its history, and the events leading up to present day in the year 2096.

In **Chapter 2: Character Creation** you will be given all of the information and tools necessary for creating a character suitable for play in this setting. You will also be introduced to the Fudge “trait ladder” and how it applies to everything you do in the game.

**Chapter 3: Equipment** is a character-focused section geared toward gear. Everything a character will need to enter the harsh world of **Psi-punk**, from guns to armor, magic devices to cybernetics, is presented in one chapter for ease of reference.

In **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**, you will find the majority of the rules and guidelines that will help both players and Game Masters make the most of the system. An introduction to Fudge Dice is given before describing all of the crunchy game mechanics including skill use, combat resolution, getting wounded, and healing those wounds. The chapter is rounded off with a helpful example combat that will illustrate how the game mechanics work in practice.

**Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** is an in-depth look at one of the defining aspects of **Psi-punk**. Presented therein is all of the information you will need to add psionics (and magic) to your game.

**Chapters 6 and 7 (Hacking and When Worlds Diverge, respectively)** provide some additional insight into the rules and the game’s setting. Many of the presented rules are optional but can be utilized to add some flair to any campaign – by using these more complex skill systems and multiple planes of existence, you will experience much more of what the game has to offer.

**Chapter 8: Game Mastering** is a guide to help both new and experienced GMs run a game of **Psi-punk**. New GMs will find advice on planning and putting together a campaign. Details about NPCs, encounters, and loot are provided for the new and experienced GM alike.

Finally, we round off the book with **Brain.net**, an adventure set in the world of **psi-punk**.

Additional appendices are also presented which contain a useful character sheet, an example of how you can substitute regular six-sided dice for Fudge dice, and a random adventure generator.

## What is Fudge?

You have seen the text mention Fudge, but what is it? Fudge is actually an acronym that stands for **Freeform, Universal, Do-it-yourself Gaming Engine**. Written by Steffan O’Sullivan with extensive input from the rec.games.design Usenet community, it is now distributed by Grey Ghost Press, Inc. under the Open Gaming License.

Fudge was designed to be an open-ended and rules-light gaming engine that Game Masters can tweak and alter to their heart’s content. It is ideal for experienced GMs, since the core rules are a collection of options that encourage a GM to pick, choose and modify as-necessary for his game, but it is overall a rules-light experience for the players. Core mechanics are freely distributed as a System Reference Document (SRD) and can be downloaded from <http://www.fudgeprg.com>, among other places.

Finally, Fudge is intended to be genreless. As a freeform gaming engine, it is designed to accommodate any setting – with the appropriate alterations to help define its mechanics and give it a more narrow purpose.

With that being said, **Psi-punk** is *based on* the Fudge engine, but uses a wide variety of modifications, additions, and omissions of the core rules to better suit our vision of a cyberpunk-style setting and gaming experience. In the spirit of Fudge we still encourage GMs to make modifications to our system as necessary, but our intention is to present to GMs and players a single, cohesive set of rules that are ready to pick-up-and-play, whereas the Fudge core rules require a bit of forethought and cherry-picking before they can be successfully employed.



# Common Game Terms

Following is a list of common terms you will find throughout this book. Don't worry if they don't make complete sense yet; we will be discussing them in detail in later chapters.

**Game Master (GM):** Most commonly referred to as simply the "GM," the Game Master is the person responsible for crafting adventures and adjudicating rules. Each group of players needs only one GM at a time. GMing a game can be both a challenging and rewarding experience, as it is up to the GM to ensure that all players (including herself) are having a good time.

**Player:** Any real person playing the game (other than the GM, who "runs" the game). Players are the people behind the characters. It is recommended, though not required, that a group have at least three players.

**Player Character (PC):** usually referred to as simply "character." Characters are in-game personas developed and brought to life by players. Generally, each player will control a single character and control his/her actions during play.

**Team:** All of the player characters in a group are collectively referred to as a team. Teams can be comprised of two or more player characters, and occasionally they include some friendly non-player characters as well.

**Non-Player Character (NPC):** NPCs are characters that are controlled by the GM, not the players. These can include anyone (or anything) from random thugs and henchmen to shopkeepers, villains (or other antagonists), monsters, and any other conceivable being that the player characters interact with throughout the course of a game session.

**Game Session (Session):** Any amount of time set aside for players and GMs to come together and play a game. A typical game session lasts anywhere from 2 to 6 hours, but some groups opt to play for more (or less) time.

**Campaign:** An ongoing story arc comprised of multiple game sessions.

**Mission:** A scenario developed by the GM that involves the characters. Missions can be anything the group desires, from pulling off a simple heist to overthrowing a fascist regime. The possibilities are literally endless and limited only by the imaginations of those involved.

**Scene:** An abstract block of time that involves the players doing just about anything. A scene can be a chase, a firefight, an intense debate, or even just a round of pints at the local pub. Anything can happen during a scene, but in general a scene represents a smaller block of time than a mission. Missions are usually comprised of several different scenes.

**Character Sheet:** A convenient place to keep track of your character's statistics. A sample character sheet is provided in the Appendix.

**Check:** In most cases, when a player rolls dice to determine the outcome of an action, he is said to be making a check (i.e., he is checking to see if his action was successful). This book commonly references "skill checks" (tests relating to a character's skills) and "attribute checks" (checks relating to either a primary or secondary attribute).

**Check Result:** The sum of a dice roll and an appropriate skill or attribute; literally, the result of a check.

**Difficulty Level (Difficulty):** The target you need to meet or exceed to be successful at a check. In some cases the GM will set this difficulty, in other cases it will be set by an opponent's check.

**Degree of Success:** The amount by which you exceed (or miss) the difficulty of a check. Degree of Success = Your Check Result – Difficulty

**Natural Roll:** The result of a dice roll before any allowed re-rolls are taken.

**Initial Result:** The result of a check before it is matched with the difficulty to determine a degree of success.

**Re-roll:** Rolling a certain number of dice again before observing the check result. Common uses of re-rolls are with Skill Specializations (re-roll 1dF) and via Luck Points (re-roll 1 dice + a number of additional dice equal to the skill's Linked Attribute). Other Gifts and Faults, including equipment Gifts and Faults, may also allow characters to re-roll dice.

**Power Rating (PR):** All magic devices have a Power Rating. This is the bonus added to any check made to activate that device. It replaces the Attribute a character using a similar psionic ability would use.

## Character Creation Terms

**Trait:** Anything that describes a character. A trait can be an attribute, skill, inherited Gift, Fault, psionic power, or any other feature that describes a character. The GM is the ultimate authority on what is an attribute and what is a Skill, Gift, etc.

**Level (Trait Level):** Most traits are described by one of nine adjectives. These nine descriptive words represent the *levels* a trait may be at. Refer to **0.1: The Trait Ladder** (below) for examples.

**Trait Ladder:** A table which displays the *levels* available for attributes, skills, and other traits which use levels. See **The Trait Ladder** below for more details.

**Build Points:** Spent during character creation to increase Skill levels, buy additional Gifts, and otherwise “build” your character. Build Points, or “BP” for short, allow you to add traits to your character until the total number of available points is depleted.

**Attribute:** Any trait that *everyone* in the game world has in some degree. See **Attributes**, below, for a sample list of attributes. On the trait ladder, the average human will have an attribute at Fair.

**Skill:** Any trait that isn't an attribute, but can be improved through practice. The default level for an unlisted skill is usually Poor, though that can vary a little; see individual skill descriptions for details.

**Linked Attribute:** Each Skill has a Linked Attribute – a Secondary Attribute which the Skill is associated with. Linked Attributes increase as the Skill Level increases. Linked Attributes also help determine how many dice are re-rolled when spending **Luck Points**.

**Luck Points:** Meta-game traits which allow characters to bend the narrative in their favor.

**Gift:** Any trait that isn't an attribute or skill, but is something positive for the character. In general, if the trait doesn't easily fit the trait ladder, it's probably a Gift.

**Fault:** Any trait that limits a character's actions or earns him a bad reaction from other people.

**Psionic Power (Power):** Although technically Gifts, psionic powers are treated separately due to their special rules. See **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** for more info.

## The Trait Ladder

**Psi-punk** uses ordinary words to describe various traits. Nearly every trait in the game will reference this Trait Ladder in some way, so take time to become familiar with it.

**Table 0.1: Trait Ladder**

Astonishing	+7
Extraordinary	+6
Phenomenal	+5
Wonderful	+4
Superb	+3
Great	+2
Good	+1
Fair	0
Mediocre	-1
Poor	-2
Abysmal	-3

These terms can be modified to use any adjective you desire. For example, if you would prefer to use “Awesome” instead of “Superb”, feel free to do so; it's your game, and you should feel free to customize it. For clarity and simplicity, these are the words that will be used throughout this book.



# Chapter 1: The World of Psi-punk



# A Brief History

During World War II, the Nazis conducted mind control experiments in an attempt to discover new methods of programming human beings, focusing on creating the perfect soldier. Despite having lost the war, they made great inroads into the science of mental programming and mind control. Most of this knowledge was captured by the Allied forces, but very little was destroyed.

Two decades later during the Cold War, the Russians began their own research in to the paranormal and supernatural. Utilizing Nazi techniques that were discovered by Russian spies, the Reds succeeded in inducing psychological phenomenon in their test subjects. These subjects began to exhibit mental capabilities beyond that of simple brainwashing: telekinesis, clairvoyance, astralism, and dowsing are just some of the words used to describe abilities that were born out of these experiments.

For generations, various world governments struggled to contain these experiments under a veil of secrecy; the general public could not know that human beings were being experimented on, nor could other superpowers get their hands on the valuable psychic prototypes that were being engineered over time.

In the year 2017, the now infamous escape of one such psychic being, Nathan Hunter, from a government facility in America sparked an uprising that would change the face of the world. Hunter was a third generation psychic, skilled in both mind control and telekinesis. After springing himself from a testing facility in North Dakota, he managed to bring to light the 75-year-old “psychic conspiracy” which generated an enormous public outcry.

The public immediately began demanding the release of all test subjects, but the American government refused to admit guilt, let alone meet the demands of the people. Hunter became a public figurehead, partly in an attempt to ensure his own well-



being (knowing full well that any attempts on his life would only cause him to become a martyr), but also because he knew that there were at least 200 others being held in similar facilities throughout the country.

By 2019, Hunter had amassed a following large enough to forcibly enter the testing facility in North Dakota, only to find that it had been completely deserted and all evidence had been cleared from the area. This sparked an even larger underground anti-conspiracy movement that eventually led to revolts across the country. A year later, Hunter and a group of 30 armed civilians entered a similar facility that they had discovered in Colorado; they freed 50 men, women, and children who were being held there.

The break-out was not a peaceful one; over 100 government employees lost their lives in the raid along with a handful of psychics. Hunter and his men fled the country, seeking amnesty in South America. Word of the event spread quickly throughout the nation and eventually the world and the



government could no longer hide its dirty secrets; they were forced to shut down all psychic research facilities and their victims were released to be assimilated into regular society.

Unfortunately, assimilation was difficult for these mental-elite. Normal people feared them for their special abilities and it wasn't long before the same folks who had demanded their release would turn violently against them. Laws were eventually passed to limit the use of mental abilities, and psychics were forced to either abandon the use of their abilities or sink in to the shadows and begin lives of crime.

Civil unrest continued for many years, but after just a few generations the population of psychics had increased significantly enough to eventually take up positions of power and repeal the tyrannical laws of the 2020s. Psychics across the world gained some amount of control, despite still being in the vast minority, and eventually the use of psychic abilities became common-place in homes and workplaces around the globe.

Now in the year 2096, the social environment is about to undergo another drastic change...

## In the Present

It has been almost 80 years since Nathan Hunter escaped from the facility in North Dakota and psychics like Hunter have become prominent members of society. Their various gifts have allowed them to enter any field of employment they could desire, much to the chagrin of normal individuals who feel like they are losing their jobs to the so-called “psi-creeps”. Some individuals and corporations are beginning to fight back.

Enter **Magicorp**, the world's foremost inventor of new technologies. Magicorp specializes in personal, commercial, and military-grade electronic devices which have the ability to manipulate some aspect of the user's environment. These devices can do anything from create small fires to generating large, precisely-localized seismic disturbances. Other devices – some of the most widely sought – can shield the user's mind from outside influences and it is rumored that Magicorp is experimenting with ways for users to tap in to a target's mind, effectively mimicking the ability that many psychics possess.

Tension is high between psychics and normals, especially now that the normals are developing potent methods of offense and defense against the mentals.

## Things to Come

In **Psi-punk**, you will enter a world torn between those who possess psychic abilities (“mentals”) and those who don't (“normals”). The political climate is turbulent; normal people continue to fear the power possessed by psychics, who are still a minority group but growing in power thanks to their unique gifts. Some organizations, such as Magicorp, are promising to be the saviors of humankind by introducing potent technologies that can be used to match the abilities of the mentals.

In this futuristic setting, taking place during or after the year 2096, characters can do nearly anything they put their minds to – literally. Despite the introduction of psychic abilities to the world, the normal people have continued to advance technology in many ways that one would expect from a futuristic setting. Throughout the text you will encounter examples of what the world climate is like, but GMs are encouraged to include their own ideas to give the world a unique flavor of their own.

# World History – North American Union (NAU)

The world is not the same place as it was around the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even if one ignores the impact that the introduction of mentals in to mainstream society, the world political, economic, and physical climates have changed in the last 100 years or so. Take, for instance, the formation of the North American Union.

By the year 2015, border conflicts at the United States-Mexico border had reached an all-time high. Citizens of the USA had drawn a veritable line in the sand regarding illegal immigration in to the US; they were either going to force the government to deal with the issue once and for all, or they were going to take matters in to their own hands. One extremist group, the Border Conflict Resolution Front, took it into their own hands to forcibly eject any illegal immigrant attempting to enter the country using any means deemed necessary (up to and often including the use of violence to permanently disable illegal aliens).

Because the government was in short supply of troops to send to the border due to the fact that most military personnel had been deployed to Afghanistan to participate in a war that had been ongoing for 14 years, there was little that the federal government could do to prevent the violent outbursts and occasional shootings that took place at the border. Texas law enforcement was unable to cope with the demand for police security and the BCRF were left almost entirely unchecked for the better part of a year.

Finally, after one massacre that left 20 immigrants dead just a few hundred yards from the Texas side of the border, the US government was forced to take action or face a home-soil war with the people of Mexico. In 2016, the first draft of the North American Agreement was written, which officially

granted all Mexican citizens amnesty within the United States regardless of citizenship. This treaty had sparked an uprising from the BCRF though, whose mission was to keep immigrants out, even though they were now legally allowed to cross the border in to America.

By 2017 the United States and Mexico signed the second draft of the North American Agreement. In this version, the entire country of Mexico had become official US property, making all citizens in both countries part of the newly-formed North American Union. This draft was hastily conceived and passed in to law to try to prevent further outbreaks of violence, but complete integration of the two nations in to a single union would take decades.

During that time, thousands of US citizens started emigrating to Canada, many of them preferring to slip through border security undetected and attempt to blend in to Canadian society without gaining citizenship. Essentially, American citizens were fleeing American in much the same way that Mexican citizens had fled their own country in decades past, hoping to move away from the problems that plagued their own nation and eke out a living in a new country full of promise.

The illegal emigration into Canada lit additional flames. While the Canadian government and people were far more willing to house American expatriates than their neighbors to the south, groups like the BCRF didn't like the idea of so many of their own citizens vacating the nation. Once more, the BCRF took matters in to their own hands and left dozens dead or wounded at the US-Canada border.

By 2019 the NAU government had too much on their plate to deal with all of these issues. They were still waging war in the Middle East, trying to integrate Mexico in to the union, and dealing with an uprising of newly-outed psychics like Nathan Hunter. Once more, they hastily signed an agreement to ally with Canada and draw them in



to the NAU agreement, which now protected all citizens from each of the three countries from illegal alien status. This chagrined many citizens who were hoping to leave behind the worries they had while living in the USA, but eventually helped settle disputes over border crossing issues.

## World History – Beyond the NAU

With the continent's three largest countries allied in a single union, they were able to redirect some of their resources to deal with other problems at hand. By the year 2021 the war in Afghanistan had been raging for 20 years and many of the same people who were influential in the "Border Wars" were now refocusing their energy and directing it toward the Middle East. The BCRF in particular gained in power as they riled up fellow countrymen and called for the overthrow of the nation's military in an attempt to force an end to the ongoing war.

Once more, government officials were forced to take action at home. They pulled back troops from the Middle East to try to maintain some amount of order on their own home soil, which left them vulnerable on the Afghan front. They also moved to put a quick end to the situation at home by ordering the covert assassination of the most influential BCRF leaders. It was rumored, though never proven, that Homeland Security hired one or more mentals to carry out the hits on BCRF leadership, which were highly successful.

After the assassinations had been carried out the BCRF organization crumbled and faded in to history, but the rumors that mentals were hired to carry out the orders just added more fuel to the fire. Nobody on either side wanted mentals working for the government, and extremists like those in the BCRF once more looked for something to attack. By now they had been fighting against

the government for so long they appeared poised to stand against it regardless of the reason.

Though the BCRF was disbanded, several of its members formed a new organization known as the Anti-Psi League (APL). Their focus was on suppressing those with psionic powers with an emphasis on preventing them from gaining any control in government office or other political affairs. Those mentals that weren't killed in the proceeding witch hunts were forced to slip in to the shadows and hide their gifts from the outside world.

Influential members of the APL eventually reached out to the government and forced them to pass laws that restricted the use of psionic abilities. It became a felony to exhibit any display of psychic ability and the law ceased to protect mentals from the witch hunts that were being carried out against them. It would be decades before mentals would be able to show their faces in public without the fear of being persecuted.

## Moving Forward

Though unable to use their abilities in public, mentals still possessed traits that could be passed on to their kin. It took about forty-five years, but by 2066 the population of psychics was large enough that they could begin to fight back.

Nathan Hunter, now an old man who had been living in South America for nearly fifty years, moved back to the NAU and formed an underground movement to unite mentals and overtake the oppressive authorities. Thanks to his powerful telepathic abilities he was able to reach thousands of mentals nationwide without alerting government officials or the still-present Anti-Psi League. They formed an unnamed network of psionics and, by 2067, moved to strike back.

Hunter's men broke in to the NAU's capitol building and assassinated the president while simultaneously assassinating the lead-

er of the APL. This two-pronged attack left both factions weak and the powerful mentals quickly eroded their structures from the top down. Stopping only when they reached a point at which no one could oppose them, Hunter's men gave him the NAU Presidency. Few normals had the nerve to oppose him.

Though not a tyrant, Hunter flexed his authority for several years to ensure that no uprising could unseat him until he was confident that mentals were safe to roam the streets once more. He repealed the laws of the 2020s that prohibited the use of public displays of psychic power and soon psychics were coming out of the shadows to reclaim their place in society at large.

With the APL gone and psychics in control of the NAU, the general public floundered for a time. Those few APL members who were left were too small in number to consider fighting back with force, but civil unrest was high and they were able to use that to their advantage. Normals resented the fact that mentals were taking their jobs and there was still the occasional chance hate crime carried out against mentals, particularly in bars and pubs where people would get drunk and violent. With so much unrest, someone was once again bound to take up a position of power and fight against it.

## Enter Magicorp

Magicorp was formed in 2069 by former APL members with a knack for science. Their mission statement was less overt than the APL's, but it still had the same goal in mind – put an end to psychic reign over traditional humanity. They began research in the field of psychic phenomena and how to emulate it through the use of technology. The first several devices that came out of their factories mimicked more mundane powers, like the ability to manipulate fire and electricity, but eventually they were able to emulate more powerful abilities.

Within twenty years, Magicorp was one of the world's leading companies. Though they did not outwardly advocate the use of their technology to fight against mentals, many people used their equipment to level the playing field. With the advent of new devices that granted users telekinesis, telepathy, and even ESP, normal citizens with enough cash could participate on even footing in the job market and in other areas which mentals had taken control of over the last several decades.

Now, in 2096, Magicorp is producing still more powerful and experimental tech which they have dubbed “magic”, but they are also branching out in to other fields including computing and cybernetics. It still remains to be seen just what sort of powerful new equipment will come out of their factories, but with continued research and acquisition of some of the world's other leading technology firms, they are in a position to start fighting back.

## Other Important World Events

### The Great Famine

Scientists had been theorizing for literally centuries that one day, the world's population would outpace its ability to produce food. At that time, they claimed, there would be catastrophic famine that reduced the world's population by a sizable amount. The planet, they said, would simply not support so many human beings. They even had a word for this event: a Malthusian Catastrophe, named after the first scientist to popularize the idea all the way back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Well, the scientists were right. Around the year 2043 the world's population had swollen to over 12 billion. Human beings were being produced faster than ever, and

some say that certain countries were even testing human clones, which added to the already oversized population density. Even as the demand for more and more food grew, the number of people growing food was diminishing. By 2043, only a mere 20% of the world population still worked on farms. Food was becoming scarce.

There were, of course, ever newer and more modern methods of growing “bigger and better” food. Growth hormones and artificial pesticides were used almost globally to be able to stretch every last crop or head of livestock to its limits. Unfortunately, only one megacorp held the patents to these products, and they went after patent violators with a vengeance, stamping out any small farm which even accidentally got hold of their seeds.

The enriched seeds patented by Farmcorp and used on over 90% of the world’s farms had one flaw that ultimately proved fatal; the plants which were produced from Farmcorp’s seeds were sterile, unable to grow anything. Farmers using these enriched seeds had to purchase a new stock every single year and were unable to re-use the plant seeds gathered from their crops.

Though there was a movement against this in the earliest decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it eventually faded out. Those who struggled against Farmcorp’s tight grip on the industry were successful for a while, but found that sustainable agriculture simply couldn’t maintain a 10-billion-strong-and-growing world population. Nearly every farm in the world finally had to give in to the enriched seeds of Farmcorp in order to grow enough food for everyone on the planet.

Then, in 2043, something happened to Farmcorp’s seed supply. Their largest storehouses of stock became infected with some new chemical they were testing, which sterilized the seeds even before they had a chance to grow for the first time. It was only a matter of a year or so before the public became aware of this dreadful secret. Farmers the world over who were dependent on

these seeds suddenly found their fields completely barren; nothing they planted would grow. Worse, the chemical fertilizer that was built directly in to the seeds destroyed much of the soil it was planted in, further contaminating the farmland for years to come.

It wasn’t long before the world’s already meager food storehouses were depleted, and with next to nobody growing any new food there was, indeed, a catastrophic shortage. Only the very richest citizens could afford to continue eating normal meals, while others were forced to live off of whatever they could scavenge. Governments were brought to their knees trying to find ways to keep up with the demand even as millions of people were starving to death.

Researchers quickly began formulating new approaches to food production, but it would be two years before anything would prove fruitful. After more than 5 billion had died from either starvation or violence related to what became known as “hunger crimes”, researches at a nanotech firm known as NFC Global developed the first nano-foods. Though previously only seen in science fiction movies, these new nano-foods became a reality which would save mankind from billions of additional losses.

Nano-food, or “non-food” as it is cynically known, is a type of sustenance created from near-nothingness with the aid of nanoscopic robots. Though as filling and nutritious as any regular meal, non-foods are bland and leave much to be desired. They are rationed to every citizen in the world who can’t afford the real deal. The invention of nano-foods not only solved the global hunger crisis, it also solved the lingering world hunger problem that had been hundreds, if not thousands, of years old.

Nowadays, the only people who can eat real food are those rich enough to afford it. Real food is mostly grown in hydroponic facilities that are owned, controlled, and fiercely defended by megacorps whose bigwigs still dine in style. Others, who are not rich enough to dine on real food every night





but can afford the occasional bio-implant, have developed bionetic tongue replacements that add flavor to non-foods. Though expensive, it is worth the cost to many people to be able to taste food again. Others, who have grown up entirely in the age of nano-food, often choose not to find out what they're missing.

## Corporate Government

As the world's citizens became more and more reliant on the offerings of various corporations, major companies began to make political bids to protect their stake in the global economic environment. Special interest groups have always attempted to pass laws which give corporate entities more, not less, power. By the year 2032, the world became an even safer place for large companies.

Corporations have long enjoyed citizen status in America, with a landmark decision in the late 1800s proclaiming that they would

henceforth be treated as people under the law, but it wasn't until the fourth decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that such a corporation finally used this status to gain entrance into congress and, eventually, the White House. While it was overlooked for many years, a Supreme Court ruling in the first decade declared that corporations, as people, should have the right to vote. The right to vote eventually led to the right to lead, and by 2032 the North American Union saw its first corporate congressman.

The corporation, Price-Less, Inc., won the popular peoples' vote by a wide margin over the competition. Some suspected foul play, but in reality it was the company's dominance as the largest, lowest-price consumer goods superstore in the nation that led to their ultimate victory. By the time all was said and done, Price-Less had a seat in congress and was in a prime position to continue working its way up the political ladder (it already topped the corporate ladder).

In the year 2038, Price-Less announced its intention to run for President of the NAU. Its deep pockets and wide-reaching contacts helped it to fund a campaign the likes of which the world had never seen. By the time the 2040 elections rolled around, there was no contest for the company's rival, and Price-Less achieved another landmark victory as the first corporate president of the NAU.

Price-Less only managed to hold the top spot for one presidential term, but the four years that the company spent as the most powerful entity in the world was put to good (some say sinister) use. Within just that short amount of time, they managed to repeal almost every regulatory law governing corporations and their ability to hold power, including those which safeguarded competition against monopolies. The years that followed were filled with some of the largest corporate mergers, buy-outs, and hostile takeovers the country had ever seen.

Unfortunately for Price-Less, the Great Famine had begun before the 2044 election. The people of the world once again began seeing corporations as giant, evil entities, a stigma which cost Price-Less the election. Though no corporation has held a presidential title since, the regulations they managed to have repealed proved nearly impossible to put back in to place. To this day, corporations hold as much (in some cases more) power than the governments of the world, thanks to that landmark election.

Though the NAU has not seen another corporate president, it has seen its share of corporate governors, senators, and other elected officials. At one point or another within the last 50 years nearly every state in the NAU has seen some corporation or another calling the shots. Since, by law, a corporation is a legal entity and holds citizenship and residence in every city, state, and country in which it has a physical presence, some corporations have even served as elected officials in multiple states *simultaneously*.

Of particular note is one monopolistic megacorporation that was allowed to form as a result of the deregulation of the 2040s. Several of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies merged to form Medical Services International, the leading, and now the *only*, medical provider in the NAU. Comprised of hospitals, pharmacies, insurance companies, and even the formerly-government-controlled Food and Drug Administration, MSI has grown to become a true behemoth in the world of medicine.

In 2076, MSI campaigned in twenty-six separate states at once. Promising free ocular and cochlear implants for the blind and deaf, fully-functioning prosthetic limbs for para- and quadriplegics, and bionetic organ replacements for all manner of people. Though it cost them billions in tax-deductible donations, MSI won the election in all but two of the states in which it campaign (Wyoming and Quebec). Its power as both a corporation and governing body grew tremendously and within just a few short years

it had wiped out all other competitors in the market. To this day, whenever you visit a hospital or buy a prescription drug, MSI is there.

## Separatist States

Following the unprecedented “government monopoly,” several states seceded from the NAU out of disgust for the concept of corporate government. Shortly following the mass-election of MSI, Quebec left the NAU in 2077. Though the former provinces’ attempts at seceding from Canada had failed, few opposed their separation from the NAU; the federal government simply refused to grant them military protection (which has grown increasingly important since the “Terror War” has, on numerous occasions, reached home soil). Though Quebec got its wish, they were suddenly faced with the need to build up their own form of homeland security.

Following Quebec’s lead, several other states left the Union. Wyoming, the other state in which MSI lost the election, was the next to leave, followed by Hawaii, Nova Scotia, Tijuana, Oregon, Washington, and Georgia. Though in many cases these states were separated by vast distances, they shared one thing in common: they were unwilling to give up their relative freedom to the increasingly corporate-controlled government. Their separation from the union was largely unopposed because it meant the NAU would need to spend less of its defense budget to protect these states.

Each of the states soon found itself in dire need of resources. Without the funding from a larger federal government, they turned to each other for support. In 2080, they collectively formed the Separated States of America, a loosely-bound governing body which was developed primarily for homeland protection.

Each of the various states of the SSA maintains the right to govern its citizens as an independent nation, but they have a com-



bined resource pool for military spending and trade. Over the last twenty years they have developed strong trade relationships with other nations, including the Asia-Pacific Union, Greater European Union, and Sub-Sahara.

## Psionicists Become Philanthropists

Just a few years after Nathan Hunter took over as President and use of psionics was legalized once again, a surge of philanthropic movements swept the planet. Thousands of powerful mentals began banding together and putting their powers to use for the good of mankind; whether these demonstrations were just cleverly orchestrated to gain acceptance into normal society or were actually performed out of the goodness of their hearts remains a hot debate.

In 2071, Global Warming was on everyone's minds as images of melting glaciers and the very real severe winters that ensued were growing worse than ever. Scientists predicted, as they had been for decades, that the Global Warming problem would soon cause a world-threatening catastrophe.

Despite impressive green energy advances and a complete separation from oil dependence, the ice caps were still melting and people wanted something to be done. To combat Global Warming "once and for all," a team of over 1,000 cryokineticists, ranging from popular scientists to common laypeople, headed to the North (and later South) poles to attempt to re-freeze the rapidly disappearing glaciers. It took four solid months of concerted effort (per location), but eventually the mission was deemed a success. The ice caps were undeniably larger and sturdier than they had been for at least a hundred years.

While the "Deep Freeze" was deemed successful by many proponents of the movement, others aren't so sure. It is undeniable that re-freezing the polar ice caps has helped



slow the severe effects of Global Warming for now, but opponents are quick to point out that it didn't solve the problem. Other bizarre weather patterns have cropped up as a result, and – because the symptoms weren't cured – the caps have ever-so-slowly begun to melt again. If nothing else, both sides agree that the effort seems to have bought the world some extra time to figure out a permanent solution.

On a less controversial note, electrokineticists began working on perhaps the most environmentally-friendly solution to the people's energy needs that has ever been devised; electricity formed purely from force of will. With no emissions, no waste, and no harmful materials involved, only suitable batteries and a method to collect power is required. Unfortunately the demand for such energy far exceeds the number of skilled electrokinetics willing to devote their time and effort to generating other people's power.



With the idea put into place, Magicorp took up the mantle of “energy saviors” in 2080. The megacorporation began manufacturing magic devices capable of emulating electrokinesis at power levels high enough to charge themselves and produce a great amount of storable surplus. Eventually these “Magic Batteries” became the de-factor source of energy for citizens the world over, further cementing Magicorp’s dominance.

Various other movements have come and gone, most of them serving to create minor social, political, and or technological changes. One group of shapers even attempted to turn the Sahara into a blooming paradise (despite ecologist’s pleas to not disturb the natural environment and the numerous species who called it their home), only to realize supreme disappointment when their shaping attempts failed to remain permanent.

## Timeline

Below is a timeline of the events noted in this chapter to serve as both a summary and a helpful reference tool.

- **WWII:** Nazis begin psychic research
- **Cold War:** Russians continue research techniques stolen from the former Nazi regime and succeeded in creating the first psychics
- **2015:** The Border Conflict Resolution Front, a mercenary band of “patriots,” is formed to fight back illegal aliens at the US border
- **2016:** A massacre at the US-Mexico border nearly incites an uprising; the first draft of the North American Agreement is written, granting Mexican citizens amnesty within the US regardless of citizenship
- **2017:** The second draft of the North American Agreement was written and hastily passed; the North American Union was formed; many NAU citizens illegally emigrate to Canada; the BCRF moves to the US-Canada border
- **2017:** A man named Nathan Hunter escapes from a testing facility in North Dakota and brings the “psychic conspiracy” to the public’s attention
- **2019:** Hunter rallies a mob to raid the facility in North Dakota but finds it empty
- **2019:** Canada joins the NAU; citizens of all three involved countries now enjoy joint citizenship across the entire union
- **2020:** Hunter and crew successfully raid a facility in Colorado, freeing many mentals who were captive there; Hunter flees to South America and the government issues the order to shut down all testing facilities
- **2021:** The leader of the BCRF is assassinated; rumors abound that a mental was hired by the government to carry out the hit; the BCRF crumbles but many of its members regroup and form the Anti Psi League, with the goal of suppressing mentals and removing them from government power
- **2020s:** The APL succeeds at inciting rage and witch hunts against mentals; federal laws are passed to prevent the use of psionics of any kind in public; most mentals are forced underground or out of the country
- **2032:** Price-Less, Inc. becomes first corporation to hold a seat in congress
- **2038:** Price-Less announces it will run for President of the NAU
- **2040:** Price-Less becomes first, and only, Corporate President
- **2040 - 2044:** Price-Less repeals many laws restricting corporate monopolies, causing a boom of mergers, buy-outs, and hostile takeovers
- **2043:** World population reaches 12 billion even as the number of food producers diminishes; FarmCorp’s seeds become contaminated with in-grown fertilizer that ruins both the seeds and the soil they are planted in, resulting in world-wide famine; 5 billion eventually die as a result

- **2045:** NFC Global invents and successfully brings nano-food to market, ending the Great Famine with a bland but nutritious source of sustenance
- **2066:** Nathan Hunter, now an old man, moves back to the NAU and begins to form a psychic resistance
- **2067:** Nathan and his men infiltrate the capital and assassinate the President of the NAU and the leader of the APL, leaving both weak; Hunter is made President and repeals anti-psi laws of the 2020s
- **2069:** Magicorp is founded by former APL members and begins research into technologically recreating mental powers
- **2071:** The global warming crisis peaks; hundreds of cryokineticists gather at the North and South poles to re-freeze the glacier and prevent catastrophic disasters; other teams of psionicists gather together for the common good and begin similar projects worldwide
- **2076:** Medical Services International campaigns for government seats in 26 states at once and is elected in 24 of them (only Wyoming and Quebec refused to have a corporate governor)
- **2077:** Quebec secedes from the NAU; Wyoming, Hawaii, Nova Scotia, Tijuana, Oregon, Washington, and Georgia soon follow
- **2080:** The seceded states formed a union known as the Separatist States of America, designed to provide a pool of resources for military spending and trade
- **2080:** Magicorp begins manufacturing electrokinetic batteries that will eventually become the de-facto energy source for all people
- **2096:** Present Day

## Major Players

It is important to know who the world's major players are; that is, who controls the world. Billions of people work for but a dozen or so of the world's largest corporations, making some of them more populous (and wealthy) than many small countries.

Some megacorporations have a corporate culture so well-defined and spread across such vast portions of the planet that it can be difficult to discern a Chinese Macroware employee from a Sub-Saharan employee, save for the regional differences in height and skin tone. Many corporate employees even adopt a single spoken dialect, further enforcing their global nature. In some cases, one's allegiance to a corporation is stronger than his allegiance to his own country.

Pay attention to the following information, or you may wind up crossing the wrong people.

## Macroware

Macroware is the result of over 50 years of technology company acquisitions and mergers. What started as two major computer hardware and software companies joining forces eventually became the world's leading computer company, a one-stop monopoly shop for all of the world's computer needs. Though their industry dominance is profound, Macroware keeps their prices low to ensure that the public, governments, and other corporations don't try to form any start-ups that might challenge their position of power.

This is the company responsible for the tablet computers that nearly everyone in the world carries around with them, in addition to the global network that links them all together. Macroware also writes the software for nearly every functional piece of technology from automobiles to complex security algorithms. It's no wonder that this is the world's wealthiest and largest company, employing more citizens worldwide than any other corporation on Earth.

Though enormously influential, Macroware sees little benefit in attempting to take any sort of governmental power. It is more prudent for a company which supplies security software and hardware to every country on earth to remain neutral; taking some political stance would certainly cause them to fall out of favor with many of the countries in which they operate.

Many unsuccessful attempts have been made by rogues to infiltrate Macroware for a variety of reasons, but few of them ever get away with it. In most of these circumstances, the infiltrators are after valuable information that the company might have on a rival company, person, or nation; indeed, the world's largest software giant may know a little something about everyone in the world, but that information is next-to-impossible to get to thanks to the company's high-tech security. They employ fewer private guards than most companies in their class, but their data security is second-to-none.

Macroware employs a large number of highly skilled Ghosts to secure their computer systems, meaning that anyone who steps into the 'Net and attempts to infiltrate their network is sure to meet with fierce, and sometimes deadly, competition. It is also rumored that a number of their top security experts are Wraiths who patrol the Astral Plane and watch for invaders from all angles.

## Magicorp

Magicorp is one of the world's largest and most prominent corporations. Founded in 2069 by former members of the *Anti-Psi League*, Magicorp's mission is to put psi-like technology into the hands of every normal citizen, thus evening the playing field between normals and mentals. This technology, which they have dubbed "magic", emulates psionic abilities in nearly every way but doesn't always come cheap.

Demand for Magicorp's technology is on the rise, and nearly every normal citizen with a moderate income has at least some

piece of magic equipment in their home. Most of the magic is reserved for higher-paying clients though, such as wealthy citizens, governments, and even other corporations. Magicorp also uses its psi-like equipment to dabble in healthcare (providing equipment to nearly every hospital on the globe) and security (providing magic security systems to consumers, governments, and other corporations). They have also begun to experiment in the fields of bio-tech, cybernetics, and robotics, attempting to find new ways to embed magic directly within the human body and to employ it in autonomous robots.

Magicorp holds the patents for literally every piece of magic equipment on the planet. Though the vast majority of their tech comes from their own research, other companies have tried to get on board, only to either be promptly bought out or curiously shut down within months of their initial launch. The patents from these companies are either folded in to Magicorp's own or rendered obsolete when the company that applies for them suddenly shuts its doors.

The company's relatively brief history (it was established only 27 years ago) has been tumultuous at best. It first met stiff opposition from the NAU government when the mentals in office felt threatened by the rise of psi-like technology that sought to challenge their power. In the end, though, the public's demand for a free and fair job market and economy defeated every attempt the government made at shutting the company down, and to this day it stands as a testament to the power that the non-mental majority still has in this world.

There have been many attempts by rogue psychics to infiltrate the corporation, either to undermine its power or attempt to strike a blow from within. These sorts of attacks continue to this day, but so far the company's high level of security has put down every one of them, earning it a reputation as a force to be reckoned with.



Though headquartered within the NAU, Magicrop operates globally and funds its own private military. Few nations have the capacity to stand up to it, and those that do often back down after only a few short days. Conspiracy theorists rumor that Magicorp is poised to try to overthrow the NAU – or at least part of it – and create its own corporate nation, which would be the first of its kind. Though the company vehemently denies these accusations publically, they may not be far from the truth – indeed, the company already owns several cities within the North American Union, including the Bay Area Arcology where it makes its home.

## MarkeTech

Some say the formation of MarkeTech was inevitable. For years, media companies merged, acquired, took over, and vertically integrated with one another to form ever larger megacorporations that controlled nearly all of the world's news, information, and entertainment. There were but a scant few major players at the top, each of which owned hundreds of brands that operated under their own names but whose bottom lines were directly associated with that of the parent company.

Eventually, with competition fierce and corporate acquisitions deregulated, only two such companies remained. Each controlled an overwhelming stake in the information, entertainment, and marketing sectors. A fierce corporate battle for dominance of the industry ensued and MarkeTech, with its cut-throat business practices, crack shot legal team, and bottomless coffers won the war and emerged as the sole proprietor of the world's multimedia operations.

Despite its monopoly, MarkeTech has a hierarchy and corporate culture that encourages competition and innovation. Each major sector in which the company operates – games, marketing, movies, music, news, publishing, and sports – functions independent from one another. These segments

compete for consumer attention and, though they all add to the bottom line of MarkeTech as a whole, compete fiercely for the dollars that are spent on their own products and services.

Competition between its divisions can get so fierce that each arm of the company employs corporate espionage tactics against one another to dig up the dirt that isn't freely shared between departments. Street runners have been known to find employment handed down from one of MarkeTech's officers, even if that work isn't officially sanctioned or recognized by the company as a whole.

## Medical Services International

When a street runner needs to be patched up after a job, the last place he wants to wind up is at a hospital operated by MSI. Known for their strict adherence to the law, MSI runs extensive background checks on every individual before treating them for illness or injury.

The law-abiding nature of MSI is perhaps due to their crack shot legal team, the same infamous group of lawyers that found the loopholes required to put MSI into the Governor's chair in over 20 states at once. This sweeping victory – for both the company and megacorporations in general, lead to the eventual secession of what are now known as the Separatist States of America.

MSI is the leading, though surprisingly not the only, legitimate reseller of cybernetics in the world. Their hospitals are equipped to handle everything from simple ocular augmentation surgeries to full-body cybernetic replacements in addition to the typical medical services one might expect (after all, there's still no cure for the common cold).

MSI operates a franchise of cyberware installment clinics known as Chip Stop. These clinics are usually found in strip malls and promise to have customers in and out

in an hour “...or the next one’s half-off!” These Chip Stop clinics specialize in minor implants and are not equipped to handle full limb or skeletal replacements, but they are clean and offer legitimate hardware at a fair price.

## NFC Global

NFC Global controls the world’s food supply in the same manner that Macroware controls the world’s technology; almost no one can compare to their influence in the market, and those who try are immediately either bought up or put down.

Short for Nano-Food Corporation, NFC Global was formed from a research facility which developed the first nano-food production units during the Great Famine of 2043. They have jealously safeguarded the patents to this tech ever since and now hold the world’s nutritional needs in their hands.

Though most consider it dangerous to allow a single company to control the world’s food sources – after all, that’s what led to the Great Famine in the first place – few people have the resources to challenge their dominance in the industry. Small farms and co-ops still exist, but only in remote regions of the world that serve a limited number of people and they never export their goods. This is, in part, because they can only produce enough food for those who thrive off of them, but also because the NFC has seen fit to apply pressure against any government which would allow food to be imported to their nation.

Other small farms exist within the confines of highly secure, fiercely-guarded corporate compounds, but the product of this food is reserved solely for rich corporate citizens. These farms are most commonly owned by NFC Global and are simply licensed to the corporations for business use, so even in this sector they have managed to gain a foothold.

The mere existence of these farms has allowed for the birth of a new type of criminal: the food smuggler. With natural food so rare and expensive, it’s no wonder that many have turned to the lucrative business of stealing real food and delivering it to the highest bidder (after taking a cut of the crop for themselves, of course).

Governments cave to the NFC’s demands for fear of having their food supplies terminated overnight, thus leaving millions – if not billions – of their citizens left to starve. Some say that the NFC is the worst of all evils, while others praise them for having brought an end to the Great Famine and allowing the population of the planet to thrive once more.

## Amazonia Luddites

Not so much a corporation as a militant faction, some say the Amazonia Luddites were founded by Nathan Hunter himself during his stay in South America. While this hasn’t been proven, it is certain that many of the foremost members of the AZL are powerful psychics with an intense hatred for new technologies.

The Amazonia Luddites have established a large and fiercely-protected No Tech Zone in what little remains of the Amazon rainforest. ‘Net signal dampeners and custom anti-tech barriers have been set up around the perimeter of the AZL’s territory and within the zone, electronics and automated machinery is strictly prohibited. Rumor has it that an anti-tech virus has been spread throughout the territory, infecting anyone who enters. This virus specifically attacks people with cybernetic implants, causing their limbs, eyes, ears, and other augmentations to malfunction and shut down.

Understanding that they are no physical match for other nations, the AZL do not make a habit of waging war on other territories or corporations. However, they do spread anti-technology propaganda throughout the world and their numbers have grown steadily over the past decade. Their ultimate goal





is unknown, but many corporations and governments fear their power and the probability that they are breeding more powerful psychics within their carefully-guarded borders. None have risked a preemptive attack on this group, however, for fear of destroying what remains of the world's last rainforest.

## The Criminal Element

In a world where the rich have become wealthy beyond their wildest dreams and the poor have become more destitute than ever, it's no wonder that so many people have turned to lives of crime. It isn't just the poor and desperate who lie, cheat, steal, and murder though; even the rich, hungry for ever-more power, will often stop at nothing to further elevate their own status.

It's no wonder, then, that gangs, street thugs, loan sharks, and even the Mob are alive and well in 2096. In addition, changes in world culture have given rise to new

forms of criminals, including hacker gangs known as Ghost Cartels, guns-for-hire known as Street Runners, and even Astral thugs known as Wraith Butchers.

## Gangs

Gangs battle it out in the slums and ghettos of the world's cities and constantly war over turf, resources, and whatever scraps of respect they can attain. Police often ignore the petty crimes that gangs commit as long as they're carried out against each other, but when a gang oversteps its boundaries and starts mugging citizens or robbing local convenience stores the police are forced to intervene. Occasionally the police send squads of gangbusters into a sprawl to take down particularly powerful groups of ruffians, but for the most part their stance has been to let them kill each other... for the good of mankind.



## 1

## Ghost Cartels

Of more importance to the police is organized crime. Centuries-old organizations such as the Mafia, Yakuza, Triad, and others still exist and continue to silently terrorize the public even as they gain in wealth and power.

In addition to these constant threats, a new breed of organized criminals has arisen. Known as Ghost Cartels, these underground organizations are highly adept at stealing and decrypting data from the world's computer networks. By employee Ghosts – people who are capable of psychically projecting their own presence *into* the 'Net – they can sneak into virtually any computer system and make off with bounties of information which they either sell to the highest bidder or release to the public to bring dirty secrets to light.

Many such organizations employ other criminals as well, including Dealers, Fixers, and all manner of armed thugs. After all, all that information would be useless if it weren't in the hands of someone who knew what to do with it or if it never saw the light of day because the Ghost who grabbed it was shot in the back of the head before he could go corporeal.

## Police

Even the law isn't safe from corruption. Nowadays, most police forces have been privatized or are, at the very least, commercially sponsored; it isn't uncommon to see a uniform that says "L.A.P.D. brought to you by KojiCorp."

Though the police are still generally seen as a good thing – after all, they do (mostly) serve and protect the innocent – they're not without their faults. It's easy to buy off most cops with a little bit of Wealth or some influential backing, but offer too little or speak the wrong words and you'll find yourself in grapheme cuffs faster than you can say "it wasn't me!"

Cops in major cities spend most of their day interrogating citizens and demanding to see their registration, which can be faked easily enough. However, cops have a quota of illegals to bring in every month and they're not above erasing someone's identity chip if it means meeting their numbers. Most of the time it's best to avoid them unless you're a ranking corporate drone whose sudden apprehension would be looked poorly upon by the very companies that sponsor them.

## Wraith Butchers

Perhaps the single deadliest breed of criminals, Wraith Butchers have earned their name by slaughtering Astral travelers. Though Astral travel isn't very common, when a soul does leave its body to travel in the incorporeal realm there is always a chance that he may encounter one of these human monsters.

What makes the act of butchering wraiths (Astral travelers) so difficult to detect is that there is no physical trauma to the body. When a soul is killed on the Astral Plane, their body remains completely intact but simply ceases to function on its own; it first goes into a comatose state and then, unless hooked up to life support within hours, shuts down and dies. Medically, it appears as though the body simply stopped functioning. No form of medicine is able to detect that the physical body's soul had been destroyed (or sucked of its energy).

What motivates these criminals is uncertain, though many suspect that there is power to be gained by devouring the life force of another being. Others may be simply attempting to assassinate competition, while still others are simply serial killers with a twisted and mostly-untraceable method.

Wraith Butchers must, themselves, travel to the Astral Plane to attack their target, which means they also need to be skilled in Astral Projection and Astral Combat. Because the number of such skilled people is small, and the number of butchers an even

smaller percentage of that segment, encounters with butchers are rare. Still, utterances of their existence have become increasingly common and their presence should not be ignored, especially now that magic devices exist that enable nearly anyone to try their hand at Astral travel.

## Street Runners

Though technically illegal, street running has become one of the fastest-growing professions for urban residents. It's a rough, dangerous life that caters to no-one, but those who can prove their mettle manage to eke out a good living.

Street runners come from all walks of life, from slummers who got tired of living in squalor to under-appreciated corporate drones who are looking to add a little excitement and adventure to their day (and flex their medical benefits). Oftentimes groups of street runners will work together on several jobs in a row, but in other cases they form and disband groups for any given mission before even getting to know each other's names.

One important thing to note is that Street Runners aren't part of any greater organization. Each one is a sort of independent contractor in his own right. While some form groups that stick together, others simply come and go like the breeze, preferring not to get too attached to anyone who might wind up dead tomorrow.

Street running is a dangerous way of life, and those who opt to perform such mercenary jobs must be willing to shoot a few bullets – and take some. Because of the illegal nature of the trade, there exists little hope for high-quality medical treatment and many runners wind up getting stitched back together by back-alley street docs who work on the sly.

Despite the risks, those who take up street running and find they have a knack for it often make quite a lot of money.

## What do Runners do?

Street Runners need to be willing and able to do a little bit of everything, or at least be able to put together a team that can cover all of its bases. It's rare that a single street runner will be working alone, since most high-paying jobs require several different, highly-specific skill sets.

Generally, a runner will speak with a Dealer who knows someone who knows a guy who needs something done without anyone knowing about it. Though it sounds like something out of a high school sitcom, the fact is that nearly anyone with money can (and does) hire street runners to do nearly anything. Oftentimes, runners are hired to do dirty work that more reputable sources don't want to be associated with: corporate espionage, assassinations, data theft, and so on.

Runners may also be hired to serve as temporary bodyguards, escorts, and delivery men. In the case of the latter, their packages usually contain some sort of illegal, dangerous, or illegal and dangerous material that needs to be safely, securely, and covertly delivered to another party.

Without street runners, much of the world would cease to operate. They're the stitches that sew together the seedy underbelly of the city and keep its guts from falling out. With that in mind, most player characters in the world of **Psi-punk** will be Street Runners, tasked with all sorts of missions that will earn them wealth, infamy, and at least a few war wounds.

# Chapter 2: Character Creation





This chapter contains all the information you'll need to create characters, including character traits and trait levels, and some different ways to allocate them.

Game Masters and players are encouraged to spend some time discussing their character's concept, abilities, and background so that the GM may be able to integrate the character into his world and story. It is a good idea to plan at least one game session in which all of the players and the GM come together for the sole purpose of discussing character and world creation.

Sometimes, a GM may already have a story in mind and it is beneficial that the characters know the basic premise before launching into character creation. For example, if the GM envisions a plot filled with political intrigue and corporate espionage, a heavy weapons expert with no diplomacy or tact may not fare very well, while a stealthy spy or diplomat character will see a lot of use from his skills.

Likewise, players may wish to communicate with each other and build a character that will fit in with and compliment the larger team. It is beneficial to have a well-rounded group of characters that can play to each other's strengths and cover each other's weaknesses. For example, a medic may be a helpful addition to any team, but having three of them could mean that the group is sacrificing something important – like a weapon's expert, a diplomat, or a sneaky infiltration expert. By building characters that fit a team dynamic, the game will play more smoothly.

## Character Concepts

Before you begin designing and developing your character, it's helpful to have an idea of what your character is like. Your character's concept may be as loosely or rigidly designed as you choose, but should always detail some important aspect of your character's personality, background, or style.

For example, Joe decides he'd like to make a "heavy weapons specialist." He hasn't considered his character's background (and may wish to use the **Character Questionnaire** outlined at the end of this chapter to help him get a better sense of what his character's personality is like) but at least he knows what types of traits he should be looking for when building his character.

On the other hand, Julia thinks she'd like to play a sneaky smuggler from Portland whose primary source of income is derived from stealing magic devices and transporting them out of town to fence in a nearby city. She knows she'll need to be good at covert and stealth skills and may need to pick up some athletic skills as well.

## Archetypes

Listed below are some common character archetypes that may be found in this world. You don't need to pick a specific one – you may blend or ignore them as you see fit – but they should help inspire you to decide the type of character you wish to play. This section is also helpful for GMs trying to create non-player characters with some personality.

### Brenner

Taken from the German word for "burner," brenner are pyrokineticists, skilled in the art of setting things on fire with their minds. These characters use their gifts for a variety of reasons, ranging anywhere from rising up against oppressive lawmakers to doing their bidding. Brenner often have a variety of other skills and backgrounds in addition to being pyrokinetics.

### Changeling

Characters that employ *psychometabolism* powers or magics for the purpose of altering their own features are referred to as "changelings." These characters are experts at disguising their appearance, voice, and

even the very nature of their being (some powerful changelings can go so far as to shape shift into animals or other creatures). It can be hard to track down a changeling, which is why their expertise is coveted by criminal organizations as well as intelligence networks.

## Corporate Drone

Few players wind up as corporate drones, and those that do often use their rank and status in their company for nefarious purposes. Drones do a company's bidding, usually without question, but aren't necessarily above taking a little back for themselves.

## Dealer

Not necessarily in the drug business, dealers are "information brokers" who make it their business to know everything that is happening in their city or other chosen sphere of influence. Dealers pay handsomely to acquire useful information and charge even more to part with it. Dealers are often the source of jobs for illegal street runners. Also, when they need to know what someone is up to, they may hire runners to find out for them.

## Fixer

A fixer's job is to find, acquire, and distribute gear through any channel they can access, legally or otherwise. Fixers are the go-to guys when characters need to get their hands on rare or illicit gear, including cyberware and magic. Fixers are often *corporate drones* or *weapon specialists* with superior clearance to corporate or military goods.

## Food Smuggler

With real food being so scarce, a few folks have chosen to make a living by stealing real food and selling to the highest bidder. Food smugglers need to be covert, stealthy, manipulative, athletic, and have a lot of underground connections.



## Ganger

Street gangs are as old as time; every city has had its share of ruffians and thugs who prey on the weak and exploit anyone they can. Gangers often carry both non-lethal and lethal weapons to deal with a variety of situations. These characters usually have few aspirations beyond eking out a living in any way they can.

## Ghost

Characters skilled at the art of hacking into computers using *electrokinesis* and *cyberpsi* are often referred to as "ghosts" because nobody can see their presence even though their actions are definitely felt. Ghosts must be skilled in computer use and need to have some method of physically projecting themselves into the 'Net, either psionically or magically.

## Hacker

An old but still-relevant term, hackers specialize in getting into places and doing things that others don't want them to. Hackers are security experts and tinkerers, often breaking into high clearance systems just to see if they can. The term applies to hacking more than just computer systems; anything with a microchip (including humans) can potentially be hacked.

## Handler

Handlers specialize in the use of *psychometry*, the ability to “read” an object's past by simply touching, or handling, the item. Handlers are employed by a variety of people, but are almost always involved in some kind of detective or spy work.

## Monster

Monsters are living examples of what it's like to have too much metal crammed into one meat sack. These characters have significantly more cyberware than the average person and scarcely resemble a human being. Some may have implants to aid them in a variety of skills or they may have a variety of skill chips that allow them to do just about anything.

## Psiborg

Psiborgs are powerful mentals who have opted to replace a significant portion of their meatsack with metal, making them physically superior to normals in addition to being more mentally powerful.

## Psi-Hunter

The first prominent group of psi-hunters was the Anti-Psi League, a group of hate-mongers who deem it necessary to eradicate all mentals to ensure their own continued existence. As an occupation, psi-hunting is strictly illegal, but that doesn't stop people from doing anything in their power to capture or kill powerful psychics. Psi-Hunters often employ magic and cyberware in their fight against the psi-freaks.

## Pugilist/Martial Artist

This archetype represents a fighting style more than a lifestyle, but many martial artists and boxers treat their craft as a way of life. Skilled in one or more of the many arts of hand-to-hand combat, these characters are a good addition to nearly any team. Many martial artists are also skilled at being stealthy, covert, and athletic, making them useful as scouts or infiltration specialists.

## Soul Jacker

Soul jackers exert mental dominance over those they encounter and command them to do their bidding. These characters are often powerful psychics with the *mind control* power, but a few wealthy soul jackers establish control by using high-powered magic devices designed to break mental barriers and allow the user to implant suggestions.

## Street Banker

A street banker by any other name would be a loan shark. These characters are the ones to turn to for emergency funding, but they take great pains to ensure that their investments are returned promptly and with all of the interest paid. Street brokers usually have a number of hired thugs in their employ.

## Street-Doc

Street-Docs are medical experts who make a living patching up people outside of the relative comfort of a hospital. These characters may be former doctors whose clinic was shut down for malpractice, current doctors looking to make a little extra on the side, or simply a guy skilled with a scalpel. Street-Docs are not always reputable, but they often come cheap and don't ask annoying questions like “Can I see some ID before I give you that new implant?”



## Street Runner

Many, but not all, player characters fall into this category. Street runners are mercenaries, selling their skills to the highest bidder so they can earn enough cash to upgrade their implants, computer hardware, magic, and other gear. They come from all walks of life, but often find themselves in the business because they've lost the ability, or the will, to work traditional jobs. Street running is illegal but the law is almost impossible to enforce, and many street runners feel that their motives are altruistic and thus their ends justify the means.

## Technomancer

Skilled with the mental art of *cyberpsi*, technomancers control machines and electronics with their minds. Many technomancers use their skills as Ghosts, but others prefer to control robots and even android-like bodies to do their bidding.

## Telepath

Simply another name for someone skilled in the use of *telepathy*, these characters are capable of contacting other beings over great distances using nothing but their thoughts. Many telepaths are employed as spies since they are equally as skilled at reading minds as they are at communicating with them, and it is far more difficult to intercept communications via thought than through the 'Net.

## Weapons Specialist

In this day and age, it pays to be the one carrying the big guns. Weapon specialists make a living by selling their skills to those who need protection and those who need to kill someone being protected. Weapon specialists are highly trained in a variety of combat methods, including both melee and ranged combat.

## Wheel Jockey

Wheel jockeys are adept at driving or flying anything with wheels (and even some

things without). Pilots, racecar drivers, tank experts, and motor boaters are all examples of wheel jockeys, but the best of them are capable of driving and piloting a wide variety of vehicles.

## Wraith

Wraiths are the Astral Plane's equivalent of a *ghost*. While ghosts project themselves into the 'Net, wraiths project their souls into the Astral. Their powers are suited for intelligence gathering and reconnaissance missions since their ability to go virtually anywhere unseen makes them well-suited to the task. See **Chapter 7: When Worlds Diverge** for details on Astral projection.

# The Character Sheet

After you have decided on a character concept, take a moment to familiarize yourself with the character sheet, provided in **Appendix I**. This is where you will jot down all of the important information about your character, including his or her name, pseudonym, traits, wealth, build points, luck points, background, equipment, and notes.

It's okay if you don't know what all of those terms on the character sheet mean yet – we'll discuss them all throughout this chapter. When you do select new traits though, be sure to write them down in the corresponding field on your character sheet.

This sheet is a helpful tool for keeping track of your character as you develop him, both during creation and character advancement. As your campaign continues, you can use the sheet to scribble notes about events that have occurred, contacts you've met, and anything else you find necessary.

More information about how to fill out the character sheet will be presented in the appendix. For now, just familiarize yourself with it so that you understand the terms you will encounter throughout the remainder of this chapter.



## Attributes

In **Psi-punk**, all characters have three primary attributes, each divided into two secondary attributes. The primary attributes, Body, Mind, and Persona, are a composite of their two respective secondary attributes.

Primary attributes are the broadest trait that a character possesses. Using the three primary attributes, we can see the “big picture” for any given character and whether they are more athletic, intellectual, or social. These attributes also act as a character’s defenses against certain forms of attack. For example, a character who is being shot at would add his Body attribute to any necessary defensive check to help determine whether he was hit and how much damage he sustained from the attack. More details about how these attributes are used are detailed throughout the book.

Because primary attributes are a composite of their secondary attributes, they may not be raised or lowered individually by any normal means. Instead, add together the bonuses (and penalties) for their secondary attributes to determine the total trait level for each primary attribute. Raising secondary attributes will be described later in this chapter.

Primary attributes and their respective secondary attributes are discussed below.

## Body

Body is used to determine how athletic a character is and how well he can avoid or absorb damage. Any time you would be the subject of a physical attack – such as a gunshot or an old-fashioned punch to the face, you would add your Body attribute to your Defensive Damage Factors (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more information on Defensive Damage Factors). Body’s associated secondary attributes are:

## Dexterity

Used for any skill which requires accuracy, reflexes, precision, or speed. Examples of Dexterity checks include aiming a gun or other ranged weapon, maneuvering a large object through a tight space, driving, dodging an attack, avoiding fast-moving obstacles, etc.

## Strength

Used for any skill which involves physical strength, stamina, fitness, or power which does not require precision. Examples of Strength checks include climbing, swimming, jumping, lifting heavy objects, running for extended periods of time, swinging a melee (hand-to-hand) weapon, throwing heavy objects or short-ranged weapons (such as spears and knives), etc.

## Mind

Mind gives a picture of how intellectual and spiritual a person is. Mind is also used as a defense against mental attacks from many psionic and magic powers. Any time you would be the subject of a mental attack, such as a *mind control* attempt or a *mental shock*, you would add your Mind attribute to your Defensive Damage Factors. Mind's secondary attributes are:

## Focus

Used for any skill involving the use of intelligence, perception, or mental prowess. Most, but not all, psionic powers use the Focus attribute, as do checks that involve reasoning, learning, memorizing (or calling back to memory), resisting mental attacks, perceiving ones surroundings, or using mechanical and technical skills.

## Spirit

Perhaps the least straightforward attribute, Spirit applies to skills which don't necessarily fit in with the rest of the physical

realm. Spirit checks can involve using empathy, luck, intuition, self-discipline, etc. This attribute also represents the ego, ambition, and spirituality of a character.

## Persona

The Persona attribute gives us an estimate of how sociable and socially connected a character is. When two individuals are locked in a tense debate, Persona is used to determine how well one character can hold his position over another. Any time another character would attempt to influence you in some social way – whether by fast-talking you out of your pocket change or by exerting his status over you – you would add your Persona attribute to any applicable check. Persona's secondary attributes are:

## Presence

Force of personality, charisma, chutzpah, style – whatever you call it, a person with a good Presence attribute understands his place in the world and other people tend to respect (or fear) him for it. Presence is most often used when one person tries to influence another in some way.

## Status

Used to represent one's place in society. Status skills are less often rolled for various checks than they are to simply represent the level of fame (or infamy), rank (military or corporate), status, respect, popularity, or wealth of a character.

# Attributes in Play

On their own, attributes are rarely checked against. Having a Body attribute of Superb, for example, might indicate that you are simply a very muscular or fit person. Sometimes, it may be enough to simply look at a person to get an impression of them.



Primary attributes are usually added to Defensive Damage Factors (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**) to determine how well a character can defend against certain types of attack. They also give the broadest picture of a character's overall traits.

A secondary attribute's primary use, other than to give a broad picture of a character, is to control the number of dice that character can reroll when using **Luck Points** (see below) to reroll an associated skill check. A character with a Great (+2) Strength will get to reroll 3dF (a base of 1dF, +2dF for having a Great attribute) any time he spends a Luck Point to reroll a skill which is associated with Strength, such as Climb, Jump, or Pugilism. For further detail, refer to the section on Luck Points.

Though attributes come in different trait levels, they cannot be raised independently. To raise an attribute, one must first raise the level in appropriate **Skills** (see below). For every 15 Build Points a character spends on any associated skill (or number of skills), a secondary attribute will raise by 1 level. To compute the level of a primary attribute, simply add together the level for each of its two secondary attributes. **No Secondary Attribute may ever be raised beyond a level of Superb and no Primary Attribute beyond Phenomenal.** A detailed example will follow the skills section, below.

## Skills

If attributes represent what your character *is like*, skills represent what your character *can do*. Skills come in to play any time your character would need to make an appropriate check. For example, you would roll against your Athletics skill any time you attempt to scale a mountain, scurry up a rope, or clamber over a fence.

## Skill Costs and Build Points

Skills start at a default level of Poor (-2) and are raised using **Build Points**. The number listed in the **Cost** column indicates the total number of Build Points you must expend to increase a skill to the level indicated in the **Level** column.

**Table 2.1: Skill Cost**

Cost	Level
-	Astonishing**
-	Extraordinary**
43	Phenomenal*
26	Wonderful*
15	Superb
10	Great
6	Good
3	Fair
1	Mediocre
0	Poor
-	Abysmal**

\* Characters may not start with a skill of this level. Instead, the character must spend this number of Build Points through the **character advancement** process (see below).

\*\* These trait levels are restricted. No player character may have a trait level above Phenomenal or below Poor; these levels exist merely as a reference point for rolled results outside of the typical range.

Each character begins play with 45 Build Points to apply to skills as he chooses, bearing in mind that no skill may start with a level greater than Superb (GMs who wish to allow more heroic starting characters may choose to increase the number of BP available to 55 instead of 45). Each time a character increases a trait level he reduces his remaining number of Build Points by the amount shown on the **Skill Cost** table above. When a character has 0 Build Points left to spend, he may no longer improve any skill, but it's

okay to “bank” leftover BP for later use as well (see **Character Advancement**, below).

When choosing a skill to improve, you must decide which of the six secondary attributes listed in the section above will link to it. Once chosen, the associated attribute may not be changed without the GM’s approval. The skills listed below are intentionally left uncategorized because many skills are capable of falling under more than one attribute umbrella. Use your common sense (and the GM’s permission) to make logical selections. The Climb skill, for example, would not logically benefit from a high Status attribute, but it may be suitable as either a Strength or a Dexterity skill, depending on the way your character handles its use.

For every 15 Build Points you spend on any number of skills associated with a specific secondary attribute, that attribute’s level increases by +1. For example, if I choose to associate the Athletics skill with the Strength attribute and I raise the Athletics skill from Poor (-2) to Superb (+3), my Strength attribute will raise from Fair (the default level) to Good (+1), because I spent 15 Build Points to raise the skill from Poor to Superb.

Alternately, I may choose to increase Athletics from Poor (-2) to Good (+1) and Melee Combat from Poor (-2) to Great (+2) for a total of 16 points in Strength attributes, which would also increase my Strength from Fair (0) to Good (+1). Note that the one “leftover” Build Point will apply to the same attribute once 14 more Build Points have been spent on associated skills.

When writing skills down on your character sheet, it is a good idea to indicate which attribute you chose to associate it with. For example, when writing down the Athletics skill on my character sheet, I might write down **Superb Athletics [Strength]**, to indicate that I have an Athletics level of Superb and that it is associated with the Strength attribute. This way, it will be easy to remember which attribute applies to the skill when spending Luck Points (see below).

With few exceptions, the skills listed below don’t need detailed rules to tell you how to apply them to your game. If you have questions about when to use a skill, ask the GM; he can help you determine under what circumstances a given skill is appropriate. The GM reserves the right to restrict skills from being used “untrained”; that is, using a skill at the default level of Poor without allocating any levels to it. Medical skills are good examples of skills to restrict from untrained use.

## Skill Groups and Specialized Skills

Most characters specialize in certain skills but are proficient with a broad range of associated skills. For example, a character who is very good at Climbing might also be a well-rounded athlete capable of performing most athletic skills with some degree of proficiency, even if he hasn’t focused his energy on learning them. This is represented by a two-tier skill selection system in which characters select a Skill Group (listed in **bold**, below) and a Specialized Skill (from the list of options following the Skill Group entries).

When choosing your character’s skills, spend your Build Points on Skill Groups in the manner outlined above. These Skill Groups will represent your character’s broader range of abilities and help you to feel like a more well-rounded and flexible individual when skill checks are called for during play.

When purchasing skills with your Build Points, you may select 2 free Specialized Skills from any Skill Group which you have increased. If you have enough Build Points leftover and wish to specialize in additional skills, you may spend 5 Build Points to gain an additional specialization; BP spent in this way counts toward increasing your associated attribute.

Any time you make a skill check during play that would be appropriate for one of your Specialized Skills, you may freely reroll

1dF without using a Luck Point. For example, Ron is attempting to scale a wall. To do so, he will check against his Athletics skill, but since he chose to specialize in the Climb skill he may reroll one die result for that check.

## Example List of Skills

Skill names listed in **bold** are Skill Groups, while those listed afterward are Specializations.

**Artistic:** Aesthetics, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Literary Arts, Performing Arts (music, theater, storytelling, jester, dance, etc., and such skills as Choreography, Composition, Costuming, etc.), Visual Arts (painting, drawing, sculpting, etc.)

**Athletic:** Acrobatics, Aerial Acrobatics, Balance, Boating, Climbing, Endurance, Free-running, Jumping, Pole-vaulting, Swimming, Throwing, Various Sports

**Combat (Melee):** Boxing, Grappling, Hand-to-hand, Martial Arts, Melee Weapons, Pugilism, Thrown Weapons, Wrestling

**Combat (Non-physical):** Astral Combat, Combat Tactics, Verbal Combat (epithets, insults, etc.)

**Combat (Ranged):** Automatics, Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Thrown Weapons

**Covert:** Breaking & Entering, Conceal, Detect/Deactivate Traps, Demolitions, Infiltrate, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Poisoning, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Stealth

**Craft:** Armory, Basket Making, Bowyer/Fletcher, Carpenter, Cooking, Knots, Leatherworking, Masonry, Pottery, Smith, Tailor, Weaving

**Knowledge:** Criminology, Cultures, Detective Fiction, Film, Folklore, Geography, History, Literature, Occultism, Political Situations, Psionics, Supernatural, Trivia, Sciences (pick one, such as Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Oceanography, Physiology, Psychology, Volcanology, etc.)

**Language:** All characters are automatically Fair at their native language, which represents a college literacy level. Increasing the skill level represents an improved reading/



writing proficiency with their own language.

Characters with a Language skill of less than Fair still speak their native language, but they are increasingly less literate than other members of their culture. A Mediocre Language skill represents someone with only a high-school reading level, while a character with Poor skill may speak only one or two words, at best.

Characters may select a new language each time they select this skill. Each language starts at a default level of Poor. Without levels in a specific language their skill is non-existent, meaning the character does not speak it at all. Increasing a Language level beyond Poor improves the character's ability to speak, read, and write that language, as outlined above.

**Manipulation:** Act, Bluff, Bribery, Con Artist, Disguise, Exhort, Extort, Fast-talk, Flattery, Forgery, Interrogate, Intimidate, Impress, Intrigue, Lying, Oratory, Persuade, Seduction

**Medical:** Anatomy, Antidotes, Diagnosis, Doctoring, Field Dressing, First Aid, Medicine, Nursing, Surgery



Characters without levels in a Medical skill are at a level of non-existent, meaning they have no knowledge of the skill at all. Attempting to use a Medical skill without levels assumes that the character has a skill level of Abysmal.

**Merchant:** Bargain, Barter, Business Sense, Evaluate Goods, Haggle, Innkeeping, Marketing, Salesmanship, Shopkeeping

**Notice:** Feel, Hear, Intuition, Search, See, Smell, Taste, Touch

It is important to note that Notice checks shouldn't be called for just to spot clues, uncover plot items, or to generally just spot something that isn't out-of-the-ordinary. Notice is best used for opposed actions (when specifically trying to spot a hidden foe, for example) or to determine unusual properties of something (such as tasting a chemical ingredient that most people wouldn't notice). See **Chapter 8: Game Mastering** for additional advice on when to call for a Notice check.

**Professional:** Accounting, Begging, Bureaucracy, Consultant, Economics, Gambling, Investing, Law, Photography, Publishing, Seamanship

**Rank:** Corporate, Government, Law Enforcement, Military

Rank is a skill that is rarely, if ever, checked against. Characters may hold rank with a specific entity, such as a specific corporation, government, or branch of the military. Sometimes a character may require a certain rank within an organization to have access to top secret information (such as CIA clearance) or may need a specific rank with law enforcement to carry restricted weapons in public.

Generally, Rank is only checked against if one is trying to influence an inferior-ranking member in the same organization. In this case, roll a rank check with a difficulty equal to the target's rank level. Success means you were able to influence the character in some way.

**Reputation:** Fame, Infamy, Notoriety, Popularity, Repute, Respect, Street Cred

**Social (Informal):** Bar Etiquette, Camaraderie, Carouse, Choosing just the right Gift, Control Libido, Flirting, Game Playing, Hold your liquor, Make Amusing Faces or Noises, 'Net Etiquette, Tall Tales, Uplift Spirits, Witty Insults

**Social (Formal):** Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Etiquette, Interviewing, Parley, Repartee, Savoir-Faire, Servant

**Spiritual:** Astral Projection, Communing with Nature, Fasting, Giving Comfort, Listening Deeply, Meditation, Patience, Praying for Miracles, Rituals, Shamanic Journeying, Theology

**Survival:** Camouflage, Camping, Fishing, Hide Traces, Hunting, Mimic Animal Noises, Nature Lore, Navigation, Tracking, Wildcraft, Woodcraft

**Technical:** Computer Security, Computer Use, Electronics, Engineering, Mechanic, Repair Vehicle, Research

**Urban:** Barroom Savvy, Gang Smarts, Shady Contacts, Street Etiquette, Street Gossip, Streetwise, Urban Survival, Urban Tracking

**Vehicles (Drive/Pilot):** Boats, Busses, Civilian Cars, Commercial Jets, Fighter Jets, Helicopters, Military Land Vehicles (Armored Cars, Tanks, etc.), Motorcycles, Race Cars, Semi-trucks, Trains

## Gifts

A **Gift** is a positive trait that doesn't seem to fit the Trait Ladder used for attributes and skills. Gifts allow characters the flexibility to add personality quirks and traits that don't require them to be "activated" (in most cases) and tend to be passive traits. In general, if a Gift isn't written on the character sheet, the character doesn't have it.

Most Gifts do not require a roll to use. A character simply has a Gift or he doesn't, and they simply work at any logical time. For example, the "Always keeps his cool" Gift implies that the character never loses control, no matter how stressful the situation. When other characters may have to make a



check to avoid being frightened, enraged, or otherwise emotionally charged, a character with this Gift simply hand-waives the roll and calls it a success.

Some Gifts may provide a bonus to applicable rolls. Generally speaking, a Gift grants a +2 bonus (since one Gift is equal to several skill levels, the bonus must be greater than an equivalent skill bonus) unless it would provide a bonus to an overly broad range of checks, in which case it would add only a +1 bonus but would enter play more often.

A Gift that might add a +2 bonus would be “Beautiful speaking voice” which may grant a +2 bonus on any Social (Formal) skill check. A Gift that may only give a +1 bonus would be “Single-minded” which grants a bonus on “any lengthy task”. The GM reserves the right to decide how long a task would take before it is considered “lengthy”, but a good rule of thumb is any task that would take one or more hours of concentration.

Characters may choose up to two free Gifts. To gain additional Gifts, they must take Faults or otherwise trade off another trait (see Faults and **Trade-Offs** below).

## Example Gifts

Absolute Direction; Always keeps his cool; Ambidextrous; Animal Empathy; Beautiful speaking voice; Combat Reflexes; Contacts in police force; Danger Sense; Guns Akimbo, Lucky (+2 Luck Points); Many people owe him favors; Never forgets a name/face/whatever; Night Vision; Patron; Perfect Timing; Peripheral Vision; Quick Reflexes; Rapid Healing; Reputation as Hero; Sense of empathy; Single-minded (+1 to any lengthy task); Tireless, Tolerant; Tough Hide (-1 to damage taken)

## Faults

**Faults** are anything that makes life more difficult for a character. They come in two varieties. Primary Faults restrict a character’s actions or earn him a bad reaction from chance-met NPCs. Various attitudes, neuroses and phobias are Faults; so are physical disabilities and social stigmas. There are heroic Faults, too: a code of honor and inability to tell a lie restrict your actions significantly, but are not signs of flawed personality.

Like Gifts, Faults rarely require a role to activate and apply in any situation where it makes sense for them to be active. They may grant penalties on certain checks (“easily frightened” may include a -2 penalty to Mind checks to avoid being frightened) or might cause some issues during gameplay, such as when a character with a Code of Honor is forced in to a situation in which he must make a morally ambiguous decision.

Faults are used to “trade off” trait levels; by taking Faults, characters may gain additional levels to spend on Gifts, skills, or attributes. **No character may have more than 4 Faults** (see **Trade-Offs** below). Be careful not to select two Faults which may have similar effects. For example, “Absent-Minded” and “Easily Distractible” are very similar and therefore should not both appear on a single character sheet.

## Example Faults

Absent-Minded; Addiction; Ambitious; Amorous heartbreaker; Bloodlust; Blunt and tactless; Bravery indistinguishable from foolhardiness; Brazen, Can't resist having the last word; Code of Ethics limits actions; Code of Honor; Compulsive Behavior; Coward; Curious; Finicky; Easily Distractible; Enemy; Fanatic patriot; Full of bluff and bluster and machismo; Garrulous; Getting old; Glutton; Goes Berserk if Wounded; Gossip; Greedy; Gullible; Humanitarian (helps the needy for no pay); Idealist - not grounded in reality; Indecisive; Intolerant; Jealous of anyone getting more attention; Lazy; Loyal to Companions; Manic-Depressive; Melancholy; Multiple Personality; Must obey senior officers; Nosy; Obsession; Outlaw; Overconfident; Owes favors; Phobias; Practical Joker; Quick-Tempered; Quixotic; Self-defense Pacifist; Socially awkward; Soft-hearted; Stubborn; Quick to take offense; Unlucky (-2 Luck Points); Vain; Violent when enraged; Vow; Worry Wart; Zealous behavior; etc.

## Trade-Offs

A player may gain extra trait levels and Gifts by taking GM-approved Faults at the following rate:

**Table 2.2: Fault Trade-off**

Fault		Gained
1 Fault		1 Gift
1 Fault	=	5 Build Points

However, the GM may rule that a particular Fault is not serious enough to be worth five Build Points, but may be worth three or four Build Points. On the other hand, severe Faults may be worth more Build Points.

During character creation, Build Points may be traded (in either direction) at the following rate:

**Table 2.3: Build Point Trade-off**

Lost		Gained
-5 Build Points		+1 Gift
-1 Gift		+5 Build Points
-1 to a Secondary Attribute	=	+10 Build Points

GMs reserve the right to limit the number of levels traded in either direction.

## Luck Points

Luck Points (LP) are meta-game Gifts that may be used to buy “luck” during a game; they let the *players* fudge a game result. These are “meta-game” Gifts because they operate at the player-GM level, not character-character level.

Players start each session with 3 Luck Points. If a character has the Lucky Gift, this number increases by 2, while the Unlucky Fault decreases the number by 2. These Luck Points reset after each session and do not carry over, so characters must either use them or lose them.

Luck Points can be used in many ways, depending on what level on the realistic-legendary scale the game is played. Here are some suggested ways to use them - the GM can create her own uses, of course. A GM may allow as few or many of these options as she wishes. However, the GM is the final determiner of how Luck Points can be used and players ask should before assuming they can do something with Luck Points.

1. Spending a Luck Point may accomplish an *unopposed* action automatically and with panache - good for impressing members of the appropriate sex and possibly avoiding injury in the case of dangerous actions. The GM may veto this use of Luck Points for actions with a Difficulty Level beyond Great, or may require multiple LP be spent if the Difficulty Level is high (a rate of 1 LP per level is a good baseline).

2. A player may spend one Luck Point to reroll one die when attempting a skill check.



Most often, this will be used to try to reroll a negative result into a more positive one, but it may also be used against an NPC to force a positive result to be rerolled.

Characters with a high associated attribute may reroll additional dice when using Luck Points in this way. For example, if a character using a Handgun skill has a Dexterity attribute of Good (+1) he may roll 1 additional die each time he spends LP in this way. If his Dexterity later improves to Superb (+3), he may reroll up to 3 additional dice (for a total of 4dF) when rerolling any skill associated with Dexterity.

3. A player may spend one Luck Point to declare that wounds aren't as bad as they first looked. This reduces the intensity of each wound by one level (a Hurt result becomes a Scratch, for example, or a Very Hurt result becomes a Hurt result instead). Generous GMs may allow characters to spend multiple LP on a single wound to further reduce its severity.

4. For appropriately legendary games, a GM-set number of Luck Points can be spent to ensure a favorable coincidence. (This is always subject to GM approval.) For example, if the PCs are in a maximum security prison, perhaps one of the guards turns out to be the cousin of one of the PCs - and lets them escape! Or the captain of the fishing boat rescuing the PCs turns out to be someone who owes a favor to one of them, and is willing to go out of his way to help the characters. This option should cost a lot of Luck Points, except in games where bizarre coincidences are the norm.

5. Activate an Astonishing result. Generally speaking, a character may only attain a check result of Extraordinary or lower, no matter how high he rolls or how great his ability is with a given skill or attribute. However, by spending a Luck Point, players who roll a result greater than Extraordinary may activate an Astonishing result. Individual skill or power descriptions may have details for Astonishing results. If not, assume that an Astonishing result is simply a better Extraordinary result and adjust the outcome accordingly.

## Psionics and Magic

Characters may spend 2 Gifts to gain a psionic ability or they may purchase magic devices with their Wealth. Further psionic abilities may be purchased by expending 2 Gifts, or by expending 1 Gift and taking 1 Fault. There is no limit to the number of psionic abilities a character may purchase, except as dictated by the campaign's normal limitations on Gifts and Faults (2 free Gifts and 4 total Faults).

Each psionic ability and magic device has one or more key attributes used to determine which of the character's attributes to add when using it. For example, the *mind control* ability's key attribute is Focus; when rolling any check to determine the outcome of using *mind control* you will roll 4dF and add your Focus attribute. It may be helpful to consider which abilities your character may want prior to settling on your final traits. See **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** for more information.

## Cybernetics

One of the defining features of cyberpunk roleplaying is cybernetics: the melding of man and machine. Characters can enhance their bodies with supernatural abilities by having cybernetic implants or even whole-limb replacements. By doing so, they give up a little slice of their own humanity in exchange for great amounts of power.

Cybernetics, their implementation, and their implications in the setting will be discussed in later chapters. For the purposes of character creation, treat any cybernetic enhancement to one's character as one or more Gifts, depending on its relative power and usefulness. Some example cyberware will be outlined in **Chapter 3: Equipment** to give you an idea of what abilities can exist in the world and their suggested cost in Gifts.

## Starting Wealth

See **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more information about how Wealth is handled in **Psi-punk**.

Every character begins play with the ability to purchase a certain amount of equipment. Unless they have Gifts or Faults that change their starting Wealth, beginning characters have a Wealth Value of 48 (Superb).

## Wealth-Specific Gifts and Faults

The following Gifts and Faults apply specifically to Wealth. Feel free to rename these Gifts to apply whatever flavor you wish to your character. Mechanically, they are designed to simply improve or reduce a character's starting Wealth Value.

### Gifts

**Debutante/Heir:** You are the heir to a great fortune and have lived the high life since the day you were born. You start with an additional 32 Wealth, for a total Wealth Value of 80 (Wonderful). This requires characters to spend two Gifts.

**Loaded:** You have Wealth to spare, or at least the above-average means to acquire expensive goods. Your Wealth Value at character creation increases by 16, to a total of 64 (Wonderful) for the cost of one Gift.

### Faults

**Broke:** You always seem to be short on cash. You start play with 16 less Wealth, or a total Wealth Value of 32 (Superb).

**Destitute:** You've spent the majority of your life's savings and have nothing to show for it. You start play with 32 less Wealth for a total of only 16 (Great). This counts as two Faults.



## Character Advancement

Player characters, like real people, grow and learn with experience. Time spent performing a task, training, and studying are all examples of methods people use to learn new skills and improve existing ones. For campaigns which last more than one game session, it is important to give characters the opportunity to grow and improve themselves; this will help the characters feel more real and less stale over time.

Players may earn Build Points (detailed above) throughout a game session and spend them on new traits. BP can be awarded to characters for a variety of reasons and traded later for new skills and Gifts. GMs may award all players a certain number of BP per session, award BP for performing specific tasks during a session, or both.

GMs should consider awarding BP to all present players at the end of any given game session. The amount rewarded may be predetermined or static (for example, John always gives his players 3 BP per session) or it may be scaled up or down depending on what the characters did during the game session (generally, the more heroic or difficult the task, the more BP rewarded). As a base line, BP awarded at the end of the session should be between 2 and 5 points. Any less would prevent the characters' skills from increasing at a reasonable rate, and any more would see them increasing too rapidly.

## Spending Build Points

At any time after a session ends, and before the next session begins, characters may spend BP to improve their skills (and thus raise their attributes). BP may also be used to purchase new Gifts at a cost of 5 BP per Gift. Note that two Gifts must be used to acquire new psionic powers. **2.5: Character Advancement** illustrates BP costs.

For example, Russell has a Great Ranged Combat skill and wishes to raise it to Superb. He earned 5 BP during the last session and spends them all to increase his skill in Ranged Combat. Later, Russell decides that he wants to be an expert, so he decides to raise his skill level to Wonderful. To do so, he needs to spend 11 BP, so he may need to run a few more missions before he can do that.

**Table 2.4: Character Advancement**

To Advance/Gain...	BP Cost
Skill from Poor to Mediocre	1
Mediocre to Fair	2
Fair to Good	3
Good to Great	4
Great to Superb	5
Superb to Wonderful	11
Wonderful to Phenomenal	17
1 Gift	5
1 skill specialization	5
1 psionic power	10 (2 Gifts)

**Designer's Note:** Trait levels of Wonderful and Phenomenal are considered extremely powerful and their cost has been adjusted accordingly. The BP costs for Wonderful and Phenomenal skills follows the pattern of the **Previous Level's BP Cost + 1**, then adds a 5 BP premium (for Wonderful) and 10 BP premium (for Phenomenal) levels; these premiums are equal to the cost of 1 Gift and 2 Gifts, respectively. Traits of Extraordinary and Astonishing are not attainable by normal means.

## Character Questionnaire

The character questionnaire is an optional, but very useful character creation tool. By filling out these questions about your characters, you will gain a better understanding of who they are, where they came from, where they are going, and what makes them particularly special. Players should be encouraged to respond to as few or as many of these questions as they would like, but to try and consider each of them.

This is not meant to be a definitive list of all of the questions that can or should be asked. As usual, feel free to add, subtract, or modify the questionnaire as you see fit.



## Questions

1. What is the character's true name?
2. What is the character's present occupation or role?
- 3a. Character's physical description: ethnicity, gender, age, height, weight, hair color, hair style, eye color.
- 3b. What are the character's distinguishing features?
4. Does the character have any strong affinities, emotional hang-ups, mental handicaps, etc.?
5. What was the character's place of birth?
- 6a. What is the character's true origin?
- 6b. What is the character's origin as he/she knows it (if different)?
7. Does the character have any formal (or informal) education or vocational training?
8. Does the character have any (legitimate) work experience? What was his/her reaction to the job(s)?
9. Who is the character's best friend?
10. Who are the character's primary contacts, patrons, or enemies (and why)?
- 11a. Does the character have any known family?
- 11b. If so, what are their occupations, statuses, locations, current relationships with the character?
12. What are the character's strongest and weakest traits?
13. How does the character see him/herself?
14. How is the character seen by others?
15. What is the character's basic nature?
16. Does the character have a sense of humor (if so, what kind)?
17. What are the character's ambition(s)?
18. What is the character's philosophy of life?
19. Does the character have any hobbies? If so, what are they?
20. What kinds of art, music, and recreation does the character prefer?
21. What is the significance, if any, of the character's working clothes (style, insignia, colors, etc.)?
22. What are the character's favorite pastimes?
23. What's the character's home environment like (physical living condition, economic level, etc.)?
24. What is *the* most important fact that should be known about this character?
25. How would you characterize this character in one sentence?
26. What unique talents or equipment does this character have?
27. How is this character different from others?
28. Why do you like or hate this character and why are you willing to play him/her?
29. Why will others like or hate this character?
30. Why will this character be memorable?

## Character Creation Summary

Creating a character for **Psi-punk** is fast and easy. Below is a simple step-by-step guide that summarizes the process for ease of reference.

### Step 1: Concept

Choose a character concept. By doing so, you can focus your attention on Skills, Gifts, and Faults to find a proper fit for your character. You can start by selecting an archetype or develop your own.

### Step 2: Skills

You begin with 45 Build Points to spend on Skills. Choose a Skill Group, decide which Secondary Attribute to link it to, and decide at what level you wish to have the Skill. Continue selecting skills until you run out of Build Points (or choose to "bank" the BP you have left for later). Refer to the following chart for Build Point Costs per Skill Level:

Table 2.1: Skill Cost

Cost	Level
-	Astonishing**
-	Extraordinary**
43	Phenomenal*
26	Wonderful*
15	Superb
10	Great
6	Good
3	Fair
1	Mediocre
0	Poor
-	Abysmal**

### Step 3: Skill Specializations

Select two Skill Specializations from within any Skill Group. Remember that rolling a Skill in which you are specialized grants you an automatic 1dF reroll. You may select additional Skill Specializations at a cost of 5 Build Points each. Points spent on additional specializations also count toward increasing your associated attributes, but your two free specializations do not.

### Step 4: Gifts, Faults, and Trade-Offs

Select up to two free Gifts and up to four total Faults. For each Fault you select, you may gain an additional Gift or five Build Points. You may make other Trade-Offs as noted on the following table:

Remember that Gifts can be used to buy Powers (see **Chapter 5: Powers and Magic**) or Cybernetics (see **Chapter 3: Equipment**) and/or any other Gift you desire.

Table 2.3: Build Point Trade-of

Lost	Gained
-5 Build Points	+1 Gift
-1 Gift	+5 Build Points
-1 to an attribute	+10 Build Points

### Step 5: Attributes

For every 15 points you spend on Skills with a linked Secondary Attribute, raise that attribute by one level. For example, if you have the **Combat (Melee) [Strength]** skill at a level of Superb, you raise your Strength attribute to Good.

Calculate your Primary Attributes by adding together their associated Secondary Attributes. For example, if you have Good Dexterity and Great Strength, you have a Superb Body. Refer to the following chart to easily reference Primary Attributes and their associated Secondary Attributes.

Table 2.5: Associated Attributes

Primary Attribute	Secondary Attributes	
Body	Dexterity	Strength
Mind	Focus	Spirit
Persona	Presence	Status

### Step 6: Purchase Equipment

You begin play with Wealth totaling one Great, two Good, and four Fair purchases. Use it to purchase gear from **Chapter 3: Equipment**. Pool any remaining Wealth at a rate of two-lower-for-one-higher; two Fair pool together to form one Good, two Good to form one Great, etc.

### Step 7 (Optional): Character Questionnaire

Finally, answer the Character Questionnaire located in this chapter. Use it to get an idea of your character's background, motives, outlook on life, etc.

### All Done!

Don't forget to add all of this information to your Character Sheet as you finalize your traits. Once you have it all written down, you're ready to start play with your brand new character!

# Chapter 3: Equipment and Cybernetics





Every person carries with them something of material value, be it as inexpensive (or even free) as a simple piece of clothing or as costly as a high-end personal computer. Most items don't need to be defined in terms of cost or game mechanics; everyone is assumed to be able to afford at least one set of clothes and, in 2096, nearly everyone carries personal electronics.

Other belongings do benefit from some careful definition and mechanical explanation. Weapons, armor, magic, cyberware, vehicles, and other high-end gear is likely to set a character back at least a fraction of their Wealth, and that is the equipment which will be defined in this chapter.

For basic goods, including clothing, personal care items, and personal electronics, simply assume that a character can and does have the things he desires. There isn't any need to deny someone a personal computer when they are as commonplace in 2096 as wristwatches were 100 years earlier. Basic computers may be upgraded with additional components or software that are beyond the cost of the initial components (and thus a character may have to spend Wealth to acquire them), but in general these items are not worth keeping track of individually.

Some characters may choose to be outfitted according to their Status or Wealth Levels, to indicate that they are unhip or trendy, amateur or professional, rich or poor, etc. However, none of this needs to have any bearing on actual game mechanics unless the player or GM deems it necessary. After all, wealthy characters may not dress the part (preferring to stay low-key or spend their fortunes on something other than nice clothes) and a poor person might be broke because he chose to spend all of his hard-earned cash on expensive computers. Likewise, a character with Superb Status may get his fame from the underground and not from being a glamorous movie star or high-paid corporate drone.

It is both simple and functional to say that a character simply has any mundane item he wishes to possess, provided it would make sense for him to be carrying at the time. For example, a woman might keep her hair bobby-pinned and thus have an improvised lock pick with her when the moment calls for it. If it would help the character out of a bind to say that he is carrying an item which would help in a stressful or harmful circumstance, feel free (as a GM) to ask the character to spend a Luck Point to procure it from his pockets.

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to those items which would benefit from some additional definition. We'll start with everyone's trusty sidekick, the sidearm.

## Guns

Guns come in five main types in **Psi-punk**: Handguns, Automatics (Autos), Rifles, Sniper Rifles, and Shotguns. Because the combat system is designed to be simple and fun, we have reduced the level of realism to provide simple and universal weapon mechanics. There are various resources available to implement more realistic and deadly gun-play in your campaign, but they will not be detailed here. The focus of **Psi-punk** is not on having the most realistic firefight mechanics, but rather to have a simplified system that supplements the bigger theme of the setting.

The guns detailed in this chapter all have the following traits associated with them at various levels depending on the weapon type.

**Damage:** the level added to the weapon's Offensive Damage Factors.

**Range:** the gun's Maximum Effective Range. See **Table 4.8: Range Difficulty** for an idea of what each level represents. Attempting to attack a character that is beyond the gun's Range results in a failed attempt every time, regardless of your rolled result.

**Rate of Fire (RoF):** the weapon's ability to fire multiple bullets in a single attack, as outlined on **Table 4.11** of **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**. Weapons with more than one RoF listed have a selectable rate of fire, meaning they can change it each round.

**Reload:** the frequency at which a gun might need to be reloaded, listed by the number of blanks naturally rolled on 4dF (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**). Multiple values indicate different reload requirements based on the gun's Rate of Fire; for example, "4, 3, 2" would be the number of blanks required for Single, Burst, and Full Auto rates of fire, respectively.

**Rank:** the minimum required Rank skill a character must possess in order to be able to both purchase and carry one of these weapons legally. Characters with Reputation or Urban skills equal to the weapon's Rank may be able to find and purchase such a weapon, but have no special permit to carry it in public. Permits may be purchased for weapons of Good Rank or lower at the cost of Good [8] Wealth; permits are not granted for weapons with Great or higher Rank levels.

**Cost:** the Wealth Value a character must spend to purchase the item. Remember that a character may still need to acquire permits or otherwise find someone to sell them these items if they have a Rank requirement higher than Fair. See **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for details on Wealth.

**Gifts:** any additional benefits a weapon might have; these may not apply to all weapons in a given category, and this is where the bulk of weapon customization comes from.

**Faults:** as Gifts but with negative, instead of positive, modifiers.

## Handguns

Handguns are the standard side-arm for most people. Though gun control laws have relaxed over the years, it's still illegal to



shoot someone. Guns are purchased legally under the (often false) assumption that they will only be used in self-defense.

Small and Medium-sized handguns can be held in one hand. Characters possessing the Ambidextrous, Guns Akimbo, or some similar Gift may wield two of these weapons and attack with each one in a single round. Characters who do not possess an appropriate Gift may also wield two of these weapons but take a -2 penalty on each attack. Large handguns are too unwieldy and have too much kick to be used in this manner.

## Shotguns

Shotgun ammo, or "shot," spreads at range. The Damage assumes a target at its Maximum Effective Range. Add +1 to its Damage at Fair Range and +2 at Mediocre Range.

Shotguns are illegal to carry in public and are not easily concealed. They impose a -3 penalty to any check made to attempt to conceal them unless they have the **Sawed-**

Table 3.1: Guns

Weapon	Damage	Range	Rate of Fire	Reload (# blanks)	Cost	Rank
<b>Handguns</b>						
Sm. Handgun	Fair	Good	S	3	Fair [4]	-
Md. Handgun	Good	Good	S	3	Good [8]	-
Lg. Handgun	Great	Great	S	3	Great [16]	Good
<b>Shotguns</b>						
Shotgun	Superb	Great	S	1	Great [16]	Great
Double-barreled	Superb	Great	S or 2 in one round	1	Superb [32]	Great
Elephant Gun	Phenomenal	Great	S	1	Superb [32]	Superb
<b>Rifles</b>						
Rifle	Good	Superb	S, B	3, 2	Great [16]	Good
High-powered Rifle	Great	Superb	S, B	3, 2	Great [16]	Great
Sniper Rifle	Superb	Wonderful	S	3	Superb [32]	Superb
<b>Automatics</b>						
Sm. Submachine Gun	Good	Good	S, B, FA	4, 3, 2	Great [16]	Great
Lg. Submachine Gun	Great	Great	S, B, FA	4, 3, 2	Superb [32]	Great
Assault Rifle	Superb	Great	S, B, FA	4, 3, 2	Superb [32]	Superb

**Off Barrel Gift** (see below). Only characters with a Police or Military Rank of Great or better may openly carry a shotgun.

## Rifles

Rifles have long barrels which helps improve their Maximum Effective Range. It is legal to carry a rifle only with a permit or sufficient Rank.

## Automatics

Dangerous and potent weapons, automatic firearms are illegal to carry in public without sufficient Police or Military Rank.

Small submachine guns can be carried in one hand and fired twice in one round with the same caveats as Small and Medium handguns.

## Gifts

Firearm Gifts include anything that can be attached to, improved upon, or modified from the original design. Gifts include every-

thing from laser scopes and sound suppressors to improved clip sizes and even computer integration. Below are a few example Gifts, but by no means a definitive list. Each Gift has a Wealth Modifier, which increases the gun's base cost by that amount.

**Energy Weapon:** This weapon fires intense beams of energy (lasers) instead of regular ballistic ammunition. Energy weapons deal more damage than their ballistic counterparts, granting them a +1 modifier on ODFs. **Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

**Fingerprint Scanner:** The weapon has been keyed to your individual fingerprints and will not fire when held by anyone else. On the up side, nobody else can use your weapon against you. On the down side, you can't fire the weapon while wearing gloves. Also note: characters attempting to use the *control animate* power to make themselves appear like you do not have enough control (or the intimate knowledge of your fingerprints) to accurately mimic your prints and therefore cannot use your gun, even if they





otherwise appear identical to you.

Optionally, you may add a second Gift to the weapon which forces it to explode in the hand of anyone attempting to fire it without your fingerprints. (**Warning: Keep out of reach of children!**) Weapons which explode in this manner deliver an *unopposed* attack with a +5 offensive damage factor against the user who pulled the trigger and anyone within Poor proximity of him. The weapon is permanently destroyed from the explosion. **Wealth Modifier:** Fair [+4] (Good [+8] with exploding trap option)

**Increased Ammo Capacity:** This attachment, as its name implies, improves the amount of ammunition the weapon can hold, thus reducing the frequency at which it must be reloaded. Weapons with increased ammo capacity increase the number of blanks required on a natural roll by 1, to a maximum of 4 blanks. **Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16] (includes cost of attachment and increased ammunition cost).

**Laser Scope:** This standard “red dot” laser scope improves the accuracy of the weapon by improving the user’s ability to target his enemy. When using a laser scope, the gun’s Range increases by one level. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]

**Ocular Integration:** This attachment requires the user to have cybernetic eyes and plugs directly into your optical system. The integration allows the user to pinpoint his target with astonishing accuracy. When using a weapon with this Gift, the wielder gains a 1dF reroll. **Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

**Sawed-Off Barrel:** Any shotgun may possess this Gift, in which the barrel’s length is cut down to a minimal size. This makes the weapon easier to conceal (negating the -3 penalty) but also halves the weapon’s effective range. **Wealth Modifier:** Fair [+4]

**Sound Suppressor:** This weapon attachment reduces the volume of the gun’s blast. Notice checks made to hear one of these weapons fire take a -2 penalty. Sound suppressors can be added to shotguns, but only if they are created using *sonarkinesis* (and thus are susceptible to *antipsi* effects). **Wealth Modifier:** Fair [+4]

**Stabilizer:** This add-on uses a variety of methods to correct for unsteady hands and light breathing, improving the weapon’s overall accuracy. When a user spends at least one round to aim his weapon, he gains a +1 bonus on ODFs in addition to any bonuses normally granted for taking time to aim a weapon. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]

## Melee Weapons

In addition to guns, many characters carry melee weapons as back-ups. Other characters carry melee weapons as their preferred side-arm, opting for style over substance. Melee weapons possess many of the same traits as guns, with a few exceptions as follows:



**Range:** use **Table 4.8: Range Difficulty** (Chapter 4) for determining the range of melee weapons.

**Rate of Fire/Reload:** melee weapons do not possess these traits.

### Gifts

**Morphing:** Weapons with this Gift have been enhanced with the *control inanimate objects* power at a Power Rating of 1. This ability allows the wielder to modify the weapon's properties slightly in any of the following ways (feel free to be creative and add your own):

**Shrink:** Reduce the weapon's size, making it easier to conceal (+1 to conceal, but -1 to ODFs)

**Expand:** Expand the weapon's size, either back to its original (if shrunk) or to a slightly larger size (-1 to conceal, but +1 to ODFs)

**Table 3.2: Melee Weapons**

Weapon	Damage	Range	Cost	Rank	Notes
Unarmed, untrained*	Mediocre	Abysmal	-	-	Cannot add Gifts
Unarmed, trained*	Fair	Abysmal	-	-	Cannot add Gifts
Brass Knuckles*	Fair	Abysmal	-	-	+1 Damage if specialized
Small Knife	Fair	Abysmal to Fair	-	-	Can be thrown
Large Knife	Good	Poor	Poor [1]	Mediocre	
Blackjack/sap	Fair	Abysmal	-	-	Mental damage
Club	Good	Poor	-	-	-1 to conceal
Quarterstaff	Good	Poor to Mediocre	Poor [1]	Fair	-3 to conceal
Whip	Fair	Mediocre to Fair	Mediocre [2]	Mediocre	
One-handed Sword	Great	Poor	Fair [4]	Fair	
Two-handed Sword	Superb	Poor to Mediocre	Great [16]	Great	-3 to conceal
Throwing Axe	Fair	Poor to Fair	Poor [1]	Mediocre	Can be thrown
One-handed Axe	Great	Poor	Good [8]	Great	-1 to conceal, +1 vs. armored opponents
Two-handed Axe	Superb	Poor to Mediocre	Great [16]	Superb	-3 to conceal, +1 vs. armored opponents

\* Being specialized in unarmed combat means having Skill Specialization (Unarmed) with the Combat (Melee) Skill Group. Brass Knuckles gain a +1 bonus to ODFs if the character is specialized in unarmed combat.

**Sharpen:** Enhance a blade's sharpness or add a cutting edge or spikes to an otherwise blunt object, giving the weapon a +1 to ODFs

**Blunt:** Reduce the weapon's sharpness, making it easier to deal non-lethal damage (damage dealt never results in death)

Only one of these effects may be active at any given time; changing between options takes 6 seconds (one round). The power may be either magic or psionic in nature. **Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

**Psi-Static:** Designed primarily for covert missions in which powerful mentals need to be dealt with, these weapons are imbued with the *antipsi* power and may be used in one of two ways.

**Antipsi Strike:** Whenever you damage someone using this function, make a free *antipsi* check against them using the Power Rating as your modifier.

**Psi-Static:** Switching to this effect causes the weapon to radiate an aura of *antipsi* as if it had the Psi-static Fault (see Chapter 4).

Changing between functions takes 6 seconds (1 round). While this Gift can be either magic or psionic in nature, it is most commonly magic. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8], Great [+16], or Superb [+32] (for PR 1, 2, or 3 respectively).

**Psychokinetic:** This weapon has been enhanced with one type of *psychokinesis*: cryo, photo, pyro, sonar, or telekinesis. It comes with a Power Rating between 1 and 3 and adds its PR as an Offensive Damage Factor. Attacks made with this weapon may have different effects depending on the nature of the power; pyrokinetic weapons, for example, may be able to ignite combustible materials with a successful attack. This Gift may be either magic or psionic in nature. Only one type of *psychokinesis* Gift may be applied to a single weapon at any given time. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8], Great [+16], or Superb [+32] (for PR 1, 2, or 3 respectively)

## Grenades

Grenades deal damage to all creatures and objects in an area, making them devastating and highly restricted weapons. Use of lethal grenades of any kind is strictly prohibited within city limits, even by ranking officials, police officers, and military personnel. With that being said, they still see their fair share of use by criminals, mercenaries, and even covert military operatives when the timing is right and the surveillance limited.

Grenades come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and qualities, but for the sake of keeping things simple and fun we have taken the average of these weapons for game statistics. All grenades use the same Range and Blast Area traits, but their Damage, Rank, and Cost traits, as well as their Gifts and Faults, may vary.

**Range:** All grenades have a maximum range (as described on **Table 4.8: Range Difficulty**) of Good ("down a block"). This is the furthest a grenade may be thrown without the aid of some other device, such as a grenade launcher.

**Blast Area:** All grenades have a Fair ("across a hall") Blast Area, as described on the same table. No grenade may ever have a Blast Area greater than Fair, but certain Faults may reduce its Blast Area.

**Damage:** Grenades have a default Damage value of Good and they deal this damage to all creatures and objects within their Blast Area.

**Cost:** The cost to purchase a set of 10 grenades is Good [8]. Certain Gifts and Faults may increase or decrease this trait. Damage may be raised at a Wealth cost of +1 Wealth Level per +1 Damage. For example, 10 grenades with Superb Damage would cost Superb [32] Wealth.

**Rank:** Grenades begin with a default Rank of Superb which may be increased and (much more rarely) decreased with Gifts and Faults. Regardless of the attacker's



Rank, lethal grenades (grenades which deal damage) may never be legally used within city limits.

**Gifts:** Gifts may be added to grenades to deal different kinds of damage, change their effect, or provide other benefits. Gifts always have an associated Wealth modifier and sometimes a Rank modifier.

**Faults:** Faults may be added to grenades to reduce their effectiveness as well as their Cost. Rarely, a Fault may be used to reduce the grenade's Rank requirement.

Below are the basic statistics for a grenade, for easy reference. Example Gifts and Faults follow.

Grenades				
Damage	Range	Blast Area	Cost	Rank
Good	Good	Fair	Good	Superb

### Example Grenade Gifts

**Antipsi:** Designed by the Anti-Psi League to combat mentals, antipsi grenades deliver an EMP-like burst of energy that disrupts psychic fields. This effect can be instead of or in addition to dealing normal damage. Use the grenade's Damage as its Power Rating when checking to suppress psionic effects within the grenade's Blast Area. **Wealth Modifier:** None (if no damage dealt) or +1 Level per Power Rating

**Cryogrenade:** This grenade has been modified to deal cold damage in its Blast Area, rather than incendiary damage. A grenade of this type has the potential to freeze water and other objects, make surfaces icy, and so forth. **Wealth Modifier:** Fair [4]

**Flash Grenade:** This grenade has been modified to deliver a stunning flash of light. It deals no damage but has the potential to temporarily blind anyone within its Blast Area. When making an attack with a flash grenade, make an attack roll and add the grenade's Damage trait to your ODFs as normal. Instead of the target making a Body check to reduce damage, they make a Body

check (and do not add any bonuses from armor) to reduce the duration of their blindness. For every degree of success by which you beat your target, they are blinded for one round. **Wealth Modifier:** None

**Inorganic Matter:** These grenades use *control inanimate* magic to deal damage only to inanimate and inorganic objects within their Blast Area. Living creatures and organic matter are not affected, making them suitable for destroying property without directly injuring anyone (though shrapnel and other hazardous side-effects may still harm living creatures). **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]

**Organic Matter:** These grenades use *control animate* magic to deliver damage to only organic matter within their Blast Area. Inanimate and non-organic objects are not affected, making this the perfect grenade for killing humans and other living creatures without destroying nearby property. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]

**Shadow Grenade:** Grenades altered by this Gift cause the light in an area to vanish, effectively creating a darkness effect. All light in the area is dimmed according to the grenade's Power Rating as if the thrower had successfully used the *photokinesis* power to darken a room. The effect lasts for one minute per degree of success. Shadow grenades do not deal damage and instead treat their Damage trait as a Power Rating trait. **Wealth Modifier:** None

### Example Grenade Faults

**Dud:** This grenade is just an empty casing; it does nothing but bounce upon impact. It is most often used as a decoy. This Fault cannot be combined with any other Gift or Fault. **Wealth Modifier:** Fair + Mediocre [-6 total]

**Reduced Blast Area:** Grenades with this Fault have a smaller Blast Area than normal. Reduce the Blast Area from Fair ("across the hall") to Poor ("across the room"). **Wealth Modifier:** Mediocre [-2]

## Armor

Armor provides the wearer with varying degrees of protection, depending on its Protection rating (see below). Each character may wear only one set of armor at any time (unless that armor possesses a Gift which states otherwise).

All types of armor possess the following traits:

**Protection:** The amount of damage from each attack that the armor can absorb. In game terms, add the armor's Protection rating to the character's Defensive Damage Factors to determine whether or not they are struck and/or injured in combat.

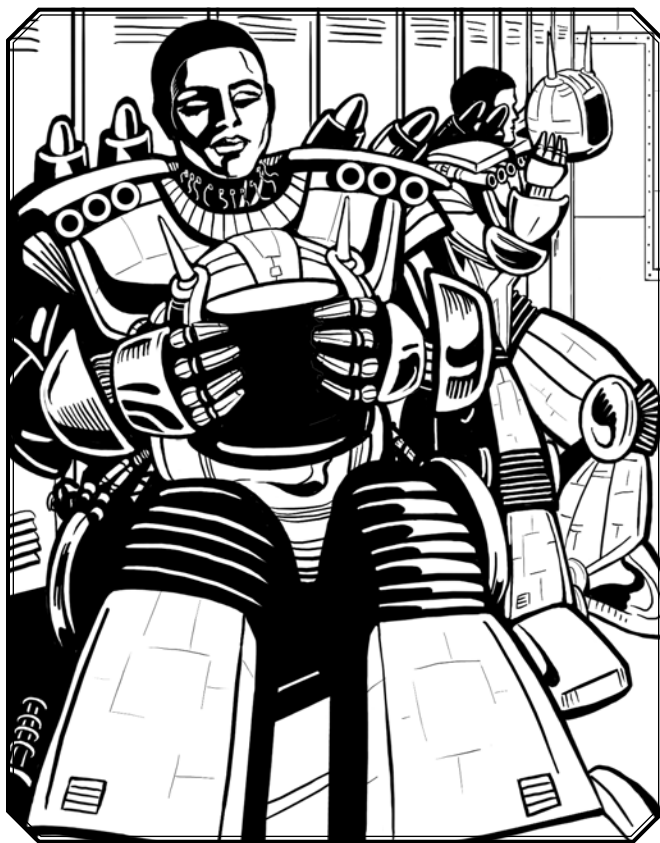
**Rank:** the minimum required Rank skill a character must possess in order to be able to both purchase and wear this armor legally. Characters with Reputation or Urban skills equal to the armor's Rank may be able to find and purchase such an item, but have no special permit to wear it in public. Permits may be purchased for armor of Good rank or lower at the cost of Good [8] Wealth; permits are not granted for armor with Great or higher Rank levels.

**Cost:** the amount of Wealth a character must spend to purchase the item. Remember that a character may still need to acquire permits or otherwise find someone to sell these items if they have a Rank requirement higher than Fair.

**Gifts and Faults:** As with any other item, armor can possess both Gifts and Faults. These help to define the armor's specific capabilities and drawbacks and are the primary traits which make one type of armor different from another. Gifts and Faults can add to or subtract from the Protection, Wealth, and Rank values of armor.

**Wealth Modifier:** The total modified Wealth Value after all Gifts and Faults have been taken into consideration.

**Rank Modifier:** This trait applies to Gifts and Faults. Gifts with a Rank modifier increase the Rank level by the listed amount,



while Faults decrease the modifier by the listed amount. For simplicity, these modifiers are listed as numeric values; a Rank modifier of +1 that is applied to Light Armor counts as a Rank requirement of Good, while a +1 modifier to Dense Armor would increase the Rank level to Superb. All modifiers stack.

## Types of Armor

Armor is defined by its Protection rating and not with a specific name or type. This system allows for characters to be creative with the way they choose to describe a particular piece of armor; armor with Good Protection, for example, could be anything from a thick leather jacket to a shirt made of highly durable futuristic fabric.

Players and GMs should feel free to work together to develop a suit of armor, choosing from the table of generic armor types below and adding Gifts and Faults to make it unique. A few example armor sets follow to give you a starting point, but the possibil-

Table 3.3: Armor

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Light Armor	Good	Mediocre [2]	—
Sturdy Armor	Great	Good [8]	—
Durable Armor	Superb	Superb [32]	Good
Dense Armor	Wonderful	Superb [32]	Great
Impenetrable Armor	Phenomenal	Wonderful [64]	Superb

ities should be limited only by imagination (and, of course, the power level the GM has in mind for the campaign).

## Armor Penalties

Certain forms of armor are bulkier than others and restrict movement. As a trade-off for better protection, these bulkier armors impose penalties upon the wearer, as indicated for each armor type below.

**Durable Armor:** Armor of Durable quality provides Superb protection but imposes a -1 penalty on any check which would feasibly be restricted by movement, such as Athletics checks. This armor also grants a +1 bonus to anyone attempting to Notice it.

**Dense Armor:** Even more restrictive than Durable armor, Dense armor imposes a -2 penalty on any physical check that would be restricted by armor and grants a +3 bonus to anyone attempting to Notice it.

**Impenetrable Armor:** This armor type cannot be concealed; it is simply too large and bulky for even the most untrained eye to overlook. It also imposes a -3 penalty on any physical check that would be restricted by movement.

## Example Armor Types

### Leather Jacket

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Light	Good	Mediocre [2]	None

The most basic type of protection, a leather jacket can be purchased and worn by nearly anyone. Though it offers only limited protection compared to more sophisticated armors, its accessibility and availability makes it a must-have for anyone not possessing superior armor.

Leather jackets possess no Gifts or Faults.

### Leather Duster

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Light	Good	Fair [4]	None

Like the traditional leather jacket, a leather duster offers only basic protection against attacks. It is longer and covers more of the body than a leather jacket though, and its size and bulk are renowned for their ability to help conceal weapons.

**Concealment [Gift]:** Any check made to notice a concealed item against characters wearing a leather duster is made at a -1 penalty. **Wealth Modifier:** Mediocre [+2]

### Bulletproof Shirt

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Sturdy	Great	Good [12]	None

Traditionally used by members of law enforcement, the bulletproof shirt has become the favored method of protection for anyone on the streets.

**Easily Concealable [Gift]:** Any check made to notice that a character is wearing a bulletproof shirt is made at a -2 penalty. **Wealth Modifier:** Fair [+4]



### Reinforced Vest

Armor Type	Protection	Wealth	Rank
Sturdy	Great	Fair [6]	None

Similar to a bulletproof shirt, the reinforced vest is comprised of densely-woven fabric that is resistant to ballistic attacks. Unlike the bulletproof shirt, this armor also contains steel plates which reinforce the armor against attack. These steel plates make it too bulky to wear under normal clothing.

**Bulky [Fault]:** This armor cannot be easily concealed; all attempts to notice it gain a +2 bonus. **Wealth Modifier:** Mediocre [-2]. (This Fault should not be applied to armor types which are already difficult to conceal, such as most armors of Durable or greater quality.)

### Full-body Armor

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Durable	Superb	Superb [40]	Good

Full-body Armor, as its name implies, protects the wearer from head-to-toe. It includes a face mask or helmet, reinforced body armor and leggings, gloves, and boots. This armor is military grade and requires a Rank of Good or better to wear openly without question.

**Heads-Up Display [Gift]:** Your helmet contains a Heads-Up Display (HUD) that provides you detailed tactical information about your surroundings. The HUD is capable of displaying such environmental elements as temperature, relative distance, slope, and size of nearby objects. For an added cost it can display infrared, thermal, or night vision. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]; each additional visual enhancement has a Wealth Modifier of Fair [+4].

### Powered Body Armor

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Durable	Superb	Great [24]	Great

Similar to full-body armor, powered body armor has a battery pack that supplies additional energy to the gear. When powered armor is struck by any object (including bullets and energy weapons), an electric current is immediately pumped through the armor to create a localized layer of added protection for a brief time. This ability to reinforce specific points on the armor as-needed means that it does not need to be as rigid at all times.

**Requires a Battery [Fault]:** Because this armor requires additional energy, a battery pack must accompany it at all times and the battery pack must maintain a charge. The armor can absorb five attacks before the battery is drained and it becomes a simple suit of body armor (reducing its Protection value to Great). Batteries are self-charging but require one hour of recharge time for each charge spent. **Wealth Modifier:** Good [-8]

### Magicorp Antipsi Armor

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Dense	Wonderful	Superb [32]	Superb

Magicorp's latest in a line of defenses against mentals. This powered armor includes *antipsi* tech which helps protect the wearer from mental as well as physical damage. The magic is implanted in the helmet, making that the armor's primary weak spot.

**Antipsi Helmet [Gift]:** The wearer is permanently under the effect of *antipsi* magic, making his mind and the area surrounding him difficult to penetrate. All psionic abilities and effects activated or targeted within 5 feet of the wearer is subject to an opposed *antipsi* check (see **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** for more info). The wearer's trait level for this check is based on the Power Rating of the helmet, and the Wealth Modifier for this Gift is equal to the helmet's Power Rating. For example, an *an-*

*tipsi* helmet with a Power Rating of Great (+2) would have an effective trait level of Great when attempting to suppress psionic effects, and the Wealth modifier for this Gift would also be Great [+16].

**Corporate Sponsored [Fault]:** This armor is commissioned by and distributed to the agents of Magicorp and may not be used by any other character without the risk of severe repercussions. The wearer may only lease this armor; it remains property of Magicorp. Characters pay less money to acquire the armor, but the corporation requires that they be of a sufficiently high rank before the character can be entrusted with it. **Wealth Modifier:** Great [-16]. **Rank Modifier:** +1

### Force Armor

Armor Type	Protection	Cost	Rank
Impenetrable	Phenomenal	Phenomenal	Superb
[128]			

The ultimate in protective equipment, Force Armor protects the wearer from all manner of attacks by utilizing built-in *telekinesis* technology to generate a field of outward force that dampens incoming attacks. In addition, *sonar*- and *photokinesis* technology built into the suit allow it to generate a temporary cloaking device which makes it imperceptible to both sight and sound.

**Cloaking Device [Gift]:** You and your armor become imperceptible to sight and sound for as long as you maintain concentration on this ability. You do not need to make a check to activate this cloaking ability, but performing actions other than movement will cause the effect to end. **Wealth Modifier:** Superb [+32]

**Flexible [Gift]:** Most body armor is inflexible, making it difficult to move about and use skills based on Dexterity. However, Force Armor is made from flexible materials as its primary defensive mechanism is *telekinesis*, not plated armor. You have a full range of motion while receiving all of the

protective benefits of this armor. **Wealth Modifier:** Superb [+32] (modifier is based on Protection rating minus 2.)

## Magic

The term “magic” refers to any device which emulates psionic abilities. Each magic device emulates one specific psionic ability: e.g. *antipsi*, *telekinesis*, *psychometabolism*, etc. For rules on using magic, see **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic**.

Because magic is treated under the law as a form of psionics, the same legal issues apply. Non-offensive psionics may be used at any time without provoking the authorities (though it may provoke civilians if the user is not careful), but use of any magic that can be construed harmful or offensive must be undertaken with caution.

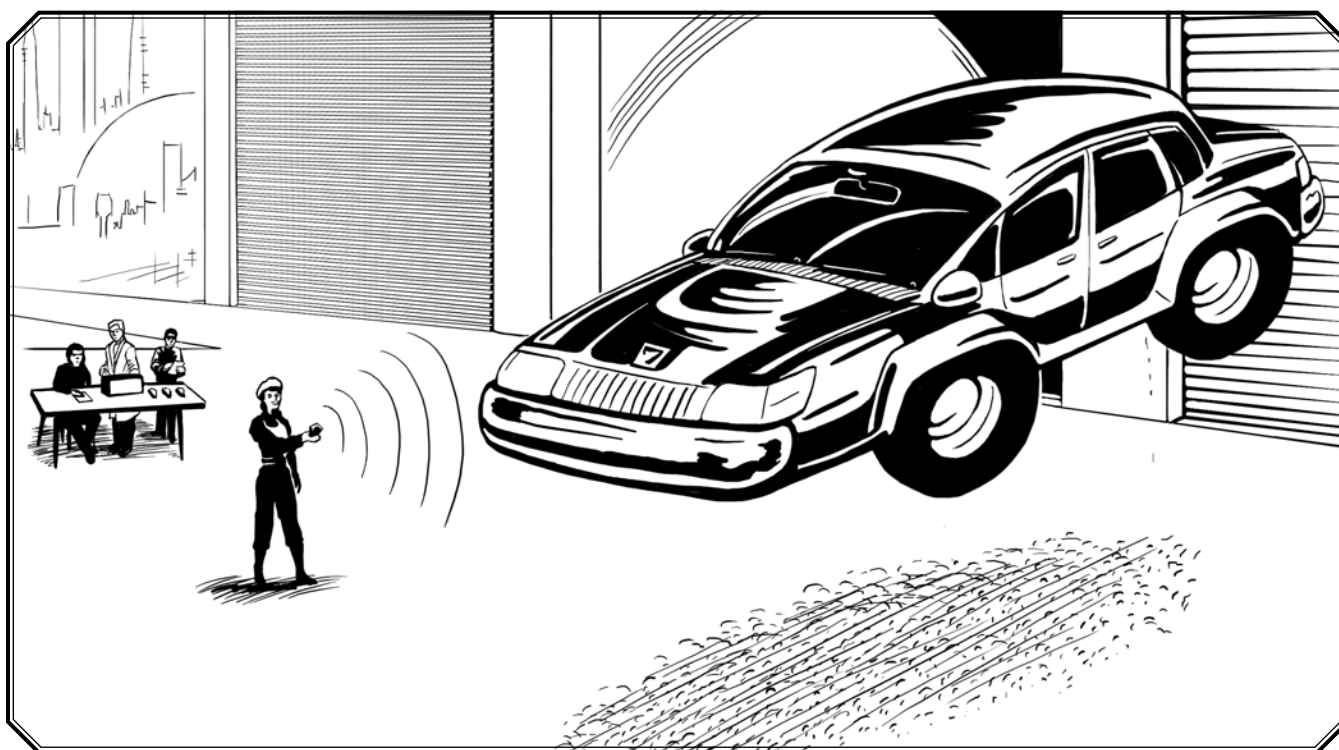
### Pricing Magic Devices

The base Wealth Modifier of any magic device is equal to its Power Rating (PR).

When pricing an item for a specific purpose, determine which psionic power could produce that effect. The device’s Power Rating must be equal to or greater than the minimum result required to produce that effect, but it also gains a Fault that limits its power (and reduces its cost.)

Also, where magic is concerned, one must possess an appropriate Rank skill to even purchase a device with a Power Rating of Great or better. As with the Wealth cost, the required level of Rank is equal to the device’s Power Rating. For example, to purchase a device with a PR of Superb, one must first possess both a Superb Rank and spend Superb [32] Wealth.

For example, a belt that is capable of turning its user invisible must have a PR of Superb or greater, since the *photokinesis* power used to create the effect requires at least a Superb result to turn someone invisible. This means the base Cost of the item



is Superb [32] and that its Rank Requirement is Superb. However, because it has the Faults of “Invisible only” and “only affects wearer,” the belt’s Superb Cost is reduced by two levels to a total Cost of Good [8]. Note that the required Rank is still Superb.

## Gifts and Faults

Magic devices may possess both Gifts and Faults, just like a person with innate psionic powers. Gifts and Faults may be chosen from those suggested in **Chapter 5**, or additional Gifts and Faults may be developed for a device. For each Gift a device possesses, increase the device’s Wealth Modifier by one level. Conversely, decrease the device’s Wealth Modifier by one level for each Fault it possesses. No device may have more than two Faults.

## Example Magic

Magic devices come in a wide variety, from gadgets that emulate one specific type of psionic power to tools used to perform a very specific function. Below are a few example devices.

### Divining Rod

A modern take on a classic tool, this device may be programmed to locate one creature or object as long as it is within one mile of the user (if PR: Great) or 10 miles (if PR: Superb).

It may be programmed from any basic communications tablet with two minutes and a Mediocre Technical check. Once programmed, the divining rod transmits a location signal to the user’s tablet.

Creatures not wishing to be located may make an opposed Mind roll to prevent the divining rod from accurately picking up on their location.

**Power:** ESP

**Power Rating:** 2 or 3

**Faults:** Locate only

**Cost:** Good [8] (PR: 2) or Great [16] (PR: 3)

**Rank:** Great or Superb

### Fire Starter

Just a fancy name for a pure *pyrokinesis* device, this gadget can do everything that someone with the *pyrokinesis* power can do.



**Power:** *Pyrokinesis*

**Power Rating:** -1 to 3

**Cost:** Mediocre [2] (PR: -1) to Superb [32] (PR: 3)

**Rank:** None, Great (PR: 2) or Superb (PR: 3)

## Flight Boots

Flight boots come in a variety of styles but are designed for one purpose: to grant the wearer the power of flight. Activating these boots allows the wearer to fly at a rate of 30 feet per round (5 feet/second).

**Power:** *Telekinesis*

**Power Rating:** 3

**Faults:** Flight only; only affects wearer

**Cost:** Good [8]

**Rank:** Superb

## Invisibility Belt

The preferred tool of many spies, invisibility belts use *photokinesis* to bend light around the wearer and make them seemingly disappear.

Users must maintain concentration while invisible, meaning they can do nothing but move, speak, or perform non-actions (like looking at one's surroundings). Any attempt to use a skill or power breaks the user's concentration and ends the invisibility effect (subject to the GM's discretion).

**Power:** *Photokinesis*

**Power Rating:** 3

**Faults:** Invisibility only; only affects wearer

**Cost:** Good [8]

**Rank:** Superb

## Seer's Glasses

Superior to common spectacles in nearly every way, this device allows its wearer to see into any place within one mile of his current location. With added dual-screen support, these glasses do not obstruct the wearer's view of his current surroundings.

**Power:** *ESP*

**Power Rating:** 2

**Gift:** Dual-screen support

**Fault:** See only

**Cost:** Great [16]

**Rank:** Great

## Antipsi Tech

*Antipsi tech* comes in a variety of options designed to fit the needs of certain target markets. It is an expensive but effective means of protecting sensitive information, but isn't necessarily undefeatable.

The following items come in Power Ratings ranging from Fair (0) to Superb (+3) and have Wealth and Rank costs equal to the Power Rating. An item's PR represents the difficulty required to overcome its defenses and successfully hack or soul jack the target.

Treat the item's PR as a Defensive Factor against psionic abilities.

### Antipsi Circlet

This piece of headwear protects a person from *mind control* attacks and *empathy* checks, as well as any other psionic effect which would directly impact the user's mind (such as telepathic communication). It must be worn around the head to be effective.

### Antipsi Field

This object is about three cubic feet and weighs around 200 pounds. It emits an *antipsi* pulse that blocks all psionics within a radius of 60 feet per Power Rating. The pulse penetrates most materials, but one inch of lead, six inches of steel, or one foot of concrete will block its effects. It is even more expensive than most antipsi tech though and has a Wealth cost equal to its PR +2.

### Antipsi Firewall

This hardware firewall protects a computer system from electrokinetic attacks.

## Antipsi Implant

Antipsi implants function like the antipsi circlet but are physically embedded in a person's body, making it impossible to disarm or steal. This item has a Wealth cost equal to the item's PR +1.

## Antipsi Lock

These are electronic locks that can be used to secure doors, windows, and other containers to shelter them from electrokinetic attacks.

## Antipsi Panel

These security panels protect ATMs, vehicles, and other devices that are publicly accessible.

# Cybernetics - Cyberware and Bioware

The line between man and machine has been blurred significantly, and in 2096 cybernetic implants are commonplace. Cyberware refers to any machine that is implanted within, or permanently affixed to, the human body. These machines are often designed to enhance one's normal abilities, though occasionally they are used insidiously and might be implanted to track an individual—or worse.

Another form of enhancement is known as “bioware”. Bioware is similar to cyberware, but it represents any sort of implant or enhancement made of organic material and interwoven directly into the body's natural functions (as opposed to being a separate prosthetic attachment). Bioware can be used to enhance muscle tissues, increase metabolism, improve lung capacity, etc.

Both cyberware and bioware are purchased using Gifts or Wealth. GMs may wish to restrict the total number of cybernetic



enhancements a character may have to prevent characters from becoming too powerful for the campaign. A good rule of thumb is to allow no more than 8 Gifts worth of cybernetics in any one character.

## Example Cybernetics

Below are some example cybernetics to get you started thinking about what possibilities lie in store for your characters. Each will have a suggested cost in Gifts and in Wealth. Generally, a character need only pay one or the other (Gifts *or* Wealth, not both) unless the GM deems it necessary to pay for both.

Like anything else, cyberware isn't perfect. Faults may be added to any cyberware to mitigate its total cost, and a rare few may possess only Faults (and therefore grant the character additional bonuses; see **Trade-offs** in Chapter 2: Character Creation.)

## Aural Augmentation

A special implant in your ears enhances ambient noise and increases your ability to focus on specific sounds. You gain a +1 bonus on Notice checks made to hear noises, and you can perceive frequencies that are above or below the normal human range (sub-vocals, dog whistles, etc.). Unfortunately, you are also more susceptible to sonar attacks and receive a -1 penalty to DDFs versus any attack involving sound, including attacks made with the *sonarkinesis* power.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

## Aural Augmentation, Advanced

Similar to Aural Augmentation, but you have more control over the noise levels you perceive. You may enhance specific sounds and decrease the levels of others, granting you improved perception without the same vulnerabilities. You gain a +2 bonus on Notice checks made to hear noises but do not receive a penalty against sonar attacks.

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

## Brain Bank

A small electronic storage device is implanted in your skull and connected directly to your neural network. This device acts as a computer hard drive, capable of containing virtually limitless amounts of data. You effectively have a photographic memory, with the ability to store and retrieve data from your brain bank as swiftly as you can think of it (though if your natural brain forgets something is stored, you do not necessarily recall it when needed; you must “actively” search for the data to be retrieved).

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

## Skill Chip Reader

If you have a Brain Bank, you may install an optional reader that allows you to make use of Skill Chips. These are small de-

vices that can be inserted into your Brain Bank (via a special port on the side of your skull) and accessed to give you temporary knowledge of nearly any skill; they include instruction manuals, tutorials, FAQs, and other detailed information necessary for the skill’s use.

You may only use a single Skill Chip at any time, and swapping out one for another takes 6 seconds (1 round) assuming you already have a replacement in hand. The chips themselves are similar in size and shape to SD cards (you may remember seeing those in a computer museum) and are easily stored in small containers. It takes one minute per skill level contained on the chip to familiarize yourself with the material presented to you and to be able to use the skill properly.

Skill Chips come in levels from Mediocre to Superb and grant you an equivalent bonus on any one skill. For example, you may purchase a Good Vehicles skill chip to gain use of the Vehicles skill at a level of Good. Note that Skill Chips do not enhance your attributes as advancement of a normal skill would and they are never associated with a specific attribute; therefore, when spending Luck Points to reroll a skill, you only ever get to reroll 1 die at a time.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth for the Skill Chip Reader; individual Skill Chips cost Wealth equal to the skill’s level +1 (Fair [4] for a Mediocre skill, Good [8] for a Fair skill, etc.)

## Brainwave

A wireless communicator is implanted into your skull and connected to your neural network. You may instantly transmit thoughts to any other person with a Brainwave communicator, though they may not be willing to receive incoming thoughts from you. To force your thoughts into someone else’s mind or to read the thoughts of a transmission that you are not supposed to



be listening in on, requires a Focus check opposed by the target's Mind attribute. The target may attempt to force you out again; you must continue to make this check each round you wish to maintain contact.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

## Cybernetic Arms

Your arms have been replaced with cybernetic limbs, with or without accompanying synthetic skin (your choice). Your arm strength is improved, granting you a +1 to your Strength for the purpose of Lifting objects (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more info) and you are better able to grip and hold objects that you would normally be able to carry. However, this does not confer any benefit when lifting particularly large or heavy objects (since that also requires back and leg muscles). If you also possess the Reinforced Frame and Cybernetic Legs enhancements you may be able to lift objects far heavier than normal for a person of your Strength.

In addition to the above enhancements, your arms are capable of withstanding extreme temperatures; you may reach into a fire and pull out an object without getting burned, for example, assuming you don't catch the rest of your body on fire in the process. You can crush bricks, bend iron bars, and perform other spectacular feats of strength that don't involve using muscles from other parts of your body. You gain a +1 bonus on ODFs when attacking with a melee weapon.

Finally, you may spend an additional Gift (or Good Wealth) to have a special compartment hidden within one or both of your arms that is capable of concealing a small object (such as a knife, small handgun, grenade, etc.).

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth (regardless of the number of arms replaced)

## Cybernetic Eyes

Your natural eyes have been replaced with purely cybernetic optical devices. When you first purchase this Gift, you may select one of the following options for free. You may spend additional Gifts (or the associated Wealth) to upgrade your cyber eyes to provide additional benefits. Regardless of how many enhancements you have, Cybernetic Eyes only count as 2 Gifts for the purposes of determining the maximum number of Gifts worth of cyberware your character may possess.

You may only use one viewing mode at a time. Switching between modes requires no time to complete and may be done simply by thinking of the mode that you wish to use. If no mode is selected, you view the world as normal for a human with 20/20 vision.

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

### Computer-Integrated Display (CID):

You may wirelessly tap into a computer and view its display through your own eyes. This enhances the display to encompass your entire field of vision and you cannot perceive the world around you while using this viewing mode. This enhancement does not confer any bonus to access a system or use the system once you have connected to it; if you do not have the appropriate security credentials (or if you are not able to crack the system) you may not be able to tap into it. Because the display is wirelessly transmitted through the 'Net, you may be able to access any available system in the world, regardless of its proximity to you.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

**Heads Up Display (HUD):** Your cyber eyes scan the area and provide tactical information about the objects and creatures you see. You can single in on specific objects to get detailed information about their height, weight, density, material composition, relative distance from you, etc.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

**Night Vision:** You can see in the dark as if you were wearing night vision goggles. Objects appear to have a green tone and details are not sharp, but you can function normally otherwise.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

**Thermal Vision:** You can see the thermal (heat) signature of anything you are viewing. This may allow you to detect invisible creatures (assuming they are not somehow masking their heat signature, such as through the use of *cryokinesis*) and other objects or beings that would normally go unnoticed.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

**X-Ray Vision:** You can see through most solid objects and view what is on the other side. One foot of stone, one inch of metal, a thin sheet of lead, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks the effect.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

### Cybernetic Legs

Both of your legs have been replaced by cybernetic limbs, with or without accompanying synthetic skin. You can run faster, jump higher, kick harder, and even balance better (using special self-correcting servos). You can bear heavier loads than a normal person of your Strength and gain a +1 bonus to your Lifting capacity (which stacks with the bonus granted by Cybernetic Arms).

You gain a +1 bonus on any skill check made to jump or balance, as well as on ODFs when making attacks with your legs. You can run at speeds up to 30 MPH, though your legs do not confer any special bonuses to sustain that speed indefinitely (you may still need a bionic respiratory system for that).

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

### Horse Heart

Though not technically the heart of a horse, this bioware enhancement improves the user's existing heart and circulatory system to give them the endurance of a racehorse.

Horse hearts grant the user a +2 bonus on Athletics checks when performing any action that requires sustained stamina or endurance, such as running a marathon (but not a sprint) or swimming great distances.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

### Mind Reader

This implant is most often used for insidious purposes and is installed without the user's knowledge. By inserting a chip into the wearer's skull and linking it to his neural network, anyone with the appropriate security credentials can log into the character's brain from a computer (or other capable device) and read that character's thoughts. These chips are used for a variety of purposes: corporations spying on their employees, governments spying on their citizens, and back-alley street docs spying on their customers just to name a few. They may also be used for positive effects, such as tracking a lost pet or using an animal to scout an area for its handler, but these uses are far less common.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Good [16] Wealth (if used with knowledge and intent); 1 Fault (if installed without a character's knowledge). Characters may take this as a Fault at Character Creation or a GM may give one to a character without his knowledge during play, in which case the character does not gain a Fault trade-off.

### Ocular Augmentation

Your vision is superior to that of the most keen-eyed individual. Though not as versatile as full cybernetic eye replacements, these enhancements are made to your existing eyes and help you to see better in most lighting conditions; you can see twice as well at night or under minimal lighting

circumstances. You also gain a +1 bonus on Notice checks made to see something. Unfortunately, you are also more susceptible to *photokinesis* and other light-based attacks and take a -1 penalty to DDFs versus such attacks.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

### Ocular Augmentation, Advanced

Your vision is enhanced well beyond that of the normal human range. You can see three times as well as a normal human in dark or dim conditions and your vision is never washed out in bright light. You gain a +2 bonus on any Notice check made to see something but do not suffer a penalty on DDFs versus light-based attacks. You are also immune to the effects of flash grenades and similar attacks.

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

### Olfactory Augmentation

Your sense of smell has been enhanced in such a way that you can detect even the slightest scents. You gain a +1 bonus on Notice rolls made to smell something and can track a creature (even an invisible one) by scent. Unfortunately, you are also more susceptible to pungent odors and take a -1 penalty on any check made to resist the effects of being sickened by smells.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

### Olfactory Augmentation, Advanced

With this augmentation, even a bloodhound would be jealous of your ability to sniff out fine details. You gain a +2 bonus on Notice rolls to detect smells and may track creatures (even invisible ones) by scent. Like a camel, you can close your nostrils to prevent harmful substances (such as dust and sand, but also airborne contaminants and foul odors) from permeating your nose. You gain a +2 bonus versus scent-based and airborne attacks.

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

## Reinforced Frame

Titanium has been grafted directly into your skeleton and the muscles in your torso have been significantly enhanced to help you bear heavy loads. Your ability to absorb damage is greatly increased and you can support the weight of a semi-truck without collapsing (assuming your legs and arms don't get crushed).

You gain a +2 bonus to DDFs against Physical damage and, if you sport both Cybernetic Arms and Legs, you can lift enormous amounts. You take no penalty when lifting objects twice as heavy as your normal Lifting weight, a -1 penalty for objects weighing three times your Lifting weight, a -2 penalty for objects weighing four times as much, and finally a -3 penalty for objects weighing five times your normal maximum Lifting limit (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more on Lifting).

**Cost:** 3 Gifts or Superb + Great [48] Wealth

## Rhino Skin

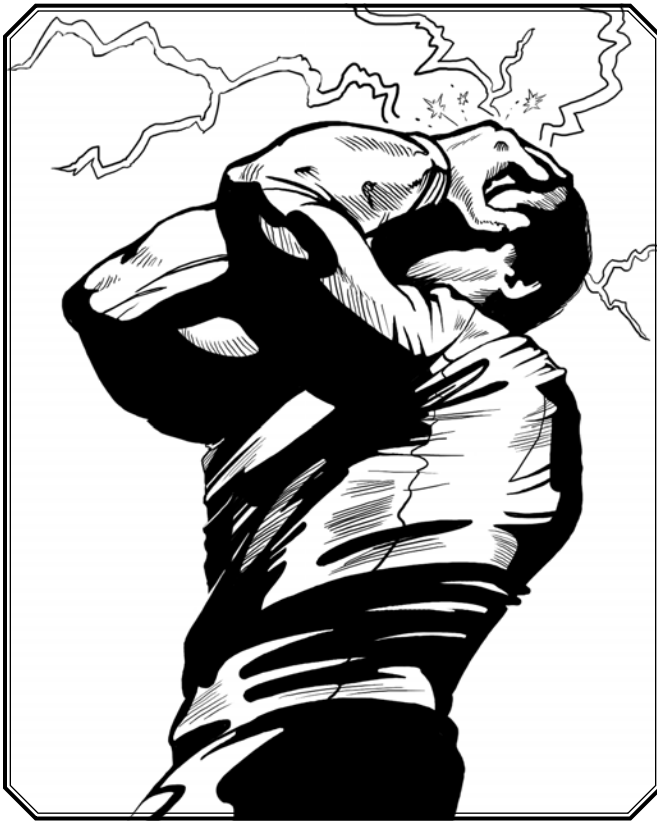
Your skin has been reinforced by a biochemical process, making it incredibly resistant to ripping, tearing, burning, and freezing. You gain a +1 bonus to DDFs vs. weapons that would pierce or tear the flesh (such as firearms and swords, but not clubs) as well as attacks from fire- and cold-based sources. Rhino Skin may be added to Cybernetic Arms and Legs as well as normal body parts. As an added bonus, you no longer have to worry about paper cuts!

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

## Titanium Knuckles

It's going to hurt them more than it hurts you. Titanium has been grafted to your bone, increasing the hardness and durability of your hands and fists. This enhancement is too subtle for others to notice unless they're in the process of feeling your wrath.





In addition to any obvious benefits of having titanium bones, you gain a +1 bonus to your ODFs when attacking someone with an unarmed attack, or a +2 bonus if you are Specialized in unarmed combat.

**Cost:** 1 Gift or Great [16] Wealth

### Voice Synthesizer

With this implant, you are capable of altering your voice to mimic that of virtually any noise or any person. Altering your voice to sound like a different, non-specific person requires no effort on your part; you simply state that you are doing so. Attempting to mimic a specific person's voice requires that you first be familiar with their voice (at the GM's discretion) and then attempt a Great Act, Bluff, or similar skill check. Characters familiar with that person's voice may make an opposed Mind check to recognize even the most minor inconsistencies and they may receive a bonus (or penalty) to this check based on exactly how familiar they are with the person.

**Cost:** 2 Gifts or Superb [32] Wealth

## Gutterware

Not all cyberware is created (or installed) equally. Some 'ware, known derogatorily as "gutterware" for its inefficient and occasionally hazardous nature, is barely worth the chrome it's made of.

Gutterware comes in three basic varieties: cheap, illegal, and cheap and illegal. It is most commonly installed by Street Docs and other operations that aren't entirely on the up-and-up. Usually, gutterware is either a discounted version of premium cyberware (such as last decade's model or a designer knock-off) or illegal 'ware that's been tampered with.

Because illegal 'ware is, for obvious reasons unregulated, it is very likely that any 'ware installed without sufficient Rank or license will be gutterware.

Game Masters should use their best judgment when a player purchases new cyberware to determine whether or not the new parts should be gutterware. Consider the amount of money the character is willing (or able) to spend on 'ware, the potential legality of the 'ware, and where he acquires it. If the character isn't a registered citizen in a city which requires registration, for example, he probably will need to find a Street Doc or some other seedy character to install it for him, since going to a traditional clinic is out of the question.

GMs may also feel free to be creative; the character likely *doesn't know* he's having faulty hardware installed, so the GM may secretly make a note about the new gear and apply its Faults without the character's knowledge!

### Faults

The key difference between gutterware and normal cyberware is that it always contains at least one Fault. Any of the cyberware outlined in this chapter, as well as any other cyberware you create, may be designated as gutterware if it contains some Fault or drawback.

As usual, applying a Fault to anything with a Gift will mitigate its cost, making it cheaper. Gutterware offsets both the Gift and Wealth costs of cyberware by a certain amount, but the cyberware's initial cost still counts toward the maximum number of cyberware Gifts a character may possess (8).

For example, Cybernetic Legs cost two Gifts. By applying the "Faulty Servos" Fault the legs would cost only one Gift but would still count as two of the eight total cyberware Gifts a character may possess.

Finally, some Faults may potentially be "bought off" during gameplay. Either the character finds someone to fix the faulty equipment (at which point he would remove the Fault) or receives an upgrade that repairs or replaces the issue. This may be done either by purchasing a new Gift with Build Points or spending the appropriate Wealth at a later time. In either case, the characters must find the in-game means to make the repair or upgrade.

### Example Gutterware Faults

Below is a list of example Faults that can be applied to nearly any piece of cyberware to make it gutterware. Feel free to develop your own and remember to use common sense when applying these Faults; not all Faults are appropriate for all types of gear.

#### Alloy

Most cyber-limbs are crafted from titanium because it is light, durable, and grafts easily to bone. Your 'ware was crafted from some lesser alloy that isn't as ideal. You gain all of the benefits the limb offers, but any time you would take an Incapacitated wound from a single physical attack you risk having the limb break. A broken limb imposes a -1 penalty on all physical checks until it is repaired (costing at least a Mediocre amount of Wealth and assuming you can find someone to fix it). At least it came cheap.

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

#### Antipsi

Your gear was probably developed by Magicorp or some other psi-hater and contains components that alter your psychic abilities. You must always reroll a single + result any time you activate a psionic power. This Fault is never beneficial; its *antipsi* effects are limited only to disrupting the user. This Fault should never be applied to characters who do not have innate psionic powers.

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

#### Faulty Servos

Your legs don't work quite like they're supposed to. You do not gain any skill or attack bonuses that would otherwise be granted by the use of Cybernetic Legs, but you still gain the increased lifting capacity and movement speed.

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

#### Government Issue

You probably don't know it, but this 'ware belongs to the government. Its serial numbers have been filed off, but the hack who installed it failed to remove its tracking chip. Government agents may come looking for you if they ever suspect their gear has been stolen and you're probably not at liberty to discuss how their 'ware wound up in your body.

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

#### Short Circuit

One piece of cyberware has a short circuit that causes it to randomly malfunction. Whenever you roll 2 blanks on any check involving that piece of gear, it simply ceases to function for a short period of time (usually just a few seconds, or long enough to apply to a single check). This may result in

the loss of vision (if using Cybernetic Eyes), loss of arm or leg control, the inability to access a skill chip temporarily, etc. The GM may spend one of his own Glitches to trigger the short circuit (see **Chapter 8: Game Mastering** for more about Glitches).

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

## Unshielded

Your gear hasn't properly been shielded from electrical currents, causing you to take more damage from electricity-based attacks. Electricity damage has a +1 bonus against you. Additionally, if a single electricity-based attack would cause you an Incapacitated wound, the GM may spend one of his Glitches to cause your gear to further malfunction, applying the Short Circuit Fault to that equipment.

**Wealth Modifier:** 1 Fault or Good [-8] Wealth

## Streetware

Some cyberware is so low-grade that it doesn't warrant the cost of a Gift. This gear, known as Streetware for its common nature, doesn't count against the limitations on the amount of cyberware a user's body can hold (subject to GM approval). These enhancements are usually cosmetic and they can often be installed with relative safety by Street Docs and low-rent shopping mall operations like Chip Stop.

Most of this 'ware is too insignificant from a game mechanic perspective to warrant an entry of its own, but some common examples of streetware include:

- tongue enhancements that add flavor to nano-food
- animated tattoos (pre-programmed or altered at will)
- eye or skin color changes
- skin textures, such as scales, fur, or glitter
- horns, hooks, tusks, or fangs

- programmable LEDs installed on the head (a.k.a. "case lights" or "dome lights")

Streetware usually does not cost characters any significant amount of Wealth. If a player character wishes to have their streetware grant a game mechanic bonus, consider whether or not it should be traditional cyberware or gutterware instead.

## Vehicles

Some people define themselves by the vehicles they drive. Whether it's a sports car or a one-ton truck, a person's choice of transportation is in some ways as important as the clothes on a character's back or the skills he possesses.

As a character-centric game, **Psi-punk's** vehicle rules have a narrow focus. In this section, we'll detail options for personal vehicles that may be chosen at character creation or purchased later.

When crafting a vehicle for your character, consider its purpose and how its design fits in with your character's theme. It may not be necessary to even buy a vehicle for your character – many people nowadays get along just fine using public transportation, taxi cabs, and the like.

Characters who decide to purchase vehicles are often (though not always) those who fit the "Wheel Jockey" archetype. For these characters, the vehicle is every bit as much a part of their personality as any other piece of equipment they may have.

The following terms will be used to describe the traits of all vehicles:

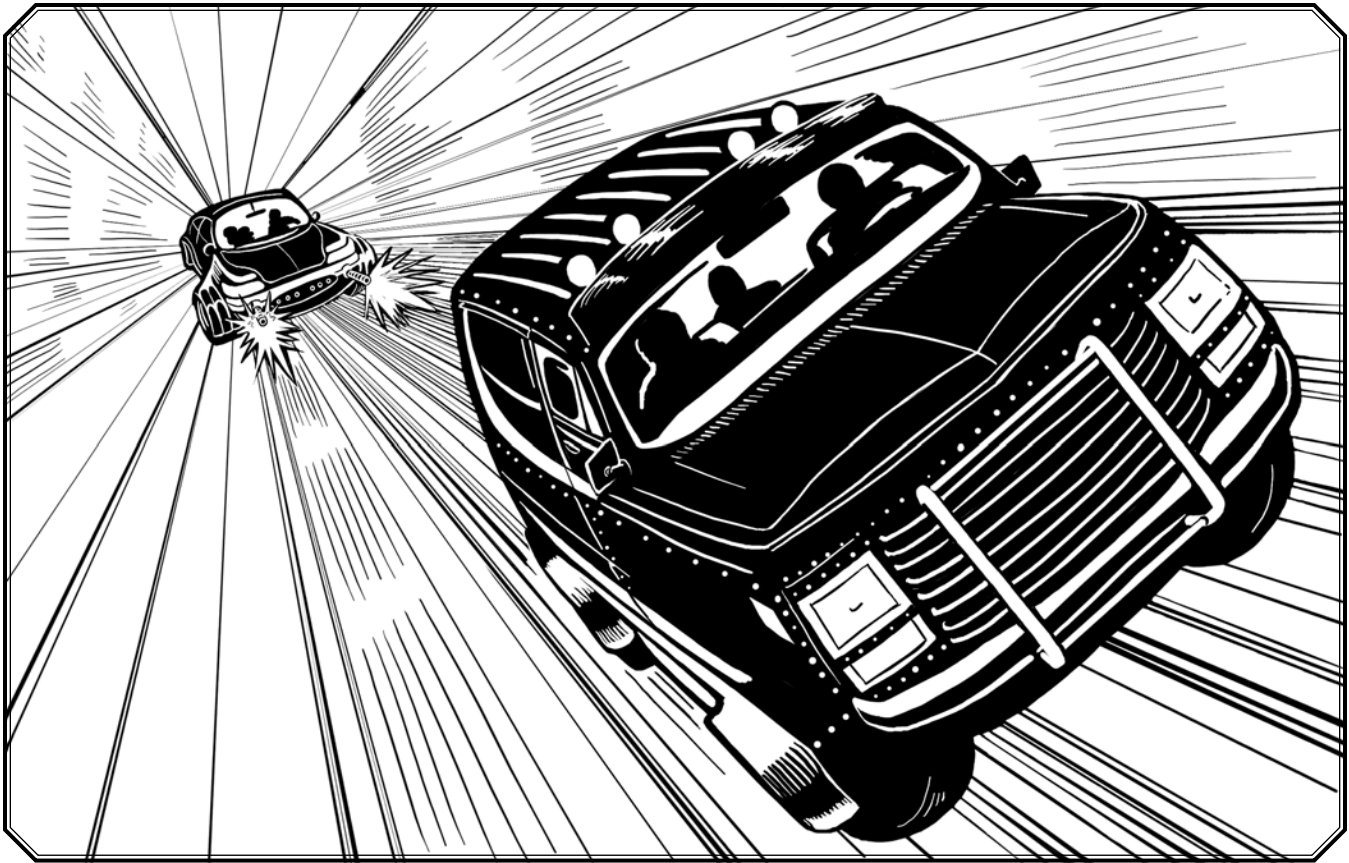
**Size:** the vehicle's relative size.

**Speed:** the vehicle's speed relative to other vehicles of its size.

**Handling:** a vehicle's maneuverability rating relative to other vehicles of its size.

**Weapons:** some vehicles have built-in weapon systems; this value represents the vehicle's Offensive Damage Factors. Indi-





vidual vehicles may have different types of weapons, from guns to bladed hubcaps, but the weapon's Damage will be equal to its Weapons trait unless altered by a Gift or Fault.

**Durability:** how durable the vehicle is; in effect, the vehicle's armor bonus, or its Defensive Damage Factors.

**Gifts/Faults:** as with anything, vehicles may possess both Gifts and Faults.

**Cost:** The total of all Wealth Modifiers determines a vehicle's final Cost (in Wealth).

## Size

Vehicles are listed in terms of their relative size, ranging from the smallest one-user personal vehicles to larger, multi-passenger military machines and even space ships. Most player characters will never own, much less pilot, very large vehicles (Superb or larger size) but stories do occasionally call for such options.

A vehicle's Speed and Handling traits are relative to other vehicles of the same size. For example, a sports car with Superb Speed and a fighter jet with Superb Speed would not even be close in a race since fighter jets travel far faster than even the fastest land-based vehicles. However, a Superb Speed sports car could out-run a Good Speed sedan on any straightaway. Likewise, a vehicle's Weapon and Durability ratings are relative to other weapons and armor of their size. For example, a Great sized truck with Good weapons would deal Good damage to another Great sized truck. However, if that same truck were to attack a Fair sized motorcycle with its weapons, the impact would be more severe.

For each Size level above or below Fair, add or subtract one point from the Weapon and Durability ratings of the vehicle. Because two vehicles of the same Size will always even out, you don't need to bother with this step for circumstances in which two same-sized vehicles are in combat.

Table 3.4: Vehicle Sizes

Vehicle Size	Examples
Abysmal	Roller skates
Poor	Skateboard, snowboard, hoverboard
Mediocre	Bicycle, moped
Fair	Motorcycle, ATV, human
Good	Cars (sedan, sport), minivans, small trucks, SUVs
Great	Large pick-ups, full-size vans
Superb	Small busses, RVs, industrial machinery
Wonderful	Semi-trucks, city busses, tanks
Phenomenal	Helicopters, fighter planes
Extraordinary	Cargo ships, passenger jets
Astonishing	Aircraft carriers, space ships

Continuing with the example above, a Great sized truck with Good Weapons attacks a Fair sized motorcycle with Good Durability. The truck would add its Great (+2) Size to its Good (+1) Weapons value for a total Offensive Damage Factor of Superb (+3) against the motorcycle's Good Durability.

Note that for the purpose of these rules, humans and all of their equipment are of Fair Size.

**Wealth Modifier:** A vehicle's Size is often proportional to its cost; larger vehicles tend to cost more money than smaller ones. Add the vehicle's Size modifier to its overall Cost on a one-for-one basis (i.e., its Wealth Modifier is equal to its Size). Remember that the Cost is equal to the sum of all Wealth Modifiers.

## Speed

As noted above, a vehicle's Speed is relative to other vehicles of its Size. If two vehicles of the same size are racing on a straight path, the faster vehicle will always win (barring external forces).

However, vehicles of different sizes operate on different scales of Speed; Good roller skates will never be able to outrun a Good truck.

Some vehicles are slower than comparably-sized vessels. Tanks, for example, tend to be slower than smaller cars and trucks. For such vehicles, add a Fault such as "Sluggish" and let it ignore the vehicle's Size when comparing its speed to others.

Finally, note that humans are not as fast on foot as motorcycles and mopeds. This does not mean that all humans have the Sluggish Fault; humans simply operate on another Speed scale entirely and are an exception to this rule.

In the end, use your common sense when comparing the relative speeds of two vehicles with drastically different qualities.

**Wealth Modifier:** Add the vehicle's Speed modifier to its total Cost on a one-for-one basis, as with Size.

## Handling

Some vehicles maneuver better than others. A vehicle's Handling trait determines just how well it maneuvers around obstacles or through tight spaces, but the vehicle's Size also has something to do with it; larger vehicles tend to be harder to control.

Add the vehicle's Handling bonus to the operator's Vehicles skill check whenever you need to determine how well the character can maneuver the vessel, but subtract its Size bonus from the check as well.

For example, Mitch is Good at operating vehicles and he is driving a sports car with Great handling. He's being chased and needs to squeeze his car down a tight alleyway to avoid his pursuer.

Mitch makes a Vehicles check to determine whether or not he can enter the alleyway without crashing into too many obstacles along the way. Thanks to the car's Great Handling score the task is made simpler. However, the car is also larger than a human and won't squeeze past obstacles as easily as a smaller object would, so he subtracts the car's Good Size from his check as well.

In total, Mitch's bonus on the check will be 1 (Good Skill) + 2 (Great Handling) – 1 (Good Size) = +2 (Great). Mitch rolls +1 on the dice for a total result of Superb and manages to slip into the alleyway without disturbing the scenery!

**Wealth Modifier:** Add the vehicle's Handling modifier to its total Cost on a one-for-one basis, as with Size.

## Weapons

Not all vehicles come equipped for combat, but those that do have a Weapons trait. Vehicles without this trait simply lack any form of built-in attack method and it's up to the operator to provide the guns.

Add a vehicle's Weapons trait to its Size trait to determine its total Offensive Damage Modifiers. Operators may use their Vehicle skill or their Combat (Ranged) skill (if appropriate) when making attacks with a vehicle's Weapons.

It is up to the owner to determine the nature of the vehicle's Weapons. For example, they could come in the form of guns hidden behind a car's headlights or a tank's cannon. In any case, the Weapon trait still dictates how much damage the weapon can deal. Any extra special effects should be handled by means of Gifts.

Note that vehicles which lack weapons can still be used in combat. It is possible to simply try to drive over someone using just the Size trait as its damage modifier to the Vehicles skill check. Some vehicles, such as cars with windows, may allow characters to fire guns out of them using the attacker's own weapons and Combat skill checks (as appropriate).

**Wealth Modifier:** Add the vehicle's Weapons modifier to its total Cost on a one-for-one basis, as with Size.

## Durability

Some vehicles are capable of taking a bigger beating than others. A vehicle's Durability rating is what determines how tough the rig is and how well it can fend off attacks.

Treat a vehicle's Durability level as if it were armor on a player; that is, apply this rating to the vehicle's Defensive Damage Factors before determining the wound level a vehicle takes from any given attack. In addition to the vehicle's Durability score, add its Size modifier to DDFs.

For example, a Good sized sports car with Great durability would have total Defensive Damage Factors of Superb (+3) because of its Good (+1) Size and Great (+2) Durability. Add these modifiers to the driver's Vehicle skill check when opposing an attack.

**Wealth Modifier:** Add the vehicle's Durability modifier to its total Cost on a one-for-one basis, as with Size.

## Vehicle Damage

Vehicles use a wound track similar to that of a player character to determine its overall "health," or state of repair. Its mental track represents on-board computers, GPS, tracking systems, and other electrical, rather than mechanical, functions. That wound track looks like this:



**Table 3.5: Vehicle Damage**

Physical:	None	Dinged	Damaged	Very Damaged	Broken Down	Destroyed
Mental (Computers):	None	Glitched	Damaged	Very Damaged	Fried	Destroyed

Attempting to operate a Damaged vehicle imposes a -1 penalty on the operator's Vehicle check, while attempting to operate a Very Damaged vehicle imposes a -2 penalty. Broken Down and Destroyed vehicles may not be operated.

Repairing a vehicle works like healing a character (see Wounds and Healing in **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more information) except that instead of making a Medical skill check the player would make a Technical or Vehicle skill check. It takes 1 hour per wound level to repair damage unless the *control inanimate* power is being used, in which case it takes 1 minute per wound level and constant contact with the vehicle. Unless they possess special Gifts which would allow them to do so, vehicles never repair damage over time on their own.

## Gifts

Like anything, Vehicles can have both Gifts and Faults to set them apart from the crowd. Gifts represent special powers or perks that are added to a vehicle to improve its functionality in some way. Faults represent issues the vehicle may have, from computer problems to old age.

In many cases, Gifts are magical in nature. Vehicles commonly make use of magic to perform a variety of functions, from attacking others to masking their own presence. Other vehicle Gifts are technological in nature, and can be as simple as having reinforced tires to as complex as high-end on-board computer systems.

**Note:** many of a vehicle's options come standard with the machine and do not add anything to its cost. Such standard features include GPS and maps, auto-pilot (with option to switch to manual mode), in-car audio and calling capabilities, and biometric

(fingerprint) locks or ignitions. Unless it wouldn't make sense for the particular vehicle to have these features (roller skates and skateboards would likely not have them) you can assume the vehicle comes pre-equipped with all of these features and any others you and your GM deem appropriate.

Each of the example Gifts listed below will indicate an associated Wealth Modifier. Generally speaking, Gifts with limited functionality have a Good modifier, better Gifts have a Great modifier, and superior Gifts have a Superb modifier.

### Ice Slick

Vehicles equipped with this *cryokinesis* unit are able to produce an ultra-slippery sheet of ice behind them, useful for getting rid of pursuers. Anything attempting to cross the ice slick must make a Superb skill check to do so (a Vehicle check for a vehicle or an Athletics check for a person).

Optionally, this slick can be placed in front of or on the side of the vehicle as well. It is possible to make a bridge using this ice slick, but the standard -2 penalty applies to skill checks when trying to cross the bridge.

**Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

### Invisibility

A *photokinesis* device has been installed in this vehicle, granting it the ability to turn itself invisible. This ability is limited in its use of *photokinesis* such that invisibility is the only option it possesses.

This device confers no special benefits other than to allow the vehicle and all of its passengers and cargo to pass unseen. It may still leave a trail, noticeably disrupt the environment, produce audible noise, generate a heat signature, etc.

**Wealth Modifier:** Superb [+32]

## Matter Mover

Using embedded *telekinesis* technology, vehicles equipped with this device are capable of moving large amounts of material out of their way. This power comes with several different power ratings.

**PR1** can lift human-sized objects or smaller.

**PR2** can lift objects the size of a large truck.

**PR3** can lift objects the size of a semi-truck.

Like other magic devices, use this device's Power Rating to determine its offensive modifiers (see **Magic** above). Creatures are allowed an opposed Mind roll to resist being moved by this effect, while the drivers of other vehicles may make an opposed Vehicles check to avoid being moved. Unattended objects (those not being held or occupied by a person) may not resist the attempt to move them.

Using this ability effectively requires concentration on the driver's part. Unless the driver has a co-pilot to operate this device independently, he takes a -2 penalty on all Vehicle checks while this device is active.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8] (PR1), Great [+16] (PR2), Superb [+32] (PR3)

## Reinforced Wheels

The wheels and tires of this vehicle are exceptionally durable. They may drive over nearly any terrain without being damaged and indeed may be self-repairing. The wheels themselves have +2 to their Durability, giving them a bonus on their DDFs whenever someone would try to shoot at the tires specifically.

**Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

## Self-Repairing

With a large up-front investment, your vehicle may be outfitted with a *control inanimate* device, paired with sophisticated diagnostic software, which repairs the vehicle's damage over time. Damage is repaired at a rate of one wound level per day, starting with the most severe wound.

For an even greater cost, a more advanced form of this device repairs the vehicle's damage at a rate of one wound level per hour, starting with the most severe.

Vehicles which are Destroyed may not be repaired in this manner.

**Wealth Modifier:** Superb [+32] (for the slower version) or Wonderful [+64] (for the faster version)

## Shifting

Making use of a *control inanimate* device, vehicles equipped with this feature are able to change some of their aesthetic elements. These vehicles can alter their color, both interior and exterior, tire tread (where applicable), their license plate, and the tint of their windows.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [+8]

## Sound Dampener

Vehicles with this embedded *sonarkinesis* device may suppress all noise within a very close radius (about 3-feet) of the vehicle. It isn't capable of producing other *sonarkinesis* effects, but it does suppress any sound the vehicles or its passengers make to about 5 decibels (such that augmented hearing would be required to detect it).

**Wealth Modifier:** Great [+16]

## Transformation

This incredibly powerful *control animate* module allows the vehicle to alter its size and structure. The vehicle may alter its Size up or down by one level from its original (so a Good Size vehicle may change between Fair and Great sizes). The vehicle changes into another appropriate for its type (a car into a motorcycle or truck, for example). All of the vehicle's other traits, including Speed, Handling, Weapons, Durability, Gifts, and Faults, remain the same.

These drastic transformations take time to complete. Altering a vehicle's Size takes five full minutes per Size level (five minutes to change from Good to Fair, but ten minutes to change from Fair to Great) and may not be performed while the vehicle is in operation.

Vehicles with this Gift gain the Shifting Gift (see above) for free.

**Wealth Modifier:** Superb [+32]

## Faults

Vehicles may possess Faults which reduce its overall cost. The Wealth modifier listed with each of these example Faults *reduces* the vehicle's final Cost.

### Electrical Problems

None of this vehicle's electronics seem to work properly. It may have been hit by EMPs one too many times or the wiring may just be faulty. Either way, the car's windows, locks, GPS, auto-pilot, in-car audio and electronic controls simply don't function.

The vehicle may still have a functioning electric engine, but its auxiliary electronics don't work. You may still operate the vehicle without penalties, but conveniences such as those listed above are not available until time and money has been spent to have them repaired.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [-8]

## Prototype

Highly advanced vehicles may be prototypes or contain some new prototype technology. While the new equipment they have installed may be represented by Gifts, they come with a few drawbacks.

Not only are prototypes rare, often one of a kind (and thus irreplaceable), they often have defects – bugs that still need to be worked out.

Whenever the prototype equipment in question would be used (whether it is a weapon with special bullets, armor attempting to absorb psionic force, or speed boosters kicking into overdrive) make the check as normal. If the natural roll (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for more on natural rolls) contains three minuses (-), a glitch occurs and the equipment ceases to function momentarily (for that action). If the natural roll results in four minuses, the prototype malfunctions permanently (until repaired). If use of the prototype equipment would not normally require a check, roll 4dF and simply observe the natural roll.

Vehicles with this Fault may not also have the Used or Sub-modern Faults.

**Wealth Modifier:** Great [-16]

## Sluggish

This vehicle's Size is not added into its Speed. This Fault is ideal when trying to represent large vehicles with lower top speeds, vehicles such as tanks.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [-8]

## Stolen

Whether or not you know it, this vehicle has been stolen from its previous owner. There may be a police bulletin out on it or there may be some very unhappy ganger who wants it back.



The existence of abilities that can alter a vehicle's appearance makes it difficult to prove (or even spot) that a vehicle is stolen, but most modern vehicles have built-in GPS devices that can be used to locate them and modern tracking systems are not easily fooled or hacked (Phenomenal difficulty).

Stolen vehicles may have other, less obvious problems of which the new owner is unaware. GMs are encouraged to pick another Fault to add to the vehicle, without further reducing its Cost.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [-8]

### Sub-Modern

This vehicle doesn't possess certain features that have become standard-issue for vehicles of its type. The vehicle may lack built-in GPS and maps, biometric locks, in-car audio and calling features, auto-pilot, etc.

Use your best judgment before applying this Fault to a vehicle. Roller skates would never have any of these features to begin with so it is not an applicable Fault, for example.

Sub-modern vehicles should likewise not come equipped with any Gifts which would include new technology, such as magic. These vehicles should be bare-bones and may not even include built-in weapons or defense systems.

**Wealth Modifier:** Great [-16] (if it possesses no other Gifts or Weapon/Durability ratings of Good or lower) or Good [-8] (if the vehicle still has some modern features, such as high-tech weapons units)

### Used

This vehicle was previously owned and may be prone to breaking down. Whenever the vehicle's operator makes a natural roll of three minuses (-) on a Vehicle check, the vehicle takes a Damaged wound as if something had malfunctioned, misfired, or worn out. If the operator rolls a natural result of four minuses the vehicle takes a Very Damaged wound instead.

Damage caused as a result of either of these checks may be repaired as normal.

**Wealth Modifier:** Good [-8]

## Example Vehicles

Following are a few example vehicles to get you started.

### Hoverboard

<b>Size:</b>	Poor [1]
<b>Speed:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Handling:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Weapons:</b>	--
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Cost:</b>	Great [21]

### Motorcycle

<b>Size:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Speed:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Handling:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Weapons:</b>	--
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Cost:</b>	Great [20]

**Pick-up Truck**

<b>Size:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Speed:</b>	Mediocre [2]
<b>Handling:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Weapons:</b>	--
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Cost:</b>	Great [22]

**Sports Car**

<b>Size:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Speed:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Handling:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Weapons:</b>	--
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Cost:</b>	Superb [32]

**Convertible**

<b>Size:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Speed:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Handling:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Weapons:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Gifts:</b>	Transformation [32]
<b>Cost:</b>	Wonderful [64]

**Used Sedan**

<b>Size:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Speed:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Handling:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Weapons:</b>	--
<b>Durability:</b>	--
<b>Faults:</b>	Used [-8]
<b>Cost:</b>	Good [8]

**Prototype Mini-Tank**

<b>Size:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Speed:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Handling:</b>	Fair [4]
<b>Weapons:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Durability:</b>	Superb [32]
<b>Gifts:</b>	<i>Antipsi</i> weapons, PR 2 (Cost: Great [+16]); option to deal no damage but negate psionic powers of target person or vehicle
<b>Faults:</b>	Prototype <i>antipsi</i> weapons (use of <i>antipsi</i> runs risk of malfunction) [-16]
<b>Cost:</b>	Wonderful [76]

**Combat Helicopter**

<b>Size:</b>	Phenomenal [128]
<b>Speed:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Handling:</b>	Good [8]
<b>Weapons:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Durability:</b>	Great [16]
<b>Gifts:</b>	<i>ESP</i> co-pilot's HUD, PR 3 (Cost: Superb [+32]); grants the co-pilot and wearer of this special headset the <i>ESP</i> power, allowing them to observe conditions outside the helicopter
<b>Cost:</b>	Phenomenal [208]

# Chapter 4: Playing the Game





In **Chapter 2** we discussed how to create a character for play in *Psi-punk*, but you still need some guidance to know what all of those numbers on your character sheet mean. This chapter will discuss how to put your characters into play by providing information about how to play the game. We'll start with the first thing every player or GM will need to know.

## Rolling the Dice

Most role-playing games use dice to help players and GMs determine the outcome of in-game actions. In *Psi-punk*, dice are used in the same way. When characters need to know whether or not they successfully performed an action – such as maneuvering a speeding vehicle down a narrow street while being chased, slugging it out with another combatant, or influencing a bouncer to let them into the night club without ID – dice are rolled.

There is no need to roll the dice when a character performs an action that is so easy as to be automatic. Likewise, an action so difficult that it has no chance to succeed requires no roll — it simply can't be done. Dice are used solely in the middle ground where the outcome of an action is uncertain.

The GM is encouraged to keep die-rolling to a minimum. Do not make the players roll the dice when their characters do mundane things. There is no need to make a roll to see if someone can cook lunch properly, or pick an item from a shelf, or climb a ladder, and so on. Don't even make them roll to climb a cliff unless it's a difficult cliff or the situation is stressful, such as if the character is being chased.

For any action the player character wishes to perform in which the outcome is uncertain, the GM must determine which trait is tested (this will usually be a skill or a power). If the action is unopposed, the GM also determines the difficulty level — usu-

ally Fair.

*Psi-punk* uses “Fudge dice” for all rolls. Fudge dice are six-sided dice with two sides marked “+” (representing +1), two sides marked “-” (representing -1), and two blank sides (representing a 0 value). To use Fudge dice, simply roll four of them (sometimes called “4dF”) and total the amount. Since a +1 and a -1 cancel each other, you can remove a +1 and -1 from the table, and the remaining two dice are easy to read no matter what they are. If there is no opposing pair of +1 and -1 dice, remove any blank dice, and the remaining dice are again easy to read.

The result of a die roll is a number between -4 and +4. On the character sheet, there should be a simple chart of the ability levels, such as the one below. To determine the result of an action, simply put your finger on your trait level, then move it up (for plus results) or down (for minus results).

**Table 4.1: Trait Ladder**

Astonishing	+7
Extraordinary	+6
Phenomenal	+5
Wonderful	+4
Superb	+3
Great	+2
Good	+1
Fair	0
Mediocre	-1
Poor	-2
Abysmal	-3

For example, Ron, who has a Good Ranged Combat skill, is shooting in a rifle contest. The player rolls 4dF, using the procedure described above. If he rolls a 0, he gets a result equal to his skill: Good, in this case. If he rolls a +1, however, he gets a Great result, since Great is one level higher than his Good Ranged Combat skill. If he rolls a -3, unlucky Ron has just made a Poor shot.

It is not always necessary to figure the exact rolled degree. If you only need to

know whether or not a character succeeded at something, it is usually sufficient for the player simply to announce the appropriate trait level and the die roll result. The game goes much faster this way.

For example, Sven is trying to out-manuever his pursuers and needs to squeeze his speeding car in to a tight alleyway. The GM sets the difficulty to Great since this is a pretty difficult task, but luckily for Sven he has a Great Vehicles skill. He rolls the dice and gets a total of +2. He simply announces “Great +2” and zips in to the alleyway without so much as knocking over a garbage can along the way.

Of course, there are many times when you want to know exactly how well the character did, even if it’s not a matter of being close. If the character is writing an article for the local paper, for example, and his Language skill is Fair, you will want to figure out what “Fair +2” means. In this case, he just wrote a Great article! There are many other instances where degrees of success are more important than merely knowing success or failure.

## Degree of Success

As we mentioned before, it is often important to know by how much you succeeded on a given check, especially during combat or when making other opposed actions (see below for more details on both of these rolls).

To determine your degree of success, simply roll the dice and compare your total result (after all modifiers have been applied) to the difficulty level of the check. For opposed actions, the difficulty level is always the total result of the opponent’s check. Your final result is known as your degree of success.

**Degree of Success** = Your Check Result – Difficulty

For example, Brad is trying to use mind control to force his will upon Matt, who doesn’t want any part of such things. Brad

has Great Focus and rolls +2 on the dice, for a total initial result of Wonderful (+4). However, Matt attempts to resist by rolling a Mind check, which he has at a level of +1. He only rolls +1 on the dice, for a total initial result of Great (+2).

Brad and Matt compare their respective check results and find that Brad’s degree of success was Great (Wonderful – Great = Great, or  $4 - 2 = 2$ ). Brad consults **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** to determine what he can do with a Great degree of success on a *mind control* attempt.

## Natural Rolls

Sometimes this book will reference *natural rolls*. Natural rolls represent the exact values listed on the dice, not including any positive or negative *modifiers* to the dice. For example, if Ron were to roll one + and three blank dice, he would have a natural roll of +1. Other times, the exact die results are observed. For example, it may be important that three of the dice were blank, regardless of whether or not the overall value of the dice is +1. Natural rolls are observed *before* any rerolls (see below) are made.

## Initial Result

The result of a check *before* it is matched with the difficulty to determine a degree of success. This is different from a Natural Roll in that the Initial Result includes all applicable modifiers, whereas a Natural Roll observes only the dice.

## Rerolls

Occasionally you will be given the opportunity to reroll one or more dice. When you do so, simply choose the dice you wish to reroll and give them another throw! You must keep the second result even if it is worse than the original (so think carefully



about which dice you wish to reroll when the opportunity presents itself).

You may be given the option to reroll one or more dice by spending a Luck Point (see **Chapter 2: Character Creation** for more about Luck Points) or you may be given the option to do so when using certain powers, specialized skills, abilities or equipment. When an ability grants the use of a reroll, the number of dice you are allowed to reroll will be listed in the ability's description.

For example, the *ocular integration* weapon Gift (see **Chapter 3: Equipment**) reads "When using a weapon with this gift, the wielder gains a 1dF reroll." This means that any time a character uses a weapon with *ocular integration*, he may reroll one of the four dice he used to make the initial check.

Certain abilities or gear may also impose reroll penalties. Any time you receive a -1dF or greater penalty, you must select a die with a + and reroll that die. If no + result was rolled for a check involving such a penalty, no reroll is made.

Re-roll penalties cancel any positive re-roll bonuses you may have. For example, if you gain +1dF re-roll from a Skill Specialization and a -1dF penalty from a faulty piece of cyberware, the two cancel each other out and no re-roll is made.

## Action Modifiers

There may be modifiers for any given action, which can affect the rolls referred to in the preceding section. Modifiers temporarily improve or reduce a character's traits.

For example, Ron, who is Good with his rifle, is Hurt (-1 to all actions). He is thus only Fair with his gun until he's healed. Sven has a Good Vehicles skill, but a Gift called Getaway Driver gives him a +2 bonus to Vehicles skill checks when fleeing a scene or being chased.

Other conditions may grant a +/-1 to any trait. In **Psi-punk** +/-2 is a large modifier — +/-3 is the maximum that should ever be granted except under extreme conditions.

## Unopposed Actions

For each unopposed action, the GM sets a difficulty level (Fair is the most common) and announces which trait should be rolled against. For example, climbing an average vertical cliff face, even one with lots of handholds, is not an easy obstacle (Fair difficulty level). For a very hard cliff, the GM may set the difficulty level at Great, which means that the player must make a rolled degree of Great or higher to climb the cliff successfully. The player then rolls against the character's trait level and tries to match or surpass the difficulty level set by the GM. In cases where there are degrees of success, the better the roll, the better the character did; the worse the roll, the worse the character did. Remember that the players may not even need to roll unless the characters are under pressure or the task is well above their skill level.



Occasionally, the GM may choose to roll in secret for the PC, such as when even a failed roll would give the player knowledge he wouldn't otherwise have. These are usually information rolls. For example, if the GM asks the player to make a roll against an Awareness skill and the player fails, the character doesn't notice anything out of the ordinary. But the player now knows that there is something out of the ordinary that his character didn't notice. For some styles of play, it's better for the GM to make the roll in secret and only mention it on a successful result.

## Success Rates

When setting difficulty levels, it may help to keep the statistical results of rolling four Fudge dice in mind.

**Table 4.2: Success Rates**

Target	Odds of rolling exactly on 4dF	Odds of rolling target or higher
+4	1.2%	1.2%
+3	4.9%	6.2%
+2	12.3%	18.5%
+1	19.8%	38.3%
0	23.5%	61.7%
-1	19.8%	81.5%
-2	12.3%	93.8%
-3	4.9%	98.8%
-4	1.2%	100.0%

Thus, if your trait is Fair, and the GM says you need a Good result or better to succeed, you need to roll +1 or better, which gives you a 38.3% chance of success. That means you'll do this slightly less than two times out of five, on the average.

## Opposed Actions

To resolve an opposed action between two characters, each side rolls dice against the appropriate trait and announces the result. The traits rolled against are not neces-

sarily the same: for example, a coercion attempt would be rolled against a character's *manipulation* skill for the active participant and against the Persona attribute for the resisting participant. There may be modifiers: someone with a Vow of Loyalty Gift might get a bonus of +2 to his self-discipline, while someone with a Craven fault might have a penalty — or not even try to resist.

The GM compares the rolled degrees to determine a *degree of success*. For example, Yvonne is in disguise and trying to trick Seth into thinking she's from the government. She rolls a Great result. This is not automatic success, however. If Seth also rolls a Great result to avoid being duped, then the degree of success is 0; the status quo is maintained. In this case, Seth remains unconvinced that Yvonne is legitimate. If Seth rolled a Superb result, Yvonne's Great result would have actually earned her a degree of success of -1 and Seth is not going to be fooled during this scene; he'll probably even have a bad reaction to Yvonne.

The opposed action mechanism can be used to resolve almost any conflict between two characters. Are two people both grabbing the same item at the same time? This is an opposed action based on the Dexterity attribute — the winner gets the item. Is one character trying to shove another one down? Roll Strength for each of them to see who goes down, and add any appropriate skills, Gifts, or Faults that might be in your favor (or disfavor). Someone trying to hide from a search party? Use the Covert skill versus a Notice skill, and so forth.

Some opposed actions have a minimum level needed for success. For example, an online fight through a video game might require at least a Fair result. If the player only gets a Mediocre result, it doesn't matter if the intended opponent rolls a Poor resistance: the player couldn't survive the various dangers of the video game level and the attempt fails. Most combat falls into this category.



An opposed action can also be handled as an unopposed action. When a PC is opposing an NPC, have only the player roll, and simply let the NPC's trait level be the difficulty level. This method assumes the NPC will always roll a 0. This emphasizes the PC's performance and reduces the possibility of an NPC's lucky roll deciding the game. As a slight variation, the GM can roll 1dF or 2dF when rolling for an NPC in an opposed action. This allows some variation in the NPC's ability, but still puts the emphasis on the PC's actions.

**\*Note:** Normally, you may not have a Strength attribute above Superb. However, certain Gifts and cybernetic enhancements may improve your Lifting capacity to levels of Wonderful, Phenomenal and beyond.

When lifting twice the listed weight, characters suffer a -2 penalty on all physical actions they perform. When lifting three times the listed weight, characters suffer a -3 penalty instead. No character may lift more than three times the listed weight for their given strength level unless he possesses a Gift which increases his lifting capacity.

## Lifting Objects

A character's Strength attribute determines how much weight he can lift. Here are some sample weights that can be lifted at various levels of Strength.

The maximum weight listed below indicates how much a person can lift or carry and still maintain some degree of mobility. Olympic records indicate that the upper limits of human strength are much higher than those listed here, but world weightlifting records are not set while running, jumping, crawling, or walking about. Generally speaking, a character who is trying to simply lift as much weight as possible will be able to lift about three times the listed figure, but only for a limited duration and with severe impairments to his mobility.

**Table 4.3: Lifting Capacity**

Level	Maximum Weight
Abysmal	20 lbs.
Poor	33 lbs.
Mediocre	43 lbs.
Fair	58 lbs.
Good	76 lbs.
Great	114 lbs.
Superb	171 lbs.
Wonderful*	256 lbs.
Phenomenal*	385 lbs.
Extraordinary*	578 lbs.
Astonishing*	867 lbs.

## Encumbrance

Many games use a trait called "encumbrance" to show how weighted-down a character is by his gear. We feel that this detracts from the game and adds an unnecessary (and often ignored) level of complexity. The above Lifting rules are provided as a guideline for answering the question: "Can I lift that object?" They are not intended to determine how slow your character moves now that he has picked up a new gun.

You will notice that this book does not reference the weight of any particular piece of equipment or gear. This is by design; we don't want players and GMs to feel that they need to micromanage these things. Don't worry about counting up every piece of equipment you have and the possible weight of each; simply assume that the equipment you carry is right for you or you have made the appropriate modifications or accommodations. Use these Lifting guidelines only when attempting to lift heavy objects that you wouldn't normally carry on your person.

## Material Value

Sometimes the strength of an object will come into play. In such instances, use the following table as a point of reference for various material values.

Reference this table whenever you need to know the relative strength or toughness of an object. You may need this information if you are trying to damage something using physical force or if you are trying to damage *someone* by hurling such an object at them.

**Table 4.4: Material Value**

Material value	Example Material
Abysmal	Dust
Poor	Plastic
Mediocre	Aluminum
Fair	Wood
Good	Brick
Great	Concrete
Superb	Iron
Wonderful	Steel
Phenomenal	Diamond
Extraordinary	Titanium
Astonishing	Grapheme

## Repute

Sometimes a non-player character has a set reaction to the PCs. Perhaps she's automatically their enemy or perhaps the heroes have rescued her and earned her gratitude. But there will be many NPCs that don't have a set reaction. When the PCs request information or aid, it might go smoothly or it might not go well at all. Negotiation with a stranger is always an unknown quantity to the players — it may be so for the GM, too. When in doubt, the GM should secretly make a Repute roll.

The Repute roll can be modified up or down by circumstances: bribes, the NPC's suspicious or friendly nature, proximity of the NPC's boss, observed PC behavior, and so on. Here are some guidelines:

The higher the Repute rolled degree, the better the reaction. On a Fair result, for example, the NPC will be mildly helpful, but

only if it's not too much effort. She won't be helpful at all on Mediocre or worse results, but will react well on a Good result or better.

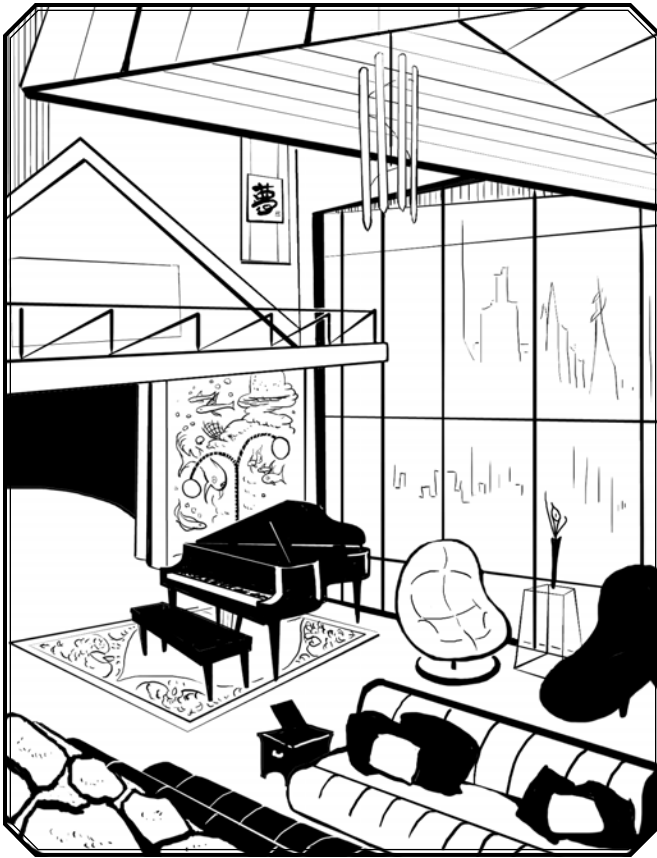
**Table 4.5: Repute Modifiers**

Situation	Modifier
The target benefits	+2
The target is friendly to the PC – a close friend or relative, or a listed contact	+1
The target is unfriendly to the PC – a total stranger, or a character the PC has offended	-1
The target is hostile to the PC – actively opposing his goals or a sworn enemy	-2
The target is placed in danger	-3
The item being asked for is valuable	-1 to -3, depending on value
The PC has a <i>rank</i> skill with the same organization as the NPC	+1 (if equal to or lower than the NPC's rank) or +1 per rank above the NPC's rank
The PC has a <i>rank</i> skill with an organization the NPC opposes	-1 per rank
The PC successfully bribes the NPC	+1
The PC attempts to bribe the NPC but fails (doesn't offer enough, offends the NPC, etc.)	-1
The PC has some outward or known quality that the NPC admires (Fame, Infamy, etc.)	+1
The PC has some outward or known quality that the NPC hates (Cowardly, Slovenly, etc.)	-1
The PC offers a favor in return	+1 to +3 depending on the favor offered

Repute rolls are used only when dealing with NPCs (whether by players or other NPCs). A Repute roll is never used against







the players to force them to perform actions against their will (after all, that's what *mind control* is for!) Characters that possess *fame*, *reputation*, or similar skills may add their level in that skill to this check, unless they are famous or renowned for something the NPC dislikes, in which case they *subtract* their level instead.

For example, Sven is a world-renowned weightlifter and has a Superb *reputation* skill for having won the Mister Galaxy contest. One NPC may admire him for this and the GM would add +3 to the Repute check, while another NPC might think Sven is just a dumb meathead and subtract -3 instead.

The Repute check is always Unopposed with a difficulty of Fair. Using modifiers and the degree of success guidelines as outlined above will help you to determine the outcome of the check and the attitude of the NPC.

## Wealth

Psi-punk uses a system of wealth that avoids complex resource-management and is designed to keep the game simple and fun. Wealth is a trait that is separate from other skills and attributes. This trait represents the purchasing power of an individual, regardless of how he acquired it. A high Wealth trait could mean the character has a lot of cash in the bank or simply has a great credit score and is able to charge everything to his account (assuming he can pay for it later). A high Wealth trait could also mean that the character has a lot of connections – friends in high (or low) places that can get him what he wants, when he wants it.

Most characters have the ability to purchase mundane items, such as food, clothing, and other daily living supplies, without the need to worry about how much each of them costs. For more expensive items, such as weapons, high-end computers, cyberware, or magic devices, a character needs to spend Wealth. Each item listed in **Chapter 3: Equipment** has an associated Cost which represents how much Wealth a character needs in order to purchase that specific type of equipment. If a character can't afford it with his current Wealth Level, he'll either need to save up or borrow money.

## Wealth by the Numbers

It may be helpful to think of Wealth as a numeric value; after all, that's how we view wealth in the real world. Rather than assigning individual dollar values to items and keeping track of your character's current finances, you may employ the following abstract numeric system. It is less granular than a purely numeric system and uses simpler math that won't slow down game play.

## Wealth Chart

Use the following chart to help you determine a numeric value for your Wealth score. This value will help you add and subtract the costs associated with Gear without reducing your ability to also look at Wealth from the perspective of the Trait Ladder.

**Table 4.6: Wealth Chart**

Value	Trait Level
0	Abysmal
1	Poor
2	Mediocre
4	Fair
8	Good
16	Great
32	Superb
64	Wonderful
128	Phenomenal
256	Extraordinary
512	Astonishing

If your Wealth Value falls within a certain range, your Wealth Level is easy to determine. For example, if you have greater than 4 Wealth but less than 8, your Wealth Level is Fair. If you acquire a Good amount of Wealth (+8) your value would increase to 12, which puts you within range of having a Good Wealth Level.

Gear can be priced numerically using this system. Cybernetic Legs with a Superb Cost (32) may have a Fault that reduces their Cost by a Good amount (8). That would make their total Cost equal 24. Subtract 24 from your Wealth Value when you purchase these legs, then determine your new Wealth Level.

Keep track of your Wealth Value and Wealth Level separately. Your Wealth Value is similar to cash in the real world – it's the numeric value that is used to determine exactly how much you have in liquid assets. Your Wealth Level is more a measure

of your status; it can be added to dice rolls made to bribe, impress, and otherwise manipulate people who are concerned with worldly matters.

## Wealth in the Game

See **Chapter 2: Character Creation** for details about how to determine a character's starting Wealth. After play starts, a character's Wealth Level can continue to represent buying power in any way which best suits him. Wealth simply represents the ability for characters to get the things they want. A high Wealth Level can be used to bribe people, buy new equipment, work their way into fancy nightclubs without an invitation (or reservation), etc.

One doesn't always need to spend his Wealth to do any of these things; rather, characters may simply roll a Wealth check as if it were any other skill. The difference between using Wealth to bribe someone and using a social skill like Impress is that Wealth isn't tied to any other attribute, so players may not benefit from Luck Point rerolls in the same way they would if they were using a skill.

If a Wealth check fails to, for example, bribe a security guard, characters may decrease their Wealth Value and try the check again; this represents "upping the ante" so to speak, by increasing the amount of the bribe to sweeten the deal. GMs may consider giving the character a bonus on his next Wealth check if he spent enough to really catch the guard's attention.

Wealth can also, of course, be used to purchase additional equipment whenever the opportunity is available.

## Acquiring Wealth

Unlike other traits, Wealth is more fluid and can be increased or decreased far more easily. Characters acquire new Wealth for any number of reasons; they may sell equip-

ment they find or don't need anymore, take out a loan from a bank (or a loan shark) or get paid for a job.

## Getting Paid

The most common method of acquiring Wealth is getting paid to do a job. This can mean either performing a task for a superior officer, pulling off a bank heist (and not getting caught or killed in the process), or completing a mercenary job for a seedy character in a grungy bar. GMs should feel free to work with their players to determine the types of jobs or missions that are best-suited to their talents and character concepts.

Regardless of the type of job, characters should get paid upon its completion. They may know what their compensation will be before they start the task or they may make off with an unknown sum of money and agree to split the loot later. In any case, when the job's done the bread's won. GMs should reward players by determining how much Wealth the task was worth and tell the players to increase their Wealth Values accordingly.

For example, if the characters are working for a paramilitary organization and are sent on a job to protect a high-ranking civilian, they may be told that their efforts will be rewarded with a Good [8] amount of cash. Once the mission has successfully been completed, characters are given 8 Wealth (a Good amount) to add to their Wealth Value. If this would increase their Wealth Level to a higher range, their Wealth Level increases as well.

## Hocking Wares

Players can choose to sell some of their existing equipment to improve their Wealth score. Generally speaking, equipment is sold at one level lower than what it could be purchased for, so a Good [8] gun would fetch a Fair [4] price. Characters with the

Haggle skill may be able to talk a buyer into giving them a better price by making a successful check (at a GM-determined difficulty). In such a case, perhaps the Good gun would fetch a Fair price and the buyer would throw in some Mediocre [2] Pocket Change.

It may be difficult to find a buyer for some equipment. Restricted or illegal items cannot be traded on the open market; you can't just walk into the local Stuff Shack and sell them your illicitly-acquired assault rifle. To find buyers for such items, characters should make an Urban (or similar) skill check with a difficulty equal to the item's Rank (see **Chapter 3: Equipment** for Rank scores). Success means the player can find a fence given enough time. Higher degrees of success mean the player can either find a buyer in a shorter amount of time or find a more trustworthy fence. Remember: many shady characters are not above selling out their contacts if it means avoiding a run-in with authorities or the promise of a quick buck.

## Taking Out a Loan

Some equipment is just too important to a job, or too coveted, to pass up. If a character really wants or needs an item he can't afford, he can attempt to take out a loan. Loans must be paid back within a time-frame specified under the loan agreement (generally one month) and almost always carry some amount of interest. Loans can, of course, be obtained from a variety of sources.

The most common methods of acquiring loans are through banks or street brokers. Getting a loan through a bank usually comes with lower interest rates but characters may be subject to criminal background checks, credit checks, and other scrutiny that certain types of characters may not wish to make public. Street brokers, on the other hand, don't ask questions about why



you want the money or whether or not you can repay them; they simply send heavily-armed thugs to rip off your cyber-limbs and hock them for the cash you owe. Street brokers also tend to require more interest than banks.

In game terms, a bank will always require the character to pay back as much money as he borrows plus an amount of extra Wealth equal to one level lower than the borrowed amount. For example, if Roy borrows a Great [16] amount from the bank, he will need to repay it in full with a Good [8] amount of interest. Street brokers, on the other hand, require characters to match the amount of money they borrow; with Great loans come Great amounts of interest.

For simplicity, banks and street brokers both require that the loan be paid back within one month of the date the funds were borrowed. Failure to pay on time results in late payment fees worth a Wealth Level 2 levels lower than the original amount borrowed, so following the above example the fee would be a Fair [4] amount.

Failure to pay again means the entire amount is owed in one additional month and it means the bank is free to hire a Collection Agency to retrieve the money. Collection Agencies are masters of tracking down people who fail to pay their debts and they are legally allowed to physically knock down doors and drag people, kicking and screaming if necessary, to jail. The sentence for defaulting on a loan is one month per Wealth level borrowed (minimum one month).

Street brokers, on the other hand, aren't as nice. They, too, have collectors who are masters of hunting down bad debtors. Unlike Collection Agencies, street broker enforcers don't give the debtor an extra month to come up with the cash; either they fork it over now or they wake up in a trash bin in a back alley with some of their spare parts missing.

## Combat

In a setting where nearly everything and everyone is used to daily conflict, combat is almost inevitable. Though combat is certainly an optional part of the game, most characters will find themselves in a combat situation at some point – if not frequently – in their careers. The remainder of this chapter will detail some of the combat terms and mechanics used in Psi-punk.

## Combat Terms

**Combat Round (Round):** An indeterminate length of time set by the GM. Because it is simple to split one minute in to 10 “rounds” of 6 seconds that is the assumed length for any given combat round. The length of time can be altered by a GM to suit his needs, but generally when each character involved has made an action, a given round is over.

**Defensive Damage Factors (DDFs):** Those traits, attributes, gifts, faults, etc. which contribute to reducing the severity of a received blow, including armor, and any applicable attributes (such as *body* versus physical attacks or *mind* versus mental attacks).

**Initiative:** The order in which characters act in a given combat round.

**Maximum Effective Range:** The furthest distance at which a given attack is capable of striking a target and dealing damage.

**Melee:** Any combat that involves striking the opponent with a fist or hand-held weapon.

**Minimum Required to Hit:** The lowest result one needs to achieve on an attack roll in order to successfully strike a target, regardless of the target's DDFs.

**Offensive Damage Factors (ODFs):** Those traits, attributes, Gifts, Faults, etc. which contribute to damaging an opponent, including a character's skill with a weapon, the weapon's damage bonus, etc.



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**Damage:** The attacker's offensive damage factors minus the defender's defensive damage factors.

**Wound Level:** A term used to describe the severity of the wound a character has taken. For example, "one Hurt physical wound," or "two Scratched mental wounds."

## Combat Rounds

In Psi-punk, combat is resolved in rounds. Each round totals about 6 seconds, to make it easy to calculate how many rounds are in a minute and to give an idea of the relative amount of time it takes to perform certain actions. In general, if an action can be performed in 6 seconds, it can be performed in a combat round.

### Determining Who Acts First

Characters in combat alternate attacking and defending based on their *initiative*. Initiative is an opposed action that is modi-

fied by the character's Dexterity or Focus attribute (whichever is higher), plus any applicable Gifts (such as Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, or Quickness). Play continues in the order of initiative from the highest rolled to the lowest, with each character taking a turn during their initiative. Initiative can be rolled once each round to keep combat more fluid and cinematic or it can be rolled once only at the beginning of combat to keep the game moving quickly – the choice is up to the GM, and she may choose to alter it during a given session depending on the needs of the combat.

A variety of modifiers can be applied to initiative. Characters who are caught unaware may receive up to a -3 penalty (depending on how unaware they were at the time they were attacked; were they sleeping, or just distracted?). If a character has poor footing, such as a slippery or narrow surface, he may take a -1 penalty to his initiative because he is constantly needing to

focus some of his attention on remaining stable. If a character has a positional advantage he may receive a +1 bonus.

These are just some examples of initiative modifiers; feel free to look for your own as the circumstances allow. Note that two opposing characters should not *both* receive modifiers for the same circumstance; for example, a surprised character may take a -1 on his initiative *or* his attacker may gain a +1 for getting the drop, but not both.

If two or more characters receive the same initiative result, they act simultaneously that round. GMs may choose to call for the player's action first or may choose to resolve the NPC's actions first, depending on their style and whatever is easiest for them to manage. However, once all actions are resolved they should be compared as if they had happened at the same time; in this way, it is possible for two shooters to wound (and possibly kill) each other, rather than one shooter killing the other before he has a chance to act.

## Taking Action

Once initiative is determined, the GM should note the order in which each player and NPC will act, in order of highest initiative to lowest. Characters may perform any action they are capable of doing in about a six-second combat round, which may include movement, negotiations, attacks, or activating special powers such as psionics or magic. The GM may rule that certain ac-

tions a character wishes to perform would take longer than a combat round and thus, the character may need to spend more than one round performing the action.

Using psionics or magic in combat as either a melee or ranged attack takes one round (six seconds) unless otherwise noted or required by the GM. Most of these types of attacks are represented by a quick discharge of power rather than sustained use.

The following table is a list of common actions and a generalization of how much time each action takes to perform. Characters can take as many of these actions in a round as time permits, unless the GM rules that the actions they are trying to take together are not feasible. Extraordinary gifts may allow for characters to perform these actions faster, thereby granting them a greater number of actions per round.

This list is not intended to be inclusive, but can be used to provide players with a guideline for basic action times.

## Holding Initiative

Sometimes a character may wish to “hold” his action, choosing to delay taking his turn to wait and see what might happen. On his initiative, a character may declare that he is holding his action and choose to do nothing. At any point before the end of the round he may choose to re-join the initiative and take his action.

A character particularly gifted in acting swiftly (such as one with a Combat Reflexes,

**Table 4.7: Action Times**

Action	Time
Crawl 5 feet, walk 15 feet, or hustle 30 feet	3 seconds
Attack with a weapon	6 seconds, can be done with movement
Climb 15 feet or swim 20 feet	6 seconds
Use psionics or magic	6 seconds
Speak or shout a command or relay minor details	No time required; part of another action
Attempt to negotiate with the enemy	6 seconds
Grapple/wrestle an opponent	6 seconds



Quick Reflexes, or similar Gift) may opt to interrupt the actions of another character. This means they are allowed to see what another character chooses to do before taking their own action and may use their turn to block, distract, or otherwise interrupt the actions of their opponent. When doing so, treat the two characters as acting simultaneously, as if acting on a tied initiative.

## Combat Options

Characters have a variety of options to choose from beyond just whether or not they wish to move or attack. In addition to maneuvering around the environment and shooting at an enemy, characters may choose to activate psionic abilities, use magic devices, actively defend against incoming attacks, and even talk down or attempt to demoralize their foes.

Following is a list of options, and any associated rules clarifications, available to characters who are participating in a combat round. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list; feel free to be creative. Just because there aren't any rules listed for employing specific skills in combat doesn't mean you have to ignore them, it simply means that they don't need any specific rules associated with them. Remember, your imagination is the only true limiting factor when it comes to role-playing.

## Attacking

You may find yourself in a situation that requires you to attack another character. You may do so at your discretion, bearing the following in mind:

Attacking a target that is *unaware* of your presence is an unopposed action with a difficulty based on the range to the target. The GM declares the Range Difficulty (see **Table 4.8: Range Difficulty**, below) and the character uses the most relevant weapon skill to attack [such as **Combat (Melee)** or **Combat (Ranged)**]. Because this is an unopposed action, the target does not get a chance to defend – he does not get to roll any dice to signify that he is trying to “dodge” the attack. Simply make your attack roll and compare it to the Range Difficulty to determine success or failure.

The Range Difficulty assumes a roughly human sized target that is not moving. To hit a character a few feet away would be Poor difficulty while the same target at the end of a football field is Great difficulty. Modifiers to the attack roll for such things as speed and size can be found in the Modifiers section, below. If the target attempts to defend itself (a wise choice), combat becomes opposed (see Defending, below). Phenomenal difficulty attacks can only be made with certain powers that allow a character to reach across planes of existence. Characters with

**Table 4.8: Range Difficulty**

Range Difficulty	Distance	Examples
Abysmal	Next to you	Hand-to-hand, Boxing
Poor	Across a table	Melee weapons (swords, clubs)
Mediocre	Across a room	Thrown object not designed to be thrown
Fair	Across a street	Weapon designed to be thrown
Good	Down a block or football field	Grenade
Great	Several city blocks	Grenade launcher
Superb	As far as you can see a man	Rocket launcher
Wonderful	To the horizon (and farther)	Missile
Phenomenal	Across a Plane (Material to Astral or 'Net and vice versa)	Psionics

the *astral projection* ability may be able to project their powers across a plane of existence (to or from the Astral Plane) but the minimum roll required to hit a target is Phenomenal. Likewise, a character with electrokinesis and the cyberpsi gift may be able to attack a person through the 'Net, but the difficulty is Phenomenal at worst.

## Defending

Most characters will not stand idle while being attacked (most will dodge or run for cover). When a character defends, combat becomes Opposed. Each combatant makes an Opposed action roll against an appropriate weapon skill or defense (such as Body for dodging). If the defending character wins, he successfully thwarted the attack. If the attacker wins, the defending character is struck by the attack.

## Minimum Required to Hit

Hitting an opponent in Opposed combat requires a minimum result of at least Poor to hit. The *minimum required to hit* is equal to the *range difficulty*, so the farther away the target, the higher the minimum to hit. For example, a character needs to score a Mediocre blow (and still win the Opposed Action) in order to hit another human sized opponent that is across the room.

Attempting to strike a dodging foe at a hundred yards is an opposed check, but the attacker will need to make at least a Good roll to strike at that distance.

## Combat Modifiers

There are many factors that may affect the result of an action. The following situations will either increase or decrease the dice roll, depending on the value of the modifier.

**Table 4.9: Combat Modifier**

Modifier	Wounds
-1	A fighter who is Hurt
-2	A fighter who is Very Hurt
<b>Position</b>	
-1	If one fighter has a positional advantage over the other, there may be a penalty to the fighter in the worse position. Examples include bad footing, lower elevation, light in his eyes, kneeling, etc.
<b>Aiming</b>	
+1	Increase skill by +1 for each full round spent aiming (max of +3)
<b>Movement</b>	
0	Target is moving on foot
-1	Target is moving slowly (up 50 mph)
-2	Target is moving quickly (up to 150 mph)
-3	Target is moving very fast (>150 mph)
<b>Size</b>	
-3	¼ inch, dime, 5mm, wings on a fly
-2	Softball
-1	Basketball
+1	Car
+2	Bus, Small building
+3	Large building, skyscraper
<b>Other</b>	
-1	Rain, Underwater, Night, Fog, Partial cover
-2	Shooting through a crowd, Target 50% covered
-3	Target 75% covered

For example, attempting to hit an object roughly the size of a basketball in the rain, will incur a penalty of -2. A character with Superb (+3) skill rolls a +1 on the dice. Normally, this would result in a Rolled Degree of Wonderful (+4), but since there is a -2 penalty to the roll, the Rolled Degree is actually Great (+2) – Fudge roll of +1, plus Superb (+3) skill, minus penalty of 2.

## Offensive/ Defensive Tactics

This optional rule allows more tactical flavor to combat at a small expense of complexity. Before each round, a fighter may choose to be in a normal posture, an offensive posture or defensive posture. An offensive or defensive stance increases combat skill in one aspect of combat (offense or defense), and decreases the same skill by an equal amount for the other aspect of combat.

**Table 4.10: Tactical Option**

Tactical Option	Offense Modifier	Defense Modifier
Total Offense (Aggressive)	+2	-2
Partial Offense (Assertive)	+1	-1
Neutral	0	0
Partial Defense (Cautious)	-1	+1
Total Defense (Defensive)	-2	+2

## PCs vs. NPCs

If a PC is fighting an NPC, the GM can treat combat as an Unopposed action by assuming the NPC will always get a result equal to his trait level. This option stresses the player character's abilities by disallowing fluke rolls by NPCs. It also helps to speed up combat by reducing the total number of rolls and comparisons made by players and GMs.

## Multiple Combatants in Melee

When more than one opponent attacks a single fighter they have, at least, a positional advantage. To reflect this, the lone fighter



is at -1 to his skill for each additional foe beyond the first, up to a maximum of -3.

There's a limit to the number of foes that can simultaneously attack a single opponent. Six is about the maximum under ideal conditions (such as wolves, or spear-wielders), while only three or four can attack if using weapons or martial arts that require a lot of maneuvering space. If the lone fighter is in a doorway, only one or two fighters can reach him.

## Ranged Combat

Like melee combat, ranged combat is usually an Unopposed action. Targets are often unaware of their assailants, especially if they are being targeted by a character with a sniper rifle. In close-and-dirty fire-fights though, when characters are aware of each other, combat becomes an Opposed action.

Following are some key terms and concepts relating to ranged combat.



## Maximum Effective Range

Each weapon has a *maximum effective range*: the furthest a character can shoot that weapon before its ammo begins to drop too rapidly to be useful. A weapon's maximum effective range is shown on **Table 3.1: Guns**.

Note that the list is a simplification of real-world maximum range. Real weapons vary in their ability to hit targets at long range, and even weapons within the same category (such as handguns) have varying maximum ranges. However, for the sake of keeping things simple and fun, the chart is used for all weapons of the given category.

Equipment modifications are available which can increase a weapon's maximum effective range. See **Chapter 3: Equipment** for more details on equipment Gifts.

## Rate of Fire

Rate of Fire (ROF) denotes how quickly a firearm shoots projectiles each time the trigger is pulled. There are four basic rates of fire: Standard, Burst, Full Auto, and Rapid Fire.

A firearm may possess more than one rate of fire. In this case, the weapon is *selective fire*. Each round, the shooter may change the weapon's rate of fire. For example, if an assault rifle possessed Standard and Burst rates of fire, the shooter could take a Standard shot in one round, and then switch to a Burst in the next. Unless noted in the weapon's description, all automatic weapons possess selective fire.

To avoid complicated mechanics that try to determine how many bullets strike a target in a single attack, a simplified solution is presented here. When firing with an automatic weapon, simply increase the attack and offensive damage factors for that weapon. It is possible to achieve a more realistic simulation by determining the number of bullets that hit a target based on the relative degree of success on the initial attack roll, but these mechanics can slow down game-

play. Instead, each rate of fire description below has its own modifiers which are applied to a single roll.

**Standard (S):** The weapon fires only once when the shooter pulls the trigger. No special rules exist for this Rate of Fire. It permits the character to attack normally.

**Burst (B):** When the shooter pulls the trigger, the weapon automatically fires three shots in a short, controlled burst. Firing a weapon in burst mode grants the attacker a +1 bonus on his Offensive Damage Factors. The attacker may only direct burst fire at a single target.

**Full Auto (FA):** When the shooter pulls the trigger, the weapon automatically fires a score of shots in a long, rapid burst. The shooter may direct full auto fire at multiple targets. Firing a weapon Full Auto at a single target grants a +2 bonus to Offensive Damage Factors. The weapon may be fired at multiple targets in a single round; in this case, the attacker gains no bonus on the roll. When attacking multiple targets, roll only once and compare the result to each defender individually.

**Rapid Fire (RF):** When the shooter pulls the trigger, the weapon automatically fires at least fifty shots in a long, rapid burst. Gatling guns and several advanced technologies are capable of this fire rate. Directing RF at a single target grants a +4 bonus on ODFs, while directing the attack at multiple targets grants a +1 bonus. As with Full Auto, roll only once and check individually against each target's DDFs. A weapon must always be reloaded after using this attack method.

**Table 4.11: Rate of Fire Summary**

Action	Bonus (Single/Multiple Targets)	Bullets Fired	Max Targets
Single	0	1	1
Burst	+1	3	1
Full Auto	+2/+0	10-25	3
Rapid	+4/+1	50+	8

This table summarizes the information outlined above. Note that this table also indicates the maximum number of targets that can be hit using a given RoF.

## Reloading Firearms

Guns require ammunition and inevitably run out of bullets. Each type of firearm must be reloaded from time to time, lest the shooter find himself without an effective weapon.

**Psi-punk's** intention is to focus on simple, fun game play and not necessarily on realism. Therefore, you will not find any references to the number of bullets a given gun has in a clip or how many times it can be fired before the weapon must be reloaded. Instead, a more cinematic approach is utilized.

Characters may continue to fire their guns with no penalty until a natural roll of a certain number of blanks is made. When a player rolls, for example, 3 blank dice on 4dF, his gun runs out of ammunition and he must spend the next round (6 seconds) reloading before he can fire the weapon again. Characters may be able to reduce the amount of time it takes to reload a weapon with a Gift, such as “Fast Reload.”

The number of rolled blanks required for a gun to run out of ammo is dependent upon the weapon's selected Rate of Fire. This information is summarized on **Table 3.1: Guns**.

## Psionics in Combat

Many psionic powers have the ability to deal damage to targets at range. In most of these cases, that damage comes from hurled projectiles: fire bolts, ice darts, laser beams, and so forth. Any power which manifests a physical object or bolt of energy to be launched at a target is called a *projectile attack*. To make such an attack, characters must possess a psionic power to activate, and the check is rolled as if activating

a psionic power normally (see **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic**) but is opposed by the target's physical defenses.

## Minimum Required to Hit

The minimum check result required to hit a target with a projectile attack is Fair. This does not vary based on the type of attack; characters who fail to manifest their psionic attacks at a level of at least Fair are simply incapable of extending an attack beyond their maximum effective range.

## Maximum Effective Range

The maximum effective range of a projectile attack is dependent upon the attacker's initial check result. For every level of success above Fair, the attacker may hurl a projectile up to 30 feet. For example, if a cryokinetic attacks with an ice dart and rolls a Great (+2) result, he may hurl the ice dart 60 feet. A Fair result means that the character can only attack someone within melee range.

## Damage

As normal, compare the attacker's check result to the defender's opposed check to determine damage. Attackers simply manifest their chosen power (such as *pyrokinesis*) and the defender rolls his Body attribute and adds any bonuses or penalties for armor, Gifts, Faults, and so forth. The attacker does not need to make an additional Combat (Melee) or Combat (Ranged) check.

## Wounds and Healing

Inevitably, combat results in one or more opponents becoming injured, or *wounded*. In **Psi-punk**, we use an abstract method of documenting wounds called a Wound Track, described below. Wounded characters must either receive medical treatment or allow a certain amount of time to pass before their wounds can be healed

or erased from their Wound Track. The following section describes how we put all of this together.

Damage to a character can be described as being at one of seven stages of severity:

**Undamaged:** No wounds at all. The character is not necessarily healthy — he may be sick, for example. But he doesn't have a combat wound that's recent enough to be bothering him.

**Scratched:** No real game effect, except to create tension. This may eventually lead to being Hurt if the character is hit enough times.

**Hurt:** The character is wounded significantly, enough to slow him down: -1 to all traits which would logically be affected. This condition lasts until the character is healed (see Healing below).

**Very Hurt:** The character is seriously hurt, possibly stumbling: -2 to all traits which would logically be affected. This lasts until the character is healed.

**Incapacitated:** The character is so badly wounded as to be incapable of taking any action, except possibly dragging himself a few feet every now and then or gasping out an important message. A particularly tough hero (one with a Body of Great or better) may be able to open doors or slowly drag himself to safety, but he is incapable of performing any normal combat actions, including mental actions such as activating psionic powers. Characters with an appropriate gift such as "Hard to Kill" might be able to remain active even while they have an Incapacitated wound.

**Near Death:** Not only is the character unconscious, he'll die within hours without medical help.

**Dead:** The character is no more; all you can do is go through his pockets and look for loose change.





## Mental and Physical Damage

There are two types of damage: mental and physical. Mental damage results from psionic attacks that directly attack the mind. Physical damage results from bullets, knives, fire, electricity, psionic attacks that directly alter a creature's form and anything else that could conceivably cause harm.

Mental and physical damage are tracked separately but have similar effects. The key difference is that when a person is at a mental wound level of Hurt, for example, he would take a -1 penalty to all abilities and actions that require thought (including using psionic abilities, reasoning skills, etc.). Characters at a physical wound level of Hurt would likewise take a -1 penalty to all physical skills (including physical combat, lifting objects, balancing, driving, etc.). When in doubt, ask the GM which penalties apply in which circumstances.

Note that it is just as possible to become Incapacitated, Near Death, or Dead from mental damage as it is from physical damage; the mind can only take so much trauma and psionic attacks can be very deadly indeed. Tracking each ability separately means you can get a good idea of the character's overall health; if he is physically Very Hurt but has no mental damage, he can still act responsibly and reason just as well as he could before he was hit by that last bullet. If a character is mentally Very Hurt but physically unharmed, he may be able to jump over the pit in front of him, but is it really a good idea? Characters who are both physically and mentally Very Hurt are likely to soon become Incapacitated.

## Wound Factors

When determining how wounded a character is when hit in combat, take into consideration all of the following factors.

### Offensive Damage Factors

Offensive Damage Factors (ODFs) are all applicable game statistics used to determine how well your character can *deliver* an attack. They are an indication of how offensively powerful he is. Total your regular ODFs and write them down on your character sheet for ease of reference, but remember that there are often other modifiers to these numbers, such as your attack roll, positional modifiers, range penalties, and so forth.

Your attack roll is one of the most important ODFs. The degree of success by which an attack succeeds is one factor — the better the hit, the greater likelihood of damage. A degree of success of +1 means you probably hit somewhere that isn't life-threatening. Scoring a hit with a +3 could mean you hit something vital. Add your attack's degree of success to your other ODFs to determine your Total Damage Factor.

The weapon used is also a factor. For thrown objects, the Material Value adds to the damage — the harder the substance, the more it hurts when it hits. Otherwise, it's relative to the nature of the weapon: a shotgun deals more damage than a pistol and a .38 usually does more damage than a .22. Example weapon Offensive Damage Factors can be found in **Chapter 3: Equipment**. Weapon damage factors are usually “static,” meaning they do not change unless you change weapons. A weapon's damage factor is an example of an ODF that can be added to your character sheet for quick reference.

It is important to point out that while many games add a character's attributes to damage (such as Strength for melee weapons or Dexterity for ranged damage) this is not the case in **Psi-punk**. Instead, a character's skill with a weapon helps determine how much damage he is able to deal with a given hit, and the weapon itself has its own damage rating to add to ODFs. Attributes are used to help determine how many dice may be rerolled when using Luck Points. For more information on Luck Points, see **Chapter 2: Character Creation**.

## Defensive Damage Factors

Defensive Damage Factors (DDFs) are an indication of how well the character can *avoid* or *absorb* an attack. These factors may be mental or physical, so it may be important to note the differences between the two. Tally up your character's DDFs and write them down on your character sheet for ease of reference.

Characters subtract their Body attribute value from any physical damage that they suffer. Note that this means characters with negative body values actually take more physical damage than normal; they're especially fragile and easily hurt. Characters with a Gift that would make them more resistant to physical harm, such as Damage Resistant, may add a +1 to their defensive factors.

Similarly, use a character's Mind attribute as a defensive factor against mental attacks. Likewise, characters with a negative mind modifier may take extra damage from mental attacks; their weak will leaves them susceptible to psionic attacks. Characters

may have Gifts, such as "Mental Resistance", which also grant +1 to their defensive factor against mental attacks.

Armor, Force Fields, and other defensive powers add their level value to DDFs against physical damage. Example armor levels can be found in **Chapter 3: Equipment**. Certain types of psionic abilities and psicraft armors may be used to add their level value to their Defensive Damage Factors against mental damage.

Finally, your defense roll is a DDF. When you are the victim of an attack that you are aware of (i.e., if the attack is Opposed), you get to roll 4dF and all other applicable DDFs to try to avoid being damaged.

## Determining Wound Level

To determine how much damage is done in a given round, the following formula may be used:

**Damage** = attacker's offensive damage factors – defender's defensive damage factors

The damage is compared to a chart to determine what kind of wound is received.

The numbers above the wound levels represent the amount of damage needed in a single blow to inflict the wound listed under the number. For example, a blow of 3 or 4 points Hurts the character, while a blow of 5 or 6 points inflicts a Very Hurt wound. If it's zero or less, no Wounds result.

## Recording Wounds

Once the final damage is determined, it is recorded on the wounded player's character sheet. When a wound is received, mark off the appropriate box. A character

**Table 4.12: Determining Wound Level**

Damage = winner's offensive damage factors – loser's defensive damage factors						
Damage	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9
Wound Level	None	Scratched	Hurt	Very Hurt	Incapacitated	Near Death

can suffer up to three Scratched, one Hurt, one Very Hurt, one Incapacitated, and one Near Death result. If a character takes a level of damage that's already checked off, it becomes one level higher. A character that has already suffered three Scratched results and suffers another Scratched result is Hurt instead.

A Scratched result has no game effect; the character took some minor damage, but isn't impaired in any way. A character who is Hurt is at -1 on all appropriate actions (mental or physical) for 1 round. A character who is Very Hurt is at -2 on all appropriate actions until healed. A character who is Incapacitated is incapable of taking any action except very minor ones and a character who is Near Death can do nothing unless someone offers them medical help.

Never add boxes for cannon-fodder NPCs (though you may wish to do so for major NPCs). In fact, NPC minions don't even need the system above. A simple three-stage system of Undamaged, Hurt, and Incapacitated is good enough for most of them. Simply make a mark under an NPC's name for Hurt, and cross out the name for Incapacitated.

## Knockout and Pulling Punches

The GM may decide that a successful Good blow (or better) to the head knocks someone out instead of inflicting a wound. In an opposed action, the Good blow would also have to win the combat.

Likewise, a player may choose to have his character do reduced damage in any given attack. This is known as "pulling your punch." To pull your punch, simply an-

nounce the maximum wound level you will do if you are successful. A player can say he is going for a Scratch in order to deliver a warning to a villain, for example. In this case, even if he wins the opposed action by +8, the worst he can do is rough up his foe a little.

## Healing

Wounds are healed through time, medical skills, or psionic powers. The amount of time it takes to recover varies based on the source of healing. Psionic powers tend to act much more quickly than medical science and characters who are left untreated to heal on their own may take longer still.

## Medical Treatment

If a character receives medical treatment, he heals much more quickly than if he is left to heal on his own. Characters who are Near Death require trained assistance to heal; if left untreated, a Near Death character will die in a matter of minutes or hours (depending on the nature of the wound that caused him to reach Near Death status; the GM can determine how much time the character has to live.)

Treating a character requires the use of a medical skill and appropriate tools. A field medic's kit may be sufficient for stabilizing a Near Death character, but may not help him recover any wounds until he has been treated at a hospital with sufficient equipment. However, the same field medic's kit will help reduce all other wounds with an appropriate medical skill check. The difficulty for the check is equal to the level of the wound, with Hurt being level 1 (Good

**Table 4.13: Example of the Wound Track found on a character sheet.**

Damage Dealt	1,2	3,4	5,6	7,8	9+
Wound	Scratched	Hurt (-1)	Very Hurt (-2)	Incapacitated	Nr. Death
	0 0 0	0	0	0	0



difficulty) and Near Death being level 4 (Wonderful difficulty).

A Scratch is too insignificant to require a roll. Scratches are usually erased after a battle, provided the characters have five or ten minutes to attend to them.

A Good degree result from use of a medical skill heals all wounds one level – one Hurt to one Scratch, Very Hurt to one Hurt, and so on. A Great result heals all wounds two levels, and a Superb result heals three levels. Scratches do not count as a level for healing purposes.

Note that it is possible to botch a healing roll and further wound a character. Any result of Mediocre or less has the opposite effect (wounds are added by 1, 2, 3 levels, etc.) This does mean that, at the GM's option, an Abysmal healing check could kill the character (I hope you have malpractice insurance!).

A result of Fair on a healing check means that the character's health does not improve, but he is not harmed either. A new check may be attempted provided there is sufficient time to do so.

Treating a character's wounds takes a number of minutes equal to 10 times the highest wound level that character possesses, with Hurt being level 1 and Near Death being level 4. As long as emergency first aid treatment has begun on a Near Death character before he dies, the treatment may be allowed to continue for the full duration (40 minutes).

## Medical Treatment Example

Kathy, Frank, and Nolan just barely survived a tough firefight. Kathy sustained a Very Hurt wound, but Nolan is Near Death due to having sustained several bullet wounds and Frank, the medical expert, needs to tend to him right away.

The GM determines that Nolan has about four minutes to live without treatment, so Frank wastes no time getting out his tools



and going to work. He knows Kathy is in a lot of pain, but she'll just have to wait.

Frank's Superb skill is going to be tested. He rolls a total of +2 on the dice and gets a Phenomenal result or a Good degree of success (since the difficulty for a level 4 wound is Wonderful). It's going to take 40 minutes to stop the bleeding and ensure Nolan's survival, but because he got started right away Frank was able to save Nolan's life. None of Nolan's other wounds can be healed, however, until he receives medical treatment with more advanced equipment than that found in a field medic's kit; he may go to a hospital or be dragged to some back-alley street doc, but either way he's probably going to need an operating table.

A medic's job is never done. Any Scratches that Kathy may have sustained have gone away by now, but she's still Very Hurt. Frank spends the next 20 minutes (10 minutes times a level 2 wound) and rolls a medical skill check. Knowing that the difficulty is Great for a level 2 wound, he knows he

Table 4.14: Wound Level Summary

Wound	Level	Difficulty	Time to Heal	
			With Treatment	No Treatment
Hurt	1	Good	10 min.	1 week
Very Hurt	2	Great	20 min.	2 weeks
Incapacitated	3	Superb	30 min.	3 weeks
Near Death	4	Wonderful	40 min.	4 weeks

needs to get at least a Superb result to heal her by even one wound level.

Frank rolls a total of -1 on the dice and adds +3 for his Superb skill, which only gives him a level of Great. That's not enough to hurt Kathy, but it doesn't help her either. Trying again, he gets a +2 on the dice for a Phenomenal result, or a total degree of success of Superb (+3).

With renewed dedication, Frank manages to fix up Kathy's Very Hurt wound and reduce it to just a Hurt wound. However, because he was able to heal up to three wound levels with this result, he also clears up that Hurt wound and now she's feeling good as new.

## Time Heals All Things

All wounds are healed between missions. If natural healing during a mission is a concern, wounds heal on their own at one wound level per week of rest. That is, after a week of rest, a Very Hurt character becomes Hurt, and so on. The GM may also require a successful roll against his Body attribute: Fair difficulty level for Hurt, Good difficulty level for Very Hurt, and Great difficulty level for Incapacitated. Failing this roll slows the healing process, but a result at least two steps higher than the target can speed up the healing process (one wound level healed per four days of rest, for example). Having a Gift such as "Fast Healer" might grant the character a +2 bonus on such checks.

## Healing Mental Damage

Healing mental damage is harder to quantify, since a scalpel and suture won't repair damage to a character's psyche. Psionic powers or magic devices may be required to heal a character's mental damage (see individual powers for examples), but a character who is brought to Near Death from mental damage is not in immediate danger of dying (since he is not "bleeding out"). Mental damage heals naturally over time in the same manner as physical damage.

Many hospitals are equipped with the appropriate medical technology to treat mental trauma, usually through the aid of magic devices. Note that magic devices have a high rate of failure when used on mentals (people with psionic abilities) and therefore very few doctors will agree to operate on psionics with mental trauma. Using a magical device to heal mental damage on a psionist imposes a -3 penalty on the healing check.

## Example Combat

All of the above information can be confusing without some example of how it all works together. This chapter will conclude with a sample combat to show you how it's done.



## Roy vs. Sven (or Guns vs. Brawn)

Roy and Sven possess the following relevant traits:

By the numbers, it may seem like Sven has the upper-hand because his total ODFs are higher than Roy's DDFs, but who will come out on top?



### Step 1: Initiative

Both characters roll for initiative to determine who goes first in combat. Assume neither character has surprise or advantage, so no modifiers come in to play.

Roy rolls 4dF and gets the following result: ■, ■, ■, ■ +0, for a total result of +1.

Sven rolls 4dF and gets the following result: ■, ■, ■, ■ +0, for a total of -2. Looks like Sven should have spent less time on the weights and more time loosening up!

**Roy will act first in the initiative.**

Roy	Sven
Offensive Damage Factors	Offensive Damage Factors
Combat (Ranged) [Dexterity] Superb (+3) Weapon [Lg. Sub-Machinegun] Great (+2) Total ODFs: +5	Combat (Melee) [Strength] Superb (+3) Weapon [Lg. Knife]: Good (+1) Weapon Gift [Shocking Blade] Good (+1) Total ODFs: +5
Defensive Damage Factors	Defensive Damage Factors
Body: Great (+2) Armor [Leather Jacket] +1 Total DDFs: +3	Body: Superb (+3) Armor [Bulletproof Shirt] +2 Total DDFs: +5



## Step 2: Roy's Action

Roy starts the combat by moving away from Sven and then pointing his SMG at the bigger man. He pulls the trigger and takes a shot at Poor range. Roy rolls the dice and gets the following result: **■, ■, ■, ■** + 5 = Great (+2). Not a lucky shot for Roy, but at least he beat the minimum required to hit for Poor range, so there's a chance he might still strike his target.

Sven is aware of the attack and so he gets a chance to defend himself with a dice roll of his own (otherwise, we would simply compare Roy's attack roll with Sven's DDFs). Sven rolls a result of **⊕, ■, ■, ■** + 5 = Superb (+3). So much for avoiding all of that flying lead!

Roy compares his rolled result of +2 to Sven's rolled result of +3 and finds that his *relative degree* is Mediocre (-1). Unfortunately for Roy, Sven's tough skin and bullet-proof shirt provide him enough protection to avoid being injured by any of Roy's stray bullets. Even though Roy had the potential to hit Sven this round, it would appear that his bullets weren't on the mark and didn't deal any significant damage to his opponent.

## Step 3: Sven's Action

Upset at being shot at but not one to back down from a fight, Sven charges after Roy and swings at his face with his electro-knife! The GM rules that this charge attack is considered an Aggressive Posture (+2 to Offense / -2 to Defense) and Sven modifies his ODFs for this round accordingly.

Sven rolls 4dF and gets the following result: **■, ■, ⊕, ■** + 5 + 2 = 6. He came out swinging wildly, but managed to surpass his minimum required to hit of Poor, so he has the potential to land a solid hit! Roy isn't going to just take this lying down, though.

Roy attempts to dodge the charging mad-man and rolls **■, ⊕, ⊕, ■** + 3 = 3. It seems that luck isn't on his side today.

Sven examines his relative degree. His initial roll was +6 while Roy's total defense was only +3, so Sven's relative degree is Superb (+3). Sven slashes Roy's chest with his knife, dealing a nice amount of damage.

## Step 4: Record Wounds

Now that someone is hurt, let's take a look at recording wounds on a character sheet. Before Roy got knifed, his wound track looked like this:

Roy's Physical Wound Track					
Damage Dealt	1,2	3,4	5,6	7,8	9+
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Very Hurt	Incapacitated	Nr. Death
	0 0 0	0	0	0	0

Roy's Physical Wound Track					
Damage Dealt	1,2	3,4	5,6	7,8	9+
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Very Hurt	Incapacitated	Nr. Death
	0 0 0	X	0	0	0

Now that he has taken damage, he looks at the chart to determine his new wound level. Sven hit Roy with a *relative degree* of +3, and looking at the wound track Roy sees that +3 indicates a Hurt wound. He marks off one Hurt wound with a pencil and now his wound track looks like this:

The GM reminds Roy that he will take a -1 penalty on all physical skill checks next round, due to his injury. With that being said, Roy's turn is up again.

## 4

### Step 5: Roy's Action

Upset about being hit, Roy unloads on Sven at point blank range to try to ensure that his bullets will hit this time. He takes an assertive posture (+1 to hit / -1 to defense) and uses Burst Fire (+1 to hit) against Sven. Roy rolls the dice and gets the following result:  $\oplus, \ominus, \oplus, \oplus + 5$  (ODFs) + 1 (assertive posture) + 1 (for Burst Fire) - 1 (for being Hurt) = 8. Not a bad shot at all, and he's definitely within range for that to meet his minimum required to hit.

Sven is at a disadvantage; having just charged Roy, his defense is down by two. He rolls the dice and prays for a miracle, but gets the following instead:  $\ominus, \ominus, \oplus, \ominus + 5 - 2$  (aggressive posture) = 1. Things are about to turn sour for Sven.

Comparing the relative degree, Roy notes that his degree of success is +7; a solid shot to be sure! Sven knows that this is not going to be good news for his character.

### Step 6: Record Wounds

Sven checks his wound track to find out what a damage of +7 gets him, and he doesn't like the result. His once-flawless wound track now looks like this:

In one single attack, Sven has been Incapacitated. He shakes his fist (or would, if he were still conscious) knowing full well that a simple +1 to his defense roll would have meant only a Very Hurt wound, which would still allow him to fight. Sven groans in pain as his body slumps to the ground, unable to carry on. He'll need medical attention, or about a month's worth of bed rest, before he'll be back to normal again. That is, if Roy doesn't choose to finish the job...

Sven's Physical Wound Track

Damage Dealt	1,2	3,4	5,6	7,8	9+
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Very Hurt	Incapacitated	Nr. Death
	0 0 0	0	0	X	0



## Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic



There are two different methods of generating supernatural effects in **Psi-punk: psionics** and **magic**. The term “psionics” relates to the ability to control, manipulate, sense, and otherwise “do really neat tricks” with your mind. Magic is a term given to electronic devices which can manipulate energy to produce similar effects to those of psionics, albeit with less spectacular and sometimes less dependable results.

Characters that choose to become gifted psionics must do so at character creation; psionics represent an innate talent that cannot be learned. Conversely, characters that use magic devices may purchase them at any time, provided they can find someone to sell them the proper equipment. It is possible, though rarely wise, to use magic devices without training; these devices are unstable and, in the hands of a novice, prone to severe backfire.

Because magic devices attempt to duplicate phenomena produced by psionics, their use by someone who is psychically adept is exceedingly dangerous. Test results have found that there is a large amount of psychic interference when a mental attempts to use a magic device, which in ninety percent of test cases has caused the device to malfunction. Resulting side effects include injury, severe bleeding, brain damage and, in at least a few cases, death.

## Legality

The use of psionic powers and magic devices in public is restricted by law, even though the anti-psi laws of the 2020s have largely been repealed. While it is now okay for psionics to use their abilities, they must exercise these rights with caution; no person may use psionics or magic in a way that would adversely affect his environment, harm another living creature, or damage property.

Many psionic powers are treated as weapons because they can produce danger-

ous and harmful effects. Characters must have a Rank skill to use harmful psionic powers in public. Generally speaking, the higher the Rank, the higher degree of success you can attain without provoking law enforcement. For example, if you have a military Rank of Great (+2) you can use *pyrokinesis* to create a Great effect without risk of repercussion.

Non-harmful psionic effects, such as *ESP*, may be used freely in public without the threat of the law. Certain people, such as those in the Anti-Psi League, still may not appreciate the use of these powers and are often forcefully vocal about their disdain.

## Using Psionics

See **Chapter 2: Character Creation** for details about how to gain psionic abilities as Gifts. Below is a list of psychic powers and their key attributes. The key attribute is used to determine a character’s overall ability to use that psionic power. A character with a Great Focus attribute would be a good candidate for the *mind control* ability, for example.

Any time you use a psionic ability, roll against the ability’s key attribute. Characters that do not have the key attribute listed on their character sheet have a default level of Fair. The degree of success determines how powerful an effect you can generate with the psychic ability.

For example: Jane is attempting to create fire using the *pyrokinesis* ability. She rolls a check against her Focus attribute, which she has at a level of Great (+2). After totaling her die roll at -1 and adding her +2, she determines that she rolled a result of Good (+1). With that result the GM rules that she can create a flame about the size of a bon fire. If she had rolled a Fair result, she might have only been able to create a match-sized flame, while a Superb result may have allowed her to generate a raging inferno.

Each psionic power entry includes examples of effects that can be generated by different degrees of success. These are by no means the limits of a character's psionic abilities, but guidelines as to what possibilities each ability possesses and the relative power level of each.

When using a psionic power, it is possible to enhance your result by spending a Luck Point. For each point you spend, you gain a +1 bonus on the check. This is especially important to note when making opposed checks, since these points may mean the difference between success and defeat! When altering a result in this way, you must declare the number of LP you will be spending *before* the check is made.

## Opposed Checks, Difficulties, and Degrees of Success

Each time you roll to determine the outcome of activating a supernatural ability you will need to determine your degree of success. In the powers listed below, different ladder levels are described to give you an idea of some of the possible effects of the power's use. In each case, these descriptions are based on the degree of success of the check, not the initial check itself.

**Example 1 (Opposed Check):** Nathan uses *antipsi* to resist the effects of Luke's *control animate* attack against him (instead of rolling a Body check to resist the attack). After all abilities and rolls are calculated, Nathan determines that his check result is Superb (+3). However, Nathan's check is being opposed by Luke's attack and Luke gets a total result of Great (+2). Nathan subtracts Luke's result from his own and gets a Good (+1) degree of success. Nathan can suppress Luke's attack against him for up to 1 minute. Luke decides it is too difficult to try to remain in contact with Nathan long enough to cause him any harm and decides to back off.

**Example 2 (Difficulty):** Luke is trying to change a wooden door in to an iron door to

try to reinforce it against attack. Because a door is a relatively large object and iron is a harder substance than wood, the GM decides that this task will have a Great difficulty. Luke is feeling pretty confident about this because he has a Great Focus attribute and is therefore a skilled shaper.

Luke rolls 4dF and gets an overall result of +1 on the dice. He adds that to his Great Focus (+2) for a total result of Superb (+3). He beat the target difficulty by 1 level: Superb (+3) – Great (+2) = Good (+1). Luke succeeded at the task, but his degree of success was only Good. This means that he is able to change the wooden door in to iron but only for about six hours, after which point the iron door turns back into a wooden one.

## Additional Skill Requirements

It may not always be enough to simply activate a psionic power. Some effects require a degree of precision or knowledge that doesn't come innately.

Depending on the desired outcome of a power's use, a character may need to roll an additional skill check to accompany a successful result. Success means that the power is activated properly *and* that the desired result is attained. Successfully activating the power but failing the subsequent skill check means something happened, but not necessarily what was intended (or with as much precision as desired).

It is ultimately up to the GM to determine whether or not an additional skill check is required. Below is an example to give you an idea of what situations may call for additional skill checks.

**Example:** Lester wants to use *control inanimate* to turn his cybernetic legs into tank legs temporarily. He has already rolled a Superb result to activate the power, so the GM rules that he has the potential to do so.

However, tank legs require moving parts and a basic knowledge of how they function. The GM decides to call for an additional Technical or Vehicle skill check at Great difficulty to see if Lester knows enough about tanks to make legs that are actually functional.

Lester gets a Superb result, or a Good degree of success, so the GM allows Lester to turn his cybernetic legs into functioning tank legs for as long as the power allows.

If Lester's Vehicle check had only been Good (a Mediocre degree of success) he may have been able to turn his legs into tank legs, but they wouldn't function very smoothly. If his result was Mediocre (an Abysmal degree) he might have turned his legs into paperweights that only *look* like the wheels of a tank.



## Psionic Powers

- Characters who are good candidates for having psionic powers include:
- those who wish to be able to do cool things using just the power of their mind
- those who think it would be fun to be part of a powerful minority
- those who aren't afraid to be antagonized by "normals" for having superior powers
- those who prefer to have a small set of powerful abilities instead of a wide range of less-powerful ones those who don't necessarily depend on having large amounts of Wealth

Below is a list of possible psionic power groups available to characters that possess the appropriate Gifts. Feel free to work with your GM to include other abilities or uses for these abilities as you see fit. Each entry contains the following information:

**Name:** the name of the psionic discipline.

**Key Attribute:** the secondary attribute (Dexterity, Strength, Focus, Spirit, Presence,

or Status) used to determine a character's skill with this group of powers.

**Description:** basic description of the power, including examples of its applications.

**Degrees of Success:** general description about how powerful an ability is with various ladder results.

**Example Gifts/Faults:** examples of Gifts or Faults that may be applied to powers to increase their effectiveness or help buy off their cost at character creation.

## Antipsi

**Key Attribute:** Focus or Spirit

*Antipsi* is a discipline used to still the mind against psionic attacks or nullify existing psionic effects. *Antipsi* is most often used in reaction to mental attack, to block a telepath from reading one's thoughts or a "puppeteer" from controlling them. *Antipsi* can also be used to suppress active psionic effects of all kinds, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the relative degree of success.



When using *antipsi* to resist a psionic attack, you may activate this power to attempt to suppress or negate the attack. Activating the power in this way requires no time on your part; it is a “free” action. If the attempt fails, your other defenses kick in and you may choose to defend against the attack normally. In essence, by attaining this power you give yourself another line of defense against psionic attacks.

- When using *antipsi* to suppress or nullify an effect, the degree by which you surpass your opponent’s check result determines the length of time you may choose to suppress the effect.
- **Abysmal (-3):** You fail to suppress the effect *and* it is treated as being of one level higher against you (i.e., a Good result is treated as Great against you).
- **Poor (-2) to Fair (0):** You are unable to suppress the effect.
- **Good (+1):** You may suppress the effect for up to 1 minute.
- **Great (+2):** You may suppress the effect for up to 10 minutes.
- **Superb (+3):** You may suppress the effect for up to 1 hour.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You may suppress the effect for up to 1 day.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** As a Wonderful result, and the attacker takes 1 Hurt mental wound.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You may suppress the effect as long as you choose or nullify the effect entirely.
- **Astonishing (+7):** As an Extraordinary result *and* you shut down all of the attacker’s psionic abilities for 1 day.

For example, Jillian attempts to suppress the mental control a puppeteer has over her colleague. She rolls a Focus check to activate her *antipsi* ability and the GM rolls an opposed check for the puppeteer’s *mind control* power. If Jillian fails to beat the puppeteer’s result, she is unsuccessful at suppressing the mental control. However, if she is successful, she can suppress the ef-

fect for an amount of time as noted above. Note that the puppeteer’s *mind control* effect may have a limited duration of its own (see *mind control*, below).

To negate all of one character’s psionic abilities (which requires an Astonishing result) a character must be able to see the target. Using the example above, Jillian would not be able to suppress all of the puppeteer’s powers if she was targeting her ally with *antipsi* if she could not see him. Jillian could, however, negate any other psionic power affecting her ally that originated from the puppeteer, such as *modify memory*.

**Example Fault: Psi Static:** The character automatically attempts to suppress all psionic effects within Poor range of herself. Psionic effects activated within Poor range of the character must succeed at an opposed check or fail to activate properly. This ability may not be suppressed. (This is considered a Fault because it can suppress both positive and negative psionic effects and the character cannot control its use.)

## Electrokinesis

**Key Attribute:** Focus

Electrokinesis is the ability to manipulate electrical energy and current with one’s mind. This potent ability is commonly depicted as a person shooting lightning bolts from his fingertips, but it encompasses more than just the destructive side of electricity. With this power, characters can not only zap their enemies with bolts of lightning, they can manipulate electrical current and devices which operate electronically, such as computers, alarm systems, electric vehicles, etc.

- Examples of *electrokinesis* ladder results include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails, electrical feedback causes you to receive one Hurt wound *and* you cause one Incapacitated wound to any device you are trying to manipulate (if applicable).



- **Poor (-2):** Your attempt fails and you cause one Very Hurt wound to any device you are trying to manipulate.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt fails and you cause one Hurt wound to any device you are trying to manipulate.
- **Fair (0):** Your attempt simply fails.
- **Good (+1):** You disable a device or take control of it for 1 minute.
- **Great (+2):** You disable a device for 10 minutes, take control of it for 10 minutes, etc. Where appropriate, you can program a device (such as a computer) to carry out orders which it will continue to operate for the duration before returning to its regular programming.
- **Superb (+3):** You disable a device for 1 hour, take control of a device for 1 hour, etc. Where appropriate, you can program a device (such as a computer) to carry out orders which it will continue to operate for the duration before returning to its regular programming.

- **Wonderful (+4):** You disable a device for 1 day, take control of a device for 1 day, etc. Where appropriate, you can program a device (such as a computer) to carry out orders which it will continue to operate indefinitely or as defined by you.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** You permanently disable or take control over a device, etc. You can reprogram computers and other software-driven devices to execute your commands indefinitely.
- **Extraordinary:** As a Phenomenal result, but you may control up to three devices simultaneously.
- **Astonishing:** As a Phenomenal result, but you can control up to ten devices simultaneously.

Individual devices will have difficulties appropriate to their size and complexity. Disabling a light bulb may only have a Mediocre (-1) difficulty since it is a small and simple object, whereas disabling an entire power plant would require you to first break in and find the central control system, then make a check to disable it (most likely a Phenomenal difficulty, though the check would depend on the system's security rating).

Use your best judgment when determining damage dealt to an electronic device or system. If a character receives a result of Abysmal (-3) when attempting to take out a power plant's central systems, he likely will not deal any harm to the system (it is probably well-guarded against such attacks). He may damage a single nearby structure which may, in turn, have its own side effects, but failure should never be rewarded by becoming a haphazard success (such as taking out the power plant because you accidentally blew it up, as opposed to just shutting it down); the end result of disabling the power plant is the same in this situation even if the method is drastically different).

**Example Gift/Fault: *Cyberpsi*:** This can be either a Gift or a fault, depending on the setting. As a gift, *cyberpsi* grants a +1 bonus to a character's roll when using *electrokinesis* to manipulate computers and other electronic devices which run software. For settings in which computer hacking is particularly important or powerful, *cyberpsi* may be a required gift for any character who wishes to manipulate computers at all (and would not gain a +1 bonus on the check).

As a Fault, *cyberpsi* means the character can *only* manipulate computers with *electrokinesis* and he possesses no ability to produce electrical shocks, shortages, or other effects.

## ESP

**Key Attribute:** Focus or Spirit

*ESP* represents the ability to sense things outside ones normal range of perception. This includes the ability to see through objects, hear noises above or below the normal human range of sound, locate objects or people (also known as “scrying”) and so forth.

- Using *ESP* actively allows a character to do any of the below things with varying degrees of success.
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails *and* you lose your *ESP* ability for 1 hour.
- **Poor (-2):** The attempt simply fails.
- **Mediocre (-1):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 10 feet.
- **Fair (0):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of 100 feet.
- **Good (+1):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 1,000 feet.
- **Great (+2):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of 1 mile.
- **Superb (+3):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 10 miles.
- **Wonderful (+4):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 100 miles.

- **Phenomenal (+5):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 1,000 miles.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** The character may see, hear, or locate at a range of up to 10,000 miles.
- **Astonishing (+7):** The character can see, hear, or locate at any distance and even across planes of existence (Material to Astral or ‘Net, for example).

*ESP* results are always real-time. Characters can choose to either see, hear, or both see and hear what is happening at the target location. Characters who do not wish to be located by someone using *ESP* may make an opposed Mind check to avoid being located. The scryer (the person using *ESP*) may not necessarily know that his attempts are being blocked.

Certain materials and devices may block *ESP*. Lead is notorious for its ability to block scrying attempts; 1 inch of lead within 5 feet of the scrying target or location imposes a -3 penalty on all attempts to use *ESP* in that area. Certain *antipsi* devices may impose similar penalties with varying degrees of effectiveness. One example might be a magic device designed to dampen scrying or other mental powers, which may impose penalties or negate attempts entirely.

**Example Fault: *Seer*:** the character may only use *ESP* to see things at a distance, not hear them. She may be able to watch two people talking on the other side of a closed door, but she would not be able to hear their conversation. A similar fault would be *Listener*, which would allow a character to hear, but not see, what is happening at a distance.

## Premonition

**Key Attribute:** Spirit

*Premonition* is a sub-school of *ESP* that works only passively, meaning that the character does not choose when to activate it. Instead, the GM makes a secret check against



the character's Spirit attribute. If the check succeeds, the character gains some piece of information that he otherwise would not have perceived, such as an incoming attack from a shadowed thug, a warning about a nearby danger, or a vision about a terrible upcoming event. The GM should use his best discretion when determining how much of the story or information he wants to give to the character and use his degree of success as a yardstick for how much the character can truly perceive.

If the GM rolls secretly for the character and fails, he may opt to give the character false information. When doing so, it is advised that the GM spend one of her own Glitches to trigger the failed ability, since the false information may adversely affect the game.

**Example Gift:** *Combat Sense*; the character is especially aware of incoming attacks. Opponents in combat never gain a bonus against him for catching him unaware.

## Precognition

**Key Attribute:** Spirit

*Precognition* is the ability to see in to the future. More often snap shots of events rather than vivid imagery, it can be difficult to tell the future with perfect success because there is no guarantee that it will happen exactly as seen.

- Precognitive visions may convey different amounts of sensory information depending on the success of a character's check result. Unless otherwise noted, the user does not have any control over the exact period of time he is witnessing, and it may be difficult to discern when or where the events might happen. Characters experiencing precognitive visions may need to depend on clues in the visions they see, such as the time shown on a clock or the date on a calendar, to get a sense of the timeframe they are looking at.

- **Abysmal (-3):** The user's precognitive abilities malfunction; he sees an accurate portrayal of the future (at any time the GM chooses), but he cannot shut it off and remains in a state of precognitive awareness until he can make a Great Mind check to snap out of it. The user may attempt one check every hour until he is successful. The character may have difficulty remembering specific events or objects he witnesses.
- **Poor (-2):** The user sees nothing at all.
- **Mediocre (-1):** The user sees only brief and erratic glimpses which may not be in chronological order.
- **Fair (0):** The user sees brief glimpses of events in chronological order, about 30 seconds worth of time.
- **Good (+1):** The user is able to see and hear about one minute of events.
- **Great (+2):** The user is able to see and hear about one minute of events at a specified time within one week of the current time.
- **Superb (+3):** The user is able to see and hear about ten minutes worth of events at a specified time within one week of the current time.
- **Wonderful (+4):** The user is able to see and hear about ten minutes worth of events at a specified time within one year of the current time.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** The user may control the total amount of time he views the events and may specify a time within one year of the current time.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** The user may control the total amount of time he views the events and may specify a time within ten years of the current time.
- **Astonishing (+7):** The user has complete control over the timing of events he witnesses.

**Example Fault:** *Only Works While Dreaming*; the character has no control over the ability and only gains precognitive information while dreaming. Results of

Superb or better are not possible with this fault. Conversely, the user is not subject to the penalty of an Abysmal result.

## Psychokinesis

### Key Attributes: Focus

*Psychokinesis*, literally “mind movement”, represents the ability to control and manipulate objects with one’s mind. A variety of abilities fall into this category, including *telekinesis* (the ability to move objects), *cryokinesis* and *pyrokinesis* (the ability to control cold and heat, respectively), *photokinesis* (the ability to manipulate light) and *sonarkinesis* (the ability to manipulate sound).

Each of the potential *psychokinesis* abilities are detailed separately below and must be taken as individual gifts.

## Cryokinesis

### Key Attributes: Focus

*Cryokinesis* represents the ability to control cold and ice. Most cryokinetics are capable of using water vapor in the air to form ice out of virtually nothing, though a few require a more dense form of liquid to achieve the same result.

- Example ladder results for the *cryokinesis* ability include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Very Hurt physical wound.
- **Poor (-2):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Hurt physical wound.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Scratched physical wound.
- **Fair (0):** You can form about 3 cubic inches of ice at a range of 5 feet.
- **Good (+1):** You can form about 12 cubic inches of ice at a range of 10 feet.
- **Great (+2):** You can form about 3 cubic feet of ice at a range of 30 feet.
- **Superb (+3):** You can form 9 cubic feet of ice at a range of 100 feet.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You can form 18 cubic feet of ice at a range of 500 feet.

- **Phenomenal (+5):** You can form 30 cubic feet of ice at a range of 1,000 feet.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You can form 60 cubic feet of ice at a range of 1,000 feet.
- **Astonishing (+7):** You can form 120 cubic feet of ice at a range of 1,000 feet.

Optionally, characters with this power can reduce the atmospheric temperature in an area by up to 20 degrees Fahrenheit per degree of success above Good in a radius of 30 feet per degree of success.

*Cryokinesis* can be used both offensively and defensively. Treat your check result as an offensive or defensive factor as appropriate. For example, a roll of Superb (+3) would grant an offensive factor of +3 if attacking someone with ice darts or a defensive factor of +3 if attempting to surround yourself in a cocoon of protective ice.

**Example Fault: Control Only:** You must have a source of water to create ice and you may only freeze as much water as you have available. You may not use *cryokinesis* to freeze water vapor in the air, and you may not use it to decrease the atmospheric temperature.

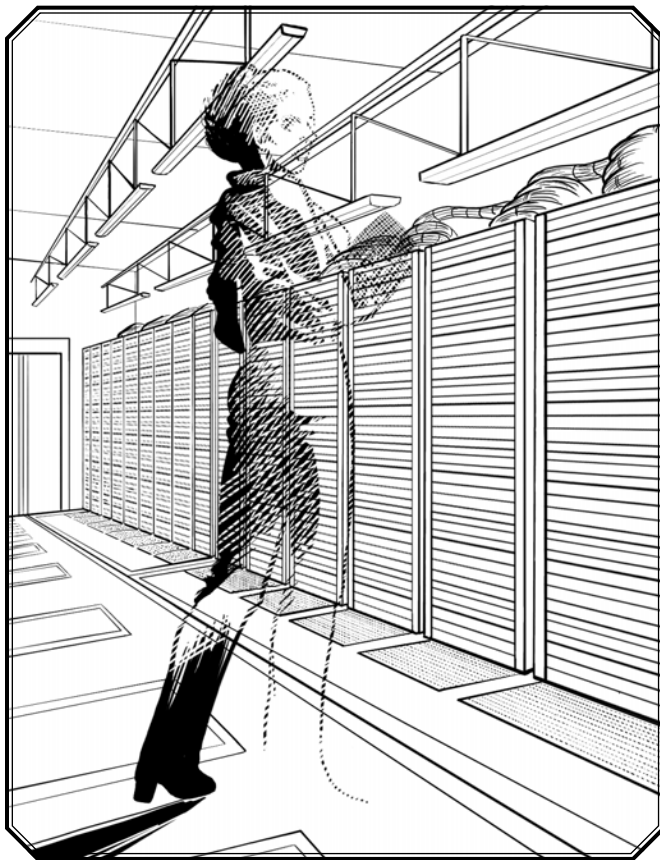
## Photokinesis

### Key Attributes: Focus

*Photokinesis* is the ability to manipulate light using the power of one’s mind. This ability seems singularly focused at first, but when one takes a moment to consider its applications it can prove to be quite powerful indeed.

Photokinetics possess the power to bend light around themselves or other objects, effectively making them invisible, or produce blasts of concentrated light so intense as to cause damage to their target (laser beams). They can control how they perceive the available light in a room, effectively giving them “night vision” or simply increase (or decrease) the ambient light in a room to affect how everything is seen.





Photokinetics are often masters of stealth, especially when paired with *sonar-kinesis* (see below). A character that possesses both of these abilities could quite literally make himself imperceptible to both sight and sound, leaving him vulnerable only to the senses of smell and touch (and, of course, taste).

- Because of the versatility of this power, you may need to work with your GM to find out just what abilities are applicable with a given check result. Below are some examples:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Very Hurt wound of physical damage.
- **Poor (-2):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Hurt wound of physical damage.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt fails; if you are trying to simply increase or decrease lighting conditions, you may raise or lower the lighting condition by a faint amount (the illumination of a match, for example).

- **Fair (0):** You may increase the light in an area by an amount equal to a flashlight; you can dim the light in a room slightly (60 watt bulbs appear as 40 watt); you can see 50% better in dark conditions.
- **Good (+1):** You can increase the light in an area as if lighting a 60 watt bulb; you can decrease the light from 100 watts to 40 watts; you can see 100% better in darkness.
- **Great (+2):** You can create light as a 120 watt floodlight; completely darken a 100 watt bulb, or see 200% better in darkness.
- **Superb (+3):** You can create light equal to an outdoor floodlight or bright street lamp, completely dim an equal amount of light, see clearly in near-total darkness, or turn yourself invisible.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You can create light equal to a light house, dim an equal amount, or make up to three nearby targets (including yourself) invisible.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** As a Wonderful result, except you can make up to ten nearby targets (including yourself) invisible.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** As a Phenomenal result, except you can make everything in a 30 foot radius invisible.
- **Astonishing (+7):** You can create light as bright as the sun, (you choose whether or not there is a focal point that is dangerous to look at) completely darken an area 150 feet in diameter, or make everything in a 60 foot radius invisible.

*Photokinesis* can be used to generate a *projectile attack* in the form of concentrated beams of intense light, otherwise known as laser beams. As with other psionic attacks, use your degree of success as an Offensive Damage Factor when using *photokinesis* in this way.

Invisibility is a powerful tool in any character's arsenal. Characters must achieve a Superb result or better to make themselves (or others) invisible and must spend their action each round focusing on this ability to



maintain it. Therefore, a character attacking another creature in combat must allow himself to become visible during the round in which he makes an attack, and must spend his action (and roll another check) next round if he wishes to try to become invisible again.

Maintaining ambient light in a room does not require the focused attention of the character. However, lighting conditions will return to normal after about 1 minute per degree of success.

## Pyrokinesis

**Key Attributes:** Focus

*Pyrokinesis* is the much-beloved (and often feared) ability to set things on fire with one's mind. Using this ability in a public place is highly illegal without a special permit or sufficient rank in a police or military organization. Generally speaking, the more public the place, the higher your rank needs to be to use this ability without alerting authorities.

- Examples of ladder results for *pyrokinesis* include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Very Hurt physical wound.
- **Poor (-2):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Hurt physical wound.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt fails *and* you take one Scratched physical wound.
- **Fair (0):** You may produce a flame roughly the size of a lit match at a range of up to 5 feet.
- **Good (+1):** You may produce a flame the size of a bonfire at a range of up to 10 feet.
- **Great (+2):** You may produce a flame with a radius of about 10 feet at a range of up to 30 feet.
- **Superb (+3):** You may produce a flame with a 30-foot radius at a range of up to 100 feet.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You may produce a flame with a 45-foot radius at a range of

up to 500 feet.

- **Phenomenal (+5):** You may produce a flame with a 60-foot radius at a range of up to 1,000 feet.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You may produce a flame with a 75-foot radius at a range of up to 1,000 feet.
- **Astonishing (+7):** You may produce a flame with a 100-foot radius at a range of up to 1,000 feet.

When using *pyrokinesis* you may opt to simply increase the overall temperature of an area. You may increase the atmospheric temperature by up to 20 degrees Fahrenheit for each degree of success above Good, out to 30 feet per degree of success.

*Pyrokinesis* can be used as a *projectile attack* in the form of a hurled burst of fire, otherwise known as fire bolts. As with other psionic attacks, use your degree of success as an Offensive Damage Factor when using *pyrokinesis* in this way.

**Example Fault: Only Has Control:** Your character can only control pre-existing flames, not create them. Use the ladder results listed above to get an idea of how much of a flame you can control at once, but remember that you have to have a source of flame before you can do anything with this power.

## Sonarkinesis

**Key Attributes:** Focus

This power represents the ability to produce and manipulate sound. With this ability, it is possible to create both loud noises and forceful bursts of concentrated sonic energy. With higher degrees of success you are capable of producing more complex sounds, including the emulation of conversations or even complex musical scores.

- Example ladder results for *sonarkinesis* include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails *and* you generate a short, incredibly loud burst of sonic energy that leaves you with one

Very Hurt physical wound You may need to make a successful Body check at Fair difficulty to avoid being deafened.

- **Poor (-2):** You can generate a noise of up to 10dB (decibels) at a range of 3 feet.
- **Mediocre (-1):** You can generate a noise of up to 20dB at a range of 5 feet.
- **Fair (0):** You can generate a noise of up to 30dB at a range of 10 feet.
- **Good (+1):** You can generate a noise of up to 40dB at a range of 50 feet.
- **Great (+2):** You can generate a noise up to about 50dB at a range of 200 feet.
- **Superb (+3):** You can generate a noise up to about 70dB at a range of 500 feet.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You can generate a noise up to about 90dB at a range of 1,000 feet.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** You can generate a noise up to about 120dB at a range of

2,500 feet.

- **Extraordinary (+6):** You can generate a noise up to about 150dB at a range of 1 mile.
- **Astonishing (+7):** You can generate a noise up to about 200dB at a range of 3 miles.

Below is a table of common sounds and their respective decibel values, so you have some idea of what level of noise this power can produce. This chart is a composition of several sources and individual charts you find elsewhere may vary, but for the most part the noises listed here fall within their respective range.

With this power, it is also possible to amplify existing noises. The highest decibel level you can amplify a given noise is based on your degree of success and mirrors the levels found in the examples above.

Common Noise	Decibels	Other Notes
Normal Breathing	10dB	Little more than minimum human hearing
Rustling leaves	20dB	
Whisper	30dB	
Refrigerator humming	40dB	
Quiet office, normal conversation	50 - 60dB	
Vacuum cleaner	70dB	
City traffic	80dB	
Subway, motorcycle	88dB	Prolonged exposure may cause gradual hearing loss
Lawnmower	85-90dB	
Garbage truck, train	100dB	
Jet flyover at 1,000 feet	103dB	Regular exposure of 1 minute or more may cause hearing loss
Jackhammer, symphony orchestra	110dB	
Thunderclap, loud stereo	120dB	
Rock concert	110-140dB	
Shotgun firing	140dB	Pain begins
Jet engine at 100 feet	140dB	Even short-term exposure can cause damage without protection
Space shuttle launch	170dB	
	180dB	Death of hearing tissue
1-ton TNT explosion	210dB	Enough to literally kill a person standing too close without both ear and body/shock protection

The difference is that when amplifying a noise, its decibel level only changes if you are successful; you do not lower the level of a sound by failing to amplify it. Conversely, you may also attempt to decrease the decibel level of an existing sound. To determine how much you can reduce the noise level, simply invert the example ladder results listed above. For example, to reduce a noise to 10dB would require a Wonderful check result, assuming the noise is 50dB (Fair). To reduce a 200dB noise to 50dB would require a Phenomenal check.

Sonarkinesis can be used as a projectile attack in the form of concentrated bursts of sonic energy, often referred to as sonic blasts. As with other psionic attacks, use your degree of success as an Offensive Damage Factor when using sonarkinesis in this way.

## Telekinesis

**Key Attributes:** Focus

One of the most widely known and understood psychic abilities, *telekinesis*, refers to the ability to directly control objects with one's mind. Through the use of *telekinesis* people have been able to open doors without raising an arm, lift monumental structures without lifting a finger, and even fly through the air without the aid of technology (or wings).

A skilled telekinetic is capable of moving great objects with a single thought, but it is said that a group of skilled telekinetics, working in tandem, could move meteors from outer space (though it may take thousands of them to do so). Most mundane citizens are therefore justifiably weary of allowing groups of telekinetics to gather, while Magicorp actively does what they can to prevent any such phenomena from occurring.

- Examples of ladder results for *telekinesis* include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** Your attempt fails, you

take one Very Hurt mental wound, *and* you cannot use this power again for 12 hours.

- **Poor (-2):** Your attempt fails and you take one Hurt mental wound, but you do not lose control of this power.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt fails and you take one Scratched mental wound, but you do not lose control of this power.
- **Fair (0):** You can lift a single object weighing up to five pounds at a range of up to 30 feet.
- **Good (+1):** You can lift up to two objects weighing up to 20 pounds each at a distance of up to 100 feet.
- **Great (+2):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to 100 pounds total at a range of up to 100 yards or you can use the power to hover no more than five feet off of the ground (you cannot propel yourself forward or backward, only up or down).
- **Superb (+3):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to 1,000 pounds total at a range of up to 300 yards or you can use the power to fly at up to 30 feet per round.
- **Wonderful (+4):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to one ton (2,000 pounds) at a range of up to 500 yards or you can fly up to 60 feet per round.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to five tons (10,000 pounds) at a range of up to one mile or you can fly up to 90 feet per round.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to ten tons (20,000 pounds) at a range of up to two miles or you can fly up to 120 feet per round.
- **Astonishing (+7):** You can lift multiple objects or creatures weighing up to 20 tons (40,000 pounds) at a range of up to three miles or you can fly up to 150 feet per round.



Characters using *telekinesis* to fly need only roll a check when in a stressful situation, such as in combat or when trying to be stealthy, otherwise they should be allowed to use their attribute bonus as their check result. Characters who attempt to fly at maximum speed during combat should be required to spend their action each round to concentrate on activating the ability. If they wish to fly as part of normal movement and still be able to act, characters should only be allowed to fly at one quarter the maximum speed listed for their result.

Lifting objects that are not held by other creatures should have a difficulty appropriate to the object's weight and the distance at which the character is trying to lift it. For example, lifting a notebook off of a table from across the room is only a Fair difficulty, while lifting a fully-loaded semi-truck (about 40 tons) from a mile away would be an Astonishing feat indeed. Pulling in a meteor from the earth's orbit would require thousands of Astonishing checks originating from a central place.

*Telekinesis* can be used to hurl objects at other characters or objects. Since attempting to calculate real-world physics can drastically slow down gameplay, it is advised that players and GMs not think too hard about the actual properties of an object. Instead, they should use the basic offensive/defensive factor guidelines when trying to determine how much damage a hurled object does. Treat this type of attack as a *projectile attack*, but instead of using your degree of success as an ODF, use the object's material value.

Try not to worry about calculating what the damage of a 10-ton object hitting another character might be (assume, if it helps, that the player's defensive bonuses include dodging out of the way or getting lucky and not taking the full force of the damage). If you need to know whether or not a semi-truck can crush the wall of a building when being hurled from 500 feet away, assume that it can.

**Example Fault:** *Flight Only*; the character using *telekinesis* only has the power to fly, not to control other objects.

## Psychometabolism

**Key Attribute:** Focus or Spirit

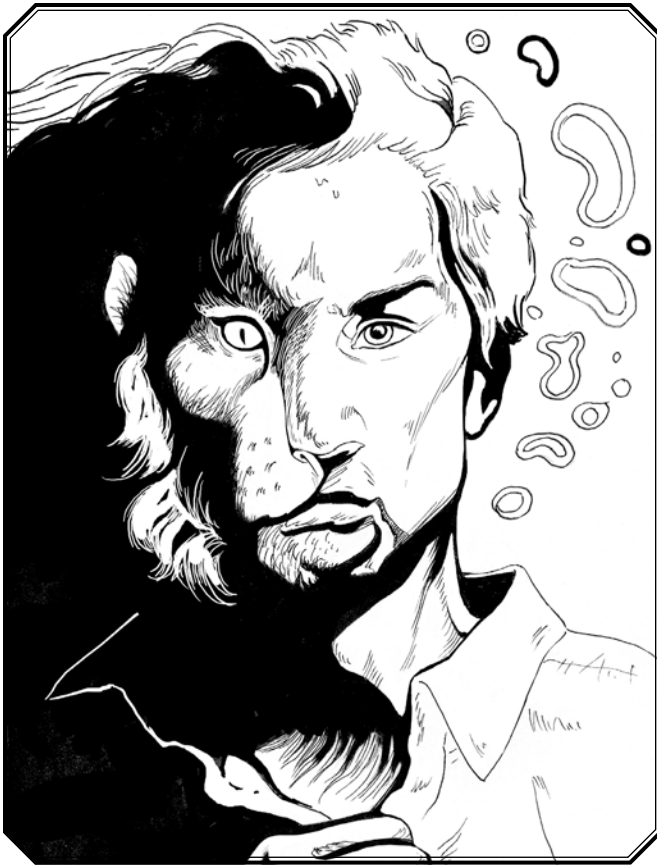
This ability allows its user to control the very molecular structure of creatures and objects. It is a potent ability with far-reaching implications. Those skilled in *psychometabolism*, often known as “shapers”, can heal themselves and others, change their appearance, transmute solid rock to sediment, and boost a person's physical abilities.

Because this psionic ability encompasses so many different types of effects, it is actually broken up in to two different powers. Each of the following powers must be taken individually.

### Control Animate Objects

This power grants the shaper control over living creatures. He can heal, harm, or alter their shape with varying degrees of success. To use this ability on a creature, the shaper must have physical contact it. Unwilling targets may oppose the shaper's Focus roll with a Body check to reduce or negate the intended effects.

- Examples of ladder results for *control animate*:
- **Abysmal (-3):** The intended effect backfires completely. If you were trying to heal someone, they instead suffer one Hurt wound. If you are intending to harm them they instead *heal* one Hurt wound. Attempting to change a creature's shape succeeds, but you do not get the intended shape (a new shape is chosen at the GM's discretion, or the GM may choose to deliver one Hurt wound to the target).
- **Poor (-2):** You fail to affect the intended creature in any way. The strain causes you to lose control of the ability for one hour.



5

- **Mediocre (-1):** You simply fail to affect the intended creature in any way.
  - **Fair (0):** You may heal a character from one Scratch, deliver one Scratch to an opponent, or alter the creature's form in some minor way (change skin color, alter their size by up to one inch, etc.). Shape changing effects last for up to one hour.
  - **Good (+1):** You may heal a creature of two Scratched wounds, deliver two Scratched wounds to an opponent, or alter a creature's shape to a greater extent (change skin, hair, *and* eye color, alter their size by up to six inches, etc.). Shape changing effects last for up to six hours.
  - **Great (+2):** You may heal a creature of three Scratched wounds, deliver three Scratched wounds to an opponent, or alter a creature's size or shape in a significant way (change all physical aspects of a person, change size by up to two feet, change a dog in to a cat, etc.). Shape changing effects last for up to nine hours.
  - **Superb (+3):** You may heal a creature of one Hurt wound, deliver one Hurt wound to an opponent, or change size and shape in a drastic way (change a human in to a frog, a bird in to a giraffe, etc.). Shape changing effects last for up to 12 hours.
  - **Wonderful (+4):** You may heal a person of one Very Hurt wound or deliver one Very Hurt wound to an opponent. You can alter the very nature of a living creature (change a human in to a mushroom, a sapling in to a full-grown tree, etc.). Shape changing effects last for one full day.
  - **Phenomenal (+5):** You may heal a person of one Incapacitated wound or deliver one Incapacitated wound to an opponent. You can alter the very nature of a living creature (change a human in to a mushroom, a sapling in to a full-grown tree, etc.). Shape changing effects last for two days.
  - **Extraordinary (+6):** You may heal a person of one Near Death wound or deliver one Near Death wound to an opponent. You can alter the very nature of a living creature (change a human in to a mushroom, a sapling in to a full-grown tree, etc.). Shape changing effects last for one week.
  - **Astonishing (+7):** You may bring a character back from the dead or instantly slay a target. You may change the nature of any living being in to any other living being. These effects may, at your option (and with GM approval) be permanent. Note that severely large changes (such as changing a shamrock in to a blue whale) may almost never become permanent, while changing a dog in to a cat is much more easily made permanent.
- Note: Healing which results from the use of *control animate* is for physical healing only; you cannot alter someone's metabolism and heal their mental damage. Healing mental damage requires the use of a *mind*



*control* power and functions in a similar manner. Likewise, damaging a target with this ability is always physical damage.

Remember that healing a creature with this ability is still dependent upon one's degree of success, with a difficulty equal to that of the wound level (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for details and **Table 4.14: Wound Level Summary** for a quick reminder about wound level difficulties).

Using *control animate* takes some time depending on the severity of the change. Harming a creature only takes one round as you quickly alter their metabolism in any way that might harm them, but healing a creature takes a lot of care to put their pieces into the right places (it takes one round of continuous contact per wound level).

Changing someone in to a mushroom may take several minutes of concentration and constant contact with the creature. If you do not have enough time to complete a significant change (which the GM can help you determine) then the effect fails. As a general rule, it takes one minute per success level to make the appropriately difficult alterations (0 minutes for Fair, 1 minute for Good, 5 minutes for Phenomenal).

**Example Gift: Healer's Touch:** You gain a +1 bonus to your check when using this ability to heal a creature's wounds.

## Control Inanimate Objects

This power functions similar to *control animate* but instead of working on living creatures it works on non-living matter. Most objects do not have wound tracks, but they can be healed and harmed (or repaired and destroyed) with this ability. When repairing or damaging an object, use the degree of success to determine how much an object is repaired/damaged; small objects may be destroyed entirely with just a Good result, while complex objects may be partially disabled with the same result but completely destroyed with a Superb result.



Changing the shape and structure of an object should likewise follow similar guidelines. A Fair result may be able to change a #2 pencil in to a mechanical pencil but wouldn't be able to turn it in to a pen, whereas a Good result could change the same pencil to a pen, marker, or other writing utensil. With a Phenomenal result you may be able to change that same pencil in to a tank, given enough time. Note that the GM may decide you need an equal amount of material to convert one object in to another, so you may need several palettes of lumber to make a tank; it largely depends on what power level the GM wants to allow in his campaign.

Using *control inanimate* still requires that you have physical contact with the object you wish to manipulate. Since most objects do not have the ability to oppose your roll, an appropriate difficulty modifier should be set to be able to manipulate the object at all. The degree of success is determined by comparing your check to the target difficulty.





## Psychometry

**Key Attribute:** Focus

*Psychometry* is the ability to visualize past events by touching an object and experiencing its history. All objects have an memory of what has happened to them in the past, including where it has been and who has touched it. Those with the gift of *psychometry* may attempt to gather information from the objects they touch.

A psychometric reading can be difficult to interpret; unless the object is a time piece it can be difficult to pinpoint the exact moment in its history that is being observed. Other clues, such as the amount of daylight visible in a room, the period clothing of the object's handler, etc., may need to be considered when interpreting a psychometric reading. GMs are encouraged to provide clues about a reading rather than literal information about the reading's results, especially since objects do not have the ability to speak or relate their experiences.

It can take time to glean information from a reading, since it is not possible to “jump to” a specific moment in an object's past unless you already know which moment you are looking for. A reader can choose to focus on a specific event to try to gain more detail about it, or simply continue looking further back in history for more details. The reader must continuously concentrate on the object to gain information about it.

- Examples of ladder results for psychometry:
- **Abysmal (-3):** The check fails *and* the reader's link with the object is permanently severed.
- **Poor (-2)** The reader gets a false reading.
- **Mediocre (-1):** The check simply fails. A new reading on that particular object may not be attempted for one hour.
- **Fair (0):** The reader may view up to one day of past events; this takes a minimum of one minute of focus.
- **Good (+1):** The reader may view up to three days of past events; this takes a minimum of one minute of focus.
- **Great (+2):** The reader may view up to one week of past events; this takes a minimum of one minute of focus.
- **Superb (+3):** The reader may view up to one year of past events *or* he may read up to one week of events in one-half the required time.
- **Wonderful (+4):** The reader may view up to ten years of past events *or* he may read up to one year of events in one-half the required time.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** The reader may view up to 50 years of past events *or* he may read up to ten years of events in one-half the required time.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** The reader may view up to 100 years of past events *or* he may read up to 50 years of events in one-half the required time.

- **Astonishing (+7):** The reader may view past events from the entire life of the object *or* he may read 100 years of events in *one-quarter* the required time.

Note that most common objects are not more than a few years or decades old. Buildings and other complex or large structures are actually composed of multiple (sometimes hundreds or thousands) of individual objects, each with its own unique memory.

Unless the reader rolls an Abysmal result, he may attempt to read the same object again in the future. Once a successful result is made (Fair or better), the same result is always used for that particular object and the reader cannot gain a better result in the future unless the player spends a Luck Point to try again.

**Example Fault:** *Can't Turn it Off*; the reader has no control over this ability and automatically begins reading the history of any object he comes in contact with. This can be distracting at best. Special gloves imbued with an *antipsi* aura may need to be worn to prevent accidental readings.

## Telepathy

**Key Attributes:** Focus or Spirit

*Telepathy*, like *psychokinesis*, encompasses a wide variety of different abilities. Some telepaths can sense imminent danger, others can communicate mentally across vast distances, and still others can impose their will upon other living creatures. Each telepathy sub-set of abilities, listed below, must be acquired separately.

## Empathy

**Key Attributes:** Spirit

- Empathy is the ability to sense another person's emotional state and, in some cases, adopt aspects of it. Empathic characters are able to tune in to other peoples' emotions, which helps them communicate more effectively and their ability to "absorb" emotions has a vari-

ety of applications. Some ladder examples follow.

- **Abysmal (-3):** You absorb a far greater deal of emotional energy than you had intended. You suffer one Very Hurt mental wound *and* the target character(s) must succeed at a Mediocre Mind check or also suffer one Very Hurt mental wound.
- **Poor (-2):** You suffer one Scratched mental wound. The target(s) do not suffer any wounds.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt simply fails.
- **Fair (0):** You accurately sense the emotional state of one specified target within ten feet and gain a 1dF reroll bonus on any follow-up skill checks made to interact with that target.
- **Good (+1):** You accurately sense the emotional state of one specified target within 100 feet and gain a 2dF reroll on any follow-up skill checks made to interact with that target.
- **Great (+2):** You accurately sense the emotional state of all people within 100 feet *and* gain a +1 bonus on follow-up skill checks made to interact with them.
- **Superb (+3):** You accurately sense the emotional state of all people within 100 feet, gain a 1dF reroll *and* a +1 bonus on skill checks to interact with them, *and* gain a 1dF reroll on *mind control* checks made to implant suggestions in one or more targets within that range.
- **Wonderful (+4):** As a Superb result, except your bonuses increase to 2dF+1 and +1, respectively.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** As with a Superb result, except your bonus to follow-up interactions becomes +2 and your bonus on *mind control* attempts increases to 1dF+1.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You accurately sense the emotional state of all people within 1,000 feet. You gain the same bonuses on follow-up skill checks as a Phenomenal result, but you can also absorb

some energy to heal your own mental wounds. You may heal one Hurt mental wound.

- **Astonishing (+7):** As an Extraordinary result, but you may also choose to deal one Hurt mental wound to any number of targets within range. Each target may make a Mind check with a Fair difficulty to prevent this damage. For large numbers of targets, GMs may wish to make a single check and apply a single group modifier to prevent this damage.

**Example Gift: Empathic Healer:** You may draw out negative energy from within another character. Doing so heals that character of one mental wound level per degree of success. However, doing so is very taxing to your own body and its balance of energy; you take one physical Hurt wound when healing another character of either a Hurt or Very Hurt mental wound. Healing a character of an Incapacitated or Near Death mental wound causes you to suffer one physical Very Hurt wound instead.

**Example Fault: Lack of Control:** You are empathic, but lack the ability to control its use. You permanently gain a +1 bonus on skill checks made to interact socially with other people and a +1 bonus on checks made to implant suggestions in them. However, crowded locations are dangerous for you. The GM should secretly roll a Spirit check for you each time you enter a crowded location. On a result of Fair or better, nothing happens. A result of Mediocre or worse causes you to suffer the ill effects listed in the power's ladder description.

The GM should alter the difficulty for this check based on the number of other people in your presence. For example, a room with only 10 people in it might be a Fair difficulty, but a crowded auditorium may have a difficulty of Great or higher. GMs should consider giving players a Luck Point when they activate this ability in places of Superb or greater difficulty.

## Mental Communication

**Key Attribute:** Focus or Spirit

*Mental Communication* represents the ability to send and receive messages telepathically over vast distances. Using this ability, a character can deliver a message to someone, receive their mental response, or even read the mind of willing (or unwilling) recipients.

- Example ladder results for *mental communication* include:
- **Abysmal (-3):** You fail the attempted communiqué *and* take one Very Hurt mental wound.
- **Poor (-2):** You fail the attempted communiqué *and* take one Hurt mental wound.
- **Mediocre (-1):** You simply fail at the attempt.
- **Fair (0):** You succeed at communicating telepathically with one target, but communication is basic. Single messages are limited to 25 words at a time.
- **Good (+1):** You succeed at communicating with one target. Communication is limited only by your ability to speak the target's language.
- **Great (+2):** You succeed at communicating with up to two people at a time. Communication is only limited by your ability to speak their language(s).
- **Superb (+3):** You can communicate successfully with up to five people at a time. This communication is not limited in any way, even if you do not speak the targets' language(s).
- **Wonderful (+4):** You can communicate with up to ten people at a time. Communication is not limited in any way.
- **Phenomenal (+5):** You can communicate with up to 50 people at a time with no limit to your ability to communicate with them.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** You can communicate with hundreds of people at a time with no limit to your ability to communicate with them. You may communicate



with animals on a primal level (you can get a sense of their instinctual thoughts).

- **Astonishing (+7):** You can communicate with any number of people, even across planes of existence (Material to Astral or the 'Net, etc.).

As a general rule, *mental communication* requires you to be aware of the target in some way and be able to see them (except when communicating across planes with an Astonishing result). As an additional Gift, you may be able to communicate with people at range and without the need to be able to see them.

**Example Gift: Telecommunicate:** The distance at which you can communicate with people is determined by your degree of success, as noted below:

Result	Distance
Fair	100 feet
Good	100 yards
Great	1 mile
Superb	10 miles
Wonderful	100 miles
Phenomenal	1,000 miles
Extraordinary	10,000 miles
Astonishing	Unlimited, even across planes

**Example Gift: Mind Reading:** Characters must possess this additional Gift if they wish to use their *mental communication* power to read the thoughts of unwilling targets (willing targets automatically grant the telepath access to their thoughts). To activate this ability simply use the *mental communication* power and make an opposed check against the target's Mind check. Success means that you can probe the thoughts of unwilling characters with restrictions based on your degree of success, as noted above.

If you have both the *telecommunicate* and *mind reading* Gifts, you may use this Gift at a range equal to your *telecommunicate* ladder result.

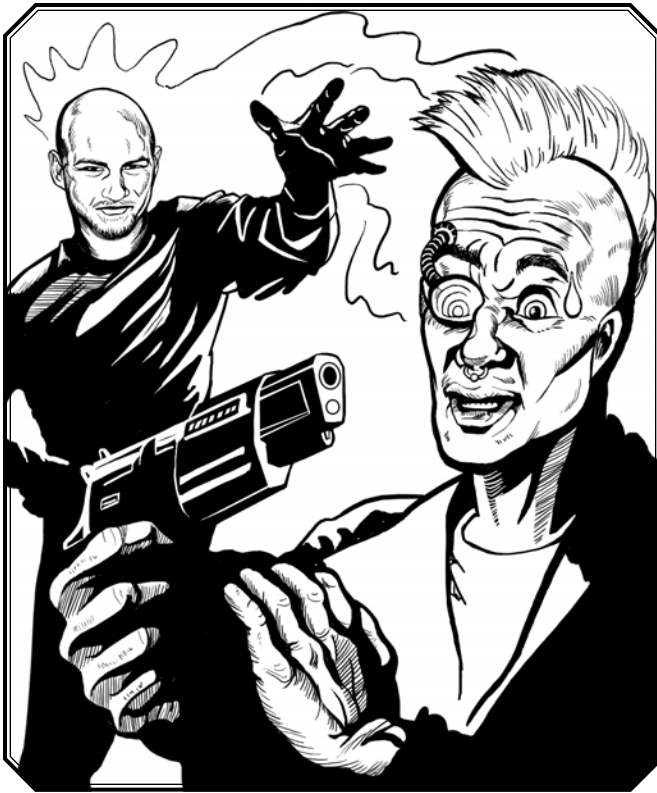
## Mind Control

**Key Attributes:** Focus or Persona

As the name implies, *mind control* is the ability to enforce your will upon another living being. This ability manifests itself in several different ways. *Mind control* can be as simple as implanting a suggestion in someone's mind or as complex as exerting complete mental dominance over their will. It can alter memories, deliver damaging mental shocks and so forth.

As with *mental communication*, *mind control* can be used generically or in conjunction with Gifts that grant a character additional uses for the power. Examples of using *mind control* as a generic ability follow.

- **Abysmal (-3):** You fail to reach the target's thoughts and take one Very Hurt mental wound.
- **Poor (-2):** You fail to reach the target's thoughts and take one Hurt mental wound.
- **Mediocre (-1):** Your attempt simply fails.
- **Fair (0):** You may implant a minor suggestion in the target (such as "come here" or "these aren't what you're looking for"). Targets will not act against their nature (will not kill themselves or someone else, unless they're otherwise inclined to do so) and will shake off inappropriate suggestions regardless of success. The suggestion lasts until the target carries it through to completion or until you make another suggestion.
- **Good (+1):** You may charm the target, causing them to perceive you as a friend. The target considers your words and interprets them in the most favorable manner, but he is still unwilling to do anything that goes against his nature. You must maintain control of a target's mind and cannot activate any other psionic powers or become distracted to a point that you would not be able to focus on maintaining control (such as in combat or other stressful situations).



- **Great (+2):** You charm a target in the same way as with a Good result, but you may continue to activate psionic powers while maintaining control. During stressful situations you must make a Great Mind check to avoid losing control of the target's mind.
- **Superb (+3):** You exhibit complete mental dominance over another character. They obey your orders to the best of their ability despite their own nature and perceive you in the best possible light. You must maintain control of a target's mind and cannot activate any other psionic powers or become distracted to a point that you would not be able to focus on maintaining dominance (such as in combat or other stressful situations).
- **Wonderful (+4):** You dominate a target's will as with a Superb result, but it takes less effort to maintain concentration. You may continue to activate psionic powers while dominating a target's mind. During stressful situations you must make a Great Mind check to avoid losing control of the target's mind.

- **Phenomenal (+5):** You fully submit a target to your will. Maintaining control requires a Mind check of only Mediocre or better.
- **Extraordinary (+6):** As with a Phenomenal result, but you do not need to make a check to maintain concentration. You may dominate up to two targets at a single time in this way, or dominate up to five targets while maintaining concentration (requiring a Fair or better Mind check).
- **Astonishing (+7):** You may dominate up to five targets without the need to maintain concentration, or up to ten targets while maintaining a Fair degree of concentration.

You may substitute any of the higher level successes for an improved lower level success. For example, with a Superb result you may opt to implant a suggestion in to dozens of peoples' minds, as opposed to dominating a single target.

**Example Gift: *Alter Memory*:** with this *mind control* Gift you have the ability to change the memories of another person. This check is opposed by the target's Mind check. If you succeed, use the degree of success to determine how much of the opponent's memory you can alter at once. The table below offers some guidelines for determining the outcome.

Result	Example
Fair	Alter one recent memory within one day
Good	Alter one memory within one week
Great	Alter one memory within one month
Superb	Alter one memory within one year
Wonderful	Alter one memory within one decade
Phenomenal	Alter one memory within 25 years
Extraordinary	Alter any one memory in the target's life
Astonishing	Wipe the target's memory completely clean

**Example Gift: Mental Shock:** using this Gift, you can deliver a mental “shock” to an opponent, causing severe damage to his psyche. To use this ability, simply make a check opposed by the target’s Mind check. You deal one point of mental damage for each degree of success by which you exceed your target’s roll. As with any form of attack, your minimum required result is Fair.

## Magic

In **Psi-punk**, the term “magic” refers to any technological device specifically designed to emulate psionic abilities. The world’s largest manufacturer and supplier of magic devices is **Magicorp**, a global super-company whose roots date back to the Anti-Psi League.

Magic is both difficult and expensive to manufacture and it takes a skilled hand (and mind) to utilize properly. While nearly every psionic power has been emulated by magic, not all of them have been perfected. Even the most powerful devices cannot quite emulate the degree of power that is displayed by highly skilled psionics, but the ability to access a wide range of powers often outweighs the drawback of not specializing.

Characters who are good candidates for using magic include:

- those who do not wish to play as a “mental” but want to use their cool abilities
- those who would prefer to have access to every psychic power instead of just a handful of dedicated abilities
- those who prefer technology to supernatural phenomena
- those who wish to play a wealthy character (magic is expensive)
- those who are outright opposed to “mentals”

## Using Magic

Activating a magic device is similar to activating a psionic power in almost every way. Characters who control magic devices spend their action to activate the effect and roll the appropriate check to determine their overall result or their degree of success. The ladder results are similar to those listed for individual powers, except as follows.

### Power Rating

Because magic does not draw from a character’s innate mental powers, it doesn’t have a Key Attribute. Instead, each magic device has a **Power Rating**, ranging from Mediocre (-1) to Wonderful (+4). When activating a magic device, add the device’s Power Rating to your check result in place of a psionic power’s Key Attribute.

For example, Ash is using a *pyrokinesis* device to generate a fireball. The device has a Power Rating of Great (+2), so when making a check to activate the device she will add +2 to her roll.

### Maximum Check Result

Magic devices have a maximum check result of Extraordinary (+6). Despite being built with highly sophisticated technology, they are no substitute for the extra effort and force of will that the mind is capable of exerting.

### Abysmal Failures

A check result of Abysmal (-3) when activating a magic device causes it to malfunction, permanently destroying it. Characters attempting to activate the device still suffer the negative effects of an Abysmal result. Magicorp assumes no responsibility for the colossal failure of their devices or any harm caused as a result.





## Cost

Unlike psionic powers, magic devices must be purchased since they are not an innate talent. See **Chapter 3: Equipment** for information on how to price magic devices.

## Availability

Not all magic devices are readily available to the general public. There are many local retail stores offering basic devices of Fair or Good power ratings, but Great and Superb devices may be harder to come by. As a rule of thumb, Great devices are police-grade and require special permits to carry. Having a contact in the police field or a gift that grants a character an appropriate license would bypass this requirement. Otherwise, characters may be able to find these devices on the black market, but must be cautious about showing them in public.

Rarer still are Superb magic devices which are of military-grade quality. A separate (or second) gift may grant characters access to these devices or they may come at the cost of a favor. Rarely can this grade of device be found even on the black market, but should a character acquire one, he must be extremely cautious when using it in public unless he has the appropriate certification.

Finally, devices with a power rating of Wonderful are prototypes requiring high-level access to acquire. Characters shouldn't have these readily available unless they work for Magicorp or somehow acquire one illegally (perhaps by breaking in to a Magicorp weapons facility). Magicorp employees must have sufficient security clearance within the company (another gift) and generally are only *lent* the device, not granted permanent use of it.

Characters with a Rank skill equal to the device's Power Rating may meet the requirements to purchase magic and carry it with a license, depending on the organization with which they hold sway. Work with the GM to discuss which organizations your skill might apply to and which devices you would gain access to by having sufficient Rank.



## Chapter 6: Hacking: Mind, Chip, and Soul

“Hacking” is a term most commonly applied to computers and refers to illicit access of a system. Computer hackers have been around for well over a century, but only within the last thirty or forty years have we begun to see a rise in mind hackers, or “soul jackers” as they have come to be known.

Soul jackers are psionics who specialize in a new breed of mind control that not only allows domination over another person’s will, but complete access to all of their memories, their body movements, and their free thoughts. Not only is soul jacking a frightful concept, it is highly illegal and treated as a felony worth a minimum of 25 years in a maximum security psi-prison... if you get caught. Soul jackers are hard to catch because the very nature of their crime is based on them having the ability to completely manipulate the minds of others and many soul jackers are also precogniscent and therefore hard to catch in the act.

Hacking computers, on the other hand, has become far more commonplace despite its likewise illegal nature. Psi-jackers have an easy time breaching computer security when they can literally talk to a system and command it to do what they want. In many ways, they would be like soul jackers for machines, if machines had a free will of their own to begin with.

Naturally, Magicorp has developed cutting-edge technology to try to prevent hackers and soul jackers alike from entering the minds and programs of people and gadgets. Through the use of *antipsi*-based products, they have developed computer security and personal mental defense systems that can keep hackers and soul jackers out, but the cost of such equipment is high and available to only the wealthy elite and prosperous corporations. See *Antipsi Tech* in **Chapter 3: Equipment** for more information.

## How Hacking Works

There are essentially four different types of hacking in **Psi-punk**. While each one represents a different target, the overall method remains the same: breach the target’s defenses, find the information you want, and (if desired) assume control of the target.

Nearly anything these days can be hacked, from computers to ATMs to cats and people. Each target requires a different skill, or set of skills, but the check always remains the same. Compare your check result, or your *degree of success*, to the target difficulty. If you meet or succeed at the target difficulty, your attempt is successful. The higher your degree of success, the better your outcome.

## Hacking Computers the Old-fashioned Way - Cracking

Computers have changed drastically over the last several decades, but one thing remains constant: they use electronic signals and circuits to store and deliver data. The methods by which people access computer systems are very similar; there were several trials throughout the years to change computer interface devices and output technologies, but many of the “Virtual Reality” prototypes failed in the 2040s due to widespread concerns about their safety.

The traditional “mouse and keyboard” that had been around for nearly 60 years finally went the way of the dinosaur, but we still interact with computers using input devices. The general public hopped off of the VR train when they realized that the best way to interface with Virtual Reality was to plug a wire directly into their skulls. However, most of the common public decided this was not the route they wanted to go with their computing devices, so a different



interface method was devised around the 2040s, one which had actually been developed in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but was temporarily abandoned when newer and shinier VR tech came along.

The most common method of human-computer interaction nowadays is through motion-censored gestures. When viewing a computer's output device – such as a 2D organic screen or a 3D holographic image – the user can manipulate objects they see just by making the appropriate gestures with their hands, eyes, feet, and facial expressions. This (some say primitive) method of interacting with technology gives people the impression of Virtual Reality without requiring any special hardware be installed in their bodies. It's ancient tech by today's standards, but it is not without its improvements.

Modern improvements to this design have ensured more accurate, real-time responses, but that is only a natural evolution of the old technology. The biggest improvement comes from the way in which these interactions are prevalent in our everyday lives. We now interact with everything from personal computers to personal communication devices in much the same way and everything from cash machines to billboards can be controlled by anybody on the street (wait your turn though, please).

The term “PC” has evolved since the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A PC used to be a standalone machine that sat beside one's desk, which was interfaced with by using a mouse and a keyboard. Nowadays, nearly everyone in the world – including those in third-world territories – owns a PC that they carry with them daily. These self-charging, light-weight computers contain a video screen capable of producing 2D images or projecting 3D holograms and in most cases a user will simply hold it in front of him and gesture appropriately to access the requested data.

When a user wishes to fully immerse himself in the 3D experience, he can set down the PC and project holograms that he interacts with almost as normally as he interacts with another human being, though taste, scent, and touch are still sadly lacking (rumors have it that Macroware, Inc. is working on a solution to this issue, though). This allows users to run communication and entertainment applications and experience them in the best way possible “next to stuffing a plug in your head”.

But what does all of this mean for you, the prospective computer hacker? It means that while you don't get to take control over someone else's body without some kind of mental powers, you *can* take control of their information – a veritable life's history of any given individual – just by grabbing their PC and cracking their security. Pay close attention, since these same methods are used to hack ATMs, billboards, electronic locks, vehicles, and anything else you might find with a chip.

## Cracking

The term “cracking” refers to illicit access of any electronic device, not necessarily just personal computers. In order to crack in to a system to gain access to its information and control of its contents, one must first possess the skill required to do so.

If you are specialized in either the Computer Security or Electronics skills, you may attempt to crack a computer system (though you may not have any idea what to do with it once you're in). Having a higher level in the Technical skill gives you a better chance of breaking in and a better idea of how to access information. With this skill you can even alter the functionality of a system so that it does exactly what you want it to do.

To crack a system, you must have access to interact with it. Access is obtained most easily by having physical access to the system you wish to infiltrate, though if you

have access to the device's Unique System Identifier (USI) you may be able to infiltrate it remotely. A device's USI is a 32-digit alphanumeric identification number, similar to an old-fashioned bar code or IP address, with the exception that all devices are assigned one so they can access The Network. In most cases these identifiers are not made readily available for the public to see and the majority of the population has no idea what their own USI is.

Once you have access to the system, make a Technical skill check to enter it. You don't need to make a check if you are legally accessing a computer system of some kind, only if you are trying to do something outside of the ordinary scope of daily computer usage (such as stealing bank records, downloading cash in to your personal bank account, or assuming control of a vehicle).

The difficulty for this check is based on the security level of the system you are trying to access. Each device may be different, and unique devices will have their own anti-cracking software built in that may change their security values from the norm. Use the chart below to find a general idea of the difficulty of common systems, but note that a GM may increase or decrease this value depending on his needs.

Failing the check will alert the system's defense software to your presence, which may or may not have additional consequences (see **Consequences of Failure** below). Once you have succeeded at your computer use check to crack the system's basic security, you still need to access the information you are looking for. Since you've already bypassed security, this check is easier than the last, but systems with high levels of security also have high levels of defense that may alert the system administrator to your presence or even attempt to kick you out of the system entirely.

Luckily for you, there's no immediate physical danger to you just because you're cracking in to a high level government system. Since you're not plugged directly in to anything, the computer's defense software can't reach out and fry your brain. Unluckily for you, it *can* detect your presence, lock all of the building's doors and windows, alert corporate security, and send men with guns after you. Better be careful after all.

To gather information about a system, make another Technical skill check with a +1 bonus. Once more, failure means bad things for you (see below) but success means you've found what you're looking for. You may freely download one file (a collection

**Table 6.1: Computer Security Levels**

Device	Difficulty
Personal computer	Fair
Corporate computer (average employee)	Good
Corporate computer (management)	Great
Corporate computer (upper-management)	Superb – Wonderful
Publicly accessible device (ATM, billboard)	Superb – Phenomenal
Personal vehicle (car, motorcycle, etc.)	Great
Corporate or government vehicle	Superb
Electronic lock	Great
Corporate or government electronic lock	Superb - Wonderful
Corporate or government flight vehicle (helicopter, private jet)	Wonderful
Megacorp or government mainframe	Phenomenal

of bank records, a dossier of contacts, a calendar of events, etc.) for each degree of success on this check.

You may take control of a system, rather than just glean information from it, by making a separate Technical check with the same +1 bonus as outlined above. Succeeding at the check means you can tell the system to do something specific, within the bounds of its normal capabilities. For instance, you can reprogram the images a billboard is showing, open an electronic lock, start a vehicle's engine, or shut down all of the security cameras on one floor of a building – all depending on which type of device you are accessing. You may issue a single command for each degree of success by which you surpass the difficulty check; make another check to attempt to issue additional commands.

Note that gaining access to certain systems may not give you total control over them. If you crack a vehicle's security and manage to start it, for instance, this skill conveys no special ability to actually drive (or pilot) that vehicle. You may still need a separate skill to do anything with the system, unless you have an appropriately skilled colleague waiting to take over once you're finished doing your own dirty work.

## Consequences of Failure

Cracking a system comes with its risks. If you fail your check, you alert the system that there is illicit activity. Depending on the device, the computer may react in a variety of ways, some more dangerous to you than others. Also note that the worse your degree of failure, the more dramatic the result. In systems whose security rating is Great or less, you may be able to attempt your check again to shut down any security the system is leveraging against you, but a system with a security level of Superb or better will completely lock you out of the system with no chance for further access.

Personal computers and other systems with security levels of Great or worse are the most lenient to intruders, since they lack the more complicated security features of higher-end systems and are usually not connected to a larger intranet. Failing a check against one of these systems simply blocks that attempt and logs you out of your computer session (if applicable). You may attempt another Computer Use check to enter the system again, but you must start over from scratch. An Abysmal (-3) failure may lock you out of the system permanently, though the system simply uses facial recognition software to remember who has been banned.

Systems with Superb and better security levels get a little trickier. Most of them are connected to a larger intranet – a network of computer systems linked together by a central server. Any time you have a Poor (-2) or worse failure when accessing one of these systems, the computer sends a signal to the intranet's mainframe, which then executes security protocols depending on its programming.

With a Poor result, these systems will not only lock you out, but send a signal to the mainframe about your exact location. Depending on where you are and what the facility's security is like, you may find yourself surrounded by armed guards in a matter of minutes (or less). Systems with Wonderful or higher security levels often lock all of the doors in the room you are in so that you have no chance for escape.

For vehicles with these levels of security, you may find yourself locked inside the cab until security shows. If you happen to be in flight when the system cuts all power to its engine and refuses to give you control, you may find yourself at the epicenter of a self-destruct protocol (that spells bad news for you).

Larger failure rates mean faster response times or more harsh security measures, in general. A Poor or Abysmal failure may result in more drastic measures being taken



against you. Inside the cab of a government helicopter, for example, a Poor failure may only lock you in and alert security, while an Abysmal failure will cause the vehicle to effectively self-destruct underneath you; the cost to replace the vehicle is usually less than the cost to recover it, plus any damages or sensitive information that may have been compromised by letting you escape with it.

## Hacking Computers the Psionic Way – Psi-jacking

“Psi-jacking” is the act of using *electrokinesis* to override a computer’s security systems and gain access or control over them. Psi-jacking works almost identically to cracking; you make separate checks for each of the same things, and failure results are almost identical. There are, however, a few key exceptions.

To psi-jack, you must possess the *electrokinesis* psionic ability (see **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic** for more information) or a magic device which produces the same effect. Instead of making Technical skill checks, you would make a Focus check to activate the psionic power, both to access and to reprogram the system.

Failure results, however, are a little different. In most cases a system will try to react identically, but failing an attempt with the *electrokinesis* power can also cause damage to the system. See the description for *electrokinesis* to determine how much damage is dealt to a system for different degrees of failure. Note that devices, like people, have their own wound tracks and malfunction when they become Very Hurt or Incapacitated. Incapacitated devices may not be able to send signals back to their respective mainframes, but it also means they cease functioning entirely (which may, as per usual, have catastrophic consequences to the user).

Finally, psi-jacking attempts are susceptible to additional security measures developed by Magicorp with the single purpose of thwarting psionic intruders. These measures, collectively known as *Antipsi Tech*, are considered equipment and are discussed in Chapter 3: Equipment.

## Hacking People the Old-fashioned Way – Social Engineering

Social engineering is one of the oldest forms of manipulation, dating back to the first time a cave man conned his fellow out of his dinner. The most common terms used to describe someone who consistently uses social engineering tactics to his advantage are “swindler” and “politician”, though most people can think of numerous others.

In a broad sense, social engineering is more than just lying to people – it’s a collection of bent-truths, half-truths, and non-truths brought together with the intent of deceiving others. Social engineering can be done on a small scale (one-on-one) or a large scale (one-on-many or even many-on-many, in group situations). Sometimes, the easiest way to get what you want is to convince someone else that it’s in their best interest to give it to you.

Any Manipulation skill is suited to social engineering, depending on the specific situation. Since the skill choices and circumstances are both equally broad, you should work with your GM to decide which skill works best for what you are trying to accomplish.

Social engineering is treated in many ways like “hacking” a person. Your goal is to manipulate them in to doing something you want. If the target is willing and able to assist you without being manipulated, it isn’t social engineering – it’s just a helpful person. In these circumstances, no check is required to get the assistance you desire; the person simply does as you ask (perhaps at the cost of a favor to be paid later).

When trying to manipulate an unwilling target, social engineering comes in to play. Such an encounter begins with the engineer (the character attempting to manipulate) interacting with the target (the person being coerced). Generally, it is best to find a good role-playing reason for your character to need the target's help. In most cases, it doesn't make a lot of sense for an engineer to try to get his neighbor to come over and make him a sandwich when he could just as easily go to the kitchen and make it himself.

Once a motive has been established, the engineer needs to make an appropriate Manipulation check. If he is trying to convince someone to hand over their wallet, he would roll an Intimidate check, while a character attempting to lie his way out of a bar fight might use Bluff, Fast-talk or Lying. Choose the appropriate specialization as applicable, or simply roll Manipulation if no specialization is available.

Next, the GM determines the difficulty of the check. The base starting value for the check should be the target's Persona attribute level (if known). Characters who are hostile toward the player are less likely to do what he wants, so the difficulty would be higher than someone who is friendly; add or subtract from the difficulty as appropriate (you can use **Table 4.5: Repute Modifiers** for help determining modifiers). Any time the difficulty would be Mediocre or worse (Poor through Abysmal) there is no check required; the character is simply helpful. Difficulty levels of Fair and better require some additional interaction and perhaps a number of checks.

Once the difficulty has been determined, the dice are rolled. Add your modifiers and compare it to the difficulty. Success doesn't necessarily mean that the target will instantly switch sides; higher difficulty levels often require more persuasion, and occasionally different types of persuasion (such as bribery). For each degree of success by which you surpass the target difficulty, re-

duce the difficulty of the next check by that amount. If the difficulty becomes Mediocre or worse, you have successfully manipulated your target. If there is still a difficulty of Fair or better remaining, you may need to roll again (and possibly switch tactics – GMs feel free to require additional skill checks and manipulation methods depending on the circumstances).

For example, Matt is attempting to get some information out of a rather surly barkeep. The barkeep doesn't make a habit of giving up information about his patrons and he has a bad attitude. The GM sets the difficulty for this check at Superb. Matt doesn't think this will be a problem since he has a Great Persuade skill, so he chats up the barkeep for a bit and casts the dice.

Matt gets a total die result of +1 which he adds to his Great (+2) skill, giving him a Superb result. Success! Matt managed to pique the barkeep's attention, but just enough to avoid a complete shut-out. He'll need to keep schmoozing to get the barkeep to open up a bit more. So Matt continues to chat up the proprietor and rolls the dice once more. This time the difficulty is only Great, since he managed to get the barkeep's attention last time and reduce the difficulty by 1.

After the dice are rolled, Matt totals them up and finds that he gets a Superb result again. Since he beat the difficulty by 1 point, he knocks an additional point off of the total difficulty. Since he started at Great and is subtracting 2 points, the difficulty for the next check is Fair, and Matt can tell that the target is really starting to warm up.

Finally, Matt decides to make things a little bit more worth the barkeep's while and offers him a little cash for his trouble. This time, Matt attempts a Bribery check, and gets a Good result. He has managed to win over the barkeep by decreasing the difficulty to Poor: Fair (0) – 2 (since he defeated the check by +1) = Poor (-2). The difficulty is now Mediocre or worse, so Matt has been successful at his test.



Note that there is a price for failure. If you *fail* the check by 1 or more, there's a chance the target will react harshly and even choose to ignore you. If you fail the check, *increase* the difficulty of the following check for each level by which you fail. If the difficulty would be greater than Phenomenal, the target is either completely unwilling to talk to you or, depending on their nature, likely to try to split you a new one.

## Hacking People the Psionic Way – Soul Jacking

Soul jacking is the harsh new term for what was once simply known as *mind control*. Though highly illegal, soul jacking is a lucrative endeavor that can yield a lot of juicy details about someone or, in some cases, give you complete control over them. This is the sort of thing that gave rise to tin-foil hats, but as we've seen over the last 30

years or so, those don't work. To truly shield yourself from being soul jacked, you need either a strong Mind or an expensive piece of antipsi tech.

*Mind control* is a sub-school of the *telepathy* psionic power. In most circles it is viewed as a dangerous ability and those who possess it are often stigmatized. On the other hand, those very folks who have the gift argue (rightly so) that it isn't their fault they have it, so why should they be blamed? It's a tricky situation to be sure, but the fact remains that probing someone's mind without their permission is definitely not socially acceptable.

The *mind control* rules outlined in the **Psionics and Magic** chapter discuss the basic functions and capabilities of the power. For those interested in a more cinematic experience though, consider the rules for soul jacking, outlined below.

In order to attempt to steal someone's thoughts or actions, you first need to have the appropriate power to do so. This means you need to either possess the *mind control* power or a magic device capable of emulating it. Because this is such an illegal action, magic devices are hard to find; Magi-corp makes them, but is only allowed to sell them to military and police personnel. You will need a Rank score with a level equal to the power rating of the device in order to find and use one legally. Naturally though, you may be able to find one on the black market.

If you do possess the ability, you need to pick your target. This can be literally any living creature that possesses a brain, but works best on members of your own species. Attempting to soul jack a creature of a different species imposes a -1 penalty – other creatures' brains process data differently and it is harder to make sense of the information you acquire.



Making the check is as simple as using the psionic power; roll against the appropriate key attribute and compare your result to the target's opposed Mind check. Instead of *mind control* being an all-or-nothing success (or failure) though, soul jacking may require some additional effort. Succeeding at your first check simply gets you in the door, so to speak.

After making a successful check, you gain access to the target's "surface thoughts". Surface thoughts represent what the target is thinking *right now*. For animals, surface thoughts are just simple, instinctual concepts, such as "food", "potty", "play", and so forth. More complex creatures, especially humans, may have an infinite range of possible thoughts.

Once you're in someone's head, you can choose to try to probe their memories or try to take control of them. Decide what you're trying to do, then make the appropriate check using your power's key attribute.

## Probe Memories

When trying to probe someone's deeper memories, make a *mental communication* or *mind control* check after you've succeeded at getting into their head. The higher your degree of success, the further you can probe the target's memories. The chart below illustrates the results.

**Table 6.2: Probing Memories**

Degree of Success	You can read...
Fair	one week of memories.
Good	one month of memories.
Great	one year of memories.
Superb	one decade of memories.
Wonderful	one lifetime of memories.
Phenomenal	multiple lifetimes of memories.*

\* Assumes creature has had multiple lives through reincarnation, a concept popular among psychics. Including multiple lives in your campaign may lead to some interesting stories.

Most animals have life spans too short to be represented by higher ladder results, but that makes it all the easier to get a life's worth of memories from an animal. Most animal memories remain instinctual, and depending on the creature they may have little useful information. Some animals, like dogs, remember a scent better than a face, for example, while others have memories approaching those of humans. Use your best judgment (and some creativity) to determine just how much information you can gather from an animal's mind.

When reading the mind of a human (or other similarly-intelligent being) you can gather nearly any piece of information you want. Even the deeper, subconscious memories might be accessible if you can probe far enough back in the character's lifetime. You can even get the earliest memories of a person's childhood dating back to before anything that person might actually be able to remember on their own.

Probing a target's thoughts can be jarring for the target. They remember everything that you are detecting as you read it, which can have unforeseen consequences. For this reason, attempting to read the thoughts of an unaware person can cause them serious confusion and, depending on the memories you are looking for, quite a bit of discomfort. If the memories you are seeking would cause the target pain, discomfort, or trigger a traumatic episode (GM's discretion), they may receive a second Mind roll to attempt to force you out of their head.

If you have the *alter memory* Gift, in addition to the *mind control* power, you may alter or erase the target's memory. See the *mind control* entry in the **Psionics and Magic** chapter for an idea of what sorts of changes you can make based on your de-

gree of success. To alter a target's memory, you need to make a separate check.

Finally, if you possess the *mind reading* Gift from the *mental communication* power, you may use it to read a character's thoughts just as if you had the *mind control* Gift, though it is limited to reading minds only; you must possess the *mind control* power to use *alter memory* or to take control of a character's actions.

## Taking Control

Once you've defeated a target's mental resistance and gained access to their surface thoughts, you can use *mind control* to gain total dominance over them. Make an opposed *mind control* check versus the target's Mind check. If successful, you can influence the target's thoughts and actions as follows.

**Table 6.3: Mind Control Options**

Degree of Success	You can ...
Fair	implant a minor suggestion in the target's mind.
Good	charm the target.
Great	charm the target and maintain control.
Superb	dominate the target.
Wonderful	dominate the target and maintain control.
Phenomenal	dominate the target and maintain control with less effort.

**Suggestion:** You implant a thought in the target's mind that causes them to react in some minor way. For example, you can tell the target to "come here" or convince them that "these are not what you're looking for." The target will interpret this suggestion in the best possible light, though he will not do anything that is completely against his nature. "Jump off of that bridge" and "shoot

your commanding officer" are examples of suggestions that a character will *not* carry out.

**Charm:** The target perceives you as a friend. He considers your words and interprets them in the most favorable manner, but he is still unwilling to do anything that goes against his nature. You must maintain control of a target's mind and cannot activate any other psionic powers or become distracted to a point that you would not be able to focus on maintaining control (such as in combat or other stressful situations).

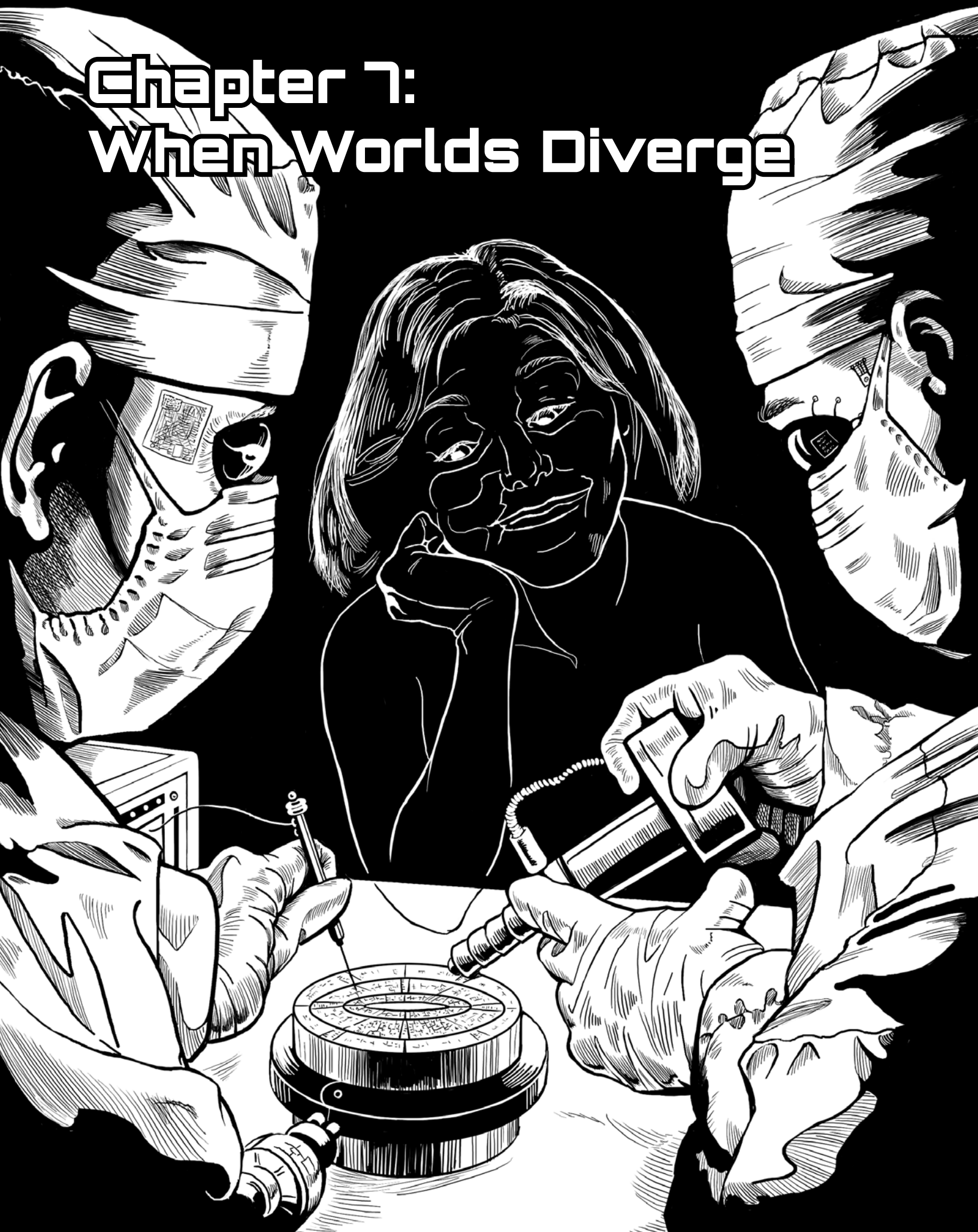
With a Great result you may continue to activate psionic powers while maintaining control. During stressful situations you must make a Great Focus roll to avoid losing control of the target's mind.

**Dominate:** You exhibit complete mental dominance over another character. They obey your orders to the best of their ability despite their own nature and perceive you in the best possible light. You must maintain control of a target's mind and cannot activate any other psionic powers or become distracted to a point that you would not be able to focus on maintaining dominance (such as in combat or other stressful situations).

With a Wonderful result you may continue to activate psionic powers while dominating a target's mind. During stressful situations you must make a Great Focus roll to avoid losing control of the target's mind. With a Phenomenal result, maintaining control requires a Focus roll of only Mediocre or better.

Note that when controlling the minds of animals and other beings of lesser intelligence, they may be limited by their intelligence when attempting to follow your orders. Choose appropriate commands and suggestions based on the capabilities of your target or your attempt may be in vain.

# Chapter 7: When Worlds Diverge





Most people consider the physical world – the place where you and I live, breathe, eat, and sleep – a mundane place. Despite the fact that nature, technology, and psionics are able to produce a seemingly unlimited array of sights, sounds, and effects, we live with these things every day and, to us, they rarely seem *too* surreal.

There are two other worlds that are roughly parallel but still very different than ours; one created by men, the other a naturally occurring plane with supernatural connotations. Though the former is man-made it is no longer as “virtual” as people once believed it to be and while the latter has been around since the dawn of existence, many people still disbelieve it. These two worlds, the **‘Net** and the **Astral Plane**, are similar in many ways.

## The ‘Net

Originally developed well over 100 years ago as a means to connect military and educational institutions around the world, the ‘Net is now an all-inclusive, global phenomenon. Though it has changed much in the last century, many of the key elements and ideals behind the ‘Net remain the same, and that is why, no matter how many new names for it people have come up with over the years, the word we use to discuss it remains the same.

The ‘Net (or Internet, as it is formally known) is a truly worldwide communications network. No longer confined just to computers, the ‘Net connects nearly every piece of electronic equipment to any number of mainframes around the globe and it is omnipresent. Though it took the better part of a century to reach every inch of the planet, the ‘Net is now accessible from literally everywhere on Earth (and even into parts of near space, like the moon).

Though certain Luddite groups exist which oppose the invasive omnipresence of the ‘Net, none were successful in sparing any part of the planet from its reach.

Still, there are certain “dead spots” within the boundaries of their private properties in which ‘Net signals are jammed, but these are a result of signal-blocking technology (provided by Macroware, the world’s leading computer supplier) and not a lapse of the ‘Net’s overall reach. Removing or disabling one of these signal-blocking devices would instantly un-jam the signal.

In years past, the ‘Net was a jumble of different technologies, both wired and wireless, which allowed computers and eventually other devices to communicate with one another. The wireless movement began in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which a push to make all ‘Net connections wireless was made. The capacity of wireless signals had previously been too insignificant to handle the amount of communication traffic that would be required for a global-scale network, but various technological advancements made it possible to handle all of the world’s communications at a near-instant pace. Today, all ‘Net traffic is wireless – save for a few corporate intranets (local networks) which still use wired networks for highly secure communications.

## Connecting to the ‘Net

Long ago, users were required to actively initiate a signal between a computer and the ‘Net in order to access it. Only by “dialing up” to the network could a computer access the information that was available. When the user was finished with his session, he would disconnect from the ‘Net and his computer would no longer be able to access it.

Later came the invention of always-on, “broadband” internet access. Users were no longer required to “dial up” to reach the ‘Net; all they had to do was turn on their computer or other ‘Net-enabled device and they were able to constantly access it. This premise remains true today, over 100 years since the invention of broadband technology, but in a slightly different form.

All computers, televisions, phones, and other electronic devices are now built with the capacity to access the ‘Net as long as they have power. Previously it was possible to unplug the connecting cable to a computer to disconnect from the ‘Net. Nowadays, every device is connected wirelessly and there are no built-in disconnect methods (though a few clever hackers have found ways to disable their own connections at will). This constant “awareness” allows users to seamlessly blend their everyday experiences with the connected lifestyle that the ‘Net allows; people communicate, learn, entertain, advertise, shop, and do nearly every conceivable daily activity while connected to the ‘Net.

## The Connected Life

While everyone is aware that the ‘Net exists, most people take it for granted. It has simply been there throughout the entirety of their lives, and will continue to be there long after they are dead. Everything they do from work to play is somehow enhanced by the ‘Net. Many of these enhancements come in the form of “augmented reality”, or the ability to receive enhanced information made possible only with the aid of computers.

Augmented reality is not the same as the now-defunct idea of “virtual reality”. Virtual reality (or VR for short) was first introduced in science fiction and later became a very realistic – or veritably realistic – notion. In the 2040s, the world’s population by and large decided to no longer support VR when it was discovered that people who were experiencing life in a “virtual world” were often susceptible to negative effects in the real world. Basically, in order to be “plugged in” to virtual reality, the user must completely disconnect from ordinary reality – and that was not only a scary thought for many, it had deadly consequences.

Augmented reality (or AR) overlays virtual aspects of the information-heavy computer world without requiring total immersion. This sort of information augmentation was popularized in science fiction and spy movies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which characters with special sunglasses or cyborgs with robotic eyes could gain information about their surroundings, such as the exact height or weight of an object, the heat signature of a person, or the distance between two points.

These concepts have grown to include a practically endless variety of information that can be transmitted to a user, either via special AR sunglasses or simply to their handheld computers. Users can find nearly any piece of information they desire (or any information that an advertiser desires them to see) simply by interacting with it. To some, this feels like a constant bombardment of media. To others, it is simply the way the world is and, without it, they would feel lost.

## Entering the ‘Net: AKA Ghosting

Most people never actually enter the ‘Net as a plane of existence. Instead, they interact with it through their tablets and other electronics. The ‘Net comes to them, and they manipulate certain aspects of it, but never truly engage it. This is, of course, by design; to literally enter the ‘Net is to cross the line between Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality and it has been made clear that the public does not want VR.

However, certain individuals are both able and willing to fully project themselves into the ‘Net, through a process known as “ghosting.” Ghosting requires the use of *electrokinesis*, which can be performed psionically or magically, and can be done from virtually anywhere on the planet (and even parts of sub-space).



## The Ghosting Check

Any character with the *electrokinesis* power, and its *cyberpsi* Gift, can attempt to ghost. Likewise, characters with access to a *cyberpsi* magic device can attempt to ghost, though these devices can be expensive and hard to come by. One can attempt to ghost from any location where they can access the 'Net, which includes the whole of Earth and its moon, except in places which have specifically been denied a 'Net signal.

Though a ghost check can be attempted from any location, it does leave the ghost's physical body vulnerable and, therefore, it is best to find a safe or well-guarded place before making the attempt.

To make a successful ghosting check, you must succeed at an *electrokinesis* check of Great difficulty. Once a successful check has been made, you leave your physical body behind and project a portion of your mind in to the 'Net.

It is possible to bring others with you. For every degree of success you may bring one additional passenger. Passengers must physically exist in a space directly next to you; one common practice is for circles of people to hold hands as they travel in this way. These passengers need not possess the *electrokinesis* Gift, but if the character that made the check is disconnected for any reason all passengers disconnect as well.

## What's Inside

Many science fiction movies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century attempted to depict what being inside a computer might look like, but every one of them got it wrong; the 'Net was never designed with conscious thoughts and direct human interaction in mind. There is no user interface because it is not technically a human-created Virtual Reality. Zeroes and ones do not float about in the sky and there are no circuitous highways.

Ghosts alter their own electromagnetic fields in such a way as to join the wireless spectrum around them, enabling themselves to move with and through it as easily as a computer broadcasts data. They are able to sense nearby access points – literally any piece of connected technology – due to the large volume of data being passed through them. By zeroing in on an access point, a ghost can use his *cyberpsi* power to communicate with the system on a deeper level and gain entry to it, allowing him to further use or control the system.

While inside a system, ghosts and their passengers spoof the device into treating them like any other program. In effect, each ghost (including passengers) is a separate program that interacts individually with the environment. These programs must be appropriate for the type of device a ghost is in; electronic billboards are only capable of running programs related to audio and video, for example, while a mainframe computer server can run virtually any program imaginable.



Ghosts can use a device's cameras (if available) to view the outside world from the machine's perspective. When not looking through the lens of the machine, the world appears very different; in fact, ghosts cannot actually see their physical surroundings without using this technique. It may be wise to have a passenger keep watch while a ghost interacts with the computer on a deeper level.

## Moving About

The 'Net is a global wireless mesh network, meaning it is comprised of billions of electronic devices the world over, each constantly transmitting data to and from one another. Every electronic device constantly routes data and boosts signals to enhance the reach of the network, though when moving over extremely long distances the data may be collected by a major hub and then passed back out into the wider network.

Put simply, a file begins at its source system and is passed through hundreds of devices along its route to a regional hub. The file is then passed from one hub to another until it reaches the destination region, where it is split up once more and passed through various access points until it reaches its end destination.

It is virtually impossible to sniff files as they are passed along their route because an individual file may be split up into millions of tiny pieces while it moves toward its destination. Ghosts must capture files either at their source or their end point, meaning they must know where the files are coming from or where they are going.

Because data transfers so quickly from one place to another, ghosts can move their virtual selves, their "ghosts", from any single point on Earth to another in milliseconds. Their physical body stays behind in the real world, but their ghost can move about freely. Extremely experienced ghosts (those who can make a Wonderful Techni-

cal check) are even capable of duplicating themselves, gaining the ability to be in multiple places at once. One common tactic is to leave one ghost with the physical body and monitor it using the cameras on a personal comm tablet in an effort to watch out for one's own safety.

While inside the 'Net, a ghost can visit any place he wishes simply by jumping to a device. Because it is easy to triangulate a device's location with its built-in GPS, ghosts are capable of very quickly jumping to specific regions and even cities of the world. It may require a bit more time and effort (in the form of another Technical check, with a difficulty depending on how precise he wishes to be) in order to pinpoint a specific building or device. Passengers always travel with the ghost.

While inside a device, ghosts can access its programming, data, security features and cameras. Ghosting is one of the most efficient methods of bypassing security, stealing information, and performing reconnaissance that is available in the world today, though it is not without its challenges. Many computers are highly secure and difficult to penetrate and some corporations even employ security personnel who are capable of ghosting and protecting a system from within.

## Ghosting Challenges

Ghosts often enter places where they are not wanted. To protect against unwanted (and illegal) intrusion, system administrators often ensure that their networks are locked down and heavily guarded against entrance by ghosts. Protecting a network can be costly, but no government, megacorp, or wealthy individual would dare leave himself unsecured against a ghost. The measures these entities take to prevent unwanted entry can pose severe challenges to even the most skilled ghosts (making it that much more important for them to bring friends).

Ghosting into a system is far more insidious than a traditional hacking attempt. Though hackers still exist and attempt to breach high-level systems every day, the majority of a company's security dollars go in to preventing attacks from ghosts. New, high-power, low-level security software has been developed specifically to thwart ghosting attempts and some of that software can cause real injuries to anyone trying to bypass it.

These special security programs have a semblance of sentience to them that is difficult to comprehend. In a partnership rare amongst today's megacorps, Macroware and Magicorp teamed up to develop a new form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) capable of using magic, generally *electrokinesis*. For all intents and purposes these programs have real, physical manifestations in the 'Net and are one of the entities which ghosts can encounter.

## Ghosting Combat

When a ghost enters a computer, he may need to contend with its security software. This can be far more difficult than simply making a Technical (Computer Security) check to bypass the machine's Security Level, since corporations and governments go to great lengths to prevent ghosting.

Following is an example list of security software that has been developed to thwart ghosting attempts. In most cases, these programs are only employed on high-level corporate and government machines due to their complexity and cost. However, many independent computer hackers and programmers also employ these programs and often run custom versions of them to suit their individual needs.

When a ghost enters a system with a Security Level of Superb or higher, GMs should consider employing any of the following security measures. These programs act as combatants and will attack the ghost

as if it were a real person (because, after all, ghosts are the real projection of an individual's consciousness). Use the standard rules for Combat (see **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**) when dealing with security software in this way, with the following exceptions.

- Do not add bonuses granted by equipment (weapons, armor, etc.) unless that equipment specifically deals with computer systems.
- Unless otherwise noted, use the character's Mind attribute as a defense, not their Body attribute.

Players may opt to use their Technical (Computer Security) skill in place of other combat skills to determine their Offensive Damage Factors when dealing with security software. This skill is opposed by the program's Security attribute, which replaces the Mind attribute of a human.

When making Combat (Melee, Non-physical, or Ranged) checks against a security program, the ghost is essentially making a brute force attack against its security defenses. No special Technical skill is required to combat these programs and a few of them are even susceptible to other forms of trickery.

Each program has a special Wound Track known as its Threat Level track. When a ghost "damages" the software he is effectively reducing the machine's understanding of him as a threat. Once the Threat Level reaches Green, the program sees the ghost as a valid user and allows him entry into the system.

Likewise, individual programs have their own Technical (Computer Security) skills to use against ghosts. Usually, the software's Technical skill level is equal to its Security Level, though certain subroutines may alter this depending upon the nature of the program. The software will essentially "attack" a character with its own Technical (Computer Security) skill opposed by the character's Mind attribute.

Any damage the character takes is considered Mental damage. A character who reaches Incapacitated or Near Death status on his Mental wound track is automatically shunted from the system and back into his corporeal body in a suitably injured state. Remember if a ghost exits the system, all of his passengers go with him. Passengers other than the ghost who are Incapacitated return to their bodies but do not drag others with them.

Some particularly high-level systems employ multiple security programs to safeguard different areas. Ghosts attempting to infiltrate a system may need to contend with more than one security program before they can reach whatever area they are trying to access. Usually only one program must be contended with at a single time, but highly secure systems may employ multiple security programs at once.

Unless the ghost somehow gains access to the appropriate usernames, passwords, and other security credentials of a system, he will need to contend with the same security programs *each time* he attempts to enter it.

Finally, a ghost can use his Technical (Computer Security) skill to try to determine the type of program he encounters. To do so, the player simply makes a Computer Security check and the GM secretly compares it to the program's Security attribute. If the player succeeds, he may identify the program, plus one piece of additional information about it for each degree of success. If he fails, he either cannot identify the program or he interprets it as a different program altogether.

For example, a ghost makes a Computer Security check to identify a program with a Security level of Superb (+3). The ghost rolls 4dF and adds his Computer Security skill and gets a result of Wonderful (a Good success). He manages to identify that the program is a Ghost Hunter and that Ghost Hunters have the *electrokinesis* power. If he had rolled a Phenomenal result (a Great success), he may also have uncovered that the Ghost Hunter is vulnerable to *mind control*.

Conversely, if the ghost had rolled a result of Great he would have failed the check by a degree of one (a Mediocre failure). The GM would tell him that he failed to identify the nature of the program. However, if the ghost had rolled a result of Fair he would have failed by a degree of three – an Abysmal result. The GM might instead tell the ghost that the program is a Spectral Firewall instead of a Ghost Hunter.

## Security Programs

Though the statistics that follow are similar to those found on a traditional character sheet, security programs lack nearly all human attributes. Each is given a Computer Security skill and a Security attribute. The program's Computer Security skill is its primary combat trait and is used to determine the Offensive Damage Factors of its attacks. Conversely, the Security level is its primary defensive attribute and will serve as its Defensive Damage Factors when trying to avoid damage.

Each program also has its own Gifts and Faults which help define its capabilities beyond simply acting as a locked door between the ghost and the system it protects.



## Brain Virus

<b>Attributes</b>	Security: Superb
<b>Skills</b>	Technical [Security]: Superb Specialization: Computer Security
<b>Gifts</b>	Infect Ghost
<b>Faults</b>	Can be manipulated
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	<i>Mind Control</i> [Security]

Threat Level Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
Wound	Red	Orange	Yellow	Blue	Green
	0 0	0	0	0	0

The brain virus has but one function: to infect the minds of ghosts. These programs are commonly employed on personal devices owned by other ghosts, but a few corporate security systems have been known to employ them as well. Brain viruses have also been used offensively. A brain virus never attacks a ghost directly. Instead, it constantly attempts to use *mind control* to gain access to the ghost's brain and manipulate its victim.

Brain viruses are programmed to force victims into performing pre-defined tasks. For instance, the brain virus may tell its victim to disconnect from the system or it may trick the victim into believing it has become part of the system itself. The virus' degree of success on its *mind control* check determines how much control it has over the victim, and for how long (see **Chapter 5: Psionics and Magic**).

Because the brain virus' commands are pre-programmed, they may need to achieve a high enough degree of success to have any effect at all. For example, the mere suggestion to exit the system is a simple command that requires little control, but forcing someone to believe they are part of the collective and maintaining a hold on their mind would require a much higher result.

Because brain viruses have enough AI to use psionic powers, they are susceptible to

being manipulated by psionics and magic as well.

## Ghost Hunter

<b>Attributes</b>	Security: Superb – Phenomenal (depends on system's Security Level)
<b>Skills</b>	Technical [Security]: Superb – Phenomenal (depends on system's Security Level) Specialization: Computer Security

<b>Gifts</b>	
<b>Faults</b>	Can be manipulated
<b>Magic Powers</b>	<i>Electrokinesis</i> [Security]

Threat Level Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
Wound	Red	Orange	Yellow	Blue	Green
	0 0 0	0	0	0	0

The ghost hunter is a basic attack program designed to deal with low-level threats in a very forceful manner. Ghost hunters are capable of attacking using their Computer Security skill as normal for Ghosting Combat or by activating an *electrokinesis* protocol which deals a physical electrical shock to the ghost. When using the *electrokinesis* power, add the program's Security level to the attack (instead of the Focus attribute that would be used by a human). If the attack is successful, the ghost takes physical damage instead of mental damage.

Ghost hunters do have one drawback: because they have just enough artificial intelligence to activate a psionic power, they are also capable of being mentally manipulated. Ghosts who also have a means of using *mind control* or other similar psionic powers may do so normally against the ghost hunter.

## Ghost Trap

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Security:</b> Superb – Phenomenal
<b>Skills</b>	Technical [Security]: Superb - Phenomenal Specialization: Computer Security
<b>Gifts</b>	Prevent Escape, Suspicious
<b>Faults</b>	
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	

Threat Level Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
Wound	Red	Orange	Yellow	Blue	Green
	00	00	00	00	00

Ghost traps are designed specifically to keep unwanted outsiders locked inside the system. These programs are built to be highly suspicious, making it extremely difficult for anyone without the proper passwords to use brute force attacks against them; ghosts must reduce the trap's Threat Level to Green twice before the program allows passage. If a ghost attempts to leave the system by any means, the ghost trap attempts to block them from doing so. The trap makes a Technical (Computer Security) check opposed by the ghost's Mind attribute. If successful, the ghost remains in the system. The trap performs this action for free in reaction to any ghost attempting to flee; it does not use up the trap's turn.

## Pandora Protocol

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Security:</b> Phenomenal
<b>Skills</b>	Technical [Security]: Phenomenal Specialization: Computer Security
<b>Gifts</b>	Appears as another program, system-wide alert
<b>Faults</b>	
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	

Threat Level Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
Wound	Red	Orange	Yellow	Blue	Green
	000	00	00	0	0

Pandora protocols are designed to mask themselves as another program in an attempt to trick ghosts into behaving differently when facing them. When a ghost attempts to identify a Pandora Protocol using the Computer Security skill, he receives misinformation about the program on any failure, regardless of how close he was to succeeding. For example, a Mediocre failure would provide misinformation even if it would normally just result in a failure to identify the program. The Pandora protocol acts identically to the program it is mimicking but uses its own Computer Use and Security traits, as well as its own Threat Level track, in place of those assigned to other programs.

If the ghost fails to bypass the protocol's Threat Level within three rounds, it sends out a silent, system-wide alert signal that fetches other programs and brings them into play. Characters may wind up facing one or more programs in addition to the Pandora protocol when this happens.

These protocols are almost always used in lieu of a spectral firewall to protect a system's most highly-confidential or secure data.

## Spectral Firewall

Attributes	Security: Superb				
Skills	Technical [Security]: Superb Specialization: Computer Security				
Gifts	Lockout Protocol				
Faults	Cannot Attack				
Psionic Powers					
Threat Level Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
Wound	Red	Orange	Yellow	Blue	Green
	0	0	0	0	0

Traditional firewalls are no match for a ghost, so these so-called “spectral firewalls” were developed as a means to prevent unwanted entry by would-be hackers. Spectral firewalls are the most basic form of anti-ghost protection. They cannot attack a ghost directly, so there is little initial harm in attempting to bypass such a system. However, a spectral firewall will keep track of the number of attempts a person has made to bypass it and alert the system’s other security programs if a ghost fails to bypass it in time.

Each round a ghost spends trying to defeat the spectral firewall’s Threat Level counts against the attempts he may make before the system’s other programs are alerted. If the ghost fails to reduce the spectral firewall’s Threat Level to Green within three rounds, the firewall will immediately call in another program to forcibly eject the user.

When this happens, the spectral firewall’s Security attribute and Technical skill both increase to Phenomenal and its Threat Level resets to Red (it effectively “heals” all damage done to it). It also calls in another program to join the fight. Select any other program and add it to the combat.

## Taking Control

After a system’s security programs have been defeated, it is possible to take control of the system. This is the primary purpose of nearly all ghosting excursions and the reason megacorps spend so much money to prevent them.

Each ghost, including passengers, are treated as separate computer programs when inside a system. They may perform any action the system would typically be capable of, such as displaying ads on a billboard, withdrawing funds from an ATM, hijacking a vehicle (even if its owner is trying to operate it), or executing complex commands on a mainframe.

Characters who are inside a system and are not being faced by security software have free access to initiate commands. Those skilled at Manipulation might attempt to reprogram a billboard to display a specific ad or message, while characters skilled with Vehicles may attempt to operate infiltrated equipment. Any variety of skills may be useful when ghosting in a system; the ‘Net isn’t just the realm of characters with great Technical skills.

The difficulty to successfully employ a skill is still based upon the system’s Security Level, which also represents the complexity of its code. To successfully operate a truck with a Security Level of Superb, for example, a character must first succeed at a Superb Vehicle check.

## Stealing Data

Gaining access to the wealth of knowledge a system contains is the other big draw for ghosts. Once a system’s security protocols have been bypassed, ghosts may make a Technical check with a +2 bonus to download data. The difficulty is based upon the system’s Security Level. For each degree of success, a ghost may download one additional piece of information.



**Note:** Some data is highly secured and protected. If a ghost is seeking specific information about a highly sensitive subject, he may have to contend with a new Security Program dedicated to protecting that specific piece of information. Generally speaking, the Technical skill allows a ghost to gather general information while security programs are employed to protect specific, top-secret files.

## Disconnecting

Once a ghost has discovered the information he was looking for, or if he feels he is outmatched by the system's security software, he may disconnect from the system by simply choosing to leave. He may attempt to connect to another system or leave the 'Net entirely and return to his physical body.

In any case, certain programs may attempt to prevent the ghost from exiting. At times, his only option may be to fight the program until he either defeats its security or becomes Incapacitated and is dumped back into his body. Programs which prevent egress can be found in the example list of security software above.

## The Astral Plane

Though most normals deny its existence, those who have visited it will cite its existence is irrefutable. The Astral Plane is another world that mirrors the mundane but has no physical presence. It cannot be seen, felt, heard, smelled, or tasted and yet it appears, to those who can visit it, to be identical to our own world.

One only reaches the Astral Plane in a disembodied state; in other words, when one's soul is literally projected outward from its body and into this extraplanar existence. Though it is not a requirement that one be psychic to enter the Astral Plane, few normals have ever experienced it. Only those with the ability to completely still

their minds and reach out to the aether have the capacity to transcend the Material Plane (the ordinary reality) and in to the Astral. With today's invasive technology, mundanes who can do this are increasingly rare.

The Astral Plane (often referred to simply as "the Astral") is an incorporeal world where nothing has physical substance, yet everything can be manipulated. The powers of the mind and soul are dominant here, while the power of the body is negligible. Everything we can see and touch in the real world can be seen on the Astral, though it all has a hazy, somewhat "ghostly" look to it.

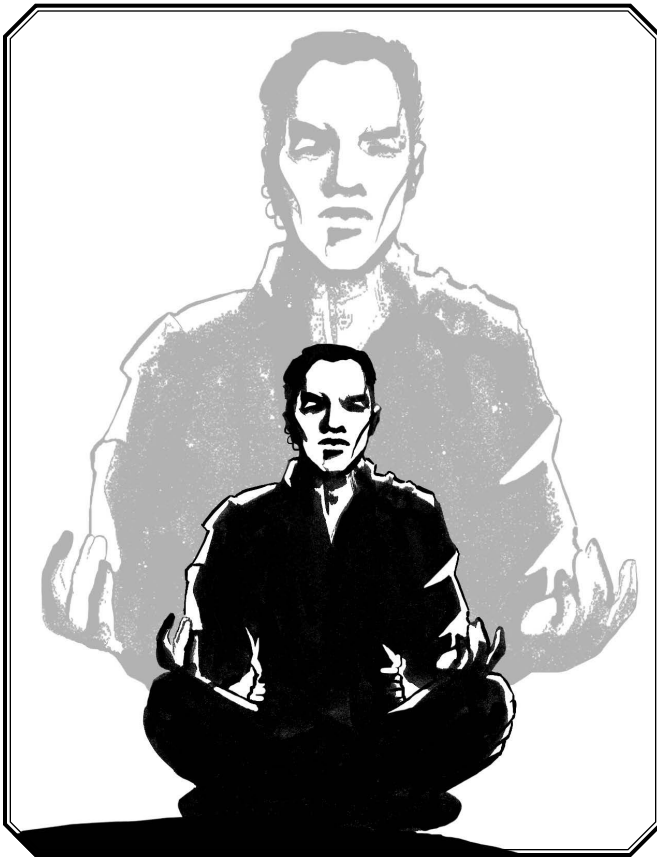
## Connecting to the Astral Plane

Visiting the Astral is not easy for most people. It requires peace, quiet, and a lot of patience. Most normals who attempt to project their soul to the Astral are unsuccessful, but a few have experienced this phenomenon and, indeed, have learned to master it.

To reach the Astral Plane, one must first find a calm, quiet place free of distraction. This is perhaps one of the most difficult steps, as the entire world seems to conspire against anyone seeking even a moment's solitude these days. However, should one find such a quiet place, he may attempt to still his mind, then disengage his soul from his body and finally "float" to the Astral.

## The Projection Check

After finding a quiet place to meditate, characters wishing to reach the Astral must make a successful Astral Projection, Shamanic Journeying, Soul Travel or similar Spiritual skill check with a Great difficulty. Moderate distractions increase the difficulty of this check to Superb, and – though it is possible to project ones soul to the Astral when being disturbed – the difficulty to do



so is Phenomenal. Upon making a successful *projection* check, the character may reach out to the Astral for as long as he maintains concentration.

Maintaining concentration requires no check unless the character's physical body becomes distracted. Once this happens, the character must make another *projection* check, this time with a Phenomenal difficulty, to remain connected to the Astral.

## Distractions

Any number of circumstances could distract a person who is projecting their soul to the Astral. Simple examples include being spoken to, hearing a loud noise, or being jostled. What many novices don't realize, especially if they are visiting the Astral for the first time, is that their body's own needs are often the biggest distraction of all.

Though a character who is projecting to the Astral may remain there indefinitely, his physical body still requires all of the mundane things that bodies do, including

air, food, water, and sleep. Many spiritual masters have spent years developing their body's tolerance to the depravation of these essentials, whether by fasting (giving up food and drink for days at a time) or training their endurance.

Experienced astral projectors know to relieve themselves and to ensure they have had ample sustenance and sleep if they are going to be travelling for long periods of time. Generally speaking, a character may travel to the Astral for three (3) hours per level of his Body trait above Poor. For each hour he remains on the Astral after this time, he must make a successful Body check to avoid being distracted (and thus requiring a *projection* check to remain on the Astral). The difficulty for the Body check begins at Fair and increases by one level for each hour the character remains on the Astral.

For example, Yvonne has a Great (+2) Body attribute. She successfully projects her spirit to the Astral and may stay there for 12 hours before her body begins to fatigue. After 12 hours have passed, she must make a Fair Body check, otherwise she becomes distracted and must make a Phenomenal *projection* check to remain present on the plane. She succeeds on her check and remains on the plane for another hour.

At the beginning of hour 13, Yvonne must make another Body check to avoid being distracted. This time the difficulty is Good (+1) since it has been another hour since her body first felt the pangs of fatigue. She fails this check and thus is required to make a Phenomenal *projection* check to remain present, despite her body's fatigue. Since she fails this check as well, she is plunged back in to her physical body.

Characters who return to their body due to distractions of any sort are dazed for 1 round; they may not take any action as they try to regain a footing on reality. Characters who return to their bodies because of fatigue are not only dazed, but they also

suffer one Scratched physical wound for each hour by which they exceeded their maximum. In the example above, Yvonne would plunge back in to her body and be dazed for one round, and she would receive 1 Scratched physical wound due to having exceeded her normal tolerance by 1 hour.

## Astral Activities

Astral projection is more than just a neat parlor trick (actually, it makes a terrible parlor trick since onlookers simply observe your body sitting in a meditative state). Those who travel to the Astral do so with a purpose, one that cannot normally be accomplished in physical reality.

The Astral has no boundaries and no physical essence, so spirits projected to this plane of existence can travel anywhere they wish – even through objects and people. This is perhaps the number one reason why astral travelers visit this plane; the ability to get in to any location undetected is a huge draw for a variety of reasons, shady or not.

Characters travelling on the Astral Plane may move through the air, through objects and even through space, since none of these things physically exist on the Astral despite their appearance. It is possible to see and hear anything that is happening within your normal range of perception while on the Astral Plane, though objects appear hazy and sounds are muted. It can be difficult to get the full picture of what is happening in a given location, but experienced travelers are adept at piecing together what they experience and determining what it all means.

It is *not* normally possible to physically affect the material world from the Astral. Because no object that appears on the Astral has any physical substance, there is no way to manipulate anything. One may attempt to control astral objects using his mind however and indeed combat on the Astral Plane is always a contest of wits and spirit as opposed to brute force and agility.

Characters with psychic abilities may use *ESP* to try to better perceive their surroundings and characters with other psionic powers may attempt to use them while in an astral form, though the normal limitations that apply to physically manipulating matter (and energy) still apply.

## Astral Combat

Should two Astral beings meet and have cause to quarrel, they may find themselves participating in astral combat. This form of non-physical combat is highly dangerous as it poses particularly severe threats to those involved.

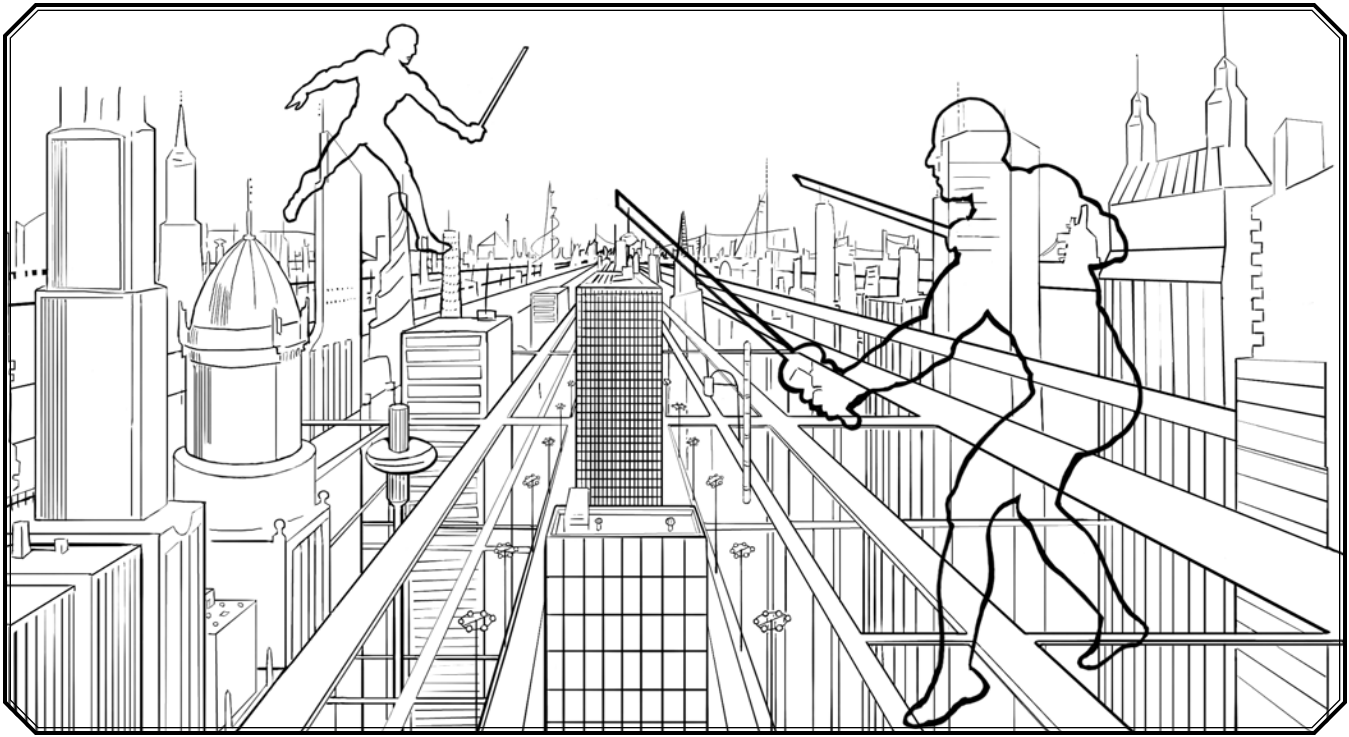
Astral combat, like physical combat, is tracked using a character's Wound Track. All damage endured while on the Astral is considered mental damage however, since no physical body is present. Attacking and defending are similar in many ways, but the attributes used to determine a fight's outcome are different.

## Use of Mental Force

On the Astral Plane, the one with the strongest will – not the strongest body – is the one who will emerge victorious. Instead of using physically-oriented combat skills, such as firearms or martial arts, Astral warriors have an Astral Combat skill. This skill should be tied to a character's Focus or Spirit attribute, and it will represent the character's ability to overpower another Astral Being.

Physical weapons and armor modifiers do not apply, nor do any physical objects or skills. Battle on the Astral is purely a matter of wits. Use of psionic powers is permitted, though many powers simply lack the ability to manifest on the Astral Plane. Since fire, electricity, and cold do not exist on the Astral, for example, psionic powers which produce or manipulate these forces simply do not function there. Other powers, such as *telekinesis* may work despite the oppo-





nent not having a physical form, since they represent exerting ones will over another.

Resolve all combat checks as normal, with the above substitutions. If a character takes damage it is treated as mental damage, and the character must make a Superb *projection* check to remain on the Astral Plane. If a character is Incapacitated or brought to Near Death status while on the Astral, he risks suffering very severe results.

### Defeating an Astral Being

If an Astral Being is reduced to Incapacitated or Near Death status, its link to its physical body is severed. The physical body's functions do not cease, but it becomes a soulless husk incapable of motion or thought. It is essentially comatose, though it continues to breathe and maintain sustainable levels of bodily functions on its own. However, it is subject to death from thirst or starvation, and it is highly susceptible to physical forms of attack.

To return to its body, the soul must be retrieved and guided back by another being. The creature that defeated the Astral Being may have also obtained dominance over

the soul once it was defeated and may not be willing to give it up without a fight or a bargain of some kind.

### Soul Retrieval

Finding a soul can be tricky at best. The easiest way to begin a search would be to enter the Astral Plane from the same physical location as the being's physical body. If the soul is not in the immediate vicinity, one can use *ESP* or other powers to attempt to locate it. The further away from its body the soul travelled, the harder it might be to find. Furthermore, if the creature that defeated the soul chose to capture it and take it elsewhere, it may complicate search efforts.

Some branches of law enforcement and some psychic private investigators specialize in soul retrievals. If nobody in the character's group is capable, they may be able to contact someone for help, but they need to act quickly before the soul's body dies. If the body dies, the soul becomes lost on the Astral forever and may one day find itself preying on other Astral Beings.

## Astral Predators and other Beings

Not all beings on the Astral Plane have physical bodies attached to the Material. The Astral is also home to souls which live there, most of whom are ex-humans who lost their physical lives while projecting. These souls sometimes go mad after spending years, even decades, living in the Astral world with the ability to look in to it, but not return to it. Many of these souls become Astral Predators.

Predators seek out fresh souls who arrive on the Astral Plane and attempt to submit them to their will. It is said that these predators have the ability to track a soul back to its body and commandeer the vessel while the soul remains outside. This phenomenon can explain why many people are driven insane for seemingly no reason; the soul inside their body simply isn't their own, and likely has spent decades brooding over its lack of substantiality.

There are, however, other Astral Beings which have always lived on the Astral and are not necessarily insane. These beings can come in any variety of shapes and often creatures of folklore and legend actually have a basis in the reality of the Astral Plane. Giants, unicorns, trolls, and even fairies exist on the Astral as mere spirits, though they rarely like to make their presence known to common Astral travelers.

The shapes these beings take are largely subjective; they represent the way a human being might see that souls' personality and are not necessarily indicative of their true nature. Faeries, for example, might be Astral Beings with flighty personalities while giants, have very forceful personalities. It may indeed be possible, though it is quite rare, to befriend one of these beings and have them act as a traveling companion and guardian. Of course, it may also be possible to make an enemy of one of these Astral Beings and find yourself doing astral combat with a soul far more powerful than your own. Traveler beware!

## Astral Rogues Gallery

Following are some examples of beings you might expect to find on a journey to the Astral Plane. Note that Astral Beings have no physical form, therefore even beings such as giants, which are traditionally viewed as physically powerful beings, have no Body attribute. Powerful Astral Beings instead have superior mental traits and forceful or boisterous personalities. Remember that the physical forms we perceive are a representation manifested by the person perceiving them and these examples are simply an attempt to make sense of the creatures in a way which other humans can relate.

### Fairy

<b>Attributes</b>	<i>Mind</i> : Wonderful <i>Focus</i> : Superb <i>Soul</i> : Good <i>Persona</i> : Superb <i>Presence</i> : Superb <i>Status</i> : Fair
<b>Skills</b>	Combat (Non-physical) [ <i>Focus</i> ]: Good Manipulation [ <i>Presence</i> ]: Superb Specializations: Bluff, Flattery Covert [ <i>Presence</i> ]: Great Specialization: Pickpocketing Social (Informal) [ <i>Presence</i> ]: Great Specializations: Practical Joker, Witty Insults
<b>Gifts</b>	Charmer (+1 to Flattery and <i>mind control</i> ) Can use <i>psychokinesis</i> powers across planes (Astral to Material)
<b>Faults</b>	Flighty Personality Easily Frightened
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	<i>Mind Control</i> <i>Alter Memory</i> <i>Photokinesis</i> <i>Sonarkinesis</i> <i>Telekinesis</i>

Mental Wound Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5	6	7+
			Very		Nr.
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Hurt	Incap.	Death
	0 0	0	0	0	0

Fairies are fond of playing jokes on people, and their ability to use *psychokinesis* powers across planes allows them to manipulate objects, sights, and sounds on the Material plane. When objects mysteriously go missing, only to later mysteriously turn up, you can bet that a fairy was responsible.

## Giant

<b>Attributes</b>	<i>Mind:</i> Superb <i>Focus:</i> Superb <i>Spirit:</i> Fair <i>Persona:</i> Wonderful <i>Presence:</i> Superb <i>Status:</i> Good
<b>Skills</b>	Combat (Non-physical) [Focus]: Superb Specialization: Astral Combat Knowledge [Focus]: Superb Specializations: Folklore, Psionics Manipulation [Presence]: Phenomenal Specialization: Intimidate Infamy [Status]: Superb Social (Informal) [Presence]: Superb Specialization: Storytelling
<b>Gifts</b>	Fearsome Reputation
<b>Faults</b>	Greedy (-3 to resist being bribed) Conceited (-3 to resist being flattered) Quick to Anger
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	<i>Mental Communication</i> <i>Telecommunication</i> <i>Mind Control</i> <i>Alter Memory</i> <i>Mental Shock</i>

Mental Wound Track					
Damage	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-10	11+
			Very		Nr.
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Hurt	Incap.	Death
	0 0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0	0	0

Giants are strong-willed, greedy creatures who are not above forcing their will upon others to get what they want. Like their fairy-tale counterparts, giants have a reputation for being fierce combatants, but on the Astral Plane they force their wits upon others as opposed to beating them down with brute force; though there is functionally little difference. Most giants share a love for storytelling and love a good folktale, especially if it involves one of their kind getting the upper hand on a lesser being. They can be easily manipulated by characters who play to this strength. Their weaknesses are best kept in mind when facing one on the Astral.

## Unicorn

<b>Attributes</b>	<i>Mind:</i> Wonderful <i>Focus:</i> Good <i>Spirit:</i> Superb <i>Persona:</i> Good <i>Presence:</i> Great <i>Status:</i> Fair
<b>Skills</b>	Combat (Non-physical) [Focus]: Great Social (Formal) [Spirit]: Superb Specializations: Detect Lies, Diplomacy Spiritual [Spirit]: Wonderful Specializations: Giving Comfort, Patience, Pray for Miracles
<b>Gifts</b>	Calming Aura (supernatural; nearby creatures are never angry)
<b>Faults</b>	Benevolent (always helps the needy)
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	<i>Empathy</i> <i>Empathic Healer</i> (but does not take physical wounds for healing mental wounds) <i>Mental Communication</i>

Mental Wound Track					
Damage	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9+
			Very		Nr.
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Hurt	Incap.	Death
	0 0 0	0 0 0	0	0	0



Unicorns are known to be kind, warm-hearted creatures who are swift to aid those in need. They are healers by nature and use their gifts to both sooth and repair the mind. They have been known to perform great acts of generosity and even miracles. These creatures are, however, exceptionally good at judging one's character. They never aid someone whose intentions are impure, and are skilled at noticing when someone is being deceitful.

Unicorns can be vulnerable to aggressors since they have very limited defense against other astral combatants. They are not exceptionally skilled in combat, but they do possess gifts which dissuade others from engaging them in battle.

## Troll

<b>Attributes</b>	<i>Mind:</i> Phenomenal <i>Focus:</i> Phenomenal <i>Spirit:</i> Fair <i>Persona:</i> Great <i>Presence:</i> Great <i>Status:</i> Fair
<b>Skills</b>	Combat (Non-physical): Phenomenal Specialization: Astral Combat Manipulation [Spirit]: Phenomenal Specialization: Intimidate
<b>Gifts</b>	Feeds on Astral Energy (see description)
<b>Faults</b>	Voracious (must consume Astral Energy regularly) Instinctual (does not think before acting) Light Sensitive (-2 to all checks while in bright light) Vulnerability to Light (-3 to defensive factors against <i>photokinesis</i> attacks)
<b>Psionic Powers</b>	<i>Mind Control</i> <i>Mental Shock</i> (only mental shock; cannot charm, suggest, or dominate)

Mental Wound Track					
Damage	1-3	4-6	7-8	9-10	11+
			Very		Nr.
Wound	Scratched	Hurt	Hurt	Incap.	Death
	0 0 0 0	0 0 0	0 0	0	0

Trolls represent the most primal of all Astral Beings. They are fierce combatants with a hunger for Astral Energy which keeps them constantly on the hunt for new sources of nourishment. Trolls must consume the souls of other Astral Beings on a daily basis or lose energy at an alarming rate. For every day a troll spends without consuming a soul, he takes a cumulative -1 penalty to his Focus attribute; trolls die if their Focus attribute reaches Abysmal. Conversely, trolls thrive on consuming the Astral Energy of others. When they defeat a foe in combat, they immediately consume its soul. This soul is permanently destroyed and even a soul retrieval is powerless to bring it back. When a troll consumes a soul it staves off its immense hunger for another day and heals all of its wounds.

Also, consuming a soul does not immediately renew the troll's Focus attribute to Phenomenal. Instead, it increases the attribute by 1 point. Thus, a troll who has gone several days without eating may need to consume several souls in a single day to fully replenish itself. Trolls, therefore, are on a constant hunt for Astral Energy.

It is rare to find a troll that is at the peak of its energetic state. Indeed, such a force would be nearly impossible to overcome, or even outrun, and surely any creature which crossed its path would become its victim. Most trolls have trouble finding meals more than three or four times per week, so their Focus attribute is more commonly at Great or Superb than Phenomenal. At any level though, a troll is a force to be reckoned with and not to be underestimated.

# Chapter 8: Game Mastering



In any role-playing game, Game Mastering can be the most challenging – and rewarding – role a player can accept. The GM's job is to oversee the storytelling, keep the scenes engaging, and ensure that everyone has fun. GMs are leaders, but their mission should be to lead alongside the players – more like a guide – than to rule over the action with an iron fist.

As a Game Master, it can not only be difficult to know where to start, but where to draw the line as well. This chapter is devoted to Game Masters of all skill levels, but particularly aimed at new GMs who need a little bit of help getting started with interactive storytelling and role-playing.

## Where to Begin?

- Before accepting the role as Game Master, ask yourself these simple questions:
- Do I like to tell stories?
- Am I comfortable in a leadership position, especially with my peers?
- Am I a good multi-tasker?

If you've answered "yes" to these questions, chances are you're well-suited for taking on the role of the Game Master. Even if you answered "no" to one or more of them though, it doesn't mean you have to relegate yourself to the role of a player for good – it just means you may want to work on bolstering your skills. In short, if you have the desire to lead a game – maybe you've dreamed up an interesting plot or encounter and you want to show it off or maybe you prefer to be actively engaged in everything that happens at the table – you can be a successful Game Master.

Once you have made the decision to GM a game, commit to it – at least for a little while. You don't have to be the GM every time your group gets together – many groups prefer to rotate GMs so that everyone gets a chance (it's really quite infectious) – but you should devote enough time to the craft and ensure

you have a sufficient amount of interest in the material you will be presenting to your players. In some cases, this may mean you plan a single game session, while in others it means you plan an entire campaign, lasting months or even years.

Being a Game Master means not just telling a story, but also presenting it to your players in a manner that is consistent, cohesive, and fun. You may have a grand adventure planned for your players, but even though this game encourages free-form rules, you should present it in a manner that is consistent with whatever game mechanics you settle upon. This way players know *how* they can expect to interact with your story.

As a GM, you should familiarize yourself with the rules. These rules are not set in stone, and you are free to alter them as you wish, but make sure that your players know what changes you make and stick with them, writing them down if necessary, so as to stay consistent. We'll talk a bit more about game rules later, but for now make sure that you're comfortable with the core mechanics.

## Adventure Crafting

One of the first things you should consider as a Game Master is the story you wish to tell. **Psi-punk** offers a brief history of the world's events and a lot of freedom to choose what else you wish to include. Remember: this world is as much yours as it is that of the authors (intellectual property notwithstanding, of course!)

Perhaps you wish to tell a story about an evil corporation trying to flex its muscles and take over the world and you want the players to rise up and stop them. Perhaps, instead, your goal is to have the players form a corporation powerful enough to challenge



Magicorp's dominance. Or, perhaps, you would rather tell a story about some mercenaries living on the mean streets who are just trying to get by in a cruel world. The choice is up to you, but we've included a random adventure generator in the Appendix to help you get some ideas if you don't have any already. Don't forget that you can also call upon your players to help decide what kind of story they wish to play; collaborative storytelling doesn't have to start with the first roll of the dice.

After you've settled upon a general story goal, you can set about determining the details. Some GMs find it helpful to have the entire plot planned in advance, complete with detailed maps and pre-determined antagonists, traps, and other perils. Others prefer to simply "Fudge it," making it up on the fly and running with ideas that players bring to the table. Neither style is better than the other, but they each have their advantages and disadvantages. Only experience can help you determine what's best for you, and as usual, you may find that the best option is a balance somewhere in between the two extremes, but we've outlined a few things to consider.

## Plenty of Planning

Planning takes time, effort, and forethought. It can be a lot of work, but it brings with it a lot of rewards. When you plan at least a session or two in advance, you're sure to be prepared for questions the players have about the story you're presenting them. It's helpful to know the names of NPCs, the security level of a corporation's electronic locks, and the layout of a building. While it takes time to set all of this up, it's rewarding and makes for a more streamlined play session.

Some people find it fun to plan out all of the details while others might find it tedious. If you're into making lists, taking lots of notes, or writing novels, you may con-

sider planning a bit more than the average GM. On the other hand, if you prefer to just take things as they come, find lists and notes boring, and don't care to write a book, you may prefer to just draft a few quick ideas and be done with it.

When you plan a game session, the simple rule of thumb is to write down the most important details of the adventure first – what can the adventure simply not function without? If you've planned for the PCs to fight an evil corporation, you may need to at least know *which* corporation they are facing, what the corporation's motives are, and what techniques they employ. Having this written down or even just stored in your own brain bank, is important for ensuring that you have a story to begin with. If you wish to plan more detailed events after that, feel free to do so. Just remember that players may not always do what you're expecting them to, so try to remain flexible to avoid "railroading" them through the story.

## Free-form Storytelling

If you're not interested in the details of fine-tuning an adventure, free-form storytelling may work for you. You should consider planning the basic overall plot for a story, but after that you may wish to make up everything else as you go. If you're good at thinking on your feet and don't have any strong ideas about the way a story should go, this method may work for you.

With free-form storytelling, you have the luxury of allowing your players to enter your world and just go crazy with it. You may even go so far as to allow the players to start telling the story from day one while you act as an arbiter. Perhaps they all agree that it would be fun to be a mercenary band and they just need you to come up with the missions they're going to perform.

If you're going to attempt to free-form a game, be sure to ready yourself for some real curve-balls. Players are known to have

all sorts of wild and crazy ideas, and it is up to you to either run with them or temper them into something more productive. The biggest problem new GMs tend to have is letting their players drive too many story details at once, and eventually nothing gets accomplished. This isn't necessarily an issue if you're all in it to just have fun, but it may not lead to the sense of accomplishment that some GMs (and players) cherish.

## You Don't Have to Choose

Remember, these story planning styles are presented here to give you some ideas and spark creativity. They're designed to reinforce your goals as a GM and adventure crafter, not to feel restrictive. You're not expected to choose between the two styles – indeed, there are dozens more styles you could come up with that don't fit into either of these categories – it just helps to be aware of yourself and know that there's no wrong or right way to plan for and craft an adventure.

## 8 Knowing and Using the Rules

We mentioned before that it is important to know the rules of the game. As a Game Master, you are the final arbiter when it comes to conflict resolution, disputes, and so forth. You don't have to memorize the entire book, but be prepared to answer basic questions and have an idea of where to locate the information you're not certain about.

Don't let the minutia of the mechanics get in the way of a good story, though; if you're not certain of an answer to a question you don't always need to stop the gameplay to find an answer. Instead, just "Fudge it" for now – make a decision and stick with it for the time being – and look up the answer later, when it's not game time.

Try to be consistent with your answers, but realize that everyone makes mistakes. If you decide that a ruling you made earlier ends up making things unbalanced or less fun, don't be afraid to change your mind, but try to make these situations the exception and not the rule. Your players will appreciate knowing that when they sit down to play the game, they don't have to re-learn it.

## More on "Fudging It"

One of the greatest strengths of the Fudge system used by **Psi-punk** is that it is designed to be modular and alterable. The rules presented in this book are a cohesive set of game mechanics designed to make picking up and playing the game as painless as possible; we put together the rules so you don't have to.

With that said, many GMs like to edit the rules, add various subsystems, and generally tweak things to suit their own tastes. This often happens when a GM becomes experienced with a system and world-building and feels like changes are necessary to add to the flavor of the setting he is creating. This is perfectly fine; we encourage you to build upon the rules presented herein and make the game as complex or simple as you would like.

It is especially common to add new subsystems of rules to handle different types of encounters. Not all social encounters need to be handled in the same way, for example, and some groups prefer to use ammunition rules (and keep track of individual shots fired) instead of using the abstracted ammo rules presented in Chapter 4: Playing the Game. Whatever works to make your game more fun for you and your players is the perfect system and you're encouraged to change things up – just make sure your players understand the changes you make to the rules that are printed in their copy of the book.

## Running a Game

Once you've familiarized yourself with the rules and have considered what type of game you'd like to run, it's time to put together a group of players and sit them down for their first session. When gathering players, try to get everyone to agree on a time and date that will work for them not just for the first session, but for the foreseeable future; having a regular time and meeting place will help the group stay together and remain consistent despite the interference of their daily lives.

If you haven't already put a copy of the rules into your player's hands and asked them to get familiar with them, your first session is as good a time as any to do that. Make sure at least one copy – a “table copy” – of the rules is available that you and your players can reference as the need arises. Since you're already familiar with how to create characters and play the game, you can walk your players through the process without having to wait for each person to read the rules individually.

## Creating Characters – Individual or Group Creation

When it comes to developing characters for a new campaign, there are two methods that often get used: individual creation or group creation. Individual creation means that players sit down and develop their characters without input from other players or the GM – they decide what they would like their character to be, how their character should act, his/her role in society, etc. Group creation still allows for players to decide these things, but it allows for players to give additional input and create characters as a team, rather than a group of individuals.

As usual you don't have to select a single style, and you don't always have to stick with a given style once you've selected it. Still, it's important to consider how you would like your players to design their characters for your first session. Many times individual character creation arises from the individual time concerns of each player; perhaps they are already familiar with the rules and want to create a character at home while they have time, then show up at the first session ready to play. If you are fortunate enough to get everyone together for a group character creation session, we suggest you give it a try and see what results; often times a whole session can be dedicated to character creation and everyone will have just as much fun as if they had run through a whole mission or scenario!

## Creating the Setting – Group Creation

Bear in mind that your world is like a character of its own, and you don't have to create it all by yourself. You can apply the group creation method to your setting as well. By allowing players to offer input about what types of locations they will visit, what types of encounters they will have, and what types of people they will meet, you are ensuring that they have a vested interest in the game. If you have some time to spare after characters have been created, you may wish to ask for their input about the world as well – even if you have a setting in mind already.

## Getting Adventurous

You have characters and a setting, now what? If you already have an adventure planned you can sit down with your players and begin. If you don't, fear not; we've included a sample adventure in the Appendix for you. Even if you don't want to run the adventure on its own, or if you want



to modify it heavily, that's okay; the goal is to give you some idea of what a typical adventure might be like. There are other published adventures for various games – some free, others not – that you can use to gather ideas as well. Just having an idea of what an adventure looks like from a GM's perspective is a great start and a lot of inspiration.

We have also included a random encounter seed generator to help spark some creativity. Using random adventure generators is a great way to get the creativity flowing, and sometimes the results are nothing if not amusing. Use these resources to help you get an understanding of what your options are and then break the mold by remembering that your options are unlimited!

## Adjudicating Skill Checks

As the Game Master, it is your job to let the players know when they should be making skill checks and when they can simply expect to accomplish a task. You should already be familiar with how skill checks work (if not, read **Chapter 4: Playing the Game**) but simply knowing the mechanics behind the skills doesn't give you guidance about when or where they should be invoked.

From a mechanical and dice-rolling standpoint, the goals of **Psi-punk** are simplicity and speed. The game should run smoothly and without too much dice rolling getting in the way of the story. With that being said, it is important to only ask the players to make skill checks when absolutely necessary. So how do you know when it's necessary?

As a rule of thumb, if the task is so easy that a normal person could do it as part of his daily routine, it doesn't deserve a dice roll. For example, driving a car to work is routine for most people, while performing

medical surgery is routine for many ER doctors. Unless pressed for time, stressed, or otherwise hindered, these sorts of routine checks aren't necessary.

Another good rule of thumb is that a character who is at least Fair at a given task shouldn't need to make a roll for it unless opposed by someone or something else. A gourmet chef doesn't need to make a skill check to cook a fancy dinner unless he's in a contest against other chefs to see who can make *the fanciest* dinner, for example.

In game terms, this means that skills such as Language aren't necessary to roll against unless a character is trying to decode a message or understand spoken dialogue in a language for which he has only a Mediocre comprehension, or to communicate to someone with only a Mediocre level of understanding.

Likewise, driving or piloting a vehicle is considered a simple task for most people (especially since nowadays most cars drive themselves) and characters can really only screw up when circumstances are out of the ordinary, such as during a chase, along a windy road on a stormy night, or when piloting a very technical craft such as a helicopter or tank.

Many GMs have a particularly difficult time determining when to call for Notice checks. We feel some other games often use Notice or Perception checks far too frequently (at least compared to their **Psi-punk** counterpart) so keep the following in mind: **when in doubt, don't ask for it**. Notice, in any of its forms, shouldn't be used as a precursor to divulging information to the players. If a character says he is searching the room for clues, you should give him everything he needs to know – unless, of course, he is trying to quickly scan the room for evidence while under suppressive gunfire. Ordinarily, Notice skills should only be employed when actively searching for targets that are being actively hidden from them (e.g., a Spot check made to notice a charac-

ter using Stealth or a Taste check used to notice chemical ingredients too subtle for the average human to detect).

Allowing characters to do things within their normal range of skill without making dice rolls will not only speed up the game, it will help players feel like their skills actually matter. Nobody likes to try doing something that they're Great at only to randomly fail for seemingly no reason. It is, however, understandable that even a Great artist make something that is only Mediocre compared to the talented craft of a Superb artist. By calling for skill checks only when necessary, you will actually *add* depth to your game and may be surprised at how much more creative the players will try to be.

## Lacking Appropriate Skills

When a character lacks the skill appropriate for a given situation, they may still attempt a roll as if they had a skill level of Poor (-2). In most cases, characters will not be able to succeed using this skill level unless the task is very simple, but allowing them the option to roll helps them feel like they can meaningfully contribute.

Remember that the skill system in Psi-punk is flexible. Sometimes a character has a skill that could logically be substituted for another (especially when it comes to the use of Social or Manipulation skills) so consider allowing these substitutes. Try to interpret skill names in their broadest sense to allow for maximum flexibility in their use, and allow Specializations to enter play when a character attempts to do something very specific.

## Setting Difficulty Levels

When asking for a skill check it is important to bear in mind the difficulty level of the task. When not clearly defined by the rules, you may need to make up a difficulty level on the fly.

When a roll is opposed this is simple: the difficulty level is always equal to the opponent's check result. Remember that there may be a minimum required to hit though; even if the attacker beat the defender's Poor check result, the attacker may still miss if he didn't roll *at least* a Fair result himself, for example.

For unopposed actions, setting difficulty levels can be a bit more tricky, but this is where the simplicity of the Fudge Trait Ladder works to your advantage. Difficulties are described by adjectives on the trait ladder, such as Fair, Good, Extraordinary, and so forth. If you're having trouble deciding on how hard you think a task should be, simply ask yourself: "Is this a Good challenge?" or "Would a Great driver have an easy time with this?"

By choosing difficulties in terms of these adjectives, you simplify the decision-making process and remove the stress of focusing on smaller details.

# Glitches – The GM's Luck Points

Recall from **Chapter 2: Character Creation** that all players receive 5 Luck Points at the start of each session. These Luck Points (LP) are designed to give the heroic players some amount of control over their own fate. Some of your Powerful NPCs (see below) also receive a limited pool of their own LP, but where does that leave you, the GM?

Game Masters receive their own special pool of LP, known as Glitches for their ability to put a wrench into the players' plans. These Glitches work in a similar manner to the player's Luck Points, but have a few of their own unique uses.

## Acquiring Glitches

At the start of each session, GMs gain a number of Glitches equal to the total number of players present during that session. If more players show up later, feel free to retroactively add a Glitch to your pool.

Additionally, you may pass out Luck Points to players as meta-game rewards; if a player does a particularly good job at role-playing a certain aspect of his character or does something that makes the rest of the group go “Wow!” then he probably deserves a Luck Point. Any time you pass out Luck Points in this way, add a Glitch to your own pool, to a maximum equal to your starting number of Glitches.

## Using Glitches

You may use Glitches in a number of ways. Each time you trigger any of the following actions, behaviors, or setbacks, spend one point from your Glitch pool.

1) Force a player to activate one of his character’s Faults. Remember their Faults should come up organically during play (meaning you won’t necessarily have to spend a Glitch *each* time a player’s Faults trigger), but when forcing a character’s Faults against him to improve the story, you should consider spending a Glitch. This includes Glitching a character’s gutterware, psionic Faults, or other character Faults.

2) Reroll a check made by one of your non-powerful NPCs. Powerful NPCs gain their own limited pool of Luck Points, but occasionally you want them to make a bigger impact than they otherwise would have. By using a Glitch you can allow one non-powerful NPC to reroll all of the dice for a single check, taking the better of either result.

3) Force a player to reroll. You shouldn’t exercise this option very frequently, but occasionally it’s just fun to watch ‘em squirm. By spending a Glitch you may force a player

to reroll all of his dice and take the worse result. You may not use this Glitch if the player has already spent Luck Points to reroll a result, and you should consider allowing players to spend LP to counteract this Glitch.

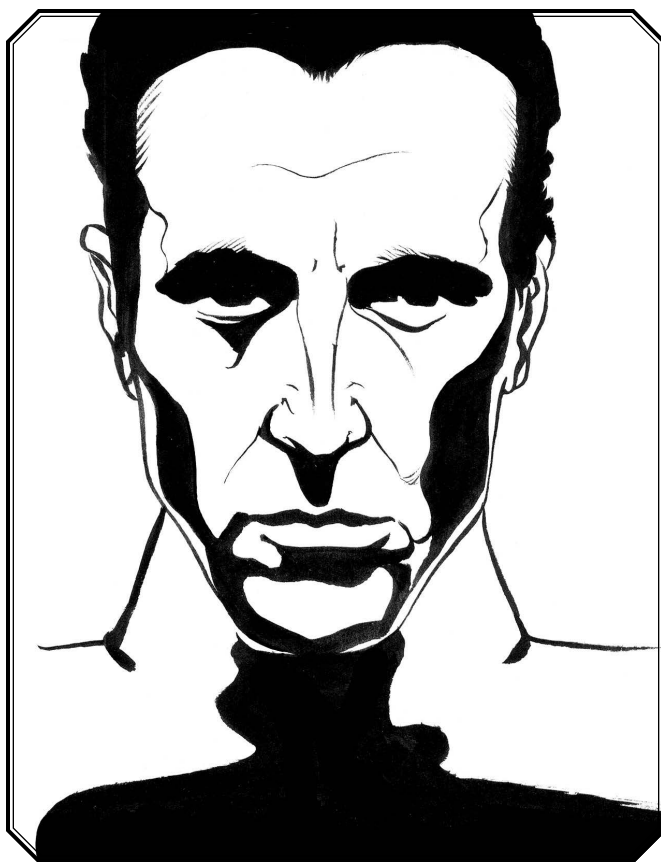
4) Create your own use. You’re the GM and it’s up to you to make the decisions, but try to keep them in-line with some of the examples we’ve provided. It can be tempting to use Glitches to completely run the show, but you shouldn’t abuse that power or you may run your players right out of town.

## NPCs and Villains

A major consideration in any game is what non-player characters your players will meet, whether in the local cyber café or on the mean streets. NPCs are one of the most important aspects of any story because they help drive the plot by providing player characters with information, distractions, complications, motives, or a face full of lead.

In most cases NPCs will be non-hostile; they don’t necessarily want to fight your characters and will probably back down when provoked. These are the average citizens the players will meet or perhaps they’re the character’s superiors. In almost every case, these sorts of NPCs don’t need to have any in-game statistics written down; you may just want to give them a name and scrawl a brief line in your notes about where the PCs encountered them and what the results of the interaction were. You may not even care to give them a name – some NPCs are only in the player’s lives for a fleeting moment, just long enough to drop a rumor, a clue, or something else that is applicable to a scene.





## Contacts and Other Important NPCs

Many characters fall somewhere between the generic bouncers or gangers and the more powerful leaders that the players will encounter throughout the course of a session. These types of characters may not need in-game statistics but, if they are recurring characters, they should at least have a name by which to identify them.

For example, if the players have a contact in the military who can get them military-grade munitions, that contact isn't just a generic NPC. He should have a unique name that the players can use to discuss him, but he doesn't necessarily need to have a list of skills, Gifts, and Faults unless the occasion calls for them.

Say the players need to contact Corporal Smith for some combat armor. You don't need to know what his combat, technical, knowledge and athletic skills are just to run a scene in which the players ask him

for assistance. Chances are, if he's just in the game to make something happen, you won't need to know any of his skills at all. It is nice that you've given him a name so that the next time the PCs need to contact him they know who to refer to.

## Hostile NPCs

Hostile characters – NPCs that actively attack the players – are not much different than contacts. You don't necessarily need to spend any time on developing the skills of hostile characters or making character sheets for them. Many times it is only important to give them offensive and defensive damage factors and have an idea of what powers or abilities they might use in battle.

**Psi-punk** makes it simple to whip up hostile NPCs on the fly. Simply determine how difficult a challenge you want to make them and pick a couple of numbers to use for their combat values. You can use the same Trait Ladder to help you determine their combat statistics. For example, if you want the fight to be a Good challenge, simply set the skills and powers of the NPCs at Good (+1). This means that you will add +1 on their attack rolls and they will have total DDFs of +1.

This system works well for minor encounters and chance-met hostilities; perhaps the bouncer at a bar is ready to throw out your rowdy players and they choose to fight back. You didn't have that planned, but you can decide that the bouncer is Great at his job and therefore has a +2 to his ODFs and DDFs. As a generic citizen, he's unlikely to have any special powers, but who knows? Perhaps the bouncer is a telekinetic; simply give him the *telekinesis* power and a key attribute of Mediocre (-1) to go with it.

To determine how much of a beating the NPC can take before going unconscious, use the same generic system. Is it a Good challenge? He can sustain just one Scratched

wound before the next blow knocks him out, while a single Hurt wound will be enough to drop him. If the challenge is Fair or worse, a single hit of any level might take him out (and if the PCs are using lethal force, will likely kill him; be prepared to let them suffer the consequences of their actions!) On the other hand, a Great contender may be able to suffer two Scratched wounds and one Hurt wound while a Superb contender would take three Scratches, one Hurt, and one Very Hurt wound before flat-lining.

Challengers of Wonderful difficulty or better are special; if they're powerful enough to receive large bonuses, they likely aren't just some schmuck the players encounter on the street. Generally speaking, generic NPCs shouldn't come with difficulties of Wonderful or greater. NPCs that do are the type that you may wish to flesh out a little bit more.

## Powerful NPCs

Powerful NPCs are those whose challenge levels are Wonderful or better. These NPCs are often recurring villains or masterminds, and often have large numbers of weaker goons at their beck and call. Though you may wish to put a bit more planning and effort into these types of NPCs, you still don't necessarily need to create them as if they were player characters; instead, consider the following.

## Wonderful NPCs

- Powerful NPCs with a challenge level of Wonderful have the following skills, ODFs, and DDFs:
- 1 skill at Superb, with a single skill specialization. For example, Superb Combat (Melee) with specialization in Pugilism.
- 2 skills at Great
- 3 skills at Good
- Offensive Damage Factors of +4
- Defensive Damage Factors of +4
- 1 Gift and 1 Fault



- Key attributes of Good (if applicable)
- Full wound track (as a player character)

If the character is designed to be a difficult combat challenge for the players, consider putting their specialization in a combat skill (as in the example above). Remember that not all encounters are combat encounters, though; if the NPC is intended to be a politician, for example, he may have Superb Manipulation with specialization in Oratory.

NPCs at this challenge level are the most common major challenges as far as character vs. character interaction is concerned. They are the gang leaders, lower-level corporate management, and mayors of the world. Your PCs will probably face these types of challengers as they begin their careers and start to work their way up the chain.

Most Wonderful challengers also have a bevy of followers. They can show up at any time and don't necessarily hang out with their leader all day long. Followers can be

gang members, security guards, public officials, and so forth. Use the NPC guidelines for challengers up to Superb difficulty as a basis for the Wonderful challenger's followers.

## Phenomenal NPCs

- Powerful NPCs with a challenge level of Phenomenal have the following skills, ODFs, and DDFs:
- 2 skills at Superb, with a single skill specialization.
- 3 skills at Great
- 4 skills at Good
- Offensive Damage Factors of +5
- Defensive Damage Factors of +5
- 2 Gifts and 2 Faults
- Key attributes of Great (if applicable)

Full wound track (as a player character)

Phenomenal challengers are on par with player characters in terms of power. By the time the PCs meet these characters, the players may have already worked their way through the rank-and-file goons under their control and possibly even a Wonderful NPC or two. It isn't unheard of for Phenomenal NPCs to have personal bodyguards on the Wonderful scale of power.

## Extraordinary NPCs

- Powerful NPCs with a challenge level of Extraordinary have the following skills, ODFs, and DDFs:
- 3 skills at Superb, with specialization in two of them.
- 3 skills at Great
- 4 skills at Good
- Offensive Damage Factors of +6
- Defensive Damage Factors of +6
- 4 Gifts and 2 Faults
- Key attributes of Superb (if applicable)

Full wound track (as a player character)

with an additional Hurt wound level

Extraordinary NPCs are truly exceptional. They are more powerful than starting players and represent a severe challenge. These are criminal kingpins, corporate big-

wigs, and top government officials such as presidents, sheiks, and dictators. They certainly have hordes of underlings of all varieties and challenge levels and it may be next-to-impossible to even get close enough to one of them to have a physical encounter.

Characters at this level may have multiple psionic powers, multiple Superb-level magic devices, or special cyberware that gives them unique special abilities. A personal encounter with any one of these characters should be a truly memorable and momentous occasion, perhaps even the turning point in an entire campaign. Do not take these challenges lightly.

## Astonishing NPCs

- Powerful NPCs with a challenge level of Astonishing have the following skills, ODFs, and DDFs:
- 3 skills at Superb, with specialization in each of them.
- 4 skills at Great
- 5 skills at Good
- Offensive Damage Factors of +7
- Defensive Damage Factors of +7
- 6 Gifts and 2 or more Faults
- Key attributes between Superb and Phenomenal (if applicable)

Full wound track (as a player character), with one additional Hurt and Very Hurt wound level

Who is more influential than a president, criminal overlord, or the CEO of Magi-corp? Only the most truly incredible NPCs in your world should be considered Astonishing challenges and are likely once-in-a-lifetime encounters for the players. Only after slogging their way through an entire criminal organization only to find an even bigger lurking threat, or some other pinnacle event, should Astonishing characters be revealed. Their presence should be just that – Astonishing!

Feel free to go nuts with these encounters. If this were a video game, these would



be the “final boss” characters – often possessing insane and perhaps otherworldly powers the likes of which the players have never dreamed. Use the extra Gifts to give them more or stronger psionic powers, cybernetic enhancements, or just plain supernatural affects that are otherwise undefined by the rest of the system.

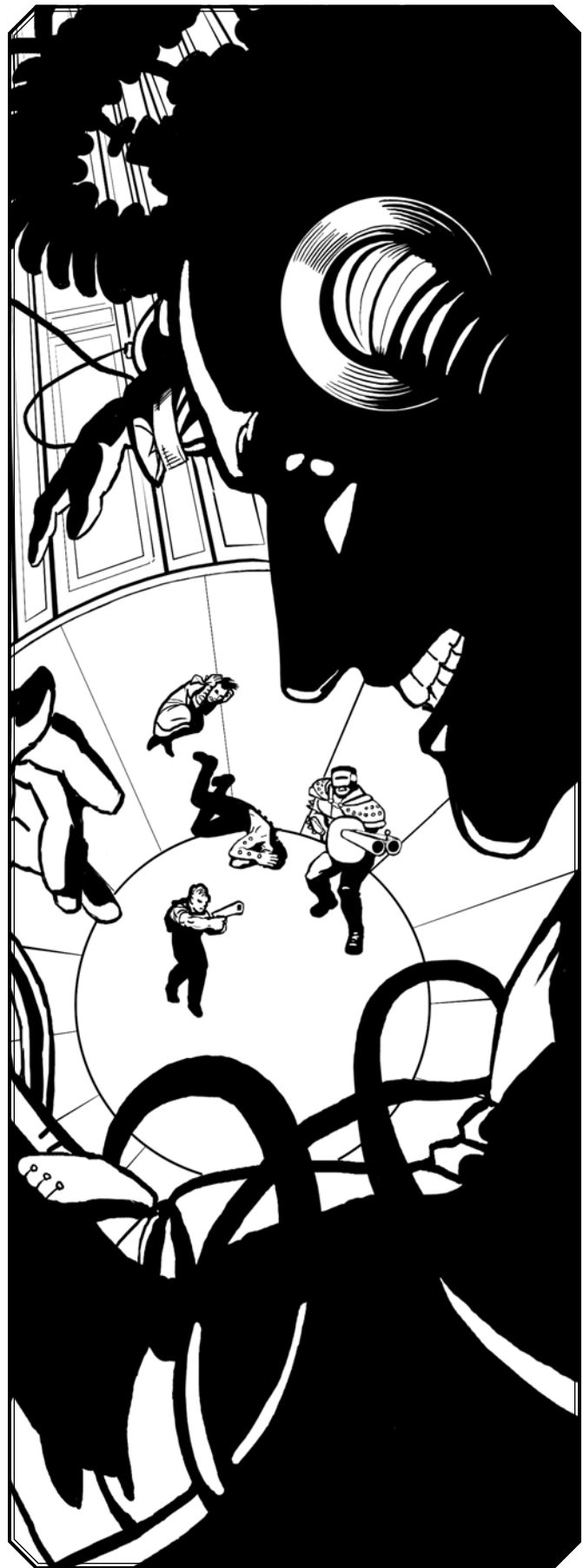
Astonishing NPCs are the largest and most powerful threats your characters will likely ever face. Try to ensure that the characters have some means of dealing with them; that doesn't necessarily mean filling them full of lead — you can choose to make an encounter with an NPC of this sort into a puzzle. Perhaps the players need to find this character's Achilles heel in order to defeat it and would never be able to win in a “fair” fight.

## Other Notes

Though the above examples are good for generic, on-the-fly creation, you are, of course, free to design encounters however you desire. If you notice that your team is a bit more (or less) equipped to handle a certain challenge, you may alter it as you wish.

Additionally, these guidelines make no assumption of what type of equipment the NPCs are carrying. In general, it's recommended that you leave ODFs and DDFs as-is, but you may choose to give them weapons and armor of various sorts to make things interesting. These changes may modify the numbers up or down slightly, but remember that the more time you spend agonizing over the finer details, the less time you have to spend on other things.

If you wish to give a Wonderful NPC an SMG, for example, you should of course remember that it has various rates of fire to choose from which will alter the character's ODFs as he changes selections. Use his power level as a baseline and modify the results as normal, but assume that the SMG's base damage rating is already factored into his ODFs.



If you envision a character that is more offensive than defensive, simply trade modifiers at a one-for-one basis. For example, a Wonderful NPC may have ODFs of +5 but DDFs totaling only +3.

Also, don't hesitate to give your NPCs magic devices, cyberware, or other equipment that would make them more interesting or more balanced. As a general rule, supernatural powers such as psionics and magic should have key attributes or Power Ratings three levels lower than the NPC's challenge level. For example, a Wonderful NPC with a magic *telekinesis* device should have that device at a PR of Good (+1), not Wonderful (+4).

Finally, you may decide that you don't want to bother detailing all of the available skills that an NPC may have. That's okay – if a particular skill is never going to come up in play, it's not necessary to have it written in your notes. When creating one of these characters on the fly, you may choose to simply make the first skill he uses Superb and work your way down from there.

For example, if a Wonderful character uses his Combat (Melee) skill first you may choose to roll it at a level of Superb. If he then needs to make a check to drive a car while being chased, simply make that one of his Great skills. Only define the skills which you actually need to use and save yourself the time and hassle of defining characters.

## Non-Human NPCs

Not every character the players will meet is human. Some might be cyborgs, artificial intelligence, astral beings, or even animals. Because the guidelines listed above are generic, you can apply them to encounters with any sort of creature that the characters might interact with. Feel free to add or remove skills, Gifts, Faults, or other traits as you see fit in order to create the encounters you desire.

## Powerful NPCs and Luck Points

Powerful NPCs are supposed to be closer to the level of player characters in power, and as such, they should be given Luck Points to use. There are some important things to consider when using Luck Points with NPCs though, since these characters are not necessarily designed to last longer than an encounter or two with the players.

Though Player Characters get five Luck Points at the start of each session, the LP they receive is designed to last them throughout the entire session. Most NPCs only appear in a single encounter, so they should not be given as many LP to spend unless you envision the encounter being particularly challenging.

Start with giving only one LP to any single Powerful NPC with a challenge level of Extraordinary or lower and two LP to an Astonishing character. If you envision the character being particularly powerful or lucky you may give them the Lucky Gift, but allow it to add only one additional LP unless they are an Astonishing NPC. By following these guidelines, you will ensure that the characters aren't getting to reroll dice for every single action they take (they still get to reroll a dice any time they use a specialized skill).

Remember that you did not define attributes for these NPCs either. Since Luck Points are designed to grant additional dice rerolls based on linked attributes, you may handle this situation in one of two ways, depending on how cinematic you wish the encounter to be.

1. If you have a good idea of what the character is like, it's easy to know which attribute is their best. For example, a bouncer probably has a high Strength attribute while a powerful mentalist probably has a high Focus attribute. When using LP to reroll a skill that is likely to be linked to the character's high attribute, set that attribute

at a level of two lower than their challenge level. For example, a Wonderful NPC would have a Great Strength while an Extraordinary character would have a Wonderful Strength. Reroll the appropriate number of dice accordingly.

2. Ignore the attribute rule altogether. If it's hard to determine what a character might be particularly good at, or if you don't want or need this particular encounter to be over-the-top, just reroll a single dice as if the character had no high attribute. This saves a lot of mental calculation and doesn't detract from the game.

## Spoils of War

When players defeat hostile opponents, they often search the bodies (whether alive or dead) for gear. In most role playing games, the old adage “to the victor go the spoils” is a driving force for character and many players expect to find something of value on just about every opponent they defeat.

It is up to you to decide the laws that govern the “acquisition” of spoils, but in general, it is assumed that much of a player's earned Wealth comes from fencing the goods they gathered from defeated opponents. You don't necessarily need to treat every possible item as a piece of loot, but consider mentioning the things that would be of most interest to a player.

For starters, consider what that NPC had used openly during the course of the player's interaction with them. If they fired an SMG, activated an *antipsi* device, or tried to gas the party with a smoke bomb, those are the items that should definitely be uncovered. Note that the items may not always be in perfect condition and that some items, like smoke bombs, may be single-use and therefore become worthless if they have been used.

Since ODFs and DDFs can come from many sources, it isn't important to assume that all NPCs with +3 DDFs were wearing armor for the PCs to loot. You don't need to assume that all non-player characters were carrying both a weapon and wearing a suit of armor, though if you described them as having such equipment you should consider making that available to the players.

You may discover, after a while, that the players are collecting a huge cache of guns. Since firearms are the most common form of attack, the players will be collecting a lot of them. If you don't wish to allow them to sell off every piece of equipment for its full price – which could have a huge impact on their Wealth levels (not to mention the economy) – consider that weapons registered to other owners may not be legally sold on the open market. Players may need to find a black market fence for such goods and they may have to accept prices for them that are well below market value.

Additionally, Wealth gained from the sale of goods should be spread equitably amongst all players. If a weapon sells at a Good value and there are four players on the team, they may each only get a Mediocre payout once it has been divided.

## Death and Dying

It's assumed that many of your NPCs will be killed at some point during play, especially if they are designed to be antagonists. When such an event occurs the players generally “loot the bodies” (see **Spoils of War**, above) and the story progresses. You may decide whether the character's death has far-reaching consequences (especially if they are a particularly Powerful NPC) or if it is easily glossed over without another mention.

When player characters die, on the other hand, the story changes dramatically. Players put a lot of time and thought into





designing their characters, their backstory, and their role within the party. Sometimes they become emotionally attached in a small (and sometimes large) way. Though the rules don't make it easy for players to die constantly, it is a real possibility.

- Should a PC be killed during play, consider the following:
- The *control animate* power has the ability to restore life to a character, but it is an Astonishingly difficult check and the availability of such a skilled animator is rare; only well-connected PCs have any hope of hiring someone to restore life to a body (unless the group possesses such a skilled character).
- Death is permanent, but near-death experiences happen with some degree of regularity. Characters who are killed in combat may be resuscitated if they reach a hospital quickly and can afford to pay for their medical bills.

Even permanent death is negotiable in a cinematic story; consider movies, television shows, and comic books in which charac-

ters *appear* to die, only to return later in the episode/season/show/series with a story to tell their survivors.

## Raising the Dead

Using the *control animate* power to raise the dead requires an Astonishing (+7) check and the expenditure of a Luck Point to activate the Astonishing result. This is exceptionally difficult to do for most characters, but it is possible. If the PC or his team are owed a favor by powerful NPCs you may hand-waive this check (at the cost of the favor), but otherwise the team may need to hunt down an appropriately-skilled individual.

Feel free to charge the players some amount of Wealth (or other non-monetary price) for the service. As a baseline, someone with such a skill should charge a Wonderful amount of cash for the act of raising the dead (it's a grisly task no matter who you are) or require some dangerous or difficult favor in return.

If the players manage to hire someone to raise their ally, there is no need to make the skill check to activate the *control animate* power; simply allow the check to be successful. If the party has a character capable of using the power, however, you are within your bounds to request a check be made, especially since they are not paying anything for the privilege. Note that the result isn't even possible unless the character has at least a Superb key attribute.

## Near-Death Experiences

Characters who receive appropriate emergency medical treatment within an hour of their death may be able to return to life. The experience may be traumatic or spiritual, depending on the character's outlook on life and may leave the character with a great story to tell later.

This great story comes with a cost, however; medical bills are costly even in the year 2096. Characters must pay a Wonderful amount of Wealth to the medical facility, payable before services are rendered (either out of the nearly-departed's pockets or the pockets of their allies). If the payment isn't received up-front, the character doesn't receive treatment.

## Lucky Breaks

A character who receives no medical treatment may have a “lucky break” at the GM's discretion. You (and/or the player) may come up with any suitable story to fit the reasoning behind his narrow escape from death, but it should fit the method he was killed. For example, a bullet he took to the head may have just missed a vital spot but left him unconscious for days or he washed ashore before he drowned.

Whatever the case may be, the character isn't dead and he shows up within a few days to the surprise of everyone who knew him to be deceased (sooner, if the story calls for it). However, this Lucky Break causes him to lose a little bit of his Luck for good; he gains the Unlucky Fault permanently. If he already has the Unlucky Fault he gains it again (receiving an additional -2 LP per session). If he doesn't have at least 2 Luck Points to permanently lose, he may not benefit from a Lucky Break.

## Tough Luck

Sometimes, characters just don't have what it takes to rejoin the mortal coil. If a character or team cannot afford to have the character returned to life or if the character lacks sufficient Luck Points to pay for a Lucky Break, he may be dead for good. If this is the case, you may ask the player to create a new character and attempt to weave that character into your story going forward.

In most circumstances, the remaining living members (if there are any) of that character's team will be able to retrieve the deceased's gear for later use. If this is a possibility (the body is not permanently lost or destroyed, for example) you may tell the player that his new character does not gain the full amount of starting Wealth and instead give that character some of his old gear (or the selling price of it).

Depending on how many Build Points your players have received since the campaign started, you may decide to offer the new character more BP than what his original character started with. This can help ensure that a new character isn't too far behind the curve relative to the other players and the challenges they will be facing in the future.

## Alternative – Permanent Death

Some GMs prefer a grittier, more realistic, and much more permanent approach to death. You are perfectly within your rights as a GM to decide that death is permanent no matter who you are and no amount of money or luck may bring a character back to life.

If you decide to choose this option, consider the guidelines in the Tough Luck section above. Players should be allowed to continue playing the game even if it means bringing in a new character or you may find that your overall campaign size will diminish (sometimes disproportionately to the number of characters who have died).

# Miscellaneous Tips for Good Game Mastering

- Everybody has a different style when it comes to running a game, but it's often helpful to learn from the experiences of others. The following bullet points include helpful advice cultivated from a variety of sources, mostly from GMs with years of experience. Not everything will ring true to you, but if you can find a few relevant bits of information and use them to your advantage then our job is done.
- **Just Fudge it!** If you don't have the answer for a rule or even a minor detail about something, just improvise. If it matters enough you can always look it up later, but don't stop the gameplay to look for an answer if you can make one up on the spot.
- **Don't let the rules rule you.** This goes along with "Just Fudge it!" If developing new rules or forcing dice rolls doesn't make the game more fun, don't bother. There isn't a need to debate the laws of physics when you're playing a dice game, especially one in which fantastic situations and supernatural abilities are the norm.
- **Believe in your world.** You don't need to get completely absorbed and immersed, but make sure that the setting you have developed or are working with is one that you enjoy; your players will be able to tell when you enjoy the setting and when you don't.
- **Make a database of names and places.** After each session, update the database with new names and places that your players have encountered. Reference it regularly when developing new plot hooks and adventures. Keep your descriptions to a single meaningful sen-



tence when possible.

- **Watch lots of films, documentaries and TV shows and read lots of books.** Mine these for NPC's, descriptions and plotlines.
- **The game isn't just for the players.** Remember that you're there to have fun too. Though you're not the players' enemy, you're not their guardian angel either.
- **Make name lists.** It can be difficult to come up with names on the fly, so make a list of appropriate names for the setting and refer to it when you need to name someone new. You can keep it simple or divide the names into groups based on NPC race, religion, archetype, etc.



- **Use all the senses.** Sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and intuition. When describing new areas, NPCs, or events, use the senses to give your players a true feel for their surroundings. “You enter a large, dimly-lit room; the stench of decay fills the air and you can feel the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end” is a much better description than “You enter a big, dark room. It smells bad.”
- **Make notes of complex rules you know you’ll need.** Though you can “Just Fudge it” when necessary, if you know you’re planning to do something that depends on a complex subset of rules, make sure you have those rules spelled out in your notes. Copy and paste whole blocks of text if necessary, make short-hand notes where possible, or at the very least write down the page number of a specific mechanic. This way you can run an event the way you envisioned it without slowing the action.
- **Listen to your players.** Pay attention not just to what your players are telling you, but what they’re doing as well. If they appear bored, step it up a notch. If they really wish to go one direction, roll with it and take them there. Make note of any off-handed conspiracy theories (especially ones made in jest) and surprise them next session when it turns out they were right all along!

Research GM “best practices.” There are a number of great websites and resources that offer great GM advice. Even if you’re a seasoned game master you can learn something from the wisdom of others, so do your research and surprise your players when you bring a new idea to the table.

## Introducing New Rules

One of the great things about the Fudge engine is its portability. There are a variety of resources available that offer alternative means of handling certain game mechanics. If you don’t like the way something is done, or you think you would prefer to use another option, that’s certainly encouraged. Moreover, if you would like to introduce a new subset of mechanics that makes a specific facet of gameplay more interesting to you and your players, feel free to do so.

We suggest discussing the changes with your players before adding anything new to the game, especially if they’re working with the same book of rules as you are. They deserve to know how and why things are being run differently, how it will affect their character decisions, and so forth.

Commonly, new rules and subsystems are added to an existing game to add more “crunch” to a specific type of action or interaction. For instance, you may import a new Martial Arts system, complete with detailed mechanics for various martial styles, maneuvers, and supernatural powers, in order to make the game more cinematic in regards to hand-to-hand combat. Alternatively, you may draw up rules for Giant Robot Combat if you decide that your game needs enormous battle suits to drive action over-the-top.

The *Fudge 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* rulebook by Grey Ghost Games is a great resource for subsystems that can be easily imported into **Psi-punk**, since the mechanics are already built using the Fudge engine. You can also find various resources around the Internet that you may be able to bring in directly or convert from another system. There are a lot of options, and this is your game, so alter it as you see fit.

# Sample Adventure: Brain.net



# Introduction – What the GM Knows

As a matter of national defense, the NAU's Department of Defense has commissioned the aid of brilliant scientist Dr. Rutherford Watkins. With the war in the Middle East still blazing, the government has hired him to develop a national defense system capable of predicting and thwarting enemy attacks by whatever means necessary.

Dr. Watkins is not only a brilliant scientist but a skilled electrokineticist and computer security specialist. He has spent the last three years, and billions of government dollars, developing a botnet that uses crowd-sourced computing methods to calculate and predict the offensive maneuvers of enemy nations by parsing intelligence data and comparing past trends as well as current political movements. His defense system has proven wildly effective and the NAU has not experienced a major threat to national security in the year since its deployment.

What most don't realize is that Dr. Watkins' security system doesn't use supercomputers, or even crowd-sourced personal computers, to perform his calculations. He realized early in development that the fastest, most powerful supercomputer in the world was the human brain, and he knew that if he could tap the power of millions of brains at once, he could form the greatest supercomputer and intelligence network known to man. Unfortunately, most humans have proven unwilling to surrender their psyche to the common good, so he had to devise a method to gain control of peoples' brainpower without their knowledge.

Before Dr. Watkins could implement his "brain botnet," he needed to devise a method for getting chips implanted into millions of willing citizens. To do that, he tapped

the power of the world's foremost marketing firm, MarkeTech, Intl. With their help, a new cybernetic implant was developed that would target a mass audience and ensure widespread rollout of the doctor's brain-utilizing microchip. MarkeTech rushed the product through production and launched a nationwide marketing campaign the likes of which the country had never-before experienced.

The product, a simple implant that taps the taste and pleasure receptors of a user's brain, bestows "the gift of flavor" to those eating the otherwise bland nano-foods that are the solitary staple of every layperson. This so-called "Flavorizer" is a boon to every citizen, since most have never even tasted real food and would pay almost anything to have the opportunity to taste something pleasant. Thanks to large government subsidies (the doctor's doing) though, citizens don't have to pay much to gain one of these coveted implants.

MarkeTech's Flavorizer has been a wildly successful product, and cybershops around the country have been filled for the last year and have made a fortune from the new product. It seems like everyone has something to gain from this breakthrough device.

Of course, there's one catch. There's always a catch.

## What Went Wrong

Because the product was rushed to market, it hadn't been fully tested on a large audience. A flaw in its design has left at least 1% of its users vulnerable to a "glitch" that causes them to go insane after limited use. The signals sent from the brain through the chip occasionally cross paths with emotional triggers, and in some cases, the user becomes exceedingly agitated, even violently angry. These users often fly off the handle and attack nearby people without provocation or regard for their own safety.



News of these occurrences is not public knowledge, but Dr. Watkins and the NAU government are aware of them. To avoid admitting guilt, billion-dollar class action lawsuits, and a forced shut-down of the defense project, the government has issued a silent order to detain victims and ship them to special mental hospitals where they are de-chipped, but detained for up to three months for surveillance. Even when de-chipped, patients seem to exhibit levels of anger far beyond what they are used to; a permanent cure has yet to be found.

## What the Players Know

Of these events, the players know very little. They are aware of MarkeTech and their new “Flavorizer” chip, and the players themselves may have already had one installed. Like other citizens of the NAU, they are unaware that their brains are being used as processors for a national defense network and that they are vulnerable to the chips’ “glitch.”

Players do not know about Dr. Watkins, the government cover-up, or even the NAU’s involvement with the creation of the Flavorizer implant. News of these events will unfold throughout the course of this adventure.

## Preparing to Play

As a GM, you should familiarize yourself with the Psi-punk rulebook so you understand the language and game terms presented in this adventure. You may alternately adapt the adventure to any game system you desire, but we will assume knowledge of Psi-punk and the Fudge system. At the very least, you should read through the entire adventure before sitting down to run it for players.

This adventure is designed for 3 – 6 players, but can be scaled up or down as necessary. Much of this adventure will unfold through role-playing and via the use of skills. Take note that more (or fewer) players will adversely affect the challenge level of any combat and they may need to be adjusted appropriately.

Once familiarized with the adventure and the core rules, gather the materials you need to play (dice, pencil and paper, players, etc.) and have fun.

## The Hook

Every adventure needs a “hook” – something to pique the players’ interests so they feel like they should care about the events that are about to take place. If you are running this adventure as part of a larger campaign, feel free to come up with any explanation you need to get the ball rolling. Perhaps one or more of the players has heard of this great new device and decides to get an implant only to later hear rumors of its negative side-effects or perhaps one of the characters has a family member who has gone berserk and they decide to investigate what went wrong. Try to use the power of the characters’ backstories to invent a hook that really hits home with them.

If you are running this adventure for a group of new players, they may not have fully detailed character backgrounds and personalities yet. Feel free to invent a different hook if you choose, but we have provided one below for your convenience.

Read the following text to your players:

“It’s a hot day in [insert the name of your city] and your group is headed to the local pub for some drinks. You’re all excited about the new Flavorizer implants that you’ve recently acquired, which have added taste to your food – something that you’d only previously heard of. Sick of bland nano-food and ready to really put your new taste buds to the test, you all agreed to gather at the bar for some drinks and a bit of now-flavored non-food.

“As you approach the bar, your conversations distracting you from the din of the city, you can’t help but take notice when a body comes crashing through the window and lands on the sidewalk at your feet. You barely manage to shield yourself from the shards of glass that try to tear at your face.

“From inside the building, you hear a cacophony of screams, shouts, and distress calls. It’s obvious that someone has crashed your party.”

“You go to the victim’s side and take a look at his body, which is covered in blood and broken glass. He’s an average-looking man in a business suit, probably just off work for some heartless Corp, and his glasses lay several feet from his body. He has several lacerations, but appears to be breathing.”

- The man is not dead, but is losing blood. Characters who wish to try to treat his wounds need to make a Fair Medical check. Success means that he will stop bleeding but remains unconscious.
- He has government-issued ID in his wallet (if the characters decide to take time to flip through it) but his name is insignificant and forgettable. For all intents and purposes he is a John Doe.
- He has no cash in his wallet (and shame on them for asking!)

If an ambulance is called, they get the impression that the response time will be sufficient to save his life

Players do not need to spend much time worrying about this NPC.

## Spring into Action

If the players haven’t already interrupted your dialogue with shouts of what their characters intend to do, give them a moment to speak up. When someone announces an action they would like to take, try to run with it – even if you haven’t prepared for it in advance (players will never cease to amaze and amuse you.) We’ve tried to anticipate a few of the actions they may take, and have provided a few solutions to help adjudicate them.

### Check/Aid the Victim

Curious (or helpful) characters who rush to investigate or aid the victim notice the following about him. Read this text to the players and use the bullet points to answer any questions.

### Enter the Bar

- Characters seeking action may wish to enter the bar. They can do so via one of two readily-noticeable methods:
- Through the front door
- Through the broken window

If attempting to enter through the front door, the characters will notice that it is being blocked by an upturned table. Characters with a Great Strength attribute may be able to force it open in one round, but characters with a lower Strength attribute may need to find an alternate means of opening the door (or enter through the window). Feel free to allow the players to be creative with ways to force the door open.

Players who wish to jump in through the window must make a Good Athletics (Jump) check to avoid being cut by broken glass on the way in. For every degree by which the character fails the check, they take one Scratched physical wound.

## Leave the Scene

Sometimes players just don't take the bait. If they choose to leave the scene, police will arrive before they have a chance to get away and they will be hauled in for questioning. Anything beyond this is outside of the scope of this adventure. Try instead to prompt the players to enter the pub and investigate what is happening.

## Inside the Bar

If the characters have followed the hook and entered the bar, they arrive to witness a lot of commotion. Read the following to the players:

"The bar is dimly lit and filled with smoke, like most that you're familiar with. It would feel crowded with people, but most of the patrons are now hiding beneath tables, behind the bar, and anywhere else they can find to try to stay out of sight. A few are screaming loudly while others are on their comm devices attempting to call the police.

"You see a lone man carving a path through the room, raving about something completely incomprehensible. He is throwing bottles, chairs, pool sticks, darts, and anything else he can get his hands on. You suspect at least one of those things was the guy lying in the street."

The bar is a wreck, and there is a raving lunatic throwing things at anyone who gets in his way. He sees the players enter the chaos and immediately begins flinging things at them.

## Combat Encounter 1 – The Lunatic in the Bar

This man has gone insane thanks to the Flavorizer chip implanted in his skull. He's an average citizen with no special powers, but due to his enraged state, his relevant combat traits are all at a level of Great. Due to his Aggressive posture, however, he hits harder and takes more damage when hit. We have summarized his traits below for your convenience.

### Lunatic's Traits

**Total ODFs:** +4

**Total DDFs:** +0

**Combat (Ranged):** Great

**Specialization:** Throwing (May re-roll one dice whenever he attacks with a thrown object)

**Gifts:** Adrenaline Rush (may take more damage than a normal person before feeling it)

**Faults:** Enraged (cannot be talked down; always uses Aggressive posture, already factored into his traits)

**Weapons:** Anything that is not nailed to the ground may be picked up and thrown at the characters.

**Wound Levels:** 1-3 (Scratched), 4-5 (Hurt), 6-7 (Very Hurt), 8-9 (Incapacitated), 10+ (Near Death); can sustain only one wound per wound level (including Scratched)





Characters attempting to talk to the man meet with only more enraged babble. He continues to throw things at them until they subdue him. Refer to **Chapter 4: Playing the Game** for a refresher on how combat is handled. Remind players that they can avoid killing a person by “pulling their punches” – choosing not to do a lethal amount of damage.

Due to his Adrenaline Rush, the amount of damage the man must take in a single hit before an appropriate wound is recorded is increased by 1. For example, a normal character that takes 3 damage from a single hit would normally receive a Hurt wound, but this man would only receive a Scratched wound. This is reflected in the “Wound Levels” section of his traits list, above.

## After the Fight

Once the lunatic has been subdued (or killed, though murder is still frowned upon even if it is done in self-defense), the players are free to investigate what happened. It is

taboo to go through the pockets of someone you just knocked out in a bar, but you can probably expect players to try this anyway.

If the PCs search his wallet, they will find about a week’s worth of various receipts, among which is a receipt for a Flavorizer implant, dated yesterday. The name of a local cybershop, “Chip Stop,” is printed on the ticket.

If they question the other patrons, they will learn that he is a regular at the bar who has a history of being a good tipper and a source for friendly conversation. Nobody who knows him can understand why he suddenly flipped out, only that he did not enter the bar with a bad attitude.

He was not quarrelling with the man in the street; the man was simply a victim of the lunatic’s sudden rage. The man in the street was no more aggressive toward him than anyone else.

The barkeep approaches the players. He’s an average-looking character who would be otherwise forgettable were it not for the small scar on his right temple which is visible through a missing tuft of hair.

“I dunno what went wrong here, but somethin’ made that guy snap. I ‘preciate you guys handling the situation with such, uh, practicality,” says the barkeep. “Ordina’ly I wouldn’t ask a patron to do me no favors, but you look like you can handle yourselves. I’ve got a job for ya, if yer up for it.”

Try to guide players toward hearing out his proposition. If they do, he tells the players that he doesn’t trust the police to handle these sorts of violent events at his bar. There’s too much paperwork and he doesn’t have insurance, so he tries to keep a low profile.

He tells the players that this isn't the first time he's heard of this sort of thing happening. His own daughter flipped out a few nights ago and was hauled off by a couple government drones. He's not allowed to have any contact with her and he doesn't know what happened. All he does know is that this guy went nuts the same way she did and he suspects something's the matter.

The barkeep offers to pay each of the players a Good amount of Wealth for their troubles. He wants to know what's happening that caused both his daughter and this man to go berserk. Assuming they accept, he'll provide a description of his daughter and impart the only clue he has to go on in regards to the incident:

"My daughter and I both got those new Flavorizers just a few days ago, down at the Chip Stop. This guy's been talking all day about how great it is to know what food tastes like, so I 'sume he's just got one too. Now I dunno if that means nothin', but it sure seems fishy to me. I just hope that we're not all going to wind up at the funny farm because of these things."

If the players had searched the man's belongings earlier, they'll note that "Chip Stop" was the name on his Flavorizer receipt.

## The Investigation Begins

After you've hooked the players into investigating the mysterious and sudden surges of violence in otherwise docile people, they can begin investigating the matter. Their only clue so far is that two people who have received Flavorizer implants at Chip Stop have gone insane. Players should follow this clue and head down to Chip Stop to ask questions.

## Chip Stop

Chip Stop is a popular chain of cybershops that specialize in minor implants. They do not do limb replacements, bio-ware, or other forms of more intense upgrades. Rather, they deal only in microchip implants. Their motto is "In and out in an hour or your next one's half off." This is common knowledge that may be imparted to the players.

Entering the storefront, players see a waiting room filled with people from every background. Most are too focused on their personal tablets to pay attention to any new person that walks through the door. Every few minutes a nurse enters the lobby and calls a name, which causes them to momentarily stop what they're doing and pay attention.

Just as frequently, new patients leave the back room with smiling faces. They have a nano-food lollipop in their mouths and seem thrilled that it has a unique and delicious flavor. Everyone in this waiting room is here for a Flavorizer implant, which the players can gather by talking up the clientele.

Behind the front desk is a harried woman who seems to be having trouble keeping up with the commotion around the office. She's the only employee readily available to speak to, but doesn't seem to take much notice of the players until they approach.

"Name?" she asks, as you approach, not even taking time to make eye contact. The woman seems flustered with the abundance of activity in the waiting area. "First and last, please."

If given a name, she types it into her terminal, then looks up at the player (or players) who gave it to her.

“No appointment record,” she states. “We’re booked this week. If you come back early next week we may be able to squeeze you in, or you can access our scheduler on the ‘Net.’”

The players are obviously not there for an appointment and should mention as much. Any time they try to ask her a question she tries to shoo them away, consistently repeating that they don’t have an appointment and to come back next week or schedule on the ‘Net.

Players may attempt any number of skill checks to try to get the woman to talk to them. Any Social or Manipulation skill will do, as will the *mind control* power. Because she’s overwhelmed and not in any mood to waste time answering questions, the difficulty for the skill check is Great.

Players may attempt this skill check as many as three times using a different skill or method each time. If they fail the third time, she becomes slightly more hostile toward the players. She begrudgingly agrees to answer their questions, but only with the most basic information possible.

- Depending on the questions asked, she may have the following information to tell the players:
- Chip Stop has been overwhelmed with customers seeking Flavorizer chips
- MarkeTech offers a 1-year limited warranty on all chips sold
- Records of current and former clients are strictly confidential

The chip seems to be having side-effects on a very small percentage of clients, but she is not at liberty to discuss what those are (she will provide this information *only* if the PCs made a successful skill check)

Players cannot talk to a chip-doc or upper management without an appointment. She will schedule an appointment for the players to speak with a doc or her boss about the

matter, but will do so only if the players succeeded at the above skill check. The appointment will be set for two weeks from today.

Players can attempt a Superb Computer Security check to break into Chip Stop’s database and alter the date, but not while in sight of the woman (note that Chip Stop has no records in their database about the Flavorizer malfunctions; snooping players will find only that certain people have or have not received an implant from Chip Stop recently.)

Even if the players succeeded on their skill check, she doesn’t offer any more information than they ask for (unless she is under a *mind control* effect, in which case she will happily comply with everything they ask.) If players manage to schedule an appointment to talk to a chip-doc or manager, they can either come back in the scheduled time or hack into the company’s database to alter their appointments.

If the players choose to wait out their appointment date, see “Waiting for an Appointment,” below. If they successfully altered their appointment dates, skip to “Meeting with Management,” below.

## Waiting for an Appointment

If the characters choose to wait out their appointment time, they may lose valuable days in their investigation. During this waiting period, they should receive clues about the events surrounding the issue.

Rumors on the street are that people have been flipping out at random all over the country. These events haven’t made the news and no official sources have addressed the issue. Nobody seems to be linking the occurrences to the Flavorizer implants, but people are getting suspicious about what’s happening.

Feel free to come up with another encounter wherein the PCs experience an enraged citizen. You may use the statistics for



the lunatic from Combat Encounter 1, above, but feel free to set the encounter anywhere you choose. If the PCs search that person, they too will have a Chip Stop receipt for a Flavorizer implant.

If the PCs return to the Chip Stop before their appointment date, the woman remembers them and depending on their success in dealing with her earlier will be more or less inclined to fudge a new appointment for them. The characters may attempt to make a Great Social or Manipulation skill check or *mind control* check to request that they see a chip-doc or manager immediately, but the difficulty increases to Superb if they had failed to influence her before. If successful, she will give them an immediate appointment (skip to “Meeting with Management”). Otherwise, they will have to continue to wait out their time and she will not allow them another try even if they return again another day.

If unsuccessful, tell the PCs that a few days pass and then continue to “Meeting with Management.”

## Meeting with Management

If players were successful at scheduling a meeting with a chip-doc, only one of them will be called back (perhaps one at a time, if they chose to make appointments for each character). Players will interact one-on-one with the chip-doc who will, after his prep work begins (remember the characters are supposed to be there to get an implant) tell the customer that they already have a Flavorizer; this should prompt discussion about the character’s actual motives for being there.

If instead the characters were able to secure a meeting with upper management, they will be called as a group into a manager’s office to speak with him about their concerns.

In either case, when one or more characters are being lead into the back room, read the following:

“You’re led into the back room by a surly nurse who looks like she’s been overworked and underpaid – but isn’t that life for all of us? As she leads you into the office you catch glimpses of chrome machinery in several rooms, each occupied by another patient. Business is certainly booming.

The nurse leads you into a room and asks you to take a seat. ‘He’ll be with you momentarily,’ she says, and hastens back toward the waiting area to call the next patient.

You’re kept waiting for only a few short minutes before a man enters the room and addresses you.”

When speaking with the characters, try to keep in mind who they’re talking to (a chip-doc or upper management) and how many characters are in the room and act accordingly. Feel free to add your own flavor – the doc preps a work station, with scissors to trim away hair around the brow, a scalpel to make incisions, and so forth. Chip Stop isn’t posh, but it’s a much more sterile environment than any back-alley street doc the players may have visited before.

- At some point the players will discuss the Flavorizer issues and their concerns about the chip. The chip-doc/management personnel can tell them the following:
- Business has been fantastic since the introduction of the Flavorizer. Chip Stop even has a tally of how many they’ve installed nationwide, and the most recent count is around 1.89 billion
- MarkeTech introduced the Flavorizer about a year ago and it has the whole nation talking

- The NAU government has subsidized the cost of the Flavorizer, making them affordable even for the average citizen
- The Flavorizer is completely harmless (characters adept at spotting falsehoods can detect that this is a lie)
- Roughly 1% of users experience some form of mental instability (this information is only offered if pressed, and only if the players succeed at a Good skill check to Manipulate/control the NPC)
- MarkeTech may have worked directly with the NAU government to create this device (Great difficulty)
- A man named Dr. Rutherford Watkins is credited as the designer of the Flavorizer (Superb difficulty)
- Users who experience side-effects become irrationally violent and attack friends, family, co-workers, and even random strangers; when possible, these subjects are hauled off to a government holding facility (Great difficulty)

There is a nearby holding facility in the warehouse district, but not even loved-ones are allowed to know of or visit it (Superb difficulty)

This is all of the pertinent information that the NPC is able to provide. If the characters manage to gather all of the information, their next logical step would be to visit the warehouse district or to at least attempt to find out which warehouse is being used as a holding facility.

## Warehouse 9

### Finding the Warehouse

If the characters were not successful in getting information that Flavorizer defectees were being kept in a warehouse holding facility, you have the option of trying to come up with some additional means of them gathering that info. One simple but effective method would be to use a mysteri-

ous message sent to one of the PCs on their tablet by an anonymous person with no traceable reply-to address:

“I know you’re investigating the Flavorizer defects. Come to Warehouse 9 at 11:00 p.m. and you’ll get your answers.”

You can let the PCs speculate over the intent of this anonymous message, but ultimately try to steer them toward Warehouse 9.

If the PCs were successful in getting information from someone at Chip Stop, they still need to find the precise warehouse. They can attempt to hack computers, use Astral Projection to listen in on someone’s conversation without being seen, *mind control* management, or any number of other things. Let them be creative and try to work with them, but ultimately lead them to Warehouse 9 in the warehouse district.

Eventually the players will arrive at Warehouse 9. The building is rather nondescript; its windows are painted over and it has a barbed wire fence surrounding it. Vicious-looking dogs patrol the land between the fence and the building. A guard post stands at the single gated entrance.

### Getting Inside

Players are usually creative and have a wide variety of tools at their disposal to help them enter places where they are not wanted. It would be impossible to write detailed scenarios for every conceivable option that the characters have, so try to be creative and work with the players when they come up with an interesting solution for getting inside the warehouse.

- To help you provide a few options for the players, describe the following aspects of the warehouse to them. Whatever

check they decide to make, the difficulty for the task is Superb. If they fail, allow them to try again using a different method (even if that means returning a week later after they've escaped certain death and have waited for the heat to cool off!).

- The warehouse is three stories tall, with only one apparent entrance
- The windows are painted over but not boarded up
- Three vicious-looking dogs patrol the grounds (dogs have ODFs and DDFs of +3 each, if the PCs wish to attack/subdue them)
- The barbed wire fence is about 10 feet tall and ten yards separate it and the building

Two guards man the booth at the gated entrance; they will not let anyone in without appropriate ID (Superb Forgery check could produce ID for the party, but no amount of bluffing, acting, or lying will let them through without ID; *mind control* may help, though)

Given the information about the area, players will have options to talk to and manipulate the guards, sneak over the fence and past the dogs, or try any number of other ideas they may come up with. Again, the difficulty for checks to succeed at whatever task they try to perform in this area is Superb. Players may have to make several different types of checks (climbing, sneaking, attack, bluff, forgery, etc.) to get through.

If the dogs start barking, they must be put down in a single round or the guards will come to investigate. If the guards are attacked (or see the dogs being attacked), they will immediately sound the alarm and a large number of reinforcements will start to arrive within just three rounds. PCs would be wise to escape and come back later, rather than try to fight with every single person in the building.

## Inside the warehouse

Once inside, the players' task is ultimately to discover what is going on with the Flavorizer and the people supposedly being held. It will take a bit of snooping for them to discover the real secret behind the events that have been uncovered thus far.

There are a few key locations that the players can explore, but they may need to get clearance to do so.

### Above-Ground Levels

- **Warehouse Entrance/Lobby.** Unless allowed entrance by gate guards, a desk clerk will question them as to their presence. The difficulty to persuade him/her is Superb, while the difficulty to sneak past is Wonderful. Players encounter this room if they entered through the front door.
- **Generic room/empty closet.** If the players entered through a broken window they will enter a small room that is nondescript and typical of a warehouse. It may be a storage room for shipping boxes, cargo containers, etc. All boxes are empty and unmarked.
- **Production Floor:** Large machinery, conveyor belts, and robotic arms stand lifeless on the production floor. It looks as if nothing has been manufactured here in months. This large room is responsible for the majority of the floor space dedicated to the building.

**Production Floor Platforms:** A runway wraps around the production floor on levels two and three of the building. There are small storage rooms on each floor that contain machine parts, some in more advanced stages of production than others. Stairs lead from the bottom level to the second and third levels.



The warehouse appears to be a generic manufacturing facility for some sort of machinery. When players explore the above-ground levels, it appears to be just another warehouse. Curiously, it doesn't appear to have been operating for some time.

Players must discover a pass card to the lower levels, which are only accessible via an elevator near the lobby. The desk clerk has a pass card, but will not part with it for any reason. If bribed, he/she will appear interested only to vehemently decline. If pressed, the clerk lets slip that he fears repercussion from the government. He immediately regrets mentioning the government and refuses to discuss them anymore. An Extraordinary Manipulation or Social check may get the clerk to loosen up a bit, but all he knows is that the warehouse was commandeered about three months ago and people have been taken below ground and held there as if it were a prison.

If the clerk is subdued without security being alerted, players may lift the pass card and gain access to the elevator. If the clerk feels threatened and alerts security, the men from outside (if not already dealt with) will arrive to fight the players. In either case, the elevator will lock down and must be forced open (via lockpicking, computer hacking, ghosting, etc.).

The clerk's traits are Great and the difficulty to get into the elevator (if it is locked down) is Superb.

## Warehouse Basement

- In the warehouse basement, players unravel the mysteries behind the Flavorizer freak-outs. Electronically locked and sealed metal doors hide victims of Flavorizer malfunctions, though soundproof and windowless rooms mask their presence.
- Each of the rooms in the basement is electronically locked, sealed, and soundproof. To enter a room, players must

successfully use an appropriate skill or power (Lockpicking, hacking, *electrokinesis*, etc.) with a difficulty of Wonderful. Each room requires its own check.

- Players attempting to shut down all power to the site (and thus circumvent the electronic locks) must succeed on an Astonishing hacking check.
- The **first time** the characters enter a room, they find no living being. Instead, they find signs that someone had been held captive here, but obviously struggled. Scratches on the walls, burst restraints, drops of blood, and other appropriate signs of struggle litter the room. Obviously nobody has taken the time to clean up the mess.

The **second time** the characters enter a room, they find an enraged lunatic who attacks them on sight, babbling incoherently. Use the same attributes for Defectees outlined under **The Final Encounter**, below.

Eventually the players enter a larger room where several victims of the Flavorizer malfunction are being held in restraints. Each appears to be struggling against their bonds as a variety of machines attempt to hold them still and perform tests on them.

In the far corner of the room stands a man wearing a lab coat, his focus on a computer terminal. One of his two pairs of arms makes gestures at the terminal's screen while the other set holds a comm tablet into which he occasionally enters notes. He seems oblivious to the players' presence at first, but as soon as one of them makes a move he turns to address them.

"You aren't supposed to be down here. No, no you're not. I'd ask for an explanation, but I'm simply much too busy. You see, all of my hands are full."



The scientist is not interested in excuses or interacting with the players. He has orders to cover up what he is doing and to remove any unauthorized personnel by force. Regardless of whether or not the players attempt to negotiate with him, he attacks them without so much as a response.

## The Final Encounter

His last act before attacking the players is to initiate a command to let the test subjects loose. These Defectees are enraged and insane like the lunatic from the bar, and they will attack whoever is closest to them (note: this may be other Defectees, the players, or the scientist). Defectees should pose a physical threat to the players and be a nuisance as they get in the way.

There are two Defectees, plus an additional one for every two players at the table. So if there are six players, there will be five Defectees.

### Defectees (2 + 1 / 2 players)

**Total ODFs:** +4

**Total DDFs:** +0

**Combat (Melee):** Great

**Specialization:** Dirty Fighting (May re-roll one dice when punching, clawing, biting, etc.)

**Gifts:** Adrenaline Rush (may take more damage than a normal person before feeling it)

**Faults:** Enraged (cannot be talked down; always uses Aggressive posture, already factored into their traits)

**Weapons:** Fists, fingernails, feet, teeth

**Wound Levels:** 1-3 (Scratched), 4-5 (Hurt), 6-7 (Very Hurt), 8-9 (Incapacitated), 10+ (Near Death); can sustain only one wound per wound level (including Scratched)

## Barkeep's Daughter

In addition to the other Defectees, there is a young girl, perhaps eleven or twelve years old, among the test subjects. She is as enraged and bloodthirsty as the rest of the subjects but can be positively identified as the daughter of the barkeep. It is up to the players to decide whether or not to take her alive.

### Barkeep's Daughter

**Total ODFs:** +2

**Total DDFs:** -2

**Combat (Melee):** Fair

**Specialization:** Dirty Fighting (May re-roll one dice when punching, clawing, biting, etc.)

**Gifts:** Adrenaline Rush (may take more damage than a normal person before feeling it)

**Faults:** Enraged (cannot be talked down; always uses Aggressive posture, already factored into their traits)

**Weapons:** Fists, fingernails, feet, teeth

**Wound Levels:** 1-3 (Scratched), 4-5 (Hurt), 6-7 (Very Hurt), 8-9 (Incapacitated), 10+ (Near Death); can sustain only one wound per wound level (including Scratched)

Players will likely notice that the scientist is controlling these robots with his tablet and attempt to disarm or destroy it. Attempting to shoot the tablet or target it with a psionic attack imposes a -2 penalty on the character's ODFs and the scientist gets a chance to resist as normal with his DDFs of +4. It takes two successful attacks to destroy the tablet, but the scientist takes a -1 penalty on his Technology checks after it has taken one hit.

With his other two arms he may defend himself, shoot his gun, or perform another action that doesn't take much concentration.

### The Scientist

**Total ODFs:** +4

**Total DDFs:** +4

**Technology:** Superb

**Specialization:** Robotics

**Combat (Ranged):** Great

**Gifts:** Extra Arms (has a pair of mechanical arms which allow him to take additional actions each round)

**Faults:** Government property (extra arms were paid for by the government, so he must do what they say or suffer severe consequences)

**Weapons:** Large handgun, tablet that controls robotic equipment

**Luck Points:** 1

**Wound Levels:** 1-2 (Scratched), 3-4 (Hurt), 5-6 (Very Hurt), 7-8 (Incapacitated), 9+ (Near Death); has a full wound track

## The Scientist

The scientist stands at the back of the room and does his best to avoid being injured. He will actively move away from the Defectees and will take cover behind machinery if necessary.

He has full command of the testing machines from his tablet and can use them to get in the way of the characters, to attempt to inject them with neurotoxins and mood stabilizers, and so forth. Each round he can issue a command to one piece of machinery, which can swivel and move into position to attack a character.



## Robots and Machinery

A wide variety of machines dots the room, each with its own extendable arms and tendril-like injectors. Each round the scientist may direct one of these to attack a character. Use his **Technology [Robotics]** skill in place of ODFs for the robots. For example, rather than making an attack roll with a Combat skill, he would roll his Technology skill instead. This check is still opposed by the target character's Body check to determine success.

If a robot makes a successful attack against a character, it may inject one of the following types of chemicals. You may choose which one, or roll randomly to decide.

Serum		
Roll	Serum	Effect
☐	Sleep Inducer	Great Mind check or become drowsy, -2 to all Skill checks for two hours
■	Mood Stabilizer	Great Mind check or become docile; can check again each round
+	Neurotoxin	Great Body check or be paralyzed after three rounds

Players may attack the robots, but it may prove futile to do so. There are an equal number of robots as there are Defectees (2 + 1 per 2 players) and each has DDFs of +5 with a normal wound track.

## The Dust Settles

If the players successfully subdue the scientist and the Defectees, they have a few minutes to obtain as much information as possible before they need to escape. If they haven't destroyed his tablet it may be a good source of information and one they can take with them as evidence.

The computer terminal has a Superb difficulty for any attempt to hack it (via the Technology skill, *cyberpsi*, or some other method). If players manage to successfully hack the terminal, they can obtain all of the information necessary to learn about the Flavorizer cover-up.

It is up to the players to decide what to do with the information they obtain, and to the GM to craft future scenarios to accommodate their goals.

Remember to tie up loose ends after the encounter. If the players accepted the barkeep's offer to pay them for information about his daughter, they can return to him to collect. If they killed his daughter in the fight, that may add complications to their relationship. Use your best judgment and creativity to decide how to handle things from here.

# Appendices



# Appendix I: Adventure Seed Generator

Use the following collection of tables to help spur some creativity when crafting an adventure.

## Instructions

1. Place your finger on the center cell of the “Employer” section (highlighted in grey for convenience).
2. Roll 2dF. Move your finger Left for each - result, Right for each + result, and leave it still for each Blank result.
3. Roll 2dF. Move your finger Down for each - result, Up for each + result, and leave it still for each Blank result.
4. Record the selection.
5. Repeat steps 1 through 4, each time moving to the next table until you have made a selection from each chart.

The sum of all of your results is the adventure seed. Fill in the details with your own ideas to get the adventure starter.

## Example

Step 1: Place finger on “Gang.”

Step 2: Roll 2dF. Result: +, Blank. Move finger Right one space.

Step 3: Roll 2dF. Result: -, Blank. Move finger Down one space.

Step 4: Record Mercenary Corps as the Employer.

Step 5: On the Action chart, place finger on Locate. Roll 2dF. Result: +, -. Move finger one space Right and one space Left (finger moves back to Locate.) Roll 2dF again. Result: -, -. Finger moves down twice, landing on Negotiate With. Record that result.

Repeat Step 5 until you have made a selection on all of the tables and recorded the results for each.

Step 6. Put them all together:

**Employer:** Mercenary Corp

**Action:** Negotiate With

**Target:** Criminal

**Opposition:** Police

**Opposition's Strength/Powers:** Control Animate

**Complication:** Betrayal

**Location:** Astral Plane

Fill it all in: A mercenary corps has hired the players to negotiate with a criminal who is hiding out on the Astral Plane. He's a powerful criminal, and if they can get him to side with them they would have a Super ally. However, the police are hot on his trail, and it is suspected that one of the mercs is leaking information to them (Betrayal) regarding the job. To make things worse, the police have assigned a changeling (Control Animate) to the operation and it will be difficult to tell the actual target apart from the shape-shifted cop.

## Adventure Tables

Employer				
Magicorp	Chip Stop	Law Firm	Research Facility	Macroware
Street Doc	Small Business	Corporation	Dealer	Shady Figure
Street Banker	Fixer	<b>Gang</b>	Crime Lord	Ghost Cartel
Police	Military	Your Government	Mercenary Corps	Rich Businessman
Security Agency	Food Smugglers	Rival Government	Former Ally	Celebrity



# APPENDIX I: ADVENTURE SEED GENERATOR

## Action

Create	Decrypt	Erase	Download	Encrypt
Rescue	Attack	Defend	Control	Escort
Observe	Conceal	Locate	Retrieve	Deliver
Counteract	Assist	Discuss	Investigate	Change
Testify Against	Trade With	Negotiate With	Blackmail	Modify Memory

## Target

Corporate Exec	Gang Boss	Rich Businessman	Celebrity	Foreign Leader
Crime Lord	Criminal	Corporate Citizen	Government Agent	Rebels
Vehicle	Information	Equipment	Rare Materials	Magic Devices
Data Center	Shipment	Package	Dossier	Classified Docs
Satellite	Computer Network	Gov't Network	Classified Docs	Real Food

## Opposition

Psi-hunter	Street Banker	Gang	Mad Scientist	Soul Jacker
Wraith	Thief	Hacker	Spy	Ghost
Lunatic	Terrorists	Military	The Mob	Rebels
Vigilante	Corporation	Police	Government	Lunatic
Foreign Power	Bounty Hunter	Corporate Hitmen	Assassin	Astral Being

## Opposition's Strengths/Powers

Photokinesis	Pyrokinesis	Telekinesis	Cryokinesis	Electrokinesis
Technology	Wealth	Reputation	Influence	Astral Defense
ESP	Cyberware	Sonarkinesis	Magic	Knows Secrets
Antipsi Technology	Weapons	Knowledge	Skills	Cyber Defense
Mind Control	Telepathy	Control Animate	Control Inanimate	Psychometry

## Complication

Identity Checkpoint	Travel	Cyberware Glitches	Theft	Foreign Borders
Rivalry	Mistaken Identity	Double-cross	Power Struggle	In-fighting
Tight Security	Riots	Politics	Ambush	Media Attention
Betrayal	Rivalry	Red Herring	Bureaucracy	Explosion
Disaster	Money	Legal Trouble	Psychicly Hidden	Shapechanger

## Location

Military Base	Outside of Town	Landmark	Bank	The 'Net
Mob Hideout	Prison	Downtown	Research Facility	Gang Territory
Strip Mall	Warehouse	Business District	Corporate HQ	The Docks
Airport	Subway	Ghetto	Mansion	Another City
Foreign Country	Nightclub/Bar	Museum	Rooftop	Astral Plane

## Appendix II: Fudge Dice

**Psi-punk** uses “Fudge Dice” for determining rolls and checks made in the game. These are dice specifically designed for the FUDGE Roleplaying Engine and can be found online or at many Friendly Local Gaming Stores (FLGSs).

If you do not have a set of Fudge Dice, you can substitute them for four six-sided dice (4d6) which are commonly found in board games and used for a wide variety of other roleplaying games.

When rolling 4d6, simply use the following conversion chart to determine whether or not a roll was a **+**, a **■** or a **-**.

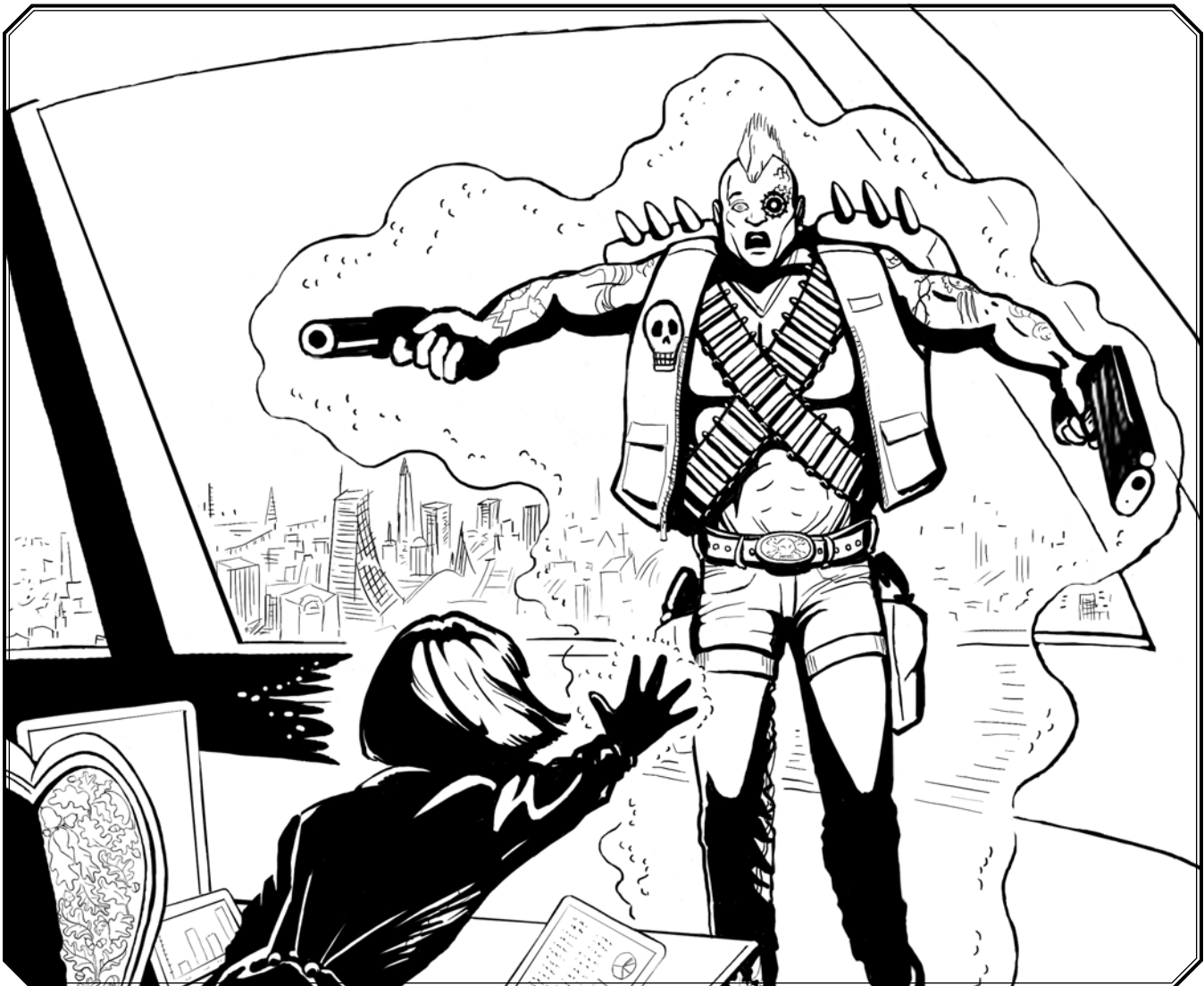
For example, Aaron rolls 4d6 and gets the following result: 3, 6, 4, 1. By comparing his results to this chart, he notes the following:

3 = **■**, 6 = **+**, 4 = **■**, 1 = **-**. Adding it all up, Aaron’s overall result is 0.

**Fudge Dice Conversion Chart**

Rolled on 1d6	Fudge Dice Equivalent
5 or 6	<b>+</b>
3 or 4	<b>■</b>
1 or 2	<b>-</b>

This is a simple way to convert Abysmal d6s into Astonishing Fudge Dice “on the fly.”



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Fault . . . . .	7, 37	Handling . . . . .	65, 67
Ghost . . . . .	136	Weapons . . . . .	65, 68
Ghosting . . . . .	136, 139	Durability . . . . .	65, 68
Gift . . . . .	7, 36	Damage . . . . .	68
Glitch . . . . .	157	Wealth . . . . .	40, 81-82
Grenades . . . . .	50	Weapons (See Guns, Melee Weapons)	
Guns . . . . .	40, 45-47	Wound (Wound Level) . . . . .	85, 91, 94

PLAYER NAME

STREET NAME

REAL NAME

ORGANIZATION



HOME CITY

## ATTRIBUTES

### BODY

Dexterity

Strength

### MIND

Focus

Spirit

### PERSONA

Presence

Status

Total odfs

ddfs

Luck

BP

## GIFTS/POWERS

## FAULTS

## SKILLS

SKILL NAME	LINKED ATTRIBUTE	SKILL LEVEL	SPECIALIZATION

## WOUND TRACK

DAMAGE DEALT	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9+
PHYSICAL TRACK	-	○ ○ ○	○	○	○	○
WOUND LEVEL	NONE	SCRATCHED	HURT	VERY HURT	INCAPACITATED	NEAR DEATH
MENTAL TRACK	-	○ ○ ○	○	○	○	○

## GEAR

NAME	odf/ddf	GIFTS	FAULTS	COST

## CYBERWARE, PSIONIC POWERS, AND MAGIC DEVICES

DESCRIBE YOUR CYBERWARE, PSIONICS, OR MAGIC DEVICES

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## VEHICLE

NAME	SIZE	SPEED	HANDLING	WEAPONS	DURABILITY
GIFTS		FAULTS			COST

## BACKGROUND & NOTES

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## TRAIT LADDER

ASTONISHING	+7
EXTRAORDINARY	+6
PHENOMENAL	+5
WONDERFUL	+4
SUPERB	+3
GREAT	+2
GOOD	+1
FAIR	0
MEDIOCRE	-1
POOR	-2
ABYSMAL	-3



# Cyber and Psi

In the year 2096, psychics walk among us. They proved too powerful to eradicate when they first appeared 80 years ago, but now normals have new tech to help level the playing field. Of course, the odds are never fair when mega-corps and rival governments are involved.

In a world where it's every corporate drone for himself, will you take your life into your own hands and cast your luck as a street runner or will you throw your hat in with the man?

In this book you'll discover:

- A complete cyberpunk RPG using the Fudge™ rule system
- A future powered by advancements in psionic-powered technologies
- Complete rules for building characters, including options to give them cybernetic enhancements, psionic powers, magic devices, and weapons galore
- Loads of psychic powers, including telekinesis, pyrokinesis, ESP, mind control, psychometry, and more
- Fast and simple rules for hacking computers that don't exclude anyone from participating
- Unique methods for hacking people, including the controversial practice of soul jacking
- Advice on how to GM a fast and simple session with limited prep time
- A sample adventure to get you started in the world of Psi-punk
- And much more!

